

This journey finds your heartland.



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Heartland JAPAN

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Tours

We divide tours and activities into four categories, each with five levels.

# 1. Fitness level (according to ATTA standards)

The level of physical strength and load on the body.

		Activity	Hiking Distance	
Level 1	Relaxed	1-3 hours	Up to 4 km	Cultural tour walking in a flat area
Level 2	Easy / Active	2-5 hours	Up to 9 km	Activities that even beginners without high fitness levels can do
Level 3	Moderate	4-7 hours	Up to 16 km	Requires moderate athletic ability and good health. Activities such as easy mountaineering.
Level 4	Vigorous	5-8 hours	Up to 19 km	Requires good athletic ability and excellent health. Experience is preferred.
Level 5	Challenging	Over 8 hours	Over 19 km~	High athletic ability is required. Participants who have no experience cannot participate.

# 2. Skill level

The level of technique required to participate in the activity.

		Canoe & Kayak (example)
Level 1	Beginner	For people with very little or no experience.
Level 2	Advanced novice	Familiar with canoes / kayaks and water. Knows basic technique. Has experience in rivers and lakes.
Level 3	Intermediate	Even in the presence of waves can confidently control the vessel. Can assist in rescue.
Level 4	Advanced	Several years of experience, Can self-rescue.
Level 5	Expert	Has several years of experience and is not only highly skilled, but can also exercise sound judgement, No problem in a challenging environment.

### 3. Culture level

Japan was divided into more than 260 counties in the 17th century. Dialects, crafts, performing arts, industry, spirituality, local cuisine, etc. developed divergently in each. Due to the Japan's long and narrow shape as well the mountainous terrain these cultural differences remain distinct. However, the number of people who inherit these cultures is decreasing. And some are so rare that most Japanese don't even know about them. Others are so deep in meaning that it may take some prior knowledge to understand (though we'll try our best to explain!). How can we quantify such a thing? We have our own level.



Level 1	It exists all over Japan. Even people with no prior knowledge of the country can enjoy it.
Level 2	For those who already have some cultural knowledge about Japan but want to learn more.
Level 3	This is something unique to the area. People who know about Japan to some extent and understand the different area may enjoy it more.
Level 4	Will be enjoyed most by people who not only know Japan well, but have also learned the history and culture of the are in preparation for their trip
Level 5	Something extremely rare that requires a deep knowledge and understanding of Japan to get the most out of. Basically, for real Japan nerds.

## 4. Heartlander level

Finally, we get to the heartlander level. Since our tours include areas and experiences that even Japanese people do not know, we have created the heartlander level to measure them.

The level is decided by a combination of the places name-recognition, remoteness, commerciality, and how much prior knowledge of Japan is necessary for it to be appreciated. The higher the level, the deeper, more remote and less touristic it will be. Higher levels will also mean more inconveniences and hardships along the way.

For most people we wouldn't recommend a level 5 straight away. Get used to the country first at levels 1 to 3. After gaining some experience and knowledge, raise the level. When you get to level 5 let us know and Heartland will make a level 6 tour just for you.

Level 1	First trip to Japan	Popular tourist destinations that even families can enjoy.	The Golden route, The Dragon route (Kanazawa > Hida Takayama > Shirakawago )
Level 2	Second or third visit to Japan	Areas known to some extent overseas	Yakushima, Naoshima, Niseko, Kumanokodo Nakahechi route, Hakuba, Nakasendo, Koya-san, Seto Inland Sea
Level 3	Fourth to seventh visit to Japan	Areas known in Japan but not overseas. Areas with few visitors due to a lack of transpiration	Izumo, Iwami Ginzan, Kumano kodo Iseji route, Aso, Kagoshima, Kirishima, Hagi, Tsuwano, Narita, Sahara, Choshi
Level 4	Eight to fifteenth visit to Japan	A developing area that isn't well known as a tourist destinations even in Japan. Perfect for finding hidden treasures only known to those in the know	Ina valley, Miyako, Tsugaru, Shimokita peninsula, Saba kaido
Level 5	Sixteenth visit to Japan and beyond	An experience that is little known or commercialized in Japan. It takes a certain amount of preparedness and a spirit of challenge to enjoy it. You can enjoy deep Japan that no one knows.	Hiramaru Myoko City, Shimane Peninsula, Gotsu (Gonokawa), Susa, Esaki, Nago

And more destinations waiting to be discovered.

# Kumano Kodo Ise-ji Trail

Activity: Trekking, Sea kayaking\*, Ancient style boat cruise\*  
(\* included in Long trip only)

Short trip : 4 Days 3 Nights

2 breakfast/4 lunch / 4 dinner

Fitness : ★☆☆☆☆ / Skill : ★☆☆☆☆

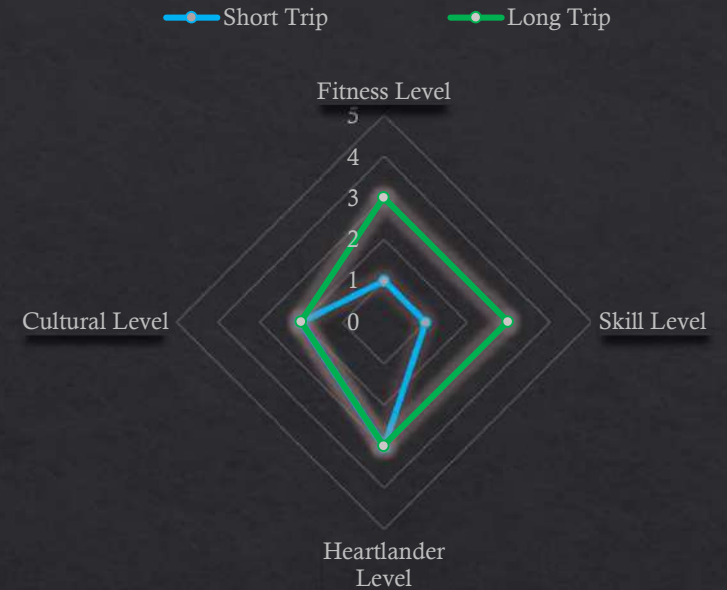
Cultural : ★★☆☆☆ / Heartlander : ★★☆☆☆

Long trip : 7 Days 6 Nights

6 breakfast / 7 lunch / 7 dinner

Fitness : ★★☆☆☆ / Skill : ★★☆☆☆

Cultural : ★★☆☆☆ / Heartlander : ★★☆☆☆



# Short trip

## Overview

Shrouded in mysticism and folklore, the Kumano Kodo is an ancient series of 5 pilgrimage routes that link the three Grand Shrines of Kumano (*Kumano Sanzan*) with rest of the country. Set in the otherworldly mountains of the Kii Peninsula, it is one of only two UNESCO world heritage designated pilgrimages in the world.

