

## Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Trek, Japan

Step back in time and trek along ancient pilgrimage trails in the footsteps of the Japanese emperors.



### Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

### Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Ryokan/Minshuku, Temple
Grade	Moderate
Duration	13 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On trek: 4 days Walks on: 3 days
Min/Max group size	5 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 5
Trip Leader	Japan Local Leader
Land only	Joining in Kyoto, Japan
Max altitude	2,854m/9,363ft, Ogumorigoe Pass, Day 7

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2021 Dates:

Mon 17 May - Sat 29 May

Mon 11 Oct - Sat 23 Oct

### 2022 Dates:

Mon 16 May - Sat 28 May

Mon 10 Oct - Sat 22 Oct

## Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

Single rooms are available in the western style hotels in Kyoto and Katsuura. In the Japanese style accommodation, generally twin rooms only are available.

## No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

## Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 5 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

## Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

## Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

## Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

# Your guide

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Your trip will be led by an English-speaking Japanese guide. They are all highly experienced, and will greatly enhance your experience on holiday. They will both guide you on the trail, and accompany you on all train and road journeys.

## Your trip highlights

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- Trek on ancient pilgrimage trails that now form a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Enjoy beautiful and varied scenery from coast to country to high mountains
- Experience traditional Japanese accommodation and superb regional cuisine
- Visit cultural Kyoto and hike at the Fushimi Inari Shrine
- Explore historic Mount Koya and stay in a Buddhist temple

## At a glance itinerary

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Days 1-2 Fly to Osaka. Transfer to Kyoto.  
Day 3 Travel to the Kii Peninsula.  
Days 4-7 Trek the Nakahechi Pilgrimage Trail from Takijiri to the Nachi Grand Shrine.  
Day 8 Coastal Walk and overnight at a private island.  
Days 9-10 Travel to Mt Koya and walk the Choishi-Michi Trail.  
Days 11-12 Visit Kyoto and walk to Fushimi Inari Shrine. Sightseeing tour and time at leisure.  
Day 13 Fly to the UK.

## Trip summary

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Used by pilgrims, noblemen and even emperors in ancient times, the Kumano Kodo is in fact a network of trails linking the sacred centres on the remote Kii peninsula - a scenic and mountainous region stretching south from the mighty Kansai cities of Osaka, Nara and Kyoto. The Kumano Kodo is now a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The pilgrimage routes to the three great Kumano Shrines - Kumano Hongu Taisha, Kumano Nachi Taisha, and Kumano Hayatama Taisha were popularised during and after the Heian Period (794-1185), when the imperial family and nobility began to seek salvation in sangaku shinko (a belief in the supernatural power of mountains), rather than through common religious practices. Emperor Gotoba (1180-1239) made no less than thirty pilgrimages to Kumano, recording his thoughts and feelings in the Kumano poems. These precious documents are now in the Yomei Storehouse archives in Kyoto.

The holiday starts in the cultural city of Kyoto, before you travel south by train along the coast to start trekking the Nakahechi trail - one of the Kumano Kodo routes. The well-maintained trail threads its way through deep valleys, mountains and small villages to offer a wonderfully varied trek. The route is on a mixture of level countryside paths to steeper hilly paths, with up to 3,500 feet of ascent on the more challenging days. The path is often paved with flagstone steps and leads through forests of Japanese cedar. Walking in the quiet solitude it is easy to imagine the days, centuries ago, when nobles followed these paths through the mountains.

After a day walking on the coast, and a night on a private island, you travel north to Mount Koya where you stay in a temple and walk one of the original pilgrimage paths used to access this remote mountain retreat. Your final two nights are spent in Kyoto, with time for sightseeing and walking at the Fushimi Inari Shrine.

This itinerary has been carefully created to immerse you in Japanese life and culture - both traditional and contemporary. Led by your expert guide, you will travel on the efficiently run local trains and buses - an essential ingredient of modern-day Japan - whilst your main luggage will be sent by courier to make the road and train transfers more relaxed.

One of the highlights of the holiday is the traditional accommodation you will enjoy whilst trekking. Villagers have converted local houses into inns or minshuku and ryokans which have Japanese-style rooms with tatami mat floors and futons, and some have communal hot spring baths for your relaxation. At the end of each day's trek, you will be warmly welcomed by your local hosts who take great pride in their beautifully kept accommodation and provide the highest levels of service. Exquisite meals are prepared using the freshest local ingredients that showcase the very best regional cuisine.

