



Koyasan and Kumano Kodo

SPRING FESTIVAL 2018 TOUR | ITINERARY

- DAY 1** **Sunday 8 April.** We meet at our hotel in Osaka. For those who arrive in the afternoon, we visit Osaka castle and its surrounding gardens (optional – we leave from the hotel foyer at 2.30pm). At 5.45pm we meet in the hotel foyer as a group to discuss the next day's arrangements over a drink (own cost) at a nearby bar. We then take a subway to the lively and bustling Dotonbori district for dinner (at own cost and optional).
- DAY 2** **Monday 9 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** **Tuesday 10 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** **Wednesday 11 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, we walk 20 minutes off the main trail to our accommodation for this evening. Breakfast and dinner included.
- DAY 5** **Thursday 12 April.** Today requires an early start ahead of a big day of walking. We return to the trail and walk from Tsugizakura-oji to Hongu (about 22 kilometres). Over the morning we hike up and over three high passes before we stop for a well-earned rest and enjoy our obento lunch. In the afternoon the scenery changes from cedar forests 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. We then take a bus to the delightful riverside village of Kawayu Onsen where we spend the night. If time and weather permit, we experience the hot thermal springs of the river before dinner. Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.



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- DAY 6** **Friday 13 April.** This morning we make a brief visit to the hot spring town of Yunomine, home to the historic Tsuyobu; the only hot spring bath that is registered as UNESCO World Heritage. We then make our way to nearby Ukegawa to begin our walk along the Kogumotori route to Koguchi (about 15 kilometres in total). Along the way, we pass one of the most spectacular views of the entire Kumano Kodo at Hyakkengura. After enjoying our picnic obento lunches, we begin our descent down into the pretty valley where the small hamlet of Koguchi is located. Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
- DAY 7** **Saturday 14 April.** After an early breakfast, we set off on the Ogomotori-goe route to Nachi Taisha, another of the three Kumano Grand Shrines. This is our last and most arduous day of walking (about 15 kilometres) and the seemingly never ending 800 metre climb on the aptly named Dogiri-zaka ("body breaking slope") is both physically and mentally challenging. A further climb after a picnic lunch takes us to the Funamitoge pass, with its panoramic views to the Pacific Ocean. From here the final descent to Nachi Taisha begins. This spectacular site is set against the backdrop of Japan's largest waterfall. 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, lunch and dinner included.
- DAY 8** **Sunday 15 April.** For our last day, we begin with an optional early morning visit to the local tuna markets before breakfast (this visit is subject to the markets operating - on rare occasions the markets are closed due to bad weather at sea). Our charter bus first takes us to nearby Shingu to see the last of the three Grand Shines, Hayatama Taisha. We then travel back along the Kumano river to Hongu to enjoy the Spring Festival at Kumano Hongu Taisha, a highlight of our tour. Lunch (own cost) can be taken at some of the small cafes in Hongu or perhaps graze on the many varieties of food on offer at the festival food stalls. At the conclusion of the festival our charter bus will take us to the coastal city of Tanabe where we stay for our last night together in a western style hotel. Breakfast and dinner included.
- DAY 9** **Monday 16 April.** Tour ends. From Tanabe there are good 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.

See next page for tour price, inclusions and other general information.



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SPRING FESTIVAL 2018 TOUR | GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR PRICE

\$3,500 per person twin share.*#

DURATION

8 nights.

Tour Start Date - End Date: Sunday 8 April – Monday 16 April 2018.

Tour Start Point: Osaka – End Point: Tanabe. 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 8 nights (including breakfast each day).
- 7 Dinners (Days 2-8).
- 4 lunches (Days 3, 5, 6 and 7).
- Transport whilst on the tour (as per the itinerary).
- 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 12 May 2017.