

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
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Japan Birding Spectacle 2024 – Steller's Sea Eagle, Dancing Cranes.

February 2 – 16, 2024

Guided by Alvaro Jaramillo and Hiroyuki Tanoi



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Japan needs no introduction. It is a large archipelago of islands that stretches for a wide latitudinal gradient offshore from China, the Koreas and Russia. Japan is largely a mountainous country, with a chain of volcanos and mountains that create a spine to the main islands. Japan reaches from sea level to over 12,000 feet at the top of Mt. Fuji, perhaps one of the world's most beautiful volcanos. Japan is a gorgeous and unique country to visit. Not only for the scenery, but the distinctive food and culture. There is no doubt that Japan is a country that has shaped the world, one of the great civilizations of our planet.

But in Japan there is another side that one usually does not contemplate, and this is the natural world of Japan. If one word had to sum it up, it would be spectacle! A nature spectacle. Picture thousands upon thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes, rivaling the well know version of this in the United States, Bosque del Apache or the Platte River. But in Japan there are various species of cranes. Farther north one can see the rare and beautiful, Red-crowned Cranes, often dancing on the ice! Truly spectacular. Add to this the chance of seeing some stray vagrant crane species and you get the idea that it is a very special place for these large, memorable and often endangered species of bird.

Also imagine the spectacle of the largest fish eagle in the world, the Steller's Sea Eagle, and in numbers! This is without a doubt one you would include in the top five most impressive raptors on earth, with its huge beak, wonderful coloration, and that odd diamond shaped tail. They come to the northern island of Hokkaido, and not only that they are surrounded by many White-tailed Sea Eagles. If you have seen those amazing photos of sea eagles, with a snowy background, they were taken here in the Japanese winter. We will see a wide variety of Japanese birds on our trip, from a nice assortment of wintering gulls on the coast, along with Japanese Cormorants, and even possibilities of some gorgeous and specialty alcids like the Spectacled Guillemot and Japanese Murrelet to waterfowl, and forest birds in the lowlands and other goodies up higher in the mountains.

Another spectacle are the wintering flocks of waterfowl, with densities of Whooper Swan in Hokkaido, and Bewick's Swans in the south. Some of those birds you look for as rarities back in North America are common here, such as Pochard, Tufted Duck, and Eurasian Wigeon. Three of the most striking ducks anywhere are possible in a winter Japan trip, the Falcated Duck named for its Scythe shaped ("falcum") tertials is a fantastic looking duck, perhaps outdone by the Baikal Teal, and then there is the rare but likely and almost impossible Mandarin Duck – any one of these three is a stunner. And let's not forget the Smew! We hope to pad the waterfowl list with various other possibilities, some of which are beauties shared with North America such as the Long-tailed Duck, and Harlequin Duck. Two species of swans are possible, and the Whooper Swan in Hokkaido is fantastic to see on the ice. We will go to the best goose watching area in Japan, where Tundra and Taiga Bean geese winter, as well as both the Greater and the Lesser White-fronted Goose, the latter is a real prize, uncommon anywhere it is found. While we look for water birds, we may find the Brown Dipper, or the Japanese Wagtail among others.

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There is so much to see in Japan, from scenery to a rare flock of Japanese Waxwings, to the most impressive of owls – Blakiston's Fish Owl. But a trip to this nation is also an immersion into a one-of-a-kind culture and people. We will be having some great traditional meals and will stay in several traditional hotels including some with thermal baths (onsen) and will be co-led by one of Japan's superb and knowledgeable birders (Hiroyuki Tanoi). He will make sure that we not only experience the natural aspect of Japan, but also enjoy and understand the cultural aspect of Japan. This tour may have some of the best and most interesting food of any tour we do, I always look forward to the food on the tour. It is diverse and amazing. Come with us to experience the Land of the Rising Sun, and some of the best avian spectacles one can see anywhere. Take your camera, some of the memories you will make are picture worthy. Japan in February 2024 – Let's go!!!



Ural Owl

The Birding Sites We Visit

In order to enjoy a wide variety of species during our winter trip in Japan, we will visit three of the four main islands on the country. We will start in the main island of Honshu, we will then visit the southern island of Kyushu, and we shall end in the northernmost

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island of Hokkaido. We will be flying between these islands, as the distances involved are great; Japan is a large country!

