

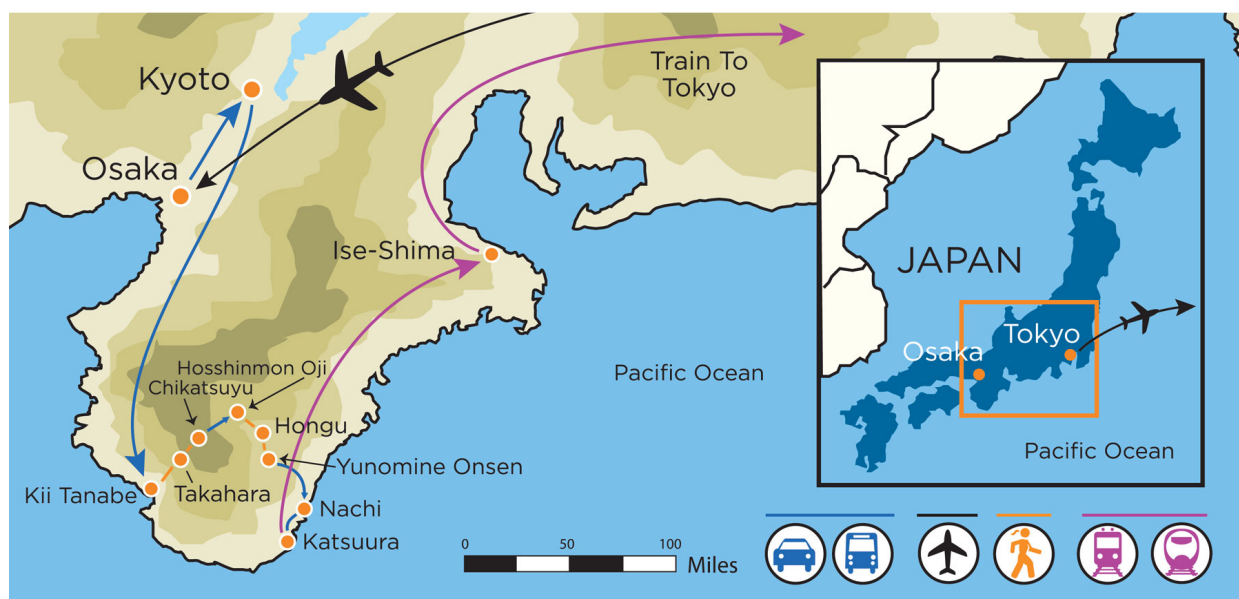
JAPAN

Ancient Traditions, Onsens, & Hiking the Kumano Kodo

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Hike from village to village along the ancient pilgrimage route of the Kumano Kodo resting at night in traditional inns
- ▶ Hike with a yamabushi, or mountain ascetic priests and learn about the preservation of Japan's regional traditions
- ▶ Meet an Ama diver, one of the Japanese women who free-dive for pearl oysters and seafood
- ▶ Experience the etiquette and tradition of a formal Japanese tea ceremony
- ▶ Enjoy the experience of bathing in natural hot spring baths

TRIP ROUTE



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QUICK VIEW ITINERARY

Day 1	arrive Kyoto, welcome dinner
Day 2	explore Ginkakuji Temple, walk the Philosopher's Pathway, meet an apprentice Geisha
Day 3	experience Todaiji Temple, walk in Nara Park, Japanese tea ceremony
Day 4	hike on the Kumano Kodo from Takijiri to Takahara
Day 5	hike from Takahara to Chikatsuyu, community hosted lunch with local women's organization
Day 6	hike to Hongu with a female ascetic priest, make traditional washi paper
Day 7	explore Nachi Taisha
Day 8	take the train to the Ise region, visit the Ise Shrine
Day 9	meet and have lunch with an Ama diver, travel by train to Tokyo
Day 10	walk in the Hama Rikyu Gardens, visit the Ginza district, explore Grand Meiji Shrine, farewell dinner
Day 11	depart Japan

ACTIVITY LEVEL

High Energy

TRIP PRICE

Main Trip: \$9,495

Optional Single Accommodations: \$2,300

TRIP DATES

April 3 - 13, 2024

DAY 1
Wednesday
4/3/24

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Arrive in Kyoto

Welcome to Japan! Start your journey through Japan in cherry blossom season, enjoying delicious Japanese feasts, exploring ancient traditions, hiking the ancient trails of the Kumano Kodo, relaxing in hot springs, and meeting Japanese women – from priestesses to pearl divers!

