

With Special Guest Lecturers:  
**Admiral Harry Harris,  
Brunhilde Bradley, and  
Arthur Golden**

**SKEPTIC**  
The Skeptics Society

# SPRINGTIME VOYAGE TO CLASSIC JAPAN



Himeji Castle

**Aboard the New 152-Guest Expedition Cruise Ship *Minerva*  
May 12 – 25, 2024**

# SKEPTIC

## The Skeptics Society

Dear Friends,

Japan is a land of contrasts. It is one of the largest economies of the world, ultramodern and technologically advanced. And yet, it cherishes and preserves its ancient traditions, customs and architecture. Modern, glittering, dynamic cities coexist with centuries-old Buddhist temples, sublime Shinto shrines, feudal castles, and samurai estates. Throughout this comprehensive voyage to Japan, we will experience these contradictory aspects of the country as they are reflected in the art, architecture, and culture of its towns, cities, and gardens.

The traditional aspect is seen in the architecture and adornments of the Buddhist and Shinto shrines we visit in Miyajima and Nagasaki, in the castles of Himeji, Hagi, Matsue, and Uwajima, and in the open-air museum of Shikoku Mur. And this ancient aesthetic literally comes alive in the exquisitely designed and maintained gardens of Koraku-en and Sengan-en. The modernist impulse is evident not only in the great cities we visit, but also in the works of avant-garde artists on display in the Adachi Museum in Sakaiminato and in Isamu Noguchi's studio in Takamatsu.

A pivotal ally of the West, Japan plays a most important role in the geopolitics of East Asia. We are pleased that Admiral Harry Harris and his wife Brunhilde (Bruni) Bradley will join us on this journey as guest lecturers. As their brief bios indicate, they have deep knowledge of this strategic region, and their lectures and discussions will give us a better understanding of Japan and Japanese-American relations. We are privileged to also have Arthur Golden as a guest lecturer. The author of the best-selling *Memoirs of a Geisha*, Mr. Golden lived and worked in Japan, and studied Japanese art and culture. Sharing his knowledge with us will surely enhance our appreciation of Japanese culture and life.

As a nation of sprawling islands, Japan is best explored by sea, and we have the ideal vessel for the task, the Swan Hellenic *Minerva*, a state-of-the-art, new-generation expedition cruise ship built in Finland and launched in 2021. Accommodating only 152 guests in superb staterooms and balcony suites, *Minerva* features elegant common areas and the most modern mechanical and environmentally conscious technology.

I hope you will join us on this extraordinary Springtime Voyage to Classic Japan.

Best wishes,



Dr. Michael Shermer  
Executive Director  
The Skeptics Society

P.S. 7% of your cruise fee will be a tax-deductible donation to The Skeptics Society – a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization.

## SPECIAL GUEST LECTURERS

### ADMIRAL HARRY HARRIS



**Admiral Harry Harris** retired from a 40-year career in the U.S. Navy in 2018 and joined the State Department three days later to serve as U.S. Ambassador to South Korea (2018-2021). During his time in the Navy, he held several commands, including the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and the U.S. 6th Fleet. A Naval Flight Officer, Harris has flown over 400 combat hours. He is the first Asian-American

to hold 4-star rank in the U.S. Navy and the first to head the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (2015-2018). From 2011 to 2013, as Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Harris served as the direct representative to Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry. Harris graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1978. Awarded master's degrees from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, he did post-graduate studies at Oxford University. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Council of American Ambassadors. He is married to Ms. Bruni Bradley, herself a career Naval officer.

### BRUNHILDE BRADLEY



**Brunhilde (Bruni) Bradley**, was born in Richmond, Virginia, and raised "all over the world." She joined the Navy in 1979, attended the U.S. Naval Academy and graduated with the class of 1984. Her various positions in Asia include service as Protocol Officer and Aide-de-Camp to the Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Philippines; operational intelligence analyst in Japan;

and Officer-in-Charge of the U.S. Navy's Radio and Receiving Facility in Kami Seya, Japan. Bruni has an MBA from Georgetown University, and she was a Mansfield Fellow in Tokyo. Bruni is fluent in German and speaks basic Japanese. For hobbies, she enjoys traveling, scuba diving, sailing, and other water sports.

