Unlike regular tours run by travel agencies, this tour is being organised and led by Dr Leigh Kirwan, Lecturer in Japanese at Griffith University. Leigh has great experience in this area, having previously led more than a dozen tours of Japan.

Travel will be on local buses, trains and ferries, so unlike ordinary tourists who view the locals from air-conditioned coaches, you will actually be living with and interacting with them. This tour is especially designed for those with no previous experience of Japan.

It covers a wide area of Japan and provides many contrasts from large cities to the smallest island villages. Most accommodation is in Japanese style, and there will be many chances to meet and talk with Japanese people, including the close bonds you will form in the homestay. A Japan Rail Pass will be used for part of this tour. It is not possible to use these passes when on study or working visas, so many people who go to Japan for a year find they are restricted to one small area.

This may be your only chance to travel so extensively and find the part of Japan you really love.

Tour Cost for land content Narita Airport (Tokyo) to Kansai Airport (Osaka):
$2,985 subject to fluctuation of the Australian dollar

Included: all internal travel by bus, taxi, and train including the famous Shinkansen, all accommodation, Tokyo Disneyland Theme Park entry, all entries to temples, shrines, gardens etc., all breakfasts, all dinners.

Not Included: Passport, travel insurance, lunches, personal spending money and airfares. As group airfares on Jetstar are now hundreds of dollars more than what you can purchase yourself with an internet booking, this year participants will save money by booking the airfare component themselves. Airfares and taxes should be less than $1000 if purchased early enough. Leigh will be travelling on the nominated flights.

INDICATION OF INTEREST – JAPAN TOUR 2011

Please email the following information to: l.kirwan@griffith.edu.au

I am interested in joining the Japan Tour in June/July 2011.

I understand that there are minimum and maximum numbers for the tour. If there is sufficient interest in the tour, please advise me when an information session is to be held at the university.

Name:
Address:
Mobile:
Preferred E-mail:
Japanese subjects currently studying at uni (if applicable):
Proposed Itinerary

Day 1 Monday 27 June  A morning Jetstar departure from Gold Coast airport takes us on a direct flight to Narita in Chiba Prefecture. Our first night in Japan is in an authentic Japanese ryokan sleeping on futon on tatami mats. Dinner will be served in the dining room. Toast your first night in Japan at Richard Branson’s Barge Inn (Japanese pronunciation of Virgin) British pub! O/N Ôgiya Ryokan, Narita

Day 2 Tuesday 28 June  Narita is famous in the Tokyo area for the Narita-san temple and Japanese gardens. This morning we visit both before having some free time in the afternoon to explore the traditional streets of this typical Japanese town and also a large modern shopping centre. O/N Ôgiya Ryokan

Day 3 Wednesday 29 June  This morning we visit the amazing National Museum of Japanese History at nearby Sakura before we take local trains through the outskirts of Tokyo and back into Tochigi Prefecture to the famous town of Nikkô. O/N “Turtle Inn” Ryokan

Day 4 Thursday 30 June  You will be in awe of the World Heritage sites in this beautiful small town, including the Tôshogû Shrine. O/N “Turtle Inn” Ryokan

Day 5 Friday 01 July  A series of scenic train rides takes us on to Kusatsu Onsen, an archetypical Japanese hot springs resort town. There are lots of street stalls with river fish on sticks etc and attractive cafés in the small town. O/N Ryokan

Day 6 Saturday 02 July  Here you can have a relaxed morning wandering around the town in yukata and wooden geta visiting the various onse or other sights. In the afternoon, quite comfortable and familiar with Japan now, we head to the big smoke - Tokyo. We will really be able to understand Japan and the Japanese with our first homestay with students from the Japan Australia Society of Rikkyô University. You may have felt you have put your watches forward 20 years when you arrive in Tokyo! There will be a welcome party tonight. O/N Home stay

Day 7 Sunday 03 July  Free with host families.

Day 8 Monday 04 July  As a group we will visit many Tokyo sights such as the Twin Towers observatory in Shinjuku, Nakamise shopping street and Sensôji Temple in Asakusa, Electric City in Akihabara and Ginza. O/N Home stay

Day 9 Tuesday 05 July  As our host families might be busy today, we will spend an exciting day at Tokyo Disneyland.

