

## NINJA TRAILS AND TEMPLE TALES

10 DAYS / 9 NIGHTS



### I. HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek ancient paths like the Kumano Kodo and Mount Koya's routes, delving into centuries-old spiritual traditions.
- Discover Kyoto's iconic landmarks, from Kinkakuji Temple to the enchanting Arashiyama Bamboo Grove.
- Experience Japan's varied landscapes, from dense forests to rugged coastlines, uncovering hidden gems like serene onsen hot springs and quaint fishing villages.
- Engage in traditional Japanese customs such as tea ceremonies, Zen meditation, and even ninja training, gaining firsthand insight into Japan's rich cultural heritage.

### II. ITINERARY

#### DAY 1

### **Nara - Arrival and Exploration**

Embark on your 10-day walking and hiking adventure in the ancient city of Nara, the cultural heart of Japan. Upon arrival, immerse yourself in the rich history and heritage of Nara as you explore its iconic landmarks, including the majestic Todaiji Temple, home to the Great Buddha statue, and the tranquil Nara Park, where you can encounter friendly deer roaming freely. Wander through the charming streets lined with traditional machiya houses, soaking in the timeless ambiance of this historic city.

#### DAY 2

### **Koyasan - Sacred Mountain Trek**

Venture to the sacred mountain of Koyasan, a UNESCO World Heritage site and center of Shingon Buddhism. Embark on a scenic trek through lush forests and serene valleys, following ancient pilgrimage trails lined with stone lanterns and moss-covered statues. Visit the atmospheric Okunoin Cemetery, the largest cemetery in Japan, where thousands of tombstones and memorial pagodas mark the final resting place of monks and samurai. Experience a peaceful overnight stay at a traditional temple lodging, awakening to the sound of morning prayers and the aroma of incense.

#### DAY 3

### **Kumano - Pilgrimage Trail Adventure**

Continue your journey along the Kumano Kodo, a network of historic pilgrimage trails that wind through the sacred mountains of the Kii Peninsula. Hike through verdant forests and past cascading waterfalls as you follow in the footsteps of ancient pilgrims on the Nakahechi route. Marvel at the mystical atmosphere of Kumano Hongu Taisha, one of the three Grand Shrines of Kumano, nestled amidst towering cedar trees. Enjoy a relaxing soak in the rejuvenating waters of a traditional onsen, soothing your muscles after a day of hiking.

#### DAY 4

### **Katsuura - Coastal Scenery and Seafood Delights**

Embark on a coastal trek along the rugged shores of Katsuura, where dramatic cliffs and sweeping ocean views await. Explore hidden coves and pristine beaches, encountering local fishermen hauling in their catch of the day. Indulge in a seafood feast featuring the freshest sashimi and sushi, sourced directly from the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Take a stroll through the charming fishing village, soaking in the laid-back coastal vibe and mingling with friendly locals.

#### DAY 5

### **Ise Shima - Sacred Shrines and Shimmering Seas**

Journey to the sacred region of Ise Shima, home to the revered Grand Shrine of Ise, the most important Shinto shrine in Japan. Explore the sprawling shrine complex, comprised of numerous sanctuaries dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu. Wander through the tranquil grounds, shaded by towering cedar trees and surrounded by lush forests. Enjoy panoramic views of the shimmering Ago Bay, dotted with picturesque islands and traditional fishing villages. Experience a traditional sea kayaking excursion, paddling through crystal-clear waters and discovering hidden coves along the coast.

#### DAY 6

### Koka - Ninja Trails and Hidden Temples

Embark on a journey to the historic town of Koka, renowned as the birthplace of the ninja. Explore secret ninja hideouts and hidden temples nestled amidst the rolling hills and dense forests of the Koka region. Discover the art of ninjutsu as you visit the Koka Ninja Village, an interactive museum showcasing ninja weapons, traps, and techniques. Hike along ancient ninja trails and secluded mountain paths, uncovering hidden waterfalls and sacred shrines tucked away from the beaten path. Experience a traditional ninja training session, learning the stealthy skills and techniques passed down through generations.

#### DAY 7

### Kyoto - Cultural Capital Exploration

Begin your exploration of Kyoto, the cultural heart of Japan. Visit iconic landmarks such as Kinkakuji Temple, also known as the Golden Pavilion, a stunning Zen temple covered in gold leaf. Explore the vibrant streets of Gion, Kyoto's famous geisha district, where you may catch a glimpse of geiko and maiko gracefully moving between tea houses. Wander through the enchanting Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, a serene forest of towering bamboo stalks that create a magical atmosphere. Conclude your day with a visit to the serene Ryoanji Temple, home to Japan's most famous rock garden, where 15 rocks are meticulously arranged amidst raked gravel.

#### DAY 8

### Kyoto - Mountain Trekking and Temple Visits

Embark on a day of mountain trekking on the outskirts of Kyoto. Hike to the summit of Mount Hiei, known as the "Mountain of Pure Bliss," offering panoramic views of Kyoto and Lake Biwa. Visit Enryakuji Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the most important monasteries in Japanese history. Explore the temple complex, comprised of numerous halls and pagodas nestled amidst dense forests. Continue your trek to the tranquil village of Kurama, famous for its hot springs and sacred Kurama Temple. Relax and rejuvenate in a traditional onsen bath, soaking in the therapeutic waters surrounded by nature's beauty.

#### DAY 9

### Kyoto - Cultural Experiences and Zen Meditation

Immerse yourself in the rich cultural heritage of Kyoto with a day of traditional experiences. Participate in a tea ceremony led by a master tea ceremony instructor, learning the art of preparing and serving matcha, and powdered green tea. Visit a local Zen temple and engage in a meditation session guided by a Zen monk, finding inner peace and tranquility amidst the serene surroundings. Explore the historic Nijo Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Kyoto's most impressive landmarks, renowned for its ornate architecture and beautiful gardens. Conclude your day with a stroll through the vibrant Nishiki Market, where you can sample a variety of local delicacies and shop for souvenirs.

#### DAY 10

### Kyoto - Farewell and Departure

On your final day in Kyoto, take some time to reflect on your unforgettable journey through Japan's cultural and natural wonders. Bid farewell to this historic city, knowing that your experiences and memories will stay with you for a lifetime. Depending on your departure time, you may have the opportunity to explore more of Kyoto or do some last-minute shopping for souvenirs. Transfer to the airport or your next destination, filled with gratitude for

the incredible experiences and adventures you've had during your 10-day walking and hiking tour of Japan.

-END OF SERVICES-

**Tour extensions: pre-tour or post-tour extensions are available, which would include accommodation and private transfers, please speak to Focus Asia travel consultant for further details.**

