

Self-Guided Walking in Japan

Trip Code: SGJP

Version:



WALK & TREK



SELF-GUIDED



LEISURELY



HIGHLIGHTS

- Ride the famous Shinkansen bullet train
- Walk in the footsteps of Samurai warriors on the Nakasendo Trail
- Make a pilgrimage along the sacred Kumano Kodo Trail to Osaka
- Discover Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka with the option to add your own private guide

AT A GLANCE

- Self-guided
- 13 days walking and sightseeing
- Rail tickets included
- Optional city guides
- Join at Tokyo / End in Osaka

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

This two week self-guided holiday crams in everything you need to truly immerse yourself into Japanese culture, a country where ancient traditions seamlessly intertwine with modern life. Arriving in Japan's vibrant capital you will step out onto Tokyo's Shibuya crossing, the most photographed in the world. Explore this magnificent city where skyscrapers act as bookends to traditional wooden buildings and escape the city and hike up Mt. Takao for far reaching views to Mt. Fuji, stunning in all seasons. And, what is a trip to Japan without a ride on a bullet train? We have included a ride on the Shinkansen to take you back in time to a life more simple as you undertake the famed postal route; the Nakasendo Trail. Walking from one quaint village to another through the Kiso Valley, greeted by warm hospitality along your way. To ensure a full Japanese experience we have designed this trip to include time in Kyoto, the most culturally rich city in Asia, where you can partake in a traditional tea ceremony before following in the footsteps of Samurai and pilgrims as hike the Kumano Kodo to the awe-inspiring Nachi Taishi. Discovering a wealth of traditions, myths and legends with every step. Ending your time on the trail by bathing your body and spirit in the oldest onsen in Japan. You will end your trip with the bright lights of Osaka, known as a foodie's paradise it is the perfect place to celebrate your experience.

Staying in a mix of 3* and 4* hotels on a B&B basis in the cities, and traditional minshuku and ryokan along the trails, with dinner included, you will have the perfect blend of flexibility local knowledge and the warm hospitality of an old friend. Staying in in the minshuku and ryokan allows you the unique insight into day to day Japanese life and the joys of home cooked Japanese food. Delicious!

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Shared airport transfers
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Self-guided information pack containing your map and route notes
- Trains/public transport as described
- Stored Value Transit Card pre-loaded with 3000JPY for use on local trains
- Tea Ceremony

What's not Included

- Travel to Narita Airport
- Travel from Kansai Airport
- Luggage transfers
- Private city guides (Day 2 and day 7)
- Gratuities for guides
- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Personal equipment
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional

Your Self-Guided Pack & Route Notes

Each self-guided holiday comes with comprehensive route notes and a map or pocket guidebook of the area you are exploring. The route notes contain information about the places you will visit and the local transport you might need, along with the detailed route notes for your daily walks or cycle rides. We even include some tips for the best places to stop for lunch.

You can expect to receive your Self-Guided Pack containing your route notes, a map or guidebook, and all your relevant documents, no later than 3 weeks before your holiday start-date. We will send your documents using a signed-for courier so that you can track your package and know that it is safely on its way to you. For bookings of more than 4 people we will send an additional Self-Guided Pack. If you do not need this additional pack please inform our Sales Team. Your pack will be sent to the lead booker, so please remind them to pack it before setting off.

Should your self-guided trip be part of a longer adventure requiring you to leave home more than three weeks before your holiday start-date, please inform our Sales Team so that we can make alternative delivery arrangements.

Self-Guided Families

Our Self-Guided Holidays are perfect for your next family holiday and are suitable for children of all ages.

Our partner hotels and accommodations are able to provide cots for young children, and some offer family rooms. We can also arrange hire of children's bikes and tag along bikes for most of our self-guided cycling trips and with trips such as Lake Constance and the Danube offering routes on designated cycle paths you can rest assured in keeping your family safe.

As a parent we trust that you know your own child's capabilities, so please read the itinerary details to ensure the distances covered each day are suitable for your family. If this is a first time walking holiday for your family, a centre based trip is a fantastic option as it allows you to easily opt out of a days walking if a day of building sand castles, swimming in the pool or visiting museums is calling instead.

