



Japan National Tourist Organization

(Japan Travel Updates <http://www.jnto.go.jp>)

Tourist Information Centers (TICs)

TIC (Tokyo): 10th fl., Tokyo Katsukaikan, 2-10-1, Yuraku-cho, Tokyo 100-0006

TIC (Kyoto): 1st fl., Kyoto Tower Bldg., Shichijo-karasuma Sagaru, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600-8216

Tel. 03-3201-3331

Tel. (075) 371-5649

Operated by the JNTO-affiliated International Tourism Center of Japan:

TIC (New Tokyo International Airport): 1st fl., Passenger Terminal 2 Bldg., New Tokyo Intl. Airport, Chiba 282-0004

TIC (Kansai): 1st fl., Kansai Intl. Airport, Passenger Terminal Bldg., Sennan-gun, Osaka 549-0011

Tel. (0476) 34-6251

Tel. (0724) 56-6025

SPIRITUAL TOUR OF JAPAN

Contrary to the modern image of Japan with electronics and automobiles, Japan abounds in spiritual experiences. Temples are open for overnight stay, where the general public can experience the typical day of a Buddhist monk, learning how to meditate, and eating vegetarian food.

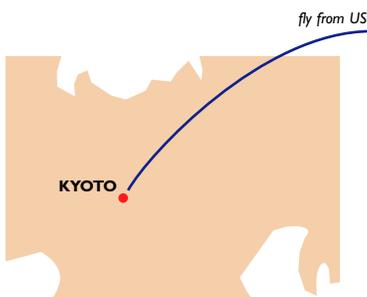


The following itinerary offers an assortment of spiritualism found in Japan.

Let us start in **Kyoto**, Japan's old capital for 1000 years up until late 19th century. This is the best city to learn about Japanese Buddhist culture, its architecture, simplicity, and openness to accept other diverse cultures.

Three distinctive areas of Kyoto are represented.

- On the first day, you will visit the **Eastern Kyoto**, starting with **Kiyomizu**, **Chion-in**, **Nanzen-ji**, and **Ginkaku-ji** (*Silver Pavilion*) among other temples.
- On the second day, you will head to **Northwestern Kyoto** to **Kinkaku-ji** (*Golden Pavilion*) and **Ryoan-ji Temple** (rock garden) to look further into the Zen spirit.
- On the third day, you will spend time in **Mt. Hiei**, the Mecca of **Tendai Esoteric Buddhism**. In late 16th century, Lord Oda Nobunaga, who wished to be a Shogun, burned the mountain, trying to diminish the threatening power of Buddhist monks of Mt. Hiei. Today, disbursed throughout in the mountains, are dozens of Buddhist structures. With good walking shoes, you can walk hours visiting them one by one.



The second leg of the trip is in mountainous **Koyasan**, the birthplace of **Shingon Buddhism**. You might stay in one of the temples overnight, and experience the life of a monk. You will be immersed in the spiritual side of this temple town, while taking in the peaceful scenery of the surrounding mountains.

The third leg of your journey is **Nara**, the oldest existing Japanese capital, dating back to the 8th century. Nara has in its core a large pedestrian park with the **Great Buddha Hall**, the **National Museum**, **pagodas**, **shrines**, and **tame deer**. You might also visit **Horyu-ji Temple**, the world's oldest wooden structure, dating back to the 7th century. A visit to **Yakushi-ji Temple** and **Kofuku-ji Temple** with its awe-inspiring five-story pagoda will add more depth to your architectural and aesthetic understanding of the Japanese Buddhist culture.



Yasaka Shrine

The highlight of the trip is the experience at **Eihei-ji Zen Temple**, a head temple of **Soto Zen Buddhism**. Hundreds of Zen monks are trained there even today. You can stay overnight at the temple and learn the way of “Zen” mediation. The temple offers a 3-night stay option. If you take this package, you will literally live the life of a Zen monk.

Reservations are required to stay in Shukubo or temple inns. JNTO can provide a list of such places that welcome foreigners (not just in Koyasan, but also in Kyoto and other areas of Japan). Remember, you will have to live like a Japanese, if not totally like a monk, by sharing a large bathtub, sleeping on a thin futon, sitting on the straw mat . . . It is recommended to avoid mid-summer and mid-winter. Typically, most of the temples have no heating or air conditioning systems. At temples, you are expected to use chopsticks and be accustomed to Japanese bathrooms and bedding. If you need a soft landing on the spiritual ground, try to stay in nearby Western-style hotels with a private bath and a Western bed.

It is encouraging to know that most Japanese do not ask your religious denomination. It is quite unlikely that you will feel unwelcome to stay at Buddhist temples.

