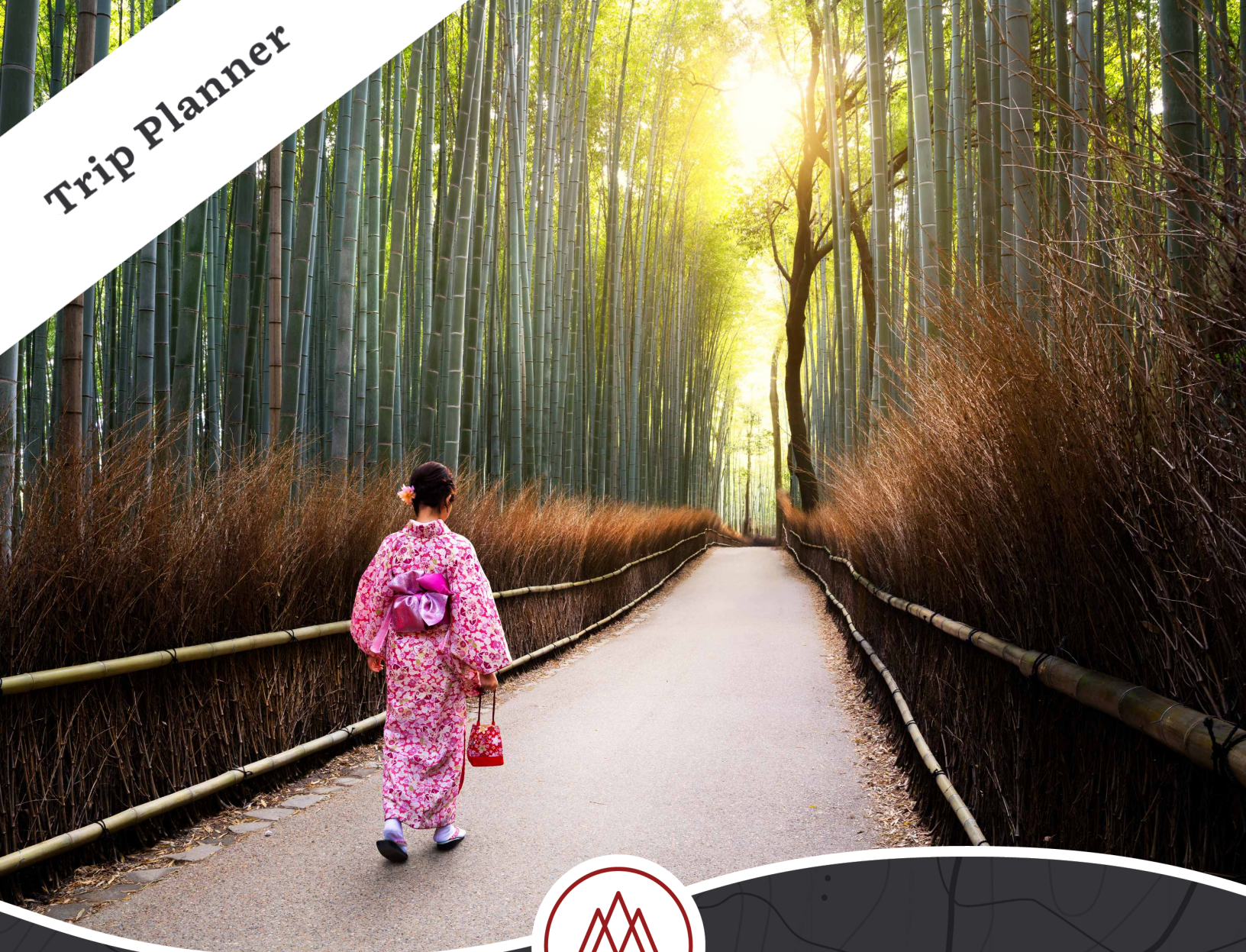




Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Nakasendo Trail Walking

Ancient Trails, Sacred Temples & Bamboo Forests

Thank you for choosing MT Sobek for your adventure. Please note that this itinerary may be subject to change depending on local conditions, so we recommend being flexible and bringing your spirit of adventure.