During your adventure, you'll get to know your guide versed in Japan's culture, traditions, history, and cuisine. You are also accompanied by an AdventureWomen Ambassador, committed to helping make your experience a fun and personally rewarding adventure, and cheering you on as you reach beyond your comfort zone to take on new challenges in your own unique way!

Arrival Information

Arrive in Osaka, Japan (ITM) today before 2:00pm.

Pick-up and Transfer

When you exit customs and immigration, make your way to the transfer desk for your shared taxi transfer to your hotel in Kyoto.

Welcome Dinner

Meet your guide in the hotel lobby at 7:00pm. Enjoy a lively welcome dinner where you can connect with your fellow travelers this evening. Share stories and discover the unique reasons each woman in your group is excited to explore Japan!

Accommodations
Royal Park Hotel Kyoto
(or similar)

Meals Included
dinner

DAY 2
Thursday
4/4/24

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Kyoto

Kyoto served as Japan’s political, spiritual, and cultural capital from the 8th to the 17th centuries. While political power has moved to Tokyo, Kyoto has retained a firm grasp on Japanese culture and traditions and is renowned for its temples, festivals, and cuisine. You’ll notice that even though Kyoto is one of Japan’s largest cities, it doesn’t have tall skyscrapers as you might expect. Few buildings or structures are taller than the pagoda of Toji Temple, located in the southwest of the central Kyoto area, which is the tallest pagoda in Japan at a height of 187 feet. The current pagoda dates to 1644, but the original was built in 864.

Ginkakuji Temple Visit Ginkakuji Temple, or the Silver Pavilion this morning. This temple is popular for its gardens and tea house.

Stroll on the Philosopher’s Pathway Walk along the Philosopher’s Path, with craft shops, cafés, shrines, and temples beside the clear waters of a small canal. One side of the canal is lined with cherry trees. Stop at Nanzenji, a tranquil Zen Buddhist temple dating back to the mid-13th century.

Maiko Experience After lunch in a private restaurant, you will be joined by a maiko, an apprentice geisha, or geiko. Geisha are revered for preserving traditional arts of music and dance. There are only approx. 250 in Kyoto, but they remain very much in demand for private functions. The world of the geisha is very closed, and introductions are often only made through personal connections.

Walking Tour of the Gion This afternoon, discover the back lanes and traditions of Gion, a famous district known for its tea houses, geiko, and maiko.

Dinner on Your Own Enjoy dinner on your own this evening. Your guide will make restaurant recommendations.

Accommodations
Royal Park Hotel Kyoto
(or similar)

Meals Included
breakfast, lunch

DAY 3
Friday
4/5/24

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Kyoto

Nara is home to some of Japan’s greatest cultural treasures, many of which are situated in or near Nara Park. Nara was the capital of Japan from 710 to 794, prior to Kyoto and Tokyo. Nara is home to several UNESCO World Heritage Site temples.

Pack an Overnight Bag

Today, your larger bag will be sent ahead to the Kumano Kodo, and you’ll reunite with your luggage on day 5. Please pack your essentials in your day pack for two nights. Essentials should include pajamas, hiking clothes for 2 days, reusable water bottle(s) and any essential medications and toiletries you will need for two nights. Note that Japanese hotels are very generous with their toiletries, so you may not need much!

Visit the Todaiji Temple

Todaiji Temple is a UNESCO World Heritage site, known for housing the world’s largest bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana. The building housing the statue is one of the largest wooden buildings in the world. On your way to the temple, stop by Nara Park, home to over 1,000 free-roaming deer. The deer are considered sacred messengers of the Gods.

