

adventurewomen

THE DESTINATION IS JUST THE BEGINNING

JAPAN

Ancient Traditions, Onsens, & Hiking the Kumano Kodo



April 14 - 24, 2024



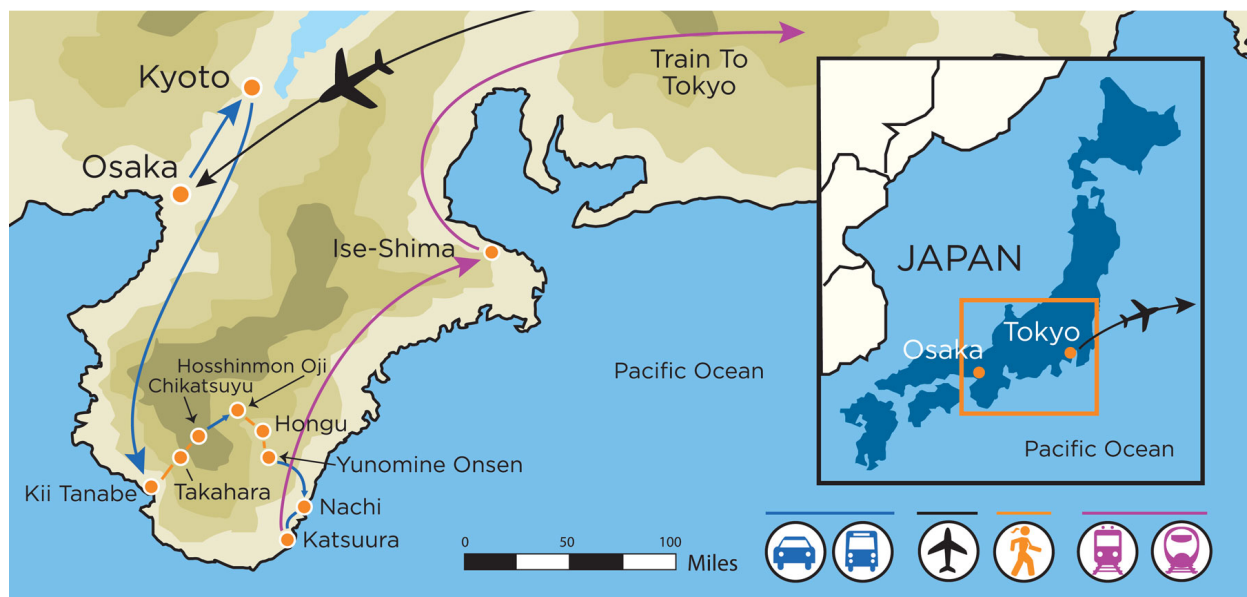
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TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ 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



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your adventure
in depth

DAY 1
Sunday
4/14/24

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 and AdventureWomen Ambassador in the hotel lobby at 7:00pm. Enjoy a lively welcome dinner as you get to know your fellow travelers this evening. Share stories and learn about why each woman in your trip is excited to explore Japan!

Accommodations
Royal Park Hotel
Kyoto (or similar)
Meals Included
dinner

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your adventure
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DAY 2
Monday
4/15/24

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 (and hopefully cherry blossoms!). 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, as they are known in Kyoto. Geisha are revered for preserving traditional arts of music and dance. There are only approximately 250 in Kyoto, but they remain very much in demand for attendance at 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

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DAY 3
Tuesday
4/16/24

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, where you will arrive tomorrow evening. Pack your essentials in your day pack to keep with you for this evening and tomorrow. Essentials should include: pajamas, one set of hiking clothes for tomorrow, reusable water bottles, a spare foldable duffel (if you're a serious shopper!), and any essential medications and toiletries you will need. 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.

Walk in Nara Park

Walk through 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. This afternoon, enjoy some free time in the Higashiyama district to browse the many small shops offering traditional handicrafts and tasty local treats, including pickles and yatsubashi, a local sweet flavored delicately with cinnamon.

Dinner

Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

Accommodations
Royal Park Hotel
Kyoto (or similar)
Meals Included
breakfast, dinner

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DAY 4
Wednesday
4/17/24

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

Accommodations
Organic Hotel
Kirinosato (or
Meals Included
breakfast, lunch,
dinner

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DAY 5
Thursday
4/18/24

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. (Note that in the traditional hot springs, you may need to cover any tattoos or body art).

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

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DAY 6
Friday
4/19/24

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. The Kotsuga village in Hongu has long been famous as a center for handmade 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

Accommodations

Kawayu Onsen
Fujiya (or similar)

Meals Included

breakfast, lunch,
dinner

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DAY 7
Saturday
4/20/24

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

Accommodations
Katsuura Gyoen (or similar)
Meals Included
breakfast, lunch, dinner

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DAY 8
Sunday
4/21/24

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.

Accommodations
Toba Hotel
International (or
Meals Included
breakfast, lunch,
dinner

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DAY 9
Monday
4/22/24

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

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DAY 10
Tuesday
4/23/24

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

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DAY 11
Wednesday
4/24/24

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)

Enjoy a relaxing stay at this hotel in Kyoto. The hotel offers massages and multiple dining choices, and it is conveniently located in downtown Kyoto.

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

Organic Hotel Kirinosato (or similar)

Kirinosato offers friendly service, magnificent views from each room and delicious meals with locally produced organic rice and vegetables. There are Japanese-style tatami-mat rooms as well as western-style rooms. All rooms have an en suite toilet; guests use the two gender-segregated communal bathing rooms, which are available from 3pm to 11pm and from 7am to 9am.

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 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 bathrooms; communal bathing area available also; soap, shampoo, electricity; Wifi

Katsuura Gyoen (or similar)

This hotel offers spacious, comfortable Japanese-style rooms with great views out onto the sea, and boasts both indoor and outdoor baths, each with a view of Nachi Falls in the distance. It is possible to reserve a 50-minute slot at their private indoor bath to enjoy alone or to share. The inn also boasts a great selection of delicious dishes, prepared using tuna fresh from the morning market, beautifully decorated with locally sourced seasonal vegetables.

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

Toba Hotel International (or similar)

Endlessly blue ocean and sky, soft ocean breezes, and sophisticated hospitality welcome you at the Toba Hotel International. Relax on the terrace and enjoy the breathtaking views of the ocean. Enjoy indoor/outdoor hot spring baths during your stay here.

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

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Accommodation Details

Prince Park Tower (or similar)

Rising above Shiba Park and located right by Tokyo Tower, The Prince Park Tower Tokyo offers spacious rooms with skyline views and free Wifi. The hotel is within walking distance to various train stations.

Amenities: En suite bathrooms with soap, shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer; electricity; 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 cancellations must be received in writing. Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure date, and the registration deposit is non-refundable.

For cancellations received 61-90 days prior to the trip departure date: 50% of the total trip cost is non-refundable. For cancellations received 1-60 days prior to the trip departure date: 100% of the total trip cost is non-refundable.

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

Our deposits are nonrefundable and nontransferable. If for some reason you need to switch to a different trip, please call us and we will do our best to accommodate you, but switching is not guaranteed.

No Smoking Policy

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

Health Insurance

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

Adventure Travel Today

At AdventureWomen, we want everyone to understand that our excursions are adventure travel vacations and not "tours." 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 vacations all over the world for women who want to **experience an active, out of the ordinary vacation, and meet new friends**. Most of all, we want our trips to be **fun!**

good-natured realist and have a sense of humor! Adventure vacations, 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!

In this spirit, the successful adventure traveler should be a