

# JAPAN

## DETAILED ITINERARY

Jul 09/26



### DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

|                              |   |                    |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| <b>Sep 28 - Oct 17, 2027</b> | - | <b>\$12995 USD</b> |
| <b>Oct 02 - Oct 21, 2028</b> | - | <b>\$12995 USD</b> |

Central Japan is a region of tall mountain ranges and fast-flowing rivers. It wasn't until recently that roads reached the more remote villages, and today many remain remarkably well-preserved, and evocative of centuries past. Our journey takes us through Japanese history, from modern Tokyo, to end near Kyoto, Japan's capital for 400 years and the repository of much of the country's cultural heritage. From Tokyo we head first to Fuji Hakone National Park, gateway to Mt Fuji. We visit Yudanaka Onsen hot spring where the famous 'snow monkeys' come to enjoy the natural hot spring baths, just like humans. In feudal times people travelling from Kyoto to Tokyo would use the Nakasendo Way – the road through the central mountains – one of a

### FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 20 land days • Starts in Tokyo, finishes in Osaka
- All meals included • Maximum 16 travellers • Witness the snow monkeys of Jigokudani • Visit restored lovely villages of Tsumago and Magome • Enjoy Kyoto and Nara – the cultural heartlands of Japan
- Visit Kanazawa with its charming gardens, samurai districts and old teahouses • Learn about the tragedy & triumph of Hiroshima • Experience Japan's bullet trains • Overnight in Buddhist pilgrim's lodgings & enjoy an up-close experience of life in a Buddhist temple

### Activity Level: 3

**ACCOMMODATIONS** Accommodations are a mix of hotels (15 nights), traditional Japanese style inns (3 nights) with futons and possible shared bathrooms, and 1 night at a Pilgrim's lodge attached to a Buddhist temple with shared facilities. Staying at traditional style Japanese accommodations give us an authentic travel experience. Note: due to the unique accommodations, single travelers (including those paying the single supplement) may need to share with same-sex singles for up to 4 nights).

Japan has an excellent public transportation system which we will mainly be traveling on. This will involve lots of walking to and around large train stations, often carrying a day pack containing overnight clothes on luggage forwarding days (approx 4 times). This is considered a walking tour.

### Challenging Aspects:

- Day 15 - optional walk approx 3 hours on flat surface
- 4 nights sleeping on futons (laid out on mat floors)
- Travel by public transportation - trains, buses, taxi's, cable cars

## ELDERTREKS



SMALL GROUP  
**EXOTIC ADVENTURES**  
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS



network of ancient highways. We will visit one of the best preserved sections in the Kiso valley, where the lovely villages of Tsumago and Magome have been immaculately restored.

We then continue on to Takayama with its delightfully historic Sanmachisuji district, and lively morning markets. Our travels bring us to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shirakawago, before continuing on to Kanazawa, a vibrant city that retains its traditional charm in the form of gardens, samurai districts, and old teahouses.

We continue on to Kyoto and Nara – the cultural heartlands of Japan and World Heritage Sites. We travel by bullet train once again to the modern city of Hiroshima, to learn about the city and its both tragic and triumphant history in the modern age.

We return to Osaka to visit the city before we enjoy the special opportunity to stay at a shukubo, or Buddhist pilgrim's lodgings, and enjoy an up-close experience of life in a Buddhist temple and discover the ancient capitals of Japan before a tour of modern Osaka.

