

DECOR | GARDEN | TRAVEL

2020

H*o*l

home by design® magazine

COLOR THEORY
four designs with perfect palettes





land of the rising sun

KYOTO, JAPAN

travel tips

When to Go: April/May and October/November are best. Avoid typhoon season, which is June through September.

How to Get There: Fly in and out of Kansai International Airport (KIX).

How to Pay: Currency is Japanese Yen. Credit cards are accepted in major cities, but it is cash only along the Kumano Kodo trail.

What to Drink: Sake, a rice wine served cold or hot, is a staple. Matcha green tea is always on hand. For beer, look to Asahi Super Dry, Kumano Kodo, and Kirin Lager.



OPENING SPREAD: Geisha walking amongst the cherry blossoms of Kyoto. BELOW: The famous red-orange gates of the Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine. OPPOSITE FROM LEFT: The Japanese symbol of spring, the sakura (cherry blossom). A *maiko* (apprentice geisha in Kyoto) in traditional makeup. *Wagashi* (traditional Japanese sweets) often accompany a tea ceremony.



Exploring Japan's cultural and artistic capital of Kyoto is more like walking through an outdoor museum than a bustling city of one and a half million residents. With temples, shrines, castles, and gardens located throughout the city, Kyoto has a calming, Zen-like essence. Perhaps this is why emperors chose Kyoto as their ancient residence.

Written by Heidi Siefkas



THE ART OF TRANSPORTATION

Getting around Kyoto is stress-free too. By purchasing an IC card—a prepaid transportation pass—you can take advantage of the efficient train and bus system. Most routes go through Kyoto Station, which is a modern work of art. The station is made of glass with a rooftop terrace and features a panoramic view of the city center, including the Kyoto Tower.

THE CULTURE OF RITUALS

The importance of ritual is steeped into every aspect of the Japanese culture. From greeting with a bow and removing your shoes upon entering a home to tying a *yukata* (Japanese house robe) and drinking matcha (green tea) at a tea ceremony, you will find rituals at every turn.

Upon arrival at any of the temples or shrines in Kyoto, there is yet another ritual of cleansing. You must wash both hands and your mouth before pulling a rope with bells to awaken the *kami* (in essence, gods). Then, you throw a small coin into an offering box, bow, clap twice, bow, pray, and bow again before passing through the main *torii* (gate).

A spectacular first stop in Kyoto to practice this ritual is the Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine with

its iconic, vermillion-red gates. After a two-hour climb to the top of the hill, you will reap the benefits of another beautiful vista of Kyoto.

THE CULINARY ARTS

If you're a first-time visitor to Japan, you may think that the food is all sushi, but that is just the tip of the culinary iceberg. From casual, standing-only *izakayas* (pubs) to formal *kaiseki* (multicourse) restaurants, the flavors of Japanese cuisine are complex, while the presentation is delicate and detailed. Favorite dishes run the gamut from land to sea, including yakitori (skewered meat), sashimi (thinly sliced raw fish), tempura (lightly battered and fried veggies or protein), ramen (wheat noodle soup), *shabu-shabu* (meat and vegetable hot pot), and *okonomiyaki* (savory wheat pancake). You won't go hungry in Japan!

THE GOLDEN PAVILION

Kinkaku-ji Temple, also known as the Golden Pavilion, is a three-story temple with two stories covered in gold leaf. Alone, it is one of the most impressive historic sites in Kyoto, but the Pavilion's beauty is amplified by its reflection in a small pond. The best times to visit and snap an Instagram-worthy moment are

early morning or late afternoon before you hit the town to explore the nightlife.

THE GION DISTRICT

Although Kyoto by day is a feast for your eyes and stomach, it has plenty to offer after dark. Gion is Kyoto's entertainment district, where you can relax on the side of the Kamo River with an Asahi beer or walk the narrow streets in search of an *izakaya*. Watch for the elegantly dressed geishas wearing white makeup, kimonos, and traditional wooden-block sandals.

THE ROUTE OF EMPERORS

Kyoto is the ideal place to immerse yourself in Japanese culture, history, and cuisine; however, if you seek being closer to nature and the *kami*, head to the Kii Peninsula via train for the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail. Amidst Japanese cedar forests, rice terraces, mountain rivers, hot springs, and waterfalls, you too can walk the Imperial Route just as the emperors once did. In fact, the Kumano Kodo—which was established to access all the peninsula's sacred areas—is an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It is now time to be mesmerized. Experience the rituals, witness the beauty, and savor the flavors of the Land of the Rising Sun. ■