

WALKJAPAN



国東

KUNISAKI: REVIVAL IN RURAL JAPAN

Programme Proposal

**6 NIGHTS
7 DAYS**

Thank you for your interest in Walk Japan's programme KUNISAKI: REVIVAL IN RURAL JAPAN. Please find enclosed the programme proposal. If you have any questions or require further assistance please do not hesitate to contact us at supportservices@walkjapan.com

OVERVIEW

Walk Japan's School Programme in Kunisaki immerses students in the rich traditions and enchanting beauty of rural Japan.

In this remote corner of Kyushu island, we venture through delightful hamlets where opportunities are provided for students to engage with and make an active contribution to the local community. Students assist in a sustainable farming project, and try their hands at traditional crafts and making local delicacies. Together we follow ancient trails in the footsteps of itinerant monks, and learn of Rokugomanzan, a distinctive esoteric Buddhism founded in this region some 1,300 years ago. At one such temple, perched on the slopes of the peninsula's highest mountain, a priest will guide us in a reflective zazen meditation session. We enjoy the warm hospitality of our hosts at charming inns, and a homestay experience with a Japanese family offers further insights into the way of life of here. We round off the programme with a celebratory karaoke session and shopping experience in the city of Fukuoka.

ITINERARY

DAY 1

Fukuoka Airport ~ Ota

Meals: Dinner

Accommodation:
Log cabins

After arrival at Fukuoka Airport we transfer by coach for the Kunisaki Peninsula, which is about a 2.5 hour drive away.

We first visit the impressive Usa Jingu shrine, a singularly Japanese environment and the source over 1,200 years ago of the religious development on Kunisaki. A short drive from Usa and we arrive in Ota, a quiet village deep

in the Japanese countryside. Our accommodation comprises chalets atop a small, remote mountain and we stay here for the next two nights. A briefing on Kunisaki and our programme is accompanied by an exploration of our surroundings, which include the atmospheric remains of a old temple. For dinner we walk to a neighbouring restaurant, where we are served delicious farmhouse cuisine.

DAY 2

Ota

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodation:
Log cabins

Today, we begin our community project work. Substantial parts of Japan's native woodland habitat have been destroyed by large-scale uprooting of old forests and the creation of cedar plantations designed to supply lumber for the construction industry. Under these conditions the forest floor, starved of sunlight, becomes a barren environment where few other plants and wildlife are able to survive.

Today we assist in the recreation of a more diverse woodland ecosystem consisting of fruit and nut trees, bushes, vegetables, vines, medicinal plants and flowers. Activities include surveying, clearing undergrowth, planting trees and bushes, opening up old paths, creating wetlands and setting bird boxes. We will help rebuild a rich environment closer to the traditional countryside of Japan.

We also help a farming couple with the cultivation of shiitake mushrooms. Later on we use the crops to create dishes for our evening meal.

At the end of the day, we return to our accommodation, atop the hill, not far from where we have been working in the forests and fields. Here we try our hand at making soba buckwheat noodles. The soba is enjoyed with delicious Japanese style curry and rice for dinner. After enjoying the fruits of our labours we join in *wadaiko* Japanese drumming.

DAY 3

Ota ~ Himeshima

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodation: Japanese style inn

After breakfast we meet Watanabe san and his colleagues in a local farming co-operative to help with and experience charcoal making. Charcoal was used heavily in rural Japan up until the 1970s for heating as well as cooking. Under their expert guidance, while helping with the work we learn of charcoal's history and usage.

NB: *This day's activity may change depending on weather and availability.*

Next, we travel a short distance by bus to visit the towering Kumano Magaibutsu, which are 1,000 year-old, giant Buddhist relief carvings on the side of a cliff. It is a steep climb to reach them but well worth the effort to see one of the best reminders of Kunisaki's great religious history.

We then transfer to Fuki-ji, which has one of the most beautiful Buddhist temple buildings in Japan. Lunch is dango-jiru, a delicious vegetarian dish famous in the area. From here we transfer by bus through the centre of Kunisaki to Imi Port. Hime-shima, a small island off Kunisaki's north coast, is 20 minutes away by ferry. Our accommodation for the night is a Japanese inn, situated a short walk from the quay.

