

CLASSIC JOURNEYS

THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS

Japan

Japan's Villages, Valleys & Tea-Field Trails



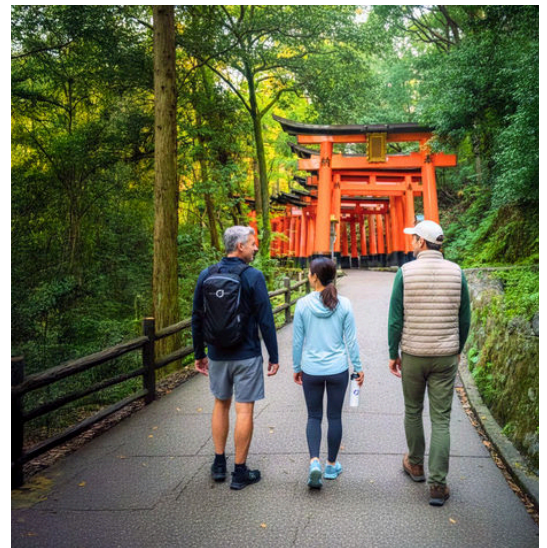
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*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*

TRAVEL + LEISURE

Japan's Villages, Valleys & Tea-Field Trails

Japan is easy to picture as a blur of neon nights, bullet trains, and “must-see” temples—but when you only skim its surface, you miss the quiet heart that locals cherish most. This journey turns down the volume and slows the pace so you can walk into Japan at eye level: along the centuries-old Nakasendo Way in the Kiso Valley, through cedar forests where forest bathing was born, and between the terraced rows of Uji's tea fields where farmers quietly tend choice leaves. Discover how cities, villages and valleys all braid together when you travel mostly on foot. With a small group and exceptionally well-connected local guides, this is Japan as Classic Journeys loves it best: cinematic countryside walks, meaningful encounters with the people who keep its culture alive, and unforgettable “only with Classic Journeys” moments you simply could not arrange on your own.



DAY 1 »

Tokyo – Lanterns & Skyscrapers

- [Walk into Tokyo like a local](#)
- [Ease into Japan with Nihonbashi's blend of merchants' lanes and towers](#)

You feel that first rush of excitement as you slip past neon billboards, glimpses of temples, and the curve of Tokyo Bay. Immediately, you see why this is a metropolis of millions that somehow still has pockets of quiet around every corner. Your base for these first nights is Nihonbashi, a district where kimono shops and old merchant houses sit just behind modern glass towers.

If you feel like stretching your legs a bit more, Tokyo offers a number of iconic places that are easy to explore on your own. You might wander over to Shibuya Crossing, the famed six-way scramble and a perfect “welcome to Tokyo” moment or ride up Tokyo Tower for a sweep of skyline that, on a clear day, reaches all the way to Mount Fuji. If you're drawn to something quieter, the broad, cedar-lined path to Meiji Shrine offers a moment of calm at the city's heart; or you can wander into Omoide Yokocho, a lantern-lit alley in Shinjuku that feels like a pocket of Old Tokyo preserved in amber. And just a short stroll from your hotel, Ginza glows with storefronts, cafés, and wide boulevards perfect for an evening wander. Dinner is open tonight by design—you might follow your nose to a neighborhood izakaya or call it an early night. Either way, you fall asleep knowing that from tomorrow on, the city will unfold for you as if you're visiting an old friend.

MEALS: NA OVERNIGHT: TOKYO

DAY 2 »

Tokyo – Backstreets, Temples & Dinner at Home

- [Wander Yanese's backstreets and shrines, then stroll Ueno's park and gardens](#)
- [Share home-cooked dinner, stories, and hands-on cooking in a real Tokyo apartment](#)

This morning you literally walk into “old Tokyo” with a local friend at your side. From your hotel, your English-speaking guide leads you to Yanese, a trio of neighborhoods spared the worst of the 20th-century bombings. You follow narrow lanes lined with wooden houses and tiny shops where neighbors still buy fish and vegetables by chatting over the counter. At Nezu Shrine you pass under rows of bright vermilion torii, hear the soft clatter of wishing plaques and step into gardens that feel worlds away from the rush of the city.

