

# Rising Sun Japan Walking Explorer

Trip Code: SGJP

Version: SGJP Rising Sun Japan Walking Explorer



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 city guide

## AT A GLANCE

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

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 13 Breakfasts
- 6 Dinners
- 8 nights Hotel
- 3 nights Minshuku
- 2 nights Ryokan

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

# Introduction

This two-week self-guided holiday is filled with everything you need to truly immerse yourself in Japanese culture, in a country where ancient traditions seamlessly intertwine with modern life. Beginning in Japan's vibrant capital, you will step out onto Tokyo's giant Shibuya crossing, the most photographed in the world. Explore this magnificent city where skyscrapers act as bookends to traditional wooden buildings, then escape the centre to hike up Mt. Takao for far-reaching views to Mt. Fuji - stunning in all seasons. Plus, what is a trip to Japan without a ride on a high-speed bullet train? We have included a trip on the Shinkansen as you travel to the countryside, where you will then step back in time to the Edo period and a life more simple as you hike the famed trade and travel route - the Nakasendo Trail. Walking from one quaint village to another through the Kiso Valley, you will be greeted by warm hospitality along your way. To ensure a full Japanese experience, we have also included time in Kyoto, the most culturally rich city in Asia, where you can enjoy a traditional tea ceremony before continuing your adventures, this time following in the footsteps of Samurai and pilgrims as you hike on the Kumano Kodo Trail to reach the awe-inspiring Nachi Taisha Shinto shrine. You will discover a wealth of traditions, myths, and legends with every step, and have the chance to bathe your body and spirit in one of the oldest onsen in Japan. You will end your trip in the bright lights of Osaka, Japan's second city, where you'll be grinning at every turn. Known as a foodie's paradise with bustling alleys filled with quirky restaurants, bars and shops, and where you'll also find ancient castles, shrines, temples and parks juxtaposed with giant fairground attractions and the famous pinball arcades, this is the perfect place to celebrate your experiences in Japan.

Staying in a mix of 3-star and 4-star hotels on a bed and breakfast basis in the cities, and traditional minshuku and ryokan with breakfast and dinner included as well along the trails, you will have the perfect blend of flexibility, local knowledge, and the warm hospitality of old friends. Staying in minshuku and ryokan gives you a unique insight into day-to-day Japanese life including the joys of home-cooked Japanese food.

# Itinerary

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## DAY 1

### **Arrive in Tokyo, transfer to your hotel, and begin your exploration of the city.**

Your trip starts at Tokyo Narita Airport, where your friendly driver will be waiting to take you to your hotel on a shared transfer. Along the 2-hour journey to the city, you can already see the efficiency and forward thinking inherent to Japanese culture as you ride the elevated highways. Depending on the time of your arrival, you may now wish to begin your exploration of this fantastic city, where ancient buildings sit seamlessly amongst skyscrapers, and traditions remain deep-rooted within a leading high-tech society. In the evening, you will be spoilt for choice for places to eat. Tokyo may be filled with famous restaurants run by celebrity chefs, however you do not need to break the bank for a fantastic meal. Much like the yin and yang of Tokyo's architecture, expensive and budget-friendly restaurants are nestled next to each other. TOP TIP: Remember to look up! Space is precious in Japan, so restaurants and shops are built one on top of the other, and the best restaurants are not always the ones at street level.



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 2

### **Experience Tokyo like a local with the option of your own private tour guide.**

Full of excitement after your brief taste of Japanese culture so far, today you can look forward to a more in-depth experience of Tokyo and its many sights. Some 37 million inhabitants - over a quarter of Japan's population - live in Tokyo and its suburbs, making this one of the most populous cities in the world. It will come as no surprise that such a dense population has resulted in a proliferation of skyscrapers and a public transport network that is unrivalled world-wide for its efficiency, cleanliness, and coverage. You will navigate this impressive network to visit the city's many major sights, from the Senso-ji Temple in the old downtown area of Asakusa, the fashion hub of Shibuya with its famous five-way pedestrian crossing, or the surprisingly peaceful parks found throughout the city. If you would prefer to have a guide to help you get to grips with the unique Japanese culture and history in Tokyo, it is possible to add a private guide to your day. We are able to offer you three different guided tours from which to choose according to your interests (please see Optional Activities under Essential Information, or speak with one of our Sales Team for details). If you have arranged a private guide, they will leave you at 5pm allowing you to explore more of the city on your own and to enjoy dinner in one of the many restaurants. We also recommend making a visit to Tokyo Skytree, if you haven't already, for great views over the city - the view is especially good if you are there at sunset.

