

JAPAN

# Kyoto, Nara & the Kumano Kodo

A Guided Walking Adventure





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## Travel Style

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.

And, with our **new optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **Tokyo Post-Tour Extension** to complement this destination, we take care of all the travel to simplify the journey. Refer to the attached itinerary for more details.



## Overview

This trip offers the rare experience of trekking the Kumano Kodo —an ancient pilgrimage route that is a UNESCO World Heritage site! This is the centerpiece of an itinerary that also includes Japan's most-treasured locales in the imperial capitals of Kyoto and Nara, and concludes in bustling Osaka. Walking routes cross moats to a feudal castle and enter immaculately preserved temples with tranquil Zen gardens, then turn down narrow streets flanked by traditional wooden homes and shops. Deep in the mountains of the Kii Peninsula, you step onto the ancient Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail. Trod for centuries by monks, then by emperors who paused at teahouses and shrines along the way to write poetry, the trail connects villages punctuated with simple shrines and centuries-old terraced rice paddies. Gracious and consummate, Japanese hospitality surrounds you in both luxurious Western hotels and in a traditional family-run inn (*ryokan*) overlooking timeless mountain views. The mysteries of the tea ceremony and geisha culture are revealed, as well as the tastes and freshness of Japanese cuisine.



## Daily Itinerary

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### DAY 1

Kyoto: Nijo Castle, Kiyomizu Temple, Gion District; 2 to 3 miles, easy

The tour begins in Kyoto, now Japan's seventh-largest city and the imperial capital for more than 1,000 years. Kyoto is considered the repository of Japan's most important and stunning historical sites—gardens, temples, palaces, traditional neighborhoods—preserved over the centuries from natural disasters and war. As the Kyoto subway is often the fastest and most efficient form of transportation within Kyoto, many of the historic sites are accessed via foot or subway—an authentic immersion in Japanese daily life in Japan.

You begin your exploration of this fascinating city with a tour of the 17th-century Nijo Castle, also a UNESCO site, the former residence and seat of power of the Tokugawa shoguns. The best example of Japanese feudal architecture, the castle is protected by several rings of defensive moats and walls, and the central Ninomaru Palace boasts five separate but connected buildings and is known especially for its “nightingale floor” alarm system that squeaks like a flock of birds when walked upon. Beautifully painted sliding doors by artists of the Kano school separate the many rooms along polished wood corridors.

After lunch, a short walk brings you to Kiyomizu Temple, founded in 778. The temple's name means “clear water,” a reference to its sacred and beneficial

waters. A UNESCO World Heritage site, its high wooden veranda provides a panoramic view of Kyoto. The present buildings dating from 1633, were constructed without a single nail being used!

Next, you take a walk back in time on Kiyomizu-zaka Street to Gion, the entertainment and geisha district, where you learn about the strict training undertaken by young women who hope to become geisha. And, this evening, your formal welcome is a private dinner with geisha. Hosted in a local *ryokan* (traditional inn), you are attended by a *maiko* (apprentice geisha), *geiko* (full-fledged geisha), and a *shamisen* (a three-stringed traditional musical instrument) player.



### **Kyoto Brighton Hotel (or equivalent), Kyoto**

A luxurious hotel set in a quiet residential area near the Kyoto Imperial Palace, the Kyoto Brighton is a plush retreat, combining contemporary décor with luxury amenities. The rooftop terrace offers lovely views of the surrounding city and dining options includes traditional Cantonese and hibachi-style restaurants, as well as a tea and coffee lounge.

## **DAY 2**

Kyoto: Philosopher's Path, Nanzen-ji Temple, Nishiki Market; 2 to 3 miles, easy

This morning begins with a guided walking tour of the narrow lanes of the Higashiyama area of Kyoto, with its original preserved wooden houses, traditional shops, and restaurants. You take the “Philosopher’s Path,” a tranquil walkway lined with cherry trees that was a favored place of the famous philosopher Nishida Kitaro. Afterward, you make your way to Nanzen-ji Temple, a large complex in Kyoto’s forested Higashiyama hills. Originally an emperor’s retirement villa, it became a Zen temple in the 13th century and has a number of gardens and sub-temples throughout its extensive grounds. Also found here is a perfect example of the meditative Zen rock garden, with carefully raked stones and a mini landscape, overlooked by the covered viewing walkway for seated contemplation. Next you enter the bustling Nishiki Market in the center of Kyoto, the centuries-old covered shopping street with a wide range of Japanese foods offered from miniscule stalls and full-sized shops. It’s a good



chance to try the variety of Japanese snacks—some sweet, some salty, some both!

Later, a 30-minute walk brings you to the Bikoen Tea Shop, founded in 1872, which in addition to providing high-quality green tea to the city's Buddhist temples, also offers visitors a chance to participate in a tea ceremony and lunch.

