Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

**Arr Kyoto, introductions and Welcome dinner**

Plan to arrive anytime today at Kansai International Airport (KIX) or Osaka International Airport (ITM). We'll arrange a shared taxi transfer from the airport to our Kyoto hotel. We'll gather early evening in the lobby of the hotel where we'll meet our local expert guide as well as each other. After Welcome and Introductions we'll walk to a local restaurant for our first shared meal, where our guide will give us a trip overview and orientation and start to answer the many questions we undoubtedly have. We'll undoubtedly all be ready for an early dinner tonight. Overnight Hearton Hotel or similar western-style hotel. D

DAY 2

**Tour Kyoto including Fushimi Inari shrine, Tofukuji Temple, Gion district**

Today we'll spend getting to know Kyoto, starting with a visit to Fushimi Inari shrine in southeastern Kyoto. Fushimi Inari is known for its rows of vermilion torii gates that snake their way up the mountain from the street level shrine to the upper sanctuary. The gates are left by devotees in gratitude or to seek the good graces of the titular spirit of this Shinto shrine. After ascending the shrine, we'll descend to nearby Tofukuji Temple, a Buddhist temple that is a UNESCO World Heritage temple and shows us another side of the spiritual traditions of Japan. We'll break for lunch and then continue in the afternoon for a walk of the Gion district, famous for its many teahouses and schools that serve a lively community of geisha and maiko, or apprentice Geisha. If we are lucky, perhaps we will spot a colorfully attired maiko on her way to a class or evening appointment. Tonight dinner is on your own so you can choose a restaurant of your liking with the assistance of our guide. Overnight Hearton Hotel or similar. B, L

DAY 3

**Transfer to Asuka, cooking class, hike to Inabushi rice terraces**

This morning we send our bags ahead to be reunited with us tomorrow and travel by train to Asuka, a small community on the Yamato plain in Nara prefecture. Before Tokyo, Kyoto, and Nara were political centres of the Japanese archipelago, Asuka claimed that title. The town is associated with Prince Shotoku, who brought the Buddhist faith to Japan. The town is peppered with ancient stone monuments whose origins are not known. On our arrival in Asuka, we'll have a cooking class of a local specialty on an organic farm. We better be good students because for lunch we'll dine on the fruits of our labors. Then in the afternoon we'll take a walk past some of the town's stone monuments and to the Inabushi rice terraces, where there is an observation deck that overlooks them and the mountains. We'll then continue to Nara and dinner at a local restaurant. Hiking: about 3 hours. 3.0 miles; ascent 1375 ft/descent 1390 ft. Overnight Piazza Nara or similar western-style hotel. B, L, D

DAY 4

**Hike from Enjo-ji Temple to nara Park**

On today's hike we follow in the footsteps of warriors who took this route from Nara to the sword-making village of Yagyu. The full hike is a challenging 12 miles, but we'll take a shorter 7.3 mile option from Enjo-ji Temple. The hike ends with a wonderful stroll through Nara Park, with its famous deer and temples. We'll visit Todaiji Temple in the afternoon. Tonight we'll choose from among the many restaurant options in Nara. Hiking: about 5 hours. 7.3 miles; ascent 790 ft/descent 1755 ft. Overnight Piazza Nara or similar western-style hotel. B, L, D

DAY 5
Begin walking the Nakasendo Way, hike from Magome to O-Tsumago

Today we begin walking the Nakasendo Way. We travel by a combination of regional trains and the shinkansen, or bullet train, to Nakatsugawa. At Nakatsugawa we board a local bus for the short journey to Magome. We then walk 3.5 hours along the Magome Pass to O-Tsumago, a small hamlet on the Nakasendo Trail. We’ll have some time to continue on an additional 20 minutes walk to Tsumago to visit the post town before returning to our rural country minshuku. Our main luggage will be sent ahead to the ryokan in Kiso-Fukushima where we stay tomorrow night, so today we’ll carry only what we need for the night. Hiking: about 3.5 hours. 5.2 miles; ascent 1070 ft/descent 1410 ft. Overnight at a Minshuku, a traditional Japanese Inn. B, L, D

DAY 6

Hike from Tsumago to Nojiri

Continuing on the Nakasendo Way, we’ll walk out from our inn to continue to Tsumago to spend a bit more time. We then continue on our longest walk – a beautiful and varied hike from Tsumago to Nojiri. The trail travels through small valleys and past forests of bamboo and Japanese cedar, through some of the least-developed scenery on the tour. We’ll finish our journey by train to Kiso-Fukushima, where we’ll stay at a lovely hot spring ryokan set in a remote valley above the town. After enjoying the ryokan’s lovely indoor and outdoor hot-spring baths, we’ll feast on a Japanese dinner with fresh local produce. Hiking: about 6 hours. 11.5 miles; ascent 2275 ft/descent 2112 ft. Overnight at Japanese Hot Springs inn, a ryokan. B, L, D

DAY 7

Train to Yabuhara, hike over Torii pass to Narai

This morning we take the train to Yabuhara, to hike over the Torii pass to Narai (about 3.5 hours). We will have some time to explore this evocative village before checking in to our Edo-period minshuku in the heart of the village. Hiking: about 3.5 hours. 4 miles; ascent 1130 ft/descent 885 ft. Overnight at a Minshuku. B, L, D

DAY 8

Walk to Kiso-Hirasawa, train ride to Tokyo

We’ll finish our journey on the Nakasendo Way with a short walk to the small town of Kiso-Hirasawa, famous for its lacquerware. After spending some time exploring the town with its many small shops selling beautifully-crafted tableware and furniture, we board a train at Kiso-Hirasawa station for our onward journey to Tokyo. We arrive at Shinjuku station - one of the busiest rail stations in the world and a bit of a culture-shock after our sojourn in the countryside. After lunch, before we discover the modern side of Tokyo tomorrow, we’ll enjoy the view over the vast Tokyo conurbation from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Buildings. We’ll then settle into our hotel in late afternoon and have a free evening to explore Tokyo cuisine on your own. Hiking: about 1 hour. 1.6 miles; negligible ascent and descent. Overnight at Shibuya Park Hotel or a similar Western-style hotel. B, L

DAY 9

Full day tour of Tokyo

We can’t be in Japan and not spend some time seeing one of the world’s great cities. We start in Asakusa, an old quarter in Tokyo’s shitamachi (low city) which still displays some narrow streets reminiscent of Edo period Tokyo. Its main attraction is Senso-ji, a large Buddhist temple with a five-story pagoda, dating originally from the 7th century and rebuilt after its destruction during World War II. Leading up to the main temple buildings is the Nakamise-dori, a pedestrian street lined with shops selling a variety of Japanese arts and crafts and souvenirs. At the end of the street is the Kaminari-mon, the famous entrance gate to the temple. In the afternoon, we continue on to the modern Harajuku district. We’ll visit Meiji Jingu, a shrine to the Emperor and Empress Shoken who were instrumental in bringing Japan into the 20th century.
modern age. Empress Shoken in particular had a deep love for poetry and it is possible to buy a fortune at the shrine that takes the form of a poetic verse. After a stroll through Harajuku and Omotesando, we'll have some free time before we convene again for a farewell dinner at a nearby restaurant. Overnight at Shiba Park Hotel or similar. B, D

DAY 10

**Depart for home**

This morning we bid farewell to Japan and our Japanese guide. She'll assist us with our limousine bus tickets to Narita Airport for our departure flight from Japan, which you can schedule for any convenient time. B