

“Mountain Roads”

TOUR OBJECTIVE

This tour aims to teach students about the rise and downfall of the Tokugawa Shogunate that consolidated control of Japan for over 250 years. Students will gain an understanding of how this period of history came to shape modern Japan, and how the Tokugawa’s strategies kept them in power – and led to their downfall.

FOCAL POINT

How did the Tokugawa shogunate use its system of walking highways, castles, and fiefdoms to control Japan, and what made those designs so important to Japan’s development in the industrial age?

IN DETAIL

Focused on showing students how diverse Japan can look, Mountain Roads doesn't just take you through a series of historical sites; it also focuses on showing how those sites play a role in the public consciousness. Castles that were the sites of battles are just the beginning; this tour invites students to walk the same highways the samurai did before leading the tour through their base of power, Edo (Tokyo). The finish is the trading port of Hakodate, where the west became more influential and the Tokugawa fought their last battle.

While this trip does utilize a historical focus at its base, it also gives students the opportunity to experience rural, traditional, and modern Japan in a single trip. With a diverse array of destinations, the tour is remarkably flexible in its ability to visit sites that correspond to a number of academic focuses, such as modern literature, art, and environmental science.

This pitch is an excellent fit for students studying:

- The Samurai, Ninjas, and the Japanese class system
- The Horticulture of Japan
- Urban Development
- Classical Japanese art
- Modern Japanese Literature, particularly post 1868
- Japan’s Culinary Heritage

ITINERARY

Day 1: Departure

We depart the USA for Japan!

Day 2: Welcome to Kyoto

We'll transfer to a flight to Osaka when we arrive, later checking into our accommodations in Kyoto.

Day 3: The Summer War Begins

It's time to get up close with history! Our first stop today is the city of Osaka, where the Summer War of Osaka was fought and the Tokugawa leaders defeated one of the last major threats to their power. We start at the scene of the battle, Osaka Castle. As we learn about the history of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the most famous occupant of this place, you'll also get to take in fantastic views and even dress in clothes from the famous battle. Of course, no visit to Osaka would be complete without a visit to a local restaurant for the region's famous cuisine, Takoyaki and Okonomiyaki! If you're feeling brave, you may even get the chance to make the Takoyaki yourself...

Day 4: A Castle of a different hue

The victors of the Summer War wasted no time to establish a castle in Kyoto to keep a close eye on the Emperor, and that's our first stop today: Nijo Castle. We'll check out the castle gardens and examine some of the castle's famous security features (hint: check the floor!). Then we'll make our way to the picturesque Nanzenji Temple in the outskirts of the Higashiyama area, where you'll be able to enjoy green tea, take in gorgeous waterfall views, and venture inside a giant gate overlooking the temple. To finish the day, we'll visit the old entry point into Kyoto from the walking highways the Samurai used to travel between Kyoto and Edo.



Day 5: Into the Country

Before we leave Kyoto, we'll visit the amazing Fushimi Inari Shrine, where shrine gate "tunnels" line the mountainside and people have been bringing "messages for the gods" for centuries. After that, it's time to don the role of the samurai as we make our way to an old section of the Nakasendo Walking Highway! We'll take a train to Nagoya and take a pit stop in the city for a little lunch before we move into the country to settle in at our ryokan.

Day 6: Footsteps of the Samurai

Today is all about the samurai experience! We'll stroll down the old Nakasendo between the post towns of Tsumago and Magome on the same path the samurai took. When we get to Tsumago, we'll have a

tasty lunch at one of the rest houses before heading back. After the trip, we'll take a rest and eat a meal prepared by our innkeepers before a free evening of games and socializing.

Day 7: The Edo Experience

While we love the country, it's time to head back into the city! We'll grab the Shinkansen and head for Tokyo and store our bags before seeing the city. We'll stop into the massive Ikegami Honmonji Temple, where the monks will teach us the basics of sutra writing before we take photos and do a little exploring around the temple grounds. That night, we'll visit Ueno Park and (weather permitting) have a little picnic under the cherry blossoms!

Day 8: Where One Road Ends, Another Begins

We'll venture to the Nipponbashi area for starters today, to see where the Nakasendo and Tokaido walking freeways officially end. Then we'll have an afternoon of time to explore some of Tokyo's hottest neighborhoods! For starters: the famous fashion and counter-culture hotbed of Harajuku, followed by the chic cool of Shibuya. In the evening, a local arts café will welcome us for dinner and some fun interactive goodies.

Day 9: East Meets West

Today we get to see Tokyo's Sensoji Temple in Asakusa, but if you're tired of temples, no worries – we'll be hitting the water too! We'll cruise down the Sumida River to the Hamarikyu Japanese gardens, where you can take in a little traditional beauty in the shadow of giant skyscrapers. In the evening, we'll grab bento and prepare for the trip to our last town, Hakodate.

Day 10: A Northern Star

Welcome to the city most beloved by our previous guests: Hakodate! We'll begin at the city's iconic morning market, where you can sample some of Japan's freshest crab and scallops. Then we'll head to Fort Goryokaku, where you'll get a view of this famous star-shaped fortress from Goryokaku Tower before venturing inside to explore the fortress grounds and the recently reconstructed Hakodate Magistrate's Office. This spot was where envoys of the Tokugawa Shogunate made their last stand in 1869, which ended the era for good and marked the beginning of Japan's modern age.



After a lunch break, we'll head back into town to check out the old "western" quarter of the city. Here, you'll have the chance to have tea at the Old English Consulate, explore the picturesque lanes and alleyways past the Hakodate Public Hall, shop at the Kanemori Warehouses – or a little of all three! To top off the day, we'll take in Japan's most famous night view from the summit of Mt. Hakodate.

Day 11: Homeward Bound

Return home and make all your friends jealous with Japan travel stories!. ^_^