Day 10 Wednesday 06 July  Free day with host families. O/N Homestay

Day 11 Thursday 07 July  We bid a tearful farewell to our host families at Tokyo station this morning, and then take our first Shinkansen ride to Shin Ôsaka to connect with a Limited Express to the summer beach resort of Shirahama. O/N Beach Hotel Shirahama

Day 12 Friday 08 July  This will be a relaxing day to spend on the beautiful sandy beaches topped up with Gold Coast sand, or taking short walks to some of the nearby natural rocky landscape features. O/N Beach Hotel Shirahama

Day 13 Saturday 09 July  A Ltd Exp to Shin-Ôsaka and a connecting Hikari Railstar Shinkansen will have us in Hiroshima just after lunch. This afternoon is set down for a sobering tour of the A-bomb museum and Peace Park. Accommodation is in Japanese style in the modern Aster Plaza Hotel.

Day 14 Sunday 10 July  A free morning for shopping in the big city department stores of Hiroshima will be followed by a relaxing afternoon among the deer roaming around scenic Miyajima Island - classed as one of the three top scenic spots of Japan. O/N Aster Plaza Hotel
Day 15 Monday 11 July  Japan’s newest Shinkansen, the Kyûshû Shinkansen opens in March 2011 and today we ride on the brand new train direct from Hiroshima to Kagoshima at the southern end of Kyûshû. A 3 hr ferry ride takes us even further south to the Unesco World Heritage site of Yakushima, famous for its giant cedar trees. We stay in a great ryokan in the small town of Ambo. O/N Ryokan

Day 16 Tuesday 12 July  After breakfast we take a bus to Kigensugi and commence a hike downhill to Yakusugi Land, a park dedicated to the amazing sugi or cedar trees of Yakushima. In the afternoon a direct bus takes us back to Ambo. O/N Ryokan

Day 17 Wednesday 13 July  The trusty ferry will take us back to Kagoshima and after an 1100km Shinkansen ride at speeds of up to 300km/hr we find ourselves in Nagoya. We will head into downtown Sakae for an izakaya dinner. O/N Toyoko Inn Business Hotel

Day 18 Thursday 14 July  After seeing the sights of Nagoya, we head into Gifu Prefecture to the delightful town of Takayama nestled in the Japanese Alps. The river and mountain scenery on this journey is outstanding. O/N Ryokan

Day 19 Friday 15 July  Our inn will provide bikes for us to ride first to the Takayama morning market, and then to the remarkable Hida-no-sato, a recreation of a village of thatched-roof houses showing village life in the area 100 years ago. Karaoke tonight? O/N Ryokan

Day 20 Saturday 16 July  Today we travel to Kyôto - the historical and cultural hub of Japan. We will have time in the afternoon to visit the famous 1200-year-old Kiyomizu Temple with great views over the city. If you can walk in a straight line blindfolded, you will find your true love! You can also drink from the springs of wisdom, wealth and longevity. In the evening we will put on our yukata kimonos and join the throngs in the closed off main street for the Gion Festival. This will be an exciting night. O/N in a typical old Kyôto ryokan.

Day 21 Sunday 17 July  The Gion Festival runs for a week, but today is the main day – the famous parade where people wear yukata and geta and watch the parade of 32 colourful ancient floats carrying musicians being pulled through the streets downtown. O/N Ryokan

Day 22 Monday 18 July  Free day to take in more of Kyôto’s amazing sights.

Day 23 Tuesday 19 July  In the morning we will visit the famous Kinkakuji - Golden Pavilion - and Nijô Castle with its squealing nightingale floors. We depart Kyôto station in the late afternoon and transfer to Kansai International Airport by express train. Overnight Jetstar flight to the Gold Coast.

Day 24 Wednesday 20 July  Early morning arrival at Gold Coast International Airport. Tour concludes.

If you would like to join this exciting tour, you should first email Leigh who will instruct you how to pay a $200 refundable deposit. Once ten deposits have been received, which will make the tour viable, you will be advised to go to jetstar.com and book airfares to and from Japan. The preferred flights which Leigh will travel on are:

Tue 19 July Jetstar Flight JQ20 Dep. Osaka 20:50 arr. Gold Coast 06:55 next day

If you prefer you may travel to and from Japan by other means but of course will not have a travel escort.

Tour meetings will be held on the Gold Coast and Nathan campuses in Week 3 of Semester 1, 2011.