

SCENIC
SAMURAI
TRAILS
SMALL GROUP TOUR



TOUR DOSSIER 2017/2018

Scenic Samurai Trails

SMALL GROUP TOUR

Japan is blessed with some of the most spectacular natural scenery in the world, most of which is found deep in the valleys and high in the mountains, miles away from the big cities that most people know. The mountain trails chosen for this tour have been passed for centuries by thousands of pilgrims from all walks of life including retired emperors and samurai leaders. Some particular favourites include the UNESCO recognized 'Sacred Mountains of the Kii Peninsula', Mt Fuji, and the preserved samurai postal route from Tsumago to Magome. We feel that the inclusion of these spectacular locations make this tour one of a kind.



ROUTE

STARTS IN TOKYO /
ENDS IN TOKYO

Tokyo [2 nights]



Mt Fuji [1 night]



Kyoto [3 nights]



Kii Peninsula
[4 nights]



Nagoya [1 night]



Tsumago & Magome
[2 nights]



Tokyo [1 night]

GROUP SIZE: MIN 6 / MAX 16 **DURATION:** 14 nights / 15 days

PRICE PER PERSON*(2/3 PEOPLE SHARING TWIN/DOUBLE/TRIPLE ROOM):

EUR4,700 GBP3,950 USD5,200 AUD7,060

PRICE FOR SINGLE OCCUPANCY:

EUR5,845 GBP4,910 USD6,465 AUD8,775

*PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO EXCHANGE RATE FLUCTUATIONS BUT WILL BE FIXED ONCE DEPOSIT IS PAID. SECURE YOUR PLACE TODAY BY PAYING THE BOOKING DEPOSIT OF €250 / £200 / US\$300 / AU\$350 PER PERSON

ACCOMMODATION CATEGORY:

Standard Western hotels in the cities, Japanese style local minshikus (guesthouses) in Kumano Kodo area, and ryokan stay with onsen hot spring bath in Tsumago/Magome area

GUIDE/ESCORTED:

Tour Leader throughout with local Tour Guides in places

2017/2018 DEPARTURE DATES:

- MAY 14 – 28 Sumo Tournament Tokyo
- JUL 28 – AUG 11 Summer Festivals
- NOV 25 – DEC 09 Autumn Leaves season & Kawayu Onsen
(Outdoor River hot springs)



Itinerary Summary

Itinerary in Brief	Accommodation
<p>DAY 1 [Tokyo]</p> <p>Arrive into Tokyo Narita or Haneda Airport Transfer to Tokyo hotel Free time in Tokyo for the afternoon Meet your group in hotel lobby at 5pm Enjoy dinner & evening in Shinjuku at local restaurant Visit Metropolitan building for panoramic night-view of the city</p> <p>DAY 2</p> <p>Enjoy breakfast at your hotel Full-day private guide with our local Tokyo tour guide Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsukiji Fish Market • Hamrikyu Garden • Edo Museum • Asakusa Kannon Temple & Shopping Street • Tokyo Sky Tree 	<p>Shiba Park Hotel (or similar)</p>
<p>DAY 3</p> <p>Enjoy breakfast at your hotel Transfer to Kawaguchiko</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch at a local restaurant in Kawaguchiko • Oishi Park • Kawaguchiko Sightseeing Boat • Dinner at your hotel 	<p>Wakakusa no yado Maruei (or similar)</p> <p><i>[Japanese style]</i></p>
<p>DAY 4</p> <p>Climbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive at summit and watch sunrise • Walk around Mt Fuji crater • Eat packed breakfast at summit • Descend • Transfer to Kyoto by bullet train (arrive evening) • Free time in Kyoto <p>Non-climbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast at your hotel • Transfer to Kyoto by bullet train (arrive afternoon) • Free time in Kyoto 	<p>Daiwa Roynet Hotel Kyoto (or similar)</p>
<p>DAY 5</p> <p>Enjoy breakfast at your hotel Meet our local Kyoto guide for a full-day private guide tour Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nijo Castle • Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) • Kiyomizu Temple • Authentic tea ceremony with geisha • Gion District walking • Free time in evening 	

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel
Free day in Kyoto - Optional day-trips include:

