

# VIBRANT WESTERN SEASCAPE

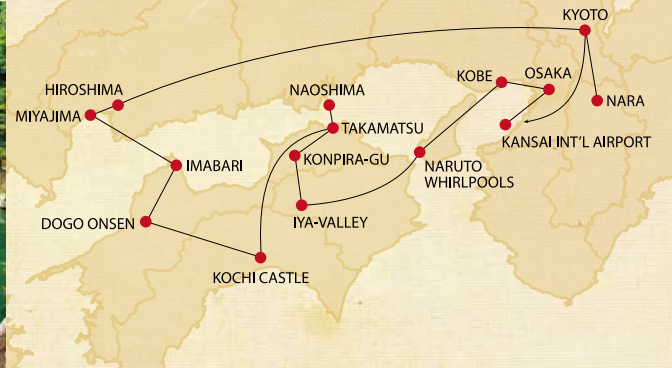
13 DAYS · 12 NIGHTS



Explore undiscovered **Shikoku**, Japan's 4th largest island located southwest of Japan's main island of Honshu.

**Shi-koku**: Shi means number 4, and Koku means land. True to its name, Shikoku literally consists of 4 prefectures: **Kagawa, Tokushima, Kochi and Ehime**. Immerse yourself in each unique flavor as you travel through all 4 prefectures; each filled with art, local regional specialties in both food and culture, and spectacular views of nature.

The tour will also explore the **Kansai region (Kobe, Kyoto and Nara)** and **Hiroshima**.





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## Itinerary:

### Day 1 • Osaka Arrival - Osaka

Arrive at Kansai International Airport in Osaka and transfer to your hotel in Osaka.

Overnight: **Ritz Carlton Osaka** or similar

### Day 2 • Osaka - Kobe - Awaji Island (Hyogo)

After breakfast, proceed for Kobe and enjoy Japanese Sake Tasting. Followed by a Lunch of Kobe beef, a Japanese delicacy and a widely-known regional specialty food in Japan.

Proceed for Awaji Island by car and visit the one-of-a-kind environmental creation project called Awaji Yumebutai, designed by famous architect Tadao Ando.

Overnight: **The Westin Awaji Island** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch]

### Day 3 • Awaji Island - Iya Valley (Tokushima)

Begin your sightseeing today with a visit to Naruto Whirlpools, created by the large volume of water moving between the Seto Inland Sea and the Pacific Ocean, combined with the unique underwater geography of the narrow strait.

Move to Tokushima prefecture and visit Iya Kazurabashi Bridge (Vine Bridge), the largest and most popular of the remaining bridges in the area.

Next, enjoy a short boat ride through Oboke and Kobo Gorges down the Yoshino River. Enjoy the beauty designated as a Special Place of Scenic Beauty.

Overnight: **Hotel Iya Onsen** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner]



### Day 4 • Iya Valley - Kagawa

After breakfast, proceed for Kagawa prefecture by car. Visit Konpira-gu Shrine, formally known as Kotohira-gu Shrine which is the main shrine of multiple shrines found around Japan that are dedicated to sailors and seafaring. Konpira-gu is a highly popular shrine visited by pilgrims from across the country. The approach begins with a shopping arcade, from where it is a 785 step climb to the main hall past a numbers of auxiliary shrine buildings and museums, and furthermore if you are willing to climb further, there are 583 more steps to the inner shrine (Okusha).

After a short break, move to Ritsurin Garden, considered one of the most beautiful and historical gardens in Japan.

Overnight: **Hotel Clement Takamatsu** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner]

### Day 5 • Kagawa - Naoshima - Takamatsu (Kagawa)

Take a ferry with your English-speaking guide to Naoshima Island, well-known for its contemporary art museums, projects, architecture and sculptures.

Visit several Art House Projects, Chichu Art Museum and Benesse Art Sites. Naoshima is a beautiful but small island, therefore you will move around the sites mainly by bus and on foot. Take a ferry back to Takamatsu.

Overnight: **Hotel Clement Takamatsu** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch]

### Day 6 • Takamatsu - Kochi

After breakfast, proceed for Kochi prefecture. Visit Kochi Castle and enjoy some bites of seasonal and local dishes at yatai restaurants (food stands). Check in to the hotel after lunch and have some free time in the afternoon.

