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Off the Beaten Path: A Different Side of Japan

2025 CHERRY BLOSSOMS ISE GRAND SHRINE, TOBA, SHIRAHAMA, MT. KOYA, WAKAYAMA PLUS OSAKA & KYOTO

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9 Nights / 11 Days • 20 Meals (9 Breakfasts, 5 Lunches, 6 Dinners)
Escorted from Honolulu • Includes an English-Speaking Local Guide
March 22 – April 01, 2025 • Tour Manager: Gordean Akiona

VISIT: Kansai • Mie • Toba • Ise • Nachikatsuura • Kushimoto
Shirahama • Wakayama • Mt. Koya • Osaka • Kyoto • Nara

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS: Hachiman Kamado • Mikimoto Pearl Island
Ise Jingu Shrine • Okage Yokochō Street • Toba Aquarium • Toba Ichibangai
Futami Okitama Shrine • Meoto Iwa • Kumano Nachi Taisha • Nachi Waterfall
Hashigui Iwa Rocks • Toretore Market • Sandanbeki Cliffs • Sandanbeki Cave
Senjoshiki • Umeboshi (Salted Plum) Factory • Ota Kyusuke Miso Factory
Kadocho Soy Sauce Factory • Ganko Wakayama • Wakayama Castle
Kongobuji • Dotonbori Shopping • Kuromon Ichiba Market • Kiyomizu Temple
Nijo Castle • Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) • Fushimi Inari Shrine
Todaiji Temple • Nara Deer Park • AEON MALL Rinku Sennan

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES: Surikomi Yuzen (Brush Dyed Yuzen) Table Mat Dyeing

ENJOY 3 ONSEN HOT SPRING BATHS: Todaya
Mercure Wakayama Kushimoto Resort & Spa • Marriott Nanki-Shirahama

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES: Kiyomizu Temple • Nijo Castle
Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) • Todaiji Temple

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Day 1: Sat, Mar 22 – HONOLULU. Depart Honolulu via Japan Airlines flt #791 at 11:25 am.

Day 2: Sun, Mar 23 – KANSAI. Arrive in Kansai International Airport at 3:50 pm. After entry formalities, walk to the hotel located across from the Kansai Airport. Dinner has been arranged at the hotel. HOTEL NIKKO KANSAI AIRPORT (1 Night) (D)

Day 3: Mon, Mar 24 – KANSAI – MIE – TOBA. After breakfast, depart Kansai for Toba. En route, stop in Mie and learn about ama, the local women who free dive for shellfish, sea vegetables and other marine products. Relax in the **Hachiman Kamado**, the huts used by the Ama to warm up between dives. Enjoy some freshly caught seafood for lunch while the Ama Divers share stories of their adventures. After lunch, learn about pearls and pearl cultivation at **Mikimoto Pearl Island**. Enjoy special **Kaiseki Dinner** at the hotel tonight. Don't forget to try out the onsen hot springs – which are divided for men and women – allow you to **enjoy the onsen hot springs** whether indoors or outdoors. The high-quality service and facilities are sure to become some of your fondest memories of your visit to Japan. TODAYA (2 Nights) (B, L, D)

Day 4: Tue, Mar 25 – TOBA – ISE – TOBA. After breakfast, travel to Ise and visit the **Ise Jingu Shrine** (Ise Grand Shrine), the most important Shinto shrine in the country. Dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu, Ise Grand Shrine is the ancestral shrine of the emperors of Japan. Next, explore **Okage Yokocho Street**, a street reproducing the crowded Ise temple town during the end stage of the Edo Period (1603–1868). There are many shops for you to explore and enjoy lunch (on your own) there. Next, visit **Toba Aquarium**, which contains one of the largest number of species of fish and animals in Japan spread out over twelve zones. The Toba Aquarium is also the only aquarium in Japan to have a dugong in captivity. Spend some time at **Toba Ichibangai**, the largest shopping center in Toba, before returning to the hotel for dinner. (B, D)

*Baggage will be sent from Toba to Wakayama, skipping Kushimoto and Shirahama. Prepare an overnight bag for two nights.