Explore nearby Arashiyama

- Hozugawa River Boat
- Togetsukyo Bridge
- Tenryuji Temple
- Bamboo Forest

DAY 6

Day-trip to Nara

- Todaiji Temple & Great Buddha
- Nigatsudo Hall
- Kasuga Taisha Shrine

Day trip to Hiroshima & Miyajima Island

- Itsukushima Shrine
- Atomic Bomb Dome
- Peace Park/ Memorial Museum

Daiwa Roynet Hotel Kyoto
(or similar)

DAY 7

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel
Transfer to Kii-Tanabe by train
Lunch at a local restaurant
Meet Kumano Kodo guide and begin trail
Highlights include:

- Visit Takahara Kumano-jinja Shrine
- Dinner at your minshiku

Local Minshuku
[Japanese style]

DAY 8

Enjoy breakfast at your minshiku
Re-join the Kumano Kodo trail with guide
Highlights include:

- Kumano Hongu Taisha Shrine
- Picnic lunch
- Oyunohara
- Kumano Hongu Heritage Centre
- Kawayu Onsen
- Dinner at your minshiku

Kawayu Onsen Local
Riverside Minshuku
[Japanese style]

DAY 9

Enjoy breakfast at your minshiku
Re-join the trail with Kumano Kodo guide
Highlights include:

- Kogumotori-goe
- Picnic lunch
- Ukegawa to Kawayu Onsen walk
- Dinner at your minshiku

DAY 10

Enjoy breakfast at your minshiku
Re-join the trail with Kumano Kodo guide
Highlights include:

- Kumano Hayatama Taisha Shrine
- Lunch at a local restaurant
- Kumano Nachi Taisha & Seiganto-ji
- Nachi Waterfall
- Katsuura
- Dinner at your minshiku

Kii Katsuura
Local Minshuku
[Japanese style]

DAY 11	<p>Enjoy breakfast at your minshiku Transfer to Nagoya by train Free time in Nagoya</p>	<p>Nagoya Sakae Tokyu Inn (or similar)</p>
DAY 12	<p>Enjoy breakfast at your hotel Transfer to Nagiso by train Explore Tsumago Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsumago-juku • Tsumagojuku-honjin • Koutokuji Temple • Dinner and onsen (natural hot spring) at your ryokan 	<p>Hotel Kisoji <i>[Japanese style]</i></p>
DAY 13	<p>Enjoy breakfast at your hotel Explore Magome Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magome's stone pavement and picturesque village • Nakasendo Trail from Magome to Tsumago • Dinner and onsen at your ryokan 	
DAY 14	<p>Enjoy breakfast at your ryokan Transfer to Tokyo by train Free time in Tokyo Recommended highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harajuku Takeshita-dori Street • Omotesando & Oriental Bazaar • Shibuya Scramble Crossing • Roppongi Hills (Tokyo City View) <p>Farewell Dinner (Optional)</p>	<p>Shinjuku or Shibuya – City Centre 3 star</p>
DAY 15	<p>Enjoy breakfast at your hotel Transfer to airport by limousine bus Tour ends</p>	<p>Tour Ends</p>

Day-by-Day Description

Tokyo - Introduction

One quarter of all Japanese live in Tokyo or the near vicinity and with a population of over 12 million inhabitants, Tokyo is one of the largest cities in the world. With its huge skyscrapers, underpasses, overpasses and crowds of pedestrians, Tokyo may not seem the most attractive city on the surface, but the city has a vibrant charm all of its own. The street level detail is what makes Tokyo such an incredibly interesting place to explore and at every turn you will be met with an array of sights, sounds and smells to enliven the senses. The city has many major sights to visit such as Senso-ji Temple in the old downtown area of Asakusa or the fashion hub of Shibuya from where all new trends are said to emanate. All in all a stay in Tokyo is to experience one of the world's most vibrant and interesting cities; a capital hurtling headlong into the future whilst maintaining its links with the traditions of ancient Japan.



◆ DAY 1: Tokyo

Your tour starts today when you arrive into Tokyo Narita Airport to be greeted by your tour leader. You will have some time to relax and recuperate after your flight or you can explore the area around your hotel in the afternoon. At 5 or 6pm all members of the group will assemble in the hotel lobby and your tour leader will take you out for an evening in Shinjuku. Towering skyscrapers dominate the Shinjuku skyline in the heart of the commercial downtown. Shinjuku station is the world's busiest train station, serving over two million passengers every day. Check out amazing views of Tokyo from the observation decks at the nearby Metropolitan Government Office before delving down into one of Shinjuku's many subterranean malls, or take a break from the hustle and bustle of the city and find sanctuary in Shinjuku Gyoen (in spring this park is of Tokyo's premier cherry-blossom viewing spots. Tonight you will enjoy dinner with your group in a local izakaya style restaurant.

