

KUMANO KODO PILGRIM'S WALK JAPAN AUTUMN 2018: WALK, EAT, SOAK

OCTOBER 20 – 30, 2018

SMALL-GROUP, PERSONALISED, FULLY-ESCORTED WALKING TOUR



2 preliminary walks near Kyoto and then 7 days walking west to east through the mountains of the Kii Peninsula staying in traditional lodgings in isolated villages.

This is the tour for you if you want to engage with nature and the history and spirit of Japan. The walks can be steep but at the end of each day you will be served delicious local food and be able to soak in natural hot spring baths. As luggage-transfer is included, only daypacks are carried. You will be most comfortable on this tour if you do regular full-day walking or hiking, are comfortable walking 6 – 8 hours on consecutive days, and able to cope with ascents and descents of 700m.

Peter and Gillian, experienced walkers of the Kumano Kodo pilgrim's trail, will be your full-time guides and companions. Gillian speaks Japanese and has designed and lead more than 20 tours to Japan.

KYOTO, KURAMA, KIBUNE and HIEIZAN

We start our Kumano Kodo pilgrim's trail autumn walking tour with 'preparation' walks near Kyoto. We travel to the north of Kyoto by train through a 'tunnel' of coloured maples to the peaceful village of Kurama. We hike about 2 hours to picturesque Kibune via Yuki-jinya Shinto Shrine and Kurama Temple. The next day a short train ride takes us to the historical town of Sakamoto. We climb about 700m to Enrajuji temple complex. This complex was founded in 788. Our return journey is by the longest cable car ride in Japan.

KUMANO SANZAN

We pay our respect to the three Grand Shrines of Kumano: Kumano Hongu Taisha, Kumano Nachi Taisha and Kumano Hayatama Taisha. These shrines represent our future, our present, and our past respectively and give us the opportunity to reflect on those aspects of our lives. From a nature worship perspective the shrines have strong links to fertility. The Shinto deities enshrined here are part of Japan's creation myths. Buddhist deities of Mercy, Healing, Compassion, and Wisdom are also venerated here.

KUMANO PILGRIM'S TRAIL

You will be fully guided walking the UNESCO World Heritage listed Kumano Kodo pilgrim's trail and stay at traditional guesthouses and ryokan. We will be served delicious multi-course, hearty and healthy meals and be provided with traditional bento lunches for the trail.

ONSEN THERMAL HOT SPRINGS

Soak away all weariness and cares in the therapeutic waters of Yunomine, Kawayu, and Kiikatsuura hot spring baths. Each onsen has its own distinct character. Yunomine, in a small valley deep in the heart of the sacred mountains of Kumano was discovered about 1,800 years ago, and is thought to be one of the oldest hot springs in Japan. At Kawayu Onsen hot spring water bubbles to the surface of the crystal clear river. At Kiikatsuura we will look out over the ocean.

Kumano Kodo Pilgrim's Walk Japan Autumn Tour 2018: WALK, EAT, SOAK

ITINERARY: October 20 – 30, 2018

DAY 1 Sat Oct 20: ARRIVAL

In the evening we will meet and stay at the Nikko Hotel Kansai airport. If you are intending to stay longer in Japan, we recommend that you do it after this tour as by that time you will have some experience of travel in Japan. We are happy to help you plan your extension.

Accommodation: Nikko Hotel at Kansai airport. **B**

DAY 2 Mon Oct 21: KYOTO, KURAMA & KIBUNE

We travel 80 minutes on the Haruka Ltd Express to Kyoto. After depositing our luggage we travel north by bus and train to the mountain village of Kurama. We will hike on a mountain path through cedars and maples to the picturesque village of Kibune. The Shinto Shrine here is associated with the god of water. Businesses associated with water in the cooking industry such as restaurants and food producers come here to pray for success. The shrine is also associated with the god of marriage and attracts young couples. In the afternoon we return to Kyoto to savour the atmosphere of this ancient capital and cultural centre and have dinner together.

Walk: 4km, 2 -3 hours **Difficulty:** Easy

Accommodation: Western style hotel with breakfast **B, D**

DAY 3 Mon Oct 22: KYOTO, HIEIZAN & ENRAKUJI

From the town of Sakamoto we will climb for about 2 hours to the summit of Mt Hiei and visit Enrajuji temple complex on the summit. Enrajuji, a world heritage site and the head temple of the Tendai style of Buddhism, was founded in 788. The temple area is dotted with more than 100 buildings and towers all shaded by a forest of old Japanese cedar trees dotted with maples. Even today, Mt. Hiei is still home to the severe acetic training called "Sennichi Kaihogyo" (Thousand Day Mountain Walk) wherein practitioners walk around the mountain every day without any days off for one thousand days.

Walk: 730m ascent, 2 - 3 hours **Difficulty:** Medium

Accommodation: Western style hotel with breakfast **B**

DAY 4 Tues Oct 23: TAKAHARA

Tanabe, where we pick up our maps for our walks, is about 2 hours and 50 minutes by train from Kyoto. In Tanabe we will get our maps and walking notes and have our luggage collected. After a 40-minute bus trip and a steep hike we will arrive at the mountain top village of Tanabe. This walk is a 4.5km consistent climb from 82m to 317m. Takahara is known as 'kiri no sato' village in the mist. The shrine at Takahara is surrounded by camphor trees 800 -1000 years old.