Walk in Nara Park

Walk though Nara Park, home to over 1,000 free-roaming deer. The deer are considered sacred messengers of the gods. You can purchase special rice crackers to feed the deer if you’d like.

Lunch on Your Own

Enjoy lunch on your own and spend some time exploring Naramachi, an older section of town home to craftspeople and small boutiques as well as restaurants and cafés.

Japanese Tea Ceremony and Afternoon at Leisure

Return to Kyoto to experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony.

Dinner

Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

Accommodations
Royal Park Hotel Kyoto
(or similar)

Meals Included
breakfast, dinner

DAY 4
Saturday
4/6/24

Accommodations
Yunomineso (or similar)

Meals Included
breakfast, lunch, dinner

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Kyoto to the Kumano Kodo

Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Kumano Kodo became popular in the 11th century as a place of pilgrimage. Kumano, part of the mountainous Kii Peninsula stretching south from the Kansai cities of Osaka, Nara, and Kyoto, has been a sacred site associated with worshipping nature since prehistoric times. The Kumano Kodo is associated with the Shugendo faith, a religion based on a form of mountain worship and blends a number of imported religions with native beliefs. At its core is an emphasis on physical endurance as a path to enlightenment.

- Journey to the Kumano Kodo

Take the train from Kyoto to Kii Tanabe this morning. Once in Kii Tanabe, you will take a bus to Takijiri.
- Lunch

Enjoy lunch before you start your hike.
- Hike from Takijiri to Takahara

Begin your walk on the Nakahechi portion of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route. From Takijiri the path climbs steadily for about 1,200' over two hours to the ridge-top village of Takahara. Your lodging tonight features hot spring baths made of cypress wood. Your delicious evening meal is made with organic, locally sourced ingredients. You'll be reunited with your bag tonight. Total mileage is 4.64 miles, 1,790' elevation gain.
- Today's Hike

4.64 miles; 1,790' elevation gain

DAY 5
Sunday
4/7/24

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Kumano Kodo

The Nakahechi route of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage network has been used extensively since the 10th century, when Japan’s Imperial ancestors first began the tradition. The classic pilgrimage circuit began in Kyoto at Jonan-gu shrine and finished with a visit to Kumano Nachi Taisha. On the return journey to Kyoto, pilgrims either retraced their steps or took the mountainous Ogumotori-goe and Kogumotori-goe passes to Hongu.

Hike from Takahara to Chikatsuyu

Enjoy an early Japanese breakfast before departing your inn. Follow the trail as it winds through small settlements and peaceful countryside. You will pass several Oji shrines over 5-6 hours before finally descending to the village of Chikatsuyu. The paths are clearly defined, and flagstones have been laid in some places to make the climbs easier. The total mileage for this hike is 7.72 miles with an elevation gain of 1,828'.

Lunch and Meet Local Women

Enjoy a late lunch and meet a local women’s group, which preserves local traditions.

Afternoon at Leisure

Take some time to relax before dinner, which is served at your family-run guest house. Enjoy a soak in the hot springs bath.

Dinner

Have dinner at your inn tonight.

Today's Hike

7.72 miles; 1,828' elevation gain

Accommodations

Kawayu Onsen Fujiya (or similar)

Meals Included

breakfast, lunch, dinner

DAY 6
Monday
4/8/24

Accommodations
Kawayu Onsen Fujiya (or similar)

Meals Included
breakfast, lunch, dinner

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Kumano Kodo

Today, hike in and around Hongu, one of the sacred shrines of pilgrimage on the Kumano Kodo. At the heart of these sacred mountains, Kumano was said to be the entrance to the land of Yomi, the ‘other world’ to which spirits traveled in Japanese mythology.