You learn about this ritual that is central to Japanese culture with its precise steps, type of tea, and beautifully minimalist pottery. You return to your hotel in the later afternoon with time to enjoy its facilities before gathering for dinner.

### **Kyoto Brighton Hotel (or equivalent), Kyoto**

#### **DAY 3**

Nara: Todai-ji Temple, Kasuga Shrine, Nara Park; 2 to 3 miles, easy

This morning, you transfer about one hour by private coach to the historical city of Nara, which is the Kansai region's second city of immeasurably valuable historic sites after Kyoto—amazingly eight of them are also on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Although Nara only briefly served as Japan's first imperial capital (from 710 to 784), this short period saw a flourishing of artistic expression and an influx of Buddhism from China—still visible today in its many temples and shrines. Its location and history also saved Nara's structures from the many manmade and natural disasters that destroyed other sites in Japan. You explore the Todai-ji Temple, defined by superlatives—the world's largest bronze statue and, until recently, the world's largest wooden structure—truly awe-inspiring in scale and artistry. Also within the compound is tranquil Nigatsu-do Hall, on the hillside of Mount Wakakusa, where an annual Buddhist rite has been performed since the year 752. You also stroll through Nara's famous park, extending broadly over the hill, mixed forest and open meadow—and sharing the trails with its thousand-plus tame deer, considered messengers of the deity of the nearby Kasuga Taisha Shrine and now revered as national treasures. You return to your hotel with time to enjoy its elegant atmosphere, perhaps with tea or a cocktail in the inviting bar before another multicourse feast.

## Nara Hotel, Nara

This grand historical hotel, built in 1909 during Japan's Meiji era, has retained its Old World elegance and sophistication in its original main building. A true fusion of European and Japanese décor, guest rooms combine both traditions in design and comfort. Surrounded by manicured grounds and gardens that are contiguous with Nara's park-like setting, the hotel offers on-site dining that includes a signature French restaurant, a traditional Japanese restaurant, a lovely tea lounge, and a wood-paneled classic bar.



## DAY 4

Transfer to the Kii Peninsula and the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Route. Takahara to Chikatsuyu; 7 to 8 miles, moderate, 1,150-ft. ascent and 1,180-ft. descent, including two challenging sections of a 20-minute sustained ascent to start the walk and a 40-minute sustained descent to end the walk (15 minutes of which is on an uneven surface with many small steps and exposed roots and rocks) or Free Afternoon at the hotel

You depart Nara this morning for a 3-hour transfer via private coach to the Kii Peninsula, the region stretching south of Nara. Your destination is the beginning of the Nakahechi Route—part of the network of ancient pilgrimage trails known as the Kumano Kodo, or Kumano Ancient Trail. This and the Camino de Santiago are the only two historical routes that are UNESCO World Heritage sites in their entirety. The Kumano Kodo grew from the 11th-century pilgrimages made by emperors from Kyoto. A landscape of verdant slopes, lush deep valleys, and rushing streams, Kumano—part of the mountainous Kii Peninsula—has been a sacred site associated with nature worship since prehistoric times. A tradition of pilgrimages grew out of the Shugendō religion that appeared here in the 7th century. Drawing from aspects of imported Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism along with native Shintoism, Shugendō practitioners believed that physical endurance was the path to enlightenment, so they embarked on long hikes in remote mountains and other physical tests. Over the many centuries, small statues (*jizō*) were erected to protect travelers along the earthen and sometimes stone-cobbled path. Nowadays, the walking routes are more accessible, so walking distances can be customized with transfers. Today,



you follow the pilgrimage route from the small village of Takahara to Chikatsuyu, through forests of *sugi* (Japanese cedar). In addition to the small shrines and *torii* gates, there are sites of old *cha-ya* (teahouses), which served as rest stops for pilgrims right up until the early 20th century. You descend to the village of Chikatsuyu, from where you are transferred to your intimate inn in

Takahara, with its unsurpassed views. Should you wish to skip this moderate to challenging walk, you may stay at your hotel for a free afternoon of relaxation.

You experience true Japanese hospitality at a multi-course evening meal of locally sourced organic ingredients—dishes of grilled fish and meat, vegetables, pickles, rice, and miso soup served in myriad shapes of pottery and lacquerware. A soak in the hot-spring baths is the perfect way to relax from the walk and the day's travels.

### Organic Hotel Kiri-no-sato-Takahara, Takahara

The Organic Hotel Kiri-no-sato-Takahara is situated directly on the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage walking route at about 900 feet and thus has some of the best views in the Kumano region overlooking the Hatnashi Mountain Range. Simple and comfortable guestrooms have mountain views and are either Japanese-style with tatami-mat floors, futons, and low furniture or Western-style with twin beds. Traditional meals of local organic cuisine are served with multiple courses in the dining room overlooking mountains and terraced hillsides. A traditional on-site *onsen* bath is fed with hot-spring water.

