



ADVENTURES
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JAPAN'S CULTURE AND COUNTRYSIDE

Trip Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Traveling the ancient Nakasendo Way
- Experiencing both modern and rural traditional Japan
- Staying in traditional inns with their reputation for hospitality
- Learning about Japanese history and culture
- Visiting two of the most dynamic modern cities in the world

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TRIP AT A GLANCE

Location:	Osaka, Japan
Activities:	Hiking
Arrive:	Arrive Kansai (KIX) or Osaka (ITM) International Airports in time for first group meeting at the trip hotel. Group meeting is 6pm on Day 1.
Depart:	Depart Narita Airport, NRT (shuttle provided) or Haneda Airport, HND (short train ride) anytime on the last day of the trip, Day 10.

NOTE: FOR THIS TRIP, YOU WILL BE FLYING INTO KYOTO AND FLYING OUT OF TOKYO

Trip Overview

While Japan has long been known for its dynamic cities, only recently has the beauty and culture of the Japanese countryside begun to gain attention. On this trip we experience both, spending time in the beginning in Kyoto, the cultural heart of Japan, and at the end in Tokyo, a mixture of ancient and modern. In between we will hike some of the best parts of the Nakasendo Way, which linked the two cities during Japan's feudal period. It was the 'road through the mountains' travelled by feudal lords and their retinues, samurai, merchants, and travelers. Each day we will walk a different section of this ancient route, avoiding those parts that have become busy roads. Each evening we will stay in one of the small "post" towns where we'll enjoy the warm hospitality of a traditional country inn, feasting on freshly prepared dishes from the regional cuisine. If you have been wanting an in depth introduction to Japan's history, nature, and culture, please join us.

Maximum group size: 12

Rating

This trip is designed for women who want to combine hiking off the beaten track in the Japanese countryside, visits to two of the main cities, and learning about Japanese history and culture while enjoying fresh regional cuisine. Women should be in good physical condition and able to hike for three to five hours a day with elevation gains between 550 - 1000 feet; and one longer day with elevation over 2,000 feet.

Rating: 1 2 **[3]** 4 5

What's Included

- An English speaking female Japanese tour leader and an AGC group leader

- 9 nights double occupancy at western style hotels in the cities and traditional Japanese inns in the countryside
- All activities mentioned in the itinerary, including sightseeing tours in Kyoto and Tokyo
- All breakfasts, 7 lunches, and 6 dinners (see itinerary)
- All transportation during the trip including group airport transfer Day 1 of the trip (from KIX or ITM) and a group airport transfer on Day 10 to NRT.
- Baggage transfer on 3 occasions

What's not included: Travel to and from Japan, airport transfer outside referenced group transfers, beverages at meals, snacks, 1 lunch and 2 dinners, guide gratuities, travel insurance.

OUR ITINERARY

Below is the itinerary we have planned 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

Plan to arrive at either Kansai International Airport (KIX) or Osaka International Airport (ITM) in time for the first group meeting planned for 6:00 p.m. at the trip hotel on Day 1. A shared taxi transfer from the airport to our Kyoto hotel will be arranged. We'll gather in the lobby of the hotel where we'll meet our local guide as well as each other. After Welcome and Introductions, we'll walk to a local restaurant for our first shared meal where our local guide will give us a trip overview and orientation. We'll undoubtedly all be ready for an early bedtime tonight.

Overnight: Hearton Hotel or similar Western-style hotel (D)

DAY 2

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.

Walking: 5 - 7 miles on dirt paths, steep steps and city streets. Overnight: Hearton Hotel or similar (B,L)

DAY 3

This morning we send our luggage head to be reunited with us tomorrow afternoon - this means we will carry what we need for today, tonight and tomorrow in our daypack. We will 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. On our arrival in Asuka, we'll visit an organic farm where we will pick vegetables and then enjoy a home-cooked meal that we help prepare. After lunch, we'll take a local bus to the Inabushi rice terraces, where there is an observation deck that overlooks them and the mountains. We then continue by train to Nara, check into our hotel and have dinner at a local restaurant.

Hiking: about 2 hours, 3 miles. Elevation gain/loss: about 200 feet. Overnight: Piazza Nara or similar Western-style hotel (B, L, D)

DAY 4

Our day begins with a short bus ride to the Enjo-ji temple where we will begin our hike. Today's hike follows in the footsteps of warriors who took this route from Nara to the sword-making village of Yagyū. Our section of this route is approximately 7.3 miles and begins at the Enjo-ji Temple. The hike ends with a wonderful stroll through Nara Park, with its famous deer and numerous temples. We'll visit Todaiji Temple in the afternoon. Tonight, we'll choose from among the many restaurant options in Nara.

