

Japan

Pilgrim Trails of the Kii Peninsula

hosted by Mike Taverner

7 April - 20 April 2019

Highlights

- Visit Koyasan Mountain top temple
- Witness fascinating temple ceremonies
- Walk the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail
- Participate in the superb Hongu Spring festivities
- Soak in the Kawayu Hot Springs
- View Nachi sacred waterfall
- Enjoy the comfort of traditional Japanese inns
- Wander about local seaside villages
- A ride on a traditional flat bottom boat

Your tour leader

Your expert tour leader, Mike Taverner, is an experienced group leader and enthusiastic walker having completed many recreational and wilderness walks. He is not a frantic 'must get there quickly' walker but one who enjoys absorbing the sights, sounds and experiences of the surrounds.

Mike leads Active Travel groups on walking adventures in West Timor, Nagaland, Peru, Japan and Ethiopia. Having walked the Kii Peninsula many times, Mike is well informed of the local conditions and full of enthusiasm for the amazing environment and its cultural and natural history.



What to expect

We use a combination of western style hotels and traditional Japanese inns known as *minshukus* or *ryokans*. Both offer fabulous style and integrity and include freshly prepared dinner and breakfast. As well, they offer delightful hot baths to soak in and enjoy.

Spring weather in Japan, like anywhere else in the world is changeable. Days can vary from crisp and clear to cold and wet. Expect rain, sunshine, but whatever the weather the ancient cedar tree forest will be a visual delight.

Accommodation is snugly warm but you need to be prepared for both warm to hot days as well as cold and wet. Our trip involves walking up to seven hours on some days at a distance between 5 to 20km. To enjoy this trip we advise you have a good level of fitness as some days we walk on steep paths. Training beforehand is also advised. To ensure the most comfortable trip it is important to wear well worn in walking shoes with good ankle support. Generally the walking is easy to moderate with three days which would be classified as high moderate due to crossing of passes rather than distance.

Our walking program begins gently in the ancient capital Nara where we explore Japan's oldest and largest temple set with other national treasures in Nara Park. Of course being early spring, we'll join the national admiration and celebration of cherry blossom.

From Nara we head into the Kii Mountain range to the secluded mountain top religious complex of Koyasan. This epitomises the merging of the worship of temples and the natural environment.

After an experience of temple life in Koyasan, we head south down the Kii Peninsula and along the spine of this stunning mountain range and join the Nakahechi route of the Kumano Kodo pilgrim trails. Over the next five days we'll walk as pilgrims have for more than 1,000 years.

Each day we'll walk 5 to 20km along moss covered paths between small mountain villages where we find local inns, amazing local food and very welcome our hot baths. Along the way we'll enjoy a rest spot for two nights where our bodies are nurtured in open air hot springs.

Our pilgrimage ends at the Grand Shrines of Nachikatsuura where the highest waterfall in Japan is found. This is one of the main fishing ports of Japan and we follow the coast to its southern most point near Kushimoto where we enjoy some coastal walks. From here it is only several hours on Japan's very efficient trains to Osaka and onward flights.



Your experience begins here...

Sunday, 7 April 2019 | Osaka

Today is an arrival day, so you are welcome to arrive at any time with check-in beginning at any time. This evening you are invited to meet your tour guide Mike and together you can go to dinner at a local restaurant (at own expense). Overnight in Osaka.

Monday, 8 April 2019 | Osaka – Nara | B

This morning meet in the hotel lobby at 8.15am, with your luggage ready for check-out. **Come dressed for a good day's** walking and travelling as we begin our walk exploring the Castle, the blossoms and its magnificent surrounds before taking local trains to Nara and begin to experience on foot its treasure trove of ancient history and culture. Overnight in Nara.

Tuesday, 9 April 2019 | Nara – Koyasan | BD

After an early walk through Nara machi (old Nara town) we travel by local train and cable car to the temple town of Koyasan spread over the top of a 900m mountain. The town has flourished as a religious centre for 1,200 years. Explore the mysteries of this place and experience temple life in our overnight lodging. Overnight in Koyasan.

Wednesday, 10 April 2019 | Koyasan – Ryujin Onsen | BD

As well as visiting some ancient and culturally significant sites, today we get our first taste on a mountain pilgrim trail. Koyasan is **integral to our pilgrim's journey. The temples have flourished as a religious centre for 1,200 years. In the afternoon we continue** along the skyline road built on the peaks of mountains as high as 1,000m to Ryujin Onsen where we will overnight in a traditional ryokan. Overnight in Ryujin Onsen.

Thursday, 11 April 2019 | Ryujin Onsen – Takahara | BLD

A short though not too gentle start to our walk on the Nakahechi route of the Kumano Kodo pilgrim route. Each day on the trail we carry only daypacks and our bags are transferred to our lodgings. Today we walk just 5km along the trail ending in a mountain village with time to explore. Overnight in Takahara.

