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Islands, Mountains and Monasteries
Japan's Honshu and Shikoku islands: Kyoto to Hiroshima

Day		Meals inc	Km cycled
1	Kyoto - Arrival day.	D	
2	Kyoto – Free day. Morning cycle tour visiting Kyoto Temples.		20
3	Nara - Cycle Kyoto to Nara.	BLD	50
4	Koya san – Cycle Nara to base of Koya san.	BLD	65
5	Tokushima - Free morning before ferry transfer to Tokushima.	BL	
6	Koyadaira – Cycle Tokushima to Koyadaira.	BLD	55
7	Kazurabashi - Cycle Koyadaira to Kazurabashi.	BLD	85
8	Kazurabashi – Free day.	B	
9	Kotohira - Cycle Kazurabashi to Kotohira.	BLD	80
10	Kanonji – Cycle Kotohira to Kanonji.	BLD	70
11	Inland Sea - Transfer to Imabari. Cycle Imabari to Island stay.	BLD	47
12	Hiroshima. Cycle inland sea to Onomichi. Transfer to Hiroshima.	BLD	40
13	Hiroshima - Free day.	B	
14	Kyoto – Morning visit to Peace Park. Afternoon transfer on bullet train to Kyoto. Final night dinner.	BL	
15	Kyoto	B	512

Japan is such an eclectic mix of sights and sounds, landscapes, history and culture that it is a joy to visit. This cycling tour takes in the cultural centres of Kyoto and Nara, both cities are outdoor museums revealing Japan's grand and fascinating history, as well as the monastic Koya-san mountain where Buddhism still thrives today. The cycling component will consist mostly of a crossing of Shikoku Island, Japan's smallest and least populated of the main four. This route will take us through the central mountains into the Iya valley, famous for its clear running rivers, gorges and ancient vine bridges. We take in a rural Japan not experienced by most visitors: handpicked home-stays and local inns, *onsens* (hot springs) to soak those weary muscles and traditional local culinary specialities. Our final days riding are sure to be a highlight as we leave Shikoku and island hop across several small islands over a series of bridges on a dedicated cycling path to the main island of Honshu. From there we transfer to Hiroshima and get a chance to soak up this city's

historical ambience before taking the *shinkansen*, or bullet train, back to Kyoto.

With some fantastic cycling and an unforgettable cultural experience we believe this trip has something for everyone.

Day 1 – Kyoto

This is arrival day and you are free to explore this fascinating city before our scheduled group meeting where we will go over all the formalities for the trip. There will be information at the local inn (ryokan) to let you know where to go for the group meeting and after that meeting we'll head out for some famous Kyoto fare in Gion district with a chance to do some Geisha spotting.

Dinner

Day 2 – Kyoto – Cycling optional 20 kms

This is a free day to explore Kyoto's many temples, shrines and palaces including Nijo Castle, Ryoanji Zen garden, Kinkakuji 12th century temple and the Philosophers' Walk. There will be bikes available to cycle around this ancient capital and we'll get you started on a bike tour to take in all the sights.

Day 3 – Nara – Cycling 50 kms

We leave Kyoto to cycle one of Japan's few cycle paths to Nara. This is a flat ride with great views all the way and a good warm up to get the legs ready for the rest of the trip. Nara city predates Kyoto as a political centre and, like Kyoto, has many interesting temples and gardens to explore. We will have time to check out Nara's important sights such as Todaiji temple, the largest wooden building in the world, and its 7th century 250 ton bronze Buddha. Tonight we stay in a local ryokan.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4 – Koya san – Cycling 65 kms

Today is a big day's cycling to the base of Buddhist mountain retreat at Koya san. We'll take a break in Asuka on the way where we have a chance to see the remnants of Japan's first capital dating back to the 7th century and the huge burial mounds for which the area is famous. The first half of the day is flat until we begin our climbing on quiet mountain roads to the base of Koya where we transfer to the summit of the mountain. We'll be staying in a working monastery and will have a chance to meet and talk to the resident monks. The vegetarian food prepared by the monks is a real treat.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5 – Tokushima

We rise early today so that we can take part in morning prayer, zazen, with the monks if we wish. We'll have time to do a bit of hiking around the mountain to visit the many temples of Koya san and its famous 1200 year-old cemetery, before heading to Wakayama for our afternoon ferry crossing to Tokushima and the start of our Shikoku Island ride.

