SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

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Kumano Kodo Highlights

7 Days/6 Nights

Kumano Kodo Highlights

Tour Overview

Experience more of the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage on the Kumano Kodo Highlights tour. Kumano has long been considered the heart and soul of Japanese spirituality, and has been blessed with a rich cultural and natural heritage, friendly locals, soothing hot springs and delicious cuisine. It is the perfect destination for those people searching for an active, off-the-beaten-path, culturally immersive Japanese experience.

Destinations

Kyoto, Kawayu Onsen, Nakahechi Pilgrimage Route, Hongu Taisha, Oyunohara, Yunomine Onsen, Shingu, Kii-Katsuura Onsen, Daimonzaka, Nachi Taisha, Nachi Waterfall

Tour Factors

Cultural Immersion

Pace

Physical Activity

Tour Details

For more than 1000 years people from all levels of society have made the difficult pilgrimage along the Kumano Kodo. The walk itself was an integral part of the pilgrimage process as they undertook rigorous religious rites of worship and purification along the way. The goal of the pilgrimage was simple: to visit and pay respects at the Hongu Taisha, Hayatama Taisha and the Nachi Taisha, also known as the Kumano Sanzan. As the origins of the Kumano Pilgrimage were a combination of Buddhism, Shinto, Shinto mythology and nature worshiop, the reasons for performing the pilgrimage were very complex.

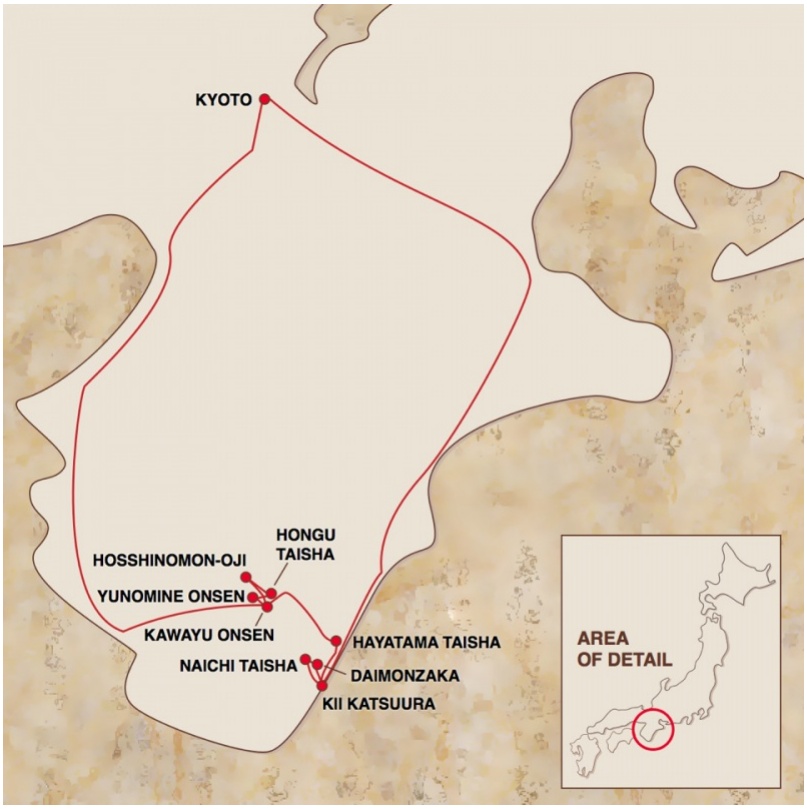
The foundations of the pilgrimage were established 1,000 years ago when retired emperors and aristocrats from Kyoto's Imperial Court started making the 600 mile (800 kilometer) journey in large numbers. Today, walking the ancient Kumano Kodo is an excellent way to experience the unique cultural landscape of Kumano's spiritual countryside. We will follow in the footsteps of those ancient pilgrims from Kyoto as we trace the history and heritage of the Kumano pilgrimage.

What This Tour Is and Is Not

This tour is not a trekking tour. Instead, it provides a high-level overview of the pilgrimage, including the most important destinations related to the pilgrimage. The tour includes three walks along the most important and famous sections of the pilgrimage. The longest of these is about 7km, or about 5 miles (mostly downhill). (½ of this walk is over pavement, and the other half is dirt trails.) The second walk is about 5 km (3 miles), all paved and flat, but there is a steep stone staircase to Kamikura Shrine. The third walk is only about 3 km (about 2 miles), and on pavement, but there are numerous steps going up for the first half of the walk. The second half is downhill.

