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## **Koyasan and the Kii Peninsula**

**September 25 – October 7, 2017**

**Please contact for price**

**Land Package price includes:**

- Ground transportation as indicated by itinerary
- Admission as indicated by itinerary
- Daily Breakfast, One Lunch and Eight Dinners
- Hotel Accommodations
- Tour Escort

**September 25, 2017**                      **Monday**                      **Day One**                      **Honolulu to Osaka**

An afternoon flight will take us from Honolulu to Osaka.

**September 26, 2017**                      **Tuesday**                      **Day Two**                      **Osaka**

We arrive in Osaka in the late afternoon. After finishing immigrations and customs we will head to our hotel.

**September 27, 2017**                      **Wednesday**                      **Day Three**                      **Osaka to Koyasan (B/D)**

We begin our tour by heading to **Koyasan**, the headquarters for Shingon Buddhism and settled by the monk Kukai known posthumously as Kobo Daishi. This area is home to 120 temples and one of Japan's most famous graveyards.

Our first stop will be **Daimon**, the great gate entrance to this temple complex. From there we will head to the **Danjyo Garan** a complex centered around the **Kompon Daito**, a great Pagoda in brilliant red, originally built by Kobo Daishi. Next we will go to the **Koyasan Reihokan**, a museum that showcases various treasures collected over the centuries. The **Kongobuji** is our next stop and it is the main temple of Shingon Buddhism. The last stop will be the **Okunoin**, a massive graveyard with numerous mausoleums dedicated to various historical figures, like Tokugawa Ieyasu, not to mention Kobo Daishi himself, who is said to be meditating for all eternity.

For the evening we will be spending it at one of the temples that lets visitors experience some of temple life. This includes trying **shojin ryori**, the vegetarian meals that are eaten by the monks daily.

**September 28, 2017**                      **Thursday**                      **Day Four**                      **Koyasan to Shirahama (B/D)**

We leave the tranquility of Koya-san and head to Shirahama via the Ryujin Skyline, a scenic highway in the mountains. When we reach Shirahama, we will visit the **Wakayama Adventure World**. This theme park zoo has a wide variety of animals on display as well as a number of rides. This facility is well known for its Panda breeding program with the most recent birth being in September 2016. Rides would be at your own expense.

**September 29, 2017**                      **Friday**                      **Day Five**                      **Wakayama Excursion (B/D)**

Today we will travel along back up the coast to explore some of Wakayama's culinary heritage. We will visit **Yuasa**, where we will learn about **shoyu** and **kinzanji miso**, a type of miso made from fermented vegetables. It is said that shoyu was discovered here as a byproduct when they made kinzanji miso. Unlike miso used to make soup, kinzanji miso can also be served as a condiment. From there we will go to **Tanabe** to learn about **umeboshi**. This is one of Japan's signature pickles made from Japanese plums and are often found inside musubi or served as a side dish. For lunch (on own) we will stop at **Tore Tore Ichiba**, Western Japan's largest seafood market.

In the afternoon we will return to Shirahama. Shirahama has a number of beautiful rock formations, the first we will visit is **Sandanbeki**, a fifty foot cliff that was used as a lookout for passing ships and swarms of fish. From there we will go to **Senjo Jiki**, a giant rock formation that looks like a tatami mat floor. Our last stop will be to see **Engetsuto** or Full Moon Island. This nickname comes from the hollow circle in the center of the island when viewed from the mainland. It looks like the rising moon.

**September 30, 2017**                      **Saturday**                      **Day Six**                      **Shirahama to Kii Katsuura (B/D)**

We will head east for Kii Katsuura. Our first stop will be in Kushimoto to see **Hashigui iwa**. This giant rock formation is a series of large rocks that give the impression of a bridge into the ocean. Legend says Kobo Daishi started constructing the bridge, but was tricked into stopping before finishing it. We then visit a **monument to Turkish sailors**, whose ship sank nearby in the 19th century. Survivors were given aid by local villagers and which cemented the friendship between Japan and Turkey. For lunch (on own) we will stop at **Shionomisaki**, where we can get a nice view of the Pacific Ocean. This area is considered the southernmost point on Honshu.

We will then see **Nachi no Taki** a very tall waterfall, said to rival the beauty of Kegon waterfalls. We will descend a natural staircase to the foot of the waterfalls to enjoy a view of it from below.