Breakfast, Lunch

Day 6 - Koyadaira – Cycling 55 kms

From Tokushima we head inland. It's a tough start as we hit a couple of really steep hills. We are treated to beautiful views of an isolated area of Japan on little travelled paved roads before stopping for the night in a local ryokan (guesthouse). Throughout this area we will come across many onsens, or hot springs, and this night will be our first – a famous onsen used by the locals in the area.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7 – Kazurabashi – Cycling 85 kms

This is a big day's ride where we take on the toughest hill on the trip. It is very steep, has countless hairpins and we cycle almost to the peak of Tsurugi san for a well-earned lunch. The afternoon is all downhill cycling through gorges and villages. We stay in a ryokan again as we do as often as we can on this trip. Ryokans offer an insight into Japanese life as our hosts will be a local family and we will have lots of time to meet them and enjoy their particular brand of hospitality. This Ryokan has one of the best outdoor onsens in Japan!

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8 –Kazurabashi – Free day

Today is a free day to relax and do as you wish. There are numerous things to do in the area. One of which is an optional, but highly recommended, visit to a 350 year-old farmhouse, Chiiori, for some locally produced tea and traditional home made noodles. This farmhouse was restored by Alex Kerr, the only foreigner to win a Japanese literary award for a book he wrote in Japanese. Also, on offer are visits to the ancient vine bridge or a swim in the nearby beautiful Iya River.

Breakfast

Day 9 – Kotohira – Cycling 80 kms

Our last day in the Iya valley takes us downhill for the first 30 kms and then a big climb before winding down into Kotohira. For those with energy left in the legs, a walk up to Kompirasan, formally known as Kotohiragu (a highly popular shrine in the wooded hills of Kotohira), will show off some of Japan's finest temple architecture. Great views are to be had of the surrounding country-side.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10 – Kanonji – Cycling 70 kms

An awesome day's cycling through flat rice farming communities until we hit the coast at Marugame. Here we break to visit Marugame castle, one of only a few remaining intact castles in Japan. From here it is another spectacular ride with lots of ups and downs on coastal roads which will allow us to absorb Japanese life in seaside and farming communities. This section has great views of the inland sea and its numerous islands and beaches and we'll have lots of time to swim and meet the characters who live along this beautiful coastline.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11 – Inland Sea track - Cycling 47 kms

We start today with a morning transfer to Imabari. Stunning views of small uninhabited islands provide the backdrop as we fly across the inland sea that lies between Shikoku and Honshu. We cross this inland sea track via a series of 7 impressive bridges linking one island to another on a dedicated cycle path. We'll stay on one of the islands to take in this unique crossing and be treated to some wonderful home-cooked traditional Japanese food.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12 – Hiroshima – Cycling 40 kms

We finish the last of our "hops" in Onomichi, pack up the bikes and board a train for an hour to Hiroshima. Metropolitan Hiroshima is imbued with history but is firmly entrenched in the future. With a great atmosphere and much to see we have plenty of time here to take in all that Hiroshima has to offer. In the evening we'll head out for a delicious Okonomiyaki dinner and a beer or two to celebrate the end of our ride!

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 13 – Hiroshima

This is a free day to explore the sights of Hiroshima. Highly recommended is a visit to Miyajima Island.

Breakfast

Day 14 – Hiroshima/ Kyoto

We'll get today started with a visit to Hiroshima's War Memorial Park where we'll invite one of the locals to talk about their experiences of the devastation the city suffered and how it has shaped the thinking of its people – an unforgettable experience. After lunch we'll take the shinkansen (bullet train) to Kyoto. We'll arrive with enough time to check in to the hotel and head out for our final dinner.

Breakfast, Lunch

Day 15 – Kyoto

As this is departure day you are free to leave at any time.

Breakfast

Inclusions

14 nights accommodation (2 nights in a hotel, 1 night in a monastery and 11 nights in ryokans (Guesthouses))

All transport en route, support vehicle, vehicle transport from Koya san to Wakayama, Ferry to Tokushima, Train Onomichi – Hiroshima, shinkansen train from Hiroshima – Kyoto.