Later, you ride across town to stroll Ueno's leafy park and the manicured ponds and stone bridges of one of Tokyo's classic strolling gardens. In Asakusa, incense curls into the air at Senso-ji, and you thread through Nakamise's little stalls of sweets and souvenirs—the kind of scene that makes you feel like you've stepped onto a movie set. Lunch is at a small restaurant your guide chooses for you—a place with no English menu and a loyal local following—where you tuck into steaming bowls or artful bento and learn how Tokyoites actually order their favorites.

By late afternoon, the city shrinks to a human scale again. Instead of a restaurant, your guide takes you to a truly “only with Classic Journeys” experience in private home where you ring a real doorbell, slip off your shoes, and follow your hosts into their living room. Over home-cooked dishes—maybe family recipes of simmered vegetables, grilled fish, or simple miso soup—you swap stories, ask the questions you can't ask in a busy restaurant and see how modern life looks in one of the world's biggest cities. There might be a short, easy-going activity too: you try your hand at brushing a few elegant kanji characters, shaping a tiny wagashi sweet, or folding a crane you can tuck into your journal. When you return to your hotel tonight, you've already made your first genuine Japanese friends.

MEALS: B, L, D OVERNIGHT: TOKYO

DAY 3 »

Narai & The Japanese Alps

- [Follow the Nakasendo through cedar forests with views of sacred Mt. Ontake](#)
- [Sleep in a preserved post town after day-trippers vanish and lanterns glow](#)

This morning you trade Tokyo's skyline for the Japanese Alps—cedar forests and wooden post towns hidden in the Kiso Valley. With your Classic Journeys guide alongside you, you set out on the express train bound for these mountains, watching as suburbs give way to fields and river gorges and the whole pace of the trip shifts. By the time you step off at Narai, once a wealthy Edo-period post town on the Nakasendo where samurai and their daimyo lords traveled between Kyoto and Edo, the cooler air and dark-timbered houses make it feel as if you've walked straight into a preserved samurai-era streetscape.

You drop your bags at a beautifully restored inn tucked right into this historic main street, then join your guide to continue along the old Nakasendo on foot. A short hop brings you to Yabuhara, where the Torii Pass trail begins. Your afternoon walk follows soft forest paths and the remnants of the Edo-period road, climbing steadily beneath towering trees. Your guide points out roadside shrines, old milestones, and the moments when the canopy parts to reveal the silhouette of sacred Mt. Ontake. This is Classic Journeys at its core: a countryside walk that's both cinematic and purposeful, with history under your boots and not a tour bus in sight. A brief return ride delivers you back to Narai, where a hot bath, a seasonal dinner, and quiet streets lit by paper lanterns round out your first night in the mountains.

MEALS: B, D OVERNIGHT: NARAI

DAY 4 »

Kiso-Fukushima – Forest Bathing & Ryokan Evenings

- Slow down with forest bathing in Akasawa's towering cedar groves
- Unwind in a traditional ryokan that feels like a private home

You wake to the soft creak of wooden floors and the hush of Narai's main street before the day-trippers arrive. After breakfast, you drive along the valley to Kiso-Fukushima. From here, make your way into Akasawa Natural Recreational Forest, a cypress forest once protected and managed by samurai-era feudal lords for its precious Kiso hinoki—now a model of careful forest stewardship and the birthplace of shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing.

The walking today is gentle, but the experience is deep. Over several hours you meander along well-kept trails beneath massive cedar and cypress trees, with frequent pauses to sit, breathe, and simply listen. Your guide invites you to pick up a leaf, notice the scent of resin in the air or feel the textures of the bark; this is less about distance and more about presence. Along the way, enjoy a simple lunch of local ingredients eaten outdoors or in a small forest café. By late afternoon you arrive to Kiso-Fukushima and your ryokan, where tatami mats, sliding shoji screens, and a carefully presented dinner of regional specialties make it feel as if you've been welcomed into a private home rather than a hotel.