At each inn, a cotton robe (yukata) and slippers are provided for your comfort and it is normal to wear these for dinner as well as whilst relaxing in the evening. There will also be toiletries in your room. This means, that on the few nights that your luggage is being couriered to your next destination, you will only have to carry a minimal change of clothes with your day pack (please see 'Special notes' and the 'Accommodation' section of this itinerary for further information).

With its blend of scenic trekking, traditional accommodation and cultural sights, this holiday offers a superb introduction to Japan's captivating landscapes, history and culture.

### **Special notes**

#### **Luggage**

Your main luggage will be transported on 3 occasions, allowing you to carry just an overnight rucksack. On certain nights you won't have access to your main luggage, but the Japanese Inns you will be staying in provide cotton robes, slippers, towels, soap and shampoo. It is normal to wear the cotton robes to eat dinner in, relax in your room and even wear outdoors, so you really can travel light! Please speak to Seraphina Berry in the office for further information.

#### **Flights and transfers**

If booking your own flights, please check with us beforehand to confirm which airport the group transfer will be from.

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single, timed transfer which is arranged to coincide with the arrival/departure of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer.

# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Fly London to Osaka

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Fly on an overnight flight from London to Osaka.

**Overnight: In flight**

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## Day 2: Arrive Osaka airport. Transfer to Kyoto, welcome dinner.

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The group flight will be met on arrival at Kansai airport, Osaka. It is about a two hour drive to the centre of Kyoto and your hotel for the night. You are free to start exploring Kyoto, or to relax in the hotel until the evening when your guide will take you to a nearby local restaurant for a welcome dinner.

**Overnight: Hotel Hearton or Similar, Kyoto (Meals: D)**

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## Day 3: Transfer to the Kii Peninsula.

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Today you travel south by train from Kyoto along the coast to Tanabe on the Kii peninsula. Your guide will expertly lead you on Japanese public transport, which is superbly run with amazingly clean trains that all run on time! The journey takes about 3 hours. The Kii peninsula has long been considered sacred in Japan as the entrance to the land of Yomi, the mythical underworld. It is also the site of the Three Sacred Shrines of Kumano - the 'Kumano Sanzan'. Tonight you stay in a simple minshuku. Your luggage will be sent by courier to Yunomine, allowing you to travel with just a light rucksack with overnight essentials.

**Overnight: Minshuku (Meals: B D)**

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## Day 4: Trek to Chikatsuyu - 9.5 miles, 6-7 hours.

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Starting from Takijiri today, you trek eastwards along the Nakahechi pilgrimage trail. Initially there is a climb to reach the small village of Takahara but the path is well defined as you continue from there along the pilgrimage trail. Flagstones have been placed in some areas to make the path easier. Although rarely seen these days, there are small bears in the Kumano mountains, and more commonly deer and wild boar. Along the route you will pass small bodhisattva statues placed by locals to protect travellers. There are also the sites of old tea-houses which provided places of rest for pilgrims right up to the early 20th century.



Depending on the availability of accommodation, you may end the day walking for a further 40 minutes beyond Chikatsuyu to the village of Nonaka which is situated close to a picturesque river on the Kumano Kodo trail.

845m/2,775ft ascent, 695m/2,275ft descent.

**Overnight: Minshuku (Meals: B D)**

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## Day 5: Trek from Chikatsuyu to the Grand Shrine at Hongu - 9 miles, 6½-7½ hours.

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The route today passes several ridge-top villages and oji shrines. Nobles would rest at these sub-shrines to refresh themselves and compose poems and their poetry is engraved on stone monuments sited along the path. You will take a bus to Doyugawabashi first, and then on to Hongu Grand Shrine. At the heart of these sacred mountains, Kumano was said to be the entrance to the land of Yomi, the 'other world' to where spirits travelled in Japanese mythology. The classic style of architecture of the Kumano Hongu Shrine blends perfectly with the surrounding mountains and forests. The shrine uses a mythological three-legged raven symbol, representing the Hongu, Nachi, and Hayatama shrines - the same motif as the one used by the Japan Football team.