Contact us at info@mtsobek.com
or call **800-974-0300**



Trip Planner

This trip planner contains essential information to prepare for your upcoming adventure. Please read it carefully and contact your Adventure Coordinator if you have any questions.

Prior to departure, we will email you **Final Details** which will include information on your guides and emergency contacts in case you are delayed en route.

- Arriving and Departing
- Transportation and Transfers
- Fitness, Terrain and Trail Expectations
- Accommodations and Meals
- Packing and Gear
- On-the-Ground Travel Tips
- Health and Safety
- Trail Support and Emergencies
- Extensions and Local Exploration

Your Trip Planner

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Arriving and Departing

Where does the trip start and end?

The trip starts in Kyoto, Japan, and ends in Tokyo, Japan.

What airport should I fly into and out of?

For the start of the trip, fly into either Osaka Kansai International Airport (KIX) or Itami International Airport (ITM). For your return, fly out of either Tokyo Narita International Airport (NRT) or Haneda International Airport (HND).

When should I book my flights?

Once your reservation with MT Sobek is finalized, we'll notify you of your trip's status. After your departure is confirmed to operate, flights and travel arrangements may be purchased. While we can often confirm departures in advance, some decisions may be finalized closer to final payment. We strongly advise checking directly with your Adventure Coordinator before purchasing any non-refundable air arrangements. For expert assistance with your flight plans, we recommend reaching out to Exito Travel at 800-655-4053 or via email at mtsobek@exitotravel.com.

When should I arrive and depart?

Once your booking is finalized and the trip is confirmed, you may purchase your flights after consulting your Adventure Coordinator.

Arrival: Arrive at Kansai International Airport (KIX) or Itami International Airport (ITM) by 3:00 pm on Day 1 to allow time to transfer on your own to your Kyoto hotel in time for the 6:00 pm orientation. Arriving at least one day early is strongly recommended to adjust to the time zone and avoid travel delays.

Departure: You may schedule your departure from Tokyo Narita International Airport (NRT) or Haneda International Airport (HND) anytime on Day 11, as a pre-booked shared taxi transfer is included. Transfers are timed to ensure you arrive at the airport in plenty of time for your flight; two to two and a half hours prior to departure.

Who will I meet on Day 1, and where?

You will meet your guide and fellow travelers at 6:00 pm on Day 1 in the lobby of your hotel in Kyoto for a trip orientation. Following the meeting, the group will convene for a welcome dinner at a local restaurant. Specific hotel details and meet-up instructions will be provided in your Final Details.

Trip Planner *continued*

What hotels do you recommend if I arrive early or stay late?

If arriving early in Kyoto, we recommend staying at our group hotel, the [Hotel Granvia Kyoto](#). For late departures from Tokyo, we suggest the [Celestine Tokyo Shiba](#). You'll book any extra nights directly with the hotel. If you book your own reservations at the group hotels for pre- and/or post-tour nights, it may be necessary to change rooms between the group stay and your independent nights. The best way to potentially avoid this is to book a room in the same category as our group blocks:

Granvia Kyoto: Standard Twin Rooms with View (323 sq. ft.) for guests booked in a single or twin on the group tour; Standard Double Rooms (258-280 sq. ft.) for guests booked in a double on the group tour.

Celestine Tokyo Shiba: Standard Queen Rooms (204 sq. ft.) for guests booked in a single on the group tour; Superior Twin Rooms (301 sq. ft.) for guests booked in a double or twin on the group tour.

Do I need a passport or visa for this trip?

A valid passport is required to enter Japan. Most countries require that passports be valid for at least six months beyond the end of your trip and contain at least one blank page for entry stamps. US citizens do not need a visa for stays under 90 days. Non-US citizens should consult their local embassy or consulate to confirm current entry requirements.

Before traveling, visit the [Visit Japan Web](#) website to upload your passport information and complete the customs questionnaire. This will expedite immigration processing upon arrival and can simplify claims for tax-free shopping.

What should I do if I am arriving in Tokyo instead of Osaka?

