



## KUMANO KODO 'KOHECHI' ADVENTURE

Guided trek along the Kohechi pilgrimage route

8 days | 7 nights

### OVERVIEW

From the most sacred place in Japan, journey along an 800 year old pilgrimage trail to the Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine.

The Kohechi is a mountainous Kumano Kodo route. It was established in the 13th century because it was the shortest distance between the sacred sites, Koyasan and Hongu.

Your tour starts in Koyasan, the birthplace of Shingon Buddhism and where founder Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai) is believed to be in eternal meditation. You will experience daily life of the monks, stay in temple lodgings, and immerse yourself in its 1200 year history.

Then you will be guided along the spectacular and challenging Kohechi trail. Following in the footsteps of the first pilgrims on their quest for enlightenment. Our trail is remote and it's likely you won't see other walkers. It can be technical and is isolated, so the trekking group is small and includes 2 experienced guides (1 local and 1 Australian based).

Come for the spiritual history, the traditional Japanese experience, the lovingly prepared meals, the challenge and the company.

### DETAILS

- Type: Challenge Trek Guided
- Adventure: Kumano Kodo 'Kohechi' Adventure
- Destination: Kii Peninsula, Japan
- Group Size: Max 8 plus leaders

### ITINERARY

#### Day 1 | Welcome to Koyasan

Welcome to beautiful Japan. If travelling with our Big Heart Adventures leader from Australia you will travel by train from Osaka, then by cable-car to Koyasan (own expense). Plan to arrive in Koyasan at lunchtime for a briefing prior to checking into your accommodation. Here, you will also be introduced to the trekking team.

Your accommodation tonight is in a Buddhist temple. Staying with the monks is special and a must-do experience for any visitor to Japan. Dinner is served at the temple and will be a Buddhist vegetarian meal called shojin ryori.

Also, this evening at 7:00pm you have a 90 minute guided night tour of Okunoin Cemetery by a local monk. A memorable experience.

Meals Included: Dinner  
Walking Distance: n/a

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## Day 2 | Koyasan

At sunrise you have the chance to experience daily temple life. You are invited to attend the 6:30am morning ceremony which may include a Goma fire ritual. The rituals flames can sometimes reach metres high.

This morning, we guide you along a section of the Nyonin-michi (Women's Route). A section that samples what to expect on the Kohechi Trail. We will enjoy lunch together at a local eatery and discuss final preparations. Then you have the choice to either rest in the afternoon or join us for a casual history stroll around town. Koyasan is an easy place to walk and has history going back to the year 826 when Kobo Daishi chose this place as the centre of Shingon Buddhism.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner  
Walking Distance: up to 10km

## Day 3 | Trek Koyasan to Omata

A traditional breakfast and then we collect our pack lunch and start our trek into the mountains to Omata.

Today's walk has some steep inclines and downhill slopes on uneven terrain as we follow the trail from Koyasan. You will climb to 1100m altitude and remain above 700m for the whole day. The route also follows paved roads at times as we make our way to the remote regions of the Kii Peninsula.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Dinner  
Walking Distance: 19km

## Day 4 | Trek Omata to Miura-guchi

Another big days hiking is in front of us as we make our way to Miura-guichi.

Today's walk starts with a steep incline as we continue on the trail. It is the most challenging section along the Kohechi route due to it's remoteness, altitude and steepness. Your efforts are rewarded however with far-reaching views and misty mountain tops. You will climb to around 1300m altitude, spending most of the day in isolated mountains before descending to under 400m.

Tonight's accommodation provides a unique insight into family life in these small and beautiful villages.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Walking Distance: 17km

## Day 5 | Trek Miura-guchi to Totsukawa Onsen

Today's trek starts by crossing the Kanno-gawa River via a bridge. Then it's a steady climb up into the mountains and back to over 1000m altitude at the Miura-toge Pass. Crossing the pass, you continue on the remote mountain trail enjoying the views over the valleys, before descending to the Nishi-gawa River.

Although longer in distance, today's walk is less strenuous. The final 8km today is on a paved road and is a pretty walk alongside the river with an icecream or treat supplied along the way.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Walking Distance: 20km

## Day 6 | Trek Totsukawa Onsen to Hongu

After a soothing private onsen and a hardy meal to recharge the body, we are ready for this morning's climb. It's steep but along the way you are rewarded by reaching the beautiful Hatenashi Settlement. With sweeping mountain ranges it's easy to see why this is considered to be one of Japan's prettiest villages.

After a rest we continue our steep ascent up to Hatenashi-toge Pass. This pass is also over 1000m altitude. Then the trail descends with nice views towards our destination at Hongu. Reaching Kumano Hongu Taisha and Oyunohara, the finishing point of the Kohechi Trail. Then a short local bus ride (20 min) to our accommodation. Please note that dependant on group pace we may catch a local bus at Michi-no-Eki OkuKumano bus stop.

Tonight we stay in Yunomine Onsen. A fitting end to our trek as past pilgrims traditionally performed purification rituals in the piping hot mineral waters here, after their long journey in preparation to worship at Kumano Hongu Taisha. Optional karaoke is also available at our accommodation.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner  
Walking Distance: 19km

## Day 7 | Hongu and Tanabe

Today we explore Yunomine Onsen and Hongu.

