

Japan on Two Wheels

Kyoto, Kii Peninsula, Mount Fuji & Tokyo

Adventures in
JAPAN

14 days guided cycling tour



Terraced rice fields in the Kii Peninsula

Dates & Prices

2009 £2650
11 - 24 October

Included

All domestic transport, support vehicle, luggage handling, accommodation, entrance fees, breakfasts. 8 evening meals are included.

Itinerary

Day 1 Meet Kyoto **2** Kyoto city cycling
3 Cycling around Kyoto **4** Nara **5** Cycling in the Kii Peninsula **6** Cycling to Yunomine Hot Spring **7** Cycling Yunomine Hot Spring to Nachi **8** Ise and ferry to Irago **9** Cycling around Mount Fuji **10** Cycle around Mount Fuji to Lake Yamanaka **11** Train to Tokyo **12** Tokyo cycling **13** Tokyo free day **14** Tour ends

14 days Road cycling with support from Tokyo to Kyoto.
Accommodation in family-run minshuku, traditional ryokan, shukubo (pilgrims' lodges) and hotels.

Highlights

Imperial Kyoto and Nara - Kumano Pilgrimage route UNESCO World Heritage site - Kawayu river hot spring - Temple stay at Nachi - Grand Shrine of Ise - Mount Fuji - Natural hot spring baths - Accommodation in traditional ryokan - Ultra-modern Tokyo

Introduction

So much of what Japan has to offer is perfectly suited to discovering by bicycle. Both the cities and the countryside are full of interesting details, and cycling allows you to see them closely while covering more ground than on foot. We start our adventure in fascinating Kyoto. The city is home to more than 1600 Buddhist temples, hundreds of Shinto shrines, several imperial palaces, and many world famous formal gardens. There will be ample time to explore this historic city and enjoy some of the wonderful Kyoto cuisine, with its refined and artistic presentation. Cycling through the old narrow streets, we will see the old 'machiya' town houses, and visit the stunning Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion) and Ryoan-ji temple rock gardens. We will also cycle into the hills surrounding the city to see the remote temples and bathe in a natural hot spring at Kurama. From Kyoto we head South to the mystical Kii peninsula, and spend three days cycling from village to village on quiet roads that follow the course of the deep valleys, stopping to dip in to hot springs. We will stay at family run inns and eat local cuisine which is prepared from the freshest local ingredients. On some days there will be a choice of moderate or more strenuous rides. At Kawanoyu, hot spring water bubbles up from the river bed and we can make our own pools of water to soak in, and at Yunomine, our ryokan (inn) has its own outdoor bath for after-dinner soaks! The Kii peninsula - also known as the Land of the Trees - has several pilgrimage routes leading to the three Grand Shrines of Kumano. In ancient times it was a feat of endurance to make the pilgrimage on foot along mountain paths and pilgrims were only allowed to subsist on what they found along the way. Our journey takes a more comfortable but equally spectacular route through this region, along the 'Kumano Kodo' (Old road of Kumano), now a Unesco World Heritage site. At Nachi we visit the tallest waterfall in Japan and stay at a shukubo (temple lodging), then cycle along the Pacific coast to Ise, the most important shrine in Japan. From Ise we board a ferry for a ride across Ise Bay to Irago. Continuing by train, we arrive at Mount Fuji where we will spend two days cycling around the volcano stopping at hot springs which are heated by the abundant volcanic forces. We will end our journey in exciting Tokyo, exploring this remarkable city both on foot and on bicycles and visiting old local neighbourhoods, dense modern central districts, and neon-soaked streets.



DAY 1 MEET IN KYOTO

Arrive at Kansai International Airport, meet your tour leader, and transfer by train to Kyoto. Bicycles brought with you will be collected and taken by van to Kyoto. There will be a welcome dinner at a nearby restaurant.