### ARTHUR GOLDEN



**Arthur Golden**, the acclaimed author of *Memoirs of a Geisha*, grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a member of a newspaper publishing family. He graduated from Harvard College in 1978, where he studied Japanese art and history and began learning the language. In 1980 he earned a master's degree from Columbia University in East Asian Languages and Culture,

studying Mandarin Chinese as well. He wrote his master's thesis on the subject of Sino-Japanese relations during World War I. During the summer of 1980, he studied advanced Mandarin at Beijing University, where he met another American student, Trudy Legge, who became his wife. Years later a piece he wrote looking back on their summer together in Beijing won a Silver Medal for travel writing from the American Society of Travel Writers. After a year working in Tokyo as a magazine editor, he returned to the U.S. and began work on a book about Japanese culture, still thinking of a career in journalism, like many others in his family. A chance comment by his literary agent set him on the path to writing a novel instead. *Memoirs of a Geisha* spent two years on The New York Times bestseller list and has sold millions of copies around the world in more than forty languages, as well as being made into an Oscar-winning film. It is consistently listed as one of the classics of historical fiction, as well as being ranked among the most beloved English-language novels.

In his talks onboard, he'll guide us through a synopsis of the history of Japan, focusing on how early foreign influences helped shape the Japanese worldview, talk about religion in Japan, and tell us about his ten-year journey writing *Memoirs of a Geisha*.

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THALASSA JOURNEYS TOLL-FREE AT 866-633-3611



# THE NEW EXPEDITION CRUISE SHIP *MINERVA*



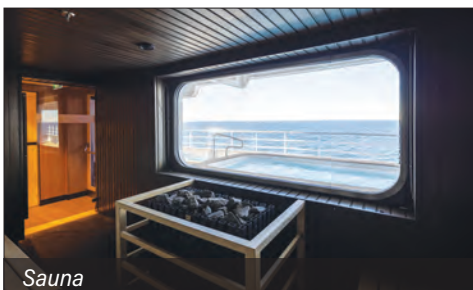
*Oceanview Stateroom*



*Balcony Suite*



*Observation Lounge*



*Sauna*



*Club Lounge*



*Outdoor Café / Bar with swimming pool*

Built in Finland, and launched in December 2021, Swan Hellenic's *Minerva* is a new-generation expedition cruise ship. Although at 10,250 tons the ship is large enough to accommodate more than 250 passengers, *Minerva* accommodates a maximum of 152 guests in 76 spacious staterooms and balcony suites. The low guest density results in one of the most generous indoor and outdoor space-to-guest ratios among cruise ships.

*Minerva* has been designed to meet the stringent requirements of the new Polar Code for ships navigating in Polar regions. Its high PC5 Category A ice-strengthened hull, and other technical and mechanical features, allow the ship to cruise the world's remote regions in safety and utmost comfort. Technologically advanced hybrid engines and a system of powerful batteries make it possible for the ship to cruise in ecologically sensitive areas, leaving minimal footprint, while a computer-controlled Dynamic Positioning System allows the ship to maintain position without anchoring. Operated by a complement of 120 experienced European

officers and international crew members, *Minerva* will carry a fleet of Zodiacs, versatile landing boats, and kayaks. Powerful stabilizers provide a smooth ride.

All staterooms and suites face outside and are equipped with private facilities, climate control, TV, Wi-Fi and USB connections as well as other amenities. Of the ship's 76 staterooms, 60 have balconies. Public areas include a spacious observation lounge that is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for lectures and presentations; a club lounge; a restaurant that accommodates all guests at one seating; an outdoor café/bar that surrounds the heated swimming pool; a wellness area with gym, spa, and sauna that includes an adjoining outdoor jacuzzi; library; beauty salon; a "mud room" with lockers for storing expedition gear; and an infirmary that is attended by a full-time doctor and nurse. The ship also features expansive open-deck areas. Two elevators connect all decks. Attentive service is provided on a 24-hour basis.