We catch a local bus back to Hongu and majestic Oyunohara, the world's largest Torii gateway. We also visit the informative Heritage Centre. Here it is possible via prior arrangement to receive a Dual Pilgrimage Certificate if you have completed both the Camino in Spain and the Kohechi route of the Kumano Kodo. Also we visit the Kumano Hongu Taisha, with time for you to explore, reflect and participate in a drum ceremony for dual pilgrims.

We enjoy lunch together at a restaurant before boarding a bus to Tanabe (2 hours). Tanabe is the main service town for the Kumano Kodo and has regular trains to onward destinations. We will assist you with purchasing train tickets.

Dinner tonight is at a restaurant close to our accommodation and the train station. Afterwards we witness 3000 rounds of fireworks at the Benkei Matsuri festival. Tanabe's annual celebration of Benkei, Japan's toughest monk warrior.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch  
Walking Distance: 2km



## Day 8 | Farewells and departures

Following a leisurely breakfast we say our goodbyes and best wishes for ongoing journeys. Your Kumano Kodo 'Kohechi' Adventure tour ends here at the hotel in Tanabe.

If travelling to Australia, you can travel to Osaka Kansai Airport by train from Tanabe with our Big Heart Adventures leader.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Walking Distance: n/a

## INCLUSIONS

### Travel

Luggage transfers daily to accommodation (1 bag per person)

### Equipment

Kumano Kodo Kohechi route map

Pilgrim stamp passport

Koyasan map

Japanese phrase booklet

### Meals

All meals and snacks as per the itinerary

B x 7 | L x 4 | D x 6

### Accommodation

2 nights Temple lodging in Koyasan twin share

5 nights 'Japanese Style' twin share while on the trail

(Accommodation location and style will change based on each days finishing location)

An onsen (Japanese bath) is offered at each night's accommodation

### Activities

Professionally guided hike along the Kumano Kodo Kohechi route

Guided tour of Koyasan

Okunoin Cemetery night tour

Morning Ceremony of the Monks

Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine

Oyunohara Torii Gate

Drum ceremony for Dual Pilgrims

Benkei Matsuri fireworks

### Safety

2 Guides for duration of tour – our local guide (bilingual) and a leader from Australia

Group First Aid kit and emergency communication device

Leaders certified in Remote Area/Wilderness First Aid

Qualified Bushwalking Leaders

### Environmental

Small group guided experience

Leave No Trace principles

Invitations to connect with nature

Reduce waste through recycling, reusing and composting

Park entry fees

### Big Heart Extras

Big Heart Adventures designed ioMerino hiking top

Big Heart Adventures designed head sock

Big Heart Adventures journal

Guided pre-departure training walks and or program (trip specific)

Discount card for pre-departure purchases at Exurbia

A charity contribution to our Give Back program

## EXCLUSIONS

- International and domestic flights
- Travel arrangements to the start and from the end of the tour
- Local bus transport (budget \$40 AUD)
- Local transport if you are unable to walk on a day
- Comprehensive Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Meals and drinks not stated on itinerary
- Items of a personal nature

## FITNESS REQUIREMENT

- A very good level of fitness is required to walk the trails on this trip
- You will be walking pack free (day packs only)
- You will walk on a variety of surfaces on trails with steep inclines/declines and rocky sections. Parts of this trail are exposed and days with wind and fog should be expected
- Our longest walking day is 20km (up to 10 hours) and we walk 4 consecutive days on this adventure
- Trail rating: Moderate-hard

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- \*Eligible Past Traveller Discount applies if you've travelled with us on any of our guided tours which were 5 days duration or longer
- Read terms and conditions before booking
- Itinerary and price subject to change at any time
- Travel Insurance is recommended. Get a quote from Covermore or Go Insurance
- Note weather, group member welfare and a range of circumstances outside our control can mean last minute changes to our itinerary are necessary once on tour. Detours may be in place
- A very limited number of single rooms are available on a firstcome basis. Single rooms are not available for night 4
- Please contact us before booking any flights. Depending on flight arrival and departure times extra nights accommodation may be required at own expense
- A minimum number of travellers are required for this trip to depart so ask someone to join you. If minimum numbers aren't reached, we may decide to still go or we will provide a full refund
- Rooming is twin share every night, except on night 4 which is triple share. Accommodation is limited along this trail and will vary from temple lodgings to small minshuku guesthouses
- Japanese style accommodation and food is traditional on the Kumano Kodo. Sleeping upon futons placed on the floor and a variety of cuisines is offered exclusively for the region. Not all dietary requests may be catered for and must be declared at the time of booking. Please note that dietary requirements cannot be added while travelling on this tour
- If you have additional needs please connect with us, we're committed to being inclusive and accessible

## ADVENTURE LEADERS

Our experienced and knowledgeable local guide (bilingual) and a leader from Australia are with you for the journey (2 leaders). Our team is qualified, experienced and super friendly. We will ensure you have a fun and connecting adventure. Leaders are certified in Remote or Wilderness First-Aid. All leaders carry a group first-aid kit, emergency communications device, emergency documentation and equipment.

## PACKING LIST

A detailed packing list is provided prior to travel

- Gear you will need:
- Rainproof jacket and pants
- Daypack (35 litre approx.)
- Water bottles/hydration kit (min 3Ltrs)
- Personal medications
- Clothing suitable for walking that is quick drying and breathable – consider merino/synthetic clothing
- Sun protection such as hat, sunglasses and suncream, insect repellent
- Sleeping attire

## ACCESSIBILITY

Requires following bush trails carrying a day pack with some steep sections. Accommodation and transport includes stairs. Please talk to us about your accessibility needs before booking