



Ancient Capitals Self-guided walking 5 days

古代の奈良



Introduction

The Kansai region, situated at the centre of Japan's main island of Honshu, is home to three historic capitals: Kyoto, Nara and the smaller, lesser-known Asuka. All three have rich and varied histories. Our tour includes scenic and culturally significant hiking trails, as well as overnight stays in

small, traditional inns, with an option for a Machiya townhouse stay in Nara. The inns offer authentic Japanese meals and outstanding 'Omotenashi' service. Learn about this historic area of Japan and discover its cultural heritage on these less familiar walks.



DETAILS

TOUR LENGTH AND PRICES

5 days

Please see the website for the prices we offer in each currency.

TYPE AND LEVEL OF TRIP

Mixed town roads (paved) and forest trails (unpaved) - the

walks are typically moderate, but strenuous at times, with days of up to 5 hours of hiking

WALKING SEASON

All year

WHAT'S INCLUDED

4 nights at Japanese inns; 4 breakfasts and 4 dinners; Round-trip tickets from Kyoto or Osaka; Detailed day-by-day itinerary, walking directions and Kansai guidebook; Topographical maps; Local support by telephone; Forwarding of one item of luggage between the inns in Asuka and Nara

ITINERARY

DAY 1 > Arrive in Asuka

Head by train from Kyoto or Osaka to Asuka on the southern edge of the Yamato Plain. This peaceful agricultural community is an ideal location to experience the rural lifestyle of the Japanese countryside.

We recommend our Asuka Monuments Walk for your first day here. The walk gives a perfect introduction to the history and landmarks of the village.

Overnight at a Minshuku Japanese guesthouse or at a friendly family homestay.

Walking distance: 9km / 5.5 miles (plus optional Iwaido detour)

Elevation gain: 420m / 1375 feet of ascent / 425m / 1390 feet of descent (plus optional Iwaido detour)

Time required: About 4 hours of optional walking

Accommodation: Minshuku (Family-run guesthouse) or Japanese homestay

DAY 2 > Asuka Tanzan Shrine hike

On your second day in Asuka, there is the opportunity to explore the village further. For a more active day, follow our walking directions along the route to Tanzan Shrine - wind your way along the pretty roads of this agricultural community and then head up along a forest trail to the atmospheric shrine.

Overnight at a Minshuku Japanese guesthouse or



friendly family homestay.

Walking distance: 13km / 8 miles

Elevation gain: 530m / 1,730 feet of ascent; 300m / 985 feet of descent

Time required: About 5 hours of optional walking

Accommodation: Minshuku (Family-run guesthouse) or Japanese homestay

DAY 3 > Hike the Yamanobe no Michi in Nara

This morning you can rent bicycles to visit Asuka's wonderful terraced rice fields. Afterwards, travel by train to Nara, Japan's first permanent capital. Established in 710 and then known as Heijo, Nara abounds in cultural heritage, with many historic treasures and easy access to wonderful nature.

Or make an earlier start from Asuka and hike the historic Yamanobe no Michi trail before arriving at

your accommodation in Nara this evening, staying at a Japanese inn or western-style hotel.

Walking distance: 16km / 10 miles

Elevation gain: negligible ascent and descent

Time required: About 5 hours of optional walking

Accommodation: Ryokan (Travellers Inn) or Machiya townhouse

DAY 4 > Hike the Yagyu Kaido in Nara

Today there is a chance to undertake the Yagyu Kaido hike from Yagyu village back to Nara, following in the footsteps of warriors who took this route to the sword-making village of Yagyu. The full hike is a challenging 20km, but we offer a shorter 12km option from Enjo-ji Temple, too. Both hikes end with a wonderful stroll through Nara Park, with its famous deer and temples. Overnight at a Japanese inn or western-style hotel.

Walking distance: 11.7km / 7.3 miles

Elevation gain: 240m / 790 feet of ascent and 535m / 1755 feet of descent

Time required: About 5 hours of optional walking

Accommodation: Ryokan (Travellers Inn) or Machiya townhouse



DAY 5 > Sightseeing in Nara

Explore more of Nara before heading onwards by train. Spend the day visiting important cultural spots including Todai-ji and Horyu-ji temples, visit the carefully preserved Edo-period merchant district of Nara-machi, Isuien Garden.

The tour ends with your train journey back to Kyoto or Osaka. You can use our train tickets to board a morning train, or you can enjoy a full day in Nara and travel onwards in the late afternoon or early evening.



► You can opt to upgrade to a wonderful Machiya Townhouse in Nara. Machiya are beautiful wooden townhouses that have seen a resurgence in recent years thanks to younger craftsmen and designers realising the cultural significance of such majestic, typically historic buildings.

► Experience the rural lifestyle of the Japanese countryside in Asuka. In this peaceful agricultural community, you stay overnight in a charming Japanese guesthouse or can stay with a local family for an immersive farm-stay experience.