## **DAY 1 • ARRIVE IN TOKYO, WELCOME DINNER**

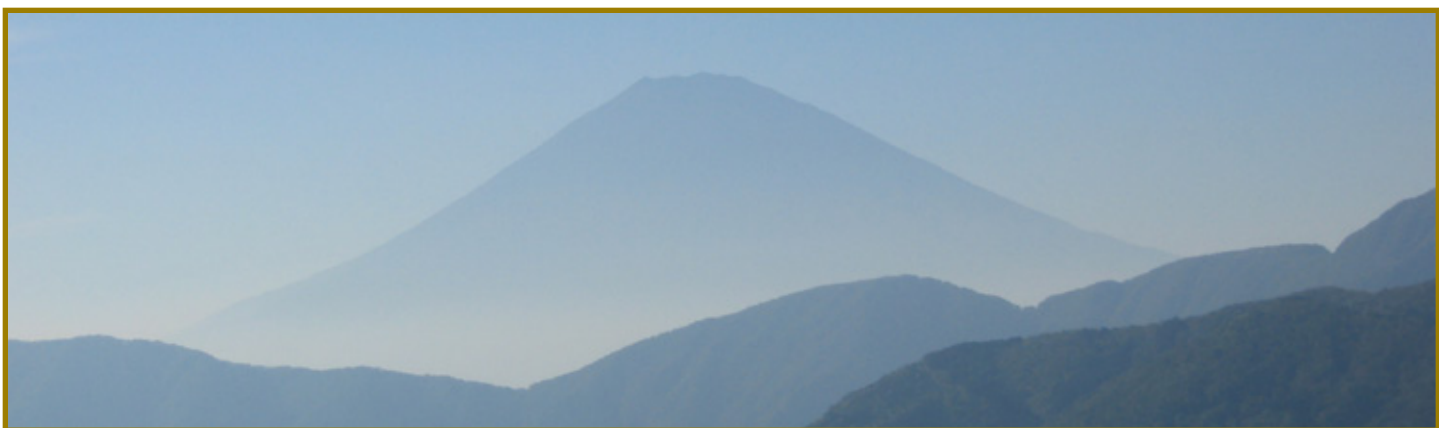
Arrive at Tokyo Airport and transfer to your tour hotel in central Tokyo. This evening we will have a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Tokyo.



## **DAY 2 • SIGHTSEEING OF TOKYO**

We begin the day at Hama-Rikyu Gardens, a beautifully landscaped strolling garden that once served as the duck hunting grounds of a powerful feudal lord. After enjoying the peaceful scenery, we walk to Hinode Pier and board a boat for a relaxing cruise along the Sumida River to Asakusa. In Asakusa, we visit Sensoji Temple, Tokyo's oldest and most famous Buddhist temple, and soak in the traditional atmosphere of the surrounding streets. From there, we take the subway



to Ueno, where we explore the Tokyo National Museum. The museum offers a rich overview of Japanese arts and culture, showcasing everything from calligraphy and kimonos to samurai swords and Buddhist sculpture.

Overnight in Tokyo.

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### **DAY 3 • EXPLORING THE HAKONE AREA AND MT. FUJI**

We will enjoy a day in Hakone, we'll walk a section of the 'suginamiki', a trail lined with Japanese cedar trees that once formed part of the old Tokaido highway, or 'East Sea Road, visit the Checkpoint Museum. We enjoy a cruise on Lake Ashi, travel by ropeway and cable car over the peaks of the Mt Fuji area, in hopes of catching this notoriously shy icon of Japan. We will arrive at our hotel in the late afternoon and have dinner.

Please note that the sites we visit and the order of activities may vary depending on the weather and time.

Overnight in Hakone.

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### **DAY 4 • YUDANAKA HOT SPRING AND SNOW MONKEYS OF JIGOKUDANI**

Today we travel by coach to Yudanaka Onsen, a hot spring village famous for its 'snow monkeys'. The Japanese macaques originally came here to warm them-

selves in the outdoor hot spring bath during the cold winters, and now come all year round. We then stay in a Japanese ryokan, known for its onsen (a Japanese hot spring, bathing facilities and inn).

Please note that the monkeys live freely in nature, so we cannot guarantee that they will be in the water during our visit.

Overnight in Yudanaka Onsen.

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### **DAY 5 • MATSUMOTO CASTLE & NARAI POST TOWN**

We travel by train first to the city of Matsumoto to see its beautiful castle, built in the 16th century. Then, after a tour of a miso factory and miso-based lunch, we continue by train to the Kiso valley and the small town of Narai with its traditional atmosphere of ancient Nakasendo Way, between Kyoto and Tokyo (or Edo as the city was known in the feudal period). There are many well-preserved houses and former inns.

Overnight in Narai.

