



Japan: Ancient Traditions, Onsens, & Hiking the Kumano Kodo

DURATION | 11 Days

TRIP LEVEL | High Energy

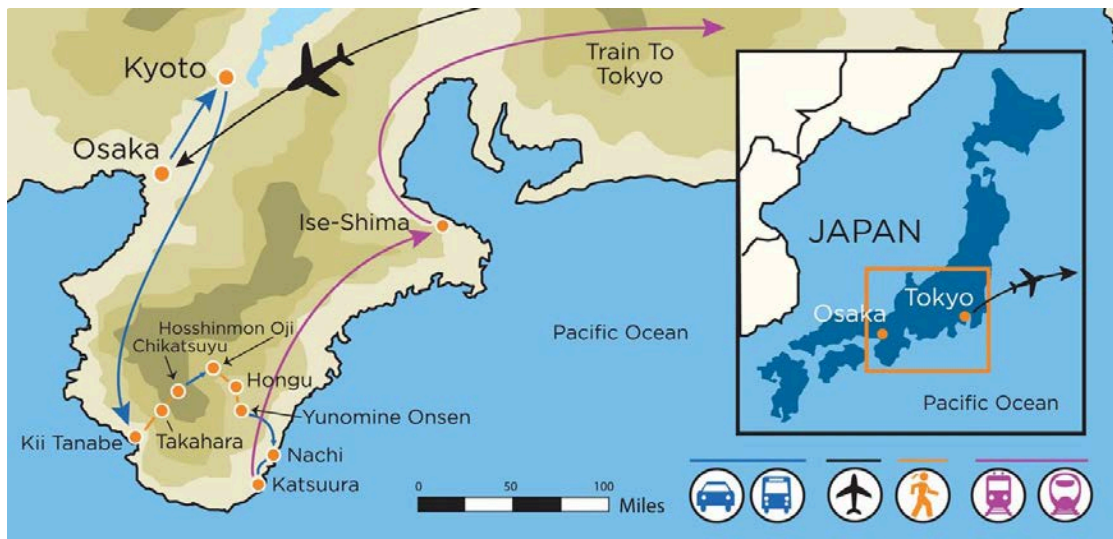
Trip Overview

Join AdventureWomen on a high-energy journey through Japan, experiencing ancient traditions, hiking the Kumano Kodo trails, relaxing in hot springs, and meeting fascinating Japanese women. Start in Kyoto, sharing a lively welcome dinner, exploring the Ginkaku-ji Temple, and enjoying a private maiko experience in Gion. In Nara, marvel at cultural treasures like Todai-ji Temple and sacred deer in Nara Park. Return to Kyoto for a traditional tea ceremony before embarking on the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage with yamabushi priests. Enjoy hot springs and traditional ryokan stays. Travel to Ise to explore ancient shrines and learn about Ama Divers. Conclude in Tokyo, visiting Hama Rikyu Gardens, Nihonbashi, and Ginza, and celebrate with a farewell dinner, reminiscing about your incredible journey.

Trip Highlights

- Hike the ancient Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route, resting in traditional inns at night.
- Learn about regional traditions from yamabushi mountain priests and meet an Ama diver.
- Experience a formal Japanese tea ceremony and enjoy natural hot spring baths.

Map View



Trip Itinerary



Day 1

Welcome to Japan!

Begin your journey during cherry blossom season, savoring Japanese feasts, exploring ancient traditions, hiking the Kumano Kodo trails, relaxing in hot springs, and meeting remarkable Japanese women. Arrive in Osaka and transfer to your Kyoto hotel. Meet the group and enjoy a lively welcome dinner, sharing stories with fellow travelers about your excitement for the adventure ahead. Your guide, versed in Japan's culture, traditions, history, and cuisine, and the incredible individuals you meet will make your experience fun and personally fulfilling, cheering you on as you embrace new challenges.

Meals: dinner | Overnight: Royal Park Hotel Kyoto (or similar)



Royal Park Hotel Kyoto (or similar)

Conveniently located in downtown Kyoto, this hotel offers massages and multiple dining choices.

Amenities: en suite bathrooms with complimentary toiletries, hair dryer, safe, flatscreen TV, Wi-Fi, air conditioning



Trip Itinerary



Day 2

Explore Kyoto's Temples, Pathways, and Geisha Traditions

Begin your day with a visit to Ginkakuji Temple, known for its beautiful gardens and tea house, then stroll along the Philosopher's Path, lined with craft shops, cafés, shrines, temples, and cherry trees. Stop at Nanzenji, a tranquil Zen Buddhist temple from the mid-13th century. After lunch at a private restaurant, meet a maiko, an apprentice geisha, and learn about their revered traditional arts. In the afternoon, explore the back lanes and traditions of Gion, a district famous for its tea houses and geiko. Enjoy dinner on your own with recommendations from your guide.