### DAY 5

Chikatsuyu to Hongu Grand Shrine; 8 miles, moderate, 780-ft. ascent and descent, with options to shorten walk

Awakening to mountain serenity and a traditional breakfast, you transfer the short distance by private bus to Chikatsuyu. From Chikatsuyu, you ascend on the trail to Nonaka and Tsugizakura-ōji, one of the many small shrines along the route. Nobles would rest at these sub-shrines, called *ōji*, to refresh themselves and compose poetry. Next, a drive of about 30 minutes takes you from Kobirotōji to Hosshinmon-ōji, where you pick up the trail to walk the final scenic section to Hongu Grand Shrine, first passing through several ridgetop villages.



The symbol of the shrine is the mythological three-legged raven, which represents the three shrines that pilgrims were required to reach for their pilgrimage to be considered complete: the Hongu, Nachi, and Hayatama shrines. In mythology the three-legged bird was sent to guide Emperor Jimmu on his journey from Kumano to the Yamato Plain. You may have the opportunity to meet a *yamabushi*—a priest of the Shugendo faith who shares some of the tenets of the faith, including their special feats of endurance. After your visit to the shrine, a short drive returns you to your inn in Takahara, where you may wish to enjoy a pre-dinner soak in the hot-spring baths while taking in the stunning surrounding vistas.



### Organic Hotel Kiri-no-sato-Takahara, Takahara

#### DAY 6

Boat ride on the Kumano River. Maruyama Senmaida rice fields; 3 miles, easy to moderate, 600-ft. descent

This morning, you travel to the Kumano River, where you board a private boat to embark on a 90-minute gentle float trip in a traditional wooden flat-bottom boat. Running the length of the Kii Peninsula, pilgrims used this route in medieval times to get from the Hongu Grand Shrine to the Hayatama Grand Shrine at Shingu on the coast, one of the three required pilgrim destinations. The river is considered sacred and as an object of worship and you are sure to gain a unique perspective of the Kumano Kodo's spiritual landscape while also admiring the stunning surrounding scenery. Leaving the boat, another short drive brings you to Maruyama Senmaida; this is an astounding system of terraced rice fields developed by farmers over more than 200 years. A short walk descends through the small pools on the narrow road as you learn about rice cultivation. A fitting picnic beside the rice paddies includes *onigiri* (rice balls with fish, vegetables, or seaweed), local homemade pickles, and green tea. In the later afternoon, you return to your *ryokan* with time to relax before dinner.

### Organic Hotel Kiri-no-sato-Takahara, Takahara

## DAY 7

Mount Koya; 2 to 3 miles, easy. Transfer to Osaka

You depart Takahara this morning and travel approximately 3 hours by private coach to Mount Koya. At an elevation of almost 3,000 feet, this is actually a group of eight peaks high in the mountains of Wakayama between the Kumano Kodo and Osaka, and is a popular day trip for many Osakans. This sprawling temple complex, founded in the 9th century by the priest Kobo Daishi, is the center of the Shingon sect of Buddhism and has grown into a town with over 100 temples, a university, and a large historical cemetery full of fascinating sculptures and memorials. You stroll the grounds and visit Oku-no-in, the shrine to Kobo Daishi, and then walk through the surrounding cemetery that holds the tombs of many historical Japanese figures.

From Mount Koya, you continue the drive to Osaka, Japan's third-largest city. Known now for its colorful accent and foodie culture, it has long been associated with merchants and trading. Unlike nearby Kyoto, it was targeted in World War II bombing, so its buildings are mainly 20th- and 21st-century vintage. Upon check-in, you have free time to explore or enjoy your hotel's amenities, before meeting for a farewell dinner.

### **Osaka Marriott Miyako Hotel, Osaka**

Every room at the Osaka Marriott Miyako Hotel is spacious and elegantly designed with floor-to-ceiling views offering spectacular views of the city. Occupying the top floors of the 60-floor Abeno Harukas cultural complex, public spaces offer endless panoramas, such as the 57th floor restaurant highlighting Japanese and international cuisine with its 360 degree views and the open-air outdoor plaza atrium at the 58th floor.

## DAY 8

Departure from Osaka

The tour ends at breakfast and you may depart at your leisure with your guide's assistance to the Kansai airport or Osaka train station.