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### **DAY 6 • TSUMAGO**

After breakfast, there will be time to wander the beautiful streets of Narai. The village is a good place to buy lacquerware and woodcrafts. A short train



and bus journey brings us to the village of Tsumago. Another of the post-towns on the former Nakasendo trail, Tsumago has been beautifully preserved - a living museum, which is still inhabited by the local residents. Wander the streets, taste gohei-mochi, skewered balls of pounded sticky rice covered in a sweet paste of miso, sesame and walnuts and visit the folk museum.

Overnight in Tsumago.

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### **DAY 7 • WALK THE NAKASENDO TRAIL, EXPLORE MAGOME & TRAVEL TO TAKAYAMA**

After breakfast, we have the option to walk a section of the historic Nakasendo Trail to Magome. (Option to skip the walk and travel to Magome by bus.) The Nakasendo once connected Edo (Tokyo) with Kyoto and featured 69 post towns; Magome is the 43rd, while Tsumago is the 42nd. We will stroll through the charming streets of Magome before traveling by private bus to Takayama. This city has preserved much of its traditional architecture and is renowned for its crafts, including yew-wood carving, Shunkei lacquerware, pottery, and furniture. After checking into our accommodation, there may be time to explore the surrounding area or relax in a hot-spring bath before dinner. In

the evening, we will enjoy local Hida beef and perhaps sample some locally brewed sake.

Overnight in Takayama.

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### **DAY 8 • TAKAYAMA'S SANMACHISUJI AND HERITAGE SITES**

Today we have a full day in Takayama, starting with a visit to the morning market, with stalls of vegetables, crafts, pickles and souvenirs. We see the Yoshijima Heritage House, a precious wooden structure with a famously refined architectural interior. When the Yoshijima house is closed, we'll visit the Kusakabe Museum. We'll also visit Takayama Festival Float Exhibition Hall and the SakurayamaNikkokan. We wander the Sanmachi area with its rows of old merchant houses, some open as museums. In the afternoon, there will be free time for you to explore the city further and hunt for special treasures to bring home.

Overnight in Takayama.

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### **DAY 9 • SHIRAKAWA-GO EN ROUTE TO KANAZAWA, VISIT A SAKE BREWERY**

In the morning, we travel to the Shirakawa-go area north-west of Takayama. The village is home to a





large number of gassho-zukuri houses, and has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1995. These large wooden houses have steep thatched roofs designed to withstand heavy snow, and the term gassho-zukuri refers to the shape of praying hands formed by the roofs. After spending time exploring this beautiful village, we continue our journey toward Kanazawa. Along the way, we stop at a local sake brewery, where we learn about the traditional brewing process and have the opportunity to taste a variety of locally made sake. We then continue on to Kanazawa, where we stay this evening

Overnight in Kanazawa.

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### **DAY 10 • SAMURAI DISTRICT, HIGASHICHAYA, KAZUE MACHI DISTRICTS & KENROKUEN GARDEN**

In feudal times Kanazawa was the seat of the Maeda clan, one of Japan's most powerful, and it rivalled Kyoto and Edo Tokyo). Kanazawa consists of a number of smaller well-preserved historical districts. Today, we will have an opportunity to try our hand at creating our own souvenir using the gold leaf the city is famed for. A brief walk from a bustling shopping district takes you to a

