

# 5 Days Osaka Kyoto Tour: Temples, Deer & Neon

**Tour Code:** JPN-D1

**Travel Route:** Osaka - Kyoto - Nara - Osaka

**Features:** Temples, Shrines, World Heritage, Modern Cityscape, Cultural Experience, Market & Local Life, Park, Shopping, Nightlife

**Tour Type:** Small Group of maximum 16 travelers, guaranteed departures;

**Guide & Driver:** English-speaking guide, experienced driver with an air-conditioned coach

**Accommodation:** 4 Nights at 4-Star Standard Hotel

## Itinerary at a Glance



### Osaka

Arrive in Osaka by flight



### Kyoto (3 Days)

Kinkakuji Temple, Nijo Castle, Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, Kiyomizudera Temple, Ninenzaka & Sannenzaka, Yasaka Shrine, Gion



### Nara (0.5 Day)

Todaiji Temple, Nara Park, Kasuga Taisha



### Osaka (1.5 Days)

Osaka Castle Park, Shinsaibashi-suji Shopping Street

## Itinerary Day by Day

## Day 1 Osaka - Kyoto | Head to your hotel in Kyoto on your own

### Konnichiwa (こんにちは)! Welcome to Osaka, Japan!

On this day, based on your flight schedule, you will arrive in Osaka by plane. Upon arrival at the airport, you will need to **transfer from Osaka to the designated hotel in Kyoto on your own**. Accommodation in Kyoto will be at a 4-star hotel conveniently located.

**Kyoto**, located in the Kansai region of the country, was once the capital of Japan. It epitomizes ancient Japan and is famous for tranquil temples, exquisite gardens, colorful shrines, grand imperial palaces, and ornate castles. Boasting **17 UNESCO World Heritage sites**, over 1,000 Buddhist temples, and more than 400 Shinto shrines, Kyoto is among the world's most culturally rich cities. It's also known for traditional Japanese arts and practices, such as tea ceremonies, kaiseki dining (a traditional multi-course meal), and ikebana (flower arranging). It remains one of the best places to see geishas, who are traditional Japanese female entertainers known for their refined skills in arts, music, dance, and conversation.



Kansai International Airport



Nishiki Market, Kyoto



#### Attractions

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#### Dining

None



#### Transportation

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#### Accommodation

4-star hotel in Kyoto

## Day 2 Kyoto Half-day Tour | Kinkakuji Temple, Nijo Castle

After breakfast, you will have free time in the morning to explore Kyoto on your own. Your Kyoto group tour will begin in the afternoon.

In this afternoon, your guide and driver will pick you up at your hotel and your group will visit one of Kyoto's most iconic sights, **Kinkakuji Temple** (Golden Pavilion) - a UNESCO World Heritage site. This Zen Buddhist temple is famous for its stunning golden exterior. The temple's stunning visual appeal comes from its top two floors, which are completely covered in gold leaf. The reflection of the golden structure shimmering in the pond in front of it, makes it perfect for photos and quiet reflection. It was originally built in 1397 as a retirement villa for Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. After Yoshimitsu's death, as per his will, the villa was converted into a Zen temple by his son.

Next, head to **Nijo Castle**, another UNESCO World Heritage site, to delve deeper into Japan's feudal history. Constructed in 1603 as the Kyoto residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Edo period, its expansive grounds and ornate architecture highlight the power and wealth of the dominant samurai clans during the Edo period (1603-1867).

The castle features two concentric rings of fortifications, each consisting of a wall and a wide moat. After passing through the grand Kara-mon (gate), you will enter Ninomaru Palace, which is divided into five buildings with numerous chambers. The interiors are adorned with masterful paintings by the Kano school, reflecting the cultural and artistic heritage of the era. The castle is renowned for its "nightingale floors," (that sing and squeak at every move, making it difficult for intruders to move about quietly), designed as a security measure against intruders. Don't miss the excellent Ninomaru Palace Garden, which was designed by the tea master and landscape architect, Kobori Enshu.