Tour Highlights	✔ Visiting the Kumano Sanzan: Hongu Taisha, Hayatama Taisha, Nachi Taisha ✔ Walk from Hosshinmon-oji to Hongu Taisha ✔ Walk along Daimonzaka ✔ Kumano Kawabune Boat Ride ✔ Four Overnights at Japanese-style Onsens
Tour Inclusions	✔ Travel Guard Gold Policy (for American tour members only) ✔ Baggage transfer from city to city ✔ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History
Tour Exclusions	✖ International airfare is NOT included. ✖ A printed itinerary is not included ✖ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Map



Tour Destinations

Kawayu Onsen

Hongu Taisha and Oyunohara

Yunomine Onsen

Shingu - Hayatama Taisha and Kamikura Shrine

Kii-Katsuura Onsen

Nachi Taisha and Waterfall

Itinerary

Day 1 Kyoto

You will be staying overnight in the city of Kyoto. You will travel on your own to Kyoto and check into the hotel. We will leave a message for you at the hotel informing you of the meeting time for the next day. No meals included.

TBD; Walking: TBD

Day 2 Travel to Kawayu Onsen; Overnight Kawayu Onsen

Before leaving, you will transfer your luggage to Kii-Katsuura Onsen. You will need enough for 3 days and 2 nights in your overnight bag. After breakfast you will meet the guide at the specified time and start the day with a Welcome/Orientation meeting. We will then begin our journey tracing the footsteps of pilgrims from Kyoto 1,000 years ago. We will be taking more modern and safer modes of transportation to Kawayu Onsen, where we will be staying overnight. Kawayu Onsen is unique in that during the winter months you can enjoy an outdoor bath dug into the sand banks of the Oto River. After checking, you can enjoy the baths next to the river. Breakfast at the hotel and buffet dinner at the ryokan are included.

Travel: 6 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 3 Walk along Nakahechi Pilgrimage Route from Hosshinmonoji to Hongu Taisha; Tour Hongu Taisha, Oyunohara and Yunomine Onsen

Today is the first day of our pilgrimage. We will take a shuttle van or bus to Hosshinmon-oji. The Hosshinmon-oji was one of the five most important Oji along the Kumano Kodo because it was considered the entry into the sacred area around the Hongu Shrine (Oji were important places of worship along the Kumano Kodo). We will walk the 7 km (5 miles) to the Hongu Taisha Shrine. The first half of the walk is through small villages, but the second half of the walk is through a secluded, forested area. At the Hongu Taisha, our first shrine of the Kumano Sanzan, we will tour the shrine and pay our respects to the Kumano deities. Before continuing, we will stop at the Kumano Hongu Heritage Center where we can rest and learn more about the fascinating history of the Kumano Kodo. Later, we will continue our pilgrimage to the nearby Oyunohara. This was the original location of the Hongu Taisha until 1889, when the shrine was destroyed by a flood and moved to its present location on higher ground. All of the pilgrimage trails of the Kumano Kodo lead to the Oyunohara. We will take the bus to Yunomine Onsen. Here you can bathe in the Tsuboyu bath, the only bath designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Pilgrims have performed hot water purification rituals in this bath for more than 1,000 years to prepare for their visit to the Hongu Taisha. We will return to our ryokan by bus where you can soothe away the sore muscles in the baths at the ryokan. Breakfast and dinner buffets at the ryokan are included.

Travel: 1 Hour;; Walking: Heavy

Day 4 Kumano Kawabune Boat Cruise to Shingu; Shingu - Hayatama Taisha and Kamikura Shrine; Travel to Kii-Katsuura Onsen

We will take a short bus ride to the boat dock where we will take a boat cruise along the Kumano River to the city of Shingu. In the past, it was common to travel from the Hongu Taisha to the Hayatama Taisha by boat along the Kumano River. From the boat dock in Shingu, we will walk to the Hayatama Shrine. While the shrine's current buildings are relatively new, the shrine has been

located at its current location since at least the 12th century. Excavations in the area have unearthed religious artifacts from the 3rd century, indicating the area has been a site of worship even longer. The 800-year old tree located on the grounds highlights the areas tradition of nature worship. We will also visit the nearby Gotobiki-iwa, a gigantic rock located halfway up the slope of Gongen Mountain. Kamikura Jinja, a small shrine located at the base of this monolith is a truly unique experience. It is said that the gods descended to earth by stepping on this large stone. From there we will travel by bus or train to the city of Kii-Katsuura where we will be staying overnight in our ryokan with unique baths in seaside caves. After checking in, we will retrieve your luggage from the ryokan. Breakfast and dinner buffets at the ryokans are included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 5 Walk along the Daimonzaka to Nachi Taisha; Tour Nachi Taisha and Waterfall