After visiting the shrine you will travel by local bus to the Yunomine Hot Spring, one of the oldest in Japan. This is also your accommodation for the night and the comfortable minshuku has its own rock-built outdoor hot spring bath, or rotemburo, and is the ideal place to relax after your walk. Your luggage sent from Kyoto will be waiting for you here.

635m/2,085ft ascent, 995m/3,265ft descent.

**Overnight: Minshuku (Meals: B D)**

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**Day 6: Trek from Ukegawa to Koguchi - 8 miles, 4-5 hours.**

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Your luggage will be sent ahead from here to Kii Katsuura. There is a short bus transfer this morning to Ukegawa on the banks of the Kumano river. From here you start the Kogumotorigoe path, which heads gently up towards the pass at 470m/1,542ft. There are some lovely views from the ridge before you descend to the remote village of Koguchi. There should be time in the afternoon to explore along the river and possibly swim if the weather is warm.

520m/1,705ft ascent, 500m/1,640ft descent.

**Overnight: Minshuku (Meals: B D)**

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**Day 7: Trek from Koguchi to Nachi Grand Shrine - 9 miles, 6 hours.**

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Today is the final section of the Nakahechi trail, with a long morning climb to the Ogumotorigoe Pass at 870m/2,854ft. You may well be able to see the Pacific ocean from here before descending to the Nachi-taki waterfall and the Grand Shrine, one of the Three Grand Shrines of Kumano. There will be plenty of time to explore the area, and admire the highest waterfall in Japan.



980m/3,215ft ascent, 921m/3,020ft descent.

**Overnight: Minshuku (Meals: B D)**

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**Day 8: Coastal walk - 4.1 miles, 3 hours. Or relax at hot springs.**

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You will make the short road transfer to the coast to enjoy a scenic walk and explore the fishing port of Katsuura. Pilgrims travelled down the eastern coast of the Kii Peninsula to travel between the Kumano Sanzan - or the three Grand Shrines of Kumano Kodo - and Ise. Ise shrine is also considered to be one of Japan's pre-eminent shrines and is itself a focus of pilgrimage. While the trail has been around for over 1000 years, its popularity surged in the 15th century as an increasing number of pilgrims would combine visits to both of these holy and revered regions. You will walk a short portion of this 170 km coastal route. For those who prefer to relax, time can be spent at your hotel. Set in the middle of the bay is a private island, which is where you will be staying the night. The hotel - which has a modern, western style exterior and wholly Japanese interior - has a hot spring and is a great place to relax after completing the pilgrimage walk. Your luggage will be waiting for you here.

546m/1,790ft ascent, 539m/1,768ft descent.

**Overnight: Hotel Urashima or Similar, Katsuura (Meals: B D)**

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**Day 9: Transfer to Mount Koya, afternoon walk.**

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Your luggage will be sent ahead to Kyoto. You will transfer by train and cable car today to Mount Koya. Situated in a bowl shaped valley covered in giant cedar trees, Mount Koya is situated 900m/2,970ft high in the mountains of the Kii peninsula. Since the 9th century when the priest Kukai (also known as Kobo Dashi) founded the first temple and the Shingon sect of Buddhism, Koya-san has been a place of religious devotion and ceremony. There are now over 100 monasteries, and you will be staying in one of them.

You will visit Kongobu-ji temple and there will be a guided walk through the vast Okuno-in cemetery, with thousands of graves and memorials to feudal lords and other past luminaries.

**Overnight: Ekoin Temple, or Yochiin Temple or Shojoshinin Temple Mount Koya (Meals: B D)**

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**Day 10: Walk the Choishi-michi - 10 miles, 5 hours.**

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The traditional approach to Mount Koya, used by both monks and pilgrims, was the Choishi-michi. The route takes its name from the five-tiered stone stupas that line the route. Each of the five tiers represents one of the five principle elements of the Buddhist universe - fire, earth, water, metal and wood - and were placed there to show pilgrims the way. The hiking trail ends at the Daimon Gate, a two storey tall, crimson gate that marks the traditional entrance to Koyasan.

