



ADVENTURES
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JAPAN'S KUMANO KODO PILGRIMAGE TRAIL

Trip Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Traveling the Kumano Kodo Nakahechi Trail, one of 2 pilgrimage Unesco designated trails in the world!
- Experiencing both modern and rural traditional Japan
- Staying in traditional inns with their reputation for hospitality
- Learning about Japanese history and culture with our local guide
- Visiting Kyoto, one of the most dynamic modern cities in the world

Phone: 877-439-4042

Outside the US: 970-833-3132

Email: info@goodadventure.com

TRIP AT A GLANCE

- Location:** Kyoto, 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 Kansai (KIX) or Osaka (ITM) International Airports (shuttle can be provided) anytime on the last day of the trip, Day 10.

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 get to experience both the beauty and culture along with some of the history, all while walking the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail. The Kumano Kodo refers to a network of pilgrimage trails through the southern Kansai region of Japan. The Kodo (old ways) are an important part of the region's UNESCO designation and have been in use for over 1000 years. The Kodo are the only pilgrimage paths besides the Camino de Santiago to be designated a world heritage site and we get to experience these amazing and ancient trails.

Rating

This trip is designed for women who want to combine hiking off the beaten track in the Japanese countryside, learning about Japanese history and culture and walk one of the 2 pilgrimage UNESCO designated trails in the world. Note: Although our focus will be more on the history and culture, the walks are moderate to strenuous. Women should be in good physical condition and able to hike for three to six hours a day with elevation gains between 550 - 1000 feet. **Rating:** 1 2 **3** 4 5

What's Included

- An English-speaking female Japanese tour leader and an AGC guide
- 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
- 9 breakfasts, 8 lunches, and 7 dinners (see itinerary)
- All transportation during the trip including group airport transfer Day 1 and 10 of the trip (from KIX or ITM to Kyoto) by shared taxi.
- Baggage transfer on 2 occasions

What's not included: Travel to and from Japan, airport transfer outside referenced group transfers, beverages at meals, snacks, 1 dinner, 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: Mitsui Garden Shimachi Bettei 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: Mitsui Garden Shimachi Bettei 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 the Kii Peninsula and the small coastal town of Tanabe. The surrounding mountains are full of orchards growing Mikan (mandarin oranges) and Ume (Japanese plums) and we'll enjoy some peaceful time in the Orchard picking (and sampling) some fruit. After, we visit the local farmers market, which champions local the wonderful local produce. Our home for the night is a renovated schoolhouse, who's aim is to promote and educate visitors to the region on the benefits of sustainable tourism. The project is a collaboration of local farmers who are proud of their local community and want to see it thrive. The lodge champions the slow food movement and local farmers wives come and cook for guests, providing them with delicious home cooked meals.

Overnight: Akizuno Garten, Renovated schoolhouse organic farm stay (B, L, D)

DAY 4

Today, we make our way to a local temple for an early morning zazen meditation session. Here we can enjoy the calm and contemplate on our day ahead. Next, we make our way back to the lodge and enjoy a cooking experience as we make our own bento box for the day before beginning our first hike along the Kumano Kodo Nakahechi Trail. Our walk begins in Takijiri where we climb steadily up an ancient mountain path. The walk today is short but steep and we're rewarded with spectacular views over the valley before making our way into the small village of Takahara.

Hiking: about 2 hours, 3 miles, ascent 1,200 feet. Overnight: Nonaka Sanso, minshuku (B, L, D)

DAY 5

Once again we'll say 'goodbye' to our luggage as we send it ahead to be reunited with us tomorrow evening. After breakfast we make our way to Takahara and continue along the Kumano Kodo trail as we make our way to the small village of Chikatsuyu. As we walk through forested paths, we'll pass small Oji shrines that have been placed there to protect and guide pilgrims. Upon arrival in Chikatsuyu we will be transferred to Yunomine Onsen for our overnight accommodation. Our main luggage will be sent ahead to the ryokan where we stay tomorrow night, so today we'll carry only what we need for the night.

Hiking: about 4-5 hours, 6.5 miles; ascent 1,575 feet/descent 1,700 feet. Overnight: Yunominesou, Ryokan (B, L, D)

DAY 6

Today we hike two scenic sections of the Kumano Kodo trail, passing ridge-top villages and oji shrines as we make our way to Hongu Shrine. The first section of the walk takes us from Chikatsuyu to Kobiro, where we take a local bus to Hoshinmon-Oji. From here we begin our descent down to Hongu Grand Shrine. Moved from its original location just over 1km away, the shrine is on the Kumano Sanzan or three grand shrines of Kumano. The mythological three-legged raven is the shrine's symbol and represents the three Grand Shrine of the Kumano, Hongu, Nachi and Hayatama. If it seems familiar, it's also the same symbol used by the Japanese Football team. After leaving the shrine, we take a local bus (15mins) to Yunomine Hot Springs, one of the oldest in Japan. Hiking: about 4 hours. 8 miles; ascent 1,055feet/descent 1,180 feet. Overnight: Yunominesou, Ryokan (B, L, D)

DAY 7

Today, we have a wonderful opportunity to return to Hongu to participate in a local craft that has been slowly going out of fashion but is now part of campaign to revive its ancient traditions. We'll learn the craft of washi paper making by using traditional Japanese methods before taking our paper back to the priests at the neighboring shrine and they will inscribe your paper with the shrine's details to create a traditional souvenir of your visit. Today we have the later afternoon to relax in our hot spring ryokan (a great way to soothe the muscles are the past couple of days hiking). Hiking: about 3.5 hours, 4 miles; 1,345 ascent/descent: 1,065 feet. Overnight: Yunominesou, Ryokan (B, L, D)

DAY 8

This morning, we will send our bags ahead of us overnight to Kyoto. They will meet us tomorrow at our accommodation. Meanwhile, we continue on to Nachi-san, the location of Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine, one of the three Grand Shrines of Kumano and Nachi-taki waterfall. From Nachi, we travel by local bus to the coastal town to Kii-Katsuura where we will spend our final night in the Kumano region in a Japanese style hot spring hotel. Overnight: Japanese Style Hotel (B, L, D)

DAY 9

This morning we leave the coast and make our way back to Kyoto. Upon arrival we'll have some free time to explore and maybe pick up a late minute souvenir or two before our farewell dinner. Overnight: Western style hotel, Mitsui Garden Shinmachi Bettei (B,L, D)

DAY 10

We must bid farewell to Japan and our Japanese guide this morning. She will assist us with a shared taxi transfer has been pre-arranged to take us back to Kansai International (KIX) or Osaka International Airport (ITM) for our departure flight from Japan, which you can schedule for any convenient time. (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 shared taxi transfer back to your airport of departure. on Day 10.

If you would like assistance with airfare, we recommend contacting our AirDesk Partner, [Exitto 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 Exitto, 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 \$50 per ticket.

Accommodations

We will be staying in three different types of accommodation.

- In Kyoto, we will stay in modern Western-style hotels (3 nights). While rooms are generally smaller than in the US and Canada, all have en-suite facilities.
- In Tanabe, Yunomine Onsen, and Kii-Katsuura 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 ryokans have both en suite bathrooms (with the exception of some older buildings) and communal hot spring style baths (segregated by sex). In one town we stay in a 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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