After the tour, you will be escorted to your 4-star hotel in Kyoto. Have a good rest!



Kinkakuji Temple, Kyoto



Kinkakuji Temple, Kyoto



### Attractions

2 Sites



### Dining

Breakfast



### Transportation

Vehicle



### Accommodation

4-star hotel in Kyoto

## Day 3 Kyoto Tour | Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, Kiyomizudera Temple, Ninenzaka & Sannenzaka, Yasaka Shrine, Gion

**Kyoto**, once the capital of Japan, epitomizes ancient Japan. Boasting 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites, over 1,000 Buddhist temples, and more than 400 Shinto shrines, Kyoto is among the world's most culturally rich cities. Known for traditional arts like tea ceremonies, kaiseki dining, and ikebana (flower arranging), Kyoto is also one of the best places to observe geishas.

After breakfast, your group will explore Kyoto for a full day. Start the morning in Kyoto bright and early at one of its most iconic sites - the Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, to beat the crowds.

**Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine** is famous for its thousands of vermilion torii gates, known as Senbon Torii ("thousands of torii gates"). Layers upon layers of vermilion torii gates line the lush, wooded hillside, forming a seemingly endless corridor. The vibrant orange and black gates contrast beautifully with the surrounding greenery, creating a visually stunning and almost otherworldly path that is highly photogenic.

Fushimi Inari Taisha was founded in the early 8th century (711 AD) and is primarily dedicated to Inari, the Shinto god of rice, fertility, sake, agriculture, and industry. As you explore the shrine, you will encounter hundreds of fox statues. Said to be the messengers of the god Inari, who is associated with cereal grains, these fox statues often symbolize the deity. Many of these fox statues are depicted holding a key in their mouths, which is said to open the granary.

**Tips:** Hiking to the summit of the mountain and back will take two to three hours, but many people go only as far as the Yotsutsuji intersection because there are fewer torii gates beyond this point. It will take 30 to 40 minutes to reach Yotsutsuji.

Next, visit **Kiyomizudera Temple**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Perched on the hillside of Eastern Kyoto, this temple is renowned for its wooden stage that juts out over the hill, providing stunning views of the city and the surrounding nature. The temple's main hall, constructed entirely without the use of nails, is an architectural marvel. Kiyomizu-dera is also celebrated for its sacred waters, which are believed to have wish-granting powers that draw countless visitors who come to drink from its stream. Don't miss the Hondo (Main Hall), Jishu Shrine, the Otowa Waterfall, and the spiritual experience of the Tainai-Meguri room.

**Tips:** The scenery at Kiyomizu-dera Temple is distinctively beautiful in each season, offering a unique charm year-round. In spring, the mountains are adorned with charming cherry blossoms; in summer, they are lush with vibrant greenery; in autumn, they are decorated with brilliantly colored leaves; and in winter, they are filled with enchanting trees.

Then, walk up the well-preserved streets of **Ninenzaka and Sannenzaka**. These charming, sloping streets are lined with traditional shops and quaint tea houses, offering a nostalgic glimpse into Kyoto's past. As you stroll through these areas, you can shop for unique crafts,

sample local snacks, and perhaps stop at a café to relax and soak in the atmosphere of old Kyoto.

Continue to **Yasaka Shrine**, the guardian shrine of the Gion entertainment district, which dates back over 1350 years. Yasaka Shrine is particularly favored by those seeking beauty and wealth. Visiting this significant Shinto shrine in Kyoto, you may also find yourself gaining some good luck. The shrine is most famous for its Gion Matsuri in July, during which you can witness the procession where the deities of Yasaka are paraded through the city streets.