On this tour you will be taking the Iseji Route. What makes this pilgrimage truly special is that it connects the *Kumano Sanzan* with the most important site in the Shinto faith, Ise Grand Shrine. Often referred to as the ‘soul of Japan’, this ancient holy site is home to *Amaterasu*, Japan’s most divine deity, the Shinto Goddess of the Sun.

As you follow in the footsteps of pilgrims long before, the journey will take you off the beaten track and deep into Japan’s rural beating heart. Through mountains and coastlines, you will get to see the true beauty of the countryside. The Iseji Route receives far fewer tourists than other routes. As a result, there is a tangible authenticity in the places you will go and the people you will meet. What’s more there will be plenty of opportunities to chat with locals, hear traditional tales and get hands-on in with their culture.

Please note that this tour is not excessively demanding physically. It is likely to be achievable for non-hikers and kids. However, as it is a pilgrimage, it does feature some light hiking on the historical trails. For more information, please get in touch.

## Highlights

- Hike along the ancient Kumano Kodo Iseji pilgrim path, stopping off at small towns and taking in breathtaking sights along the way.
- Visit Ise Grand Shrine, the most important site in the Shinto faith.
- Visit all three of the Kumano Grand Shrines (*Kumano Sanzan*), completing the mission of your pilgrimage.
- Enjoy a special ceremonial performance of Wadaiko Japanese drums at a Shinto shrine.
- Get hands-on with cultural experiences during the tour, with special opportunities such as a local style sushi-making class.
- Explore the beautiful region and meet the locals as your trip helps to revitalize the rural area.

## Itinerary

### Day 1

Your tour will start at Nagoya Station. Here you will meet your guide and receive a quick briefing about your upcoming adventure. Next travel by train to Ise Station. After your dropping your luggage with the courier service, you'll head to the *most important* place in the Shinto faith, Ise Grand Shrine. Take a walk around the inner shrines of Geku and Naiku to see the sublime sacred sites and learn more about Japan's folk religion.

Next stroll through Oharaimachi, the town that developed near the gates of Ise Grand Shrine. This town once bustled with pilgrims who would shop here for souvenirs to bring home with them. The town still retains that exciting old-town shopping district feel today. End the day by checking in at your accommodation and going for dinner at a local restaurant.

Stay : at Japanese style ryokan accommodation

## Day2

The first full day of your pilgrimage will begin at Futamigaura, where you'll pass through the 'official' starting point of the Iseji route, Tamaru. Here, you'll be presented with the traditional white robes worn by Shinto pilgrims, which you can use throughout your trip. In Shintoism, white represents death and the robes are seen as a willingness to risk such a fate on your journey. But steady on! Before you start to worry, just remember such trips are a lot safer this century than ones gone before.

At Futamigaura, enjoy the traditional Japanese architecture as you walk through the town's wooden inns and buildings. Stroll along the beach to see *Meoto Iwa*, 'The Wedded Rocks', two rocks side-by-side, jutting out of the sea, bound together with the *shimenawa* rope of the Shinto faith. A stunning view and a real icon of the area.

After a quick stop at the neighboring Futami Okitama and Ryugu Shrines you'll start the day's hike at Magose Toge Trailhead (5.2km/2.5hrs/ Elevation gain 150m), which you'll reach via a private vehicle. This beautiful two and a half hour hike will take you as far as the quaint seaside town of Owase. There a guide will take you on a food walk to learn more about (and sample!) some delicious local delicacies.

Your food walk will be followed by a unique and rare experience at the nearby Owase Shrine: the chance to attend a special Shinto ceremony involving taiko drums and holy tree worship. This is a side of Japan that not many people get to experience.

Then check in to relax and rest for the night.

Stay : at Hotel style accomodation



### Day 3

This morning's hike will take you along the Matsumoto Toge Ridge (3.6km/1.5hrs/Elevation gain 120m ). The beautiful forest path is pathed with ancient cobble stones and will take you back to an era long ago.

On finishing the one and half hour hike you'll transfer to Oroshian Guest House. Here you'll get hands-on in a sushi-making lesson. Learn how to make this iconic Japanese delicacy in the local style for yourself with Ms. Matsui. She is an incredibly skilled lady who runs the guest house and could teach you a thing or two about Japanese country life and cooking. Then devour your creations for lunch.

And finally, the last stop of the day is your first *Kumano Sanzan*. The majestic Hayatama Grand Shrine is your first of the three Kumano Grand Shrines. After exploring the majestic grounds, return to your accommodation for some dinner and some well-earned rest.

Stay : at Hotel style accommodation

### Day4

The final hike of your trip will start at the nearby Daimonzaka Gate. From there, your hike (2.7km/1hr elevation gain 130m) will lead you to your second *Kumano Sanzan*, Nachi Grand Shrine. Here you can see the iconic Nachi Falls. The 133m waterfall is often photographed in the backdrop of a three-story pagoda. This is the photo featured on many a book cover and website about Japan and the Kumano Kodo. A stop at Seigantoji Buddhist Temple will complete your morning activities.

After a break for lunch, you will travel to Hongu by private vehicle. Hongu Grand Shrine will be the last shrine of the *Kumano Sanzan* and the ending point of your pilgrimage on the Iseji route.

After a big congratulations and a walk around the area, your pilgrimage is complete. It is time to close this adventure and get ready for the next. The rest of the afternoon will be spent travelling by private vehicle from Hongu Grand Shrine to Kii-Tanabe Station. This will be followed by a train ride to Shin-Osaka Station.

On the train, you'll enjoy a special packed-lunch 'bento' dinner, to send you off in true Japanese style!



# Long trip

## Overview

Shrouded in mysticism and folklore, the Kumano Kodo is an ancient series of 5 pilgrimage routes that link the three Grand Shrines of Kumano (*Kumano Sanzan*) with rest of the country. Set in the otherworldly mountains of the Kii Peninsula, it is one of only two UNESCO world heritage designated pilgrimages in the world.

