

Land of Fire

Tokyo, Kyoto, and Kyushu

14 days guided walking tour

Adventures in
JAPAN



Aso caldera seen from Kuju Highlands

14 days guided walking tour visiting Tokyo, Kyoto, and Japan's southern island of Kyushu. Accommodation in family-run minshuku, traditional ryokan, mountain lodges and hotels.

Highlights

Imperial Kyoto – Mount Aso, one of the world's largest active volcanoes – Aya castle and crafts centre – Samurai houses and castle at Obi – Traditional Yokagura dances at Takachiho – Hot sand baths on the beach – Accommodation in traditional ryokan – natural hot spring baths – gentle walks along country paths – Ultra-modern Tokyo

Introduction We will travel from Tokyo to Kyoto, to see the former imperial capitals and repositories of much of Japan's cultural heritage. Our journey will then continue to Japan's southern island of Kyushu. Kyushu is considered the cradle of Japanese civilization, and several locations connected with the Japanese creation myths feature on our journey. Kyushu is also known for its numerous active volcanoes, and we will explore the Kuju, Aso, and Kirishima ranges. A natural by-product of the volcanoes are 'onsen', or hot springs, and we will enjoy many relaxing dips in their soothing waters. At Kuju the Miyama Kirishima tsutsuji, a variety of Pink Azalea, covers the mountainsides forming a lovely backdrop for our remote natural hot spring lodge. Mount Aso, the world's largest volcanic caldera with some lovely walking comes next. At Takachiho, the *yokagura* dances performed at the shrine enact the Japanese creation myth. After some gentle cycling in the countryside, we will try our hand at *aizomeorimono* (indigo-dyed fabric) and pottery at Aya, a lovely farming town. Following a visit to the samurai houses of Obi, our journey continues to the Kirishima volcanoes for some thrilling walking. At Kagoshima we will visit the Iso tei-en gardens. We will enjoy a hot sand bath near Kaimondake before flying back to Tokyo.

DAY 1 MEET IN TOKYO

Meet at Narita International Airport and transfer by train to Tokyo. You will have a leisurely walk around central Tokyo. In the evening there will be a welcome dinner at a city restaurant. Overnight at city centre hotel.

DAY 2 TRAIN TO KYOTO

In the morning we will travel by shinkansen (bullet train) to the ancient capital of Kyoto. This sophisticated city is home to around 1,600 Buddhist temples, as well as Shinto shrines, palaces and gardens. It was Japan's capital from 794 until 1868. After lunch we will visit Ginkaku-ji (the Silver Pavilion) and then walk along the Philosopher's path to Kiyomizudera temple. Dinner and overnight at traditional ryokan (traveller's inn).

DAY 3 KYOTO

We will have a full day in Kyoto today. In the morning we will

preceded Kyoto as Japan's capital from 710 to 784.

Visit Ryoan-ji, home to the famous rock garden, raked gravel and 15 moss-covered boulders. Afterwards, we will visit the Arashiyama district on the western edge of the city. There will be a chance to visit the Zen temple of Tenryuji, and the bamboo groves behind it, as well as the Togetsukyo Bridge. After lunch, there will be free time. You can return to central Kyoto with your tour leader or stay on in the Arashiyama area and perhaps take a boat ride along the Sagamo river. The group will meet in the evening for dinner.

DAY 4 KUJU HIGHLANDS

(Walking 4 miles: 3.5 hours)

In the morning we will travel by train and then road to the Kuju range of volcanoes which include the highest peaks in Kyushu.

