

JAPAN: ANIME TO ZEN

*Musica
Getaways*



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YOUR HOST

LYDIA SNYDER

Lydia is a multi-discipline artist and ethnomusicologist with a focus on Japanese music and culture, but with a passion for global arts and travel. She uses music to explore arts and intimacy, sound healing, trance and altered states of consciousness, and ecomusicology.



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TOUR OVERVIEW

Begin your enchanting journey in **Tokyo**, the dazzling neon heart of Japan, where the city never sleeps and every street hums with possibility. In the electric wonderland of **Akihabara**, the air sparkles with the magic of anime, from towering manga shops to vibrant cosplay streets that feel like stepping inside your favorite series. As the sun sets, the city's pulse quickens in intimate live music venues tucked into hidden alleys, where the infectious energy of J-pop, rock, and electronic beats swirl into the night like an endless festival of sound and light.

From Tokyo's electric skyline, drift toward the majestic silhouette of **Mount Fuji**, the iconic guardian of Japan's soul. Here, the serene landscape offers a tranquil symphony, the gentle rustle of pine trees, the whisper of cool mountain breezes- a perfect counterpoint to the city's vibrant energy.

Then, journey to **Kyoto**, a city where the past and present entwine like the delicate brushstrokes of a master artist. Wandering through its ancient streets and serene temples, you'll discover hidden cafes and cozy live houses where hauntingly beautiful melodies echo like timeless poetry.

Finally, arrive in **Nara**, a gentle city where the sacred meets the playful. Amidst tranquil temples and the friendly gaze of roaming deer, hear the soft strains of traditional instruments. Nara's peaceful charm offers a soulful pause, a moment to reflect on your journey.



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SAMPLE ITINERARY

TOKYO

DAY 1: ARRIVAL IN TOKYO: A GENTLE START IN YANESSEN

Upon arrival at Narita International Airport (NRT), board the Keisei Skyliner to Yanesen, a charming and historic neighborhood. This area, largely untouched by the modernization that has swept through much of Tokyo, offers a peaceful and authentic atmosphere with narrow lanes, old wooden homes, and family-run shops. It's an ideal place to gently settle into the rhythm of Japan.

We'll check into our ryokan and take time to rest and refresh after the journey. Whether it's a brief nap, a hot shower, or simply a moment of quiet reflection, this downtime will help you adjust to the time zone and prepare for the days ahead.

As the sun begins to set, reconvene for a guided twilight walk through Yanesen. Your guide will lead you through the winding alleys, pointing out neighborhood shrines, hidden temples, and small artisan workshops. You'll get a feel for the layout of the area and soak in the subtle beauty of Tokyo's slower-paced side. The evening concludes with a welcome dinner at a local Teishoku-ya a cozy, family-run restaurant serving teishoku, traditional Japanese set meals. Expect a balanced and beautifully presented meal featuring rice, miso soup, pickles, and seasonal dishes such as grilled fish or simmered vegetables. It's a warm and nourishing introduction to Japanese culinary customs and a perfect way to end your first day in Japan.



TOKYO

DAY 2: A CULTURED DAY IN TOKYO: MUSIC, TRADITION & REFINED ENCOUNTERS

We'll start our day at the Tokyo National Museum, an essential introduction to Japan's centuries-old aesthetic traditions. Nestled within Ueno Park, the museum's quiet galleries offer a curated journey through fine art, religious artifacts, and exquisite traditional musical instruments. Just a short walk away, head to the nearby Kanda Myojin Shrine, where ornate Shinto architecture meets contemporary Tokyo energy.

For lunch, reserve a table at Kanda Yabusoba, an iconic soba house offering meticulously handmade noodles in a beautifully restored wooden building.

In the early afternoon, we will experience a private, hands-on shamisen lesson. Led by a master performer, our group will learn the instrument's history, techniques, and soul-stirring sound. Each guest will have the opportunity to learn the basics of holding, strumming, and interpreting this deeply expressive instrument.