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As you follow in the footsteps of pilgrims long before, the journey will take you off the beaten track and deep into Japan’s rural beating heart. Through fishing towns and rice terraces, mountains and coastlines, you will get to see the true beauty of the countryside. The Iseji Route receives far fewer tourists than other routes. As a result, there is a tangible authenticity in the places you will go and the people you will meet. What’s more there will be plenty of opportunities to chat with locals, hear traditional tales and get hands-on in with their culture.

Please note that this tour is a physically demanding and requires a certain level of fitness. It may not be suitable for people with no hiking experience or with mobility issues. For more information, please get in touch

## Highlights

- Hike along the ancient Kumano Kodo Iseji pilgrim path, stopping off at small towns and taking in breathtaking sights along the way.
- Visit Ise Grand Shrine, the most important site in the Shinto faith.
- Visit all three of the Kumano Grand Shrines (*Kumano Sanzan*), completing the mission of your pilgrimage.
- Enjoy a special ceremonial performance of Wadaiko Japanese drums at a Shinto shrine.
- Kayak down the coast in a section of the pilgrimage historically often taken by boat.
- Get hands-on with cultural experiences during the tour, with special opportunities such as a local style sushi-making class
- Explore the beautiful region and meet the locals as your trip helps to revitalize the rural area.

## Itinerary

### Day 1

Your tour will start at Nagoya Station. Here you will meet your guide and receive a quick briefing about your upcoming adventure. Next travel by train to Ise Station. After dropping your luggage with the courier service, you'll head to the *most important* place in the Shinto faith, Ise Grand Shrine. Take a walk around the inner shrines of Geku and Naiku to see the sublime sacred sites and learn more about Japan's folk religion.

Next stroll through Oharaimachi, the town that developed near the gates of Ise Grand Shrine. This town once bustled with pilgrims who would shop here for souvenirs to bring home with them. The town still retains that exciting old-town shopping district feel today. End the day by checking in at your accommodation and going for dinner at a local restaurant.

Stay : at Japanese style ryokan accommodation

## Day 2

The first full day of your pilgrimage will begin at Futamigaura, where you'll pass through the 'official' starting point of the Iseji route, Tamaru. Here, you'll be presented with the traditional white robes worn by Shinto pilgrims, which you can use throughout your trip. In Shintoism, white represents death and the robes are seen as a willingness to risk such a fate on your journey. But steady on! Before you start to worry, just remember such trips are a lot safer this century than ones gone before.

At Futamigaura, enjoy the traditional Japanese architecture as you walk through the town's wooden inns and buildings. Stroll along the beach to see *Meoto Iwa*, 'The Wedded Rocks', two rocks side-by-side, jutting out of the sea, bound together with the *shimenawa* rope of the Shinto faith. A stunning view and a real icon of the area.

After a quick stop at the neighboring Futami Okitama and Ryugu Shrines you'll start the day's hike at Tsuzurato Toge Trailhead ([hiking 6km/3hrs/ Elevation gain 356m](#)). This section of the ancient pilgrimage takes roughly three hours to complete and will take you past some beautiful rural scenery, eventually leading to Kii-Nagashima, where the day's hike will end.

The final stop will be a leisurely stroll around Uomachi fishing village, a district of Kii-Nagashima. Here, you'll have the chance to hear some old folk tales about the infamous *kami* (spirit creature) known as the '*Kappa*', and even watch a shadow theatre play before heading to your accommodation for dinner

Stay : at Minshuku (family-operated Japanese style) accommodation

## Day 3

Today's hike will begin at Magose Toge Trailhead ([7km/4hrs / Elevation gain 484m including Mount Tengu-Kura](#)), which you'll reach via a private vehicle. This four-hour hike will involve peaking at the Mount Tengu-Kura. The view from the megalith on the peak is breathtaking. The hike will eventually take you as far as the quaint seaside town of Owase. There a guide will take you on a food walk to learn more about (and sample!) some delicious local delicacies.

Your food walk will be followed by a unique and rare experience at the nearby Owase Shrine: the chance to attend a special Shinto ceremony involving taiko drums and holy tree worship. This is a side of Japan that not many people get to experience. The evening will be a leisurely one, with plenty of time to relax. Make sure to use this time to rest as much as possible. There's still plenty of excitement up ahead.

Stay : at hotel style accommodation

## Day 4

After breakfast on day four, you will travel to Mikisato Beach. Here, you'll be jumping into a kayak and paddling your way to Kata Bay. Wait, kayaking? On a pilgrimage? That's right, in fact it is recorded in diaries that many pilgrims took boats to from Mikisato to Sone in order to complete a part of their pilgrimage in the Edo Period. This leg will be your 'pilgrimage by sea', an adventure not many will ever get to try and the only sea section on the Kumano Kodo.

To end your sea excursion lunch will be served on a one-of-a-kind floating restaurant. Mr. Nishi, a friendly local will welcome you to his floating pad. You can shower and freshen up before a BBQ lunch. It is also a great opportunity to ask questions to a local. Fully recuperated, you'll then make a stop at Asuka shrine.

No rest for the wicked, your days hike awaits. This time you'll walk along the Sone Jirozaka Tarozaka Toge Pass (5km/3hrs/Elevation gain 250m ) taking you to Nigishima. It will take around three hours to complete. When you reach your destination, a private vehicle will be waiting to take you to your accommodation, where dinner and rest await.

Continuous stay : at hotel style accommodation

## Day 5

This morning's hike will take you along the Matsumoto Toge Ridge (3.6km/ 1.5hrs/ Elevation gain 120m ) to Onigajo centre

Transferring to Oroshian Guest House after your hike, you'll get hands-on in a sushi-making lesson. Learn how to make this iconic Japanese delicacy in the local style for yourself with Ms. Matsui. She is an incredibly skilled lady who runs the guest house and could teach you a thing or two about Japanese country life and cooking. Then devour your creations for lunch.

This slow, relaxed afternoon will then end with a pleasant stroll along the UNESCO World Heritage Onigajo coastline near your accommodation before dinner.