## ITINERARY CHANGES

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

## A WORD ABOUT ACCOMMODATIONS

On this itinerary, your accommodations consist of Western-style hotels and a traditional Japanese inn or *ryokan* (for three nights). All Japanese *ryokans*, whether modest or luxurious, have Japanese-style guestrooms with thin sliding doors, tatami-mat floors, and floor-level futon bedding (one futon per person). The *ryokan* chosen for this tour offers traditional Japanese-style guestrooms but some rooms offer floor-level futon bedding and others offer twin beds with futon mattresses. Essential for staying in a traditional Japanese room is the ability to—fairly easily—squat down to the floor to sit, kneel, or lie down, and to get back up. Covered by an immaculate and soft tatami-mat floor (never touched by street shoes), the guestroom is minimally furnished with: the futon(s), always freshly aired and stowed away during the day and unfolded and made at night; a small central table with floor seat; and a side table with coffee/tea maker, television, and radio/CD player. The guestrooms contain an en suite toilet and sink, but no bath or shower (see below for explanation of Japanese bathing).

**Please note:** Depending on the group size, you may be assigned to either a room with floor-level futons or with two twin beds. Single rooms are not available at the *ryokan*; therefore if you have chosen a single supplement, you will be matched with a roommate of the same gender for this three-night stay only (single rooms are available at all other tour accommodations).

## A WORD ABOUT JAPANESE BATHING

The *ryokan* (traditional inn) offers a traditional Japanese communal bath—actually two bathing areas, because they are segregated by gender. Communal bathing and hot-spring soaking have been part of Japanese life for centuries...and, to get to the point, yes, it does involve being naked with other people of the same gender. This short description is meant to provide some background about this unique and enjoyable Japanese cultural practice—to be expanded upon by your guides when on tour.

In your *ryokan* room, you are provided with your *yukata* (light cotton bathrobe), a large towel for drying, and a small towel for scrubbing. Donning your *yukata* and inside slippers to walk through the *ryokan*, you enter the outer room of the bath, where there are baskets and hooks to leave the robe, slippers, and the large drying towel (there is no place to hang it in the bathing area, so, yes, this is when you are now naked holding only your scrubbing towel). From here, you proceed to the bathing area, which is divided into two sections: the washing section (of hot/cold taps, hand-held showers, small sitting stools) and the actual large soaking tub. This bathtub is for soaking only AFTER you have thoroughly cleansed yourself. The tub is filled with very hot water that is used communally and not replaced after each individual's soak.

**How to:** (1) Choosing a stool and a small sluicing bucket, you sit in front of a tap and you rinse, wash, scrub, and repeat using your small towel (and soap provided or you can bring your own products). (2) Only after thoroughly rinsing off any and all soap residue, do you enter the very hot soaking tub, dip a toe to check the temperature, adjust if necessary with cold water from the tap and a bucket, slip in, and relax.

### **RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL**

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

# Tour Itinerary Overview

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## TOUR MEETING POINTS AND TIMES

**Kyoto Brighton Hotel, Kyoto, Japan 9:00 a.m. (May 23 and October 12)**

**Hyatt Regency Hotel, Kyoto, Japan, 9:00 a.m. (September 26 and October 3)**

## NIGHTS 1 & 2

**Kyoto Brighton Hotel (May 23 and October 12)**

Nakadachiuri, Shinmachi-Dori

Kamigyo-ku, Kyoto, Japan 602-8071

Tel 011 81 75 441 4411

Email [kbh\\_reserve@brightonhotels.co.jp](mailto:kbh_reserve@brightonhotels.co.jp)

[kyotobrighton.com](http://kyotobrighton.com)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

**OR**

**Hyatt Regency Hotel (September 26 and October 3)**

644-2 Sanjusangendo-mawari, Higashiyama-ku

Kyoto, Japan 605-0941

Tel 011 81 75 541 2203

Email [kyoto.regency@hyatt.com](mailto:kyoto.regency@hyatt.com)

[kyoto.regency.hyatt.com](http://kyoto.regency.hyatt.com)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## NIGHT 3

**Nara Hotel**

1096 Takabatake-cho

Nara, Japan 630-8301

Tel 011 81 742 26 3300

[narahotel.co.jp/en/](http://narahotel.co.jp/en/)

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service is not available.

## NIGHTS 4, 5 & 6

**Organic Hotel Kiri-no-sato-Takahara**

826 Takahara Nakahezi-cho

Tanabe City, Wakayama, Japan

Tel 011 81 739 64 1900

Email [kiri-takahara@mb.aikis.or.jp](mailto:kiri-takahara@mb.aikis.or.jp)

[kirinosato-takahara.com](http://kirinosato-takahara.com)

Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service is not available.