Please discuss this further with our sales team who will be happy to assist in picking the best trip for your family.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

This trip starts at Tokyo Narita Airport. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a land only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. For this trip, we have included a shared transfer for you from Tokyo Narita Airport to your accommodation. The journey takes approximately 2 hours and you can expect some great views over the city as you ride the elevated highways to your hotel.

The trip ends in Osaka. We have included a shared transfer from your hotel or train journey from Osaka's Namba Station direct to Kansai Airport. This is a short 35minute journey on the Nankai Rapid bullet train with reserved seat reservations for the best train time for your onward journey.

Please ensure you inform our customer sales and support team as early as possible of your flight times so that we can arrange your transfers for you.

Meal Plan

This trip is on a bed and breakfast basis throughout the trip to allow you flexibility when staying in the cities and larger towns. We have also included 6 evening meals when you will stay in a traditional minshuku or ryokan.

Included evening meals will generally be kaiseki style, this is a traditional Japanese multi-course meal including multiple small dishes freshly prepared with locally-sourced seasonal ingredients. Meals are generally served at low tables, and you will be required to sit on cushions on the floor. Knives and forks will be rarely seen, be prepared to use chopsticks. Outside of the cities breakfasts will also be exclusively Japanese style.

Food & Water

Water from the taps is perfectly drinkable on this holiday - please use this to fill your personal bottles for your daily activities. We do not encourage the purchase of single-use plastic bottles.

Japanese cuisine is fresh, fragrant and flavoursome. It is a cuisine which draws on the umami tastes, largely down to the broths, soups and slow cooking processes used in Japanese cooking, drawing out the flavours. You can look forward to many rice and noodle dishes such as the popular ramen, udon (a thick wheat noodle) and soba dishes such as yakisoba (a buckwheat noodle). Seafood and shell fish is a staple in Japanese cuisine, not just because of the hugely popular sushi and sashimi but also grilled or fried in a light tempura batter. Japan has plenty of specialty dishes from the expensive Kobe beef, a type of Wagyu cattle reared in a way that produces a melt in the mouth beef, to the traditional warming bowls of ramen, with each region having its own take on this dish. However, a favourite of ours here at KE is the Takoyaki octopus balls of Osaka. These are a deliciously moreish street food of pieces of octopus within a batter cooked on a grill, similar to a Dutch pancake grill, to produce the delectable balls, served topped with teriyaki sauce, tempura batter scraps and mayonnaise. We highly recommend trying them, though we warn you it is a test of patience to wait for them to cool down before taking a bite!

Other fantastic Japanese cuisine experiences are Teppanyaki, where diners sit at a hot iron grill and watch their dishes cooked in front of them (usually with some theatrics); or Shabu-shabu where diners sit around a large cooking pot filled with broth and served a selection of tofu, raw meat (usually thinly sliced pork and beef) and vegetables to dip in the boiling broth before eating.

For food on the go you can always be sure to find bao buns and onigiri in local convenience stores. Bao buns are a parcel of steamed dough containing a tasty filling, often pork, and are the Japanese version of grabbing a sandwich. Onigiri are a parcel of rice with a tasty filling and often come with a seaweed wrapping and usually triangular in shape. Both make great snacks for while you are out exploring.

Similar to most of Asia breakfast is really an extension of lunch or evening meals. You generally won't find a croissant or bowl of cereal but instead a warm bowl of ramen or perhaps Omuraisu, an omelette filled with rice and topped with ketchup. Coffee is also not as widely popular as it is in the UK so you may have to rely on the plentiful Green Tea to provide your daily caffeine fix.

If you are vegetarian please be advised that, outside of the cities, it is hard to guarantee that dishes are 100% vegetarian. Most Japanese dishes involve miso, dashi or soy sauce, all of which contain fish and vegetarianism is not a concept that is widely understood.

Included evening meals will generally be kaiseki style, this is a traditional Japanese multi-course meal including multiple small dishes freshly prepared with locally-sourced seasonal ingredients. Meals are generally served at low tables, and you will be required to sit on cushions on the floor. Knives and forks will be rarely seen, be prepared to use chopsticks. Outside of the cities breakfasts will also be exclusively Japanese style.

Accommodation

For this trip you will experience several different types of accommodation in keeping with the locations you are staying to provide a true taste of Japan. Whilst in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka you will stay in comfortable 3* or 4* hotels with all the facilities you would expect from a city hotel including en-suite bathrooms, air-conditioning, TV and most have a small fridge too. Space is a premium in Japanese cities so hotels are multi-storey and rooms are generally compact and cosy.