Dates & Prices

2009 £2590

5 - 18 April,
10 - 23 October

Included

all transportation between destinations
accommodation
entrance fees
full-time services of tour leader
all breakfasts & 10 evening meals

Itinerary

Day 1 Meet Tokyo **2** Train to and visit Kyoto **3** Visit Nara & train to Fukuoka **4** Train to Beppu hot springs & hiking in Kuju National Park **5** Drive to Kurokawa hot spring & Mount Aso **6** Walking on Takadake crater **7** Drive to and visit Takachiho **8** Cycling near Takachiho & drive to Aya **9** Visit Aya Crafts Centre & drive to Obi **10** Visit Obi & walking on Kirishima Volcanoes **11** Drive to & visit Kagoshima **12** Visit Chiran Samurai houses & Kaimondake hot sand baths, fly to Tokyo **13** Free day in Tokyo **14** Tour ends



We will hike for 3.5 hours to a hot spring lodge nestled in the heart of the mountains. Dinner and overnight at the lodge.

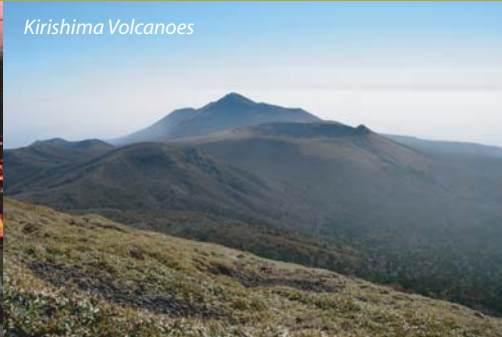
DAY 5 DRIVE TO MOUNT ASO

(Walking 4 miles: 3 hours)

Leaving the mountain lodge, we will hike out by a different path, passing nearby Kuju-dake peak and Naka-dake peak and arriving back at the car park. We will then continue by road to Kurokawa hot spring village. Following a relaxing soak, we will continue on by road to the Aso area.



Shinjuku, Tokyo



Kirishima Volcanoes



Udo-jingu shrine, Miyazaki

Aso is the largest active volcano in Japan, and one of the largest in the world. The caldera, which was formed around 300,000 years ago in a cataclysmic eruption, is around 25km in diameter. The peaks of Taka-dake and Naka-dake punctuate this massive highland area and offer excellent walks and hikes.

We will check in to our lodgings for the next two nights, a beautiful former temple guesthouse in a quiet village. Dinner and overnight at guesthouse.



Mount Kaimon-dake

DAY 6 HIKING TO TAKA-DAKE

(10 miles walking: approximately 6 hours)

After breakfast we travel by car part of the way up the volcano and then take the Sensuikyou cable car to the top. You will then climb to the top through fields of lava rock and along the craters edge. Passing brightly coloured volcanic rocks, we will briefly stop at the summits of Taka-dake and Naka-dake with views of the surrounding countryside and nearby mountains. Dinner and overnight at minshuku.

DAY 7 DRIVE TO TAKACHIHO

(5.5 miles walking: approximately 3 hours)

We will travel by road today on the Aso Panorama highway which runs over the top of the Aso volcanoes with spectacular views of the surrounding caldera. From the highway, a leisurely stroll will take us through the lovely countryside of south Aso past small villages and rice fields. We will continue on by road and arrive at the small town of Takachiho for lunch. The town sits astride the Takachiho gorge whose strange and beautiful rock formations created by volcanic activity have become part of local folklore and the Japanese national creation myth. You will take a short walk along the gorge, and have a lunch of sansai (mountain vegetables), grilled rainbow trout and grilled chicken accompanied by shochu, a spirit made from sweet potato and heated inside bamboo beakers at a small teahouse. Dinner will be at the ryokan, followed by a visit to Takachiho shrine to see the Yokagura, sacred dances which tell the mythical story of Japan's creation.

DAY 8 CYCLING NEAR TAKACHIHO AND DRIVE TO AYA

(5.5 miles walking: approximately 2 hours)

In the morning we will take a leisurely cycle along the peaceful lanes in the countryside near Takachiho, stopping at small shrines and passing through small villages. We will have a picnic lunch and then cycle back to Takachiho. We will then travel by road to Aya, once a base for the Ito Clan in their struggles against the Shimazu Clan of Kagoshima. We will take a short walk to the Teruha suspension bridge, 140 metres above the Aya river. (In spring this is a wonderful place to see the cherry blossoms on the surrounding mountains) Dinner and overnight at ryokan.