Day 5: Wed, Mar 26 – TOBA – NACHIKATSUURA – KUSHIMOTO. After breakfast, visit the **Futami Okitama Shrine**, where a number of shinto deities (kami) are enshrined. Many frog sculptures can be seen in the vicinity of the shrine as they are believed to be a type of charm for bringing people or things back. Not far from the shrine is the **Meoto Iwa**, a pair of large and small rocks located side by side in the sea. The larger of the two rocks represents the husband and the smaller one represents the wife. Both rocks are connected by a shimenawa rope which acts as the division between the spiritual and earthly realms. After lunch, visit **Kumano Nachi Taisha**, one of the three Kumano shrines, situated a few kilometers inland from the coastal hot spring resort of Katsura. The shrine is part of a large complex of neighboring religious sites that exemplify the past fusion of Buddhist and Shinto. The site also boasts the tallest waterfall in Japan, **Nachi no Taki**. The tallest single-tiered waterfall in Japan, it was the original religious site in the area. Transfer to the hotel for a buffet dinner. MERCURE WAKAYAMA KUSHIMOTO RESORT & SPA (1 Night) (B, L, D)

Day 6: Thur, Mar 27 – KUSHIMOTO – SHIRAHAMA. After breakfast, visit the **Hashigui Iwa Rocks**, a group of 40 gigantic igneous rocks that form a line in the sea that is 850 meters long. Stop at **Toretore Market** for some shopping and lunch on your own. After lunch, visit the **Sandanbeki Cliffs** and **Sandanbeki Cave**. Lastly, visit **Senjoshiki**, a unique landscape located on the west coast of Shirahama before transferring to the hotel. MARRIOTT NANKI-SHIRAHAMA (1 Night) (B, D)

Day 7: Fri, Mar 28 – SHIRAHAMA – WAKAYAMA. Depart Shirahama for Wakayama. Enjoy shopping at an **Umeboshi (Salted Plum) Factory**, for this uniquely Japanese staple. Next, learn about two ingredients essential to Japanese cuisine at the **Ota Kyusuke Miso Factory** and **Kadocho Soy Sauce Factory**. For lunch, savor high-quality Japanese-style cuisine at **Ganko Wakayama**, an old Japanese estate with one of Japan's most renowned gardens. Lastly, visit **Wakayama Castle**. Built on the orders of warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1585. Unfortunately the castle did not survive WWII, and most of the present buildings are a 1958 post-war reconstruction. Only the Okaguchi Gate and stone walls remain from the original castle. Transfer to the hotel in Wakayama. Enjoy an izakaya dinner at a local restaurant. HOTEL GRANVIA WAKAYAMA (1 Night) (B, L, D)

Day 8: Sat, Mar 29 – WAKAYAMA – MT. KOYA – OSAKA – KYOTO. After breakfast, explore **Mt. Koya** (Koya-san), the center of Shingon Buddhism; an important Buddhist sect which was introduced to Japan in 805 by Kobo Daishi (also known as Kukai), one of Japan's most significant religious figures. A small, secluded temple town has developed around the sect's headquarters that Kobo Daishi built on Koya-san's wooded mountaintop. It is also the site of Kobo Daishi's mausoleum and the start and end point of the Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage. Kobo Daishi began construction on the original Garan Temple Complex in 826 after wandering the country for years in search of a suitable place to center his religion. Since then over one hundred temples have sprung up along the streets of Koya-san. We visit the most important among them, **Kongobuji**, the head temple of Shingon Buddhism. Next explore **Dotonbori**, one of Osaka's most popular tourist destinations, this street runs parallel to the Dotonbori canal. It is a popular shopping and



entertainment district and is also known as a food destination. Enjoy lunch on your own while here. Lastly, visit to **Kuromon Ichiba Market**, a lively covered market which stretches for 580 meters in Osaka's Chuo Ward. The market is famous for its fresh seafood, fruits and vegetables, meats, dried fish, pickles and confectionery. Many stalls will prepare, cook and serve their food to you right on the spot! An excellent place to stroll, sample, and snack on a delicious variety of fresh market foods. Transfer to the hotel in Kyoto. The remainder of the day is at your leisure. The Local Guide will have suggestions on various dining and shopping opportunities nearby. MIYAKO HOTEL KYOTO HACHIJO (3 Nights) (B)