If you are arriving into Tokyo instead of Osaka to start this trip, or if you are booking back-to-back journeys with our [Japan Kumano Kodo Walking and Hiking](#) trip, we suggest booking the Shinkansen train between Tokyo and Kyoto or Osaka. We recommend downloading the Smart-EX app to book tickets and reserve seats in advance. While there is no cost savings for booking early, it secures your seat; reservations typically open one month prior to travel. Because train service is frequent, you can even book on the day of travel if you do not require a specific departure time.

Transportation and Transfers

Are airport transfers included?

Arrival transfers are not included; guests transfer independently from the Osaka airports to the Kyoto hotel. For arrivals into Kansai International Airport (KIX), we recommend taking the Haruka Limited Express to Kyoto Station (approximately 70-80 minutes). For arrivals into Itami International Airport (ITM), we recommend the airport shuttle limousine bus (approximately 50-60 minutes), which drops off at the south side of Kyoto Station. Our hotels in Kyoto are located alongside the station, just a short walk from the platform or bus stop. Detailed instructions for these methods will be sent in your Final Details email approximately one month prior to departure.

Departure transfers are included and will be provided via pre-booked shared taxi from the group hotel in Tokyo to either Narita (NRT) or Haneda (HND) airports on Day 11. Transfers are timed to ensure you arrive at the airport in plenty of time for your flight; two to two and a half hours prior to departure.

Can MT Sobek help arrange a private transfer?

No, guests will need to transfer independently to Kyoto using the highly efficient airport express trains or shuttle limousine buses.

Trip Planner *continued*

How much time will we spend in vehicles during the trip?

Rather than traveling by private vehicle throughout this trip, you'll mostly travel together with your guide using Japan's excellent public transit system to connect between regions. Expect roughly two to five hours on travel days using bullet trains, local trains, cable cars, and buses to connect regions. Transfers within the Kiso Valley are typically shorter, around two hours by private vehicle.

Are there any especially long travel days?

Yes, a few days include longer travel as you move between Japan's cultural landmarks, countryside villages, and mountain valleys. Day 5 includes about five hours by local buses and trains as you travel from Nara to the scenic Kiso Valley. Days 3, 4, and 9 include roughly three and a half to four hours of travel, with time to watch Japan's landscapes shift from city streets and temple towns to forested hills, river valleys, and the approach to Tokyo.

Fitness, Terrain and Trail Expectations

How difficult is the activity on Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Walking?

This rewarding trip requires good physical stamina for long days on your feet. You'll combine three to eight hours of daily hiking with several miles of city walking, often navigating stairs and train stations.

Elevation Expectations: While the trail elevations are modest on this trip, on Day 7 you'll gain 2,129 feet over the course of eight miles and on Day 8 you'll hike the 1,130 feet to Torii Pass.

Uneven Terrain: Trails on the Nakasendo are well-marked but include uneven rustic sections with stone steps and exposed tree roots that require surefootedness, especially when damp. Trekking poles are useful for maintaining balance and close-toed shoes are essential.

Active Full Days: The challenge is the "all-day" nature of the trip, from early morning temple services to evening walks, with five to eight miles of activity most days.

City Walking: Cultural touring days in Kyoto and Tokyo involve up to six miles of walking on pavement, which can be just as demanding as the mountain trails.

Do I need prior experience?

Prior hiking experience is strongly recommended to ensure you are comfortable on uneven trails. Because the itinerary involves significant walking on rustic stone steps and inclines, you should have a good base level of fitness and be comfortable being active for five to eight hours daily.

Trip Planner *continued*

How should I train or prepare for Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Walking?

We recommend starting a consistent training regimen at least three to six months before your trip to build a solid cardio base and leg strength. Because this trip involves stone steps, preparing your knees and joints for climbing and descending is essential for your comfort.

Cardio Base: Engage in activities like hiking, biking, or swimming for 40 to 60 minutes, four to five times per week.

Hike with Elevation: Include at least one full-day hike per week on hilly or rustic trails to simulate Nakasendo conditions.

Stair Training: Incorporate stair climbs into your routine to prepare for the numerous stone steps found at temples and on trail passes.

Gear Break-in: Use your training sessions to fully break in your waterproof hiking boots and get used to walking with a daypack.

Is there exposure or technical terrain on Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Walking?

There is no significant technical terrain or exposure to heights on this trip. You will encounter rocky paths, exposed tree roots, and large stone steps. Your expert guides will manage the pace and provide support.