DAY 9 AYA CRAFTS CENTRE, DRIVE TO OBI

In the morning, we will visit the castle followed by

the Crafts Centre, where you will have the opportunity to try your hand at Japanese pottery, weaving, and *aizomeorimono* (indigo-dyed fabric).

After lunch at a café serving locally produced organic food, we will drive to the historic town of Obi south of Miyazaki city. Along the way you will see the spectacular coastline and stop at the Udo-jingu shrine which is totally enclosed within a cave. Obi, once the site of an important castle built by the Ito clan, is now a well-preserved town with Edo period samurai houses lining its main street and colourful carp swimming in the culverts. You will visit the former residence of the Ito clan, and wander the backstreets stopping in a small teashop to enjoy green tea and traditional Japanese sweets. Dinner and overnight in ryokan.

DAY 10 TRAVEL TO KIRISHIMA VOLCANIC RANGE

(7 miles walking: approximately 3.5 hours)

We will take a short stroll around Obi this morning, and then travel by road to the Kirishima volcanic range, on the border between Miyazaki and Kagoshima prefectures. Rising up from the plains to the west of Miyazaki, the active volcanic peaks are significant in Japanese mythology. The many volcanic fumaroles spewing forth steam create a dramatic landscape, and showWe will climb to the top of Takachiho-no-mine peak for stunning views over the surrounding countryside. After descending, we will travel by road to the Ebino-kogen area and stroll near the volcanic vents. At the hotel there is a sauna as well as an outdoor mineral bath with a view over the volcanoes. Dinner and overnight at hotel.



Ramen noodle stand, Fukuoka

DAY 11 TRAVEL TO KAGOSHIMA

(3 miles walking: approximately 1.5 hours)

Leaving Kirishima, we will travel to the city of Kagoshima, dramatically situated on Kagoshima Bay opposite Sakurajima, an active volcano. Kagoshima used to be the home of the Shimazu clan, southern Kyushu's most powerful feudal family, and we will visit Sangen-en, their lovely villa and gardens which has Sakurajima across the bay as an impressive backdrop. In the afternoon there will be free time. You may like to take the ferry across to the Sakurajima volcano or simply wander explore the city of Kagoshima. Overnight in hotel.

DAY 12 KAIMONDAKE AND HOT SAND BATH

You will travel south this morning, stopping first at Chiran, a well preserved town with many Samurai houses and their gardens. Chiran is also home to amuseum about the Kamikaze pilots of World War II, as this was the air base used by the young pilots on their doomed missions. Lunch will be home-made soba and udon noodles in a local restaurant housed inside a thatched building. Next you will travel to the sandy beaches at the very southernmost tip of Kagoshima prefecture, and the small volcano of Kaimondake. You will visit Yamakawa

beach, where thermally-heated mineral water bubbles to the surface. Locals mix the sand to ensure a steady temperature, and you will be able to wear a cotton yukata robe to sit in the warm sand and be covered. We will then return by road to Kagoshima for our flight to Tokyo. Overnight city centre hotel.

DAY 13 TOKYO

There will be a free day today in Tokyo so you can shop for souvenirs or presents, visit a museum, or simply wander through the city. In the evening there will be a farewell dinner.

DAY 14 TOUR ENDS

On our final day we say farewell. Your guide will help you transfer to Tokyo's Narita airport for your flight home, or you may like to stay a few day's longer.



Hot sand baths, Yamakawa

General Information

Meet/Depart

Tokyo (Narita International Airport)

Group Size

5 to 12

Walking level

moderate - 6 days of walking from 1 to 3.5 hours per day on flat paths and mountain trails with some moderate ascents.

Mode of travel

Trains (shinkansen 'bullet train' and local), plane, bus, and on foot

Tour leader

Full time services of Japanese-speaking British tour leader plus local Japanese guides at certain destinations.

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