Day 9: Sun, Mar 30 – KYOTO. After a delicious Japanese/Western buffet breakfast at the hotel, embark on a full day of sightseeing beginning with a visit to **Kiyomizu Temple** (literally "Pure Water Temple"). Next, visit **Nijo Castle**. After the Tokugawa Shogunate fell in 1867, Nijo Castle was used as an imperial palace for a while before being donated to the city and opened up to the public as a historic site. Its palace buildings are arguably the best surviving examples of castle palace architecture of Japan's feudal era. Today's hands-on experience is **surikomi yuzen (brush dyed yuzen)**. Since the patterns are dyed by placing a paper stencil over a table mat you can make an authentic piece, even if this is your first time. Lastly, we visit **Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion)**, a Zen Temple whose top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf, before returning to the hotel. (B, L)

Day 10: Mon, Mar 31 – KYOTO. Full day at leisure. Your hotel is surrounded by department stores, specialty stores, and restaurants. A perfect day to fulfill your shopping list. Your Local Guide will be available to assist as needed. (B)

Day 11: Tue, Apr 01 – KYOTO – NARA – OSAKA – HONOLULU. After breakfast, check out from hotel. A full day of sightseeing is ahead. On our way back to Osaka, view the stunning vermilion colored **Fushimi Inari Shrine**, whose four kilometer long tunnel of scarlet torii gates was featured on the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*. After lunch, visit the **Todaiji Temple** in Nara. Todaiji, the largest wooden building in Japan, houses the largest bronze statue of Buddha at 16.3 meters high. The surrounding **Nara Deer Park** is inhabited by over **1,000 Shika Deer**. A final shopping stop will be made at **AEON MALL Rinku Sennan** before transferring to Kansai International Airport for our return flight home. Depart Osaka via Japan Airlines flt #792 at 10:05 pm and arrive in Honolulu at 10:50 am the same day. Aloha and welcome home! (B, L)

UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Kiyomizu Temple (1994), Nijo Castle (1994), Kinkakuji Temple (1994), Todaiji Temple (1998).

* Fares are per person, USD based on double occupancy and include all airline taxes and fees. Airline fuel supplements, taxes and fees are subject to change and tour member is responsible for any increases. Some airline-imposed personal charges, including but not limited to baggage, priority boarding and special seating, may apply. For details visit www.tripadvisor.com/AirlineFees. After initial deposit, a \$75 per person Non-Stop Travel (NST) cancellation fee will apply. Group departures may be cancelled, if there are less than 24 tour members. Final payment to NST for "non-cruise" air and land package must be made by money order or personal check. NST does not guarantee that all tour members will fly together with Tour Manager. Tour Manager assignments, number of meals offered on tour, tour price, discount, and the "final" tour itinerary are subject to change with/without notice. **NST reserves the right to correct errors or omissions including but not limited to, fares, fees, and surcharges at any time.** Deposit: \$500 per person. Final payment due: 11/12/24. NST at its discretion, may use group and individual photos on its website, print, television, and various social media. Cherry blossoms are subject to weather conditions and are NOT guaranteed. † Early booking discount is per person. Purchase of NST's complete air and land package is required. †† Earn rewards every time you refer a friend. For each "new-to-NST" customer you refer, both you and your referral can receive a \$25 discount off your next NST escorted group. **Special assistance:** You must notify NST, at time of reservation, of any disability requiring special attention. NST reserves the right to cancel your booking or terminate your vacation if your special needs or disabilities are not suitable for the vacation or if you are not traveling with a companion who will provide all the assistance you require. **Wheelchair and electric scooter access outside of the USA is severely restricted.** 111924