Hike from Hosshinmon Oji to Hongu

Take a local bus to Hosshinmon-oji, where you will walk a gentle section of the trail for 5.5 miles over 2.5 hours to the Kumano shrine at Hongu, one of the three ‘Grand Shrines of Kumano’. You’ll gain a total of 515’ in elevation.

Meet a Yamabushi

During your walk, you will be accompanied by a yamabushi, or mountain ascetic priests. Learn more about the training of yamabushi and the Shugendo faith.

Traditional Washi Paper Making

Arrive in Hongu, where you will make traditional Japanese washi paper. Otonashi paper is made from fibers of the mulberry plant and was once dedicated at the Hongu Grand shrine in the form of paper amulets called Gou Shinpu. Create your own piece of Washi at the workshop, and return to Hongu to have it stamped with a special Shuin red seal at the Kumano Grand Shrine – a traditional pilgrim’s souvenir and work of art.

Lunch

Enjoy lunch at a local cafe.

Optional Walk on the Dainichigoe

From the Kumano shrine at Hongu, walk 1.7 miles over 1.5 -2 hours on the Dainichigoe to the Yunomine Onsen, one of the oldest natural hot spring onsen villages in Japan, famous for the thermal water bubbling to the surface of the crystal-clear stream. Spend the night in Yunomine Onsen. Enjoy a relaxing soak in a Japanese bath (bring large bandages to cover tattoos or body art, as no clothing is allowed in this bath) before or after your delicious dinner.

Today's Hike

5.47 miles; 515' elevation gain

DAY 7
Tuesday
4/9/24

Accommodations
Urashima (or similar)

Meals Included
breakfast, lunch, dinner

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Kumano Kodo

Kumano Nachi Taisha is an example of Buddhist and Shinto syncretism (Shinbutsu shugo) nestled in the Kii Mountains, near Kii Katsuura, Japan. Cedar forests surround the site.

Visit Nachi Taisha Visit the shrine as well as the nearby Nachi waterfall, which is said to be inhabited by the kami spirit Kiryu Gongen. Nachi-san is one of the shrines of pilgrimage on the Kumano Kodo. The shrines of Nachi-san are set in primeval forest, and are marked by an ancient stone approach, the Dogenzaka. The adjacent Nachi-no-taki or waterfall crashes to the rocks below and is the focus of the traditional worship of natural spirits. The hike from Daimonzaka to Nachi is 3.17 miles with an elevation gain of 1,373'.

Lunch Lunch will be at a local cafe today.

Dinner Enjoy dinner at your hotel tonight.

Pack an Overnight Bag Today, pack your larger bag which will be sent ahead to Tokyo tomorrow morning. Pack your essentials for your overnight in Toba in a smaller backpack style bag to take with you.

Today's Hike 3.17 miles; 1,373' elevation gain

DAY 8
Wednesday
4/10/24

Accommodations
Toba Hotel International
(or similar)

Meals Included
breakfast, dinner

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Kumano Kodo to Ise

Ise has been considered a sacred place for 2,000 years, and the shrine is surrounded by 1,000-year-old cedar trees, but the buildings themselves are rebuilt every 20 years. The site is eternal and ancient yet characterized by regeneration and youthfulness.

Travel by Train to Ise This morning, you will send your large bag ahead to Tokyo and then take the train to the Ise area.

Visit the Geku The outer shrine, or Geku, is dedicated to the spirit of food, clothing, and housing. Devotees come to offer prayers of gratitude, and to maintain the purity of the shrines, visitors must pray outside. Only the high priests, shrine maidens, and the Emperor are allowed to enter the buildings.

Visit Okage Yokocho The Okage Yokocho is an area of older buildings relocated here that previously stood on the old route of pilgrimage to the shrine. Most of the buildings are now shops or restaurants catering to pilgrims’ more earthly desires. In addition to local delicacies and bean paste sweets, you’ll find shops featuring local handicrafts and products, such as Matsusaka Momen, items made from indigo-dyed local cotton. Enjoy lunch on your own.

Dinner Drive to Tobu, and enjoy dinner at your hotel tonight.