## Day 6

Today you'll hike along the Tori Toge Pass (4.8km/2.5hrs/Elevation gain 240m), passing through the incredible terraced rice fields of Maruyama–Senmaida. Said to be the most beautiful rice terraces in Japan, the 1340 small paddies cut into the mountainside may truly blow your mind.

Your afternoon will be spent on the waters of the Kumano River. The Sandanbo is a traditional sailing boat that will show you a side of Japan not many get to see.

And finally, the last stop of the day is your first *Kumano Sanzan*. The majestic Hayatama Grand Shrine is your first of the three Kumano Grand Shrines and is a sign that your pilgrimage is nearing completion. After exploring the grounds, return to your accommodation for some dinner and some well-earned rest.

Stay : at hotel style accommodation

## Day 7

The final hike of your trip will start at the nearby Daimonzaka Gate. From there, your hike (2.7km/1hr / Elevation gain 130m ) will lead you to your second *Kumano Sanzan*, Nachi Grand Shrine. Here you can see the iconic Nachi Falls. The 133m waterfall is often photographed in the backdrop of a three-story pagoda. This is the photo featured on many a book cover and website about Japan and the Kumano Kodo. A stop at Seigantoji Buddhist Temple will complete your morning activities.

After a break for lunch, you will travel to Hongu by private vehicle. Hongu Grand Shrine will be the last shrine of the *Kumano Sanzan* and the ending point of your pilgrimage on the Iseji route.

After a big congratulations and a walk around the area, your pilgrimage is complete. It is time to close this adventure and get ready for the next. The rest of the afternoon will be spent travelling by private vehicle from Hongu Grand Shrine to Kii–Tanabe Station. This will be followed by a train ride to Shin–Osaka Station. On the train, you'll enjoy a special packed–lunch 'bento' dinner, to send you off in true Japanese style!







# Izumo Iwami Ginzan & Gonokawa River Trail

Activity : Walking

Short Trip : 3 Days 2 Nights

2 breakfast / 3 lunch / 2 dinner

Fitness : ★★☆☆☆☆ / Skill : ★☆☆☆☆

Cultural : ★★☆☆☆☆ / Heartlander : ★★☆☆☆☆

Long Trip : 6 Days 5 Night

5 breakfast / 6 lunch / 5 dinner

Fitness : ★★☆☆☆☆ / Skill : ★☆☆☆☆

Cultural : ★★☆☆☆☆ / Heartlander : ★★☆☆☆☆



# Short Trip

## Overview

History, mystery and more than a sprinkling of mythology... the wonders of Shimane Prefecture are just waiting to be discovered.

Known as Japan's birth place and the 'province of the Gods', Shimane consists of three main areas: Iwami, Izumo and the Oki Islands. The city of Izumo, located along the Sea of Japan's rural San'in coastline, is home to one of the oldest and most important Shinto shrines in the country; the Izumo Taisha Shrine has been the focus of legends and mystery for over a thousand years and a sacred air hangs over its ancient grounds.

Located in the mountains surrounding Oda City lies the historic silver mine of Iwami Ginzan. Iwami Ginzan, along with several other historical buildings, shrines and ruins, have been actively preserved by locals as part of a community revitalisation movement. As a result, the area was granted 'World Heritage' status in 2007, and makes for the ideal destination to truly explore and experience Japan's authentic history.

From history that you can touch and taste to the strong and charming community spirit that can be witnessed across the prefecture, the real Shimane is even more interesting than the folktales and legends that it has inspired. Join us on a truly unforgettable adventure to a special destination that you'll never want to leave!

## Highlights

- Visit Izumo Grand Shrine, considered the oldest and one of the most sacred shrines in Japan.
- Learn about the 'Welcoming of the Gods' ceremony where 8 million gods hold their "annual meeting" at Bentenjima Shrine.
- Visit Iwami Ginzan, a wonderfully preserved silver mine and a UNESCO world heritage site.
- Watch a traditional performance of Kagura, a ceremonial worship dance dating back well over 1000 years.
- Get hands-on in traditional Japanese arts & crafts including pottery and *kagura* mask making.

Walk along the Gotsuhonmachi Highway, exploring historic, preserved landmarks and buildings as you go.

# Itinerary

## Day 1

Your journey to the heart of the ‘Province of the Gods’ begins at Hiroshima Station, where your guide will greet everybody and give you a quick briefing. After that, you’ll board a private vehicle to Izumo via the Okuizumo Tatara Sword Museum, where you can see the actual forging of a real Japanese sword before your very eyes.

Next, you’ll jump straight in and visit the sacred and ancient Izumo Grand Shrine. It is considered the oldest shrine in all of Japan, with the earliest records dating back at least to the early 700s. Okuninushi, the deity (*kami*) responsible for creating the Japanese islands is enshrined here. You can also see the largest *shimenawa* (a religious rope that demarks the borders of the gods in the Shinto faith) in the world. It is a truly impressive place and often called the “birthplace” of Japan.

Following this you’ll walk to Inasanohama Beach - home to Bentenjima Shrine and the location of the ‘Welcoming of the Gods’ ceremony, where 8 million *kami* descend every November. Learn more about this fascinating ritual on the beach where it occurs. If you’re lucky, you’ll witness a beautiful sunset over the Sea of Japan and feel the power of the gods that congregate here. Then it’s off to your accommodation for a delicious dinner and a good nights’ rest.

Stay : at Japanese style ryokan accommodation

## Day 2

After breakfast, the group will travel by private vehicle to Iwami Ginzan for a morning of exploration. Stroll around the beautiful UNESCO world heritage site. There is a lot to see including the mines themselves, Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine Museum, the fascinating 500 Gohyaku Rakan Statues, perfectly preserved historic buildings and more. Next, you’ll stop at a local restaurant for lunch.

In the afternoon you're off to try your hand at making *Iwami Ware*, a local type of pottery at a shop called Yakimono Kan. Here, you can take part in a special pottery workshop and learn more about the area's historical links to the craft.

Following your evening meal, you won't get to rest straight away. Tonight, there is something a little bit special instore. You'll make your way to the nearby Tatsunogozen Shrine. Here you'll have the chance to watch a traditional performance of *kagura*. *Kagura* is a form of storytelling through dance which goes back well over 1000 years. Seen in Shinto as 'entertainment for the gods', the masks, incredible costumes and dynamic movements may be entertaining for gods, but they are utterly mind blowing for mere humans. This is not something tourists will ever usually get to see. A level of deep discovery reserved for those who really chase it.

