

Discover Kyoto

Over the centuries, Kyoto was destroyed by many wars and fires, but due to its exceptional historic value, the city was dropped from the list of target cities for the atomic bomb and escaped destruction during World War II. Kyoto served as Japan's capital and the emperor's residence from 794 until 1868. Countless temples, shrines and other historically priceless structures survive in the city today.

With over 2000 temples and shrines: a city of true masterpieces of religious architecture. It's where robed monks shuffle between temple buildings, prayer chants resonate through stunning Zen gardens, and the faithful meditate on tatami-mat floors. Even as the modern city buzzes and shifts all around, a waft of burning incense, or the sight of a bright vermillion *torii* gate marking a shrine entrance, are regular reminders that Kyoto remains **the spiritual heart of Japan**.

Kyoto Highlights



Kinkaku-ji

Kyoto's famed 'Golden Pavilion', Kinkaku-ji is one of Japan's best-known sights. The main hall, covered in brilliant gold leaf, shining above its reflecting pond is truly spectacular. Needless to say, due to its beauty, the temple can be packed any day of the year.



Fushimi Inari-Taisha

With seemingly endless arcades of vermilion torii (shrine gates) spread across a thickly wooded mountain, this vast shrine complex is a world unto its own. It is, quite simply, one of the most impressive and memorable sights in Kyoto.



Gion District

Gion is the famous entertainment and geisha quarter on the eastern bank of the Kamo-gawa. The best way to experience Gion is with an evening stroll around the streets lined with 17th-century traditional restaurants and teahouses lit up with lanterns.



Ginkaku-ji

Home to a sumptuous garden and elegant structures, Ginkaku-ji is one of Kyoto's premier sites. The temple started its life in 1482 as a retirement villa for shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa, who desired a place to retreat from the turmoil of a civil war.



Chion-in

A collection of soaring buildings, spacious courtyards and gardens, Chion-in serves as the headquarters of the Jōdo sect, the largest school of Buddhism in Japan. It's the most popular pilgrimage temple in Kyoto and it's always a hive of activity.



Daitoku-ji

For anyone with the slightest fondness for Japanese gardens, don't miss this network of lanes dotted with atmospheric Zen temples. Daitoku-ji, the main temple here, serves as headquarters for the Rinzai Daitoku-ji school of Zen Buddhism.



Ōkōchi Sansō

This is the lavish estate of Ōkōchi Denjirō, an actor famous for his samurai films. The sprawling gardens may well be the most lovely in all of Kyoto, particularly when you consider the brilliant views eastwards across the city.



Nishiki Market

The covered Nishiki Market (Nishiki-kōji Ichiba) is one of Kyoto's real highlights. Commonly known as Kyoto no daidokoro (Kyoto's kitchen) by locals, this is the place to see the weird and wonderful foods that go into Kyoto cuisine.



Nijo Castle

Nijo Castle (Nijō-jō), complete with well-preserved walls, towers, and a moat, was built in 1603 and later served as the seat of government. The complex has several buildings containing many significant works of art.

Getting around Kyoto

Kyoto is incredibly easy to explore by public transport or under your own steam. Learn more about the different options and get ready to discover the city.



Trains

Kyoto is served by six train lines, discover the city's train system.

[Find out more](#)



Taxis

Plentiful and reasonably priced, you can cover a lot of ground fast.

[Find out more](#)



Subway

The best way to move north-south
and east-west in the city.

[Find out more](#)



Cycling

One of the world's best bicycle cities!
A great way to explore the city.

[Find out more](#)



Buses

You can get almost anywhere by bus,
if you know where to board.

[Find out more](#)



Walking

Discover the districts within the city
or go hiking - it's up to you!

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