In the morning we will transfer your luggage to Kyoto. You will need enough for 2 days, 1 night in your overnight bag. Today we will visit Nachi Taisha, the third of the Kumano Sanzan. We will take a bus to the base of the Diamonzaka, a 2 km (1 mile) cobblestoned staircase. The Daimonzaka winds its way through huge cedar trees that are as old as 800 years from the valley bottom to the Nachi Taisha Shrine. The Nachi Taisha Shrine is perhaps the most dramatic shrine in Japan. It is located high on a hillside with impressive views of the 133 meter (about 435 feet) tall Nachi-no-Otaki waterfall, Japan's tallest waterfall. This waterfall was the original religious focus of the area, and was venerated by the earliest Japanese people. Even today it is hard not to be impressed by the power and the beauty of the falls. We will return to our ryokan at the Kii-Katsuura Onsen where you can once again rest in the seaside baths. Breakfast and dinner buffets at the ryokan are included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 6 Travel to Kyoto; Sayonara Dinner

After checking out of the ryokan we will return to Kyoto by express trains where we will check into our hotel for the evening. After checking in we will retrieve our luggage from the hotel. The rest of the afternoon will be free for you to explore Kyoto on your own. In the evening we will enjoy our Sayonara dinner of kushiage (fried skewers of vegetables, fish and meat). Breakfast buffet at the ryokan and dinner at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 7 Sayonara

It's time to say "Sayonara". You will continue around Japan on your own. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: TBD; Walking: TBD

Walking level descriptions:
Light – 0 to 2 miles on level ground
Medium – 2 to 4 miles on level ground or 0 to 2 miles on hilly ground
Heavy – 4 to 6 miles on level ground or 2 to 4 miles on hilly ground

Dates & Pricing

Dates	Price (land only) / Single Supplement (All prices are per Person)	Status
Mar 21, 2027 - Mar 27, 2027 Cherry Blossom	¥577,076/ ¥84,983	Available
Sep 26, 2027 - Oct 2, 2027	¥577,076/ ¥84,983	Available

Add-On Tours

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Inclusions

- Local, licensed, English-speaking, Japanese guides
- **Travel insurance from Travel Guard**, one of the world's largest travel insurance providers, will be provided to everyone from the United States. All others will receive a $100 per person credit and will be responsible for obtaining their own travel insurance in their own home country. (The insurance provided by Samurai Tours will cover the land portion only. Insurance to cover airfare and other additional expenses is the tour member's responsibility.)
  - Exact coverage dependent on state
    - For residents of the following states please click here for your available plan. FL, KS, MN, MO, MT, NY, and WA
    - For all other states and the District of Columbia click here
  - **Travel Insurance Surcharge:** Depending on your age at the time the travel insurance is purchased, you may be subject to the following surcharge for your travel insurance. Travel insurance surcharges will be due at the same time as your tour deposits. (the surcharge itself is not insured)
    - Up to 69 – $0
    - 70-74 – $100
    - 75-79 – $125
    - 80-84 – $200
    - 85+ – $300
  - **Travel Insurance Opt-Out:** If you would prefer to opt out of the travel insurance, please note this at the time of registration. You will receive a $100 credit per person, which will be reflected on your invoice. In the event that you would need to cancel your tour, cancellation penalties may apply. See the Terms and Conditions page for the Cancellation Fees Schedule.

- All transportation from Kyoto to Kyoto as described in the itinerary

- Accommodations each evening (Two nights in Western style Hotels and 4 nights in Japanese style Ryokans)

- Meals:
  - Breakfast every morning from Day 2 through Day 7 of the itinerary
  - Dinner from Day 2 through Day 6 of the itinerary

- All transportation costs when traveling with the group. (Transportation costs during scheduled free times are the tour member's responsibility.)

- Admission fees to the destinations and activities listed in the Tour Highlights column on the right. (Itinerary specifics subject to change)
- Electronic version of itinerary

- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour

- Baggage transfer from Kyoto to Kii-Katsuura Onsen
- Baggage transfer from Kii-Katsuura Onsen to Kyoto

Each tour member receives an electronic copy of our tour handbook. This handbook is full of tips and suggestions taken from our Japan travel experiences that allow you to better plan and prepare for your trip, and therefore enjoy your trip even more. The tips and suggestions included cover everything from how to save while exchanging money, what to pack, some basic Japanese-language tips, general etiquette do's-and-don'ts, ryokan customs, etc.

Exclusions

- Airfare is NOT included.
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included
- Transportation to Kyoto at the beginning of the tour

- Transportation from Kyoto at the end of the tour
- A printed itinerary is not included

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