**Overnight: Ekoin Temple, or Yochiin Temple or Shojoshinin Temple Mount Koya (Meals: B D)**

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**Day 11: Transfer to Kyoto. Fushimi Inari walk - 3 miles.**

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You leave behind the tranquillity of Mount Koya this morning and head to the cultural city of Kyoto. In the afternoon you will visit the Fushimi Inari shrine and climb to the top. Fushimi Inari is an important Shinto shrine dedicated to the god of rice, it is renowned for its myriad of vermilion Torii, or gates, that create a vivid impression as they snake their way along and up the hillside. Your luggage will be waiting for you in Kyoto.

**Overnight: Hotel Hearton or Similar, Kyoto (Meals: B)**

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**Day 12: Morning - sightseeing in Kyoto. Afternoon - at leisure. Farewell dinner.**

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This morning you will visit the Golden Pavilion or Kinkakuji. Known for its dazzling gold-leafed exterior, it was originally built for Ashikaga Shogun in the 15th century as a place of contemplation and rest. You will also visit the Nijo Castle, originally the Kyoto residence of the Tokugawa Shoguns in the 17th century. Built in the 'momoyama' style, the wooden floors creak when walked on, apparently a security measure against intruders.

In the afternoon you are free to explore further or to go shopping. Nishiki Market is a great place to get an idea of the incredible diversity of food in Japan. You can also see related businesses such as the Aritsugu knife shop where they sell a wide range of top quality Japanese kitchen knives and other utensils. Nearby are some department stores and other interesting shops which you may like to visit. Shopping culture in Japan has, like everything else they do, been taken to impressive heights.

**Overnight: Hotel Hearton or Similar, Kyoto (Meals: B D)**

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**Day 13: Fly to London.**

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After breakfast there will be a group transfer to the airport for your flight back to London. **(Meals: B)**

## Our grading system

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Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Trek is graded as a Moderate trekking holiday, as described below.

### Moderate

Holidays in this grade typically involve 5 to 10 days of walking or trekking. They will often venture into more remote country and can cross mountain passes. Altitudes though are still relatively low, going no higher than around 4,300m/14,000ft. Accommodation can include simple hotels, tea houses, lodges and camping.

## What the price includes

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**Mountain Kingdoms** aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

### What's included:

- ✓ A local, English-speaking, Japanese guide
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK (flight inclusive option). If you are travelling land only, check with our office for joining time at the airport
- ✓ Single, timed group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ All baggage transfers as per the itinerary (one bag per person)
- ✓ All road transport by train, bus and private vehicles
- ✓ Meals as specified: all breakfasts and 10 dinners
- ✓ Sightseeing as specified
- ✓ Good standard accommodation in a variety of accommodation styles
- ✓ Activities as specified
- ✓ The option of joining one of our three pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle

### Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

### What's not included:

- ✗ Lunches and one dinner
- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Airport transfers (if your flights do not coincide with the timings of the group flights)
- ✗ Locally paid bar bills and laundry
- ✗ Optional activities
- ✗ Tips

### Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.



## Your accommodation

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We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in this itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.

Accommodation in Kyoto and Katsuura is in western style hotels, with twin or single rooms available. In all other places the charming traditional ryokan, minshuku and temples have tatami mat flooring, futon beds, and western bathrooms either en suite or shared. Many have communal hot spring style baths, and all have delicious Japanese food. In the ryokan or minshuku single rooms are not generally available and single travellers will be paired with another traveller of the same sex from the Mountain Kingdoms group.

Please be aware that in Japan double rooms are much smaller than twin rooms. We will therefore automatically book a twin room for couples. If you would prefer one of the smaller double rooms, you just need to inform us when you make your booking.



### **Hotel Hearton or Similar, Kyoto**

This 3\* hotel is in a good location in the heart of Kyoto, close to a subway station and within easy walking distance of many of the city's main attractions. Rooms are bright with en suite facilities, air-conditioning, televisions and fridges, and the hotel offers free Wi-Fi and a restaurant serving western and Japanese cuisine.



### **Minshuku**

Minshuku are either traditional wooden buildings, or more modern constructions. The rooms are traditional Japanese style, with tatami matting floors and futons laid out in the evening. The food is Japanese and always beautifully presented and delicious! Bathrooms are generally shared, and there are often communal hot spring style baths segregated by gender.