Our evening will be spent at the National Theatre of Japan for a lively performance of Kabuki! Witness the shamisen in action at this sophisticated venue, and get an up close look at the art that inspired modern anime with its dazzling costumes and exaggerated style!

Conclude the day with an elegant nightcap. For something serene, visit a contemporary tea salon such as Higashiya Ginza, where matcha and artisanal wagashi are served with minimalist beauty and deep respect for seasonal ingredients. If your group prefers a livelier finish, venture to a discreet sake bar in Kagurazaka or Yanaka, such as Sasaki Saketen, where curated sake flights are sometimes accompanied by live shamisen performances.





TOKYO

DAY 3: VIBRANCY & ANIME! NEON LIGHTS, DRAWN WORLDS, AND TOKYO BEATS

Begin your day in the iconic Akihabara Electric Town, Tokyo's anime paradise. Wander through multilevel stores like Animate and Mandarake, overflowing with manga, figurines, cosplay gear, and rare collectibles. Every corner buzzes with nostalgia and discovery- a haven for fans and curious travelers alike.

Midday, shift from consumer to creator in a manga drawing workshop led by a local artist. Learn the basics of sketching expressive eyes, dynamic poses, and panel layouts as you bring your own character to life- no experience required, just imagination. Next, slip into a dream at a charming maid café, where you're greeted with playful chants, decorated dishes, and whimsical performances. Enjoy adorable food, snap fun photos, and immerse yourself in Tokyo's unique take on "kawaii" culture. As the neon sky deepens, head to Shibuya, crossing the famous scramble into a district alive with energy. End the night at a J-Pop concert or live club performance, where Tokyo's vibrant music scene takes center stage- from glittering idol groups to underground rock. Join local guide, Hiro, as he leads us on a tour of the J-rock scene in Tokyo.

A day of anime, art, and electrifying culture, this is Tokyo at full volume!

DAY 4: FREE DAY IN TOKYO

Enjoy a free day to experience Tokyo at your own pace! Your guide will provide tailored suggestions!

Experience immersive art at the TeamLabs exhibit or take a stroll in Shinjuku Goen, a famed Japanese Garden, and sink your teeth into the most spectacular desserts!



FUJI

DAY 5: TRAVEL TO MT. FUJI: SERENITY AND NATURE'S ART

Mount Fuji is a recurrent motif in Japanese music, representing beauty, inspiration, and the spiritual connection between nature and the arts. Its iconic image resonates through various genres, illustrating how the landscape profoundly influences musical expression in Japan.

We'll ride the legendary Shinkansen bullet train to the stunning Fuji Five Lakes region, where we'll check into a traditional ryokan offering serene views of Mount Fuji. In the afternoon, we'll visit the iconic Chureito Pagoda, where the panoramic view of the pagoda with Mount Fuji in the background is truly unforgettable.

As evening falls, unwind in the ryokan's onsen, soaking in mineral-rich waters with Fuji as your backdrop. Then gather for an elegant kaiseki dinner, a beautifully crafted multi-course meal that showcases the season's finest flavors.



DAY 6: FUJI MUSICAL SOUNDCAPES

Start your day early with a sunrise meditation at Yagizaki Park, especially beautiful in autumn with its colorful trees and open skies. The park hails an unobstructed view of Mt. Fuji rising above the lake, often reflected in the calm morning waters.

After soaking in the views, head over to the charming Kawaguchiko Music Forest Museum. Styled like a European village, the museum features ornate automated musical instruments, and small performances that bring the past to life.

For lunch, enjoy a hearty bowl of Hōtō noodles, a regional specialty of thick flat noodles stewed in a miso-based broth with pumpkin and seasonal vegetables. One of the best spots to try this dish is Hōtō Fudō, a local favorite known not only for its traditional flavors but also for its eye-catching, modern building design.

In the afternoon, make your way to the lake for a scenic cruise on Lake Kawaguchiko aboard the “Ensoleille” sightseeing boat. The cruise offers panoramic views of the lake and Mt. Fuji from the water– a completely different perspective that’s especially peaceful and photogenic.

