

CULTURAL WALKING TOUR

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. 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, 2 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.

CLASSIC JOURNEYS ITINERARIES MAY BE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT CHANGES, HOTEL SUBSTITUTIONS, AND OTHER MODIFICATIONS.

DAY 1 »

Tokyo

We meet our guide in the hotel lobby and we're off. 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. Next we are on 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.

As the afternoon draws to a close, you'll head to a taiko 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

OVERNIGHT: TOKYO

DAY 2 »

Kawaguchiko/ Hakone

After breakfast, make your way west to Kawaguchiko to explore Arakurayama Sengen Park, on foot at eye level. Known for its picturesque views of Mount Fuji and iconic five-story pagoda, this scenic nature spot is located on the hillside of Mount Arakura and offers incredible photo opportunities. Stretch your legs on a walk up to the observation deck that looks out over the cityscape of Fujiyoshida City with the majestic Mt. Fuji towering above.

Continue to Oishi Park for a walk along winding paths in the beautiful flower fields. The vibrant colors change with the seasons, creating a breathtaking landscape all around you. This serene spot is the perfect place to soak in the scenery, connect with nature, and appreciate the beauty of Japan's iconic mountain in the distance.

Reaching Hakone, a classic resort town known for its hot springs and incredible views of Mount Fuji, you'll marvel at the huge, centuries-old cedar trees lining the streets. Set out on an easy walking path – a segment of the old pilgrimage route from Tokyo to Kyoto – and enjoy the shade and the breeze as you stroll. The scent of the trees is a gentle form of natural aromatherapy, and the first example of the deep serenity that comes upon you in the Japanese countryside. End your day at a traditional ryokan (inn) for some downtime and a relaxing dinner of local specialties.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: HAKONE

DAY 3 »

Hakone

After a peaceful night and a traditional breakfast, it's time to explore in this beautiful region. Set out with your expert local guide to the volcanic valley of Owakudani (known as the 'great boiling valley') that was created over 3,000 years ago by an explosion of the Hakone volcano. Today it is an active crater that emits streams of hydrogen sulfide and hot spring for a fascinating look at the unique terrain of this region. Consider eating one of the eggs cooked in the springs – they are said to add seven years to your life! Then it's off to 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 Ashinoko, unfolding an incredible scene before you. Walk the path from the torii gate through the forest, lit by lanterns, to the main shrine building.

Lastly, you'll discover the Hakone Open Air Museum, which features over a thousand sculptures by international and Japanese artists, including a Picasso Pavilion. Enjoy the harmonic balance of nature and art by checking out the exhibits throughout the spacious grounds in combination with beautiful views of the surrounding valley and mountains.

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.

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.

You'll have to explore and shop in along the cobbled streets of the Higashiyama area, including Kiyomizu Temple, Ninenzaka and Sannenzaka and also the expansive Yasaka Shrine.

Late in the afternoon, we check into our luxury home for the next three nights.

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 5 »

Kyoto

We'll start our morning visiting Arashiyama. As remarkable as it's carefully tended gardens are, they are overshadowed rather literally by the nearby bamboo forest. Begin with a walk around Arashiyama's beautiful gardens followed by a rickshaw ride through 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.

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. Stroll through this serene forest landscape before visiting Ryoan-ji Temple and its iconic rock garden. With 15 carefully placed rocks on meticulously raked gravel, this garden is a masterpiece of minimalist design and an ideal place for a moment of quiet contemplation.

MEALS: B

OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 6 »

Kyoto

After a relaxing morning on your own, make your way to Kiyomizu-dera Temple, which is surrounded by beautiful nature and picturesque cherry blossoms in spring, then arrive on foot at Nijo Castle. This historic landmark was built in the early 17th century and served as the residence for visiting political leaders. Explore the Ninomaru Palace within the castle complex, which is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site and consists of multiple buildings with intricate sliding doors and stunning garden views. The artwork reflects the opulence of the Edo period and the castle's moats will feel like you have stepped back in time.

For a farewell dinner, you will enjoy a traditional kaiseki cuisine meal with private geisha entertainment consisting of conversation and dancing accompanied by the shamisen (Japanese stringed instrument).

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 7 »

Depart

After breakfast, we will depart for Osaka's Kansai Airport for flights home, or you can book your transport independently to your next destination.

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 Tokyo Hotel**
START CITY: **Tokyo**
START TIME: **10:00 AM**

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

END LOCATION: **Airport**
END CITY: **Kyoto**
END TIME: **10:00 AM**