MEALS: B, L, D OVERNIGHT: KISO-FUKUSHIMA

DAY 5 »

Nakasendo Way & Kyoto – Tsumago to Magome Walk

- Walk the classic Tsumago - Magome section of the Nakasendo Way
- Trade post-town cobbles for Kyoto's tiled rooftops and walkable streets

Today you walk one of Japan's classic village-to-village routes. From Tsumago, set off on foot at eye level along the Nakasendo toward Magome, following in the footsteps of merchants and messengers who once traveled between Kyoto and Edo on this same stone-paved road. Pass farmhouses, bamboo groves, and wayside teahouses where travelers once rested, with your guide sharing stories of feudal processions, ancient travel regulations, and how these post towns fought to preserve their wooden facades when modern highways diverted traffic elsewhere.

Lunch is at a simple, welcoming spot along the way—perhaps noodles eaten with the sound of a nearby stream, or a traditional meal of rice, pickles, and grilled local trout—chosen because it's where your guide would bring a friend, not a busload of strangers. In the afternoon, board the Shinkansen in Nagoya for the smooth, 1st-class glide into Kyoto. As evening lights come up over Kyoto's tiled roofs, you're perfectly placed to step out for dinner on your own in this endlessly walkable city.

MEALS: B, L OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 6 »

Kyoto – Icons, Backstreets & Nighttime Food Adventure

- Walk Kyoto's temples and lanes in an "only with Classic Journeys" arc
- Taste Kyoto at street level on a progressive neighborhood food adventure

With Kyoto right outside your door, you have a relaxed morning to follow your curiosity—maybe a quick solo stroll to a nearby shrine, a coffee in a neighborhood café, or a wander through local shops. After lunch, your guide weaves an “only with Classic Journeys” afternoon that strings together a handful of the city’s most emblematic sites in a way that feels like a story, not a checklist. You climb partway up the hillside pathways at Fushimi Inari, framed by endless vermilion gates; step into the gardens of a temple where raked gravel and moss tell their own quiet tales; and weave through the narrow streets of Gion, watching the lanterns begin to glow as evening approaches.

As twilight falls, you set off on a nighttime food adventure—a progressive dinner on foot in the company of a local friend who loves to eat. Over several easy hours, you duck into small, often family-run spots you’d never find alone: perhaps a stand-up bar for a crisp local beer and skewers hot off the grill, a tiny counter serving Kyoto-style small plates and a sweet shop for a last bite of something seasonal. This is countryside walking’s urban cousin: short strolls between stops, deep immersion in local life, and the pleasure of sharing plates and stories with your traveling companions. You return to your hotel late in the evening, well fed and feeling wonderfully at home in Kyoto.

MEALS: B, D OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 7 »

Uji & Kyoto – Tea Fields & Geisha Hospitality

- Walk Uji’s tea fields and river paths with a master as host
- Experience geisha culture through a private, story-rich kaiseki evening

If you’ve ever wondered how a cup of matcha begins, today you’ll find out. Uji is a riverside town that has been at the heart of Japan’s tea culture for centuries. Here you stroll through streets where tea shops display their bright green leaves in polished tins, visit shrines and temples whose wooden beams have watched over harvests for generations and walk out into the iconic tea fields themselves—terraced rows of perfectly clipped bushes flowing over rolling hills, with farmers tending the leaves in wide-brimmed hats as you follow narrow paths between the rows. You finish your walk along the river where cormorant fishers once lit the night with fire baskets, with the scent of fresh tea still in the air.

Your visit includes an intimate tea experience with a tea master who explains how leaves are shaded, picked, steamed, and ground, then prepares a bowl of matcha just for you with a practiced, unhurried grace. You taste the difference that terroir, timing, and care make in every sip. After lunch at a local restaurant, you return to Kyoto for a brief rest before your final evening together.

Tonight, you step into a side of Kyoto that usually stays firmly behind closed doors. Your guide invites you to truly “only with Classic Journeys” culture-through-cuisine experience, a kaiseki dinner in a ryotei or historic teahouse, where multiple courses arrive like edible brushstrokes of the seasons. During the meal, a geisha and maiko join you for an evening of music, dance, conversation and the gentle humor of traditional games. This is not a show on a stage, but an encounter in an intimate room where you can ask questions and exchange smiles.