Honshu

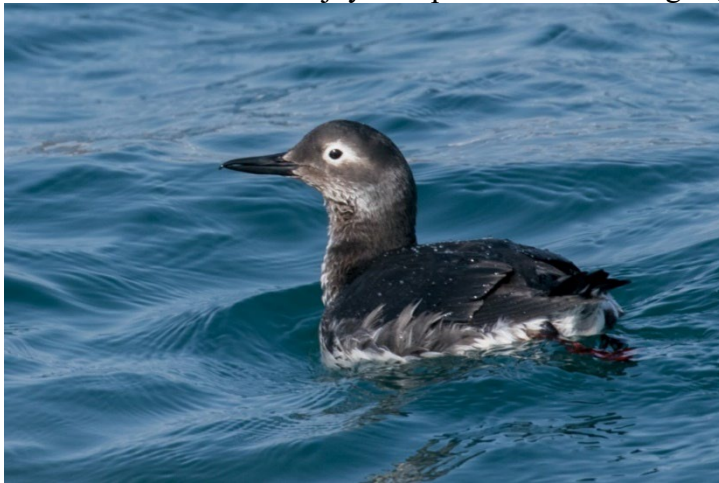
This is the main, central and largest island in Japan. It is where we will land in Tokyo and begin our tour. We will be visiting areas along the coast, north to Sendai, and lowlands as well as a visit to the Japanese Alps while we are here. This includes some time photographing the famed, snow monkeys (macaques) of Japan. Please look at the day by day itinerary below for some of the birds we will look for on Honshu. We will be focusing on waterfowl and forest birds while here, with various buntings, Green Pheasant and other edge and open country species as well. Note that on Honshu we will be privy to experiencing some of the best gull watching anywhere in the planet on the coast and can expect a wide diversity of species including Black-tailed, Vega (Herring) and Slaty-backed.

Kyushu

This is the southernmost island in Japan. On Kyushu, we will enjoy some fantastic crane watching. As well, we will look for southern specialties such as Daurian Jackdaw, and Ryukyu Minivet among others. Our visit to the coast may also allow us a chance at the Japanese Murrelet and perhaps the rare Saunder's Gull. This part of Japan is warmer than other areas we will visit, although in winter we still expect some cold.

Hokkaido

On the other hand, Hokkaido is the coldest and northernmost island we shall visit. Here is where we will enjoy the spectacle of fish-eagles, along with the chance for the



rare Blakiston's Fish-Owl. More crane watching is in store, as this is where the Red-crowned Cranes are to be found, and hopefully we shall enjoy their dancing while we are there. A short boat trip may allow us to find several alcid species, of which the Spectacled Guillemot will be high on our list of specialties we will look for.

Spectacled Guillemot



Red-crowned Crane

About the Physical Requirements & Pace

This is not a difficult tour; we will be mostly birding on flat ground and the pace will be relaxed. Note however that we do have two boat excursions. There is one longer hike, to get to the snow monkeys. This is a mile long trail in the snow with some uphill grade. This is a winter trip and in particular in the north we may encounter snow and ice. There may be walks where the ground could be snowy or icy, where even parking areas may have ice. However, we are always near our vehicle or some place to get warm if needed. We will have a longer walk on possible snowy or partly icy paths in Karuizawa. We recommend taking crampons to put on your boots, these help you grip on ice and snow and make birding in these conditions quite comfortable (see below). The short (3 hour) boat ride is on a fishing vessel and in moderately protected waters, but if you are especially prone, you may want to have some seasickness medication available. It does get cold on the boat, there is no inside cabin to warm up in. The shorter boat ride to the ice floes and the Steller's Sea Eagles is all in protected waters. Nevertheless having the right cold weather gear will be imperative.

In Japan it is not always common to use salt or sand to melt away ice as is common in North America. In the alps and parts of Hokkaido we may be walking in trails that are

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snowy or icy. We strongly recommend taking crampons that easily slip over your boots to add a level of grip on ice or snow. Alvaro found these quite easy to use and really helpful for helping to enjoy the places, birds and scenery rather than being stressed out about the walking.