### **Hotel Urashima or Similar, Katsuura**

The Urashima is located right on the seafront and boasts several hot springs including a natural 'bokido', or cave, hot spring baths. The hotel has an outdoor swimming pool (open during the summer) and a good range of amenities. Rooms are traditionally furnished with futons and tatami mats and come complete with a fridge and tea making facilities.



### **Ekoin Temple, or Yochiin Temple or Shojoshinin Temple Mount Koya**

The Ekoin is a peaceful, traditional Buddhist temple with tatami mat rooms with futons. It has a large, communal spa bath and delicious vegetarian food. You are welcome to join in with the Buddhist ceremonies that the monks perform daily, but there is no pressure to do so. We may also use the Shojoshinin Temple, one of the oldest temples on Mount Koya, or the Yochin Temple - both have similar facilities as the Ekoin.

## Meal arrangements

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11 Breakfasts and 10 Dinners are included. Lunches are not included but your guide will help you organise these, which might be picnics or taken in local restaurants or cafes.

## Flight arrangements

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### Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare. Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

### Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

## Further information

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When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## The nature of adventure travel

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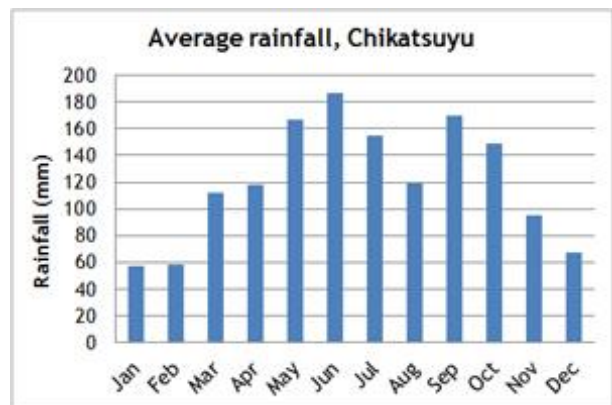
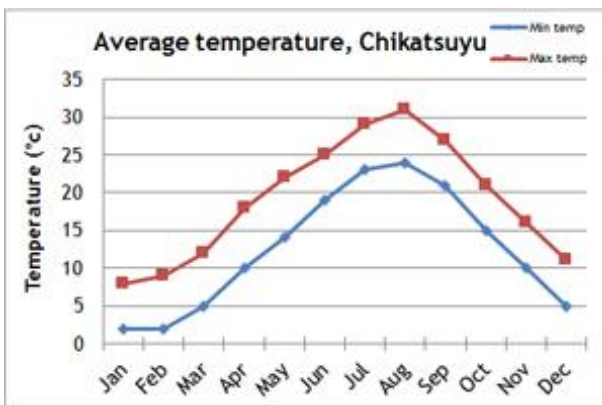
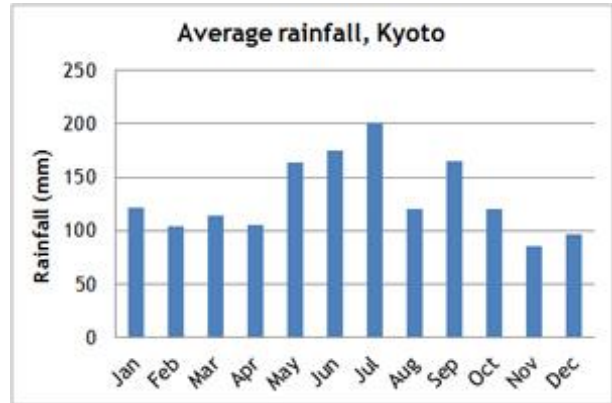
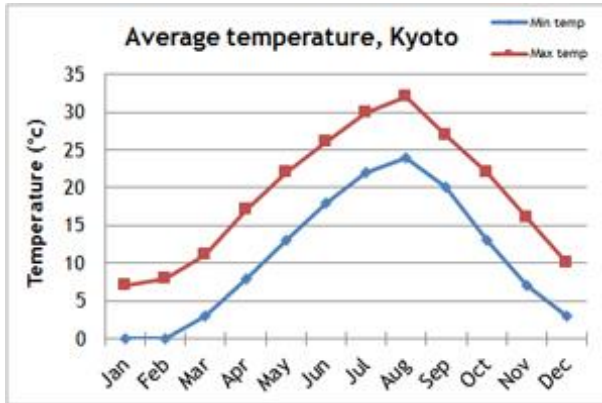
Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

## Trip altitude

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**Important** - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend [www.medex.org.uk](http://www.medex.org.uk) as a good source of information.