Bike

Meals; Breakfasts (13), Lunches (10), Dinners (9)

All morning tea and afternoon teas (snack food, hot drinks) whilst cycling

All water (whilst cycling)

Cycling leader/ Mechanic

Bike tools and spare parts

Support Vehicle

Joining point instructions

Heianbo ryokan is a 5 minute walk from Kyoto station. From Osaka airport (Kansai airport) please take the Haruka (express train, 1 hour 10 minutes, one per hour) to Kyoto station. Take the north exit. Once you have exited the station and are facing north you will see Kyoto Tower in front of you. To your left will be Kyoto central post office. To the north next to that is a Lawson convenience store. Cross the street across from Lawson's and then turn left. The first right is Shinmachi dori. Take this north for two streets, past the fire station and supermarket until you reach the corner with the primary school. Turn right and Heianbo Ryokan is 100 meters down on the left side. Take the phone number with you to call and ask the helpful English speaking staff if you become lost or print out this map to show someone (there is a helpful Tourist Office in the station);

There will be a note from your group leader about plans for a meeting and welcome dinner on the evening of day 1.

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725 Heian – cho, JR Kyoto-ekimae, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto, Japan

Phone: +81 75 351-0650

Fax: +81 75 371-1173

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Pre/post trip accommodation

If you would like us to organise some extra nights accommodation either before or after the trip at our starting or finishing point hotel, just let us know when you book the trip. Prices are;

City	Hotel name	Cost p/person-single	Cost p/person-twin
Kyoto	Heianbo Ryokan	AUD 70	AUD 70
		CAD 60	CAD 60
		EUR 40	EUR 40
		GPB 30	GBP 30
		NZD 80	NZD 80
		USD 60	USD 60

Bike Asia Travel style

We think cycling through a region for the first time with a group of like-minded people is a great way to travel in Asia. Our aim is to provide you with the opportunity to meet new people, learn about new cultures, experience different landscapes and most all to have some fun. Cycling is a major part of our trips – they are cycle tours after all. We have designed our trips so that they are accessible to people with a reasonable level of fitness. Different trips will require varying degrees of physical ability. Each trip dossier has specific details on terrain, cycling conditions, distances covered each day and an altitude profile. All of our trips are fully supported, so should you want or need to take a rest, there will be a seat for you and a place to put your bike. Our trips are also designed to allow you the opportunities and time to appreciate the environment, scenery and culture around you, and to participate in any activities that may be on offer.

Ethical travel

An integral part of travelling is to have a positive impact on the country that you are visiting. On this trip there are a number of things you can do to have a positive impact on the communities that we visit.

Dress – parts of Japan are still quite conservative. In rural areas and temples overly revealing clothing is considered offensive. You should make an effort to dress more conservatively in these situations. Walking around a village in bike shorts is not appropriate so if you wish to cycle in just bike shorts you should have something with you on the bike to put on over the top (eg long, loose shorts or a skirt/sarong). When visiting temples shorts are acceptable providing they cover the knee. Singlet tops are not acceptable in temples.

Phrase Book - A highly memorable part of your travels will be the local people you meet. In the tourist areas some people will speak English but away from these areas you should learn a few words of Japanese. We will teach you some of the basics but if you want to really interact we recommend bringing a phrase book.

Group size

Maximum 12

Minimum 4

Accommodation

The sleeping arrangements are for twin-share so if you are a single traveller you will be paired up with someone of the same sex. This ensures that whether you are travelling solo or with friends, everyone is paying the same rate. We will be staying in a mixture of hotels and guesthouses. We choose hotels (where possible) that are comfortable, centrally located places which are adequate in every way. They have private bathrooms. Guesthouses are more basic with shared washing and toilet facilities.

Transport

All transport listed is included in the trip price: all vehicles whilst cycling (one or two depending on the group size) and the vehicle transfer between Onomichi and Hiroshima at the end of the cycling component. You will only need to pay for any transport taken during free time.

Bikes

Bikes are included in the trip cost. Our mountain bikes are entry-level standard. We keep them well maintained and we travel with all necessary tools and spare parts. We use Cannondale bikes with the following specifications:

Hard tail (front suspension)
Shimano Alivio 21 speed gears
Shimano Alivio v-brakes
Off road tyres
One bottle cage
Ergonomic seat
A range of sizes

You may wish to bring your own pedals, clips, seat and handle extensions, as we can easily fit them to our bikes.

You are of course welcome to bring your own bike. Keep in mind though, that while we offer maintenance and spares for the bikes we provide, we can't guarantee that we can cater to your particular bicycle needs so it would be best to bring your own. If you are unsure we recommend that you speak to your local bike shop about what parts to bring.