Walking: 4.5km 2 - 3 hours **Difficulty:** Medium

Accommodation: Japanese guest house hot spring baths, delicious local food, & magnificent views **B, L, D**

DAY 5 Wed Oct 24: TAKAHARA - CHIKATSUYU-OJI

We will walk out of the village past houses and fields into the forest and its ancient stone paths. We will see several smaller shrines (oji) originally erected to protect and guide pilgrims and serving as places of worship and rest. The walk is 11.3km, about 4 hours with a rise of 345m before we descend 360m into Chikatsuyu village

Walk: 11.3km 4 hours **Difficulty:** Easy

Accommodation: Japanese guest house hot spring baths & delicious local food

B, L, D

DAY 6 Thurs Oct 25: CHIKATSUYU-OJI – YUNOMINE

We will walk 5.2km ascending 216m and descending 132m in about 2.5 hours to the massive Nonaka no Ipponosugi 800 year old cedars with up to 8m circumference. Nearby we can fill our water bottles at Nonaka no Shimizu spring, one of the '100 famous waters of Japan'. We then travel by bus to Hosshinmon-oji and continue the walk to Yunomine hot spring village. Yunomine hot spring was discovered over 1800 years ago.

Walk: 12.3km 5 hours **Difficulty:** Hard

Accommodation: Japanese onsen ryokan with indoor & outdoor hot spring baths

B, L, D

DAY 7 Fri Oct 26: YUNOMINE - HONGU - KAWAYU

We will have a short walk over a rise of 180m from Yunomine to Hongu Taisha. The grand shrine is set amongst giant cedar and camphor trees. There is an excellent history and local information centre. We then travel by traditional boat on the Kumano River to the town of Shingu. We will transfer to the onsen village of Kawayu by bus. In Kawayu onsen hot water bubbles to the surface of the crystal clear river. The ryokan and guesthouses are spread out along the river. You will have the opportunity to bathe in the ryokan's indoor and outdoor baths and also bathe under the stars in the warm waters of the river.

Walk: 3.4km 2.5 hours **Difficulty:** Medium

Accommodation: Japanese onsen ryokan indoor & outdoor hot spring baths

B, D

DAY 8 Sat Oct 27: KAWAYU - KOGUCHI

The trail starts with a 5.5km climb to an impressive lookout with a panoramic view of the 3600 peaks of Kumano.

Walk: 16km 5 – 6 hours **Difficulty:** Hard

Accommodation: Japanese onsen ryokan indoor & outdoor hot spring baths

B, L, D

DAY 9 Sun Oct 28: KOGUCHI - NACHI - KIIKATSUURA

Today is our last big day of walking and our toughest with the first section climbing 800m in 5km. Our reward will be the view of Nachi falls which at 133 meters boasts the longest drop in Japan, with one ton of water dropping down the cliff every second. The 14.5km walk with a total ascent of 980m and descent of 920m will take us 7 - 8 hours. As well as the waterfall, Nachi has the Kumano Taisha shrine and a very atmospheric 5th century Buddhist temple. We will take a bus 30 minutes to the fishing port of Kiiatsuura. Our onsen hotel is on an island and we will be able to relax in the outdoor onsen baths surrounded by the sounds of the sea.

Walk: 14.5km 7 – 8 hours **Difficulty:** Strenuous

Accommodation: Japanese onsen ryokan with indoor & outdoor hot spring baths

B, L, D

DAY 10 Mon Oct 29: HAYATAMA SHRINE - KIIKATSUURA

The small fishing port of Kiiatsuura boasts the highest volume of tuna fish hauls in all of Japan. Early in the morning we can attend an exciting auction of the tuna caught on long lines in the coastal waters, with whistling hawks swooping in to try to get some fishy scraps.

From Kiikatsuura we travel approximately 30 minutes by train to Shingu. In Shingu we can visit Hayatama Shrine, the last of the three grand Kumano Shrines and climb the very steep 538 stone steps to Kamikura Jinya and its 'toad rock' that has been venerated for at least 1600 years. On our return you can explore this small fishing port, stretch your legs on the island's walking track, or pamper yourself with hot spring baths and massages. Or maybe you'll just want to spend the whole day relaxing at our island resort.

Accommodation: Japanese onsen ryokan with indoor & outdoor hot spring baths

B, D

DAY 11 **Tues Oct 30: DEPARTURE** Kiikatsuura to Kansai airport or elsewhere

Our Kumano Kodo experience ends in Kiikatsuura.

You may choose to travel to the airport for flights home or extend your journey. Book an evening flight if you are departing on October 30. The earliest you will be able to get to Kansai airport is 15:20 and Narita is 15:53.

TOUR COST: AUD\$4,890 per person twin share (International airfares not included)

Inclusions: 10 nights' accommodation, all breakfasts, 5 lunches, 8 dinners, all entries, local transport for the period Day 2 (Kansai airport) to Day 11 (Kiikatsuura)

BOOKINGS: info@myjapantour.com / (61) (0)411 340 407 / (61-3) 94598460

BOOKING DEADLINE: Friday April 20, 2018

FINAL PAYMENT: Friday June 22, 2018

FITNESS LEVEL: A high level of fitness is required. Participants may choose to take the bus to the next accommodation if tired. (Such bus rides are considered outside the itinerary and will be at the cost of the participant.)

ORIENTATION: Saturday September 8, 2018 in Melbourne - An opportunity for participants to meet in an informal environment to share their expectations, hopes, interests, and concerns while enjoying home-cooked Japanese food. Those who cannot attend will be invited to contribute by forwarding questions/comments or to participate on Skype.