

CULTURAL WALKING ADVENTURE

Japan

Imperial Cities Tokyo to Kyoto

CLASSIC JOURNEYS
THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS



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*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*

TRAVEL + LEISURE

Unlocking the Secrets of Ancient (& Modern) Japan

Tales of Samurai and Shoguns. Gleaming bullet trains and tranquil country ryokans. Boisterous taiko drums and the mystical twang of the shamisen. Japan is a land where ancient tradition and modernity blend and blur into an unforgettable and utterly unique cultural experience. Our itinerary begins in the clamor of Tokyo, slips into the serene forest of Hakone in the shadow of Mount Fuji, and culminates in sophisticated, historic Kyoto. Exceptional local guides decode the culture and provide insight into rituals that define life today as they have for a thousand years or more. Along the way, you'll meet practitioners of the tea ceremony, a sushi master who teaches you his craft, calligraphy instructors and others. We'll also arrange dining experiences that will treat you to the spectrum of styles for which Japan is known.

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ACTIVE HIKING & WALKING
- LOCAL WELL-CONNECTED GUIDES
- PREMIERE HOTELS
- FOODIE FOCUSED
- HANDCRAFTED TRIP DESIGN
- MORE IS INCLUDED

What's Included

- All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 4 dinners
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip, handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to sites and other scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

→ PRIVILEGED ACCESS EVENTS

One-of-a-kind access to remarkable people, places and activities arranged just for you.

Terrain

Easy to moderate on good trails with some hills and steps, and city sidewalks.

DAY 1 »

Tokyo

We meet our guide in the hotel lobby and we're off to the quintessential Japanese experience: a hands-on sushi-making class. Working alongside our private chef, you'll learn about the ins and outs of crafting nigiri sushi, maki sushi, and others using the legendary fresh fish and other fresh ingredients (in case raw seafood isn't your thing). Afterward, with a fresh appreciation of this food tradition, you'll sit down to a meal of your own creations.

Behind Tokyo's glimmering modern façade, the long history of the city is still easy to discover. For Asakusa, the district where much is the same as it was during the Edo Period that ended in the mid-19th century. On a guided walk, you'll soak in the local life along Nakamise, a traditional shopping street, and we'll visit Sensoji, Tokyo's oldest temple.

As the afternoon draws to a close, you'll head to a taiko dojo to enjoy an exciting close encounter with the impressive Japanese drums. Your teacher will first give you a brief outline of taiko drums, how they are made, and their history and significance in Japanese music. You will be taught simple, but impressive rhythm patterns including the poses and vigorous yells that accompany the drumming.

MEALS: L, D

OVERNIGHT: TOKYO

DAY 2 »

Hakone

The scenery is nothing short of stunning out of the windows of your train car, the express train that speeds us to Hakone this morning. Hakone is a classic resort town, known for its hot springs and especially for unmatched views of Mount Fuji.

Huge, centuries-old cedar trees line our easy walking path – a segment of the old pilgrimage route from Tokyo to Kyoto. The shade is lovely, and the breeze rustles through ferns. The scent of the trees is a gentle form of natural aromatherapy, just the first example of the deep serenity that comes upon you in the Japanese countryside. For a different take, we step aboard a boat for a cruise on Lake Ashi, cupped inside an enormous volcanic crater. Back on shore, we'll board the Hakone Ropeway for a scenic gondola ride over a valley where hot springs bubble and steam. We'll walk that terrain at Ōwakudani, where you may want to eat one of the eggs cooked in the springs – they are said to add seven years to your life!

We end the day at our traditional ryokan (inn) accommodations for a relaxing dinner.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: HAKONE

DAY 3 »

Hakone

After a peaceful night and a traditional breakfast, we'll go exploring in this beautiful region. We'll visit the Hakone Shrine, a hidden Shinto retreat favored by the Samurai in the 12th century. The crimson torii gate is one of Japan's iconic sights, rising from the waters of Lake Ashi.

This afternoon, we walk off lunch with a moderate hike to the area of Hatajuku. You'll walk along more of the original Tokaido, the ancient route linking the Kanto and Kansai regions. Follow the footsteps of the original stone paths who walked this route centuries ago.

Lastly, you'll visit the Hakone Open Air Museum, which successfully attempts to create a harmonic balance of nature and art by exhibiting various sculptures on its spacious grounds in combination with beautiful views of the surrounding valley and mountains.