Meals: **B**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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### DAY 3

## Journey to Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park and hike sacred Mount Takao.

Today you have the opportunity to get out of the big city and enjoy your first hike in Japan. You will hop on the train for the short journey out to the west of Tokyo city to the sacred Mount Takao (Takao-san in Japanese). The mountain is part of a range of wooded mountains that form a natural boundary to Tokyo's urban landscape, and mark the boundary of the Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park. Arriving at the foot of Mount Takao, you have a choice of clearly marked trails leading you to the mountain's summit. The routes vary in difficulty, and all are dotted with small temples, religious statues, and offerings that increase in number as you reach Yakuoin, an attractive temple dedicated to the 'kami' or spirits of the mountains. Many of the routes offer great views, and from the top on a clear day, you can enjoy some great vistas of the magnificent Mount Fuji. The hike to the summit takes around 2-3 hours and, for those seeking a more leisurely option, there is a cable car to the top (not included). If you would like to make your walk a little longer, you can continue along one of the marked routes from the top further into the National Park, and perhaps summit one of the neighbouring peaks. The wonderful thing about Mount Takao is that, although the hike is popular with locals, tourists rarely visit the mountain, so you can get off the beaten track and enjoy the peace of the mountains after a busy couple of days in the city. You end your day by returning to Tokyo for your final night in the city.

Meals: **B**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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### DAY 4

## Ride the famous bullet train and begin your journey along the Nakasendo Way to Tsumago.

This morning, send your bags ahead to Kyoto and travel with just your overnight essentials in your daypack for the next 2 nights. We will provide guidelines in your personal road book about how to transport your luggage. Fuelled by your hotel breakfast today, you will then have the joy and excitement of riding Japan's famous bullet train, the Shinkansen, from Tokyo to Nagoya en-route to begin your journey on the Nakasendo Way. From Nagoya, you then swap onto a local train to Nakatsugawa, the access point for the Kiso Valley where today's section of the Nakasendo Way will take you. Finally, you will hop on the local bus to Magome. The journey takes around 3 hours and, having whizzed out of the city on the bullet train, you will really feel the change of pace as you wind your way towards rural Japan on the local train. Arriving in Magome, you will have time to discover this charming historic village - once an important stop on the Nakasendo Way - that retains its beautiful old wooden houses and traditional

way of life. Next, you will set out on your walk, over the Magome Pass to Tsumago on what is regarded as the most beautiful section that remains of the old Nakasendo Way. The Nakasendo was one of five routes used by the Samurai to travel between Tokyo and Kyoto during the Edo period, and walking it today will reveal a side of Japan seldom seen by either foreigners or Japanese alike. Waterfalls, stone paths, mountain views, and tiny villages all make this a walk not to be missed. Arriving in Tsumago, a charming old post-town, you can check into your traditional accommodation and look forward to a delicious, lovingly prepared meal from your hosts.

Meals: **B D**

 <b>Accommodation</b> Minshuku	 <b>Ascent</b> 326M	 <b>Descent</b> 430M	 <b>Distance</b> 8KM
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## DAY 5