Enjoy a free evening to explore the Fuji area at your own pace. Stop by a café such as Cafe Mimi or Lake Bake, both offering wonderful Fuji views and excellent desserts or coffee. You may choose to have dinner at a nearby izakaya or a lakeside restaurant, enjoying seasonal Japanese fare while watching the light shift across Fuji’s face.

End your day under the stars. Find yourself in Oishi Park or find a quiet spot along the lake for stargazing. The Fuji region, with its clean air and low light pollution, provides a stunning backdrop for watching the night sky. Whether you’re admiring constellations or simply enjoying the peaceful stillness of the mountains, it’s the perfect close to a day steeped in natural beauty and quiet charm.





KYOTO

DAY 7: TRAVEL TO KYOTO: THE HEART OF TRADITIONAL JAPAN

Travel to Kyoto via Shinkansen. You will experience a stay in a functioning Buddhist temple that offers a rare opportunity to experience monastic life firsthand. During your stay, you'll be invited to observe and, if you wish, take part in aspects of daily temple life. Meals consist of shōjin ryōri, the refined and deeply symbolic vegetarian cuisine of Buddhist monks. Prepared without meat, fish, or pungent ingredients like garlic and onion, each dish is a lesson in balance, restraint, and mindfulness.

After checking into our accommodation, wander through the atmospheric streets of Gion, Kyoto's most iconic and historic geisha district. This beautifully preserved area offers a unique glimpse into traditional Japanese culture, with its wooden machiya townhouses, cobbled alleys, and lantern-lit teahouses. As the sun sets, you may catch sight of a geiko (Kyoto geisha) or maiko (apprentice geisha).

DAY 8: ZEN BAMBOO ROOTS

Today we will explore the shakuhachi flute and its use among the Komuso monks as a tool for spiritual enlightenment. After an early meditation and light breakfast, we will visit Myoan-ji temple, a temple dedicated to the shakuhachi flute. There we will meet Genshin Seian, world master shakuhachi player and 42nd kansu (or director) of the Myoan-ryu temple.

We will enjoy a hands-on workshop with shakuhachi master, Yodo Kurahashi, who will teach the basic sound production and zen aesthetics of this simple, difficult instrument.

Kurahashi sensei will join us for a special lunch in Tenrinji Temple and afterwards as we explore Japan's most famous bamboo grove, **Arashiyama**, a breathtaking forest located on the outskirts of Kyoto, where towering green stalks sway gently in the breeze, creating a serene and almost otherworldly atmosphere.

In the early evening, enjoy a **curated concert of shakuhachi music** by local masters. Return to our accommodations for dinner and quiet reflection.



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KYOTO, & NARA

DAY 9: FREE DAY TO EXPLORE KYOTO

Take a free day to go at your own pace and get lost in the old Capital! Participate in Ninja training! Tour the famed Golden Pavilion, or Visit Plastic Vinyl Records, a listening bar, café, and record shop all in one!

DAY 10: KOTO: JAPAN'S NATIONAL INSTRUMENT

Begin your day with a tranquil early morning walk along the Philosopher's Path. This peaceful stone walkway traces a narrow canal and leads directly to Ginkaku-ji, also known as the Silver Pavilion. Though not actually covered in silver, this understated Zen temple is a masterpiece of wabi-sabi- the Japanese aesthetic of simplicity and impermanence.

Late in the morning, transition from quiet observation to hands-on learning with a koto workshop. Under the guidance of a professional koto musician, you'll learn the basics of playing this elegant 13-stringed instrument.

In the late afternoon, immerse yourself in another essential part of Japanese culture with a tea ceremony at Camellia Garden followed by a stroll through Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine with its thousands of vermilion torii gates.

For dinner, we will make our way back to Gion for a special Geisha experience. It's a perfect conclusion to a day steeped in tradition, art, and the timeless sound of the koto.