DAY 9
Thursday
4/11/24

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Ise to Tokyo

Ama divers are women who practice free-dive fishing - they dive without oxygen tanks or other mechanical help - to collect seafood or pearl oysters. Archaeological evidence shows that Ama diving has been practiced in the area for nearly 3,000 years. However, this traditional lifestyle is under threat; it is slowly dying out as the younger generation of women choose not to follow in their mothers' footsteps.

Visit an Ama Pearl Diver

Spend the morning with an Ama Diver and learn about her life and unique profession. Enjoy a special seafood lunch with the diver.

Travel by Train to Tokyo

Take a regional and a bullet train to Tokyo.

Dinner

Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodations

Prince Park Tower (or similar)

Meals Included

breakfast, lunch, dinner

DAY 10
Friday
4/12/24

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Tokyo

Tokyo is the capital of Japan and is the eighth largest city in the world. Tokyo was originally a small fishing village named Edo, which means estuary. Its name was changed to Tokyo (to: “east”, and kyo: “capital”) when it became the imperial capital under Emperor Meiji in 1868. You’ll discover the city as the Japanese do today - by subway and train.

Hama Rikyu Gardens

Visit the Hama-Rikyu gardens this morning, located near the mouth of the Sumida-gawa, a large river that flows through Tokyo. The garden is divided into two major sections. The southern garden was the site of a villa where the Shogun (commander-in-chief) could relax, enjoy duck hunting, and entertain visitors from the 17th to 19th century. It contains the Shio-iri-no Niwa (garden with a tidal pond) which is on the sea, and its scenery varies with the ebb and flow of the tide. There is a striking contrast between the gardens and the gleaming towers of the new Shiodome business area beyond.

Nihonbashi

Stop at Nihonbashi (the “Japan Bridge”), which is considered to be the “center of Japan”, and the starting point of all of Japan’s main roads since the Edo period.

Ginza

Spend some time in the elegant Ginza shopping district. Enjoy lunch along the way.

Meiji Jingu

Explore the Grand Meiji Shrine, near Harajuku this afternoon. The shrine is dedicated to Emperor Meiji, who was instrumental in modernizing Japan. This tranquil oasis is on the doorstep of Harajuku and Omotesando – areas known for avant-garde fashion and architecture.

Farewell Dinner

Have a farewell dinner with your new AdventureWomen friends. Reminisce over all of the memories you have made and celebrate the end of an amazing journey through this truly spectacular country.

Accommodations

Prince Park Tower (or similar)

Meals Included

breakfast, lunch, dinner

DAY 11
Saturday
4/13/24

JAPAN

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Depart Tokyo

Enjoy one last morning in Tokyo before departing Japan.

Transfer to the Airport	Say goodbye to your new AdventureWomen friends as you transfer to the airport for your flights home.
Departure Information	Depart Narita International Airport (NRT) or Haneda Airport (HND) in Tokyo, Japan after 10:00am.

Please note: AdventureWomen will attempt to adhere to the itinerary as much as possible. However, certain conditions (political, climatic, environmental, and cultural) may necessitate changes in the itinerary. AdventureWomen reserves the right to alter any itinerary at any time, if necessary. We will attempt to notify participants of changes as far in advance as possible. Costs incurred by such changes will be the responsibility of the participants.

Meals Included
breakfast

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Accommodation Details

**Royal Park Hotel
Kyoto (or similar)** Conveniently located in downtown Kyoto, this hotel offers massages and multiple dining choices.

Amenities: soap, shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer; Wifi

**Yunomineso (or
similar)** Offering tranquil outdoor hot-spring baths with nature views, Yunomineso is a perfect place to put your feet up after a few days on the trail. The traditional rooms have sliding paper screens, floor cushions, and Japanese futon bedding on a tatami (woven straw) floor.