### Delve deeper into the Kiso Valley and walk the Nakasendo Way over the Torii Pass to Narai.

Waking up in the jewel of the Kiso Valley, you will have time to explore the ancient streets of Tsumago and soak up the town's Edo period ambiance, before beginning today's walk on the Nakasendo Way. Walking through the quaint car-free streets, it is hard to believe that you were in the hustle and bustle of futuristic Tokyo just 24 hours earlier. Leaving Tsumago, you continue along the Nakasendo Way to further enjoy the Kiso Valley as you make your way past tea fields and farms, to nearby Nagiso. From here, you will take an enjoyable train journey through the countryside to Yabuhara, where you will once again step out onto the Nakasendo Way. This part of the Way will take you over one of the highest points of the trail as you walk over the Torii Pass situated 1,200m above sea level. Walking through larch forests, passing little mountain shrines and old teahouses, you will descend to Narai accompanied by wonderful views over this well-preserved postal town. Narai is often referred to as 'Narai of a Thousand Houses' as it was once the wealthiest town on the Nakasendo Way and marks the halfway point between Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo). In the heart of the town, you will find a 1-km road lined with beautifully preserved wooden buildings complete with traditional renji-goshi lattice work. Take time to enjoy this photogenic street and perhaps visit one of the former merchant residences, that are now open to the public, before you travel to the Matsumoto area for a ryokan stay and a dinner of local specialties.

Meals: **B D**

 <b>Accommodation</b> Ryokan	 <b>Ascent</b> 450M	 <b>Descent</b> 390M	 <b>Time</b> 2-3 hours	 <b>Distance</b> 11KM
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## DAY 6

### Ride the train through the Japanese landscape to culturally rich Kyoto.

Today you will journey to Kyoto, the cultural heart of Japan. After breakfast, you will make a train journey

of around 3 hours from Matsumoto to Kyoto, with two simple changes along the way. Kyoto is one of the most culturally rich cities in Asia and is home to some 17 UNESCO sites, over 1,600 Buddhist temples, around 400 Shinto shrines, and Zen gardens galore, creating a unique experience for any visitor and really revealing the ancient soul of Japan. Arriving in this captivating city, you can check into your accommodation for the next 3 nights before heading out to experience the city's splendours for yourself.

Meals: **B**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 7

### **Discover Kyoto, with the option of your own private guide, and delight in a traditional tea ceremony.**

In Kyoto you'll feel very much in touch with the rhythms of nature too, as reflected throughout its green spaces, delicate cuisine, and majestic festivals, that all seem to breathe with the seasons. At first glance, it may seem as though Kyoto has not escaped the typical neon lights most Japanese cities have fallen victim to, however you will soon see past the bright lights to unearth the city's treasures. Tucked away quietly among the busy shopping centres are peaceful sacred shrines and time-honoured teahouses, while mysterious geisha scuttle down backstreets. Kyoto's charm lies in these details and, whether you are here for three days or three years, the closer you look the more you will discover. You can choose whether to explore this magnificent city on your own, or have us arrange your own private guide. We are able to offer you three different guided tours from which to choose according to your interests, to help you get further under the skin of this beautiful city (please see Optional Activities under Essential Information, or speak with one of our Sales Team for details). Even if you are exploring your own way without a private guide, you will have the opportunity to join in the unique experience of a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, known as Chanoyu. This traditional form of hospitality is shaped by the unique circumstances of each interaction between a host, their guests, and the tea utensils. This is a mysterious, spiritual, and highly skilled art form where everything is done for the enjoyment and well-being of the guests, with movements and gestures made carefully to demonstrate respect and friendship as the host selects and arranges each piece of beautiful Japanese teaware according to the character of their guests. Each tea gathering must be a unique experience, and great importance is placed on ensuring the same combination of objects is never used twice. You will also learn about the history of the tea ceremony and sample the vivid green, slightly bitter matcha tea that lies at its heart. The tea ceremony is an art form of the geishas - mysterious wonders who are often misunderstood by those outside Japan - who essentially are artists: highly skilled in fan dancing, playing an instrument called a shamisen, and social etiquette, including tea ceremonies.

Meals: **B**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 8

### Learn about the mythical Tengu and seek your fortune in the omikuji as you hike from Kurama to Kibune. Tonight is your final evening in Kyoto.

Today you have the option to escape to the mountains to discover the folklore of the mythical Tengu - the red-faced goblins with long noses said to have trained the samurai hero Minamoto no Yoshitsune - on a hike from Kurama to Kibune. Your morning starts with a 30-minute train journey from Kyoto to the northern hills of Mount Kurama, where samurai were trained by Buddhist practitioners in the 12th century. Arriving at the Kurama Temple, your walk will take you along a beautiful trail to Kibune village to follow a lantern-lined trail to the Kifune Shrine, known for bringing good fortune to those seeking love. Dedicated to the local god of water, Takaokami no Kami, the shrine's proximity to the Kamogawa River has made it a place of spiritual healing as well as a welcome escape from the summer heat. The shrine is also known for its unique omikuji (fortune slips) that tell your fortune when you place them in the sacred water, and you may see locals receiving their fortune. Leaving the shrine behind, you make your way into the town to take the train back to Kyoto, where you will have time to explore more of the city before dinner.