Stay : at Japanese style ryokan accommodation

### Day 3

The morning after watching *kagura*, you will have an opportunity to make a *kagura* mask yourself with the professionals that make them for a living. These vivid, sometimes even nightmarish masks are stunning and you will be experiencing a depth of culture that most Japanese won't even get to enjoy. Then you'll depart for an area called Gotsu. Following lunch at a local restaurant you will begin a walking in the historical Gotsu Hon Machi Highway area ([Town walking / 2hrs](#)). As you walk, you'll come across various historical sites and landmarks, such as the former San'in Road cobblestones, the Chikamoto Taishiyodo Dorayaki bakery (where you can enjoy freshly-made dorayaki red bean pancakes) and some preserved residences with exhibits and displays related to the area's rich and important history. After a leisurely two hour walk it is time to depart.

A private vehicle will deliver you to Hiroshima Station where all good things must come to an end. But hopefully your memories of this incredible place will live on.



# Long Trip

## Overview

Mystical mountains, rugged coastlines and arcane mythology: Shimane Prefecture is a treasure trove of beauty and an explosion of culture waiting to be discovered. Known as both the ‘Birthplace of Japan’ and the ‘Province of the Gods’, the historical significance of Shimane cannot be understated. One of the most rural prefectures in Japan, a trip to Shimane gives you a glimpse at the real rural soul of the country. Far from the bright neon lights, here the skills, traditions and spiritual practices of older times are treasured and preserved from a fast-changing world.

The city of Izumo, located along the Sea of Japan’s rural San’in coastline, is home to Izumo Grand Shrine. Considered *the* oldest and one of the most important Shinto shrines in Japan, a sacred and mysterious air hangs over the ancient grounds of Izumo Grand Shrine.

Located in the mountains surrounding Oda City lies the historic silver mine of Iwami Ginzan. It dates back around 500 years and once produced one third of the world’s silver. The area has been stunningly preserved by locals as part of a community revitalization movement. Granted ‘World Heritage’ status in 2007, Iwami Ginzan is the perfect destination to explore Japan’s fascinating industrial, political and economic past.

From a history that you can touch and taste, to the strong community spirit that can be witnessed across the prefecture, the real Shimane is even more interesting than the folktales and legends that it has inspired. Join us on a truly unforgettable adventure to a special destination that you’ll never want to leave!

## Highlights

- Visit Izumo Grand Shrine, considered the oldest and one of the most sacred shrines in Japan.
- Learn about the ‘Welcoming of the Gods’ ceremony where 8 million gods hold their “annual meeting” at Bentenjima Shrine.
- Visit Iwami Ginzan, a wonderfully preserved silver mine and a UNESCO world heritage site.  
Watch a traditional performance of Kagura, a ceremonial worship dance dating back well over 1000 years.
- Get hands-on in several traditional Japanese arts & crafts including pottery, paper making, *kagura* mask making, calligraphy and taiko drumming.
- Walk along the Gotsu-Hon-Machi Highway, exploring historic, preserved landmarks and buildings as you go.
- Kayak along the beautiful Gonokawa River and see the area’s ruggedness from a different perspective.
- Practice Zen meditation at Choko-ji Temple.

## Itinerary

Day 1～ 2 Long trip is as same as short trip.



## Day 3

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After checking in at your accommodation in the evening, dinner will be served followed by plenty of time to relax.

Stay ; at hotel style accommodation

## Day 4

Boarding a private vehicle after breakfast, you'll start your day by travelling to the Ginzan Kaido Highway (a section of ancient road leading to and from Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine) for a guided walk that will take you through a bamboo forest with beautiful views of Mt Sanbe. The walk ([9.3km/3.5hrs / Elevation 280m](#)) will finish with lunch at a local restaurant.

In the afternoon, you'll return to your accommodation. Dinner will be served early but your day is not over yet. After gathering at the lobby of your accommodation, you can join a local Taiko Japanese drumming workshop at a nearby place and finish your day with a bang!

Stay ; at hotel style accommodation

## Day 5

Day five begins with a short drive to Choko-ji Temple, where you'll be practicing Zen meditation and calligraphy under the expert guidance of a resident priest. Used by Buddhists as methods for training and stilling the mind, this morning's activities should help you to find some rest after such a busy few days.

Travelling once again by private vehicle, your next destination will be Uzui, where lunch will be prepared and served by a friendly local woman at a nearby guesthouse. Following lunch, the guesthouse owner's son will share some mythical stories and information about the local area, as well as explaining the social issues that this rural community has faced in recent years and the solutions used to combat them.

In the afternoon, you'll travel on to an area called Hirasa Ueda. Here you'll get a walking tour of the local area with a knowledgeable guide who will explain the ins and outs of rice farming as you traverse a landscape blanketed with rice fields.

After checking in to your accommodation for the evening and enjoying a delicious dinner, there will be one more activity left to enjoy. You will have the chance to watch a *kagura* rehearsal and interact with the performers afterwards. After this trip you are going to be a *kagura* master!

Stay : at hotel style accommodation

## Day 6

After a long trip and having done so much, this is your last day and you are going to need a treat. This morning there will be a slower start to the day and your first stop will be a Sake Brewery. Learn about the sake brewing process with a tour of the facility and learn more about the taste with ... well a tasting.

Following this you'll head the Miyoshi area. There will be a delicious lunch served at a local restaurant followed by a trip to somewhere rather special. Here you'll visit Japan's first ever *yokai* museum. *Yokai* are spirits that originate from Shinto mythology. There are so many fascinating *yokai*. They have inspired so much modern Japanese culture from *manga* to *anime* and video games. This visually exciting museum will be your last attraction as it is now time to depart.

A private vehicle will deliver you to Hiroshima Station where all good things must come to an end. But hopefully your memories of this incredible place will live on.