Whilst on the trails you will have the opportunity to stay in smaller traditional accommodations including Ryokans and Minshukus for a classic Japanese experience. Ryokan are traditional Japanese-style inns and may be a modern concrete or traditional wooden structure, with traditional rooms consisting of a tatami matting (straw matting) floor and a futon which is laid out by the staff in the evening for sleeping. The rooms are private and have en-suite facilities as well as communal hot spring style baths (segregated by sex). In the evenings meals are enjoyed together and are lovingly prepared by your hosts.

Minshukus are also a type of family-run inns built in a traditional style with tatami matting and futons, however, you may be required to lay out yourself in the evening and they do not usually offer ensuite facilities. These are a slightly less formal style accommodation, a home from home, with warm hospitality and excellent food. Minshukus feel like you are staying with friends and provide a real off the beaten track experience to your trip.

Optional Activities

Private Tour Guides

We offer the option of adding 1 or 2 days of private guiding to help you get the most out of your sightseeing in the cities of Tokyo (Day 2) and / or Kyoto (Day 7). Please let us know your preferred sightseeing choices no later than 60 days prior to departure. Private guiding incurs an additional cost of £300 per guide per day.

Should you choose to add a private guide for either or both of these days, one of our knowledgeable, friendly, professional guides will meet you at your hotel after breakfast and lead you on a full-day tour of Tokyo or Kyoto. You can opt to travel by bus and subway, or by taxi. Your guide will return you to your hotel around 5pm or, if you prefer, will leave you in an alternative location of your choosing.

We are proud of our guides and we engage them directly with our local partner, not via agencies or other third parties.

Includes:

- The guide's fee.
- The guide's own transport by public transport (the guide will pay for their own).
- Entry for the guide to *some* cultural heritage sites (your guide will advise if there is a fee to be paid for their entry).

Does not include:

- Your own transportation between locations.
- Public transport for you (you should pay for this using your Stored Value Transit Card).
- Taxi transport for you or your guide if you prefer to travel by taxi (needs to be paid by you on the spot).
- Admissions to the sites you visit for you, and for your guide where this is not free for the guide.
- Cost of refreshments for you or your guide, such as a coffee break and lunch.
- Tips for the guide as an expression of thanks for time well spent together, although this is not expected or compulsory (a suggested tip amount is JPY 1000 per person per day).

Private Guide Options Day 2 Tokyo:

We have devised three fantastic itineraries for you to choose from, including some of the most famous sights and some lesser-known spots.

Option 1. Yanaka - Echoes of Old Tokyo

Yanaka is one of the coolest areas of Tokyo, where you can experience the traditional and modern side of the city all at once. The area avoided major damage during natural disasters and world wars, so it still oozes charms from times gone by.

- Start from Kiyosumi garden in the quiet residential area where the famous Edo period business

merchant, Kinokuniya Bunzaemon, used to live.

- Stroll through the peaceful streets of Nezu and Yanaka to feel the traditional Edo atmosphere.
- Enjoy snacks from a legendary ice-cream shop or sweet stall on the way to Nezu shrine (one of Japan's oldest shrines).
- Try a lunch of delicious fresh soba noodles at one of the area's famous noodle joints.

Option 2. Harajuku - A Meeting of Old and New

Harajuku, the area around Tokyo's Harajuku Station, is famous for extreme teenage culture and fashion, however there's more to this area than may first meet the eye. In a nearby green oasis you'll find one of Tokyo's major shrines, and the spacious Yoyogi Park. Beautiful ukiyo-e paintings are exhibited in the small Ota Memorial Museum of Art, and the Nezu Museum has an impressive collection of Asian art and a traditional Japanese garden.

- Savour the finest pieces of Japanese art with a visit to the Nezu or Ota museums.
- Stroll along the modern Omotesando avenue with its dual role as gateway to the Meiji Jingu shrine (memorial to the 122nd Japanese Emperor) and modern shopping mecca.
- See exciting modern Japanese architecture and spot the latest fashion trends among the shops and customers of Harajuku.
- Do some crowd-watching at the world-famous intersection in Shibuya to finish the day.

