



9 Days

# Japan

## Shinto Shrines and Shingon

Join us on a spiritual journey through the Land of the Rising Sun as we travel from Tokyo to Nikkon and onto Kyoto. Learn about the ancient rituals of Shinto and how the teachings of Buddha have been interwoven into traditional beliefs. We travel through vibrant cities, iconic temples and stay overnight in a Monastery where we join in a Shojin meal with our hosts. Along the way we spend time in Nikko with its dramatic backdrop of towering mountains. This is a great opportunity to commune with nature before heading to Kyoto, our final stop, known for its temples, shrines, Geisha costumes and beautiful gardens.



# Recommended tour itinerary

## Day 1-2

### Arrive Tokyo

We take a mid afternoon flight to Tokyo from London. You are met on arrival by your experienced Japanese tour guide who will be with you throughout the duration of the trip. We transfer directly to the hotel in Tokyo and check in. After time to freshen up, we have a briefing and then head out for our first taste of Japanese cuisine. Known for its fresh, high quality produce, meal times are a real highlight of our Japanese experience as we try new foods to tantalise our taste buds, from sizzling yakitori to traditional ryokan.

## Day 3

### Tokyo City

An action packed day as we venture into Tokyo city. Over one-quarter of the Japanese population live within a 50 km radius of the centre of Tokyo, making it the most populous metropolitan area in the world. The day starts as we take a stroll to the city's oldest temple at Asakusa to visit the ancient Buddhist temple at Sensō-ji. Founded in 645, this imposing Buddhist structure hosts a magnificent five story pagoda and holds significant importance to the city's Buddhist community.

Our next stop is the imperial Meiji Shrine set in 170 acres, which was constructed after the death of the Emperor Meiji and his wife in 1912. In stark contrast to the vibrant city all around, the shrine is located in the tranquil Yoyogi park. You will be invited to write wishes on pieces of paper and tie them onto the prayer wall as our guide explains the role the shrines play and we are introduced to the history of Shinto traditions.

After a delicious lunch, we walk to the Harajuku district. In contrast to the spirituality of this morning's sights, we will see a different aspect of Tokyo as we witness the bright lights and young fashion outlets of central Tokyo. We finish at Shibuya World, the famous pedestrian crossing where wave upon wave of commuters make their daily journey home - a sea of humanity, in one of the world's premier commercial hubs.

## Day 4

### Kamakura

This morning, we take a day trip to the historic city of Kamakura. Located 50 km south west of Tokyo, it is a city known for its unique temples and shrines many of which are over 1,200 years old. We visit the famous Hase-kannon temple where you will see one of the largest wooden statues in Japan. With a height of just over 9m and made from camphor wood and gilded in gold, the temple sits half way up Mount Kamakura and has spectacular views over the Pacific. We then move onto Zeniarai Benzaiten where legends says you can wash your money in the shrine famous for its natural spring - in the hope that your monetary wealth will multiply! After lunch we move onto Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, the most iconic and important Shinto Shrine in Kamakura and a Tendai Buddhist temple built in 1063. The shrine and surrounding city were built with Feng Shui in mind and our guide will shed light on the intricacies of this ancient Japanese tradition.







## Day 5

### Nikko

Today we will move to Nikko, 150km to the north of Tokyo. Nikko has been a centre of Shinto and Buddhist worship for many centuries. The town has a dramatic backdrop with towering peaks, lakes, waterfalls and hot springs all in abundance in the adjoining Nikko National Park. We will visit Nikko Toshogu, which has the strong connection with old Japanese General Tokugawa Ieyasu. Initially a relatively simple mausoleum, Toshogu was enlarged into the spectacular complex seen today by Ieyasu's grandson Iemitsu during the first half of the 1600s. There is time in the afternoon for a walk to take in the beautiful surroundings of the botanical gardens. Alternatively we can head to Yumoto meaning "origin of hot water" where we can visit a traditional Onsen.

## Day 6-8

### Kyoto

Today we head to Kyoto by the Shinkansen Bullet train travelling at speeds up to 320 km/h! We will be met at the train station (in itself a major attraction; its futuristic design has won countless awards) and transfer directly to our hotel. There is time to check in and freshen up before we head out for an orientation tour of the Gion district where we mingle with women wearing traditional Geisha costumes. We learn about the role of geiko and maiko culture on their way to or from an engagement at an ochaya.