# Tsuwano & Hagi-Okan Walk

Activity : Walking

Short Trip : 3 Days 2 Nights

2 breakfast / 3 lunch / 2 dinner

Fitness : ★★☆☆☆☆ / Skill : ★☆☆☆☆

Cultural : ★★☆☆☆☆ / Heartlander : ★★☆☆☆☆

Long Trip : 8 Days 7 Nights

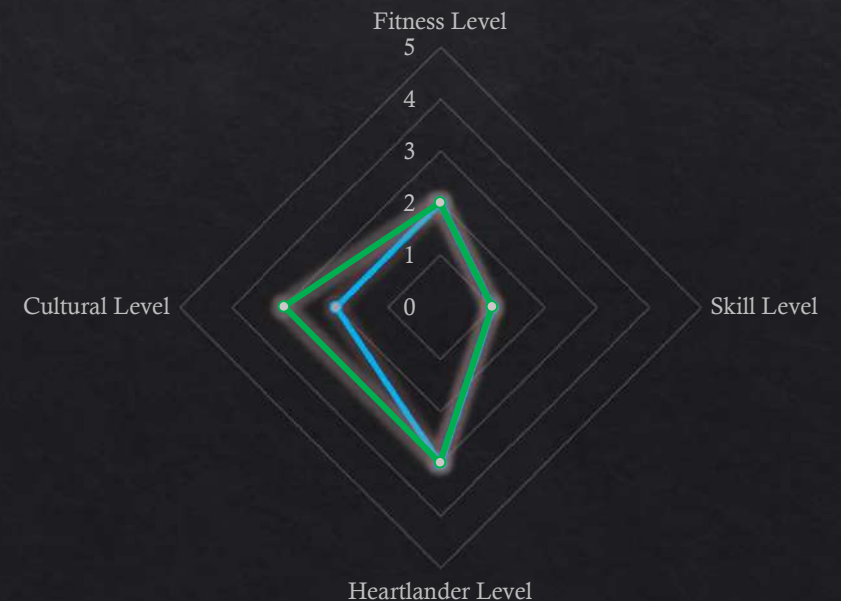
7 breakfast / 8 lunch / 7 dinner

Fitness : ★★☆☆☆☆ / Skill : ★☆☆☆☆

Cultural : ★★☆☆☆☆ / Heartlander : ★★☆☆☆☆



Short Trip Long Trip



## Overview

Situated within the stunning and historic Shimane Prefecture lies the town of Tsuwano, a quiet and unassuming destination surrounded by a beautiful rural landscape.

Often referred to as 'Little Kyoto', Tsuwano and its surrounding areas are home to a wealth of preserved treasures, such as an old Samurai district, monuments, ruins and even one of Japan's five greatest Inari Shrines.

Join us on our special Tsuwano tour and experience Japan's history and traditions first-hand as you visit important monuments and locations, walk in the footsteps of Samurai along the Hagi-Okan Highway.

## Highlights

- Visit the site of banished Christian Martyrs in the historical 'Little Kyoto' area
- Experience a traditional tea ceremony during a tour of a local tea farm.
- Watch a performance of Kagura, Japan's oldest traditional dance.
- Try your hand at pottery making and enjoy a visit to the Hagi Glass Factory.
- Enjoy a dip in a hot spring after exploring the beautiful Yamaguchi countryside.

# Itinerary

## Day 1

On the first day of the tour we will head to Tsuwano from Shin-Yamaguchi station by train, a small castle town commonly known as ‘Little Kyoto’ due to its rich history and cultural significance. The day will begin at Taikodani Inari Shrine for a chance to take in its one thousand vermilion torii gates, before taking the chair-lift to explore the ruins of Tsuwano Castle. From there, we will go on to visit the Tsuwano Catholic Church and Otome Pass, which was once the place of banished Christian Martyrs.

After lunch in a local restaurant we will visit a local tea farm to see how tea is made and take part in a traditional tea ceremony. From there, it will be time to return to Taikodani Inari Shrine for a dinner before taking in a performance of Iwami Kagura - a vibrant and traditional Japanese theatrical dance popular with locals.

Stay at; Japanese style ryokan type accommodation

## Day 2

The second day of the tour will start with a visit to the Hagi glass factory. Enjoy learning how to make some spectacular glass art by yourself ! Our next stop will be the Hagi Seaside Market, known as the oceanfront “Kitchen of Hagi” where local producers supply on the freshest and highest-quality ingredients. Here, we will visit a local restaurant that specialises in using the fresh delicacies of seafood caught off the coast and stop for lunch. After lunch we will visit Kosaian Hagi Pottery, where we will try our hands at creating our own pieces of pottery and there will be a chance to buy souvenirs. Following this, we will take a walking tour through downtown Hagi - an incredibly well-preserved World Heritage Site where you can experience what life was like during the Edo Period in a typical Samurai town.

Stay ; at Japanese style ryokan accommodation



### Day 3

The final full day of your tour will begin with a private vehicle ride to Akiragi. From there, you'll start on a two hour walk to Chonogiri Toge, along part of what was once the Samurai Highway (9km /2 hrs / Elevation gain 300m) . After strolling in the footsteps of history, you'll then take the vehicle to Sasanami, where lunch will be served at a local tofu restaurant.

Following a relaxing trip to Sasanami Kominka, an old teahouse, you will have time to explore the area by yourself before travelling on to the next destination – Joeiji Temple. Enjoy a guided tour of the temple and its gardens, then visit Rurikoji Temple and the nearby Kozan Park, where you can reflect on the past week and all that you have experienced and learned while surrounded by abundant natural beauty. Finally, we will head to Yuda Onsen for a gentle stroll around the hot spring town before taking a relaxing dip in a hot bath and our trip terminates upon arrival Yuda-Onsen.





# Long trip

## Overview

Situated within the stunning and historic Shimane Prefecture lies the town of Tsuwano, a quiet and unassuming destination surrounded by a beautiful rural landscape.

Often referred to as 'Little Kyoto', Tsuwano and its surrounding areas are home to a wealth of preserved treasures, such as an old Samurai district, monuments, ruins and even one of Japan's five greatest Inari Shrines.

Join us on our special Tsuwano tour and experience Japan's history and traditions first-hand as you visit important monuments and locations, walk in the footsteps of Samurai along the Hagi-Okan Highway and meet the genuine fishermen, performers and residents of this beautiful, rural retreat.

