

I-ADVENTURES JAPAN **Paths Through Past and Present**

May 15-26, 2027

Join us on an extraordinary 12-day journey through Japan at one of the year's most beautiful times. Mid-May offers near-perfect conditions with pleasant temperatures, vibrant landscapes, and long daylight hours. The spring holiday crowds have departed, while the heat and humidity of summer have not yet arrived, creating an ideal season for exploring cities, mountain trails, and coastal communities.

When possible, we will use Japan's excellent train system. Traveling by train is one of the great pleasures of visiting Japan and is an experience in itself. On longer routes, we'll ride the sleek Shinkansen bullet trains, known for their remarkable speed, comfort, quiet, and punctuality. For journeys into smaller cities and scenic regions, we'll use Limited Express trains, which offer a relaxed way to watch Japan's mountains, countryside, villages, and coastlines pass by. To make traveling even easier, we'll take advantage of Japan's excellent luggage forwarding service, sending suitcases ahead to our next hotel. This allows us to move comfortably through stations, board trains easily, and enjoy the journey without having to manage heavy luggage along the way. When trains aren't convenient, we will travel by private coach.

Throughout the journey, we'll experience Japan through a thoughtfully balanced blend of guided exploration and personal discovery. Beginning amid the temples, gardens and historic neighborhoods of Kyoto, we'll travel into the forested mountains of the Kiso Valley, where village-to-village walking will immerse us in the landscapes and postal towns of the historic Edo period Nakasendo Trail. We'll then explore Kanazawa's samurai heritage and living craft traditions before continuing to the remote Sea of Japan coast and the remarkable fishing village of Ine. From there, we'll experience the centuries-old Japanese tradition of communal hot-spring while in Kinosaki Onsen. Our next stop is Okayama, our jumping off point to Naoshima, where contemporary art, bold architecture and the landscapes of the Seto Inland Sea come together in one of Japan's most distinctive cultural destinations.

The result is a journey that is immersive rather than hurried, offering opportunities to not only to enjoy the vestiges of Japan's remarkable history, but also to experience its exceptional hospitality, beautiful land and seascapes, enduring commitment to craftsmanship, and timeless appreciation for beauty and thoughtful design.

Kyoto — May 15 to 17

Temples, Gardens and Spiritual Traditions

Our journey begins in Kyoto, Japan's imperial capital for more than a thousand years and one of the country's greatest repositories of art, architecture and spiritual tradition.

Our first evening will be intentionally relaxed, allowing time to settle in before gathering for a Welcome Dinner showcasing seasonal Kyoto cuisine.

We'll spend the rest of our time in Kyoto exploring its magnificent temples, ornate shrines, serene Zen gardens, atmospheric wooden neighborhoods and centuries-old traditions that remain woven into everyday life. We will enjoy wandering lantern-lit streets and traditional wooden districts and experience the tranquility of the towering Arashiyama Bamboo Grove.

Kyoto provides the historical and spiritual foundation for everything that follows, introducing the Japanese appreciation for simplicity, craftsmanship, nature and thoughtful design that we'll encounter repeatedly throughout our journey.

Kiso Valley — May 17 to 20

Historic Mountain Villages and Walking the Nakasendo

Leaving Kyoto behind, we'll travel by Shinkansen high speed rail to Nagoya and then aboard the slower Limited Express Shinano into the Japanese Alps.

The Kiso Valley is a landscape of cedar forests, mountain streams and beautifully preserved postal towns along the Nakasendo, one of the principal routes connecting Kyoto with Edo (now Tokyo) during the feudal era. Travelers once made this journey almost entirely on foot, resulting in a chain of postal towns that provided food, lodging and rest to samurai, merchants and pilgrims. Today, several of these towns remain beautifully preserved, with the stone paths and wooden buildings offering a glimpse into Japan's past.

Our three-night stay allows us time to walk village-to-village on the Nakasendo at the pace that the route was originally traveled. For those who prefer not to walk, we will provide alternative transportation.



Kanazawa — May 20 to 22

Samurai Heritage, Refined Culture and Living Craft Traditions

From Kiso we'll continue north through the mountains to Nagano before taking the Hokuriku Shinkansen high speed rail west to Kanazawa.

Kanazawa offers a quieter and more intimate urban experience than Kyoto, but shares the elegant, traditional charm and well-preserved historic architecture of the ancient capital. Once the center of one of feudal Japan's wealthiest domains, the city escaped much of the wartime destruction suffered elsewhere and retains beautifully preserved Edo era districts alongside one of Japan's greatest landscape gardens.

Kanazawa is also one of Japan's great centers of traditional craftsmanship. We'll see artisans working in traditions such as Kaga Yuzen silk dyeing, Kutani ceramics, lacquerware and gold leaf. This will be an excellent opportunity for purchasing high-quality Japanese crafts and decorative objects.