**October 1, 2017**                      **Sunday**                      **Day Seven**                      **Kii Katsuura (B/D)**

Today is a relaxing day. We will take a **short cruise** around the harbor. The area is sometimes known as Kii no Matsushima, referencing the beautiful Matsushima islands in Miyagi Prefecture. The cruise includes a stop in Taiji, where we will visit the **Taiji Whale Museum** which will tell the story of traditional whaling. The afternoon will be free to relax and enjoy the onsen.

**October 2, 2017**                      **Monday**                      **Day Eight**                      **Kii Katsuura to Ise (B/D)**

In the morning, before breakfast, we will go to watch a **fish auction**. Kii Katsuura is a noted tuna port and we will stop by to see the second largest tuna catch in Japan. We continue northward to Toba where we will visit the **Mikimoto Pearl Island**. This is the fulfillment of Koichi Mikimoto's dream of placing a pearl necklace on every lady's neck. The island is dedicated to his dream and the production of cultivated pearls. We will also enjoy a nice **cruise in Ise Bay**.

From there we head to **Meotoiwa** or the Wedded Rocks. The Wedded Rocks are a pair of rocks that according to Shinto tradition represent the union of spirits, Izanagi and Izanami, as well as a man and a woman. The rocks are tied together by a rope that weighs over a ton and is replaced several times a year.

**October 3, 2017**                      **Tuesday**                      **Day Nine**                      **Ise (B/L/D)**

Our first stop of the day will be a visit the **Ise Shrine**, which is among the most sacred shrines in Japan. It dates back to the 7th century and honors two spirits, the more famous of which is Amaterasu, the spirit of the Imperial family. By tradition the shrine is rebuilt every twenty years with pieces of the previous shrine being sent around the country to be used in other shrines.

For lunch, we will have grilled seafood with an **Ama Diver**. These women are famous for diving without the aid of any modern air tanks and they are known for harvesting the famous pearls in the area. During lunch, the diver will share stories about their lives.

Our other stop will be to the **Toba Aquarium**, which is noted for its efforts in breeding rare animals like the finless porpoises and dugongs. They have twelve distinct areas that include focusing on animals from the waters around Ise, Japanese River fish, polar creatures, and more. It is the only aquarium in Japan that keeps dugongs.

**October 4, 2017**                      **Wednesday**                      **Day Ten**                      **Ise to Osaka (B)**

Today we head back to Osaka. Along the way we will stop in Iga Ueno, the home of the Iga Ninja. We will visit the **Iga-ryu Ninja Museum**, which is dedicated to the history of these mysterious spies and assassins who thrived during the warring states period. We will get to see artifacts and even get a chance to see how special rooms were designed. Next to the museum is **Haiseiden** or Poet's Memorial Hall dedicated to one of Iga Ueno's most famous sons, the poet Matsuo Basho. This unusual building was built to celebrate Basho's 300th birthday and its roof is designed to look like the hat he wore during his travels.

Nearby is **Iga Ueno Castle** also known as the White Phoenix Castle because of its architecture. Its 30 feet high walls are the tallest of all the castles in Japan. It has a museum that talks about the area's history and it was also featured in Akira Kurosawa's Kagemusha.

**October 5, 2017**                      **Thursday**                      **Day Eleven**                      **Nara Excursion (B/D)**

In the morning we head to Nara, the third prefecture that makes up the Kii Peninsula. Here we will find the first capital of Japan in **Asuka**. This small town was the capital of Japan from 538 to 710. We will visit the **Chikatsu Asuka Museum** where we will learn about the area before going to visit the **Ishibutai Tomb**. This stone structure is made up of 30 stones with the largest weighing 75 tons. It is believed to be the final resting place of one of the members of the Soga Clan who were very powerful at the time.

We will then head to Nara city, where we will stop at **Naramachi**, the city's original shopping arcade, where we can walk around and have some lunch.

**October 6, 2017**                      **Friday**                      **Day Twelve**                      **Osaka (B)**

This is a free day to do as you please. You may visit Osaka's famous food district, **Dotombori** or go shopping at the nearby **Den Den**, Osaka's electric town. Or you can see the excellent **Osaka Aquarium** or spend time at Osaka's very own **Universal Studios**. For the more historically minded there is **Osaka Castle** or to get a view of the city you can head to the **Umeda Sky Garden**, a platform that is suspended between two skyscrapers. Osaka has much to offer and your escort will be available to help you get around.

**October 7, 2017**

**Saturday**

**Day Thirteen**

**Osaka to Hawaii (B)**

An evening flight will return us to Honolulu on the morning of the day we left. Upon arrival we must go through immigration before collecting our luggage to clear customs.