Day 1 – Arrival – Transfer to KYOTO



Ryokan

The best way to go directly to Kyoto is to arrive into Kansai Airport and transfer by Limited Express train for Kyoto Station or limousine bus for Kyoto station and then proceed to your hotel. However, you can also arrive into Narita Airport and transfer by plane to Itami Airport (the domestic airport closest to Kyoto) or go into Tokyo, overnight and take an early 3 hour Shinkansen “bullet train” to Kyoto the next morning.

Day 2 – KYOTO – Get the Feeling of KYOTO

Visit Buddhist temples: **Kiyomizu**, **Chion-in**, **Seijaku-in**, **Nanzen-ji**, **Ginkaku-ji**.

There is much walking involved. A good pair of walking shoes is essential.

Start the day from Kyoto Station. Take City Bus #100 or 206 to Gojozaka. Take Gojozaka Street to Kiyomizuzaka Slope. Stay on this ever-busy uphill road until you see the three-story pagoda of **Kiyomizu Temple**.



Kiyomizu Temple

The origins of **Kiyomizu Temple** go back to the 8th century. This unique structure with a main hall built upon a platform supported by 149 wooden columns is one of the most popular sites in Kyoto. Once reaching the cascade (the name of Kiyomizu derives from it, “pure water”), take a side alley to **Seikan-ji Temple**. This five-minute walk is well worth it, as Kiyomizu Temple is viewed most exquisitely from Seikan-ji. Admission to Kiyomizu is 400 yen.

Leaving Kiyomizu, take the same road back to the beginning of Kiyomizuzaka Slope. At the spice shop, make right to a narrow lane called **Sannenzaka Lane** (three-year slope). Continue on to **Ninenzaka Lane** (two-year slope). Quaint antique shops and specialty shops add charm to these lanes. The Japanese find this area “typically Kyoto.”

Looking at the five-story **Yasaka Pagoda** of **Yasaka Shrine** on your left, continue on to Kodaiji Road all the way to Maruyama Park. Renowned for weeping cherry trees, Maruyama Park is the oldest public park in Kyoto. Walk north through the park towards **Chion-in Temple** (head temple of **Jodo Buddhism**).

The wooden gate of Chion-in and the long white walls around the temple grounds are some of the most impressive and serene in all of Kyoto. Many of the temples in the area can be visited free of charge.

Walk north to Sanjo-dori (Sanjo Street). Once on Sanjo-dori, make a right turn. Pass the Miyako Hotel on the right hand side, and walk toward **Nanzen-ji Zen Temple**. Dating back to 1264, it is the head temple of the Nanzen-ji School of **Rinzai Zen Buddhism**.

Walk northeast to **Tetsugakuno-michi**, nicknamed “**Philosopher’s Path**”, after 20th century philosopher, Nishida Kitaro, who was a student of both Zen and modern Western philosophy. The path stretches about 2 kilometers to **Ginkaku-ji Temple**, and remains quiet and serene, dotted with small cafes, souvenir shops, and secluded temples.

At the end of the promenade is **Ginkaku-ji Temple** or **Silver Pavilion**. Unlike its name, the two-story meditation hall is not Silver colored unlike its name (the silver leaf was never put on). However, the temple represents some characteristics of the Zen spirit – simplicity, austerity . . . Admission is 500 yen.

After exploring Ginkaku-ji, take City Bus #5, 11, or 17 to get back to Kyoto Station. Try to take your time on this walking tour. It is important for you to absorb the

ambiance at a leisurely pace. If it rains, reverse day itineraries in Kyoto. You have 3 days in Kyoto.

Day 3 – KYOTO – Zen, and more Zen . . .



Kinkaku-ji

Visit Buddhist temples in Northwestern Kyoto: **Kinkaku-ji** (Zen meditation hall and teahouse), **Ryoan-ji** (Zen garden).

From Kyoto Station take City Bus #52 or 59 to Kinkakuji-mae “Golden Pavilion”. Founded by Shogun **Yoshimitsu** in late 14th century, this was his villa where he spent his retired life. It is most important to know that the two-story gilded pavilion was a meditation hall, not a summer house, and the strolling garden was meant to bring spiritual peace to the founder. In the garden there is a small tea-house. It is a reminder that the tea ceremony is closely associated with Zen philosophy. Admission is 400 yen.



Royan-ji

From Kinkaku-ji walk southwest to **Ryoan-ji Temple**. Being one of the distinguished Zen temples of Rinzai Zen Buddhism, the temple was founded in 1450 by a Samurai lord. The rock garden is the supreme specimen of dry landscape gardening using no live plants, thus having remained almost in the original form for over five centuries. The 550 square-foot rectangular garden consists of 15 rocks and white sand. Admission: 400 yen.

If you have time, stop by at **Ninna-ji Temple**, head temple of the **Omuro school of Shingon Buddhism**. The temple is noted for its relaxing stroll garden, and five-story pagoda. Admission is 400 yen.

