

Self-Guided Walking in Japan

Trip Code: SGJP

Version: SGJP Self-Guided Walking in Japan



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

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

[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

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DAY 1

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

Your trip starts in 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 of the Japanese culture as you ride the elevated highways.

Depending on the time of your arrival, you may wish to begin your exploration of this fantastic city. A city where ancient buildings sit seamlessly amongst skyscrapers and traditions are deep rooted within a 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 but you do not need to break the bank for a fantastic meal. Much like the yin and yang of Tokyo's architecture, expensive restaurants sit next to budget friendly.

TOP TIP: Don't forget to look up! Space is precious in Japan so restaurants and shops build one on top of the other and the best restaurants aren't 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 taking a more in depth insight into Tokyo and its many sights.

Over a quarter of all Japanese live in Tokyo and its suburbs, some 12 million inhabitants, making it one of the biggest cities in the world. It will come as no surprise that this intense population has given rise to skyscrapers and an impressive public transport network, unrivalled anywhere in the world for its efficiency, cleanliness and coverage. You will navigate this fantastic 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 throughout the city.

If you would prefer to have a guide to help you get to grips with the unique Japanese culture and history it is possible to add a private guide to your day. We are able to offer you three different guided tours to choose from depending on your interests (please see Optional Activities under Essential Information, or speak with one of our sales team).

If you have arranged a private guide they will leave you at 5pm allowing you to further explore the city on your own and enjoy dinner in one of the many restaurants. We also recommend taking a visit to Tokyo Skytree if you haven't already for great views over the city. The view is especially good if you attend for sunset.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation

Hotel

DAY 3

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

Today you have the opportunity to get out of the big city and enjoy your first Japanese hike. You will hop on the train to take the short journey 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 start of the Chichibu-Tama National Park. Arriving at the foot of the mountain you have a choice of clearly marked trails to reach the top of Mount Takao, varying in difficulty, and all dotted with small temples, religious statues and offerings along the routes, increasing 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 views of the magnificent Mount Fuji. The hike to the summit takes approximately 2-3 hours and for those seeking a more leisurely option there is a cable car to the top too.

If you would prefer to make your walk a little longer you can continue from the top along one of the marked routes further into the National Park and perhaps summit one of the neighbouring peaks. The wonderful thing about Mount Takao is that although it is a popular hike with locals it is rarely visited by tourists, allowing you to 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

DAY 4

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

Fuelled by your hotel breakfast today you begin the Nakasendo Way, but first you have the joy of riding Japan's famous bullet train, Shinkansen, from Tokyo to Nagoya. From here, you then swap to 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 approx. 3 hours and, having whizzed out of the city on the bullet train, you will feel the change of pace as you swap onto the local train and wind your way towards rural Japan. Arriving in Magome you will have time to discover this charming historic village; once an important stop on the Nakasendo Way, today it retains beautiful wooden houses and a traditional way of life.

Setting out on your walk your route will take you to Tsumago via the most beautiful remaining section of the old Nakasendo highway. The Nakasendo was one of the five routes used by 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 lovingly prepared meal from your hosts.

Meals: **B D**

 Accommodation Minshuku	 Ascent 326M	 Descent 430M	 Distance 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 ambience, before beginning today's walk on the Nakasendo Way. Walking through the quaint car-free streets it is hard to believe 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 at 1,200m high. Passing through larch forests, little mountain shrines and old teahouses you will descend to Narai, accompanied by wonderful views over the 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 1km 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, which are now open to the public, before you travel to Matsumoto area for a ryokan stay and a dinner of local specialties.

Meals: **B D**

 Accommodation Ryokan	 Ascent 450M	 Descent 390M	 Time 2-3 hours	 Distance 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 take the approx. 3 hour train journey from Matsumoto to Kyoto, stopping for 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, and 400 Shinto shrines, creating a unique experience for any visitor, which showcases 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 witness the cities splendour 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.**

Kyoto boasts an array of world-class gardens, majestic festivals, and delicate cuisine, all of which reflect the rhythms of nature and the changing seasons. At first glance Kyoto has not escaped the typical neon lights most Japanese cities have fallen victim too, but you will soon see past the bright lights to unearth the cities treasures. Tucked away among the shopping centres are the sacred shrines and time-honoured teahouses which lay quietly between businesses, 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 arrange your own private guide to help you get under the skin of this beautiful city and visit the many must see spots. Please see Optional Activities under Essential Information, or speak with one of our sales team.

You will also have the opportunity to enjoy the unique experience of a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. A tea ceremony is the traditional form of hospitality and treasures the unique opportunity and serendipity of every meeting. It is a practice which is an art form for the Geisha of Japan; a mysterious wonder who are often misunderstood by the west but are essentially artists, highly skilled in fan dancing, shamisen and social etiquette, including tea ceremonies. You will learn about the background of the tea ceremony and sample the bitter traditional matcha that lies at the heart of it.

Meals: **B**

**Accommodation**

Hotel

DAY 8

Learn of the mythical tengu and seek your fortune in the omikuji as you hike from Kurama to Kibune. Spend your final evening in Kyoto.

Today you have the option to escape to the mountains to discover the folklore of the mythical tengu, or red faced goblins with long noses, who are said to have trained the samurai hero Minamoto Yoshitsune, on a hike from Kurama to Kibune. Your morning starts by taking the 30 minute train journey from Kyoto to the northern hills of Mount Kurama. It is here 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, it is the shrines' proximity to Kamogawa River which has made it a place of spiritual healing and a welcomed escape from the summer heat. The shrine is also known for its unique omikuji (fortune slips) which 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 the take the train back to Kyoto where you will have time to further explore the city before dinner.