# Climate information



## Extensions

### Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).



There are many ways you can extend your holiday in Japan with Mountain Kingdoms: you could book extra nights at a hotel at the start or end of your trip, take a personal sightseeing tour or enjoy some other exciting activity. In fact whatever's available, we can help make it happen. We're happy to suggest ideas, provide quotes and make all the arrangements. We can also assist with flight and hotel upgrades.

## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- This varied itinerary has been carefully designed to include the best trekking, day walks and cultural attractions.
- You stay in traditional inns of character outside Kyoto, including lodgings at a Buddhist temple.
- You will be accompanied throughout by a professional, English-speaking guide who will be delighted to share their expert knowledge of the history, culture and nature of their home country.
- Group transfers to/from Osaka airport are included.
- Our maximum group size is 12 for this trip. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects often associated with larger trekking groups.
- We research our holidays first-hand and Seraphina Berry completed this trip in 2016. If you have any questions please contact Seraphina on 01453 844400, she will be very happy to help.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and sightseeing tours.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- We are an IATA accredited agent and work directly with some of the world's major airlines. If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

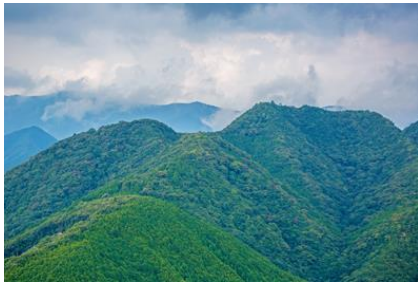
## What our clients say

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*Staying in Ryokan, Minshuku and Temples was a definite plus as it enabled us to experience the traditional side of Japan.*  
- Miss W, Harrow

*The immersion in rural Japanese culture, combined with trekking along an ancient route was excellent. Our guide was resourceful & versatile in face of new challenges.*  
-Mr H, London



*As ever the trip was very well planned and researched. The balance between trekking and culture was excellent. The opportunity to stay in traditional Japanese inns and the food they provided was a highlight. Our guide, Yumi, was exceptional. She combined trek leading with information about Japanese history and culture superbly - from past experience we know this is a very difficult balance. In addition her organisation and people management were first class, in sometimes difficult circumstances and always with charm and a smile.*  
-Mr T, Buckinghamshire



*We can honestly say that our Kumano Kodo holiday has been one of the best in our lives and we enjoyed every minute of our amazing trip. We particularly enjoyed the combination of nature, exercise and culture. We are grateful for the variety of places to stay, from Japanese B&B to large modern hotels to monastery lodgings. And we would like to mention that the trip would not have been the same without our amazing guide, Yumiko. Yumi's knowledge of Japanese culture and history is superb and she is one of the main reasons why every one of us fell in love with Japan. We would like to thank the Mountain Kingdom for this amazing holiday and would not hesitate to recommend the agency to all our friends.*  
-Mr V Korolev, Berkshire

*We greatly enjoyed the holiday, with the highlights bring the trek and Koyasan. The organisation was faultless and the guide was first class. My strongest memories are of the towering cedar trees, the baths, the traditional bedrooms and the dining experiences. Thanks for a great trip.*  
-Mrs L, Wiltshire

*A gifted leader, Yumi, was engaging and informative throughout, true professional. Exceptional input, attention to detail and lots of fun. Great walking, good places to visit and stay, very good all through and such a fantastic country.*  
-Mr C, Cumbria

# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## **Truly independent**

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

## **Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality**

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

## **Complete financial security**

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

## **No Surcharge Guarantee**

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

## **Award winning Responsible Tourism**

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).

## **Genuine small group travel**

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

## **Loyalty Discount**

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

## **Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier**

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

## **Comprehensive information**

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit [www.tourismdeclares.com](http://www.tourismdeclares.com)

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

### **Carbon Offsetting**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

### **Reducing Carbon Emissions**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