Option 3. Edo Castle and Asakusa - From Shogun to Emperor

(Note: this option not available on Mondays or Fridays).

Edo Castle was home to the powerful Tokugawa shogunate for 260 years, so was the centre of Japan's politics and much intrigue too. Where the castle once stood you'll now find the stately Imperial Palace along with its serene gardens and interesting museums.

Asakusa was Tokyo's leading entertainment district and in the Edo period was home to kabuki theatres and a large red light district. Today it is an area of striking contrasts as large parts of the area were destroyed in air raids in 1945. However the main attraction today is Sensoji, a popular Buddhist temple built in the 7th century. There are fabulous contrasting views towards the modern, monumental 634m-tall Tokyo Sky Tree, Japan's tallest building, on the other side of the Sumida River.

- Explore the site of the former Edo Castle, now the Imperial East Gardens, and imagine its colourful history of fire, love, revenge, and conspiracy.
- Take a break in the Ginza area, Tokyo's traditional shopping mecca.
- Experience striking contrasts between old and new in Asakusa at Sensoji temple and its arcades of traditional shops.

Private Guide Options Day 7 Kyoto:

We have devised three fantastic itineraries for you to choose from, including some of the most famous sights and some lesser-known spots.

Option 1. The Bamboo Forest

Arashiyama is a scenic area nestled at the foot of the mountains on the western outskirts of Tokyo and has deep historical connections with Zen Buddhism. Here you'll find Tenryuji, one of Japan's oldest temples. Dating from 1339, it is designated as number one amongst Kyoto's five major Zen temples. Tenryuji has a very beautiful garden and Sogen Pond, and is famous for its use of 'shakkei' (borrowed scenery). The gardens here were laid out by Muso Soseki, an eminent Zen master. Arashiyama is also famous for its captivating natural bamboo grove.

- Visit Tenryuji, the Temple of the Heavenly Dragon.
- Marvel at the Sogen Pond and 'borrowed scenery' as you walk through Tenryuji's famous gardens.
- Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the Arashiyama Bamboo Grove as you stroll through this majestic emerald green tunnel.
- Glimpse into the world of Japanese poetry with a visit to the lovely old residence of famous Haiku poet Mukai Kyorai.
- Ride on Kyoto's only tram, the hundred-year-old Randen.
- Enjoy the paintings, gardens, and buildings of the exquisite lesser-known Zen Buddhist temple of Myoshinji, founded in the 14th century.
- Explore central Kyoto and the exciting Nishiki food market.

Option 2. Philosophical Eastern Kyoto

The Philosopher's Path is named after Dr. Kitaro Nishida, the most significant and influential Japanese philosopher of the 20th century. It weaves its way along the strip of temples that sit at the base of the Higashiyama Mountains. Visit Nanzenji, Eikando, and Ginkakuji temples, all of which have a fascinating history and beautiful gardens.

- At the start of your walk lose yourself as you explore the expansive grounds and sub-temples of Nanzenji, the headquarters of the Rinzai school of Zen.
- Be intrigued by the unusual Buddha statue and the Hojo pond with its quaint shrine at Eikando temple.
- Meander along paths through symbolic raked white sand sculptures, around a beautiful pond, through pine trees and mosses, at Ginkakuji temple until you reach the Silver Pavilion, one of Kyoto's most notable monuments.
- If you wish, you can visit Hakusasonso, former home of the painter Hashimoto Kansetsu. His wife planted all the cherry trees along the Philosopher's Path for future visitors like you.

Option 3. A Taste of Southern Kyoto

Southern Kyoto is famous as the home of 10,000 torii (shrine gates), and plenty of stunning temples.

- Stroll through streets with white walled old houses.
- Wander through seemingly endless arcades of spectacular vermilion torii.

- Take a sip of sake at the Fushimi Sake Brewery which was founded here, where the purest water flowed down from the mountains.
- Ride the local train to Tofukuji to admire its unique Zen rock garden.
- Walk to the stunning shrine complex of Fushimi Inari to see its myriad vermilion torii gates.
- Experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, the traditional form of hospitality that treasures the unique opportunity and serendipity of every meeting.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday, we recommend a bag/case with wheels to allow you to easily transport it. You will also require a daypack for on the trails. Whilst walking the Nakasendo Trail you will not have access to your main luggage and will need to carry any items you require for days 4-6 in your daypack. You will also be required to carry any items you may need whilst on the Kumano Kodo Trail days 9-11. Space is limited in traditional accommodations such as the minshuku and ryokan, so packing light in your day pack whilst your luggage is forwarded to the larger towns and cities is much more practical. The minshuku and ryokan provide meals, toiletries and a yukata (cotton robe) and shoes are not worn inside Japanese homes (or these styles of home-from home-accommodations), so you really can pack light.