DAY 11: TRAVEL TO NARA: ANCIENT PRIMEVAL FORESTS & DEER

Bid farewell to Kyoto as we journey even further back in time to Nara, Japan's first permanent capital, established over 1,300 years ago. After checking into your traditional ryokan, take some time to settle in before heading out to explore Nara Park, where you can interact with the friendly, free-roaming deer.

Stroll or take a charming chariot ride through ancient forest paths to Kasugataisha Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site revered in the Shinto tradition. As you walk among moss-covered stones and lantern-lined trails, your host will play Shika no Tone ("Call of the Deer") on the shakuhachi flute, setting the mood with its hauntingly beautiful melody. At the shrine, immerse yourself in the sacred art of Kagura- a traditional Shinto music and dance ritual that brings myth and spirit to life.



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NARA

DAY 12: NARA'S RITUALS & DRUMMING

Begin your morning at Tōdai-ji Temple, one of Japan's most iconic and spiritually significant sites. Pass under the towering Nandaimon Gate and approach the monumental Great Buddha Hall (Daibutsuden)– the massive bronze statue presides over a space where acoustics amplify even the softest footstep.

On certain mornings, you can witness the resonance of Shōmyō, the solemn and haunting Buddhist chant performed by monks during ritual ceremonies.

We will walk southward toward Naramachi. In this historic district, with its preserved wooden townhouses and narrow lanes, you'll find boutique shops selling traditional crafts, vintage sheet music, and the occasional folk instrument tucked among ceramics and textiles. It's an ideal place to pick up a small, locally made souvenir.

In the afternoon, participate in a hands-on taiko drumming workshop, a deeply physical way to engage with Japan's rhythmic heritage. Head to NAKOZA Taiko Dojo, a local community space known for welcoming visitors of all backgrounds. The workshop introduces you to the foundations of wadaiko, from posture and grip to traditional rhythms and ensemble coordination.

Enjoy a free evening to explore Nara at your own pace! You might unwind at a local sentō (public bath) or venture to a cozy dinner spot, like the friendly Maguro Koya, known for its fresh tuna dishes, or a quiet machiya restaurant offering creative Japanese-Italian fusion.



DAY 13: RETURN TO TOKYO: – LAST IMPRESSIONS

After breakfast, take the return train back to Tokyo (3 hrs) retracing your steps and reflecting on such a full experience! As the train races past golden rice fields and misty mountains, it's the perfect time to contemplate the past days: the temples you've explored, the meals you savored, the quiet and loud moments that made your trip unforgettable. Maybe you flip through photos, write a few thoughts in a journal, or just sit back and watch Japan roll by one last time.

Arriving in Tokyo just around midday, you drop your bags at the hotel and set out to make the most of your final afternoon. With no strict schedule, you have the freedom to explore the corners of Tokyo you may have missed.

You might find yourself wandering through Harajuku, browsing quirky fashion and character shops, or heading to Ginza for sleek boutiques and exquisite food halls- perfect for picking up last-minute gifts and souvenirs.

As evening sets in, we will gather for a celebratory farewell dinner and karaoke session- a true Tokyo experience! Whether you sing your heart out or just cheer others on, it's the perfect, joyful exclamation mark to your Japan adventure.

DAY 14: DEPARTURE AND REFLECTIONS

Enjoy a slow, peaceful morning, savor a quiet breakfast at your hotel or step out for one last bite from a favorite café or convenience store. If there's time, take a short stroll or pick up any final souvenirs, snacks, or gifts you may have missed.

Then, with everything packed and memories still fresh, make your way to Narita Airport. As the train or airport shuttle pulls away from the city, take in the final views of Tokyo-a last look at the skyline, the streets, the neon, or the serenity, and begin your return journey home, carrying with you the stories, sights, and spirit of Japan.





LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR DAY TOUR & EXPERIENCES

SHAKUHACHI FLUTE

EXPERIENCE

We will visit Myoan-ji temple, a temple dedicated to the shakuhachi flute. There we will meet Genshin Seian, world master shakuhachi player and 42nd kansu (or director) of the Myoan-ryu temple.