◆ DAY 2: Tokyo City Tour

Today you will travel around Tokyo like locals with our friendly local guide, starting off at the buzzing Tsukiji fish market. Step next door into a world far away from sushi and sashimi into Hamarikyu Garden for a gentle stroll among the high rise towers looking over you. You will also visit the Edo Tokyo Museum which houses incredible exhibits that provide a rich insight into Tokyo during the Edo Period. After lunch head straight to Asakusa, the old traditional part of Tokyo which is conveniently located near Tokyo Sky Tree from where you can view Tokyo from 350 metres from the ground.



◆ DAY 3: Tokyo - Kawaguchiko

Today you take a bus from Shinjuku to Kawaguchiko where you will marvel at one of the most iconic sights in Japan, Mt Fuji. Those members of the group who wish to climb this sleeping giant will start from Kawaguchiko 5th station where they will meet our experience Mt Fuji climb guide and from where they will begin their ascent. Make your way up to the 8th station where you will stop off in a mountain hut for dinner and some rest. Wake in the early hours and continue your hike all the way to Mt Fuji's summit where you will wait for Fuji's spectacular sunrise. Many people



prefer the views of Mt Fuji from its surrounding lakes. For those who would rather not tackle the hike you will enjoy lunch at a local Kawaguchiko restaurant before visiting nearby Oishi Park which is famous for its stunning views of Mt Fuji over Lake Kawaguchi and the surrounding natural landscape. Voyage out across Lake Kawaguchi on the Kawaguchiko Sightseeing Boat before settling in for dinner at your hotel.

◆ DAY 4: Kawaguchiko – Kyoto Introduction

Kyoto is one of the most culturally rich cities in Asia. Home to 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites, over 1,600 Buddhist temples and 400 Shinto shrines, this ancient city showcases the heart and soul of traditional Japan. Kyoto boasts an array of world-class gardens, majestic festivals and delicate cuisine, all of which make much of the rhythms of nature and the changing of the seasons. On first glance however, visitors will see that like any large Japanese city, grid-like Kyoto has its fair share of neon and concrete. But the discerning eye will soon pick out Kyoto's treasures: sacred shrines tucked in among shopping arcades, time-honoured teahouses nestling among modern businesses and mysterious geisha scuttling down backstreets among the tourists and souvenirs. Kyoto's charm lies in these details and whether you're here for four days or four years, the closer you look, the more you'll discover.



◆ DAY 5: Kyoto City Tour

Today you will receive the best possible introduction to Kyoto as our expert local guide takes you around to Kyoto's most spectacular sights. You will visit Nijo Castle, Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavillion), Kiyomizu Temple, and the Gion district famous for its maiko and geisha. In the afternoon you will spend time at a local tea house with a real Kyoto Geisha participating in traditional tea ceremony.



◆ DAY 6: Free day in Kyoto / Optional day-trip to Nara OR Hiroshima & Miyajima Island

Today you can have a full day off from touring giving you the opportunity to either take a break from it all and/or go see the sights in Kyoto that you really want to see. Your tour leader will be available in the morning to help you orientate your day. If you need ideas, he/she will also be there to fill your day with other Kyoto highlights such as the Philosophers Walk or Arashiyama Bamboo Forest. If you are still full of energy and keen for some sight-seeing we recommend an optional day-trip to either Nara or Hiroshima & Miyajima Island.

Nara - Introduction

Nara lies just 40 minutes by local train from Kyoto and is renowned for the wealth of its Buddhist and Shinto heritage. Nara was formerly the end of the Silk Road and was for this reason the area which first saw Buddhist teaching making the transition across the ocean from China. The daibutsu or big Buddha is hugely impressive as is the huge wooden structure which houses it, to this day the world's largest wooden building despite the current structure being a third smaller than the original. The myriad of shrines and temples are all set against the backdrop of the low lying mountains and in the midst of Nara Park, which is famously home to a vast population of pesky deer. Given half a chance they'll happily munch on your guide books, umbrellas, scarves, and about anything else they can get their noses into! You can also buy official deer cookies to feed them with but do so at your own peril.