Can I hike at my own pace?

The group hikes together with regular breaks. Guides help manage pacing so everyone can hike comfortably while maintaining safety and group cohesion. On the Mount Wakakusa hike, guests may have the option to hike at their own pace.

What if I want to skip a day?

There are several opportunities to opt out of activities on this trip. On days where you stay in the same hotel for two nights (such as in Kyoto or Tokyo), you can choose to relax at the hotel or explore independently. However, some days involve point-to-point travel where skipping the activity is not practical.

How much free time will I have?

Days are generally full with scheduled walks, tours, and transfers. You will typically have some free time in the late afternoons to freshen up or enjoy the hotel's onsen before dinner. In larger cities like Tokyo, there are scheduled periods of free time and independent exploration.

Accommodations and Meals

Trip Planner *continued*

What should I expect from accommodations on this trip?

Accommodations are a highlight of the journey, offering a mix of modern city hotels and traditional Japanese countryside inns. You will stay in Western-style hotels in Kyoto, Nara and Tokyo, and spend five nights in a traditional shukubo, ryokans or minshukus along the pilgrimage trail.

Traditional Ryokans: Rooms at these inns feature minimalist design with tatami (straw) mat floors, paper screens and seating on cushions or low chairs. You will sleep on traditional individual thin futon beds that are laid out for you in the evening. You will remove your shoes once inside your room and change into the provided slippers. Shoes must never be worn on the tatami. Different slippers are provided exclusively for use in the bathrooms. Lightweight cotton robes called yukatas are provided for all guests to wear to dinners (optional) and to the communal baths (furo) while staying at traditional lodgings.

Onsen Culture: Ryokans are cherished for their natural hot spring baths (onsen), which are ideal for soaking after a hike. Bathing is typically done in gender-segregated communal facilities. To maintain the purity of the water, bathing suits are typically not allowed in the onsens. Local etiquette requires thoroughly washing with soap in the shower area before entering the onsen itself. We're often asked about tattoo etiquette regarding onsen visits. Please reach out to your Adventure Coordinator for information on the cultural considerations of visiting onsens.

Ensuite & Shared Bathroom Facilities: At western-style hotels in Kyoto, Nara, and Tokyo, rooms have ensuite baths. On nights 3, 5, 7, and 8, you will use communal single-gender bathing facilities rather than an ensuite bath, and on nights 3 and 8, toilets and sinks are also shared down the hall and rooms are separated by thin sliding screens—making earplugs a helpful addition.

Room Configuration: In Japan, double rooms (with one large bed) are relatively rare for city hotels. Most rooms are twin rooms with two beds (twin-size beds or oversized twin or full-size beds). Additionally, double rooms are usually smaller than twin rooms at our Western-style hotels, so we recommend that guests who are sharing a room stick with twin room accommodations throughout the trip. For shukubo, ryokan, and minshuku stays, note that rooms are always set up with one individual futon per person.

Shukubo Experience: The shukubo is an authentic Buddhist temple lodging attended by young monks in training. Guests will have the opportunity to attend morning prayers with the monks during their stay.

Will I have access to Wi-Fi and electricity?

Yes, Wi-Fi is available at most hotels and traditional inns and is generally free. Japan uses the same electrical plugs as the US with no 3rd grounding plug, however, it's useful to note that Japan uses 100V standard, unlike the US standard 120V. A voltage converter is not required, and you will have outlets to charge your electronics every night.

What meals are included?

All breakfasts are included daily. Most lunches and dinners are also included, as noted in your itinerary, with a few occasions where you can enjoy some lunches or dinners at your leisure in Kyoto, Nara, and Tokyo.

Trip Planner *continued*

What is the food like on Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Walking?

Food is a cornerstone of this journey, celebrating Japan's passion for fresh, seasonal ingredients and artful presentation. While group meals mostly feature authentic Japanese cuisine, we include a few Western-style meals for variety.

Some meals at traditional inns involve an authentic dining experience sitting on cushions on the floor at low tables. When dining in this style, you are welcome to sit in a position that is most comfortable for you.