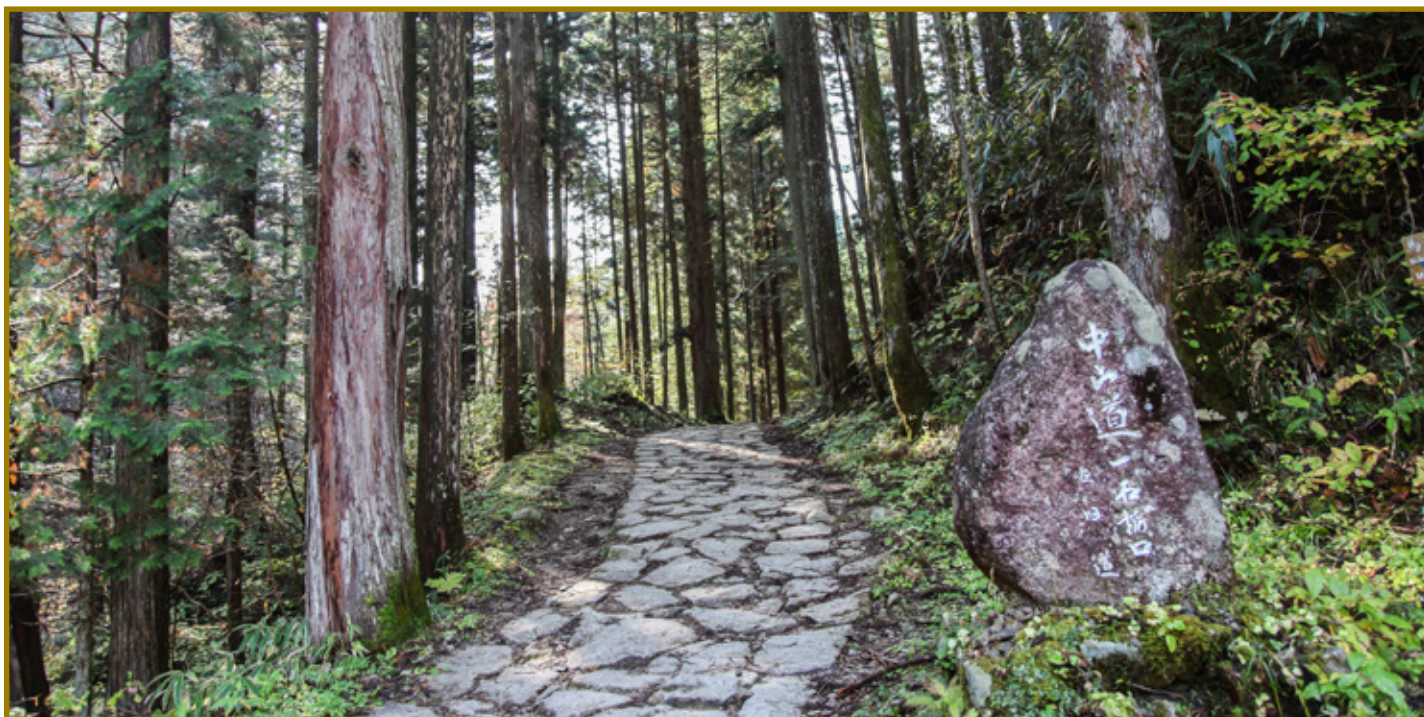
tranquil neighbourhood of former samurai homes and gardens. Their traditional buildings and cobblestoned lanes remain. We'll visit one of the samurai houses. Then, we continue on to the preserved geisha districts – the most notable of these being the Higashi-chaya, and Kazuemachi-chaya districts - where Kanazawa's geisha entertained with music and dance. In the afternoon we'll visit Kenrokuen gardens, designed as a formal walking garden that displays changing vistas as you make your way along its pathways.

Overnight in Kanazawa.

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### **DAY 11 • MORNING VISIT TO OMICHO MARKET AND ONWARD TRAVEL TO KYOTO**

This morning we'll visit Kanazawa's famous market, Omicho market. Established during the Edo Period, Omicho Market has been a cornerstone of Kanazawa's food culture for over 300 years. The expansive market is home to more than 170 shops, including numerous fishmongers offering freshly caught seafood from the Sea of Japan. In addition, you'll find



stalls selling local fruits and vegetables, marine products, clothing, groceries, and a variety of restaurants. The market is especially famous for its crab, yellow-tail, and shrimp from the Sea of Japan.

After the market visit, we travel by train to Kyoto and our hotel in the center of the city.

Overnight in Kyoto

## **DAY 12 • SIGHTSEEING OF KYOTO AND TEA CEREMONY**

We begin a day of sightseeing by traveling to Fushimi Inari Shrine, famous for its vermilion torii gates that snake up the hillside. In the afternoon we make our way to the Higashiyama district and to experience a tea ceremony or way of the tea. This ancient tradition is a ceremonial way of preparing and drinking green tea and you'll learn the art from a tea master. From here, we'll take a walk through the Gion district famous for its many Riyotei (exclusive private restaurants) and Geiko (full fledged Geisha) or Maiko (apprentice Geisha).