Hiking: about 7 hours, 7.3 miles, an additional 2 miles sightseeing; ascent 550 feet/descent 1,500 feet. Overnight: Piazza Nara or similar Western-style hotel (B, L, D)

DAY 5

Today we once again send our luggage ahead to be reunited with us tomorrow evening. We will be walking the Nakasendo Way. Translation of this name is literally, "Middle Mountain Way" and once was an important trade route connecting Japan's capital Kyoto to Tokyo. It is now one of Japan's most famous hiking routes. Our hike will begin in Magome and end in Tsumago. Along the way we'll enjoy waterfalls, bamboo groves, cedar forests and beautiful vistas over the Kiso Valley. To reach the beginning of our trail, we will 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 approximately 4 miles along the Magome Pass to O-Tsumago, a small hamlet on the Nakasendo Trail. Upon arrival, we'll walk through the picturesque town to our lodging for check in. After settling in, we'll gather for another wonderful Japanese dinner. If energy allows, an after-dinner stroll through town is always an option. After a bit of exploring in Tsumago you can choose to continue to Nagiso by foot or by local bus. Once in Nagiso, the group will transfer by shuttle 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, 4 miles; ascent 550 feet/descent 1,100 feet. Overnight: traditional Japanese hotel in O-Tsumago (B, L, D)

DAY 6

Today we continue our hike on the Nakasendo Way. We'll walk from O-Tsumago to Tsumago, approximately a 30-minute walk. Once arriving in Tsumago, we'll have a short time to walk through the town before we are shuttled to the start of our hike today. The trail travels through small valleys and past forests of bamboo and Japanese cedar, through some of the least-developed scenery on the tour. At the end of our hike, we'll transfer by van 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 4 hours, 6.5 miles; ascent 2,275 feet/descent 2,112 feet. Overnight: Japanese Hot Springs inn, a Ryokan (B, L, D)

DAY 7

Once more we send our luggage ahead to be reunited with us tomorrow night in Tokyo. To get to the beginning of our hike today, we will take the train to Yabuhara. From there we hike over the Torii pass to Narai (about 3.5 hours). Arriving in Narai, we'll enjoy a late lunch and then a bit of free time to explore this We will have some time to explore this historic and well-preserved post town.

Hiking: about 3.5 hours, 4 miles; ascent/descent: 900 feet. Overnight: at a Minshuku (B, L, D)

DAY 8

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 and enjoying lunch, we board a train 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, and check into our hotel. Late afternoon, we'll visit one of the near-by towers for a great view of the city before deciding what neighborhood restaurant looks best for dinner. Dinner is on your own, but your local guide will have lots of suggestions.

Hiking: about 1 hour. 1.6 miles; negligible ascent and descent. Overnight: Shiba Park Hotel or a similar Western-style hotel (B, L)

DAY 9

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 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. Whew - a very busy day!

Overnight at Shiba Park Hotel or similar. (B,L, D)

DAY 10

This morning we bid farewell to Japan and our Japanese guide. She'll assist us with our bus tickets to Narita Airport (NRT) for our departure flight from Japan, which you can schedule for any convenient time. The bus ride is approximately 2 hours and does have toilet facilities. You will be picked up 4 hours prior to your scheduled flight. If you are flying out of Haneda Airport (HND), your Japanese guide will help you sort out those plans. To get to the Haneda Airport, it is a short (30-minutes) train ride. The train station is near the hotel and accessible by taxi or walking. (B)

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

Getting There

Kyoto is served by two international airports and we will arrange a shared taxi transfer from either airport to the hotel on Day 1. At the end of the trip we will arrange a limousine bus from the hotel to Narita.

If you would like assistance with airfare, we recommend contacting our AirDesk Partner, [Exito Travel](#). Start by submitting this [form](#). Just fill in your dates and destinations, including any additional notes about preferred carriers, class of service, possible stopovers, etc., and an agent will typically respond via email within a few hours. If you prefer to call, the number is 800-655-4053; be sure to tell them you are traveling with Adventures in Good Company.

Please note: Most of the international airlines are in-network for Exito, so they do not charge extra for their services (and often have access to discounted rates). When necessary, processing fees out-of-network carriers are minimal at around \$35-\$50 per ticket.

Accommodations

We will be staying in three different types of accommodation. In Kyoto, Nara, and Tokyo, we will stay in modern Western-style hotels (6 nights). While rooms are generally smaller than in the US and Canada, all have en-suite facilities. In Kiso-Fukushima we will stay at a hot springs ryokan. A ryokan is a traditional Japanese-style inn, usually older wooden buildings with rooms in the Japanese style with tatami (straw) matting and futons laid out in the evening by the ryokan staff. Evening meals are served communally in the dining room, and are exquisitely prepared multi-course meals. Many ryokan have both en suite bathrooms (with the exception of some older buildings) and communal hot spring style baths (segregated by sex). In two towns we stay in Minshuku, which are smaller family-run inns. At these smaller family-run inns the bathrooms will be downstairs or down the hallway from the sleeping rooms. Both Ryokan and Minkushu are classic Japanese experiences. Please note: Vegetarian options are available, but limited. Strict vegetarian diets, vegan diets, or gluten free diets will not be possible to accommodate due to the pervasiveness of the fish-based stock dashi and the use of soy sauce and miso in Japanese cuisine. There will not be much if any fresh fruits and/or vegetables. Most of the vegetables will be pickled, fried or cooked in soup.

Travel Insurance

We recommend that you purchase a travel protection plan to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, visit www.travelexinsurance.com or call 1-800-228-9792 and reference location number 06-0331.

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CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellation charges reflect the many expenses Adventures in Good Company cannot recover if you cancel, even if you must do so due to illness, injury, or personal emergencies. These fees are not meant to be punitive. The charges made reflect the expenses Adventures in Good Company has incurred in administering your reservation and planning for your participation. We recognize that the majority of those who cancel their reservations do so out of necessity. Please note that we do not make any refunds for any unused portion of your trip, not arriving, arriving late, or leaving the trip early.

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