Upon our arrival, we take some time to learn the vital do's and don'ts of living in the traditional Japanese style: Where do we take off our shoes? Where are the beds? How do we use the baths? The lessons learnt here are important, and will be vital later on during the tour when we stay with Japanese families. Have a look at the pages on Japanese etiquette in this handbook for some hints and tips.

DAY 4

Himeshima ~ Akane Onsen

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodation: Japanese style inn

We return to Imi Port by ferry and then spend the morning here at a craft workshop. Activities include *take-zaiku* bamboo working and *Shitto* weaving.

Following lunch, another walk; this time through the extensive grounds of Kyu-Sento-ji, a once powerful temple. Two impressive Nio guardian deities, myriad gravestones, ancient stone walls and foundations are all that remain today.

A short climb brings us out at the 'fortress rock' peak of Itsusu-ji Fudo, which houses in its shadow a small shrine room. This provides spectacular views across Kunisaki, the Seto Inland Sea and Himeshima. Descending from here, we are met by a bus and taken to our nearby accommodation, which includes a Japanese favourite; *onsen* thermal hot spring baths. Bathing is divided into male and female.

DAY 5

Akane Onsen ~ Futago-ji ~ Bungo-Takada

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodation: Homestay

This morning we visit Futago-ji, the most important temple in Kunisaki. Here we try *zazen* Buddhist sitting meditation under the friendly guidance of Gojun-san, the young priest of the temple. Gojun-san will also show us around the extensive grounds of his lovely temple and introduce us to the religious history of Kunisaki area.

We then transfer to Bungotakada to enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Afterwards we have some time to stroll around this small town, which has a pleasant post-war period charm. Here we are divided into small groups to meet local Japanese families, who we will be staying with until tomorrow morning. This is always a great opportunity for getting to know the Japanese and their culture at first hand.

DAY 6

Bungo-Takada ~ Fukuoka

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodation:
Western business hotel

After breakfast we gather with our farmstay families in Bungo-Takada for a farewell ceremony. We set off for Fukuoka by bus, eating lunch en route before arriving at Dazaifu and its elegant Shinto shrine, which was first built in 905AD. Appropriately, it enshrines Tenjin, the Japanese god of learning. Some time in Dazaifu to explore the shops for souvenirs.

Finally we reach Fukuoka and after dinner we partake in a Japanese favourite, *karaoke*, for a celebratory end to our tour.

DAY 7

Bungo-Takada ~ Fukuoka

Meals: Breakfast

Early morning transfer after breakfast to Fukuoka Airport before our flight back home.

NOTES

- ➔ This itinerary is subject to change.
- ➔ The group will be met at Nagoya Centrair Airport by the Walk Japan Tour Leader.
- ➔ The Tour Leader is an experienced guide, is fluent in English and Japanese and knowledgeable about many aspects of Japan.
- ➔ All travel in Japan is included on the itinerary.
- ➔ Meals provided are noted in the itinerary above. Japanese cuisine is as varied as it is high in quality.
- ➔ Japanese inns are traditional Japanese-style accommodation and hotels are Western-style.
- ➔ Entrance fees for guided visits to museums and the like are included.
- ➔ There is no porter service in Japan. Please bring only one piece of main luggage and a day pack for walking per person.
- ➔ WiFi and other internet connections are only available in our accommodation in Fukuoka.

WALKJAPAN

Walk Japan is the pioneer of off-the-beaten-track walking tours in Japan. Authentic and enjoyable tours to discover Japan, its people, society and culture. Beginning in 1992 with our innovative and best-selling Nakasendo Way tour, we were the first to successfully introduce the real Japan, geographically and culturally, that often remains inaccessible for most visitors to the country. Since then, Walk Japan has created more original tours throughout Japan and been widely recognised for its work, including selection by National Geographic as one of the 200 Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth.

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