Meals: **B**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel



**Time**  
3 hours



**Distance**  
4KM

## DAY 9

### Follow in the footsteps of pilgrims on your first walk on the Kumano Kodo.

This morning you say farewell to Kyoto, and take the train to the small town of Kii-Tanabe on the mystical Kii Peninsula, the gateway to the historic Kumano Kodo Trail. Before setting out, send your luggage ahead to the inn at Yunomine Onsen or Kawayu so you can walk with just your overnight essentials in your daypack for the next 2 nights once again (details provided in your personal road book). The journey provides another opportunity to experience the famous bullet train to Osaka before you swap to a slower pace of life as you take a scenic coastal rail journey to Kii-Tanabe, accompanied by magnificent views out across the ocean to Shikoku and Awaji Island. You will have time to stretch your legs and explore Kii-Tanabe before taking a short local bus journey to Takijiri. This town is famed not only as the gateway to the Kumano Kodo, but also for its many fantastic seafood restaurants and Izakaya pubs (meaning 'stay-drink-place'). An Izakaya is a bit like a Japanese version of a tapas bodega as it serves small plates, making it a great option for grabbing a bite to eat before you take the short bus journey to Takijiri where you will begin your walk. Your route begins at a visitor centre, where you can discover more about the historic trail, before you make your way up through woodland, passing Oji on your way where you will see pilgrims stamping their records. The Oji are subsidiary shrines dotted along the route to guide and protect pilgrims on their journeys, as well as providing great places to rest along the way. Arriving at the ridge-top village of Takahara, you will be welcomed to your traditional accommodation by your hosts for the evening. Here, you can relax and enjoy the wonderful views over the Hatenashi mountain range (particularly at sunset) while your friendly hosts prepare your evening meal.

Meals: **B D**

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 <b>Accommodation</b> Minshuku	 <b>Ascent</b> 370M	 <b>Time</b> 2 hours	 <b>Distance</b> 5KM
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## DAY 10

### Wake to magnificent views over the Hatenashi Mountains, ascend to the high point of the trail (690m), and discover the story of Emperor Kazan as you hike to Chikatsuyu.

Feeling rested, you will wake to the tranquillity of Takahara and the warm hospitality of your hosts before stepping out onto the Kumano Kodo once more. Today's sections of the trail will take you through contrasting landscapes: first past rice fields as you leave the village to ascend through peaceful woodlands, passing more Oji as you go; then, before long, the woodlands fade as you reach the Jujo-oji clearing where you are greeted with lovely views, making this a popular picnic spot. Reaching the highest point of the trail (690m), you discover what remains of the Uwada-jaya Teahouse before descending to pass the Three-Fold Moon Viewing area, then making your way up towards the Hashioritoge Pass. Here you will find an unusual statue of Kazan - one of the first abdicated emperors to undertake a pilgrimage to Kumano - sitting on a horse and a cow. When you have finished observing this unusual character, you descend a staircase to a wonderful viewpoint from where you can see your final goal in the valley below - Chikatsuyu. Making your way down into the valley, once again you will be greeted with a warm welcome from your hosts for the evening and a tasty home cooked supper.