If you have some energy left, try to walk south to **Myoshin-ji Temple**, supreme temple of the **Myoshin-ji school of Rinzai Zen Buddhism**. With 47 structures in the temple complex, it looks as though you came right into a samurai movie location. Admission is free except for a small section. Take City Bus #61, 62, 63, or 65 to return to Kyoto Station.

Day 4 – KYOTO: Mountain Buddhism and a bit of Samurai History

Visit to Mt. Hiei, Mecca of Tendai Buddhism

From Kyoto Station, take Kyoto Bus #51 or Keihan Bus #7 to **Enryaku-ji** (main structure in Mt. Hiei). Switch to a shuttle bus to Yokawa, where you will take another shuttle bus to **Eryaku-ji**.

Enryaku-ji Temple dates back to the 8th century. Founded by Saicho, Mt Hiei produced some of the most influential Buddhist monks. For hundreds of years

Buddhist monks had enjoyed political and financial powers. In the late 16th century, though, Oda Nobunaga burned Mt. Hiei, trying to subjugate these monks. The book *Taiko*, written by Eiji Yoshikawa (publisher: Kodansha) describes how this undertaking was carried away by Lord Oda.

Start with **Todo**, the East Precinct, with its lecture hall and belfry. The main structure called *Konponchudo* is a national cultural asset, which was rebuilt by the 3rd Tokugawa Shogun in the 1630s. An eternal flame burns inside the building.

Saito, the West Precinct, is much quieter than Todo. **Shaka Hall**, with its stately curved roofline, is found together with **Rurido Hall**, which escaped Lord Oda's infamous fire.

If you have time and wish to enjoy nature, you might walk from Todo to Yokawa via Saito along the **Tokai Nature Path**. It stretches about 4 miles. Otherwise, take a shuttle.

Day 5 – By train from KYOTO to KOYASAN

Visit Koyasan, Mecca of Shingon Buddhism

Here is your chance to experience a stay in a temple . . . meditating and eating *shoji-ryori* – vegetarian temple cuisine.

Koyasan or **Mt. Koya**, is located in Wakayama Prefecture, south of Kyoto. To get there from Kyoto, take a JR Shinkansen bullet train to Shin-Osaka (30 minutes). Transfer at Shin-Osaka for the Osaka Kanjo Line for Shin-Imamiya Station. At Shin-Imamiya Station transfer again to the Nankai Koya Line bound for Koyasan. It takes 1.5 hours by express train. The Nankai train ticket costs 1,990 yen. The train stops at Gokurakubashi, and you will be directed to a cable car to reach Koyasan (5 minutes).

Temples offering overnight lodging in Koyasan (reservation required):

Hozenin Temple Telephone:	0736-56-2658 / Fax: 0736-56-4556
	9,000 yen – 12,000 yen/night incl. 2 meals
Ichijoin Temple Telephone:	0736-56-2214 / Fax: 0736-56-2264
	9,000 yen – 30,000 yen/night incl. 2 meals

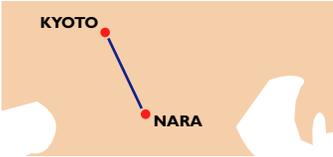
Day 6 – KOYASAN – Feel the temple town

Koyasan is a sacred place for many Japanese. Kukai, founder of *Shingon Buddhism* about 1200 years ago is probably the most revered Japanese monk. He is also known for developing Japanese phonetic letters, Hiragana, from Chinese characters.

Deep in Mt. Koya is **Koyasan Okunoin**. This is where Kukai's soul is said to be in nirvana, resting to be reincarnated.

Walk around town or take a bus to get around in Koyasan. You might take advantage of the special day coach pass for 800 yen.

Day 7 – Train to NARA – The oldest existing Capital of Japan



Meet Great Buddha and friendly deer

Take Nankai Line to Hashimoto, then change to JR Wakayama-Sakurai Line for Sakurai. In Sakurai, catch a train on JR Nara Line to Nara.

Nara was the capital of Japan between 710 and 784 AD, during which time, Japanese cultural foundation was formed. Buddhism flourished and foreign cultures including those of the Near East were introduced.

For the remainder of the day, let's visit **Horyu-ji Temple**. Take JR Yamatoji Line to Horyuji Station. Walk north for 25 minutes. Horyu-ji is the world's oldest wooden structure. Four of the 33 buildings date back to the Asuka period (552 – 645 AD). The temple is designated as a historical world heritage by UNESCO. Admission is 700 yen.



Nara Park

Day 8 – NARA – Nara Park, Essence of Ancient Capital



Todai-ji Temple

Visit **Nara Park**, the largest city park in Japan, covering 1294 acres. The area closest to the City of Nara is the treasure house of the ancient capital.