Kyoto may no longer be the capital of Japan, however it is now widely regarded as being its de-facto capital of culture. Having escaped widespread destruction in the second world war, the city boasts a wealth of temples, shrines and other priceless cultural buildings to visit. Today we cover the most iconic places of Kyoto, including the Kinkakuji Golden Pavilion, the top two floors of which are completely covered in gold leaf, Ryoanji and the world famous zen style garden dating from 1450, as well as the Kiyomizu temple regarded as one of the most celebrated temples in the whole of Japan. Approached along the steep and busy lanes of the atmospheric Higashiyama District, these are just some of the places we visit in this action packed day. There is also the opportunity for a calligraphy lesson in the afternoon (optional extra).

Our second full day in Kyoto sees us experience the magical atmosphere of the Torii Red Gates which straddle a network of trails as well as the important Fushimi Inari Shinto shrine. This is followed by a traditional tea ceremony with an English speaking Sensei. One of the highlights of the trip takes place this evening as we travel to the Shukubo Temple where we stay the night in basic monastic accommodation and experience a traditional Shojin Dinner, the practice of which dates back many centuries.

## Day 9

### Nara

Today we take a short trip to Nara, another famous historic city close to Kyoto and home to some of Japan's oldest and most magnificent temples. We visit the Todaiji temple which hosts the largest Buddha statue in Japan. Our next stop is the Nara Deer park and the beautiful Isuien Japanese traditional garden where we take a walk through the manicured beds interspersed with tea houses. We return to Kyoto for our farewell dinner.

## Day 10

### Osaka & flight to UK

Free morning followed by transfer to Osaka for our overnight flight back to London.

# Further information

## Look what's included!

- International flights
- All accommodation
- All food
- All transportation and activities
- Bi-lingual, first-aid qualified local tour leader
- Parent and student trip launch evening
- Pre-departure preparation evening
- 1-day offsite safety INSET day for staff
- ATOL financial protection
- Medical Emergency / Repatriation Travel Insurance
- Group first aid kit and prescription meds pack
- BS8848 safety management and risk assessments
- Detailed pre-departure information and kit lists
- Comprehensive teacher travel packs
- Permanent operations team in your destination
- 24-hour UK operational support whilst overseas
- Carbon offsetting of all flights
- Free t-shirt for every participant and teacher

## What's excluded?

- Transport to airport in UK
- Drinks (advice will be given on purification of water)
- Visas or tourist cards if required
- Any required inoculations
- Personal spending money
- Tips for guides, drivers and porters
- Airport departure taxes paid locally
- Cancellation and personal effects insurance

## Your educational journey timeline



## Physical journey rating:



Some low level physical activities included in your trip, including walking on uneven terrain, maybe a morning/afternoon trek of two to four hours. That said, no physical preparation is required to make the most of the tour. High humidity and temperatures can occur at certain times of the year.

## Culture shock rating:



Students should expect some culture shock. You'll be exposed to signs of poverty. The food will be quite different to home and English, whilst still spoken, will be less prevalent. Respecting the local culture will make it easier to fit in and get the most out of your trip. We're likely to visit remoter locations on this tour where access to western style services may be sporadic. Often on trips of this grading there are parts of the itinerary which are more remote, interspersed with sections which are more 'comfortable'.

# A journey of 1,000 miles...

Starts with a single step... Contact us now to start your educational journey.

## 1 Get your tailor-made proposal and further information

If this itinerary doesn't quite scratch your educational travel itch then let us tailor-make one for you. Our wealth of experience and expert in-country contacts means we can design an itinerary just for you. Contact us for more information and a detailed quote.

## 2 Ask for risk assessments and marketing materials

We can provide initial risk assessments and destination threat assessments to help you with your expedition approval process. Ask for posters and your pre-booking information pack too.

## 3 Arrange a trip launch evening at your school

This is a chance for students and parents to hear more about the planned adventure with a comprehensive information evening and an opportunity for questions.



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