## **NIGHT 7**

### **Osaka Marriott Miyako Hotel**

3-6-12 Honmachi, Chuo-ju

Osaka, Japan 541-0053

Tel 011 81

Email [stregis.osaka@stregis.com](mailto:stregis.osaka@stregis.com)

[starwoodhotels.com/stregis/](http://starwoodhotels.com/stregis/)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## **TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME**

**Osaka Marriott Miyako Hotel, Osaka, Japan, after breakfast**

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT**

### **One Call International**

Email [mail@oncallinternational.com](mailto:mail@oncallinternational.com)

### **If communicating from within the US**

Text 603.838.3169

Tel 800.555.9095

### **If calling from outside the US**

Tel 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Tips and Travel Resources: International Access Codes).

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.

# Tour Facts at a Glance

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## TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)

8 days, 7 nights

## DEPARTURE DATES (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)

May 23-20, 2016

September 26-October 3, 2016

October 3-10, 2016

October 12-19, 2016

## SCHEDULED GROUP PRICE, TOUR ONLY

\$6,798 (Single +\$1,178)

If you are interested in reserving the optional Flight + Tour Combo and pre- or post-tour extensions **for our scheduled group departures**, please refer to the attached itinerary for tour length, dates, pricing, and inclusions.

## PRIVATE TOUR-ONLY PRICE FROM

8–11 guests: from \$7,098 (Single+\$1,178)

12+ guests: from \$6,798 (Single+\$1,178)

This private tour is available daily, on request, from April 1 through November 30.

## TOUR MEETING POINTS AND TIMES

Kyoto Brighton Hotel, Kyoto, Japan 9:00 a.m. (May 23 and October 12)

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Kyoto, Japan, 9:00 a.m. (September 26 and October 3)

## TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Osaka Marriott Miyako Hotel, Osaka, Japan, after breakfast

## ACTIVITY LEVEL

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with a range of 2 to 8 miles per day. The walking is a combination of easy city walking with 2 full days of moderate walking along the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route. There are ascents and descents on all walks and many paths are

uneven and rocky and require sure-footedness. Select days on the tour are designed to introduce you to the culture and history of Japan, and these days consist of 3 to 4 miles of cultural exploration and city walking. While visiting historic sites in the city, public transportation such as the subway is used for short transfers. In addition, there are two longer transfer days: Day 4 includes a 3-hour transfer from Nara to Takahara. While a bit long, the drive is scenic and relaxing! Day 7 includes a 2.5-hour transfer to Mount Koya on winding roads with stunning scenery. **If you are prone to motion sickness, we recommend bringing a remedy to make you more comfortable.**

## **INCLUSIONS**

- » Two expert local guides, with you 24/7
- » All meals; local wine or beer included with dinners
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

## **LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN**

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Guest Acknowledgment of Risk and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

## **GRATUITIES**

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency.



# Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the **new optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **pre- or post-tour extensions**, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

## TOUR MEETING POINTS AND TIMES

**Kyoto Brighton Hotel, Kyoto, Japan 9:00 a.m. (May 23 and October 12)**

**Hyatt Regency Hotel, Kyoto, Japan, 9:00 a.m. (September 26 and October 3)**

Your guide(s) will meet you in the lobby of the hotel. Please be dressed for city walking.

## MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT

Kansai International Airport (KIX), Osaka, Japan

[kansai-airport.or.jp/en/](http://kansai-airport.or.jp/en/)

Kansai International Airport is the closest airport to Kyoto and offers regular train and bus service between Kansai Airport Station and Kyoto Station.

Narita International Airport (NRT), Tokyo, Japan

[narita-airport.jp/en/](http://narita-airport.jp/en/)

Tokyo is a convenient gateway city from which to reach Kyoto via Shinkansen bullet train, with several train departures offered daily. The journey takes 2 ½ hours and tickets can easily be bought upon arrival in Japan, which will guarantee a seated reservation (booking from outside the country does not guarantee a seat). Tickets can be purchased at the Japan Rail (JR) ticket office in the train station on the underground level of the airport. Your train ticket will show your train number, time, car and seat number.

## GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT

**From Kansai International Airport:** There are regular bus, train, taxi, and private car transfer options available between Kansai International Airport and Kyoto. Trains depart regularly between the airport and Kyoto Train Station and the journey takes about 1 ½ hours. From here, taxis are readily available at Kyoto Train Station, which is just a few miles from the Kyoto Brighton Hotel or the Hyatt Regency Hotel. For a full range of options, please visit [kansai-airport.or.jp/en/index.asp](http://kansai-airport.or.jp/en/index.asp)

**From Kyoto Train Station:** The Kyoto Brighton Hotel and the Hyatt Regency Hotel are just a few miles from Kyoto Station. Taxis are available as you exit the station and will cost approximately 2,000 yen (about \$20 USD). Most drivers speak limited English and tipping is neither customary nor expected.