Note that our hotels are a mix, some are Western style hotel, and others are Japanese style hotels. Japanese hotels may take some getting used to, on some you will sleep on traditional and very comfortable, Japanese futons. Single rooms may not be available in some hotels. Most Japanese hotels have private bathrooms, but not all, we may have to share bathrooms in at least one hotel. Some Japanese style hotels have showers only in the onsen hot springs. Hotels in Kyushu and Hokkaido tend to have natural hot springs that you may want to enjoy. We will be able to sample some wonderful traditional Japanese cuisine as we travel, although lunches tend to be at quicker and in more efficient places including roadside convenience stores which offer a varied and much healthier fare than you would expect from a store such as this in our country. Some of our dinners are feasts, for the palate as well as for the eyes! Note that in traditional restaurants, you may eat at low Japanese tables, again this takes some getting used to for us westerners. It is traditional to take your shoes off in Japanese style hotels. They have slippers there for guests to use, but you may consider bringing your own.



Blakiston's Fish Owl

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Note that restaurants in Japan will usually not tailor a meal to someone's specific needs or choices. You are expected to leave anything you do not want to eat, but there is no tradition of ordering food to your specific requirements. The food is fantastic however! If you do not eat fish, keep in mind that fish is served on most days. Japan is not an easy place for vegetarian eaters, if you do not eat fish.

Itinerary for Japan 2024

Feb 2, 24. Day 1 – ARRIVAL IN JAPAN. Arrival day at **Narita International Airport**. Recall that you will be crossing the international date line on transit from North America so you will arrive a day later than your departure day! Our hotel is near the airport, and easily accessible using the courtesy shuttle. We will be meeting for a joint dinner and meeting our local guide Hiroyuki during this evening. If you fly in Haneda Airport, you will need to take a transfer bus from Narita to Haneda (80 min. cost is approximately \$30). Please allow enough time to shuttle from Narita. NOTE – for those who arrive early on this day, we can walk to a nearby pond and hope to see Mandarin Duck before dinner.

As travel can be stressful, bags can become misplaced, and it is a long trip from North America, some folks may choose to arrive a day early and we can help you arrange that with extra nights at the hotel. Night in Art Hotel Narita near the airport.

Feb 3, 24. Day 2 – CHOSHI AND WATERFOWL VIEWING. This morning we will visit the world renowned gull watching port of Choshi, eat some seafood for lunch and then visit Kamisu Pond later in the afternoon. This will be a coastal day for sure! Choshi is internationally known for the gulls, which may include Slaty-backed, Black-tailed, Vega, "Kamchatka" Mew Gull, Glaucous, Glaucous-winged, Black-legged Kittiwake and perhaps the rarer Mongolian Gull or Taymir (Lesser Black-backed) Gull. This is the best spot in Asia to see Iceland (Thayer's) Gull! The port is also great for studying the Japanese (Temminck's) Cormorant, and Harlequin Ducks may be seen on the rocks. Kamisu pond where we will go in the afternoon, is great for waterfowl. Here we may see good flocks of ducks including some uncommon ones such as Smew. But here we could find numbers of Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon as well as Eastern Spot-billed Duck. The star of the show is the Falcated Duck which can be frequent here and can give good looks. The lawns and trees here may allow us to see some common Japanese birds such as the wintering thrushes, Dusky, Brown-headed and Pale, as well as Bull-headed Shrike, Japanese White-eye, Brown-eared Bulbul, Japanese Tit and Large-billed Crow. Night in Tokyo at the Hotel Sunroute Stellar Ueno.

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Feb 4, 24. Day 3 – TOKYO TO SENDAI. Today we will embark on a truly Japanese excursion, a ride on the bullet train or Shinkansen. This remarkably fast and comfortable train will take us to Sendai in approximately two hours, which is less than the time it would take us to go to the airport, wait for a plane and fly to Sendai! One drawback is that it is uncomfortable to travel with large luggage on the train. So we will ship these to our hotel the day before, so we do not have to mess around with that during our travel. We will walk to the train from our hotel and will also walk to our Sendai hotel from the train station. Truly a Japanese experience! In the afternoon we shall visit the Izunuma and Kabukuri-numa area by bus to concentrate on finding geese and land birds. This area of Japan hosts the largest concentrations of wintering geese in the country. We hope to find Whooper Swans, Greater White-fronted Goose, Taiga Bean Goose, Tundra Bean Goose and with luck the rarest of them all the Lesser White-fronted Goose. As well Baikal Teal should be findable, and the adorable Smew should be around. There may be other land birds which may include the Green Pheasant, Japanese Wagtail, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Eastern (Japanese) Buzzard, Bull-headed Shrike as well as Rustic and Meadow buntings. Birding the marshes may gain us the opportunity to see some raptors, such as Hen Harrier, Eurasian Kestrel, and Eastern Marsh Harrier. Night in Sendai Area.