DAY 2 KYOTO CITY CYCLING

(Cycling: 10 miles/15km)

Our first full day in Japan will be spent on a cycling tour of Kyoto, visiting Ryoan-ji temple, with its famous rock garden of raked gravel and 15 moss-covered boulders. Afterwards, we will visit the famous Kinkaku-ji, also known as the Golden Pavilion. We will continue cycling through the narrow

streets of Kyoto. In the evening your tour leader will lead you on a walk to Pontocho, where there is always the possibility of spotting a Geisha on their way to work, and you will eat at a local restaurant. After dinner you there are many opportunities to enjoy Kyoto's vibrant nightlife.

DAY 3 CYCLING AROUND KYOTO

(Cycling: Choice of 27 miles/45km or 42 miles/70km)

We will cycle into the hills surrounding Kyoto today, visiting Kurama temple (with the option of a dip in the natural hot springs nearby). We will have a pic-nic lunch at Kurama. After lunch, there will be the choice of a direct return to Kyoto (total of 45km) or a longer (total of 70km) route via the shores of Lake Biwa. There will be free time until dinner at a local restaurant in Kyoto.

DAY 4 NARA BY TRAIN

We will travel by train this morning to Nara. Many of Japan's greatest cultural treasures are concentrated in and around the city, with eight UNESCO World Heritage sites. The Todaiji temple, Nigatsu-do and Sangatsu-do halls, Kasuga shrine, Shinyakushi-ji temple, Kofuku-ji temple, Shosoin treasure house, and Isuien garden are all in or near Nara Park. Todaiji's Daibutsu-den is the largest wooden building in the world, and houses a 16-metre tall bronze image of the cosmic Dainichi buddha, containing 437 tonnes of bronze and 130kg of gold. In the afternoon, there will be free time to relax or wander through the old town before we head back to Kyoto.



DAY 5 CYCLING I N THE KII PENINSULA
(Cycling: 22 miles/ 35km)

Travelling by train, we will travel to the mystical Kii Peninsula via Osaka. Our train will hug the coastline and we will reach the small town of Tanabe. Our bicycles and luggage will be transferred by road and we will cycle from Tanabe into the rural forested hills. We will closely follow the route of the 'Kumano Old Road', a pilgrimage route that once started in Kyoto and travelled to the Kumano Grand Shrine at Hongu. The Kumano Old Road has been established as one of Japan's National Historic Roads and the area is also a UNESCO World Heritage site. Wayside shrines encourage regular rest stops. Today's ride will be 23 miles or 36km, and we will arrive in the small village of Chikatsuyu in time for dinner at our family-run minshuku (guesthouse), with its own hot spring next door.



DAY 6 CYCLING TO YUNOMINE HOT SPRING
(Cycling: 45 miles/76km)

The cycling continues through the mountains to Yunomine Onsen, one of the oldest natural hot spring onsen villages in Japan. We make our way to Kawayu, a natural hot spring that bubbles up to make warm water pools in the pebbles on the river bed. There will be ample time for a lovely soak in the warm water, and then we will continue to the Grand Kumano Shrine in Hongu. At the heart of these sacred mountains, Kumano was said to be the entrance to the land of Yomi, 'the other world' which spirits travelled to in Japanese mythology. 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 Association. You will stay at a comfortable ryokan with an outdoor hot tub, fed by local hot springs, in Yunomine. Evening soaks under the stars are recommended for tired limbs, as are morning dips before breakfast. Your breakfast eggs might well be boiled in the sulphurous waters at the spring in the centre of the village. Overnight ryokan.



DAY 7 YUNOMINE HOT SPRING TO NACHI
(Cycling: 33 miles/56km)

Today we follow the course of the Kumano River to the Pacific Ocean and then along the coast to arrive at the Nachi Shrine. The shrine and temple complex overlooks the Nachi-no-taki waterfall, the highest in Japan (133 meters). You will stay at the Sonshoin temple, an appropriate resting place after your ride. The lodging has a pretty Japanese garden, and a beautiful view of the waterfall and surrounding forest. If you can get up at 5.30 a.m. you can even take part in morning meditation! Overnight Buddhist temple.