Food

Food is a very important part of any travel experience and Japan is no exception. Most of the meals on this trip are included in the trip cost, with a few exceptions like free days. To see which meals are included, read the inclusions list or the itinerary. Vegetarians and vegans are well catered for and should you have any other dietary restrictions, you just need to inform us. Many of our meals will be local food and at local eateries: noodles, pickled vegetables and fruit for breakfast, noodles, pancakes filled with vegetables, seafood or fish cooked on a hot plate in front of you for lunch and an assortment of sushi, California rolls, tofu, soup, vegetables (deep fried in a light batter and served with a dressing) for dinner. Snack food like fruit, biscuits, cakes and nuts will be available for our break stops on cycling days with coffee, tea and hot chocolate. There are always convenience stores where you can buy chocolate, sandwiches and lollies if you need a sugar fix.

Money

You will need to bring money on the trip to pay for the following; some meals, drinks, activities in the free time, departure tax and of course shopping. We suggest you utilise a variety of methods for payment. There are:

ATMs where you can use your cards - Maestro, Cirrus, Visa and MasterCard
Designated banks where all currencies and traveller's cheques can be changed.
The amount you bring is going to depend on how much you plan to spend. To give you an indication of prices

Beer JPY 300 – JPY 1000
Dinner at local restaurant JPY 800
Dinner at foreign restaurant JPY 4500
Bottle of water (small) JPY 150

We also recommend that you bring US \$100 in emergency funds, to be used when circumstances beyond the control of Bike Asia necessitate a change in itinerary.

The Japanese currency is the Japanese Yen (JPY). Exchange rates at the time of writing are;

1 AUD = 99	1 USD = 119
1 EUR = 161	1 GBP = 238
1 CAD = 106	1 NZD = 89

Insurance

Obtaining your own travel insurance is required in order to participate on a Bike Asia trip. It will need to include a minimum coverage of medical expenses with emergency evacuation. Your group leader will need to see a copy of your insurance at the group meeting on the first day.

Some recommended insurance companies are;

World Nomads;

www.worldnomads.com

Covermore;

<http://www.covermore.com>

Fitness

You will need to a good level of fitness to participate in this trip. There are eight cycling days in total, with most days cycling up to 80km on. This trip involves some very steep and long mountain climbs, with one lasting for 25kms on a steep gradient ...up! The first half is very hilly, whilst the latter part of the trip is more gently undulating. The cycling is done at an altitude between sea level 1500 metres above sea level.

Cycling conditions

The cycling terrain is all sealed surfaces, with some sections of the trip on cycling paths! On the roads we will encounter few cars, but you still need to be constantly alert for vehicles.

Health

In order to make the most of your holiday, you need to be as healthy as possible! For a list of vaccinations we recommend that you seek advice at a travel clinic at least six weeks prior to departure. Our group leader will have Senior's Level first aid training and will travel with a first-aid kit, however it is also recommended that individual travellers have a basic first aid kit with any personal medical requirements. Our group leader is not authorised, for legal reasons, to administer any kind of drugs including pain relief tablets, antibiotics etc so be sure to pack a supply of your favourite pain-killers. Pharmacy products vary in different countries and you may not be able to buy products that are widely available at home. Include the following: plasters, dressings, bandage, calamine lotion (a must for soothing sunburn), oral re-hydration treatment (in case of bouts of diarrhoea), insect repellent, insect sting relief, eye drops, moisturiser and lip balm for the dry weather, antiseptic cream and antiseptic wipes.

For more information on travel health, you can click on the links below:

Australia;

<http://www.tmvc.com.au/>

United States

<http://www.cdc.gov/page.do>

United Kingdom

<http://www.travelhealth.co.uk/>

Visas

Most participants will need to obtain a Japanese visa, either through a travel agent or directly from the Japanese embassy/consulate. For the latest information, see your travel agent.

Luggage/Packing list (guide only)

We advise against using a hard shell suitcase for this trip. A **soft backpack** would be the most suitable, and the easiest to transfer in/out of the support vehicle in the morning and evening. Keep in mind when you are packing that often our local crew are lifting our bags everyday so try to pack as lightly as possible. Please check our climate charts to assess your clothing requirements, or contact us if you are unsure.