### **PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the Kyoto Brighton Hotel (May 23 and October 12) or Hyatt Regency Hotel (September 26 and October 3), our meeting-point hotel (depending on the departure date), for the night prior to the tour. Please contact the hotel directly to make these reservations. In order to guarantee you do not need to move rooms, please mention Country Walkers when making the reservation and request a superior room at the Kyoto Brighton Hotel or a standard room at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

#### **Kyoto Brighton Hotel (May 23 and October 12)**

Nakadachiuri, Shinmachi-Dori  
Kamigyo-ku, Kyoto, Japan 602-8071  
Tel 011 81 75 441 4411  
Email [kbh\\_reserve@brightonhotels.co.jp](mailto:kbh_reserve@brightonhotels.co.jp)  
[kyotobrighton.com](http://kyotobrighton.com)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

Rates vary depending on the season but start at approximately \$225 USD for a superior room, not including breakfast or taxes.

**OR**

#### **Hyatt Regency Hotel (September 26 and October 3)**

644-2 Sanjusangendo-mawari, Higashiyama-ku  
Kyoto, Japan 605-0941  
Tel 011 81 75 541 2203  
Email [kyoto.regency@hyatt.com](mailto:kyoto.regency@hyatt.com)  
[kyoto.regency.hyatt.com](http://kyoto.regency.hyatt.com)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

Rates vary depending on the season but start at approximately \$250 USD for a standard room, not including breakfast or taxes.

### **DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS**

If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting point for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

## **TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME**

### **Osaka Marriott Miyako Hotel, Osaka, Japan, after breakfast**

You may leave any time after breakfast on the last day of the tour. Your guide(s) or the hotel concierge can assist you with making any taxi arrangements to travel to the Kansai International Airport (KIX) or the Osaka Train Station.

The journey via train from Osaka Station to Kansai Airport Station takes approximately one hour.

# Information & Policies

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## **GUARANTEED DEPARTURES**

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour\*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

*\*except in cases of force majeure*

## **RESERVATIONS**

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255. We can confirm your reservation with a deposit of \$350 per person. Final tour cost is due 90 days prior to tour departure date. As arrangements are confirmed at least a year in advance, the tour price is subject to change.

## **GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

## **CANCELLATION POLICY**

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost\*. Please notify us in writing.

*\*One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

## **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

Air or other travel arrangements to and from your tour are not included in the price of your trip. We encourage you to contact your local travel agent, or Better Travel, a Vermont-based agency (800.331.6996 or [bettertravel@madriver.com](mailto:bettertravel@madriver.com)), for any additional air, hotel, rail, or transfer arrangements you may need.

# Japan at a Glance

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## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

**U.S. citizens:** Passports are required and must be valid for the duration of the stay. Visas are not required for stays of 90 days or less.



For more information, see [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

## CURRENCY

Japan uses the yen (JPY). For up-to-date exchange rates, see [oanda.com](http://oanda.com).

Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

### Travel Tip

Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), and some dollars to exchange.

### Important Note

Since you will likely need yen to pay for your taxi to the hotel or any unforeseen situations, it is a good idea to change some dollars or withdraw some local currency immediately upon your arrival at the airport.

Large stores, restaurants, and hotels accept major credit cards; however, small shops in rural areas only accept cash.

## TIME ZONE

Japan is 14 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. For more information on worldwide time zones, see [worldtimezone.com](http://worldtimezone.com).

## PHONE & INTERNET

Japan country code: +81

Cell phone coverage throughout Japan is extensive but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to [countrywalkers.com/phones](http://countrywalkers.com/phones).



Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages; however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.

## LANGUAGE

The official language of Japan is Japanese.

While knowledge of the local language is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see [bbc.co.uk/languages/japanese/](http://bbc.co.uk/languages/japanese/), the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book, or the Japan National Tourism Organization's "Tourist's Language Handbook," an easily downloadable phrase book: [www.jnto.go.jp/eng/touristhandbook/eng.pdf](http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/touristhandbook/eng.pdf).

## ELECTRICITY

Alternating current of 100V is used in Japan (and 50Hz in eastern Japan, in Tokyo, and 60Hz in western Japan, including Hiroshima, Kyoto, and Osaka). The most common plug is similar to the U.S. type, with two flat blades.

For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see [electricaloutlet.org](http://electricaloutlet.org).

## WEATHER

The best time to visit Japan is in the spring and fall, as summers are hot and humid, and winters cold, due to its geography and location. In central Japan, the preferred travel months of May and September through November experience mild temperatures and rain in brief showers. Average temperatures (high/low) in Kyoto (also representative of Nara and Osaka) are: May, 76/57° F; September, 84/68° F; October, 74/56° F; and November, 65/54° F. In Tokyo, average temperatures are a few degrees cooler, and in Hiroshima, in southern Japan, a few degrees warmer.