## **DAY 13 • KYOTO: KINKAKUJI AND RYOANJI**

We visit the famous Kinkaku-ji, the Golden Pavilion, originally built by the Ashikaga Shogun in the 14th century as a place of contemplation and rest. From there, we will visit Ryoan-ji, with its famous rock garden of raked gravel and fifteen moss-covered boulders.

In the afternoon you have a choice of free time to make your own discoveries in the afternoon, or, you may accompany your guide to explore the downtown core. Within a short walking distance of your hotel is Teramachi street – the section between Sanjo and Shijo streets in Kyoto used to be known as a temple town. If you look carefully off of this street and behind the parallel Shinkyogoku shopping arcades, you'll find ancient temples tucked in behind the shops. Walking a bit further West near the Shijo end of Teramachi street will also bring you to Nishiki market, for those who wish to explore the culinary offerings of Kyoto. The shopping arcades also provide a wonderful opportunity to purchase souvenirs that reflect the traditional crafts of Japan

– washi paper cards, elegant folding fans, brightly decorated tenugui and handkerchiefs can all be found within this area, in addition to traditional Japanese sweets.

Overnight in Kyoto.

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### **DAY 14 • TRAVEL TO HIMEJI, VISIT HIMEJI CASTLE**

This morning, following breakfast at our hotel, we will depart by bullet train for Himeji. Himeji Castle is nicknamed “White Heron” Castle because of its white walls covered with white plaster. Himeji Castle is famous for both its huge main tower and its maze-like design. As one of the finest surviving examples of early 17th-century Japanese castle architecture, it is a masterpiece of construction. The castle has recently completed extensive restoration works.

Overnight in Himeji.

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### **DAY 15 • SIGHTSEEING OF MIYAJIMA AND ONWARD TO HIROSHIMA**

We leave Himeji and continue by bullet train to Hiroshima. From here it's a short journey on a local train to board our ferry to Miyajima Island. We begin with a stroll along the waterfront offering us outstanding views of the Great Torii and Itsukushima Shrine. The island is so sacred that the Torii stands on 6 pillars so as not to be buried deep within the sea bed. The shrine itself has multiple buildings which are linked by boardwalks.

We will ascend on ropeway to a viewpoint that offers spectacular views over the inland sea. As we leave and return back to the town, we'll spend time exploring its streets and traditional shops before retiring to our accommodations.

Overnight in Hiroshima.

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### **DAY 16 • PEACE PARK AND MUSEUM AND ONWARD TO NARA**

This morning we travel to Hiroshima. Known throughout the world as the first city to bear the impact of the use of atomic weapons, Hiroshima today is a vibrant, modern city. Throughout the Peace Park are a number of touching memorials, including the Children's Peace Monument, festooned with brightly colored strings of origami cranes, left by children from all over the world to express a desire for peace. The Peace Memorial and Museum provides context to the impact of the bombing on the city, the country, and the world.

Next, we journey onto the first permanent ancient capital of Japan, Nara which served as the nation's capital from 710 to 784. We visit Nara National Museum before taking a stroll down Naramachi, Nara's old town and the old merchant district with its narrow streets, shops, cafes and restaurants.

Overnight in Nara.

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### **DAY 17 • TODAI-JI TEMPLE AND NARA PARK**

Today we have a day of sightseeing in Nara. We start with a walk through Nara Park. Famous for its free roaming deer that are considered sacred. Next, we visit Todai-ji Temple, with its bronze statue of Buddha. The temple is said to be the largest wooden structure in the world. From Todai-ji we continue onto Kasuga Taisha. The shrine was established at the same time the city became the capital and is dedicated to the deity responsible for protecting the city.

Overnight in Nara.