On return to our hotel, take a soak in the inn's huge infinity-edge hot-spring onsen overlooking the mountains or indulge in a treatment at the garden spa before dinner.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: HAKONE

DAY 4 »

Kyoto

After our quiet days in the country, the pace changes today as we board the bullet train for a high-speed journey to Kyoto, Japan's former imperial capital and a city often (and justifiably) named one of the finest cities in the world.

Fueled by a bento box lunch on board, we go right from the train station to a calligraphy lesson. You'll receive an explanation of how Kanji (Chinese characters) came to Japan, and the three kinds that Japanese people use. You'll have the opportunity to try writing some characters with advice and support of the calligraphy instructor.

After, we'll transfer to the Gion and Higashiyama district. Gion is Kyoto's most famous geisha district filled with ochaya (teahouses), where geiko and maiko entertain. Along the lower slopes of Kyoto's eastern mountains, Higashiyama is one of the city's best-preserved historic districts, and a great place to experience traditional old Kyoto. The streets are lined by small shops that have been in business for centuries, selling specialties such as Kiyomizu-yaki pottery, sweets, and pickles. The air is filled with the aroma of green and roasted tea, a perfect segue to your chance to take part in a traditional tea ceremony.

Your tea master will demonstrate how to prepare for and host a tea ceremony, and of course how to make a bowl of green tea. After taking part in this centuries-old ritual, you'll have to explore and shop in along the cobbled streets of the Higashiyama area, including Kodaiji Temple, the pagoda at Yasaka and the expansive Yasaka Shrine.

Late in the afternoon, we check into our luxury home for the next three nights. You're at liberty tonight to dine at the hotel or in one of the city's many fine restaurants.

MEALS: B, L

OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 5 »

Kyoto

It's said that 20% or more of Japan's most important national treasures are in Kyoto and they are now recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Site Historic Monuments. Today, we'll take our time exploring some of the finest. At the Golden Pavilion, originally a Shogun's retirement villa, the top two floors are covered in gold-leaf. Located on the back side of Ninnaji Temple, there is a hiking trail modeled after the famous pilgrimage route of kobo daishi in Shikoku island of Japan. We'll walk along this ancient route viewing many of the eighty-eight small temples.

After lunch, we'll visit Arashiyama. Its Tenryuji Zen temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As remarkable as it's carefully tended gardens are, they are overshadowed rather literally by the nearby bamboo forest. It's almost impossible to describe how the towering trunks of the trees soar to an over-arching canopy and seem to tint the air an herbal emerald green. Your path will be dappled by remarkable shards of sunbeam that penetrate the leaves of the bamboo—a phenomenon so unique that it has its own name: komorebi.

MEALS: B OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 6 »

Wazuka / Kyoto

This morning, we drive to the small town of Wazuka is famous for its excellent quality tea. This region is where tea cultivation is said to have started when it was brought over from China, and is the birthplace of what we know today as Japan's rich tea culture. A local guide will lead us through tea fields and farms where meticulous rows of bushes blanket the hills. You'll even have a chance to pick some tea for yourself before lunch in a local restaurant where the specialties are made of – you guessed it – tea!

Back in Kyoto you'll have some downtime to relax or enjoy the hotel at your leisure. For a farewell dinner, you will enjoy a sumptuous meal with an hour of private geisha entertainment consisting of conversation and dancing accompanied by the shamisen (Japanese stringed instrument).

MEALS: B, L, D OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 7 »

Depart Osaka

After breakfast, we depart for Osaka's Kansai Airport and flights home.

MEALS: B

Tour Hotels



Conrad Tokyo

Located near the Ginza, heart of the city, this glamorous contemporary hotel overlooks magnificent views of Tokyo's skyline. The luxurious guest rooms are decorated in minimalist Japanese design. The property has a variety of fine restaurants and a spa.

NIGHTS: 1 nights



Hakone Kowakien Ten-Yu

This recently opened sanctuary is everything you want in a ryokan—a sense of remoteness, tatami-matted floors, and a private open-air onsen bath. Situated in the mountains, there are lovely views all around of the mountains and forest.

NIGHTS: 2 nights



The Thousand Kyoto

A luxury hotel in the Shimogyo Ward district, it's amazing location puts you close to top attractions. Relax in the modern, spacious guestrooms. Stroll the serene garden, dine at the hotels two on-site restaurants or try a therapeutic spa treatment.

NIGHTS: 3 nights

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

START LOCATION: **Lobby of Conrad Tokyo Hotel**
START CITY: **Tokyo**
START TIME: **10:30 AM**

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

END LOCATION: **Osaka Kansai Airport**
END CITY: **Osaka**
END TIME: **At Leisure**