Adjacent to the shrine, **Gion** is Kyoto's famous geisha district. Here, you might catch a glimpse of Geisha (Geiko) in their elaborate kimonos and traditional makeup. As you wander through the cobblestone streets of Gion, take a moment to appreciate the beautifully preserved machiya (wooden townhouses), ochaya (teahouses), and exclusive ryotei (traditional Japanese restaurants). Gion is particularly enchanting at dusk when the lanterns are lit and geishas and maiko (apprentice geishas) make their way to evening appointments, making the narrow lanes come alive.

After the tour, your group will be escorted back to your hotel.



Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, Kyoto



Ninenzaka & Sannenzaka Streets, Kyoto



### Attractions

6 Sites



### Dining

Breakfast



### Transportation

Vehicle



### Accommodation

4-star hotel in Kyoto

**Day 4 Kyoto - Nara - Osaka | Todaiji Temple, Nara Park, Kasuga Taisha, Osaka Castle Park, Shinsaibashi-suji Shopping Street**

In this morning, your group will depart from Kyoto and head to **Nara**, about 1.5-hour car ride. Before Kyoto, there was Nara, Japan's first permanent capital and one of the country's most rewarding destinations. Nara boasts 8 World Cultural Heritage sites, making it Japan's second most culturally rich city after Kyoto.

Visit **Todaiji Temple**, one of Japan's most historically significant temples and a UNESCO **World Heritage site**. It is known for housing the **world's largest bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana**, which stands just over 16m high and consists of 437 tonnes of bronze and 130kg of gold. It represents Vairocana Buddha and is flanked by two Bodhisattvas. Todaiji's main hall, Daibutsu-den (Big Buddha Hall), is **one of the world's largest all-wood buildings**, even though the present reconstruction of 1692 is only two-thirds of the original temple hall's size.

Walk to **Nara Park**, adjacent to Kasuga Taisha. This park is famous for its hundreds of freely roaming **deer**, considered **messengers of the gods** in Shinto tradition. Purchase some **shika senbei** (deer crackers) to feed the deer as you stroll through the park.

Head to **Kasuga Taisha** (Kasuga Grand Shrine), Nara's most celebrated Shinto shrine, another UNESCO **World Heritage Site**. It is renowned for its lanterns, which have been donated by worshippers. Hundreds of bronze lanterns can be seen hanging from the buildings, while **thousands of stone lanterns** line its approach and the surrounding woods. These lanterns are lit twice a year during the Lantern Festivals in February and August, creating an ethereal and mesmerizing atmosphere.

After the tour, drive to **Osaka** (typically takes around 45 minutes to an hour). Osaka, Japan's third-largest city and a major economic hub, is renowned for its rich history, diverse cuisine, distinctive culture, and robust economic strength. The city's unique sense of humor and open personality make it an exceptionally interesting place, more colorful than most cities. Acres of concrete are covered with dazzling neon lights and brightly colored storefronts. Osaka is a city that loves to eat, known as the "nation's kitchen", boasting a wide variety of culinary delights.

In this afternoon, visit **Osaka Castle Park**, one of Japan's most famous landmarks and a symbol of Osaka's historical grandeur. Originally built in 1583 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a powerful daimyo who aimed to unify Japan, it was the largest castle of its time. After multiple renovations and reconstructions, today's Osaka Castle has been transformed into an open park, covering a total area of 105.6 hectares, making it a must-visit attraction.

Walking into the scenic area of Osaka Castle, you'll be amazed by the massive scale and precision of the moats, gates, and stone walls. The largest stone slab is 11 meters wide, and many stones are inscribed with the crests of the 64 daimyō (feudal lords) tasked with the castle's construction back in 1620. **Overlook the Main Tower (Tenshukaku)** of Osaka Castle, which stands tall against the sky at the center of the extensive castle grounds. Take some time to stroll through the **Nishinomaru Garden**, which offers a picturesque setting with over **600 cherry trees** and beautiful views of the castle tower from below. This is especially enchanting during the **cherry blossom season**, which usually occurs in late March and/or early April.

