

# An All-Inclusive Luxury Sushi Tour Of Japan Kicks Off Later This Year



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At the ripe old age of 35, there are few guided tours that'd actually appeal to me at this stage of my life. I'm much too old for a Contiki, too young for a traditional cruise, and too impatient for a small group tour. While I know travelling with people who initially start out as strangers can actually be a great thing, it seems the opportune time for tours is either when you're really young, or really not-young. That being said, I'd be the first to jump on a Ponant or Aqua Expeditions sojourn, especially if it's to Antarctica or the Galápagos Islands. There are a few land-based exceptions too, like this new culinary expedition from Plan Japan, designed to take travellers on a tour of Japan's most exclusive – and almost impossible to book – sushi restaurants.

Locking down a booking at Tokyo dining icons like *Été* and *Sugita* can be immensely frustrating, to say the very least. Due to many Japanese chefs' exacting standards, limited seating and dedication to highly personalised service – not to mention the astronomical demand – reservations at Japan's top-rated restaurants are elusive. Some are even strictly off-limits to foreign guests, with not even hotel concierges from the likes of the reliable five-stars like *Peninsula* and *Shangri-La* being able to secure a table for guests if they aren't already regulars.

There are a few reasons why Japan's most respected chefs find ways to avoid letting foreign guests book a table at their restaurants. One, tourists are a lot less predictable than locals, and given the reverence Japanese culture has for dining etiquette, you can understand why some culinary masterminds would feel less comfortable letting someone they don't already know walk through their doors. Two, Japan's best restaurants have more than enough loyal customers to take them through the business year with ease.

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During my travels in Japan, I'd even heard a rumour that many Japanese restaurants flat out refuse a Michelin star rating as it would draw too much unwanted attention. I know I've eaten at quite a few Michelin-quality restaurants without knowing it.

I write that to write this – Plan Japan's Luxury Sushi Discovery Experience sounds like a smart way for any gourmands to eat their way through the land of the rising sun without the aforementioned hassle. And therein lies the utility in these types of tours: insider access.

Plan Japan was founded by Rachel Lang, who is noted for her strong personal connections to Michelin star chefs, Sumo champions, and other cultural heavyweights in Japan. The boutique tour company is one of many that regularly peel back the intricate layers of Japanese culture to offer travellers experiences that can't be booked via any regular means. Given that even just Tokyo hides plenty of secrets many wouldn't even be able to uncover in their lifetime, Japan is the ideal place for a tour.

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The Luxury Sushi Discovery Experience will run across five days from September 25th to 30th with hosting from both Lang herself as Melbourne-based sushi chef Arnaud Laidebeur, who is best known for his work at *Prahran's Uminono*.

The tour will come inclusive of flights with Japan Airlines and "luxury five-star accommodation." While the price of the tour hasn't yet been released – the website is taking registrations for the new tour now – I assume such an exclusive experience would at least warrant accommodation in some of Tokyo's top hotels like *Hoshinoya*, *Shangri-La*, *Aman*, *Park Hyatt*, or *Peninsula*.

I don't have access to the full itinerary but according to a media release, the Plan Japan sushi tour will include dining experiences at the following restaurants:

- *Sushi Amamoto*
- *Sushi Sugita*
- *Hakkoku*
- *Sushi Kimura*
- *Sugalabo* (voted one of the world's best restaurants in France's authoritative [La Liste](#))
- *Florilège*
- *Été*

"Unlike many countries, money and fame cannot grant you access to the best restaurants in Japan," said Lang.

"Instead, Japan's owners and chefs value honour, trust and tradition – and choose to take reservation from people they know personally, or have built a history with."

Plan Japan have opened to Luxury Sushi Dining Experience to both individual books and corporate group bookings. Numbers are, as expected, capped to keep the group tight. After all, some of these restaurants can only fit six people at a time.