In the early evening, you will be picked up for a unique Geisha dinner experience. You will enjoy local flavors of food and drinks while playing with traditional Geisha. This will be one of the highlights of your trip. Transfer back to the hotel.

Overnight: **The Crowne Palais New Hankyu Kochi** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner]

### Day 7 • Kochi - Dogo Onsen (Ehime)

Proceed for Ehime prefecture and visit Dogo Onsen Honkan (Main building), a wooden public bath house built during the Meiji era in 1894.

Enjoy sightseeing in Uchiko, once a prosperous city of wax and paper production. There are still several young artisans who focus on these crafts, and you might be able to visit one of the art studios if available.

Overnight: **Yamatoya Besso** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner]

### Day 8 • Dogo Onsen - Imabari (Ehime) - Miyajima

After breakfast, head to Imabari area and enjoy scenic cycling over Shimanami Kaido, which connects to Japan's main island of Honshu and Shikoku prefectures, for about 1 hour.

At the end of the cycling road, there is a local yatai market where you can enjoy fresh seafood BBQ. Proceed for Hiroshima and take a ferry to Miyajima Island.

Overnight: **Iwaso Ryokan** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner]

### Day 9 • Miyajima - Kyoto

Visit Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima, its torii gate is unique for being built over water, seemingly floating in the sea during high tide. The shrine complex contains of multiple buildings, including prayer hall, a main hall and a noh theater stage, which are connected by boardwalks and supported by pillars above the sea.

Take a ferry back to Hiroshima city and visit Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park/ Museum.

Proceed for Hiroshima station to take a bullet train to Kyoto. At the station, English-speaking guide helps in choosing bento box called Ekiben (railway boxed meals) which is one of the unique Japanese cultures. Seasonal and regional food can be purchased as boxed meals, and you can enjoy them while being on a bullet train, while

enjoying the scenery for Kyoto.

After arriving to Kyoto, enjoy traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony at a temple.

Overnight: **Hyatt Regency Kyoto** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner]

### Day 10 • Kyoto - Nara - Kyoto

After breakfast, depart for a full day of touring in Kyoto and Nara. Visit Kyoto Imperial Palace, which was used as the residence of Japan's Imperial Family until 1868.

Next, move to Nijo Castle, built in 1603 by Ieyasu Tokugawa, the founding shogun of the Edo shogunate which ruled Japan from the beginning of the 17th century, for use as a base when he was in Kyoto.

After lunch, proceed for Nara and visit Todaiji Temple and Nara Deer Park. Todaiji's main hall, the Daibutsuden, is the world's largest wooden building, and it houses one of Japan's largest bronze statues of Buddha (Daibutsu), which is close to 50 feet tall.

Kasuga Taisha, Nara's most celebrated shrine, was the tutelary shrine of the Fujiwara, Japan's most powerful family clan during most of the Nara and Heian periods.

Move back to Kyoto and enjoy Tempura dinner (example) with local vegetable called Kyo Yasai (vegetables in Kyoto).

Overnight: **Hyatt Regency Kyoto** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner]

### Day 11 • Kyoto

Begin your full day sightseeing in Kyoto with a visit to beautiful Arashiyama Bamboo Forest which gives you the feeling of entering another world. You can also experience the unique rickshaw ride throughout the forest. At Tenryu-ji Temple, enjoy vegetarian Buddhist cuisine, called Shojin Ryori, as local flavor.

After lunch, visit Kinkaku-ji Temple (Golden Pavilion), a Zen temple whose top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf.

Stop by Nishiki Market, a narrow, five block long street lined by more than 100 small shops and restaurants. The market is called "Kyoto's Kitchen", specializes in all things food related; fresh seafood, knives and cookware, seasonal and local specialties such as Japanese sweets, pickles, and sake.

At a local restaurant, enjoy special dinner with Maiko / Geiko.

Overnight: **Hyatt Regency Kyoto** or similar  
[Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner]

### Day 12 • Kyoto

After breakfast, visit a Kiyomizu Porcelain Kiln and stroll around Gion district with English-speaking guide. After a half-day tour in Kyoto, you have free time at your leisure to explore the city.

Overnight: **Hyatt Regency Kyoto** or similar  
[Breakfast]

### Day 13 • Kyoto - Osaka Departure

Enjoy this magical city of Kyoto until the very last minute before your departure to Osaka International airport. From Osaka airport, take your flight back to the U.S.

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For more information, please contact us!



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