Friday, 12 April 2019 | Takahara – Nonaka | BLD

Enter the ***"passage into the precincts of the sacred mountains"*** and ease our way into our pilgrim like journey as we walk for about 15km past ancient teahouse remains and small shrines. Tonight we lodge in a traditional *minshuku*. Overnight in Nonaka.

Saturday, 13 April 2019 | Nonaka – Kawayu Onsen | BLD

Today our walking gets more serious as we traverse the Mikoshitoge pass along the many ups and downs of this 22km section of the trail into Hongu with its World Heritage listed shrine, the Kumano Hongu Taisha. Tonight we stay in traditional and outstanding lodgings at nearby Kawayu Hot Spring. Three nights in Kawayu Onsen.

Sunday, 14 April 2019 | Kawayu Onsen | BD

Today we experience the Kumano Kodo by boat as pilgrims have done for a thousand years. This vital section of the Kumano Kodo will take us by traditional flat-bottom boats to Shingu and the Kumano Hayatama Taisha. We return to Kawayu Onsen.

Monday, 15 April 2019 | Kawayu Onsen | BD

Today is the annual Spring Festival in Hongu which should not be missed. In Kawayu Onsen you can enjoy some rest time. Here there is geothermal heated water percolating through the gravel banks of the river enabling us to make our own hot bath.

Tuesday, 16 April 2019 | Kawayu Onsen – Koguchi | BLD

Back onto the trail for our beautiful 13km walk over three passes that follow a trail of poem monuments. This is a good day's walk and ends again in comfortable lodgings accompanied by the usual amazing spread of Japanese cuisine (and hot bath). Overnight in the mountain village of Koguchi.

Wednesday, 17 April 2019 | Koguchi – Nachi | BLD

We re-join the walking trail for our final day on the Kumano Kodo. Our walk of 15km takes us over three quite challenging **passes. Our pilgrim's way ends at the Grand Shrine: Kumano Nachi Taisha where we stay in a nearby minshuku in** Nachi. Overnight in Nachi.

Thursday, 18 April 2019 | Nachi – Kii Tahara | BD

Spend the morning exploring the sights of Nachi including the sacred waterfall and walk the fabulous paved path lined with ancient cedar trees on Daimonzaka Hill. After exploring the nearby fishing port of Kii Katsuura we take the scenic local train to the southern tip of the Kii Peninsula where we stay in the seaside fishing village of Kii Tahara.

Two nights in Kii Tahara.

Friday, 19 April 2019 | Kii Tahara | BD

Explore the local seaside community and coastline, maybe even touch base again with a little known section of the Kumano Kodo.

Saturday, 20 April 2019 | Kii Tahara – Osaka | B

From nearby Kushimoto the express train takes us through Wakayama where we can then transfer to Kansai airport. Alternatively, you can easily continue on by train to Osaka and connections beyond. If you are not returning to Osaka Kansai Airport, please make sure to advise Mike who can assist you in making arrangements for travel to your next destination.

\$5189pp twin share
Single supplement: \$817 (subject to availability)

Inclusions

13 nights accommodation in comfortable hotels and traditional Japanese inns

Meals as indicated including a selection of fabulous fresh Japanese dishes
(13 x Breakfasts, 5 x Lunches, 10 x Dinners)

Sightseeing, transport, entrance fees to attractions listed
(*some local transport not included)

Luggage transfer between accommodations

Hot baths to soak away any soreness

Services of Mike Taverner as a tour leader

Exclusions

International flight tickets

Sightseeing not included in the itinerary

Any pre- or post-tour arrangements

Travel insurance

Items of personal nature

Any other items not mentioned above



Booking information

Securing your place A minimum number of tour guests is required to confirm and guarantee this tour's departure. Spaces are limited; book early to avoid disappointment.

All deposits and interim payments are non-refundable and no exemptions can be made for any tour guest who has paid a deposit and can no longer attend the tour. Progressive payments will be required for this tour.

Deposit \$500.00 per person upon booking your place on the tour

Interim payment: \$1,000.00 per person due within one week of the tour becoming a confirmed departure

Final payment: Balance due 60 days prior to departure

TravelPay allows you to pay for your holiday by interest-free monthly instalments on your own credit/debit card.

You choose: you can pay over 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 10 months. Ask us for more details today.

*The tour price may change, subject to confirmation of all services. As the tour cost is based on the US dollar, a currency surcharge may be applicable if the US dollar exchange rate falls prior to final payment.

Travel insurance Travel insurance is required for all tour guests. We suggest taking out a comprehensive insurance policy on payment of your deposit to protect your non-refundable payments in the unlikely event of an unforeseen cancellation.

Disinclination to travel is not covered by travel insurance. It is the responsibility of each tour guest to ensure that their travel insurance covers their personal requirements and any pre-existing medical conditions.



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For bookings please contact our experienced travel advisors

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