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### **DAY 18 • KOYASAN - MOUNT KOYA**

We travel along the scenic Nankai Railway Line to Koyasan (Mount Koya), a bowl-shaped valley

filled with cedars high in the mountains of the Kii Peninsula. Since the 9th century Koyasan has been a place of religious devotion and ceremony. Today there are more than 100 monasteries, many of which have Shukubo (pilgrim's lodging). We stay in one of the elegant temples and dine on shojin-ryori (Buddhist vegetarian cuisine). We walk through the vast Okuno-in cemetery, with thousands of graves and memorials to feudal lords and other past luminaries.

Overnight at Koyasan (Mount Koya.)

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### **DAY 19 • MORNING PRAYER SERVICE, ONWARDS TO OSAKA**

This morning we rise early to enjoy a morning prayer service with the monks at our Shukubo and then leave the peaceful tranquility of Koyasan behind for

the bright lights and hustle and bustle of Osaka - the epitome of modern Japan. It is considered to be the commercial hub of Japan. Behind the neon glare, against the chrome and glass of new skyscrapers and developments, Osaka offers some surprises. We'll have some free time to explore and maybe pick up some last minute souvenirs before we gather together for a farewell dinner.

Overnight in Osaka.

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### **DAY 20 • DEPART OSAKA**

Today we transfer to the airport for our flights homebound.



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### 1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

### 2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (portage), national guide, and bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

### 3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

### 4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit many temples and historic sites, and have talks and discussions on the region’s history, culture and politics, but this is only one element of what we do. We believe that it is equally educational to get to meet new people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most “educational” moments are spent walking down a country road.

### 5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All land transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We travel by trains (bullet trains and local), highway bus, local bus and sometimes taxi. This trip involves a lot of walking to and around large train stations, often carrying a day pack containing overnight clothes on luggage forwarding days (approx 4 times). This is considered a walking tour.

### 6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We stay in 3 types of accommodation on this tour. Modern western style hotels with private bathrooms are used in larger cities. Ryokan (or Minshuku) which are traditional Japanese-style inns. They may be in modern concrete or older wooden buildings, but the rooms are always in the Japanese style with tatami (straw) matting and futons laid out in the evening. Some Ryokan have en-suite bathrooms,

though older buildings generally offer shared facilities. Smaller inns offer domestic-scale bathing tubs used privately in turn by guests; larger inns offer communal spa-style baths, segregated by gender. They are the classic Japanese experience, although because of their small size, the group may be divided into 2 Ryokan for 2 nights. At Mount Koya, we will stay in Shukubo which are lodgings in Buddhist temples originally meant for pilgrims but now open to anyone. Rooms are similar to Ryokan or Minshuku, though without en-suite facilities. It is a wonderful experience to stay in a Shukubo and there is the opportunity to join the early morning religious service provided by Buddhist monks.

### 7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

For September/October and April trips the weather is pleasant and not too hot, but it will be cool in the mountains. Average highs from around 18°C-25°C (60's°F-70's°F) and average lows at night in the 8°C-12°C range (upper 40's°F-50's°F).

### 8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

### 9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

***\*Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit***

### 10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you once you have booked the trip.

**Please note** that during our stay at the guesthouses, our luggage will be forwarded to the next major hotel and will not come with us to the guesthouse. Therefore you must bring a medium sized backpack to carry your essential overnight items during these nights. We will try to obtain lockers for your backpacks during the day at train stations, however you should be prepared to carry your belongings on your back in case lockers are not available. This will be



the arrangement 6 times during the tour, twice for 2 nights, 4 times for 1 night.

### **11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?**

All meals are included, starting with dinner on day 1, and finishing with breakfast on departure day. We eat a variety of local foods prepared in a wide range of settings.

Traditional ryokans (inns) and minshuku (family-run guesthouses) typically serve multi-course, Japanese-style meals that reflect local and seasonal ingredients. These meals are beautifully presented and can differ significantly from Western-style meals. Further information is provided in the pre-departure trip kit.

### **12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?**

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks has a full air department and we offer highly competitive airfares. Whether you simply want an air quote, or you would like to make an air reservation when booking your tour, just give us a call and we'll work out a routing for you.

### **13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?**

If you have any further questions about the trip, please do not hesitate to contact our office for additional information. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to those who have booked on the tour.