We will enjoy a hands-on workshop with shakuhachi master, Yodo Kurahashi, who will teach the basic sound production and zen aesthetics of this simple, difficult instrument.



NARA'S RITUALS & DRUMMING

EXPERIENCE

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YOUR STAY



SAWANOYA RYOKAN

LOCATION: TOKYO

NIGHTS: 5

ROOM TYPE: STANDARD ROOM

HOTEL KONANSOU

LOCATION: FUJI

NIGHTS: 2

ROOM TYPE: STANDARD ROOM

SHUKUBO TEMPLE

LOCATION: KYOTO

NIGHTS: 4

ROOM TYPE: STANDARD ROOM

NARA RYOKAN

LOCATION: NARA

NIGHTS: 2

ROOM TYPE: STANDARD ROOM



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WHAT'S INCLUDED?



- Japanese Music Specialists guides
- Unique ryokan hotel rooms
- All breakfasts
- Four lunches
- Musician Tour Leaders
- Local guides
- All music, city, and historical tours
- Train Travel Across Japan
- Entry into Japanese music & theatre events daily
- Ten nice dinners
- Transportation to events (As needed – some events and other destinations are nearby, and we will walk a bit on this tour – please bring comfortable shoes!)
- Grandmaster shakuhachi lectures & masterclasses
- Japanese Koto & Shamisen lessons
- Airport arrival and departure transportation to Narita Airport





WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED?



- Roundtrip flights between your hometown and Japan.
- Comprehensive travel insurance is highly recommended.
- Any recommended or required vaccinations or travel-related medications are the responsibility of the traveler.
- Lunches and dinners not specifically listed.
- Activities not included in the official itinerary as well as personal expenses.
- Tips for guides, drivers, hotel staff, and musicians.
- Alcohol is only included where mentioned.
- Extra stays before or after the tour are not included but can be arranged at an additional cost.





UPCOMING TOUR DATES & PRICES



JULY 30TH-AUGUST 13TH, 2026

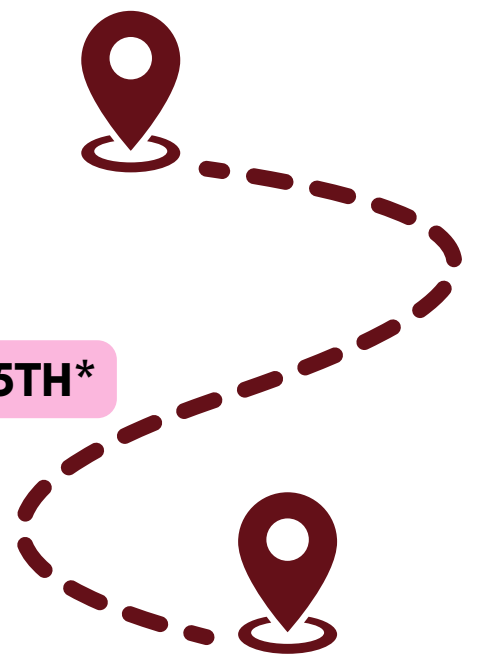
Tokyo, Fuji, Kyoto, & Nara Japan

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PRICING AND PAYMENTS:

Prices are per person and vary based on your selection of accommodation. To reserve your spot, we require a \$1000 USD deposit (50% of the total price for private tours.) Final payments are due around 90 days before tour departure. We have some options for multiple payment plans if needed. Just contact us and let us know.

The prices on our website are all in US Dollars and based on an ACH/Wire bank transfer from our 3rd-party merchant or directly from your own bank. If you wish to use a credit or debit card, a 3.5% fee will be added. We do not accept cash or checks.

We have plenty of individuals, couples, groups, and families that travel with us, and everyone has a blast. If you have any special requests, please let us know. We will work with you to make sure you have the perfect space and feel comfortable during your stay.

If our dates do not work for you, keep in mind that we also do personalized tours with custom dates and group sizes.



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