Breakfasts at the Western-style hotels in Kyoto, Nara, and Tokyo are buffets featuring both Western and Japanese dishes, including juices, coffee, and tea. At the traditional inns, a Japanese breakfast is served, which may consist of grilled fish, rice or rice porridge, miso soup, savory custard, and steamed or pickled vegetables.

Group lunches and dinners will mostly feature Japanese cuisine, though a few meals will be western style for variety's sake. Japanese cuisine reflects a passion for fresh, seasonal foods and artful presentations. Seafood, vegetables, rice, and soy products play a predominant role. Matcha, a finely ground green tea, is an integral part of tea ceremonies and soy sauce, miso paste, and seaweed are common seasonings across the country.

While a limited amount of guide-selected beer and wine is included with your welcome and farewell dinners, additional alcohol is available for purchase.

Can you accommodate dietary restrictions?

For guests following vegetarian or vegan diets, we are happy to request meals without apparent animal products; however, meals entirely free of fish traces are not possible due to the ubiquitous use of *dashi* (broth flavored with dried fish). If you choose not to eat dishes containing *dashi*, you may need to supplement your meals with your own snacks. Similarly, we cannot guarantee 100% gluten-free meals as soy sauce and miso—core Japanese seasonings—contain gluten and are difficult to avoid. We can request meals that exclude wheat noodles, tempura, and breaded items to support your needs.

Let us know about your dietary restrictions and food allergies as soon as possible, ideally at or before the time of booking, so we can advise and coordinate with guides, hotels, and restaurants. Guests should also list these on their Participant Information Form. Once the tour begins, it is generally not possible to accommodate new dietary requests or changes.

Are single rooms available?

Yes, a limited number of single rooms are available on this trip. About a third of our travelers go solo, and single room inventory often books up quickly! You can find more information on solo traveler options [here](#). While single rooms are guaranteed in Kyoto, Nara, and Tokyo, traditional inns in the countryside have limited space. While rare, guests with single reservations may be asked to share a twin room with another MT Sobek traveler of the same gender for up to five nights at these traditional inns.

Are triple rooms available?

Triple rooms are generally not offered on this trip to ensure all accommodations meet MT Sobek standards for your comfort.

Packing and Gear

Trip Planner *continued*

What should I pack for Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Walking?

Japan experiences four distinct seasons, and because our trips run during the spring and fall when rain is common and temperatures can vary widely, dressing in layers is the key to staying comfortable throughout the day.

Your outermost layer should be a waterproof, breathable rain jacket and rain pants to keep you warm and dry, supplemented by a fleece jacket or warm layer as necessary. We recommend packing synthetic or wool/synthetic blend clothing, as these fabrics provide the best insulation, wick away perspiration, and dry quickly; we strongly discourage the use of cotton garments in cold or wet conditions.

On hiking days, we recommend long-sleeved shirts and long pants to protect from insects.

Essential footwear includes sturdy, waterproof hiking boots, and you will also want fresh socks for the evenings when you remove your shoes in traditional lodgings.

A detailed packing list will be provided to help you prepare.

Do I need trekking poles or specialty gear?

Yes, hiking poles with rubber tips are essential for this trip. They provide necessary stability on the deep, uneven stone steps and slippery tree roots found along the Nakasendo trail. We strongly recommend training with your poles before the trip to get comfortable with them on hilly terrain. Plan to bring your own trekking poles and pack them in your checked luggage rather than your carry-on bag.

What size daypack should I bring?

A daypack with a 20- to 30-liter capacity is ideal. It must be large enough to carry your water, rain gear, extra layers, and sunscreen.

Can I bring more than one bag?

Guests should plan to bring one main piece of luggage, your daypack, AND a small, lightweight personal bag or zippered tote. To provide an authentic and manageable travel experience, we utilize Japan's takuhaibin courier system to forward your main suitcase twice: from Day 3 to Day 5, and from Day 7 to Day 9. You will have your full luggage for the nights of Day 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, and 10. On the intervening two-night stretches, you'll carry a daypack and a lightweight personal bag or zippered tote for your essentials while navigating trains and buses.

While you're on the trail, we handle the transport of your personal bag to the inn so you only ever carry your daypack on the actual hikes.

