

NORTHERN JAPAN

Our 2016 trip will focus on the greater Tokyo area, the mountainous Nagano region, and a trip up north to an area that was affected by the earthquake/tsunami in 2011 (but is totally safe as far as radiation danger is concerned). We'll start in Tokyo—one of the largest, craziest cities in the world—and spend a few days exploring everything it has to offer. This will include **the famous Penis Festival in nearby Kawasaki**, as well as Ueno Park, Shibuya “scramble” crossing, and **the world-famous Tsukiji fish market (before it is moved at the end of 2016)**. As Tokyo is a melting pot of cuisines from all over Japan, we'll be trying a bunch of **regional specialties** as well as the local dishes, including one very special dinner at one of the top restaurants in the world. We'll also get out one of the days and spend a whole afternoon with the locals, **picnicking under the cherry blossom trees**.

After Tokyo we take the bullet train to Nagano, which is the staging grounds for **the 206th sexennial (every six years) Onbashira festival**. For the past 1200+ years the locals of a small city on a lake in the middle of the mountains have been cutting down giant trees, dragging them up the mountains, and riding them down before transporting them back to the city to be positioned upright in front of the local temple for the next six years. The festival runs for three days, and after that we'll check out Matsumoto castle before heading to Nagano city. This will be our base of operations in our quest to see **the renowned bathing snow monkeys**. Found only in Japan, these monkeys are the only monkeys in the world to live and thrive in such cold temperatures, aided of course by the prevalence of hot springs, which they make good use of.

We then head out back towards Tokyo and then head north to Sendai. **Sendai is known for being one of the culinary capitals of Japan**, and we'll enjoy as much of that as we can during our three nights there. We'll tour some local distilleries and breweries, and explore **how the local residents are still recovering from the huge 2011 disaster five years down the road**. To finish up the trip we'll circle back to Tokyo for a couple nights, enjoying another wonderful dinner along with a stroll through Ueno Park, where all of the interesting Japanese “characters” hang every Sunday.

TERRE DE L'EBRE

Day 1:

9:00: Transfer from Lloret de Mar to L'Ametlla de Mar

12:45: Tuna tour activity

You will be able to swim in the water with the largest tunas in the world and enjoy thrilling moments with all five senses.

3:00: Lunch Rte. No Stress

5:15: Visit to Apiarian Interpretation Center Muria

Following an explanation about a bee's life cycle, you can observe their habitats and different features, in natural surroundings, the identification of the hive as its habitat, a colony of bees and types, how they work, honeycombs, etc.

8:00: Transfer to the hotel

Check – in. Dinner and accommodation Deltebre

Day 2:

9:45: Check-out

10:00: Discovering Ebro Delta Natural Park

Discover the different ecosystems that make up the Ebro Delta: bays, lagoons, the mouth of the Ebro river, the salicornars (a native plant), sand dunes, etc.

12:30: Visit to MónNatura Delta de l'Ebre

MónNatura Delta de l'Ebre allows us to discover a natural environment of enormous wealth in one of the largest wetlands in Western Europe. Land and water come together on this spit to create an environment that is home to a unique variety of wildlife, particularly the internationally famous water birds.

1:30: Lunch Poblenou del Delta

A lovely village lying in the heart of the Ebro Delta. The village is characterised by the picturesque beauty of its lovely flower-lined streets and whitewashed houses. The town's history goes back to the time when the Ebro Delta began to be colonised and these insalubrious, marshy lands were made suitable for rice growing. Poblenou sprang up in 1955, when the government offered people land and houses in return for helping to "tame" the soil.

4:00: Nautical activity

One of the most elegant ways to enjoy the waters of Alfacs bay is on board of a sailing ship, letting the wind do all the work. Allows for an unforgettable panoramic view of the Ebro Delta.

5:30: Route of the mussel beds

On the route of the mussel and oyster beds you'll come across a unique place, the Caseta del Parrillo, located over the mussel and oyster farms. There, true professionals will introduce you to the world of the mussel and its relationship with Els Alfacs Bay.

7:00: Check – in Hotel del Port

8:00: Dinner - Hotel Restaurant Llansola

Day 3:

9:15: Check-out

10:00: The Millenary Olive tree route

In Arión area, Ulledecona, you can see thirty- five monumental olive trees belonging to the Porta Ferré family, including La Farga de l'Arion which has a perimeter of 8 metres and has been declared a Monumental Tree by the Catalan Government. This natural living heritage has become one of the most typical, historical and emblematic scenes in Terres de l'Ebre.