Feb 5, 24. Day 4 – SENDAI AREA. Before breakfast, at 05:30 we will depart for Kabukuri-numa to watch the flight of geese in the morning, if the conditions are right this can be a wonderful spectacle. Apart from the species mentioned for yesterday, we may find Snow Geese here, one of the few places in Japan where they winter. We will return to the hotel for breakfast. After breakfast we shall have a full day of exploring the Sendai area with a local expert, as Hiroyuki Tanoi lives and birds here. We will focus on species that we have not yet found which may not be easy to see elsewhere on our route. Night in Sendai Area.

Feb 6, 24. Day 5 – SENDAI TO KYUSHU. We will have an optional pre-birding outing to go and see the goose fly in again. After breakfast, however we will take a flight to the southern island of Kyushu, with a stop in Osaka. Japan is of course a large archipelago, of which there are four large islands. From north to south, they are Hokkaido, Honshu (the largest, and where Tokyo is located), Shikoku and Kyushu. On the way to the city of Izumi, we will bird woodlands and a reservoir in the early afternoon, looking for Mandarin Duck, Eastern (Japanese) Buzzard, Northern Goshawk, Olive-backed Pipit, Ryukyu Minivet, among others. We will stop by the coast and scope out over the ocean, with luck the Japanese Murrelet is a possibility here. Night in Izumi, Kagoshima.

Feb 7, 24. Day 6 – ARASAKI. Today we will visit the Arasaki Crane Reserve after some morning birding near our hotel. We will enjoy the Hooded and White-naped Cranes, but

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we will have some time to search carefully through the flocks. Annually there are Common Crane and Sandhill Crane that can be found here, if the crane deities are smiling on us, rarer vagrants such as Siberian and Demoiselle Crane have been found here. Birding in ruderal field and edge areas may allow us to find Russet Sparrow, Daurian Jackdaw, the uncommon Ruddy-breasted Crake as well as various buntings such as Chestnut-eared, Black-faced and Rustic among others. The gorgeous Green Pheasant is a possibility, as is Chinese Penduline Tit, and Japanese Grosbeak.

We will spend part of the afternoon at Kogawa Dam, where possibilities include White-bellied Green-Pigeon, Common and Crested kingfishers, Ryukyu Minivet, Red-flanked Bluetail, Gray Wagtail, and buntings including the uncommon Yellow-throated Bunting. Night in Izumi, Kagoshima.

Feb 8, 24. Day 7 – THE HIKAWA & KUMAGAWA RIVERS. These rivers are a wonderful spot to see the very rare Saunder's Gull, and perhaps the more common Black-tailed, Vega, and maybe Heuglin's and Pallas's gulls (rare). We will also be on the lookout for Eurasian and the rare, Black-faced spoonbills, as well as wintering shorebirds including Kentish Plover. Night at Yunomoto-Onsen Ryokan (single rooms may not be available).

Feb 9, 24. Day 8 – KAGOSHIMA TO HANEDA. A short drive from our hotel we will visit Lake Miike & Kirishima Jingu Shrine. There is great forest here, where Ryukyu Minivet as well as Pygmy and Japanese woodpeckers can be found along with other woodland birds: Long-tailed and Japanese Tit, Red-flanked Bluetail, Olive-backed Pipit, as well as Grey and Yellow-throated (Elegant) Bunting. The rarer White-backed Woodpecker has been found here. After lunch, we will return to the Kagoshima Airport, for our flight to Haneda Airport, in Tokyo. Night at Haneda Airport hotel.

Feb 10, 24. Day 9 – SNOW MONKEYS TO KARUIZAWA. In the morning, we will head west to the Japan Alps. We will then visit the world famous "Snow Monkeys" or Japanese Macaques in the snow and springs. This is a very popular site visited by locals and tourists. We will devote time to photographing the monkeys, more than birding although various tits, Eurasian Treecreeper and sometimes even Alpine Accentor can be found here. Note that there is a hike of approximately 45 minutes on a snowy trail to reach the area where the monkeys bathe. From the monkeys we continue driving to Karuizawa. If we arrive with time, we shall do some birding in the area near the hotel. Night in the mountains of Karuizawa.

