



Koyasan and Kumano Kodo

SPRING 2024 TOUR | ITINERARY

- DAY 1** **Wednesday 10 April.** 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 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** **Thursday 11 April.** Today we each pack into our backpack a change of clothes for overnight as our suitcases will be transferred to our inn on Day 3.
- This morning 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 take lunch at a local restaurant and then learn more about historic Koyasan with a visit to Kongobu-ji temple and the Garan. 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** **Friday 12 April.** 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 private bus mid morning for Takijiri-oji, around 2.5 hours away. At Takijiri-oji we eat an obento lunch and then begin our pilgrimage along the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail.
- 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 4** **Saturday 13 April.** 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 arrive at 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. From Chikatsuyu we take a bus to a point further along the trail and walk from there approximately 8 kilometres back to Chikatsuyu. About half way back along the trail we take a break at Tsugizakura-oji and admire the 800 year old giant cedar trees there.



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- DAY 5** **Sunday 14 April.** 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 6** **Monday 15 April.** 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. We arrive in Hongu in time to enjoy the annual 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 we take a public bus to the nearby riverside village of Kawayu Onsen where we spend the night. We experience the hot thermal springs of the river before dinner.
- DAY 7** **Tuesday 16 April.** 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.

[#]The festival is weather dependent. Alternative activities in Hongu will be arranged if the festival is cancelled or postponed.



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- DAY 8** **Wednesday 17 April.** 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.
- DAY 9** **Thursday 18 April.** For our last day, we begin with an optional early morning visit to the local tuna markets before breakfast (subject to the tuna market operating on the day of our visit). We then travel by charter bus to nearby Shingu to see the last of the three Grand Shines, Hayatama Taisha. Our charter bus will take our luggage on to 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.

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

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



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SPRING 2024 TOUR | GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR PRICE

\$4,650 per person twin share*#.

DURATION

8 nights.

Tour Start Date: Wednesday 10 April 2024. Tour End Date: Tuesday 18 April 2024.

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

GROUP SIZE

Minimum of 6 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. It is particularly difficult to cater to people with coeliac disease or who follow a strictly vegetarian diet.

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 8 nights (including breakfast each day).
- Welcome drink Day 1.
- 8 Dinners.
- 5 lunches (Days 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8).
- 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 the morning of Day 2 our luggage is transferred to our accommodation for Day 3 and we each pack into our back pack items required for overnight (Day 2) and the next day (Day 3).
- Entrance fee to Kongobu-ji temple at Koyasan.

* 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 19 June 2023.