Japan: Nakasendo Trail and Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage

Trip Code: JNK

Version:

WALK & TREK	GUIDED GROUP	5 MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Immerse yourself in serene nature on the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage
- Be transported to Edo Period Japan with 2 days walking on the Nakasendo Trail
- Discover the bright lights of Tokyo and the zen gardens and temples of Kyoto

- Sleep in traditional ryokan with their own onsen ‘hot spring’ baths
- Experience the intricacies of Japanese culture

AT A GLANCE

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

The Nakasendo Trail connected Kyoto and Tokyo during the age of the samurai. We’ll walk some of the best sections of this mountainous trail, including visits to the ‘post towns’ of Tsumago and Magome. Their beautifully preserved cobbled streets and dark wood, lattice-front houses evoke Japan’s Edo period glory.

During our 3-day Kumano Kodo pilgrimage, we’ll take on a challenging trek between two of Kumano’s grand shrines. Our path through the heart of these sacred mountains, where nature is worshipped and Shinto gods dwell in thundering waterfalls, winds through tranquil ancient forests, with spectacular mountain and ocean views – a feast for the body and soul.

We will experience the warmth of Japanese hospitality staying in traditional ryokan and minshuku; sleeping on futon beds, dining on traditional multi-course meals, and relaxing in soothing hot thermal springs.

Additionally included are 3 nights in dazzling, future-chasing Tokyo and 2 days to explore the peaceful Zen gardens and temples of Kyoto. We’ll utilize Japan's excellent public transport throughout, including a journey on the world-famous high-speed bullet train.

This trip is an excellent way to experience the history and culture of Japan. You'll return home a step closer to understanding the unique Japanese way of life.

Is this holiday for you?

This holiday is graded as moderate. On the Nakasendo Trail, our hikes will last for around 4 hours with moderate amounts of ascent and descent. Most of the walking is on good, soft paths, and partly on paved roads.

On the Kumano Kodo, we will encounter some more demanding sections with long, steep ascents and descents on paved and cobbled paths. Our most challenging day will be walking the Ogumotori-goe from Koguchi to Nachi, where we must climb 800m in just 5km on the intimidatingly named ‘Dogiri-zaka’ (torso-splitting slope!). We’ll be sure to take this section in our stride.

We will sleep in a combination of hotels and traditional ryokan and minshuku. In the traditional accommodation, we will spend multiple nights sleeping on futon beds, which are essentially bedding and mattresses rolled out on a tatami mat floor.

Sightseeing in Tokyo, Kamakura, and Kyoto will involve a combination of walking and public transport, so we can expect to be actively walking (on our feet) for several hours on each of these days.

We will utilize public transport throughout, using a combination of buses and trains. This is simply the best way to travel in Japan, and it makes the holiday a very immersive experience. This does mean that we will be responsible for loading and unloading our baggage and walking with it to/from our accommodations.

A wonderful part of Japanese culture is the cuisine, so we recommend you brush up on your chopstick skills before visiting Japan; knives and forks may not always be available, and the culinary delights will be irresistible

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- Shared shuttle airport transfer if arriving on Day 1
- Train from Osaka Hotel to Kansai Airport if departing on Day 14
- JP Rail Pass and pre loaded IC card (to cover included transport)
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- All land transport required by the itinerary
- All activities/excursions/entrance fees mentioned unless specified as 'optional'

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Airport transfers other than group transfers
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Tips
- Miscellaneous personal expenditure - drinks and souvenirs etc

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

You can arrive at any time on Day 1. The group will meet at the designated hotel in Tokyo on the morning of Day 2.

Shared shuttle transfers from Tokyo Haneda and Tokyo Narita airports are included for those arriving on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary. The transfer from Tokyo Haneda takes approximately 20 minutes, while the transfer from Tokyo Narita takes around 90 minutes.

On the final day of the Land Only itinerary, you will need to take the train from a station near our hotel in Osaka to Kansai International Airport. The journey takes approximately 10 minutes. The train fare can be purchased using the supplied prepaid travel card (IC card).

Meal Plan

All breakfasts, 6 lunches and 7 dinners are included in the holiday price.

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.

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. Rice, and noodles such as Udon and Soba, are ubiquitous. Seafood and shellfish is very common, served grilled or raw as sashimi or sushi, as well as soy products, like tofu. Broths and soups, such as Miso, are also very typical. Seasonal vegetables will feature prominently and may come served in a broth, lightly battered (tempura), or pickled. These items are generally served at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Our 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 and included lunches during the walking sections of our holiday will usually be bento boxes provided by our accommodations.

When food is not included, your tour leader will be able to recommend the best places to eat and to help arrange group meals. In towns and cities there will be a variety of restaurants and street-food stalls offering extensive menus, which often have pictures to make ordering easier.

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. It will be a good idea to bring some of your own food with you to help supplement your diet and you will also be able purchase snacks in shops. The same applies to those following a vegan.

For those with celiac disease, unfortunately, we are unable to cater for you on this trip. This is due to the prevalence of soy sauce and other cooking ingredients commonly used in Japanese cuisine. If you have a mild gluten intolerance and are interested in joining the trip, please get in touch and we can discuss whether the trip would be suitable for you.

Accommodation

During the holiday, you will spend 7 nights in comfortable hotels, which are well located for public transport, with 3 nights in Tokyo, 3 nights in Kyoto and 1 night in Osaka.

In Kiso Fukushima (2 nights) and in Yunomine Onsen (2 nights) we will stay in traditional ryokan, with their own onsen (communal hot spring bath) for those wishing to experience this unique Japanese ritual. At the ryokan it is usual to find a cotton robe (yukata) and slippers provided for your comfort and it is normal to wear these for dinner as well as whilst relaxing in the evening.