Hiroshima - Introduction

Hiroshima is a city that needs little introduction. It is of course infamous for being the site of one of two atomic bombs dropped on Japan at the end of the Second World War. Despite its tragic past, Hiroshima is now a bustling and vibrant city which has risen phoenix-like from the ashes. The Peace Park and Museum are a poignant reminder of the reason for Hiroshima's fame and everyone should spend an afternoon in this part of town. Other attractions in Hiroshima include Hiroshima Castle and the baseball stadium. The Shukkei-en garden is well worth an afternoon stroll with a number of tea houses dotted about the grounds. The Hiroshima Prefectural Museum of Art contains some wonderful paintings by both Japanese and Western artists. There is also the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art which has many pieces inspired by the 1945 bombing. There are also some great views of the city from here. The local food is okonomiyaki, a kind of Japanese savoury pancake. You choose the ingredients and then cook the pancake yourself at your table.



◆ DAY 7: Kyoto - Kii Tanabe & Takahara

This morning you travel by train from Kyoto to Kii Tanabe. From here your adventure in the Kii Peninsula begins!

The entry point to the World Heritage Nakahechi Route lies at Kii Tanabe where you will begin your hike through the UNESCO World Heritage 'Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain range'. Upon arrival to Kii-Tanabe station, one of our local experts will greet the group and share the plan for what lies ahead. We will move by chartered vehicle to Takijiro area where lunch will be served at a local farm restaurant, serving delicious local food in a Japanese cottage style building. From here we will drive to Takijiri-Oji and visit the Pilgrimage Centre. Takajiri-Oji is considered the sacred entrance into the Kumano mountains. The trail climbs up-hill most of the way to the small village of Takahara and takes about 2 hours to complete. Tonight we will overnight at a very quaint minshuku with mountain views sure to take your breath away. Dinner is included tonight, considered locally as heaven for organic food lovers.



◆ DAY 8: Kawayu Onsen

We leave Takahara's lovely locals, and move on to Hosshinmon-Oji where we begin our hike to the first of the Grand Shrines, Kumano Hongu Taisha. This is a very nice half day walk on the pilgrimage route. It goes through a mixture of ridge top settlements and forest trails. There are some great panoramic lookout spots along this trail. A local mountain expert will accompany us throughout our hikes which will add to the adventure and ease the pain of navigating our way through. Half way through this hike, we will stop at a local hut and have a picnic (bento lunch box) before visiting the Grand Shrine and then Oyunohara, considered Japan's largest Torii gates ever built.

In the afternoon, we will meet our driver and settle into our river view ryokan in Kawayu Onsen. Dinner, swimming, bathing in the river &/or hot springs at your ryokan are just what your body needs after today's exhilarating walk.

Kawayu Onsen is famous for its river bank that, in the Winter, becomes a bubbling outdoor river hot spring (Sennin Buro). In the Summer months you can dig up your very own hot spring and soak in one you make yourself. Tonight, after dinner, we will visit the nearby training club house of the local Taiko Group (Japanese drum) called Oku Kumano Taiko. Enjoy a mini concert by the locals or even join in yourself! This is a wonderful chance to meet and interact with locals who are only too happy to show off their traditional drum playing skills.



◆ DAY 9: Kawayu Onsen

If you consider yourself a walker, you might want to take a break today as our non-walking option includes a spectacular boat ride along the Kumano River to the scenic Dorokyo Gorge. This will take a half a day allowing you to relax and enjoy the surroundings at Kawayu Onsen.

The walk will finish at approx. 3.30pm giving you time to enjoy Kawayu's highlights (the river, the great food at your ryokan, and the onsens).

◆ DAY 10: Kii Katsuura - Nagoya

You will spend the morning walking the famous walk up to Nachi Waterfall and Shrine before making your way back to Nagoya by express train. Free time to refresh in Nagoya's five star luxury hotel located next to shops/restaurants/train station.