LUGGAGE FORWARDING SERVICE

You will notice when travelling in Japan that nobody seems to be carrying large luggage. Nobody other than the foreign tourists that is! This is because Japan has an extremely extensive, efficient, and reliable delivery service available known as *takuhaibin*. The Japanese never travel with their luggage unless they are driving to their destination, and there is no need for you to either!

The service can be arranged at your accommodation and must be paid for locally (costs approx. 2,000 - 2,500 yen). This service is required on Day 4 to forward your luggage to Kyoto and on Day 9 to forward your main luggage to Yunomine Onsen, and Day 11 to Osaka. Full information regarding the *takuhaibin* will be provided with you travel documents.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Visa Japan

UK and USA passport holders do not require a visa for short stays.

Health & Vaccinations

Severe Allergies

Please inform our KE Sales and support team of any severe allergies you may have before travel. We will always do our best to help but we are unable to guarantee an allergy free environment on our KE trips. We advise that you always carry your own treatment for the allergy with you such as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' if required. We also recommend that you discuss this with your accommodation on arrival so that they can better assist you.

Currency

The unit of currency in Japan is the Japanese Yen.

Preparing for your Holiday

The advantage of a self-guided walking holiday is that you decide the pace however getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. You should be comfortable with walking 3 to 4 hours for consecutive days with two 8 hour days on the Kumano Kodo. The walks are leisurely in length, however the terrain can be steep in parts and paths rocky with tree roots underfoot and you should be confident on uneven terrain.

Climate

Japan's climate is classified as temperate in that it has four distinct seasons. However, a variety of influences including the Siberian air stream and various Pacific Ocean currents give the country a fairly complex climatic pattern. In April/May you can expect temperatures from around 8 - 20 degrees centigrade, in Sept/Oct it will be hotter with highs of around 28/30 degrees centigrade.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- Lonely Planet - Japan
- A Geek in Japan, by Hector Garcia
- Geisha, A Life, by Mineko Iwasaki
- Rice, Noodle, Fish: Deep Travels Through Japan's Food Culture, by Matt Goulding

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Self Guided Equipment List

- Hiking boots with good grip soles
- Functional base layer
- T-shirts
- Hat
- Windproof jacket
- Fleece / extra layer
- Long/short hiking trousers
- Hiking socks
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Rucksack (approx. 20 l)
- Small first aid kit inside your rucksack
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle or hydration pack
- Camera (batteries/memory card)
- Mobile Phone (ensure your data package covers your destination)
- Power bank
- Waterproof phone cover

- Sun glasses
- Personal wash kit
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Tupperware for picnics
- Walking poles
- Headtorch & spare batteries
- Your self-guided route notes

Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

Land Only Information

Please note our 'from price' listed is based on 4 persons on twin or double occupancy, however we can quote for any number of travellers, including solo travellers, contact our sales team for a quote.

This trip is extremely popular and space tends to be limited (there is only so much accommodation along the trails), so we recommend to book very well in advance.

All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. You may even wish to make this holiday part of a bigger adventure or pair it with one of our other holidays. We can arrange additional nights accommodation before or after your self-guided trip, ask our sales team to find out more about this.

Our sales team will be happy to provide you a quote for scheduled flights or alternatively you may wish to book your own flights from your nearest regional airport. If you have a preferred carrier whom you would like to travel with, then please do let us know. Please note all flight prices can only be confirmed once all ground services have been confirmed.

Please DO NOT book your flights before you have received your booking confirmation and your deposit has been taken.

Why Choose KE

Why KE?

This trip is the ultimate insight into Japanese culture. You will not only visit the key cities but also walk along the Nakasendo and Kumano Kodo trails. We have included a bullet train journey, the option to add private guided tours in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka and a tea ceremony to provide the ultimate Japan experience.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 23/11/2024 and the trip is subject to change