When staying at traditional Japanese lodgings, take advantage of the provided toiletries, towels, slippers, and yukata (cotton robes). It is normal to wear the yukata for dining and relaxing, even outdoors, meaning you do not need to pack extra evening clothing for these nights.

We include the forwarding of one larger item of baggage per person, with a maximum weight of 25kg/55lbs and a maximum combined length, width, and depth of 160 cm/62 inches. If you choose to travel with two larger items of baggage, our Adventure Guide is happy to arrange forwarding for both pieces. In this case, you will be asked to pay locally for the second item, which is typically the equivalent of around \$25 per bag for each instance of forwarding (price subject to change). If traveling with valuables or fragile items, we recommend keeping them with you while hiking.

Are there any seasonally required items?

For March and November departures, fleece or wool hats, warm gloves, and a medium-weight down jacket are essential. May and September travelers should bring hiking shorts for hotter, humid days.

Trip Planner *continued*

What kind of footwear should I bring for this trip?

You will need sturdy, medium-weight, waterproof hiking boots or trail shoes with solid soles and traction. High-ankle boots are recommended if you prefer additional support on rocky terrain, though trail shoes are acceptable if they provide excellent grip. Be sure to break in your footwear prior to the trip to avoid blisters on the trail. You should also bring comfortable walking shoes for city days and temple visits.

Will I have access to laundry during the trip?

Laundry service is offered at the hotels for an additional charge; it is not available at the traditional inns (though there are coin-operated self-service laundry machines at or nearby some of the inns). Check with the front desk for fees and availability. You can also hand-wash a few quick-drying items in your room and hang them up to dry, but please make sure you check with the *ryokan/minshuku* first about where you can hang things to dry, because drying laundry over tatami mats can damage them beyond repair.

Should I bring a personal medical kit?

Yes, we recommend bringing a personal kit with basics such as blister care (moleskin or Compeed), bandages, sunscreen, lip protection, and hand sanitizer. Please bring a sufficient supply of any personal prescription medications.

On-the-Ground Travel Tips

What is the weather like on Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Walking?

Japan's weather varies significantly by season, requiring a versatile layering system and rain gear to stay comfortable.

March & April: Expect daytime highs in the 50s°F and 60s°F, with cooler evenings in the high 30s°F to 40s°F.

May: Daytime temperatures can reach the mid-70s°F, with trail temperatures averaging 64°F to 70°F, though it remains cooler in the mountain valleys of the Nakasendo.

September: This month can see highs in the mid-80s°F or higher with high humidity, making lightweight wicking fabrics a priority.

October & November: Highs average in the 50s° to 70s°F, with cooler evenings in the 40s°F, perfect for active walking and soaking in hot springs.

What currency should I bring?

The local currency is the Japanese Yen (JPY). While credit cards are accepted in major cities, Japan remains a cash-heavy society. In the countryside and small towns, many shops and restaurants are cash-only.

Please keep in mind that banks in Japan typically close at 3:00 pm on weekdays, and since hiking days often keep you on the trail until later, you will generally not return to town until after banking hours. For the most convenient access to cash, we suggest using ATM machines located in post offices or 24/7 convenience stores like 7-11, Lawson, or Family Mart, which frequently accept foreign bank cards.

Will I have cell service?

Cell service is generally excellent in cities and towns. Coverage can be inconsistent on certain sections of the mountain trails, so we recommend downloading any important maps or information for offline access. We recommend contacting your service provider for international rates or using Wi-Fi-based calling apps like WhatsApp when at your accommodations.

Trip Planner *continued*

Will I need electrical adapters or a voltage converter?

Japan uses the same flat two-prong electrical plugs as the US and operates on a 100V system. A voltage converter is not required for most US electronics. Note that Japanese outlets rarely have a third grounding hole, so you may need a simple two-prong adapter if your device has a grounded plug.

How much extra money should I budget?

Your land cost includes most major expenses of the trip. We recommend budgeting around \$300 to \$400 for personal expenses such as meals on your own, souvenirs, and laundry, not including optional tips for your guides.

How is tipping handled on this trip?