## Highlights

- Witness a private performance of Kagura, a traditional form of dance-worship dating back over 1300 years
- Take a tour around a tea field, learn about how tea is produced and enjoy tasting the locally-made products
- Get to know local fishermen as you enjoy a special trip on their real, working boat
- Give back to the local community and enjoy a special 'dinner party', cooking meals created with local produce bought fresh from resident farmers and fishermen
- Immerse yourself in the beauty of the area on carefully-selected hikes, treks and walking tours
- Try your hand at traditional crafts such as glass-making and pottery under the watchful eye of professional craftsmen and instructors

## Day 1

Your adventure begins at Hiroshima Station, where you and your group will meet at the Shinkansen ticket barriers for introductions and a short tour briefing. When everyone is ready, you'll then travel to Tsuwano via Shinkansen and local train, where you can drop your bags off at your accommodation and take a short walk to explore the area before the day's activities get underway.

Starting with a delicious lunch at a local restaurant, your afternoon will consist of a visit to Yomeiji Temple, where you will have time to explore the grounds and even take part in a guided meditation experience. The session will be guided by a temple priest, who will teach you the buddhist techniques of training and quieting the mind – the perfect preparation for what is sure to be a hectic and busy week!

Returning to your accommodation after your temple experience, dinner will be served early. This will give you plenty of time to enjoy a private performance of Kagura – an ancient form of dance-based worship – before the day comes to an end.

Continuous stay: at Ryokan type accommodation

## Day 2

After breakfast, the group will walk to the Taikodani Inari Shrine and spend some time exploring it and its grounds before moving on to the Tsuwano Castle Ruins via chairlift and a short trek. Other historically significant sites that you'll be visiting this morning include the Tsuwano Catholic Church, Otome Pass and St Mary's Church. As you walk, your guide will share the sad history of these sites, and the stories of the Christian martyrs associated with them.

After a quick stop at a restaurant for lunch, you will then travel to Shusuien Tea Farm for a tour of the fields, a fascinating lecture on tea production, and a wonderful opportunity to taste (and even buy!) some fresh, local teas to take back home with you.

Returning to your accommodation in the afternoon, you'll have some time to relax and enjoy the facilities before dinner is served at the nearby restaurant.

## Day 3

The first activity on the third day of your tour will be a short trip to Yadomi, a settlement town, to check out a peculiar geological formation that can be found there. Known as ‘Tatamigafuchi’, this phenomenon consists of several hexagonal columns of turtle-shell shaped rocks running parallel to the river bank. Peer through the cracks and you’ll see crystal-clear water streaming underneath.

From Tatamigafuchi, you’ll then travel by private bus to Saidoji Temple for a tour, and a visit to the Itsukushima Shrine. This will be followed by lunch at a local restaurant.

In the afternoon, the group will travel to Susa Fishing Port. Here, you’ll have the chance to not only meet and interact with local fishermen, but also to board their real, working fishing boat and explore the sea of Japan and the surrounding beauty from an unforgettable and special perspective.

Stopping briefly to check in to your night’s accommodation, you and your group will then travel to Ogawara to visit Sumikawa Sake Brewery. Here you can enjoy a tour of the brewery and an explanation of how Sake is made, followed by everyone’s favorite activity – tasting! There will also be a chance to purchase some sake during your visit, which makes for a great souvenir to take home.

Returning to the accommodation, dinner will be served on-site just early enough to ensure that you have ample time for relaxing and making the most of the property’s facilities before bed.

Stay: at Ryokan type accommodation

## Day 4

You’ll have plenty of time to enjoy the great outdoors on day four of your tour, starting with a private bus ride to the Susa Hornfels area. From the two landmark boulders known as Kabuto (helmet) Iwa and Yoroi (Armour) Iwa, you will take a guided walking tour as far as the Hornfels, a designated natural monument considered to be one of the 100 top Geological features of Japan. Admiring the geological formation and how it contrasts with the surrounding Sea of Japan, it won’t be hard to see why this site has become so well-known.

From the hornfels, you'll then travel by private bus once more to your next stop – Mt. Kouyama. Standing at 553 meters tall and jutting out into the Sea of Japan, this mountain is home to Koute-Sha, a shrine that you'll discover as you walk your way to the summit. Also at the summit, you'll come across a special boulder known for its magnetic properties. Make sure to bring a compass to see the boulder's power for yourself!

After lunch at Ume no Ha and some free time to explore Susa, you'll then take the train to Nago. Here, you can drop your luggage off at your accommodation before joining a walking tour around the fishing village with a local guide. As you walk, you'll also have the opportunity to shop for fresh local ingredients to use for the night's final activity – a special “dinner party” together at your guesthouse!

Stay : at guest house style accommodation

## Day 5

This morning, you'll travel by train to Hagi and quickly drop your bags off at your accommodation before making your way to the Hagi Fish Market. Enjoy a tour of the market and learn about the fresh produce sold there, where it comes from and who buys it. After the tour, you can then sample some fresh seafood for yourself at a restaurant within the market.

After lunch, the group will enjoy a hike from the market to the Camellia Forest, ending up at the summit of Mt Kasayama. Here, you'll have a short time to enjoy the beauty of Hagi's natural scenery.

Walking back towards the town, your final stop of the day will be the Hagi Glass Art Studio. Enjoy a tour of the glass factory before getting hands-on and learning how to make some spectacular glass art by yourself, which you'll be able to collect the next day and take home with you as a memento or souvenir!

In the evening, dinner will be served at your accommodation with plenty of time to relax and make use of the facilities.

Continuous stay ; at ryokan type accommodation

## Day 6

You'll be doing a lot of cycling on day six, so make sure to fill up on breakfast to ensure you have all the energy you need for exploring! Collecting your bicycle from a nearby rental shop, you'll start on a cycling tour of Hagi that will take you to various local landmarks such as the ruins of Hagi Castle, Kikugahama Beach and Castle Hagi Town before stopping at restaurant for lunch. The final stop of the cycling tour will be Shoka Sonjuku Academy, where Torajiro Yoshida, a legendary Japanese fighter, taught Western military techniques and politics to young local boys in the mid 1850s until he was executed. After the visit, you will return your bicycle to the rental shop.

As part of a more relaxing afternoon, you'll travel to the Hagi-yaki Pottery Kiln by private bus. At the kiln, you'll have the chance to try your hand at making your very own pottery in the Hagi-yaki style (a famous style that originated in the Hagi area) and also enjoy time to look at the various items on sale, should you wish to take any home as a souvenir. When the experience is finished, you will then return to your accommodation for dinner.