Feb 11, 24. Day 10 – KARUIZAWA. The mountain forests of Karuizawa are great for various forest species such as Japanese Grosbeak, Hawfinch, Japanese Woodpecker, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, Eurasian Siskin, Brambling, Pallas's Rosefinch, and the attractive Copper Pheasant if one is very fortunate. The forest flocks are led by the

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Japanese versions of our chickadees, the tits. A total of four species can be found here, Japanese, Coal, Willow and Varied Tit. This is a reliable place to find wintering Japanese Waxwings, although they are nomadic, and in some years, they do not come down from the north. Some luck is required with them. Later on in the day, a visit to the Chikumagawa River will be focused on finding the Long-billed Plover, along with the striking Japanese Wagtail and perhaps Gray Wagtail. The nearby reservoir may have one of the world's most unique and gorgeous ducks – the Smew. We will scour the water here for any unusual waterfowl among the more common Tufted Duck, and Common Pochard. Baikal Teal is possible here. Night in Karuizawa.

Feb 12, 24. Day 11 – KARUIZAWA TO TOKYO AND FLIGHT TO HOKKAIDO. We will have a final bit of time in the mountain forests of Karuizawa to find anything we missed yesterday. We shall continue on to Haneda, where we will take an afternoon flight to Kushiro, Hokkaido. Night in Hotel in Tsurui Village, Hokkaido.

Feb 13, 24. Day 12 – TSURUI TO LAKE KUSSHARO. We will begin our day with a pre-breakfast visit to the Otowa Bridge to see the cranes waking up from their roost. With warm morning light, we should have some nice opportunities for photography of the Red-crowned Crane. After breakfast, we will visit the Tsurui Crane Reserve where we will have more time with the cranes, to watch their dances, and displays and more photos of course. After another nice Japanese lunch, we will visit a site where we can find numbers of Whooper Swans, again another great photo and observation opportunity. Woodland birds in the area include Eurasian Jay, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Bullfinch, Great Spotted, Grey-headed and White-backed Woodpecker. At our hotel in the evening, we will hope that the very rare (30 pairs occur in the northern Island) Blakiston's Fish Owl appears. Night at Yuyado Daiichi.

Feb 14, 24. Day 13 – STELLER'S SEA EAGLES ON ICE – We will depart after breakfast for Rausu. Here we will board a boat cruise of approximately 2 hours to observe Steller's Sea Eagles, and White-tailed Eagles in the drift ice. Conditions vary, and sometimes the ice is not there. But if all goes well, seeing the eagles on drift ice is the best! We will visit the Notsuke Peninsula in the afternoon, where if it is a good year we may find Asian Rosy Finch, Snow Bunting and Lapland Longspur along with great looks at the Hokkaido form of Red Fox, and Sika Deer. Tonight, we have a second shot at the Blakinston's Fish Owl in case we did not find it previously. Night at Yuyado Daiichi.

Feb 15, 24. Day 14 – LAKE FUREN & OCHIISHI NATURE CRUISE. We will be visiting Lake Furen where we will once again enjoy the spectacle that is the concentration of White-tailed and the mighty Steller's sea-eagles. Certainly, one of the highlights of the trip! In the afternoon, we will take a nature boat cruise in Ochiishi (weather dependent), here

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we will be looking for numbers of Harlequin Duck and Long-tailed Duck, as well as various species of alcids including Spectacled and Pigeon Guillemot (including the *snowi* form, which may deem species status), Ancient Murrelet and perhaps the Least Auklet and Crested Auklet. Red-faced Cormorant is possible, as well as several northern species of gulls including Glaucous and Slaty-backed. Night in Kuashiro, Hokkaido.

Feb 16, 24. Day 15 – AKAN CRANE CENTER AND DEPARTURE DAY. We will have a morning to visit the Akan International Crane Center where Red-crowned Cranes often dance and allow for great photography. This will be our last birding before arriving at the airport just past lunchtime. You can depart from Kushiro and connect through Tokyo on your way home, or perhaps you would like to spend some time being a tourist in Japan. We leave that up to you!