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL **THALASSA JOURNEYS** TOLL-FREE AT **866-633-3611**

# ITINERARY



Sunday, May 12, 2024

**DEPART THE US FOR OSAKA, Japan**

Monday, May 13

**OSAKA, Japan**

Arrive in Osaka and transfer to the *Hotel Hankyu International* (or similar) for overnight. This evening, join fellow travelers for a welcome dinner. (D)

Tuesday, May 14

**OSAKA/HIMEJI/KOBE/EMBARKATION**

After breakfast, join an excursion to Himeji Castle, widely acclaimed as Japan's most spectacular castle and a World Heritage Site. Unlike many Japanese castles, Himeji was never destroyed by war, earthquake or fire, and remains much as it was when it was completed in 1609. Its 83 buildings are described by UNESCO as

"a masterpiece of construction in wood, combining function with aesthetic appeal." After lunch, continue to nearby Kobe to board *Minerva* and sail. (B,L,D)

Wednesday, May 15

**OKAYAMA & KURASHIKI**

Okayama, the capital of Okayama Prefecture, is the second largest city in the Chugoku Region. Our first stop is at the Koraku-en Garden, recognized as one of the three best landscape gardens in Japan. Encompassing about 33 acres, it was built in 1700 by the local feudal lord as a strolling garden for his relaxation and contemplation. It features a flat lawn with attractive ponds, a hill in the center, a tiny tea plantation with rice paddy, and a small waterfall. In the afternoon, we travel to Kurashiki, where we explore the Ohara Museum of Art and tour the Ohashi Family House, typical of wealthy merchants of the 18th-century. Also stroll in the historic town center, lined with beautifully-preserved old buildings. (B,L,D)

Thursday, May 16

**HIROSHIMA/MIYAJIMA**

Today we pay a solemn visit to Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and Museum and the Atomic Bomb Dome, one of the most sobering monuments anywhere in the world. We also explore the Itsukushima Shrine, a holy place of Shintoism since the earliest times, and home to an iconic 'floating' torii gate. The present shrine dates from the 13th-century and is a reflection of the style favored by the most powerful leader of the time, Taira no Kiyomori. Itsukushima's balancing of the sea, the buildings, and the primeval forest on Mt. Misen are accepted as this tradition's standard of beauty. (B,L,D)

Friday, May 17

**MOJI/HAGI**

Hagi, once the seat of the powerful Mori Clan of Japan's feudal period, is now best known for its well-preserved castle town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Although only ruins remain of the castle itself, the basic plan of the Edo period town has survived. Most of the streets are laid out exactly as they were four hundred years ago and retain the characteristic pure white walls and gray roof tiles of that period. (B,L,D)

Saturday, May 18

**SAKAIMINATO/MATSUE**

Made entirely of pine, Matsue Castle was built in 1611, and, with a partial reconstruction in 1692, never having been ransacked or burned, remains as it was in the late 17th-century. Explore the five-story façade, including the uppermost floor, which offers views of the city, Lake Shinji, and the distant mountains. In the afternoon, we visit the Adachi Museum of Art and its gardens. The Museum houses numerous works by the great masters of modern Japanese art – Yokoyama Taikan, Takeuchi Seiho, Uemura Shoen, and Ito Shinsui, among others. Most of the works were selected by Adachi Zenko (1899-1990), the museum's founder, who favored a wide and eclectic range of styles. (B,L,D)



The canals of Kurashiki





Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima



Hagi, Old Town

**Sunday, May 19**

**BUSAN, South Korea**

From Busan, our excursion takes us to Gyeongju, the ancient capital of the Silla Kingdom. The Gyeongju Historic Areas, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, contain outstanding examples of Korean Buddhist art from the flowering of Silla culture between the 7th- and 10th- centuries. We will visit Bulguksa Temple, home to many cultural relics protected as National Treasures, including the Dabotap and Seokgatap Pagodas, the Yeonhwa-gyo & Chilbo-gyo Bridges, and the Golden Seated Vairocana Buddhist Figure. We also spend some time exploring the Gyeongju National Museum. (B,L,D)

**Monday, May 20**

**NAGASAKI, Japan**

Nagasaki is a busy and colorful city that was an early center of trade with the Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish. We will explore the Sofukuji Temple, one of the finest examples of Chinese Ming dynasty temple architecture in the world, and we will pay a visit to the Atomic Bomb Museum and Peace Park, which commemorates the awesome power of the weapon that brought an end to WWII in the Pacific. Visit also the Oura Cathedral, the oldest Christian church in Japan. (B,L,D)