Meals: breakfast, lunch | Overnight: Royal Park Hotel Kyoto (or similar)



Trip Itinerary



Day 3

Nara's Historic Temples and Sacred Deer

Visit Todaiji Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site, renowned for housing the world's largest bronze statue of Buddha Vairocana and one of the largest wooden buildings in the world. Walk through Nara Park, home to over 1,000 sacred deer, considered messengers of the gods. After lunch on your own, explore Naramachi, an old town section with craftspeople, boutiques, restaurants, and cafés. Return to Kyoto for a traditional Japanese tea ceremony and enjoy dinner at a local restaurant in the evening.

Meals: breakfast, dinner | Overnight: Royal Park Hotel Kyoto (or similar)



Trip Itinerary



Day 4

Journey from Kyoto to the Historic Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage

This morning, take the train from Kyoto to Kii Tanabe, then a bus to Takijiri. After lunch, start your 2.8-mile hike on the Nakahechi portion of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route. The path climbs steadily for about 1,200 feet over two hours to the ridge-top village of Takahara. Enjoy a delicious evening meal made with organic, locally sourced ingredients.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Organic Hotel Kirinosato (or similar)



Organic Hotel Kirinosato (or similar)

Kirinosato offers friendly service, magnificent views from each room and delicious meals with locally produced organic rice and vegetables. The Japanese-style tatami-mat rooms and western-style rooms have an en suite toilet, two gender-specific communal bathing rooms (available 3-11pm & 7-9am).

Amenities: en suite toilet, communal bathing area with complimentary toiletries, hair dryer, Wi-Fi in lobby area



Trip Itinerary



Day 5

Hiking the Kumano Kodo and Local Traditions

Start your day with an early Japanese breakfast before embarking on a 6.5-mile hike through the peaceful countryside, passing several Oji shrines and ascending 1,575 feet. After descending to the village of Chikatsuyu, enjoy a late lunch and meet a local women's group preserving traditional crafts. Relax before dinner at your family-run guest house and soak in the hot springs bath.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Kawayu Onsen Fujiya (or similar)



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 with complimentary toiletries, Wi-Fi

Trip Itinerary



Day 6

Pilgrimage to the Kumano Grand Shrine

Take a bus to Hosshinmon-oji and hike a gentle 4-mile section to the Kumano Grand Shrine, accompanied by a female yamabushi, learning about Shugendo faith. In Hongu, create traditional Japanese washi paper and get it stamped at the shrine. Enjoy lunch at a local café, then spend the night in Yunomine Onsen with a relaxing soak and a delicious dinner.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Kawayu Onsen Fujiya (or similar)

Trip Itinerary



Day 7

Explore Nachi Shrine and Waterfall

Visit Nachi Shrine and the nearby Nachi waterfall, set in a primeval forest with an ancient stone approach. The waterfall, a focus of traditional worship, adds to the spiritual experience. Have lunch at a local café, then enjoy dinner at your hotel.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Urashima (or similar)



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 complimentary toiletries, hair dryer, Wi-Fi in lobby area

Trip Itinerary



Day 8

From the Kumano Kodo to Ise

Send your large bag ahead to Tokyo and take the train to Ise, where you'll visit the outer shrine dedicated to the spirit of food, clothing, and housing. Explore Okage Yokocho, a relocated area of old pilgrimage route buildings, now housing shops and restaurants. Enjoy lunch on your own before driving to Toba and dining at your hotel.

Meals: breakfast, dinner | Overnight: Toba Hotel International (or similar)



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 complimentary toiletries, hair dryer, safe, flatscreen TV, Wi-Fi



Trip Itinerary



Day 9

Meet an Ama Diver and Travel to Tokyo

Spend the morning with an Ama Diver, learning about her unique profession and enjoying a special seafood lunch. Take regional and bullet trains to Tokyo, where you will dine at a local restaurant.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Prince Park Tower (or similar)



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 complimentary toiletries, bathrobes, hair dryer, minibar, electric kettle, flatscreen TV, Wi-Fi

Trip Itinerary



Day 10

Explore Tokyo's Gardens, Shopping, and Shrines

Visit the Hama-Rikyu gardens, contrasting the historical villa site with the modern Shiodome business area. Explore the Ginza shopping district and the Grand Meiji Shrine near Harajuku, dedicated to Emperor Meiji. Enjoy lunch along the way and have a farewell dinner with your AdventureWomen friends, celebrating your journey through Japan.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Prince Park Tower (or similar)



Trip Itinerary



Day 11

Departure from Tokyo

Transfer to the airport and say goodbye to your AdventureWomen friends. Depart from Narita International Airport (NRT) or Haneda Airport (HND) after 10:00 AM. Enjoy breakfast before your departure.



What's Included

What's 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 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

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.

