

4 DAYS IN

Kyoto

JAPAN

ITINERARY



DAY 1: Getting There & Downtown



Getting there

Tokyo to Kyoto

- 2h20 from JR Tokyo Shinagawa Station on Nozomi Shinkansen
- Arrive JR Kyoto Station
- Use [IC Card](#) on Kyoto Metro



Things to do in Downtown Kyoto

- Look up and see [Kyoto Tower](#) opposite JR Kyoto Station (the station is an attraction in itself!)
- Head northeast into the Gion neighbourhood and stroll across Sanjo Ohashi Bridge, overlooking the ancient Kamo River
- Wander over to Sanjo Shopping Arcade with its 7 kilometres worth of shops
- Stroll along Shijo-dori in the evening towards Yasaka Shrine and maybe spot a *maiko* running errands
- End the day at Yasaka Shrine. Usually very popular during the day, the crowds ease during the evening for an intimate experience.

Where to stay in Kyoto

- Kyoto Granbell Hotel [BOOK →](#)
- 5mins from Gion-Shijo Metro Station



Where to eat in Kyoto

- Pontocho Alley
- Nishiki Market
- Eateries around Sanjo Station

Foodies book in advance

- [Kyoto bar hopping tour →](#)
- [Uji macha & Byodo-in walking tour with tea ceremony →](#)
- [Gion & Kaiseki food tour →](#)
- [Nishiki Market lunch tour →](#)

DAY 2: *Northern Kyoto*

Things to do in Northern Kyoto

- Head to Arashiyama Bamboo Groves (Sagano Bamboo Forest) early morning to beat the crowds. Please remember to “be invisible” and refrain from etching your name into the bamboo
- If you’d like to see snow monkeys in Japan without visiting Nagano, say hello to them at Iwatayama Monkey Park while you’re in this area
- Visit the lovely Adashino-Nenbutsu-ji Temple, with each stone representing a person who died without a next of kin. They are honoured every August in a small candle-lit ceremony



- Admire the stunning lush moss gardens at Gio-ji Temple. These are easily overlooked by foreign tourists as it’s about 3kms from Arashiyama Bamboo Groves. It’s worth it, though!



- Finish the afternoon at one of Kyoto’s biggest drawcards, Kinkaku-ji. This Golden Pavilion has to be seen to be believed!
- If you have extra time in Northern Kyoto, you may wish to add the gardens of Kyoto Imperial Palace & Nijo Castle to your itinerary.

Optional experiences to book in advance

- [Arashiyama insider hidden tour](#) →
- [Arashiyama rickshaw tour](#) →
- [International Manga Museum tickets](#) →
- [Nijo Castle & Ninomaru Palace tickets](#) →

DAY 3: Central Kyoto



Things to do in Central Kyoto

- Begin early morning at Sannenzaka & Ninenzaka to enjoy these iconic spots as well as famous Yasaka Pagoda without crowds
- Stroll the Sannenzaka slope towards Kiyomizu-dera, Kyoto's most famous temple. Don't miss Otowa Waterfall here!
- Within Kiyomizu-dera is Jinshu-jinja shrine, tucked away featuring the "Fortune Stones of Love"
- Visit the oldest Zen temple in Kyoto, Kennin-ji. Housing important National Treasures, breathtaking artworks and an incredible hand-painted dragon mural on the ceiling



- Head to Yasaka Koshin-do, the colourful "pom pom temple" that represents kukurizaru (a monkey with bound hands & feet) in a quiet residential area
- Explore Kodai-ji with its "dragon's back" covered wooden boardwalk, the two oldest preserved teahouses in Japan, enshrined historical figures and a secluded bamboo grove
- Finally, enjoy Maruyama Park at sundown before venturing back into Gion to find Shimbashi, Tatsumi Bridge & Izumo no Okumi Statue.

Optional experiences to book in advance

- [Traditional tea ceremony & Kiyomizu-dera private tour](#) →
- [Bar hopping tour in Pontocho](#) →
- [Kyoto kimono rental experience](#) →
- [Lunch or dinner with a maiko](#) →

DAY 4: Eastern Kyoto



Things to do in Eastern Kyoto

- Make your way to Fushimi Inari Taisha as early as possible. Allow 2-3 hours as it's one of the city's most popular and crowded attractions
- Follow the length of Philosopher's Path to Ginkaku-ji (Silver Pavilion). Explore the weaving stone pathways, mossy gardens & amazing city views



- Venture into the city's south to discover Daigo-ji temple gardens. Its isolated location means it's often overlooked!
- Head back north towards Tofuku-ji, famous for its expansive Japanese landscaped gardens and "checkerboard" moss garden
- Visit the massive working aqueduct of Nanzen-ji. Enjoy the garden and city views from the walking trail along the top of the aqueduct
- Finally, cross the river into the Pontocho area. Explore narrow alleyways, sample different eateries & experience the old-world charm of Kyoto. Keep your eyes peeled for geisha here!



Optional experiences to book in advance

- [Fushimi Inari private hidden hiking tour](#) →
- [Japanese sake tasting, brewery & lunch tour](#) →
- [Pontocho evening food tour](#) →



Quick links to useful resources

Essentials to book in advance for Japan

- [Japan Rail Pass](#) →
- [Rechargeable Suica Card](#) →
- [Pocket WiFi](#) →
- [Travel SIM Card](#) →

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Happy (invisible) travels,

Alyse



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