**Tuesday, May 21**

**KAGOSHIMA/CHIRAN**

From Kagoshima drive through picturesque tea plantations to reach Chiran, a small town that resonates with the memory of its samurai past. Several of the authentic 18th- and 19th-century residences we will see are still used by descendants of the original owners. Their enclosed gardens, shut off from the narrow streets by walls and hedges, are fine examples of the samurai style of "borrowed landscaping," in which surrounding mountains and scenery are made part of the garden design. We will also visit Sengan-en Garden, another example of borrowed landscaping, built on the coast north of Kagoshima in 1658 by the head of the local feudal clan. (B,L,D)

**Wednesday, May 22**

**YAKUSHIMA ISLAND**

Explore the small and seldom-visited Yakushima Island, located about 50 miles south of the main Japanese islands. Yakushima was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1993 in recognition of its incredible variety of ecosystems—ranging from subtropical

coastal vegetation, through a temperate rainforest of thousand-year-old cedar trees, to bamboo grasslands on the peaks of its mile-high central mountains. (B,L,D)

**Thursday, May 23**

**UWAJIMA**

Visit Uwajima Castle, one of the few original Edo period castles that remain, and then travel to the nearby town of Uchiko, whose picturesque old street of Yokaichi is lined with buildings dating from the final years of the Edo period and the early years of the Meiji Restoration. As we walk along this street we will encounter an old sake brewery, the Amazake Chaya Teahouse, the Uchiko-za Theater and the Kami Hagi-tei, the former home and workshop of one of Uchiko's most influential families. (B,L,D)

**Friday, May 24**

**TAKAMATSU**

Spend the day in Takamatsu, where we will explore Shikoku Mur, an open-air museum situated at the base of Yashima Mountain that exhibits traditional buildings and structures relocated here from all over Shikoku Island. We will visit the nearby studio of sculptor Isamu Noguchi, an extension of the famous Garden and Museum in lower Manhattan. (B,L,D)