DAY 8 TRAIN TO ISE, FERRY TO IRAGO
(Cycling: Choice of 12 miles/20km or 54 miles/90km)

After an early breakfast, we take the train to Ise, and cycle to the Grand Shrine, the most important in Japan for the native Shinto religion. Although the first shrine building was erected in the 7th century by the Emperor Jimmu, they are rebuilt every twenty years in line with Shinto tradition. From Ise we will cycle to Toba port, and take a ferry across Ise Bay to the Irago Peninsula, where we will stay at a family-run minshuku.

DAY 9 CYCLE AROUND MOUNT FUJI
(Cycling: 45 miles/76km)

Continuing on our ride we will cycle from Irago to Tawara, and board a train for the journey to Mount Fuji. The highest peak in Japan at 3,776 metres, Mount Fuji is revered as sacred by the Japanese. Our bicycles will be brought from Irago, and we will cycle today along a road which hugs the western slopes of the volcano to Lake Shoji-ko, and check-in to our accommodation.



DAY 10 CYCLE AROUND MOUNT FUJI TO LAKE YAMANAKA
(Cycling: Choice of 24 miles/40km or 42 miles/70km)

From Lake Shojiko we continue along the northern slope of Mount Fuji with wonderful views of the grand volcano. We pass Lake Kawaguchi-ko, another of the famous 'Fuji Five Lakes', and finish at Lake Yamanaka-ko. Our accommodation has a hot spring bath.

DAY 11 TRAIN TO TOKYO
(Cycling: 7 miles/12km)

After breakfast we will cycle the short journey to Kawaguchi-ko station, and take the Fujikyu train to Tokyo. After checking-in to our hotel, there will be a short walk followed by a visit to the Tokyo Tower for a panoramic view of the city. Afterwards, we will visit Meiji shrine, with its tall torii shrine gate made out of cypress wood, and the neighbouring Harajuku area, famous for its vibrant youth fashions. A short walk away is the trendy Omote-sando street, home to boutiques and some of the most daring architecture in Tokyo.

DAY 12 TOKYO CYCLING
(Cycling: 9 miles/15km)

In the morning we will enjoy a leisurely cycle through the Yanaka 'shitamachi' area of Tokyo. This tightly-knit residential area offers an insight into the lives of ordinary Japanese with neighbourhood shops, temples and bath-houses. You will be able to see where one of the last Shogun was buried and we will also stop to try some fresh Japanese azuki-bean sweets. After we finish the ride, there will be free time before we meet for dinner.

DAY 13 TOKYO

There will be a free day in Tokyo today. You may like to shop for souvenirs or visit one of the many museums in the city, or even visit Akihabara, the large electronics district. In the evening we will meet and travel to Shinjuku, for a farewell dinner in an 'izakaya' Japanese restaurant.

DAY 14 TOUR ENDS

Your tour leader will help you transfer to Tokyo's Narita Airport for your flight home.

General Information

Meet/Depart
Meet Kyoto (Kansai International Airport)
Depart Tokyo (Narita International Airport)

Group Size
5 to 12

Cycling
Moderate - 9 days of cycling. On some days there is a choice of two levels. Total cycling from 243 miles/405km to 309 miles/515km.

Rental bicycles
Hybrids available for £175

Mode of travel
Trains (shinkansen 'bullet train' and local), ferry, and on-road cycling.

Tour leader
Full time services of an English/Japanese-speaking tour leader and support vehicle driver.

Extending your trip
We are happy to book pre or post-tour accommodation throughout Japan.

Oxalis Holidays Ltd.
Website: www.oxalis-adventures.com
Email: info@oxalis-adventures.com
68 Landseer Road, London N19 4JP, UK
Phone: +44 (0)20 7099 6147
Fax: +44 (0)20 7681 3131