◆ DAY 11: Nagoya - Tsumago/Magome

From Nagoya, we take another express scenic journey to the Kiso Valley, getting off at Nagiso, the nearest station to our hotel. Overnight for the next two nights will be at the areas best hot spring hotels with great food and irresistible hot springs on our door step. On day 14 we will set off on our trek from Tsumago to Magome, an 8km walk along the river walkways, mountain passages, and tiny villages. If you feel like you've done enough walking for the trip, the option of taking the local bus to each village is also available which your tour leader will be

more than happy to assist you with. After the breathtaking walk we will return to our hotel where once again, we can soak in the healing baths to relax the legs and sore muscles some of us might have! Dinner also served tonight.



Tsumago was once a post town on the old Nakasendo highway linking the ancient capital of Kyoto with Matsumoto. Today, Tsumago is loved for the residents' efforts to preserve the town's Edo Period ambiance. Power lines are hidden away and cars banned from the main roads during the daytime so that the beautiful, traditional buildings and flag-stone streets can be seen in their true glory. A stay in Tsumago is to step back in time and

experience old Japan; a world away from the robots, gadgets and gizmos that many associate with modern Japanese cities. Tsumago is situated in the picturesque Kiso Valley and the hike between Tsumago and Magome along the old post route is any outdoor lovers paradise. Upon arrival to your hotel you will get the chance to soak in what we might consider one of Japan's best hot spring baths. With a choice of more than 6 different baths, many of which are outside, you could easily spend up to two hours sampling the variations on offer. Dinner will be served tonight - buffet style!

◆ DAY 12: Tsumago to Magome Walk

Today we will set off on our trek from Tsumago to Magome, an 8km walk along the river walkways, mountain passages, and tiny villages. If you feel like you've done enough walking for the trip, the option of taking the local bus to each village is also available which your tour leader will be more than happy to assist you with. After the breathtaking walk we will return to our hotel where once again, we can soak in the healing baths to relax the legs and sore muscles some of us might have! Dinner also served tonight.



◆ DAY 14: Tsumago - Tokyo

After breakfast we will make our way back to the capital for some last minute shopping and excitement. Or, if your onward journey is from Osaka or Nagoya, you have the option of staying at either city instead of going back to Tokyo.

Either way, it is important to inform us of this in advance so we can make the necessary arrangements with hotels. Our final night we will spend on the town sampling some Tokyo night life with your tour leader. Or, if you prefer to relax, you can opt out of this. We will arrange a farewell dinner for those who wish to join which again will be optional.



◆ DAY 15: Tokyo

Scenic Samurai Trails Tour will finish after breakfast. You will be provided with airport limousine bus tickets to get you to Narita or Haneda Airports, which depart from outside your hotel directly frequently.

What's included?

Service	Description
Accommodation	7 nights in western hotels and 7 nights in Japanese style ryokans or minshuku
English speaking tour leader	English/Japanese speaking assistant throughout
Airport Transfers	Arrival and Departure Airport/Hotel transfers included
Private Tour Guides	Private Guides in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Kumano Kodo
Entrance Fees	Included into all sights listed on itinerary
Cultural Experiences	Tokyo Sights by Day & Night, Geisha Tea Ceremony (Kyoto), World Heritage Temples and Shrines in Kyoto, Bullet train journeys, Japanese Gardens, 5 day journey through the World Heritage 'Sacred Mountains of the Kii Peninsula', meeting local villagers along the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage route, valley/river boat cruise between Kawayu Onsen and Shingo, Samurai Castle in Nagoya, old Samurai postal hiking route from Tsumago to Magome (wondering through preserved villages from samurai era), and back to Tokyo for some last minute shopping or late night fun!
Meals	Breakfast daily & 7 dinners

This package also includes:

- Comprehensive tailor-made travel pack
- Financial peace of mind
- All taxes and service charges
- Emergency contact 24/7 while on tour

*Not included:

- Meals other than those detailed above
- International Flights (Fly in/out from Tokyo – to get exact details consult with us if you prefer)
- Local transport at each destination (taxis, buses, subways etc.) except where specified
- Baggage Handling (you will be required to carry your own bags. Your tour leader will recommend in places to send your bags onto to the next hotel by the regular Takkyubin Service)
- Tour Leader and Driver Gratuity (optional and can be decided with your group)

How to Book

Contact any of our Japan Travel Experts to get set up for booking this tour on your own online portal.

Email: info@uniquejapantours.com

Call: +353 1 6787008 / +44 20 3239 2519