12:00: Basket weaving Museum

The art of basket weaving with palm leaves disappeared as a profession during the sixties, however there are still many people in Terres de l'Ebre who preserve this tradition and often show how it was done. Alfara de Carles, Mas de Barberans, Paüls and Els Reguers are just some of the villages where lots of baskets are still made. Different implements can be made by weaving with palm leaves, such as large baskets, covers for carafes or jugs. In some of these villages, workshops are held to recuperate this trade, as in Mas de Barberans where a fair dedicated to this art is celebrated, the name of this fair is "El Racó dels Artesans" "Craftsmen's Corner".

2:00: Lunch Temps de Terra

This project is developed in a very special agricultural and livestock farm in Cabiscol property, which is located on the high ground of Amposta, in the heart of the Terres de l'Ebre. Discover its organic orchard and vegetable gardens, apart from its workshops (cheese making or natural soap manufacture).

5:30: Departure to Barcelona

EXPERIENCING DUBAI

Day 1: New York

In transit to London

Depart New York for London on British Airways.

Day 2: London to Dubai

The Oberoi, Dubai

Arrive in London and connect to Dubai on British Airways.

On arrival, an airport representative meets the group after disembarking the plane and entering the terminal to assist with customs and immigration formalities and with baggage claim. After the baggage is collected, the airport representative escorts the group to the arrivals area, where a Ker & Downey representative is waiting to transfer everyone to the Oberoi, Dubai for overnight.

Day 3: Dubai

The Oberoi, Dubai Breakfast and Dinner

This morning is at leisure to relax and enjoy the hotel's facilities.

This afternoon between 2:30pm and 3:15pm, a Ker & Downey representative meets the group in the hotel lobby for a desert safari, followed by an exclusive private dinner in a desert camp. Return to the hotel between 10:00pm and 10:30pm.

Day 4: Dubai

The Oberoi, Dubai Breakfast and Lunch

After breakfast, a Ker & Downey representative meets you in the hotel lobby for a full day exploration of the city, including lunch at a fabulous restaurant.

The tour starts with a drive through the new Marina projects, Internet City, Media City, and a visit to the Palm Island. A monorail ride from Gateway Station to Atlantis gives you a glimpse of the upcoming structures around the Dubai Marina, the world's biggest waterfront development, with over 200 new and exciting leisure and entertainment projects, which will shape the future all the way to 2020. Following your overview of this truly stupendous achievement, return to the mainland. Driving past the Marina

Project, venture to the Madinat Souk. In addition to featuring unique wind towers and domes, the market place offers a wonderful mix of major retailers, restaurants and coffee shops, all set within an Arabian-style landscape.

Continue to Jumeirah Mosque (view from outside or visit inside depending on the schedule – possibility every Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday). A prominent landmark of the city, it is one of the largest and most beautiful of Dubai’s mosques. Built in the medieval Fatimid tradition, it is a spectacular example of modern Islamic architecture and is particularly active at night. Drive along the skyscraper area of Sheikh Zayed Road, also referred to as “Little Manhattan”, where we pass by the Emirates Towers and the Dubai World Trade Center. Then we drive along the Zabeel Road, passing by the Palace of Sheikh Mohammad, as well as the Rashid Palace, home to the Royal family of Dubai. (No photography here please.)

Visit the Al Fahidi Fort, which houses the Dubai Museum. It was constructed around 1787 and once guarded the landward approaches to the town. Renovated in 1971 for use as a museum, its colorful life size dioramas vividly depict everyday life in the days before the discovery of oil. Galleries recreate scenes from the Creek, traditional Arab houses, mosques, the souk, date farms, and desert and marine life. One of the more spectacular exhibits portrays pearl diving, including sets of pearl merchants’ weights, scales, and sieves. Also on display are artifacts from several excavations in the Emirate, recovered from graves that date back to the third millennium BC.

We cross creek by traditional boats, or abra, to reach the souk where Arabic shipping vessels would traditionally discharge their cargos brought from the Far East, China, Ceylon, and India on the docks, to be bargained over in the souks adjacent to the docks. The times have changed since then as the Dubai spice souk has given way to air-conditioned multi-storied shopping malls and items on sale have changed from spices, silks, and Ittar (Arabic perfume) to the latest electronic gizmos, gold, and designer apparels. The gold souk, or gold market, is a truly dazzling sight to behold. It has earned Dubai a reputation for being the “City of Gold”. The market offers earrings, rings, necklaces, bracelets, and pendants of all kinds, with twenty-five tons of gold

on display at any given time in the shop windows.

Day 5: Dubai to New York Breakfast

This morning following breakfast, a Ker & Downey representative meets the group in the hotel lobby for the transfer back to Dubai International Airport, where an airport representative meets the group for VIP assistance with check-in and security.

Dubai bids a fond farewell as the group departs on British Airways for New York via London.