Varied Tit

Your Guides

Alvaro Jaramillo was born in Chile but began birding in Toronto, where he lived as a youth. He was trained in ecology and evolution with a particular interest in bird behavior. Research forays and backpacking trips introduced Alvaro to the riches of the Neotropics, where he has traveled extensively. He is the author of the *Birds of Chile*, an authoritative yet portable field guide to Chile's birds. Alvaro writes the Identify Yourself column in

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Bird Watcher's Digest. Among various projects he recently authored the ABA Field Guide to Birds of California, and the sparrow chapter for the Handbook of Birds of the World, he is also writing a photo guide to the birds and wildlife of Patagonia. Alvaro was granted the Eisenmann Medal by the Linnaean Society of New York, it is awarded occasionally for excellence in ornithology and encouragement of the amateur. Alvaro lives with his family in Half Moon Bay, California.

Hiroyuki Tanoi Hiroyuki is from Tokyo, but now lives in Miyagi, Japan with his wife, Shoko who is also a very skilled birder. Both of them are particularly keen on seabirding, and have been all over the world looking at, and photographing seabirds. Hiroyuki started birdwatching when he was 6 years old and has been doing it now for over 30 years. He recalls as a junior high school student, observing seabirds from the ferry (Tokyo-Kushiro) and being drawn to them. He remembered how it was both difficult and interesting to identify seabirds at that time, and over time he became fascinated with them. He has a great knowledge of Japanese birds, and much experience birding in Japan. Hiroyuki works for an environmental research company. In that work he mainly surveys and observes land birds.

Financial Information

FEE: \$8100 from Tokyo ending in Kushiro, Hokkaido. This does not include "Visit Japan" domestic airfare tickets. These needs to be bought outside of Japan, by non-Japanese residents, and we will give guidance on their purchase. In 2020, internal flights cost \$390 but they are expected to cost more currently.

DEPOSIT: \$500 per person.

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: October 5, 2023

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$950. Singles may not be available at traditional Japanese style hotels.

LIMIT: 9.

Additional Information

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid for the dates of your stay is necessary for US citizens to enter Japan. Your passport must have at least one blank page for the stamp. No visa is necessary if you are staying less than 90 days. If you are not a US citizen, please

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check with the Japanese consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or phone or e-mail Alvaro's Adventures and we can look this up.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please plan to arrive in Tokyo by February 2, 2024. Arriving a day early to rest up and avoid the stress of missed connections is always recommended and we can arrange extra nights at the hotel for you. Note that we begin at our hotel near Narita Airport, you can arrive in Haneda but give yourself time to take the comfortable bus (1.5 hours) to Narita. Of course arrival in Narita simplifies your travel, unless you are visiting Tokyo before the trip and then Haneda is much closer to the city.

Please schedule to leave Kushiro, Hokkaido(KUH) on Feb 16, or later if you want more time to see Tokyo on your own. Be sure to check with Alvaro's Adventures to confirm that the flights you have chosen will work with our itinerary and to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. We are not responsible for these fees.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$8100 for one person in double occupancy from Tokyo, Japan. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 14, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through lunch on Day 15, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling, drivers and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leaders. Alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature are not included. The above fees do not include your airfare to and from Japan, internal airfare, airport taxes, visa fees, optional extra tips to local drivers or guides, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the tour is \$950 but note it may not be possible to have a single room at traditional Japanese hotels these may not be available, we will inform you before the trip runs. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$500** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit and the Release and Indemnity form must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by October 5, 2023. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: This is a non-smoking tour.

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CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Alvaro's Adventures for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

Alvaro's Adventures is a Registered Seller of Travel in the State of California (CST # 2105497). Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California. This ensures your right to a prompt refund: Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where the passenger is not at fault and has not canceled in violation of any terms and conditions previously clearly and conspicuously disclosed and agreed to by the passenger, all sums paid to the seller of travel for services not provided will be promptly paid to the passenger, unless the passenger advises the seller of travel in writing, after cancellation. This provision does not apply where the seller of travel has remitted the payment to another registered wholesale seller of travel or a carrier, without obtaining a refund, and where the wholesaler or provider defaults in providing the agreed-upon transportation or service. In this situation, the seller of travel must provide the passenger with a written statement accompanied by bank records establishing the disbursement of the payment, and if disbursed to a wholesale seller of travel, proof of current registration of that wholesaler.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 89 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased.

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Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Alvaro's Adventures, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Alvaro's Adventures acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Alvaro's Adventures accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, and other pertinent matter provided by Alvaro's Adventures. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
birding & nature tours



Olive-backed Pipit

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

6/23 AJ