Meals: **B D**

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 <b>Accommodation</b> Minshuku	 <b>Ascent</b> 480M	 <b>Descent</b> 520M	 <b>Time</b> 4-5 hours	 <b>Distance</b> 10KM
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## DAY 11





### Walk to the Kumano Shrine, Hongu, with a choice of routes, and bathe in the waters of a traditional onsen.

Before setting out, send your luggage ahead to Osaka so you can walk with just your overnight essentials in your daypack for the next 2 nights once again (details provided in your personal road book). Today you have the option to shorten your walk on the trail, however those who are feeling energetic will begin by walking from your Minshuku this morning, following the Kumano Kodo as it makes its way through small villages and over the Kii Mountains, to the Kumano shrine at Hongu. Along your way, you will be in awe of the giant cedar trees at the Nonaka-no ipposugi shrine and, if you are lucky, you will spot monkeys in the trees too. You will also have the opportunity to purify yourself at one of the Chozuya water basin, before making your way into the heart of the sacred Kii Mountains. Arriving at Hongu, you will enter through the Hongu Oyunohara Torii Gate, the largest torii gate in the world standing at 33.9m tall and 42m wide. The Kumano shrine at Hongu is one of the three 'Grand Shrines of Kumano', said to be the entrance to the land of Yomi, the 'other world' to which spirits travelled to in Japanese mythology. Take your time to



explore the shrine and enjoy this spiritual place before getting the bus to Yunomine Onsen, one of the oldest natural hot spring villages in Japan. You can enjoy a warm soak in the waters of one of the oldest onsen in Japan before dining on a delicious meal prepared for you by your hosts. Today's route is the longest of the week, however it is possible to use the local bus service to reduce your walk to 15 km or 7 km, depending on how you are feeling. If you opt to walk the full route, we recommend rising early to allow yourself plenty of time to take in all of the charms of the pilgrimage. Should our accommodation at Yunomine Onsen not be available, you may stay at the nearby Kawayu Onsen instead, famous for the geothermal waters that bubble up from the riverbed, allowing for hot-water bathing in crystal clear waters in a lovely natural setting.

Meals: **B D**


	<b>Accommodation</b> Ryokan		<b>Ascent</b> 820M		<b>Descent</b> 1140M		<b>Distance</b> 24KM
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## DAY 12

### Sail down the Kumano River on a Kawabune, visit Shingu and the Hayatama Taisha, and relax in the onsen of Kii Katsuura.

Feeling refreshed and invigorated from your stay at the onsen, today you will experience the Kumano Kodo in a different way - by Kawabune (a flat-bottomed wooden boat) - gliding along the Kumano River (subject to availability & weather conditions). Following the route taken by many pilgrims before you, you will sail downriver to Shingu, home of the Kumano Hayatama Taisha, one of the three 'Grand Shrines of Kumano'. The Hayatama Taisha has occupied the banks of the river since the 12th century, although it has undergone some rebuilding in recent years. According to Shinto creation myth, three kami descended to earth, landing on a rock near the shrine that is worshipped as a sacred object. Take your time to explore the shrine before boarding the train to Kii-Katsuura at the mouth of the river. Kii-Katsuura was once a small fishing port, and today is a popular onsen town after the discovery of the outstanding hot springs. You will have the opportunity to enjoy the beach and relax in the onsen at your hotel before dinner - the perfect end to your day on the Kumano Kodo.

Meals: **B D**

	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel
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## DAY 13

## Climb the ancient staircase from Daimonzaka to reach your final goal of the Kumano Kodo - Kumano Nachi Taisha - then take the train to Osaka to celebrate a great two weeks in Japan.

If you are an early riser, we recommend venturing to the bustling fish market before breakfast, a popular attraction in the town. Watch the tuna auction and how the fishermen seamlessly throw the fish around the market as if taking part in a well-rehearsed dance. After breakfast at your hotel, you will take the bus to Daimonzaka where you will follow an ancient 600m-long stone staircase lined with century-old cedar and camphor trees, to Nachi Taisha. As you climb the 267 stairs through peaceful woodland, you will be spurred on by the knowledge you are on your way to reaching your final goal on the Kumano Kodo. Arriving at the top of the stairs, you will catch your first glimpse of the Kumano Nachi Taisha shrine, perfectly placed in front of Nachi-no-Otaki Falls, the tallest waterfalls in Japan with an uninterrupted drop of 133m. For thousands of years, pilgrims, emperors, samurai, and now you too, have made the special journey to pray here. Enjoy your time exploring the final of the three 'Grand Shrines of Kumano' of your journey, before taking the train to Osaka where you can raise a glass to a fantastic two weeks in Japan.