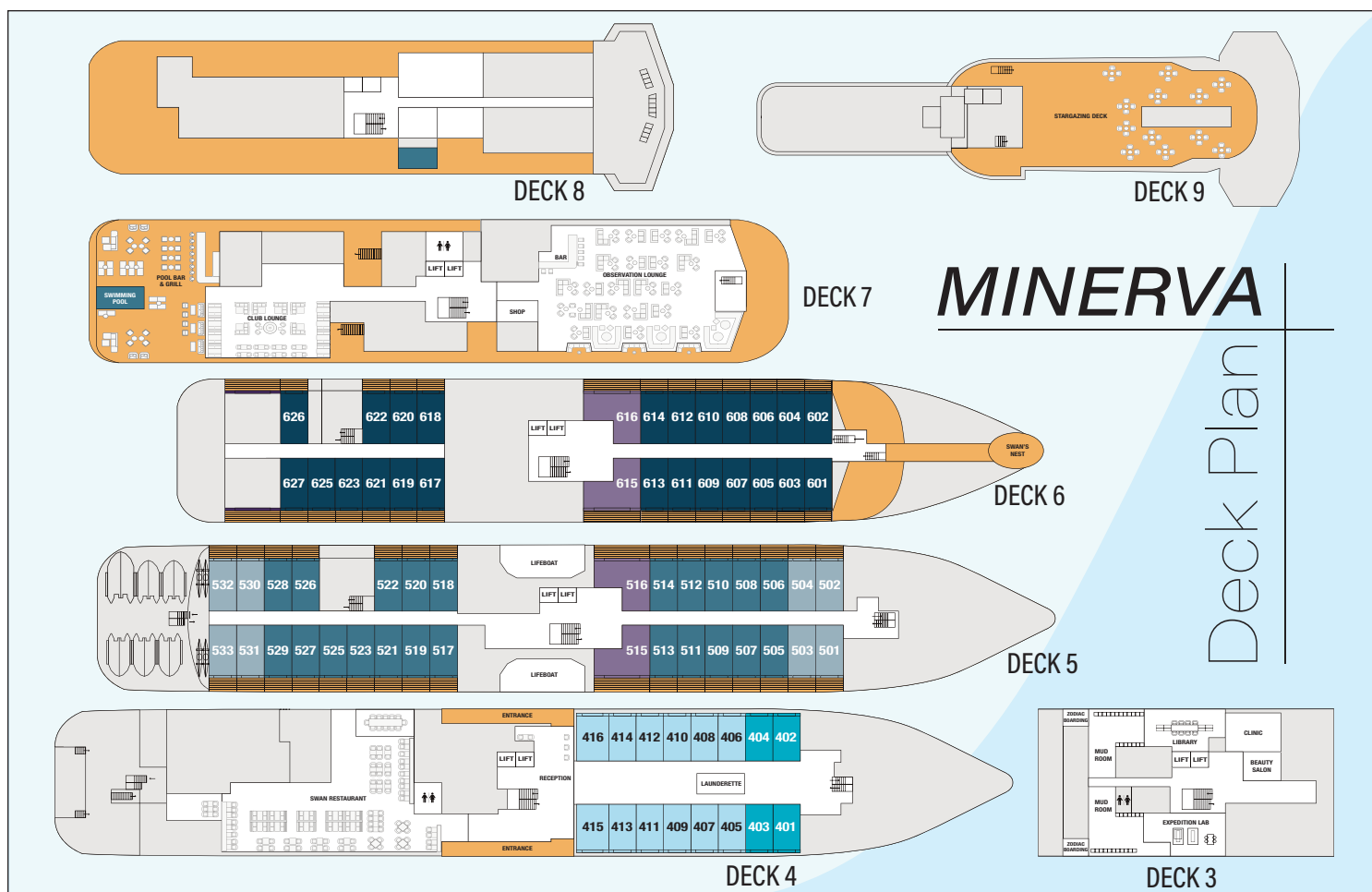
**Saturday, May 25**

**KOBE/DISEMBARKATION**

After breakfast aboard, transfer to the Osaka airport for flights homeward. (B)



Korakuen garden, Okayama



All accommodations aboard *Minerva* are spacious staterooms and balcony suites. They are elegantly decorated, face outside, affording sea views, and include a queen-size bed that can be arranged as two twin beds, a spacious bathroom, mini-refrigerator, safe, ample closet space, climate control, telephone, TV, Wi-Fi, and USB connections, as well as other amenities.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	RATES PER PERSON / DOUBLE OCCUPANCY
<b>E</b>	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. Deck 4. 206 sq. ft. Staterooms 401- 404.	\$13,590
<b>D</b>	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. Deck 4. 206 sq. ft. Staterooms 405- 416.	\$13,990
<b>C</b>	Suites with balcony & living room area. Deck 5. 300 sq. ft. Suites 501 - 504, 530 - 533.	\$15,290
<b>B</b>	Suites with balcony & living room area. Deck 5. 300 sq. ft. Suites 505 - 514, 517 - 529.	\$ 15,990
<b>A</b>	Suites with balcony and living room area. Deck 6. 300 sq. ft. Suites 601 - 614, 617 - 627.	\$17,570
<b>AA</b>	Suites with large balcony, separate bedroom & living room. Decks 5 & 6. 440 sq. ft. Suites 515, 516, 615 & 616.	\$20,390

## SPECIAL BENEFIT

Book this cruise program and receive a

**5% SAVINGS**

on your next cruise with  
The Skeptics Society  
and Thalassa Journeys.

If you book your next cruise within  
30 days after you return from  
*SPRINGTIME VOYAGE TO CLASSIC JAPAN*,  
you will receive an  
**ADDITIONAL 5% SAVINGS.**

### FOR SOLO TRAVELERS

A limited number of cabins are available for single occupancy in categories D to B at no additional charge. Additional single cabins are available at a supplement of 50% of the per person double occupancy rate, instead of the normal 70% supplement.

