

DAY 1: OSAKA, JAPAN / KYOTO

Arrive at Kansai International Airport (KIX) in Osaka at any time. Transfer to Kyoto and check in to our hotel.

Accommodations: Kyoto Hotel Okura

DAY 2: KYOTO

Kyoto served as an imperial capital for more than a thousand years, and many of the wooden temples and gardens from that era have been collectively designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Visit the 14th-century Tenryuji temple, considered one of the city's great Zen temples, and discover its beautiful grounds and gardens. Outside the temple's north gate, wander through Arashiyama's atmospheric bamboo grove. Then venture into the wooded hills southeast of the city to the famed Kiyomizudera temple, known for the expansive wooden terrace that extends from the main hall. Walk along the terrace, taking in panoramic views of maple and cherry trees below and Kyoto's skyline in the distance. Below the temple, visit the sacred Otowa Waterfall, with three separate streams that are believed to have different benefits: longevity, love, and success. Cap off the afternoon at the lively Nishiki Market, perusing—and tasting—a variety of Japanese specialties. At tonight's welcome dinner, meet a former geisha to learn about the geisha lifestyle and enjoy a short performance.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Kyoto Hotel Okura

DAY 3: KYOTO

Stroll the elegant Zen rock garden at Ryoanji and iconic Kinkakuji, or "temple of the golden pavilion." This afternoon, experience the tranquil garden at Sanzenin temple. Then step inside a local sake brewery to learn about the history and production process of one of Japan's most iconic beverages. Enjoy an evening at leisure to explore Kyoto on your own.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Kyoto Hotel Okura

DAY 4: MOUNT KOYA

Travel to Mount Koya, headquarters of the Shingon Buddhist sect. Meet a temple priest and wander through the evocative Okuno-in cemetery, where the tombs of more than 200,000 samurai warriors and

other dignitaries fill a grove of age-old cedar trees. Venture into Kongobuji, the chief temple of the Mount Koya monastery, and see work by artists of the Kano school of painting. Settle into our simple lodgings and enjoy a traditional Buddhist vegetarian dinner.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Eko-in Monastery or similar

DAY 5: MOUNT KOYA / IYA VALLEY

After attending an optional morning prayer ceremony, descend to the shores of the Inland Sea and ferry across to Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's main islands. In Tokushima, see costumes and floats from the city's 400-year-old dance festival at the Awa Odori Kaikan museum. Our home for the next two nights in the Iya Valley is a ryokan, or traditional Japanese inn, where inviting, on-site hot spring baths offer a chance to relax and rejuvenate.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Hotel Hikyonoyu

DAY 6: IYA VALLEY

Travel along the steep slopes of the Iya ravine to a 300-year-old thatched farmhouse, home to the Chiiori Trust, a unique project that seeks to preserve age-old rural traditions in the valley. Continue to the Okuiya Niju Kazurabashi, twin suspension bridges made of intertwined vines, and hear the legends of their creation. Witness timeless scenes of village life in Ochiai, a community of traditional dwellings, some of which date from the Edo period (circa 1600-1870).

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Hotel Hikyonoyu

DAY 7: SHIKOKU / NAOSHIMA

Travel north to Zentsuji, revered as the birthplace of the Buddhist priest Kobo Daishi and as one of the important stops along Shikoku's 750-mile and 88-temple pilgrimage route. In Takamatsu, stroll through the tranquil gardens of 17th-century Ritsurin Park. A ferry then brings us to the small island of Naoshima, which has recently emerged as a mecca of contemporary art and architecture. Get a new perspective on nature through inventive art installations at the Benesse House Museum this afternoon and stay in the adjacent hotel, designed by acclaimed architect Tadao Ando.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Benesse House

DAY 8: NAOSHIMA

Wander past the works of Claude Monet and James Turrell at the innovative Chichu Art Museum, built underground but designed to capture natural light and shadow. Also visit homes that are part of the Art House Project, which has transformed some of the island's older structures into imaginative works of art.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Benesse House

DAY 9: NAOSHIMA / HIROSHIMA

Ferry back to Honshu and take the high-speed train to Hiroshima. Pay a visit to Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and the Peace Memorial Museum, which documents the atomic explosion that ravaged the city. Spend the remainder of the afternoon visiting Shukkei-en garden or explore this thriving modern metropolis—a testament to Japanese resilience—on your own.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Sheraton Grand Hotel or RIHGA Royal Hotel

DAY 10: MIYAJIMA / HIROSHIMA

Set off by ferry for a full-day excursion on Itsukushima Island, popularly called Miyajima. Venture into the 12th-century Itsukushima Shinto Shrine, a World Heritage site built over the water, where a vermilion torii (wooden gateway) appears to float at high tide. Participate in a traditional tea ceremony, then take advantage of free time to go on a hike, visit temples, and stroll through the picturesque town. Back in Hiroshima this evening, gather for a farewell dinner.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Sheraton Grand Hotel or RIHGA Royal Hotel

DAY 11: HIROSHIMA / OSAKA

Take the high-speed train from Hiroshima to Osaka and enjoy lunch on the train. Then, transfer to the Kansai International Airport (KIX) in Osaka and catch your flight home.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch