



Koyasan and Kumano Kodo

SPRING FESTIVAL 2017 TOUR | ITINERARY

DAY 1 **Tuesday 11 April.** We meet at our hotel in Osaka. For those who arrive in the afternoon, we visit Osaka castle and its surrounding gardens (optional). At 5.30pm we meet in the hotel foyer as a group to discuss the next day's arrangements. We then take a subway to the lively and bustling Dotonbori district for dinner (at own cost and optional).

DAY 2 **Wednesday 12 April.** Today we travel by train and cable car to UNESCO listed Koyasan, birthplace of Shingon Buddhism in Japan. On arrival we walk a section of the path taken by female pilgrims, who until early last century were forbidden to enter the Koyasan temple precinct. We continue to explore this historic area after lunch (own cost). Our accommodation tonight is a Buddhist temple, where there will be an opportunity to join in a guided meditation before dinner. After a traditional vegetarian temple meal, shojin-ryori, we take an atmospheric night walk through stone lanterns to Okunoin cemetery where Kobo Daishi, the founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism, rests. Breakfast and dinner included.

DAY 3 **Thursday 13 April.** This morning we join in prayers and experience the Goma fire ritual at the temple (optional) before breakfast. We then travel by charter bus to Takijiri-oji, with a stop at a farmhouse café for a lunch of organic home grown produce.

On arrival at Takijiri-oji, we visit the information centre and then begin our pilgrimage along the Kumano Kodo. Our walk from Takijiri-oji to Takahara is only about 4 kilometres but it begins with a steep and perhaps challenging climb! The destination is worth the effort. Tonight we stay at a wonderful lodge, well known for its hospitality, organic food and stunning views. Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

DAY 4 **Friday 14 April.** Today our 14 kilometre walk takes us from Takahara to Tsugizakura-oji. Again our walk begins with a steep climb and before descending for lunch at a roadside café (own cost), we climb 400 metres from Takahara. In the afternoon we pass through the small hamlet of Chikatsuyu, site of one of the oldest oji shrines along the trail. A small footbath here fed by a local hot spring is a pleasant place to soak our pilgrim feet. After admiring the 800 year old giant cedar trees at Tsugizakura-oji, our charter bus will take us to the delightful riverside village of Kawayu Onsen where we spend the next three nights. If time and weather permit, we experience the hot thermal springs of the river before dinner. Breakfast and dinner included.



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- DAY 5** **Saturday 15 April.** This morning we take the public bus to Hosshinmon-oji where we commence our 7km walk into Hongu. The scenery changes from the cedar forests of the previous day to orange groves and tea plantations as we gently descend into Hongu. Here we explore Kumano Hongu Taisha, one of the three Grand Shrines that make up the Kumano Sanzan. Later we enjoy the Kumano Hongu Taisha Spring Festival and the associated festival food stalls (own arrangements for lunch). In the late afternoon we return by public bus to Kawayu to relax and enjoy the hot springs. After indulging in today's festival food, our meal tonight is a casual dinner of noodles at our inn. Breakfast and dinner (noodles) included.
- DAY 6** **Sunday 16 April.** After breakfast our charter bus first takes us to the nearby hot spring town of Yunomine, home to the historic Tsuyobu; the only hot spring bath that is registered as UNESCO World Heritage. We then transfer to the Kogomotori section of the Kumano Kodo trail. Walking this trail back to Kawayu (approximately 8 kilometres) we pass one of the most spectacular views of the entire Kumano Kodo at Hyakkengura. Breakfast, obento lunch and dinner included.
- DAY 7** **Monday 17 April.** Today we complete our pilgrimage to the three Grand Shrines of Kumano. After transferring by charter bus to Shingu to visit Kumano Hayatama Taisha, we then make our way to Kumano Nachi Taisha, where Japan's highest waterfall provides a spectacular backdrop to this shrine. We walk the famous Daimonzaka section of the Kumano Kodo (approximately 1 kilometre). Leaving Nachi Taisha, we travel by public bus a short distance to the coastal town of Kii-Katsuura. Our accommodation this evening is an onsen resort where we relax in the wonderful indoor and outdoor onsen baths, before our final dinner together. Breakfast and dinner included.
- DAY 8** **Tuesday 18 April.** Our tour ends this morning but not before an early morning visit to the tuna markets (optional). From Kii-Katsuura there are train connections to Kansai International Airport, Kyoto, Osaka or on to Tokyo. We are happy to assist with the purchase of train tickets for onward journeys. Breakfast included.



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SPRING FESTIVAL 2017 TOUR | GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR PRICE

\$3,250 per person (twin share). *#

DURATION

7 nights.

Tour Start Date - End Date: Tuesday 11 April – Tuesday 18 April 2017.

Tour Start Point: Osaka – End Point: Kii-Katsuura. We will provide directions to our Osaka hotel.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum of 10 participants on a twin share basis (plus two tour leaders).

TOUR LEADERS

Alison Weber and Carolyn Abbey. In the unlikely event that either Alison and Carolyn, or both, are unable to accompany this tour due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, we will endeavour to engage a replacement tour leader and will provide details as soon as possible.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Food allergies and strict dietary requirements are not common or well understood in Japan. Our accommodation providers are generally not able to cater to specific dietary needs. If you have dietary restrictions but are interested in joining our tour, please contact us to discuss further.

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodation for 7 nights (including breakfast each day).
- 6 Dinners (Days 2-7).
- 2 lunches (Days 3 and 6).
- Transport whilst on the tour.
- Luggage shuttles (1 piece per person, maximum 70 litres/15 kilograms).

With the exception of Day 2, our luggage is shuttled daily and we walk with just a day pack. On Day 2 our luggage is transferred to our accommodation for Day 3 and we each take a small, soft bag for items required that night. This bag is not carried whilst hiking.

* As many of the inns we stay in are quite small and have a limited number of rooms, accommodation is provided on a twin share basis (subject to availability, triple share may be an option). Please contact us if you wish to join the tour but do not have a travelling companion to share a room with.

As indicated in our terms and conditions, the tour price is subject to change if there is a fall in the Australian dollar to yen exchange rate. There will be no change in the tour price once we have received full payment from you. The price reference date referred to in the terms and conditions is 15 August 2016.