Accommodation
Hotel



Time
3 hours



Distance
4KM

DAY 9

Follow in the footsteps of the pilgrims on your first walk along 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. The journey provides another opportunity to experience the famous bullet train to Osaka where you swap to a slower pace of life as you take a scenic rail journey along the ocean for magnificent views across to Shikoku and Awaji Island to Kii-Tanabe. You will have time to stretch your legs and explore Kii-Tanabe before taking the short bus journey to Takijiri. The town is not only famed as the gateway to the Kumano Kodo, but, for its many fantastic seafood restaurants and izakaya pubs (meaning stay, drink, place) which serve small plates a little like a Japanese tapas bodega, making a great place to grab a bite to eat before taking the short bus journey to Takijiri to begin your walk. Your route begins with a visitor centre where you can discover more about the historic trail before making your way up through the woodland, passing Oji along the way where you will see pilgrims stamping their records. The Oji are subsidiary shrines along the route designed to guide and protect pilgrims on their journey and provide a great place of rest along your way. Arriving at the ridge-top village of Takahara you will be welcomed by your hosts for the evening where you can relax, enjoy the wonderful views over the Hatnashi mountain range (particularly at sunset) while your hosts lovingly prepare you a meal.

Meals: **B D**



Accommodation
Minshuku



Ascent
370M



Time
2 hours



Distance
5KM

DAY 10

Wake to magnificent views over the Hatenashi Mountains, ascend to the high point of the trail (690m) and discover the story of 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 a contrast of landscapes, first past rice fields as you leave the village to ascend through peaceful woodlands, passing more Oji as you go. Before long the woodlands clear way to the Jujo-oji clearing where you are greeted with lovely views, making it a popular picnic spot. Reaching the highest point of the trail (690m) you are greeted by the remains of the Uwada-jaya Teahouse before descending to pass the Three-Fold Moon Viewing area and make your way up towards the Hashiori-toge 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 fantastic viewpoint with your final goal in the valley below, Chikatsuyu. Making your way down to the valley, you once again will be greeted with a warm welcome from your hosts for the evening and a tasty home cooked supper.

Meals: **B D**

 Accommodation Minshuku	 Ascent 480M	 Descent 520M	 Time 4-5 hours	 Distance 10KM
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DAY 11

Walk to Kumano Shrine, Hongu, on a choice of walks and bathe in the waters of an Onsen.

Today you have the option to shorten your walk on the trail but for those who are feeling energetic you will begin from your Minshuku to follow the Kumano Kodo as it makes its way through small villages 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 the monkeys in the trees too. You will also have the opportunity to purify yourself at one of the Chozuya before making your way into the heart of the sacred Kii Mountains. Arriving at Hongu, you will be greeted by Hongu Oyonohara Torii Gate, the largest torii gate in the world. 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' which spirits travelled to in Japanese mythology. Take your time to explore the shrine and enjoy this spiritual place before taking the bus to Yunomine Onsen, one of the oldest natural hot spring villages in Japan, where you can enjoy your first onsen experience, with a warm soak in the waters before feasting 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 undertake the full route we recommend raising early to allow yourself plenty of time to take in all of the charm of the pilgrimage. It is also possible that you may stay at the nearby Kawayu Onsen, famous for its thermal water bubbling in the crystal clear river should Yunomine Onsen not be available.

Meals: **B D**



Accommodation
Ryokan



Ascent
820M



Descent
1140M



Distance
24KM

DAY 12

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

Feeling refreshed from your stay at the onsen, today you will experience the Kumano Kodo in a different way- by Kawabune (a flat-bottomed wooden boat) along the Kumano River (subject to availability & weather conditions). Following the route taken by many pilgrims before you will sail down the river to Shingu, home of the Kumano Hayatama Taisha, one of the 'three great shrines of Kumano'. The Hayatama Taisha has occupied the banks of the river since the 12th century though it has undertaken some rebuilding in recent years. According to Shinto creation myth, three kami descended to earth on a rock near the shrine and it is worshiped 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 but today is a popular Onsen town after the discovery of the fantastic 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**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 13

Climb the ancient staircase from Dainmonzaka to your final goal of the Kumano Kodo- Kumano Nachi Taisha. 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 the fisherman seamlessly throw the fish around the market like some sort of well-rehearsed dance. After breakfast at your hotel you will take the bus to Dainmonzaka where you will follow the ancient stone staircase, lined with century old cedar and camphor trees, to Nachi Taisha. As you climb the 267 stairs through the peaceful woodland you will be fuelled by the knowledge you are reaching your final goal of the Kumano Kodo. Arriving at the top of the stairs you will catch your first glimpse of Kumano Nachi Taisha Shrine perfectly placed in front of Nachi-no-Otaki Falls, the tallest waterfall in Japan. For thousands of years pilgrims, emperors, samurai, and you too, have made the special journey to pray here. Take your time to explore the final of 'the three great shrines' of your journey before taking the train to Osaka where you can raise a glass to a fantastic two

weeks in Japan.

Meals: **B**

 Accommodation Hotel	 Ascent 600M	 Distance 4KM
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DAY 14

Explore Osaka before making your onward journey.

Wake 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 the 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).

Meals: **B**

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, about 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 they are safely on their 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 you set 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 do 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 Nanba Station direct to Kansai Airport. This is a short 35minute journey on the Nankai Rapit 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 is drinkable from the taps on this holiday. Please fill your personal bottles for your day in the morning. We do not encourage the purchasing 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 prior to 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 direct 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.

Please note that a paper copy of your travel insurance is required if you are travelling to Huaraz and the Huayhuash region.

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 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers. [>> Find out more](#)

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

sgjpwhy 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 27/07/2024 and the trip is subject to change