For up-to-date forecasts, see [qwikcast.com](http://qwikcast.com). For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com).

### Travel Tip

- Bringing your own hair dryer or other electrical device? You'll need a travel converter, available at most hardware, travel, or consumer electronic stores.
- For laptops or an electronic device with a dual-voltage switch, you'll need the adapter plug but not a converter.

## FOOD & DRINK



The diversity of geography and climate along the length of the Japanese archipelago has resulted in a great variety of regional and seasonal foods, accompanied by specific drinks and dishware. A traditional meal ends with miso soup, which can contain tofu, vegetables, and even small clams; other traditional dishes follow in small plates and courses such as fish, vegetables, perhaps tempura-style, pickles, and a bowl of rice (white is most common). Fish is of course served raw in sushi or sashimi (the piece of fish without a rice bed), but it is also appreciated grilled and broiled with a savory marinade. Soba (buckwheat) or udon (wheat) noodles are eaten with delicate broth or sauce. Widespread dishes that seem to be typically Japanese are, in fact, foreign in origin, such as ramen noodle soup or *gyoza* dumplings (both Chinese), and mild curry sauce over a breaded pork cutlet is a staple. Traditional sweets are made of red bean paste or soft sweet rice (*mochi*), while a more modern dessert is green-tea ice cream. Tea is available in myriad varieties—including several grades of green tea, roasted tea, and even cooling barley tea—and is served throughout the day as well as ceremonially. Sake (fermented rice wine) pairs perfectly with many dishes, as does a crisp Japanese lager-style beer.

**Water:** Tap water is safe to drink throughout Japan.

### Travel Tip

A unique cultural experience, the traditional Japanese bath or hot spring (*onsen*) differs from Western bathing in that you wash outside the tub, before settling in for a relaxing soak. Here are a few guidelines.

Japanese Bath Dos and Don'ts:

Do	Don't
Remove all jewelry to avoid discoloration	Wear clothing in the bath
Wash and rinse thoroughly before entering soaking tub	Splash or swim
Squeeze your scrubbing towel and leave aside before entering tub	Bring your small scrubbing towel into the tub
Check water temperature—if it is too hot, you can add cold water from the tap	Empty the tub!



## LIFE IN JAPAN



### Shopping and banking hours

Shops and stores are generally open seven days a week between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. (department stores usually close at 7:30 p.m. on Sundays).

Banks are open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday to Friday.

### Mealtimes

Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. In restaurants, lunch is served from noon to 2:00 p.m. and dinner is usually served from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

### Tipping

Tipping is not practiced in Japan in hotels, restaurants, or for taxi drivers. Although not required, if you do wish to leave money for maid service in a hotel or *ryokan* (traditional inn), it is customary to place the money in an envelope.

## TRAVEL RESOURCES

### National Japanese tourist board official site

[www.jnto.go.jp](http://www.jnto.go.jp)

### Public holidays

To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Japanese public holidays, festivals, or other cultural events. The Japanese tourist board's website, [www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/businesshours\\_holidays.html](http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/essential/businesshours_holidays.html), has a list of public holidays and festivals.

## TRAVEL IN JAPAN

A wealth of travel information is available at [www.jnto.go.jp](http://www.jnto.go.jp).

### Airports

The majority of international flights arrive at Tokyo's Narita International Airport (NRT): [/www.narita-airport.jp/en/](http://www.narita-airport.jp/en/). Many international flights also arrive at the Kansai International Airport (KIX), [www.kansai-airport.or.jp/en/index.asp](http://www.kansai-airport.or.jp/en/index.asp), providing more direct access to the Kansai region's

### Travel Tip

It is illegal to bring into Japan some over-the-counter medicines commonly used in the United States, including inhalers and some allergy and sinus medications. Specifically, products that contain stimulants (medicines that contain Pseudo-ephedrine, such as Actifed, Sudafed, and Vicks inhalers), or Codeine are prohibited.

cities of Osaka and Kyoto. An extensive domestic flight network connects Tokyo and Kansai to the rest of Japan.

## Trains

Japan has an extensive rail network, with the national company, Japan Railways (JR), servicing all major cities, and connecting to regional private railway companies. The Japan Rail Pass—a very economical and convenient means for short-term visitors to travel by train, including the Shinkansen bullet train—must be ordered prior to arrival in Japan. Information on fares, routes, and how to purchase is available at the tourism website:

[www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/railway/japan\\_rail\\_Pass.html](http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/railway/japan_rail_Pass.html) and from JR's Japan Rail Pass site: [jrpass.com](http://jrpass.com).