Meals: **B**

	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel		<b>Ascent</b> 600M		<b>Distance</b> 4KM
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### DAY 14

## Explore Osaka before making your onward journey.

Wake up in Japan's second city, a place full of life and bright lights. Take a stroll through the city, get in touch with your inner child and take a ride on one of the city's big wheels, or pay a visit to Osaka Castle before making your onward journey. Osaka really comes alive after dark when the city's residents finish work and take full advantage of its many restaurants, bars and attractions. If you have the time, we recommend staying an additional night to experience Osaka and perhaps enjoy a day trip to Nara (a must during blossom season) - please ask our Sales Team for details.

Meals: **B**

## Holiday Information

## What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Self-guided information pack containing your map and route notes
- Japan guide book
- Shared airport transfers
- Trains/public transport as described
- Stored Value Transit Card pre-loaded with 3000 JPY for use on local trains
- Tea ceremony
- Kawabune boat ride or taxi transfer to Shingu according to boat availability

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Travel to Narita Airport
- Travel from Kansai Airport
- Visas (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Luggage transfers
- Local bus Nakatsugawa to Magome and buses on the Kumano Kodo
- Private city guides (Day 2 and / or Day 7)
- Gratuities for guides
- 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

The trip starts at Tokyo Narita Airport, or at your hotel in Tokyo - please advise our Sales Team about where you would like to begin your trip. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis, allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method that best suits you.

The nearest airport is Tokyo Narita Airport. If you are beginning your trip at this airport, we will include a shared transfer for you from the airport to your accommodation in Tokyo. 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 upon checkout on the last morning of your itinerary. If you are then heading straight to Kansai Airport for your onward journey, we include a shared transfer from your Osaka hotel or a train journey from Osaka's Nanba Station, direct to Kansai Airport. The train option is a short journey of approximately 35-minutes on the Nankai Rapid bullet train with reserved seats for the best train time for your onward journey. If you are making your own onward journey instead, a transfer to Kansai Airport will not be included.

## Meal Plan

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

The included evening meals will generally be kaiseki style - this is a traditional Japanese multi-course meal consisting of several small dishes freshly prepared using 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 are rarely seen, so 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 draws on umami flavours, that really come through thanks to the slow cooking processes used in Japanese cooking to prepare dishes including broths and soups where the flavours are richly intensified. You can look forward to many rice and noodle dishes such as the popular ramen (Chinese-style wheat noodles served in broth), udon (a thick wheat noodle), and soba dishes such as yakisoba (a thinner buckwheat noodle).

Seafood and shellfish are staples in Japanese cuisine, not just because in 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 melt-in-the-mouth meat, to the traditional warming bowls of ramen, with each region having its own take on the dish. However, a favourite of ours here at KE is the Takoyaki octopus balls of Osaka. This is a deliciously moreish street food of consisting of pieces of octopus and other ingredients such as tempura scraps, green onion, and pickled ginger bound together in a wheat-based flour batter to create balls that are then grilled or fried in a specially moulded pan a bit like a Dutch pancake grill. These delectable balls are then served topped with teriyaki sauce, tempura batter scraps, and mayonnaise. We highly recommend trying them, although we warn you it is a test of patience to wait for them to cool down before taking a bite! If you are not a fan of octopus, fear not, as you can also find Takoyaki made without the octopus, often switching it for pieces king oyster mushroom instead. Yum!

Other fantastic Japanese cuisine experiences include Teppanyaki, where diners sit at a hot iron grill and watch their dishes being cooked in front of them (usually with some theatrics). Another is Shabu-shabu, where diners sit around a large cooking pot filled with broth and are served a selection of tofu, raw meat (usually thinly sliced pork and beef) and vegetables that are then dipped in the boiling broth and dipping sauces before being eaten.

For food on the go, you can always be sure to find Bao buns and Onigiri in local convenience stores. Bao buns are parcels of steamed dough containing a tasty filling, often pork, and grabbing one is the Japanese version of grabbing a sandwich. Onigiri are rice parcels, usually triangular, with a tasty sour or salty filling such as pickled plum or salted salmon, and come wrapped in nori seaweed. Both make great snacks for while you are out exploring.