All rooms at the hotels and at the ryokan have private bathrooms.

In Koguchi (1 night) and Nachisan (1 night) we will stay in simple minshuku with shared bathroom facilities.

Ryokan are traditional Japanese Inns, Minshuku are similarly traditional but usually with more basic facilities and are more akin to a family run B&B. Whilst staying at the ryokan and minshuku we will experience traditional Japanese lifestyle and hospitality, sleeping in a simple room on a futon bed, with a tatami mat covered floor, and enjoying local cuisine served by our welcoming hosts.

Accommodation is based on twin share. If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired with another single client of the same sex. A limited number of single rooms are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights at the group hotel are available on request.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional and qualified tour leader.

Altitude

This holiday does not involve any significant ascent to altitude and we would not expect any altitude issues with this trip.

Spending Money

Approximately £450 per person (or equivalent in US dollars or Euros) should be allowed for non-included meals, drinks, snacks, and miscellaneous expenses.

Japan is mainly a cash society and it is best to travel with cash. You can obtain yen prior to travel or money changing facilities are available at the airport and in most towns/cities if you would prefer to change your money on arrival. Your Tour Leader will be able to advise.

Please note you may have difficulty using credit and debit cards issued outside Japan. Cirrus, Maestro, Link and Delta cash cards are not widely accepted. Japanese post offices, 7-Eleven stores and JP Post Bank often have international cash machines. Check with your bank before travelling and take sufficient alternative sources of money for the duration of your stay.

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is not customary in Japan, in fact, if you try to tip in hotels/restaurants it may be refused. Some higher end restaurants may add a 10% service charge to your bill. You may want to tip your Tour Leader to say thank you, or handing over small gift is also a good way to show your satisfaction. If you tip your Tour Leader money should be placed inside of an envelope and presented quietly. As a guide, £2-3 a day would be appropriate.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one main piece of luggage and one daypack. Your main luggage should be a soft-shell suitcase with wheels or, ideally, a large backpack with wheels.

Please bring luggage that is manageable and can easily fit into the luggage racks or overhead storage areas on trains. A medium-sized suitcase or travel bag is ideal – large or bulky cases may be difficult to store and handle during transfers.

Another reason to keep your main luggage as small and lightweight as possible is that you will be required to regularly carry your luggage on and off public transportation and to/from accommodation (no more than a 10 to 15-minute walk).

For international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the ‘Dates and Prices’ table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

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.

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 including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa Japan

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

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The unit of currency in Japan is the Japanese Yen.

Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking 3 to 7 hours for consecutive days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

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 May/Oct/Nov you can expect temperatures from around 10 - 20 degrees centigrade. We will be hiking in mountainous regions and it is possible we will encounter sun, rain, fog and wind at times. It is important to pack for hot, cold and wet weather.

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. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

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.

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

Equipment List

Please try and keep the weight of your baggage to a minimum. See the ‘baggage allowance’ section for further details.

YOU SHOULD BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Hiking boots/shoes
- Sandals/trainers
- Socks
- Walking socks
- Trekking trousers
- T-shirts (quick drying)
- Thin long sleeve top/shirt
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Lightweight waterproof jacket/Poncho
- Underwear
- Shorts
- Sunhat
- Sunglasses
- Daypack
- Water bottles 1 Litre x2

- Selection of dry bags (to keep luggage contents dry)
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Basic First Aid Kit - You should bring your own personal first aid kit consisting of the following: throat lozenges, painkillers (anti-inflammatory), antiseptic cream/spray, plasters and blister treatment, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite). Glucose tablets are a good idea.

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE OPTIONAL:

- Travel clothes
- Trekking poles (highly recommended)
- Umbrella
- Insect repellent - (DEET)
- Camera
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

NOTES

Luggage: A soft bag/suitcase with wheels/large rucksack is most suitable. Please keep this as small and lightweight as possible as you will have to do a fair bit of carrying on and off public transportation and to/from accommodation. If your luggage has a rigid frame, the height should not exceed 82 cm or it will not fit into the lockers.

Remember to bring sandals or comfortable shoes for sightseeing, we will be on our feet a lot. These should be easy to take on and off, as shoes are not worn inside most buildings in Japan!

Land Only Information

Please refer to the 'Joining Arrangements & Transfers' within Holiday Information for further details.

Flights and other transport to your destination should not be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the departure is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for joining in Tokyo. A shared shuttle transfer from Tokyo HANEDA or Tokyo NARITA is included on Day 1. The holiday ends in Osaka. The train fair to Kansai Airport can be purchased with the pre paid travel card (IC card) supplied.

Flight Inclusive Information

Limited seats are available at the advertised flight price, please book as early as you can. If we are unable to secure seats at the price shown, or you have requested regional departures and/or upgrades, we will provide you with an alternative quote. It is likely that flight payment will be in advance of your final holiday balance. Booking a flight inclusive package means you will benefit from full financial protection, eases your holiday planning, and leaves us to deal with airlines and schedule changes. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will offset the carbon of your flight.

Regional departures and/or alternative carriers are available on request.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Tokyo Haneda or Narita Outbound flights will depart the UK early evening, arriving in the morning. Return flights will depart Osaka KANSAI airport in the morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK in the evening.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

This Japan holiday has become one of our fastest-selling worldwide – and for good reason. We keep group sizes small, choose exceptional traditional accommodations, and build in the time you need to truly settle into each region rather than rush through it. From walking the most atmospheric stretches of the Nakasendo to an immersive pilgrimage on the Kumano Kodo, Crafted for travellers who want to experience Japan beyond the surface, with expert leaders, outstanding food and a beautifully balanced programme- its Japan the KE way.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 14/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change