



**GLOBAL CYCLING
ADVENTURES**

Japan Heritage Bike Tour

Kyoto to Kyoto

OVERVIEW

Get ready to experience authentic and historic Japan on this 7-day cycling tour of the Kansai region. Visit Kyoto's must-sees before embarking on a breathtaking circuit encompassing natural vistas, traditional villages, onsens (hot springs), majestic temples, peaceful shrines, manicured tea plantations, delectable cuisine and so much more. These are some of the best roads for cycling in all of Japan - perfect for first time visitors and frequent travelers to the country alike!

The adventure begins in historic Kyoto, pedaling back in time as we explore the stunning legacies of the city's history and some of Japan's most valuable cultural heritage. The following days we cycle on a lovely route taking us through an undulating landscape of forests and rice fields dissected by mountain streams and dotted with traditional villages, farms, Shinto shrines, and legendary temples. We skirt the shores of the beautiful Lake Biwa, Japan's largest lake, and then ride on a series of scenic roads leading to Nara, a quaint city lovingly referred to as "mini Kyoto". Along the way we'll explore the Edo-era canals of Omihachiman and pass through the Wazuka region, a truly stunning rural area comprising tea fields expertly carved into the hillsides over many centuries. We will spend two nights in Nara, where we'll discover its proud heritage sites and take part in a traditional tea ceremony! The last day we ride back to Kyoto with a visit to the photogenic Arashiyama bamboo grove along the way.

- DURATION - 7 DAYS
- AVERAGE DISTANCE PER DAY - 46 KM
- ARRIVAL DESTINATION - KYOTO
- DEPARTURE DESTINATION - KYOTO

ITINERARY

DAY 1 KYOTO BY BIKE

On this adventure we hit the ground running (well, cycling)! Be sure to arrive at least the night prior. We'll meet at our tour hotel at 09:00 AM and head out on an inaugural 18 km ride to discover Kyoto which, for over a millennia, has been the cultural center of Japan.

The city's flat terrain, excellent bike paths, and treasure trove of heritage sites makes for wonderful urban riding. We visit Heian Shrine for a look at its massive red torii gate and wander the grounds of two of Kyoto's most picturesque Zen temples: Ginkaku-ji (Silver Pavilion) and Nanzenji Temple. Before concluding the ride we'll also swing by the Gion District, famous for its tea houses and traditional Geisha culture. Along the way we'll stop for lunch at a local restaurant and, in the evening, we'll enjoy a welcome dinner.

Cycling Distance: 18 km Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2 KYOTO TO OGOTO

Today we trade the hustle and bustle of central Kyoto for the serenity of its rural hinterland. The ride is one of the hilliest of the trip, but our efforts will be rewarded when we arrive in Ogoto - an area renowned for its hot springs (onsen)! Cycling out of Kyoto, we head for the forested, northeastern hills where we'll stop in the ancient farming village of Ohara. The village is home to a lovely collection of historic Buddhist temples, chief among them being Sanzen-In. Founded by the influential monk Saicho in the late 8th century, this Tendai Buddhist temple consists of imposing stone walls, tea rooms, halls, and gardens. We'll take our time to stroll around Ohara and Sanzen-In and, after lunch, complete the ride to Ogoto, located near the shores of Lake Biwa. We aim to arrive in time for a refreshing soak in the hot spring waters and, for dinner, we'll enjoy kaiseki - a traditional multi-course Japanese meal known for its artful presentation and use of seasonal ingredients.

Cycling Distance: 45 km Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 OGOTO TO LAKE BIWA AND KOKA

After breakfast we jump on the saddle for a great day of riding along the shores of Lake Biwa, Japan's largest lake, and its surroundings. Our route takes us straight across the kilometer and a half long Biwako Ohashi Bridge. As we pedal, enjoy wonderful views across the expansive waters. Once we have reached the other side of the lake we'll skirt along the shores until we reach the picturesque town of Omihachiman. Here we'll explore the medieval canal flanked by cobbled walls and traditional houses. We then continue our journey through the scenic countryside until we reach the town of Koka where we'll spend the night.