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL **THALASSA JOURNEYS** TOLL-FREE AT **866-633-3611**



## PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

The rates are all-inclusive. There are no hidden costs and no additional charges such as shore excursions or embarkation and port charges. Other than the international airfare and expenses of a personal nature, all else is included. Specifically, the rates include:

- One night at the *Hotel Hankyu International* (or similar) in Osaka.
- Welcome dinner in Osaka.
- Cruise aboard the new expedition cruise ship *Minerva*.
- All meals aboard ship with a selection of wines, beers and soft drinks with lunch and dinner.
- Coffee, including espresso and cappuccino, tea and soft drinks throughout the day and night aboard ship.
- Open bar with select alcoholic beverages aboard ship.
- 24-hour room service aboard ship.
- Group airport/ hotel/pier transfers at designated times, and handling of luggage.
- Complete program of tours, excursions and other activities ashore, planned by Thalassa Journeys, and led by professional local guides.
- Educational program of lectures and discussions by Admiral Harry Harris, Brunhilde Bradley, and Arthur Golden.
- The services of an experienced Thalassa Journeys trip director.
- Gratuities to shipboard personnel, local guides, drivers and porters.
- All local taxes and service charges, including port and embarkation taxes.
- Basic Wi-Fi aboard ship.
- Complete pre-departure material.

**NOT INCLUDED:** International airfare; travel insurance; expenses of a personal nature; any items not mentioned in the itinerary or the above inclusions.



Nagasaki



Traditional garden, Takamatsu



Gyeongju Historic Area, South Korea

## GENERAL INFORMATION

SKEP 24M-0512

**PAYMENT SCHEDULE:** A deposit of \$1,500 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure. Payment can be made by personal check or charged to a credit card.

**CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS:** All cancellations are subject to a \$300 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received 61-90 days prior to departure will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the total program cost per person. Cancellations received within 60 days of departure are subject to 100% cancellation penalties. Requests for cancellations must be made in writing. No refunds will be made for any part of this program in which you choose not to participate.

**INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the event that you must cancel your participation in a travel program, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement.

**ITINERARY:** The itinerary, accommodations and arrangements are subject to change at the discretion of Thalassa Journeys.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Please read carefully the following terms and conditions, which constitute the sole, legally enforceable agreements between the traveler and Thalassa Journeys. Thalassa Journeys acts solely as agents for the traveler with respect to all transportation, hotel and other tour arrangements. In that capacity, we exercise all reasonable care possible to ensure the traveler's safety and satisfaction, but, we neither assume nor bear any responsibility or liability for any injury, death, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity arising in connection with the services of any ship, airplane, train, automobile, motor coach, carriage or other conveyance, or the actions of any third-party, involved in carrying the traveler or in affecting these tours. We are not responsible for damages, additional expenses, or any other losses due to cancellation, delay or other changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, civil disturbances, acts or threats of terrorism, travel warnings or bans, termination or suspension of war risks or other carrier insurance, quarantine, acts of God or other causes beyond our control. All such losses must be borne by the traveler, and tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. In the event of cancellation, delay or rescheduling mandated by any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall have the option of accepting in lieu of the original tour such rescheduled tour or other substituted tour(s) as may be offered by us, or else, receiving a refund of as much of such advance tour expenditures as we are able to recover on the traveler's behalf from carriers, third-party tour vendors, etc., but, we shall not have any obligation or liability to the traveler beyond the foregoing. We reserve the right to make alterations to the tour's itinerary and to substitute hotels, transportation methods, or lecturers if this is required. We reserve the right to cancel, delay, or reschedule any tour prior to departure, and, so long as this is not due to any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall be entitled to a full refund of all monies paid to that point if he/she so desires. No refund shall be made for any unused portion of any tour. By forwarding their deposit(s), the traveler certifies that he/she and/or their dependents, minors or others covered thereby do not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that could create a hazard for them or other travelers. We reserve the right to decline to accept or to decline to retain any person as a member of any tour should such person's health, condition or actions adversely affect or threaten the welfare or safety of other travelers or impede the tour. Baggage or valuables brought on the tour shall be transported, handled or stored at the traveler's risk entirely, and, we shall bear no liability or responsibility for any damage or other loss thereto. Resolution of any disputes arising hereunder shall be affected exclusively in the state or federal courts presiding in Florida, pursuant to applicable Florida law.

**RATES:** Tour costs are based upon current airfares, tariffs, and currency values. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed prices, they are subject to change.

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# Join Admiral Harry Harris, Brunhilde Bradley, and Arthur Golden on SPRINGTIME VOYAGE TO CLASSIC JAPAN

**May 12 - 25, 2024**



Ritsurin Garden in Takamatsu

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