Personal	Travel	Bicycle
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long trousers• Shorts• Shirts• Warm jacket• Jumper• Hat• Sandals/light shoes• Swimming Costume• Sunglasses• Light rain coat• Toiletries• Tampons• Small towel• Sunscreen• First aid kit• Mosquito repellent• Camera and film• Contact solution• Eye drops• Gloves/scarf	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passport with 6 months validity and spare pages• Passport photo• Travel insurance details• Flight tickets• Money/ travellers checks/cash/credit card• Guide/phrase book• Money pouch• Medication (i.e.; cold tablets, headache tablets, sleeping tablets)• Main/day pack• Alarm clock• Plastic bags• Pocket knife• Torch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Something to carry your personal belongings in while cycling, eg. daypack, bum bag, handlebar bag.• Helmet• Cycling gloves• Water bottle/bladder• 2 x padded bike shorts with something to put on over the top when off the bike.• Your own seat, pedals, cleats. (optional)• Light wind-proof jacket for cycling• Cycle shoes (with cleat attachment if you use them)• Handle extensions• Gel-seat

Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory in Japan. It is meant to be a reward for good service. One of the reasons that our trips run so well and are so much fun is the effort and energy put in by our local crew. On this trip, we will have a driver, who you may wish to tip at the end of the trip.

Safety

Our cycling tour leader has the authority to change or cancel all or part of this trip if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns. This decision would not be taken lightly, and where possible it would be made in consultation with our local crew, local operator and Bike Asia management. Your leader will be present on all

included activities, staying at all the same hotels, guesthouses and of course cycling with you. During free time, should you choose to participate in any optional activities that are not part of our itinerary, please note that we cannot give any representations or guarantees about the safety of the activity, the standard of the operators running them or the equipment that they use.

In the group meeting, the cycling leader will run a session on cycling safety. Whilst some travellers will have years of touring experience, for others, this might be their first cycling trip ever. We need to cater for a range of abilities and experience and it is in everyone's interest to learn about the particulars of cycling in this region from someone who has already done it. It goes without saying that by running and participating in a cycling trip, both parties accept an inherent level of risk. However, we take the safety of our passengers very seriously and we ask that you cycle in a safe and responsible manner and that you look out for the well-being of your fellow travellers. Cycling helmets must be worn by all cyclists at all times whilst cycling.

Most national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest information before departure. The links for some major travel advisories and updates are listed below;

Australia;

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au>

Britain;

<http://www.fco.gov.uk>

Canada;

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/consular_home-en.asp

New Zealand;

<http://www.mfat.govt.nz/travel/>

United States;

<http://travel.state.gov>

We recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling in the cities, for the safe keeping of your passport, money, credit cards and traveller's cheques. Utilise the hotel/guesthouse safety boxes or safe once you arrive.

Communication

Internet, phone, mail, video conferencing, wi-fi - communication is not going to be an issue in this country. You should leave your family or friends the Bike Asia contact details. Our office staff will be able to get in touch with us in an emergency.

Group Leader

Our leaders are passionate about Asia and cycling... phew! They love what they do and take their job seriously. They will make every effort to ensure you have a safe, enjoyable trip with as much fun as possible. They bring many qualities and skills to this role, knowledge of group cycling, safety, management and liaising between you and the local crew. In working for us, they have made a commitment to learning as much about the culture, language and customs of Japan as possible, and they are happy to share any of this knowledge with you. However, please keep in mind that they are not local and will not know everything.

Rules

We don't have many, but the ones we do have are important. We always abide by the laws of the country that we are travelling through. This means you are not to use any illegal drugs or use prostitutes. Any passenger who does either will be asked to leave the trip immediately.

Feedback

After you have completed the trip, we want to know what you thought about it. This is important to us, as it is through your feedback that we monitor our trips and make improvements for the future. Log on to our website and click on the feedback link. It will take you a minimum of 3 minutes, or should you feel like writing in more detail, then a little longer. If you fill in the feedback form, we'll give you an automatic 5% discount on any of our trips in any other region.

Photos

We are always looking for good photos of the regions we travel through. If you have some that you would like to send us, we would love to have a look.

Newsletter

Our quarterly email newsletter has information on events happening in Asia, travel stories, cycling stuff, last-minute deals on our trips, travel tips and more. If you would like to subscribe, just go to our homepage and enter your email address. Your email address will be kept confidential.