Tipping is a common way to show appreciation for your guides' expertise and care. We recommend tipping each of your guides 20,000 Japanese Yen per participant, in local currency. Please present your tip in an envelope or wrapped in clean paper, as is customary in Japan. Tips for drivers, hotel staff, and restaurant staff are already included in your trip price.

Health and Safety

Do you recommend travel insurance?

Yes, we strongly recommend purchasing travel insurance for all trips. Travel insurance can help cover trip cancellations or interruptions, medical expenses, emergency evacuation, travel delays, and other unexpected situations. We offer travel insurance with Arch RoamRight and will be happy to provide you with a quote. Please see our [Travel Resources](#) page for more information.

Do I need to be cleared by a doctor to participate?

There is no standard required clearance from a doctor to participate in this trip. You will have an opportunity to discuss your fitness and preparedness for the trip with MT Sobek. If you have medical concerns or questions about fitness, consult your healthcare provider before traveling.

What medical support is available during the trip?

Your MT Sobek guides have a professional Japanese guide license and are trained in first aid, CPR and safety protocols. They carry a group first aid kit, but it is important to remember that medical facilities may be far away and medical care in remote areas can be delayed.

What kind of challenges should I expect on Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Walking?

The primary challenges on this trip include navigating steep, uneven stone steps and rustic trails with sections of loose rock or exposed roots, which can be slippery in the rain. You will have consecutive active days and transition between multiple modes of public transportation in crowded stations. Hiking poles are helpful for balance on the trail and stone steps. Your guides will help you navigate crowded public transportation hubs and are there to manage the pace and support you along the trail.

Trip Planner *continued*

How can I stay healthy during the trip?

Check with the US Centers for Disease and Control Prevention (CDC) for information on recommended immunizations, and/or your local travel clinic or healthcare provider for health concerns at your destination.

Staying healthy on the trail begins with proper pre-trip preparation and consistent daily self-care. To maintain your well-being, we recommend hydrating consistently by drinking plenty of water and using powdered electrolytes to replenish minerals lost through sweat.

Foot care is equally essential; address any hot spots or blisters early with moleskin or Compeed patches, and ensure your toenails are trimmed to prevent discomfort during long descents.

Maintain good hygiene by washing or sanitizing your hands frequently—especially before meals and after using public transportation—is a simple but effective way to stay well.

Prioritize rest and recovery each evening by taking advantage of the rejuvenating hot spring onsens to soothe tired muscles and recharge for the next day's adventure.

Trail Support and Emergencies

What if I have an emergency and need to be evacuated?

If a medical emergency occurs, your guides will manage the situation and coordinate evacuation if necessary. It is important to understand that evacuation in rural Japan can be complex and expensive; therefore, we strongly recommend travel insurance that includes emergency coverage to handle these unexpected costs.

Are bathrooms available on the trail?

Bathrooms are available in post towns and at some train stations along the route, but facilities are not always present on the forested sections of the trail. We follow Leave No Trace principles; your guides will provide guidance on how to responsibly answer nature's call when facilities are unavailable.

What is the guide-to-guest ratio?

This trip is typically supported by one expert MT Sobek guide for every eight guests. A second guide is added for larger groups to maintain our high standard of support.

Extensions and Local Exploration

Are trip extensions available before or after Japan Kyoto to Tokyo Walking?

Trip extensions are not available for this itinerary. If you're planning to arrive early or stay late independently, plan on making your own arrangements. Some recommendations are provided below.

Trip Planner *continued*

What are the best things to do if I arrive early or stay late?

If you have extra time in Kyoto, we recommend exploring the Gion district to see traditional teahouses or visiting the Fushimi Inari Shrine's famous red gates.

In Tokyo, you might enjoy visiting the Tsukiji Outer Market for fresh sushi, exploring the high-tech Shinjuku district, or taking a peaceful stroll through Ueno Park. Both cities offer endless opportunities for world-class dining, museums, and hidden neighborhood temples.

To help navigate unique considerations for traveling independently in Japan, like public transportation and language challenges, some guests use popular online day-guide services to help plan their free time. Please feel free to reach out to us for more information.

Happy travels from all of us!

We wish you all the very best on your adventure! Check out our photo contest for a chance to showcase your pics and win trip credits for future MT Sobek adventures.