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## GEEO ITINERARY

Japan Express 6/26/2024

### **Day 1: Osaka Arrive in Osaka at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.**

Arrive in Osaka at any time. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you plan to arrive in Japan at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference and overcome any jetlag. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Osaka before the trip. Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

### **Day 2: Osaka/Kōyasan (B, D) Travel to the center of Buddhism in Japan and sleep in a temple atop Mount Kōya. Savor a traditional dinner of shojin ryori (Buddhist vegetarian cuisine). Watch the monks pray the following morning.**

Journey to Mount Kōya, the religious headquarters of Shingon Buddhism founded in 816 by the Buddhist monk Kobo Daishi, one of Japan's most significant religious figures. The train ride up to the wooded mountaintop is possibly one of the finest rail journeys in Japan. For the final steep ascent, switch to the funicular and then hop on a bus to reach the monastery. Explore the temples and moss-covered Oku-no-in cemetery in the afternoon. In the evening, dine on shojin-ryori (typical vegetarian cuisine), experience the temple lodging (shukubo), and relax in a yukata or kimono. During the overnight stay in the mountain temple, witness the monks' routines. Early morning at the temple the next day, observe the monks praying before a vegetarian breakfast. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by train, funicular, and bus

### **Day 3: Kōyasan/Hiroshima (B) Watch the monks pray in the morning and enjoy a traditional breakfast. Have some free time to enjoy Kōyasan before traveling to Hiroshima in the afternoon.**

Early morning at Mount Kōya offers the opportunity to observe the monks as they pray. Breathe the fresh mountain air and soak in the beautiful surroundings before a vegetarian breakfast. Later, visit Oku-no-in, the most sacred site in Kōyasan and the location of Kobo Daishi's mausoleum. The area is surrounded by a massive cemetery, the largest in Japan with over 200,000 tombstones lining the path to Kobo Daishi's mausoleum. Be sure to see Torodo Hall (the Hall of Lamps), the main place of worship where more than 10,000 lanterns are kept burning day and night. In the afternoon, journey back down the mountain and board a train to Hiroshima, a historically significant city marked by the explosion of the first atomic bomb in 1945. Approximate travel time: 5 hrs by bus, funicular, and bullet train

### **Day 4: Hiroshima This morning, visit the Peace Park and Memorial Museum commemorating the events of 1945. In the afternoon, take a ferry ride over to the sacred island of Miyajima to see the famous floating Torii Gate. Opt to hike around Mt. Misen.**

Walk through the Peace Park in the center of Hiroshima, a living memorial dedicated to the tens of thousands who died from the atomic bomb blast in 1945. Visit the statue of Sadako Sasaki, a young girl who died of leukemia as a result of the bomb blast, despite folding 1,000 origami paper cranes to appeal to the gods to make her well. See the frame of the Gembaku Dome, the sole building to withstand the explosion. Reflect, remember, and be reminded of the power we all hold to create peace. Take a trip to Miyajima Island, famed as one of Japan's most scenic spots, with a free afternoon to explore. See the

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famous floating Torii Gate, set out in the bay, which glows extraordinarily at sunset. The island is dotted with shrines and temples, populated by deer, and traversed with hiking trails for those who want to get some exercise. There are also shopping lanes full of souvenirs and tasty treats. Visit Miyajima at your own pace, and have the option to hike up to the peak of the island, Mt. Misen, to see spectacular views of the surrounding islands. Approximate travel time: 1.5 hrs (round-trip ferry)

**Day 5: Hiroshima/Kyoto Travel to Kyoto and start exploring. Visit the impressive Nijo Castle and gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the evening, explore the geisha district of Gion on a walking tour with your tour leader.**

Travel to Kyoto, the traditional heart of Japan, where you will visit the Nijo Castle and gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the evening, walk through Gion, Kyoto's most famous geisha district, with your tour leader. Visit shops, restaurants, and ochaya (teahouses), where geiko (Kyoto dialect for geisha) and maiko (geiko apprentices) entertain. Approximate travel time: 1.5-2 hrs by bullet train

**Day 6: Kyoto Visit to the beautiful Fushimi Inari Taisha shrine and walk under the bright torii gates. Opt to shop, stroll along the riverbank, or explore another of Kyoto's many temples with free time.**

Visit the Fushimi Inari shrine, located just outside of Kyoto. Walk under the thousands of iconic torii gates (as seen in the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*) and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere. The shrine itself is at the base of the Inari mountain but includes many trails up to smaller shrines in the area. This afternoon, enjoy free time in this picturesque city. Kyoto is home to over 2,000 temples, including some of the most magnificent in the country, dating back centuries. Use your free time to continue exploring. The options are endless; the city also boasts museums, castles, and traditional gardens. Or. opt to visit neighboring Nara or Osaka.

**Day 7: Kyoto/Hakone (D) Take a boat ride on Lake Ashino-ko and (hopefully) catch a glimpse of majestic Mt. Fuji. After, travel to Hakone, a town in the hills famous for its onsens, or natural hot springs.**

Hop aboard a passenger boat to cruise the waters of Lake Ashinoko. If you are lucky, on a clear day, you can capture a view of Mt. Fuji. The lake was formed from the caldera of Mt. Hakone following its eruption 3,000 years ago. Later, travel to Hakone and enjoy a Japanese multi-course kaiseki meal. The town is known for its natural hot springs; finish the day with a soak in an onsen. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by bullet train, 30 mins by bus

**Day 8: Hakone/Tokyo (B) Head to Tokyo with time to do some last-minute shopping.**

Arrive before noon in Tokyo with time to explore this energetic metropolis. Opt to visit Ueno Park and its museums, Akihabara for cutting-edge electronics, Harajuku for funky fashions, Ginza for the highest of the high end, the grounds of the Imperial Palace East Garden, or just stroll the streets. Get a glimpse of the traditional Japanese life that still lies just under the modern surface. Approximate travel time: 2 hrs by bullet train

**Day 9: Tokyo Depart Tokyo at any time.**

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Tokyo at any time. Tokyo is a huge, vibrant city, and we highly recommend extending your stay in Tokyo by at least one day to allow more time to experience this incredible city. You may book post-trip accommodation at your hotel in Tokyo through us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEE0 programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEE0 will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEE0 program

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that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book.