## Other local transportation

In addition to rail and airlines, Japan has a long-distance bus network, [www.bus.or.jp/en/index.html](http://www.bus.or.jp/en/index.html), but rail or air is preferable. Renting a car is also possible, but bear in mind that an international driving permit is required, driving is on the left-hand side of the road, tolls on highways can be astonishingly high compared to the U.S., and parking in urban centers can be challenging. For more information, visit [www.jnto.go.jp](http://www.jnto.go.jp).

## Etiquette

**Bowing** is perhaps the most familiar aspect of Japanese etiquette to visitors. The parameters surrounding bowing and bow depth are complex and factors include the parties' relationships to one another in age or professional rank. Japanese often shake hands with non-Japanese visitors, who themselves might attempt a bow—perhaps gently turn to the left to avoid bumping heads when attempting a handshake/half-bow.

**Removing your shoes** upon entering a home or temple is—unlike bowing—a “requirement,” regardless of your nationality. In homes and temples, slippers are usually made available, and it's best to keep your socks on. Socks only are fine in an informal setting. Removing shoes feels very right before stepping onto delicate *tatami* mat flooring—traditionally made of woven rushes—which is soft underfoot.

# Packing List

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## PACKING TIPS

Pack light! Keep in mind there will be times you may have to carry your own luggage short distances, especially before and after your Country Walkers tour. Due to space constraints, we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece (approximately 18x15x29 inches or 8,000 cu. in.) and one small carry-on, per person. We recommend packing any personal necessities, medications, your hotel itinerary/emergency contact information, your hiking boots (or shoes), and extra clothes in your carry-on luggage in the event that your baggage is delayed. We suggest leaving valuable jewelry at home. A copy of your passport or other important documents should be kept in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying a purse, camera, money belt, or backpack in busy cities, airports, and train stations.

**Please note:** If travelling by bullet train during your time in Japan, please remember to pack light with bags that are relatively small and easy to roll or carry. Bullet trains have limited storage, and train stations have many staircases to negotiate. Elevators are available but they are quite small and can be crowded.

## FOOTWEAR

- » Hiking boots or shoes. There are many brands to choose from. Proper fit is crucial, so try on new boots or shoes while wearing socks you plan to use on tour. Be sure to break in new footwear well before your tour begins. By the time you're ready to join your walking tour, you should be able to complete 4 to 6 miles of walking without discomfort. We require lightweight boots or shoes with proper ankle support and good tread to ensure stability on all types of terrain. Waterproof footwear keeps feet dry in heavy rain, and water-resistant footwear keeps feet dry in heavy dew. Country Walkers reserves the right to deny participation to any guest not wearing appropriate footwear.
- » Comfortable shoes that are easy to take off and put on, as you will often be required to remove your shoes when entering temples, shrines, and some accommodations.
- » Synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended for walking as they will quickly cause blisters)
- » Blister remedy

## CLOTHING

- » Lightweight, wash-and-wear long pants (zip-off pants are ideal)
- » Long-sleeved, wash-and-wear shirt (for evenings and sun protection)
- » T-shirts and shorts
- » Polar fleece or light wool pullover (it will keep you warm even when wet)
- » Dinner attire: dress is smart casual
- » At Mt. Koya, the Oku-no-in shrine requires conservative dress. Arms, shoulders, and legs should be covered before entering, making convertible zip-off pants a good option for both men and women.

## OUTERWEAR

- » Waterproof rain gear: jacket, pants, hat, or hood
- » Windbreaker with hood (your rain gear may be suitable)
- » Hat with a broad brim or visor

## EQUIPMENT

- » Daypack large enough to carry water, extra clothing, rain gear, and personal items (camera, etc.)
- » Waterproof cover for pack
- » Water bottle, canteen, or CamelBak-type water reservoir or hydration pack to carry your own water while walking (equivalent of one liter)
- » Sunblock and lip balm
- » Insect repellent
- » Sunglasses
- » Toilet kit for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues, and moist towelettes, which can be disposed of upon return to the hotel
- » Personal first-aid kit, including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original container). However, please note that it is illegal to bring into Japan some over-the-counter medicines commonly used in the United States, including inhalers and some allergy and sinus medications. Specifically, products that contain stimulants (medicines that contain Pseudoephedrine, such as Actifed, Sudafed, and Vicks inhalers), or Codeine are prohibited.

## OPTIONAL

- » Telescopic walking sticks (Please note that while telescopic walking sticks are recommended for this tour, they are not provided by Country Walkers. Therefore, please plan on bringing your own should you wish to use them.)
- » Binoculars
- » Bathing suit for hotel pools
- » Camera and charger and/or extra batteries
- » Zip-lock bags (to keep camera and valuables dry)
- » Small notebook and pen
- » Field guides (see enclosed reading list)
- » Folding umbrella
- » Bandana
- » Hand sanitizer and/or moist towelettes
- » Handkerchief (many restaurants and some washrooms do not offer napkins or hand towels)