Ine and the Tango Peninsula — May 22 and 23

Coastal Fishing Villages and Maritime Japan

From Kanazawa we'll travel by private coach toward the remote Tango Peninsula and the Sea of Japan. Here we have two options:

1. Ine is an extraordinary fishing community wrapped around a protected bay. This is our introduction to maritime Japan—where the architecture, food and way of life have been shaped by the sea rather than by castles, temples or mountain trade routes. The village is famous for its *funaya*—traditional wooden boathouses built directly at the water's edge, historically with fishing boats stored below and living spaces above. At night in the sea, there is often bioluminescence.

2. Kyotango has triple Japan's national concentration of centenarians. This option is about longevity and healthy living. We will learn about the Kyotango Longevity Cohort Study and what researchers are learning about diet, gut health, physical activity, vascular health and lifestyle. We will then meet residents, enjoy a longevity-inspired lunch and explore the coastal countryside on foot or by e-bike. At night in the sea, there is often bioluminescence.

Kinosaki Onsen — May 23 and 24

Relax, Soak and Experience Traditional Ryokan Hospitality

After an unhurried morning, we'll make the short drive west to Kinosaki Onsen, one of Japan's classic hot-spring towns. Kinosaki is not simply a resort with hot tubs – the entire town is organized around the tradition of communal bathing.

Upon arrival in Kinosaki, we will change into *yukata* robes and *geta* sandals to walk the willow-lined streets between public bathhouses, cafés and small shops. Everyone will have ample time for bathing before returning to the hotel for dinner. After dinner, those inclined can head back into town for an evening stroll and another soak.

The following morning offers time for breakfast and a final bath before departure.

Okayama & Naoshima — May 24 to 26

Contemporary Art, Architecture and Seto Inland Sea Landscapes

After a relaxed morning in Kinosaki, we'll travel south by train toward Himeji and continue by Shinkansen high speed rail to Okayama, our base for the final two nights. Depending upon timing and group interest, this transfer day offers us the option for a several-hour stop at Himeji Castle, which lies directly along our route. Afterward we'll continue to Okayama, check into our hotel and enjoy an easy evening.

May 25 — Naoshima: Modern Art & Architecture (Day trip)

Our final full day introduces a dramatically different Japan. From Okayama we'll travel by local train to Uno Port and take the 20-minute ferry across the Seto Inland Sea to Naoshima, one of Japan's most celebrated art islands where world-class contemporary art, striking architecture, and breathtaking coastal scenery come together.

We'll devote the entire day to the island, exploring highlights such as:

- **Chichu Art Museum**, designed by Tadao Ando largely below ground and illuminated primarily by natural light
- **Benesse House Museum**, where art, architecture and landscape merge

- **Art House Project**, which transforms historic and abandoned village buildings into contemporary installations;

We will also take time to wander charming fishing villages transformed into living art spaces, admire Yayoi Kusama's famous pumpkin sculptures, and experience a destination where creativity and nature coexist. In striking contrast to the historic cities we've explored, Naoshima demonstrates how contemporary art, architecture, and thoughtful design have become integral parts of modern Japanese culture.



We'll return to Okayama in the late afternoon or early evening and gather for our Farewell Dinner, reflecting on a journey that has taken us through vibrant cities, tranquil mountain villages, seaside towns, timeless temples and gardens, remarkable craftsmanship, and the warmth and hospitality that make Japan such an unforgettable destination.

May 26 — Okayama to Osaka and Kansai International Airport Homeward Bound

After breakfast, we'll travel by Shinkansen from Okayama to Shin-Osaka, which takes approximately 45 to 50 minutes. For those flying home, the JR Haruka airport express reaches Kansai International Airport in approximately another 50 minutes.

May 27 — TBD Optional Add-On Trip to Shikoku Island

We will also offer an add-on trip to Shikoku Island for those who are interested. Shikoku is one of Japan's best destinations for travelers who want to be outdoors and active, with a landscape of forested mountains, river valleys, rugged coastline, and small rural towns. Days can include walking sections of the historic 88-temple pilgrimage, cycling quiet country roads or parts of the Shimanami Kaido, hiking through scenic valleys, exploring coastal trails and fishing villages, and soaking in an onsen after a day outside. **The itinerary and cost will be out soon.**

Japan 2027 – Itinerary Summary

Stop	Description	Nights	Transportation to next stop
Kyoto	Temples, Gardens and Spiritual Traditions	2	Shinkansen to Nagoya + Limited Express Shinano/local train to Kiso
Kiso Valley	Historic Mountain Villages and Nakasendo Walking	3	Limited Express toward Nagano + Hokuriku Shinkansen to Kanazawa
Kanazawa	Samurai Districts, Refined Culture and Living Craft Traditions	2	Private charter coach to Tango Peninsula/Ine
Ine / Tango Peninsula	Coastal Fishing Villages and Maritime Japan	1	Private charter coach to Kinosaki
Kinosaki Onsen	Traditional Ryokan and Restorative Hot-Spring Culture	1	Limited Express to Himeji + Shinkansen to Okayama
Okayama / Naoshima	Contemporary Art, Architecture and Seto Inland Sea Landscapes	2	Shinkansen to Shin-Osaka + JR Haruka to Kansai Int'l Airport
TOTAL	11 nights / 12 days		