Last, enjoy shopping at **Shinsaibashi-suji Shopping Street**, Osaka's busiest shopping arcade. Then, head to the lively district of **Dotonbori**, where waterways are lined with luminous advertisements and signs. It's especially glitzy during the holiday season, with decorations strung across the bridges. Full of fantastic restaurants, clubs, and karaoke bars, it's the city's go-to area for entertainment. Take a photo at the iconic **Glico Man** sign. Try takoyaki, ball-shaped octopus bites, kushikatsu (Japanese deep-fried skewered meat and vegetables), and okonomiyaki, a savory Japanese pancake topped with whatever you like.

**Free Time Ideas:** visit **Shinsekai** (New World), an old neighborhood known for its nostalgic atmosphere reminiscent of the Showa era. Tsutenkaku Tower is the iconic landmark of this district. It was inspired by cities like Paris and New York. From a modern perspective, this 100-meter-tall steel tower may not seem particularly high, yet it holds a significant place in local history as a symbol of progress and innovation. Visiting Shinsekai is like stepping back in time, offering both the charm of yesteryears and the excitement of modern urban culture.

After the tour, your group will be escorted to the 4 star hotel in Osaka.



Nara Park Tour



Todaiji Temple, Nara



#### Attractions

5 Sites



#### Dining

Breakfast



#### Transportation

Vehicle



#### Accommodation

4-star hotel in Osaka

## Day 5 Osaka Departure | Transfer to the Airport on your own

After breakfast, it's time to say goodbye to Osaka, as your **5-day Japan group tour** comes to an end. Today, you will need to head to the airport on your own, depending on your flight schedule. Kansai International Airport (KIX) in Osaka is available for your departure flight.

**Tip:** If you would like a private transfer from your hotel to the airport with Asia Odyssey Travel, please contact our travel experts in advance. We can arrange it for you.

Thank you for choosing **Asia Odyssey Travel** for your Japan tour. We are dedicated to enhancing your travel experience and look forward to welcoming you on your next adventure in Asia. Have a safe journey home!



Shinsaibashisuji



Food, Osaka



#### Attractions

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#### Dining

Breakfast



#### Transportation

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#### Accommodation

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## Price: What's Included & What's Excluded

### What's Included:

- ✓ **Accommodation:** Throughout the trip, stay in 4 star hotels in each city of Japan.
- ✓ **Guide Service:** English-speaking guide during visit.
- ✓ **Meals:** Breakfasts are included in itinerary. Please refer to the itinerary for the details of the meals provided.
- ✓ **Attraction Tickets:** Entrance tickets for all listed attractions are included, guaranteeing full visits. In case of unexpected circumstances, alternative arrangements will be discussed with the tourists.
- ✓ **Transportation Arrangement:** Air-conditioned vehicles.

- ✓ **Operation Service:** Our service from tour planning, handling, operational and finishing your trip

#### **What's Excluded:**

- ⊗ **Visa:** Travelers are typically responsible for obtaining their own visas and paying any associated fees.
- ⊗ **Airfare:** International round-trip tickets and Domestic air tickets (Flight ticket booking service and instant quotes are available upon request.)
- ⊗ **Airport Pick-up & Drop-off Service:** No transfer service is provided on the first and last days for departure.
- ⊗ **Travel Insurance:** Travel insurance is usually not included and should be purchased separately.
- ⊗ **Single Room Supplement:** The default accommodation is based on two people sharing a room. If you require a single room, an additional single room supplement must be paid.
- ⊗ **Personal Expenses:** Other personal expenses such as laundry, telephone, internet, fax, etc., within the hotel.
- ⊗ **Tipping:** Tips for drivers and guides (Tipping practices may vary depending on the region and nature of service; it is recommended to consult the guide's opinion in advance).
- ⊗ **Unexpected Circumstances:** In case of uncontrollable and non-agency-related factors (such as natural disasters, war, strikes), flight delays or cancellations, delayed visa processing at embassies.