



## Koyasan and Kumano Kodo

AUTUMN 2023 TOUR | ITINERARY

- DAY 1** **Saturday 4 November.** Arrive in Osaka (own arrangements) and check in to our hotel. Take the opportunity to explore Osaka before we meet as a group later in the day. The bustling Dotonbori area is an easy 10 minute walk from our hotel or maybe take the nearby subway two stops to Osaka castle. At 5.00pm we meet in the hotel foyer to enjoy a welcome drink while we discuss arrangements for the following day. We then walk to a nearby restaurant for dinner.
- DAY 2** **Sunday 5 November.** 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 including a visit to Kongobu-ji temple. Our accommodation tonight is a Buddhist temple. 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.
- DAY 3** **Monday 6 November.** This morning we join in morning ceremonies at the temple (optional) before breakfast. After breakfast we have free time to continue exploring Koyasan until we depart by public bus shortly after midday for the Koyasan station to take a train to Wakayama on the coast of the Kii peninsula. An early lunch (own cost) can be taken at one of the local cafes or perhaps buy something to eat on the train along the way. We arrive in Wakayama mid afternoon and after checking in to our hotel we have time to visit Wakayama castle and surrounding gardens before dinner at a local restaurant.
- DAY 4** **Tuesday 7 November.** After breakfast we travel by train to Tanabe where we visit the Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau and buy lunch provisions (own cost). From Tanabe we take a private bus to Takijiri-oji where we eat our lunch and begin our pilgrimage along the Kumano Kodo. Our walk from Takijiri-oji to Takahara is just under 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.
- DAY 5** **Wednesday 8 November.** Today we walk some 17 kilometres along the Kumano Kodo and we start with a traditional breakfast (including coffee for those who need it). 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. Soon after lunch we pass through the small hamlet of Chikatsuyu, site of one of the oldest oji shrines along the trail and where we later return to stay the night. A small footbath here fed by a local hot spring is a pleasant place to soak our pilgrim feet. We climb out of Chikatsuyu and an hour or so later reach Tsugizakura-oji and admire the 800 year old giant cedar trees. We continue on the trail from Tsugizakura-oji another 4 kilometres and take a public bus back to Chikatsuyu and our accommodation for this evening.



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- DAY 6 Thursday 9 November.** After an early breakfast we return to the trail by public bus and walk from where we left the trail to Hosshinmon-oji (approximately 12 kilometres). Over the morning we hike up and over three high passes predominantly through forest but with occasional magnificent views to the Kii mountain ranges. The trail passes through a number of former settlements and along the way we enjoy an obento lunch. From Hosshinmon-oji we take a bus to the charming riverside village of Yunomine, home to the historic Tsuyobu, the only hot spring bath with a World Heritage listing. (Keen walkers may wish to get off at Hongu and hike the steep Dainichi-goe trail approximately 2.5 kilometres to Yunomine). Our inn sits on the edge of the river and overlooks Tsuyobu.
- DAY 7 Friday 10 November.** After breakfast we take a public bus to return to the Kumano Kodo trail at Hosshinmon-oji and walk from there to Kumano Hongu Taisha (approximately 7 kilometres). We pass through orange groves and tea plantations as we gently descend into Kumano Hongu Taisha, one of the three Grand Shrines that make up the Kumano Sanzan. Lunch (own cost) can be taken at some of the small cafes in the small town of Hongu and afterwards we have time to explore Hongu, including the Kumano Hongu Heritage Centre and also Oyunohara, the original site of Kumano Hongu Taisha. Mid afternoon we take a public bus to the nearby riverside village of Kawayu Onsen where we spend the night. Weather permitting, we experience the hot thermal springs of the river before dinner.
- DAY 8 Saturday 11 November.** After breakfast we make our way to nearby Ukegawa to begin our walk along the Kogumotori route to Koguchi (about 13 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.
- DAY 9 Sunday 12 November.** After an early breakfast, we set off on the Ogumotori-goe route to Nachi Taisha, another of the three Kumano Grand Shrines. This is our last and most arduous day of walking\* (approximately 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 Funami-toge 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 indoor and outdoor onsen baths, before our final dinner together.

\*There is an option to take public transport to Nachi Taisha and we discuss this further on tour.



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**DAY 10** **Monday 13 November.** For our last day, we begin with an optional early morning visit to the local tuna market before breakfast (the market has irregular closing days and our visit is subject to the market being open). We then travel to nearby Shingu to see the last of the three Grand Shines, Hayatama Taisha. Our luggage will be taken to nearby Shingu station a short walk from Hayatama Taisha where our tour will end. We are happy to assist with the purchase of train tickets for onward journeys.

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



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AUTUMN 2023 TOUR | GENERAL INFORMATION

### TOUR PRICE

\$4,700 per person twin/triple share\*#.

### DURATION

9 nights.

Tour Start Date: Saturday 4 November 2023. Tour End Date: Monday 13 November 2023.

Tour Start Point: Osaka – End Point: Shingu Wakayama. We will provide directions to our Osaka hotel.

### GROUP SIZE

Minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12 participants on a twin share\* basis (plus tour leader/s).

### 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. The traditional Japanese inns where we stay and the restaurants where we eat are generally not able to cater to specific dietary needs. Soy sauce and fish stock are widely used in Japanese cuisine and most meals including breakfast will feature fish or seafood.

You may need to bring your own food or snacks to supplement the meal that is provided if you are a strict vegetarian or have dietary requirements, such as a gluten intolerance or have an allergy or dislike of seafood. If you have dietary restrictions, please contact us to discuss further.

### ACCOMMODATION

We stay at traditional Japanese regional inns, mostly simple family run minshuku (guesthouses or lodges). Toilets and bathrooms are usually shared. At some inns the baths are communal (women and men are segregated) in keeping with traditional Japanese culture. By western standards these inns might be considered two or three star. Conversely in our opinion the meals and hospitality are four star or more. Our website has more information in the What to Expect section.

### INCLUSIONS

- Twin share \* accommodation for 9 nights (including breakfast each day).
- Welcome drink Day 1.
- 9 Dinners.
- 4 lunches (Days 2, 6, 8 and 9).
- Transport whilst on the tour (as per the itinerary). Any transport costs associated with taking an option to shorten the walking distance outlined in the itinerary are not included.
- 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 overnight on Day 2. This bag is not carried whilst hiking.
- Entrance fee to Kongobu-ji temple at Koyasan.

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\* 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 do not have a travelling companion to share with. On some nights and subject to availability we may be able to provide a room for single occupancy at an additional charge.

# 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 8 February 2023.