Cycling Distance: 55 km Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4 KOKA TO NARA

In the morning we'll ride to Shigaraki, an area that made its name creating ceramic statues of tanuki (raccoon dogs). These ceramic figurines can still be found in many gardens, restaurants and drinking establishments in the area. From there, we ride through beautiful countryside as we head to Wazuka, one of Japan's premier tea growing regions. We ride along small, winding back roads that dissect the expansive patchwork of perfectly manicured tea fields carved into the

rolling hills of Wuzaka. The route is hilly but there will be plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the views. As we emerge from the tea fields of Wazuka we'll complete the final stretch to Nara. For the last 15 km, we will hop on a local train in order to avoid the city traffic. Nara is another of Japan's former capitals, but one which is now a small and compact city with some of the oldest and most impressive temple complexes in the country.

Cycling Distance: 61 km Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5 NARA

With a few days of cycling behind us, this morning we take it easy as we discover Nara and its cultural gems. We start with a visit to Kasuga Shrine, one of Nara's most prominent Shinto shrines known for its iconic vermilion-colored buildings, numerous stone lanterns, and sacred deer that roam the surrounding forest. We'll also check out Todaiji Temple, one of Japan's most famous temples housing a colossal bronze Buddha statue. Rounding out our heritage-inspired morning, we'll participate in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony before enjoying lunch. In the afternoon we'll head out for a scenic cycling loop along the Yamanobe-no-Michi trail. The trail passes through some of Nara's most historic areas and is part of Japan's oldest road. Dinner is on your own tonight - our crew will be happy to make some recommendations.

Cycling Distance: 39 km Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6 NARA TO KYOTO

Soak in the tour's final views of the Kansai countryside as we return to Kyoto via the plains of the Kizu and Katsuragawa rivers. The route is predominantly flat and we'll skirt around Kyoto to end our ride at the foot of the mountains in the western outskirts of the city. Here we discover one of Japan's most beautiful Zen temples, Tenryu-ji, renowned for its elegant architecture and garden. And just around the corner we'll find the famous Arashiyama bamboo grove where we'll stroll through rows of towering green bamboo stalks piercing into the sky. After this iconic end to our cycling adventure we return to central Kyoto via a quick metro ride. In the evening we reconvene for a farewell dinner.

Cycling Distance: 56 km Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 DEPARTURE DAY - KYOTO

You are welcome to stay at the hotel until it is time to check-out. Feel free to extend your stay in Kyoto or head to the airport or the train station for your onward travel.

Cycling Distance: 0 km Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

INCLUDED IN THE TOUR

- Accommodation: 6 nights
- Hybrid bike hire and helmet
- Meals as listed in the itinerary
- English speaking tour guide
- Support vehicle
- Entrance fees listed in itinerary
- Cycling jersey and water bottle
- Bottled drinking water & snacks while cycling

NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR

- International flights and taxes
- Passport and visa requirements
- E-Bike Hire
- Single room surcharge
- Personal expenses & drinks
- Optional activities and sightseeing
- Tips

TOUR GRADE 4: MODERATE

This trip is 274 kilometres entirely on tarmac in good condition and on a mixture of secondary roads and paved bicycle paths. Some of the days cycling in Kyoto and Nara are on primarily flat terrain, however the countryside surrounding Kyoto can be hilly with some steep sections. The support van will always be nearby if you need a rest or a lift to the top! Your guide's expert knowledge of the area and terrain means that you always know what is coming up in terms of distance and difficulty. This makes a tremendous difference, as does the constant supply of water and refreshments along the way.

Suitability: The route has been designed with manageable distances and terrain, and can be done by anyone with a reasonable fitness level. A support truck is always available to help when necessary, except on Kyoto city days and while riding on dedicated bicycle paths.

Biking Conditions: The roads are smooth tarmac in excellent condition. The distances aren't long, but some smaller roads in the mountain areas outside the city may be a bit rough and steep in places.

These trips require a good level of cycling experience and fitness. To prepare yourself, aim to ride twice a week, with a longer ride at the weekend so that you'll be comfortable riding for several hours at one time. Add variety to your cycling experience, like new routes and in new areas, to build confidence.