Start walking towards **Todai-ji Temple**, or **Great Buddha Hall**. You can not miss it as it looms over other structures around it. The original giant Buddha statue was cast in 746 AD. Today only the base remains and the rest was remade later. The statue measures almost 50 feet in height and weighs 380 metric tons. Behind the statue, there is a hole in a column inside the Buddha Hall. That is the size of the Buddha's nostril. Sometimes young children actually crawl in and through it!

One of the best parts of Nara Park is **Nigatsudo** and **Sangatsudo Chapels**, located just north of the Great Buddha Hall. There is something about this area that turns your inner time machine backward by ten centuries. Walk in the area when there aren't many people. The view from Nigatsudo Chapel is out of this world.

Leaving the park, walk toward Kintetsu Nara Station. On the way, make sure to visit **Kofuku-ji's five-story Pagoda**, the most impressive pagoda of all. Shooting

165 feet into the sky, it stands magnificently in front of you, the culmination of Japanese temple architecture.

If you have time, visit **Yakushiji Temple**. The original temple was dedicated to Emperor Temmu's consort in late 7th century. Many temples in the area were erected in similar manners.

Day 9 – Train to EIHEI-JI



Eihei-ji Temple

Eihei-ji is the Head Temple of **Soto Zen Buddhism** in Fukui Prefecture, northeast of Kyoto. It can be considered the highlight of the Spiritual Tour.

From Nara take either Kintetsu Line or JR Nara Line to Kyoto. Note that there are two separate railway stations in Nara. Once in Kyoto change to JR Hokuriku Line to Fukui, then change to Keifuku Line to Eihei-ji.

Eihei-ji Temple, one of the head temples of **Soto Zen Buddhism** is situated in a small valley. The temple is so well known that all mail arrives at the temple by just writing Heimeiji Temple, Japan, from anywhere in the world. Founder Dogen Zenji learned Zen in China and built a maintain temple here in 1244. This is where Zen is authentically practiced daily. In fact, hundreds of monks from all over the world come here for real-life training.

The temple offers two different overnight packages. The first, is a one-night stay to experience an “introduction” to Zen meditation. Arrive at the temple before 4 p.m. so that you can take a bath, eat a vegetarian supper at 5:30 p.m., listen to chief priest's welcome message and practice Zen meditation at 6:50 p.m., go to bed at 9 p.m. The next day starts early. Rise at 3:20 a.m., mediate or listen to a lecture at 3:50 a.m., work at 5 a.m., and have breakfast at 7 a.m. Cost is 8,000 yen including 2 vegetarian meals.

The second package is 3 nights long, following a similar daily schedule. Added to the above schedule, you will work from 8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m., then practice Zazen or Zen meditation. Lunch is served at noon, work 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., practice Zazen at 2 p.m. Afternoon study starts at 4 p.m., etc. This cycle repeats for 3 days. The major difference between the two packages is commitment. In the first package, participation in the early morning routines is optional. However, if you take the latter package, you are required to stick to the daily schedule and not allowed to miss any of the routines. The cost of 9,000 yen for the 4-day 3-night package includes two books, yukata, and miscellaneous items necessary for the stay.

A reservation at least a month in advance is necessary for either of the above packages. Write to: Sanzen-gakari, Eiheiji, 5-15 Shihi Eiheiji-cho, Yoshidagun, Fukui Prefecture 910-1228, or have a Japanese speaker call 0776-63-3102.

Head for your next destination or return to reality.

RESOURCES

Websites

<http://www.gospelcom.net/send/japan/spirit.htm>

Spiritual Climate of Japan and religious and philosophical traditions.

<http://www.kanzaki.com/jinfo/jliterature.html>

Japanese literature website.

http://www.gonomad.com/destinations/0101/johannsen_shikokuminiguide.html

Online article about a Japanese spiritual pilgrimage.

<http://www.ohayosensei.com/books/spirit.html>

Japan bookstore website's spiritual section, for spiritual books on Japan.

Books

A Traveler's Guide to Japanese Pilgrimages, by Ed Readicker-Henderson (Weatherhill), November 1994

Japanese Pilgrimage, by Oliver Statler, (Morrow), 1983-- out of print

Pilgrims Guide to Forty Six Temples, by Shiro Usui (Weatherhill), 1990

Zen Guide: Where to Meditate in Japan, by Martin Roth, John Stevens (Weatherhill), October 1985

Magazines

Japanese Journal of Religious Studies:

<http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/jjrs/jjrs.htm>

Special Issue: "Pilgrimage" - 1997: 24/3-4

Special Issue: "Tendai Buddhism"- 1987

Parabola Magazine:

A spiritual magazine with a number of back articles related to Japan

<http://www.parabola.org/magazine/backlist.html>

Tricycle Magazine:

A Buddhist quarterly with some back articles on Japan

<http://www.parabola.org/magazine/backlist.html>