Amenities: En suite toilet; communal bathing area with soap, shampoo, hair dryer; electricity; Wifi in lobby area

**Kawayu Onsen
Fujiya (or similar)** Offering tranquil hot-spring baths and river views, Kawayu Onsen Fujiya is a great place to relax. The traditional rooms have sliding paper screens, floor cushions, and Japanese futon bedding on a tatami (woven straw) floor.

Amenities: En suite bathrooms; communal bathing area available also; soap, shampoo, electricity; Wifi

**Urashima (or
similar)** This hotel appears to float in the bay off Kii-Katsuura and you reach the hotel by private shuttle boat from the pier. There are six hot spring baths (all gender-specific) and two of the baths are open-air and set in a cave. In the Japanese-style tatami-mat rooms, the hotel staff will lay out your futon while you are eating dinner.

Amenities: En suite bathrooms with soap, shampoo, hair dryer; electricity; Wifi in lobby area

**Toba Hotel
International (or
similar)** Sophisticated hospitality welcomes you at the Toba Hotel International. Relax on the terrace, enjoy hot spring baths, and the breathtaking views of the ocean.

Amenities: En suite bathrooms with soap, shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer; Wifi

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Accommodation Details

**Prince Park
Tower (or similar)**

Rising above Shiba Park and located by Tokyo Tower, this property offers spacious rooms with skyline views and is within walking distance to various train stations.

Amenities: En suite bathrooms with soap, shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer; Wifi

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Included:

- ▶ Accommodations as per itinerary based on double occupancy
- ▶ All meals as listed in the itinerary
- ▶ All ground transportation
- ▶ Airport transfers on scheduled arrival and departure days by shared taxi
- ▶ Guided sightseeing and activities as indicated in the itinerary
- ▶ Entrance fees
- ▶ Entrance fees for sites listed in the itinerary
- ▶ English-speaking guide(s) throughout the trip
- ▶ Drinking water available in large jugs to refill personal bottles
- ▶ Soft drinks, tea, and coffee at meals
- ▶ Snacks in vehicles
- ▶ Gratuities for drivers, hotel staff, wait staff, and luggage porters

Not Included:

- ▶ International airfare to and from Japan
- ▶ Optional activities
- ▶ Meals not specified in the itinerary
- ▶ Alcoholic beverages (unless otherwise specified)
- ▶ Fees for passport, visas, immunizations, or travel insurance
- ▶ Cost of hospitalization or evacuation
- ▶ Items of a personal nature
- ▶ Gratuities for guides

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Cancellations and Refunds

Notification of cancellation must be made in writing to AdventureWomen, LLC (email will be accepted). Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure date.

- For cancellations received 89-60 days prior to the trip departure date: 50% of the package price is non-refundable and non-transferable.
- For cancellations received 59-0 days prior to the trip departure date: 100% of the package price is non-refundable and non-transferable.

You are highly encouraged to purchase **trip cancellation insurance** to cover emergency situations. Travel insurance information will be sent to you once you have registered for your trip.

Switching Trips

You can transfer your deposit to another trip with no additional fee if you notify us within 120 days of the original trip departure date. We can hold your deposit for up to six months as a credit. Failure to book a new trip within this timeframe will result in the forfeiture of your deposit.

No Smoking Policy

Beginning in 1995, our trips became smoke free. Please note that there will be no smoking by any participants on AdventureWomen trips.

Health Insurance

You must have your own health insurance to participate in an AdventureWomen trip.

Adventure Travel Today

We define "adventure travel" as travel in which one actively participates, as opposed to a "tour," in which one is more or less a passive observer. AdventureWomen designs and organizes trips all over the world for women who want an active, out of the ordinary experience, and meet new friends. **Most of all, we want our trips to be fun!** In this spirit, the successful adventure traveler should be a good-natured realist and have a sense of humor! Adventure trips, by nature, require that participants be self-sufficient, flexible, and able to accept situations as they exist, and not just as they would have preferred or expected them to exist. The constraints of scheduled group traveling also necessitate that each of us be understanding of and sensitive to others. Being on time is important, and contributes to the congeniality, success and well-being of both individuals and the group!