Stay : at Ryokan style accommodation

## Day 7

The final full day of your tour will begin with a private bus ride to Akiragi. From there, you'll start on a two hour walk to Chonogiri Toge, along part of what was once the Samurai Highway (9km / 2 hrs / Elevation gain 300m) . After strolling in the footsteps of history, you'll then take the bus to Sasanami, where lunch will be served at a local tofu restaurant.

Following a relaxing trip to Sasanami Kominka, an old teahouse, you will have time to explore the area by yourself before travelling on to the next destination – Joeiji Temple. Enjoy a guided tour of the temple and its gardens, then visit Rurikoji Temple and the nearby Kozan Park, where you can reflect on the past week and all that you have experienced and learned while surrounded by abundant natural beauty.

In the evening, you'll have a chance to share your thoughts, memories and emotions with the rest of the group over a final, farewell dinner at your accommodation before bed.

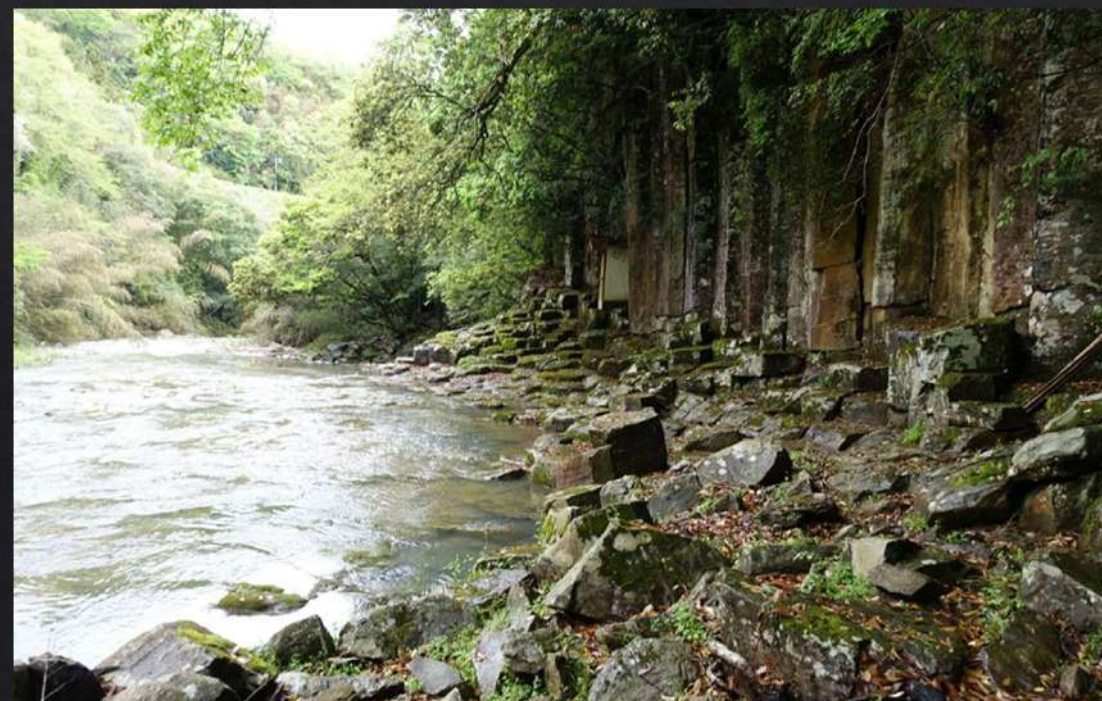
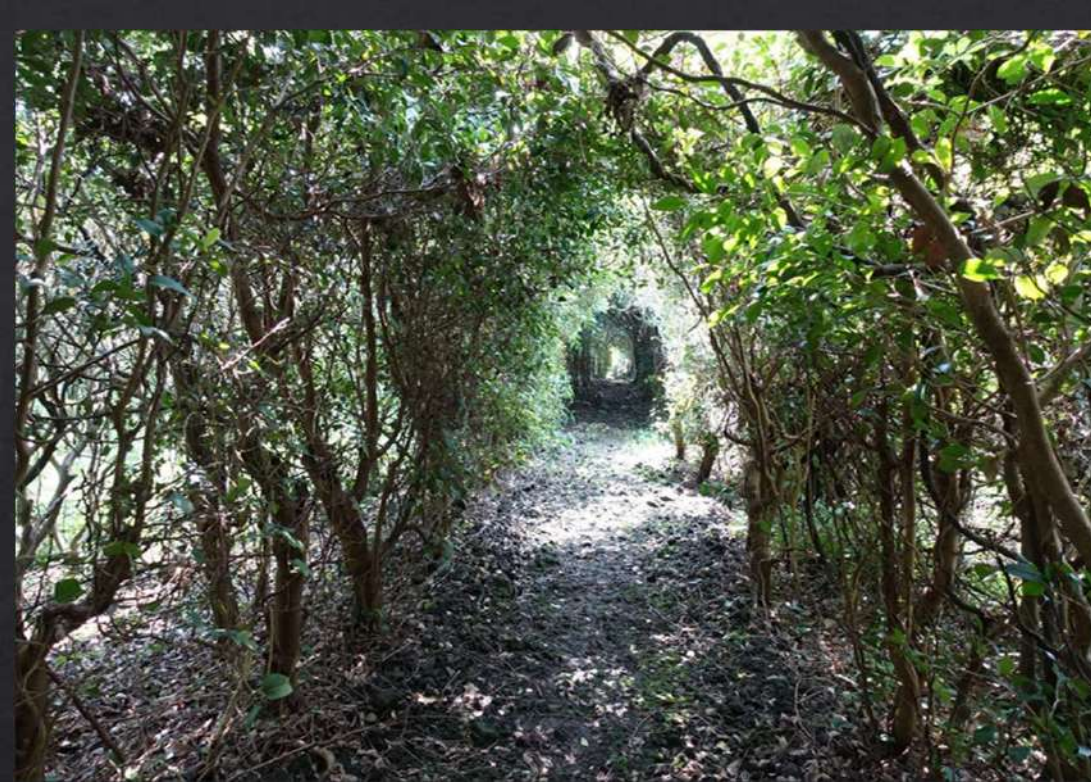
Stay ; at Ryokan style accommodation

## Day 8

The tour will end on day eight, following breakfast and **check-out** from the accommodation.







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