MEALS: B, L, D OVERNIGHT: KYOTO

DAY 8 »

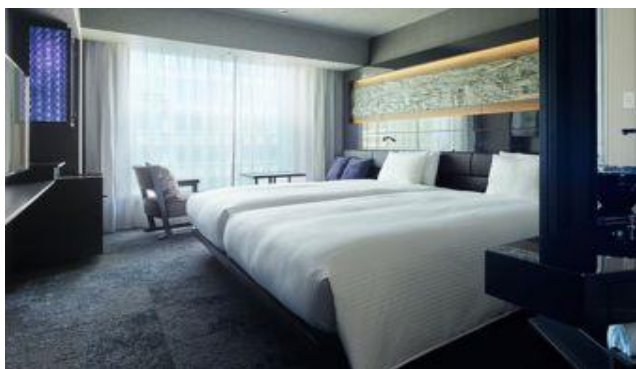
Kyoto – Osaka

- Savor a final Kyoto morning at your own unhurried walking pace
- Depart with memories of villages, valleys, and friends across Japan

On your last morning in Japan, you might take one more walk around the neighborhood, pick up a final pastry or coffee, or simply linger over breakfast as Kyoto wakes up around you. When it’s time to go, it’s an easy transfer to the train station or to Kansai or Itami Airports for your onward flight. You fly home with the feeling that you didn’t just see Japan’s highlights—you walked into its villages and valleys, shared tables and stories with the people who live there, and helped sustain the traditions that welcomed you in.

MEALS: B

Tour Hotels



Mitsui Garden Hotel Nihonbashi

Discover a luxurious haven while staying at Toyko's Mitsui Garden Hotel Nihonbashi. Centrally located and offering impeccable service, this upscale property boasts modern rooms, fine dining, and a relaxing Japanese bath spa to unwind while in the city.

NIGHTS: 2 nights



Byaku Narai

Beautifully restored heritage inn in the heart of Narai-juku, blending minimalist Japanese aesthetics, artisanal details, and thoughtful comforts for an immersive night in a preserved post-town streetscape.

NIGHTS: 1 nights



Kiso Mikawayaya

Traditional ryokan in Kiso-Fukushima with tatami rooms, seasonal kaiseki dinners, and soothing indoor baths, offering an intimate, unhurried experience of everyday life in the Kiso Valley.

NIGHTS: 1 nights



The Royal Park Hotel Iconic Kyoto

Stylish, centrally located Kyoto hideaway with lounge access, serene contemporary rooms, and easy walking distance to temples, boutiques, and dining. Relax during your stay and unwind between city strolls and countryside walks.

NIGHTS: 3 nights

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

LOCATION: Tokyo Hotel Lobby
CITY: Tokyo, Japan

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

LOCATION: Kyoto Hotel Lobby
CITY: Kyoto, Japan

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ▶ **CURATED WALKS THAT LEAD TO 'ONLY WITH CLASSIC JOURNEYS' EXPERIENCES**
 - Immerse and connect you across cultures as you explore on foot
- ▶ **EXCEPTIONAL LOCAL GUIDES**
 - Bring authentic experiences to life
- ▶ **ENCHANTING ACCOMMODATIONS**
 - Where luxury and local mean you feel at home
- ▶ **EAT LIKE (& WITH) THE LOCALS**
 - Local flavors and time to savor the moments together
- ▶ **SMALL GROUPS, GUARANTEED**
 - Mean deeper, richer experiences while making friends along the way
- ▶ **REGENERATIVE TRAVEL**
 - We take strides to preserve cultures, traditions, and nature

What's Included

- Accommodations for 7 nights
- All breakfasts, 4 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.

Enhancing Your Journey

We're constantly seeking ways to improve your experience. Count on us to update you with any significant changes before departure. Minor adjustments may be communicated by your guides during the trip to ensure you have the best possible journey.