As in most of Asia, breakfast is really a version of lunch or the evening meal. At breakfast in Japan you generally won't find a croissant or bowl of cereal - instead you're likely to find a warm bowl of ramen or perhaps Omu-raisu, an omelette made with thin fried scrambled egg, filled with fried rice, and topped with ketchup.

If you are vegetarian, please be advised that, outside the cities, vegetarianism is not a concept that is widely understood. Whilst vegetarian options are available they are limited, and it is difficult to guarantee that 'vegetarian' dishes are 100% vegetarian as most Japanese dishes contain dashi, which typically contains fish. Strict vegetarian diets, vegan diets, and or gluten free diets will be difficult to accommodate in Japan.

The included evening meals will generally be kaiseki style - this is a traditional Japanese multi-course meal consisting of several small dishes freshly prepared using 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 are rarely seen, so be prepared to use chopsticks.

## Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

## Accommodation

On this trip, you will experience several different types of accommodation in keeping with the locations in which you are staying, to provide you with a true taste of Japan. Whilst in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, you will stay in comfortable 3-star or 4-star hotels with all the facilities you would expect from a city hotel including en-suite bathrooms, air-conditioning, TV, and (in most) a small fridge too. Space is at 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 Ryokan and Minshuku, for a classic Japanese experience. Ryokan are traditional Japanese-style inns and may take the form of a modern concrete or a traditional wooden structure. They generally have tatami rooms that have a tatami (straw matting) floor on which a traditional futon mattress is laid out directly by staff in the evening, in time for going to bed. There may also be cushions and/or chairs and a table all very low to the ground in such rooms, so be prepared to be able to get all the way up and down. The rooms are private and have en-suite facilities as well as access to communal hot spring style baths (segregated by gender). In the evenings, meals are enjoyed together with other guests and are lovingly prepared by your hosts.

Minshuku are also a type of family-run inn built in a traditional style with tatami matting and futons, however you may be required to lay out your futon yourself in the evening and they do not usually offer en-suite facilities. These are a slightly less formal style of accommodation, a home from home, with warm hospitality and excellent food. Staying at a Minshuku feels as if you are staying with friends, and provides a real off-the-beaten-track experience.

## 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 on 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 foreign tourists that is! This is because Japan has an extremely extensive, efficient, and reliable delivery service available known as *takuhaibin* or *Takkyubin*. The Japanese never travel with their luggage unless they are driving to their destination, and there is no need for you to do so 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

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## 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.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

**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.

### 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 has a temperate climate, 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 complex climatic pattern. In April and May, you can expect average temperatures of around 8 - 20 degrees centigrade; in September and October it will be hotter, with highs of around 28 - 30 degrees centigrade. The summer months are the hottest, and August temperatures can reach 35 degrees centigrade or more. Rainy seasons occur from mid-June to July and, especially, in September and October, when there can be torrential rains associated with tropical cyclones. Always be ready with your waterproofs just in case!

## 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](http://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](http://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

- Japan - Lonely Planet
- A Geek in Japan - Hector Garcia
- Geisha, A Life - Mineko Iwasaki
- Rice, Noodle, Fish: Deep Travels Through Japan's Food Culture - Matt Goulding
- Etiquette Guide to Japan - Boye Lafayette De Mente / Geoff Botting
- Abroad in Japan - Chris Broad

## 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
- Hiking socks
- Long / short hiking trousers
- Functional base layer top and leggings
- T-shirts

- Fleece / extra warm layer
- Windproof jacket
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Hat, gloves, and neck gaiter
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Sunhat
- Small first aid kit inside your rucksack
- Water bottle or hydration pack
- Mobile Phone (ensure your data package covers your destination)
- Power bank
- Waterproof phone cover
- Camera (and batteries / memory card)
- Reusable sealable picnic boxes for picnics
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Walking poles
- Headtorch with spare batteries
- Personal wash kit

- Your self-guided route notes
- Rucksack (approx. 20L)

## 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 gives you the ultimate insight into Japanese culture, ancient and modern. As well as visiting the key cities, you will also walk along parts of the Nakasendo and Kumano Kodo trails. To help give you the quintessential Japan experience we have included a bullet train journey, a tea ceremony, and the option to add private guided tours in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka.



**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 18/03/2025 and the trip is subject to change