



MORISTACK — SAMPLE GUIDE

Kyoto

4 Nights / 5 Days for a Couple

A sample deliverable — not a real customer's guide

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Sample Guide: Kyoto, 4 Nights / 5 Days for a Couple

This is a sample, built to show what a real MORISTACK Japan digital guide looks like. It is not a real customer's guide — your own guide would be built from your own request. It is not a confirmed itinerary, a day-by-day schedule, or a booking; it is a starting structure for you to research and book yourself.

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The request this guide was built from

This is an illustrative request, not a real customer.

Travellers	Two adults (a couple), no children
Trip length	4 nights / 5 days, Kyoto only
First time in Japan	Yes
Interests	Traditional architecture and gardens; being outdoors; a slow pace
Pace	Relaxed — one main area per day, no rushing between sites
Mobility	Comfortable walking, but wants to avoid long uphill climbs
Season	Not specified — written to work across seasons, with seasonal notes included

Arriving at Kyoto Station

If you're arriving by Shinkansen, Kyoto Station's layout catches almost every first-time visitor off guard, so it's worth reading this before you land. The biggest trap: the "Shinkansen Central Exit" (新幹線中央口) -- where you come out of the Shinkansen ticket gates -- is a different place from the station's separate "Central Exit" (中央口). Heading the wrong way from the Shinkansen gates puts you on the Hachijo side of the station, away from the city center.

For the city bus (useful for reaching Higashiyama and Gion on day one, and other days depending on your base): from the Shinkansen concourse, head toward the station's "Central Exit," not the Shinkansen Central Exit. It's marked by a curved, light-colored roof near Kyoto Tower. City bus stops are right outside.

For the subway (Karasuma Line -- useful for reaching a Shijo/Kawaramachi base): the most direct route is through the "Underground East Exit" (地下東口). From the paid area, head north past the West Ticket Gate and the Central Ticket Gate, and look for the escalator down once Kyoto Tower comes into view -- the subway is underground, so it's easy to walk straight past the entrance without noticing it.

This layout can shift when the station is under renovation, so treat the exit names as the thing to ask about or look for on signage, not a fixed walking route.

Source: [Kyoto City Official Travel Guide: navigating Kyoto Station](#)

The 5-day outline

Each day below is organized by area and theme, not by clock time. This is not a confirmed, minute-by-minute itinerary — it is a starting structure for you to research and book yourself, in whatever order and timing suits you once you're there. Each day has quick highlights first, then the full reasoning below, and map links to every named spot at the end.

Day 1 — Higashiyama & Gion — *Light* — arrival day



- Walk the preserved lanes of Sannenzaka and Ninenzaka
- Kiyomizu-dera's wooden stage and city view
- Yasaka Shrine, then Gion's lantern-lit streets in the evening

This guide deliberately keeps day one light. Most first-time visitors underestimate jet lag, and generic itineraries often front-load day one with too many sights. Here, day one is a single area, walked at an unhurried pace, with room to rest first if you need it.

Higashiyama is Kyoto's best-preserved historic district — sloped lanes (Sannenzaka and Ninenzaka), wooden machiya, small shops — leading up to Kiyomizu-dera, a hillside temple known for its wooden stage and city view. From there, a gentle walk downhill reaches Yasaka Shrine, on the boundary with Gion.

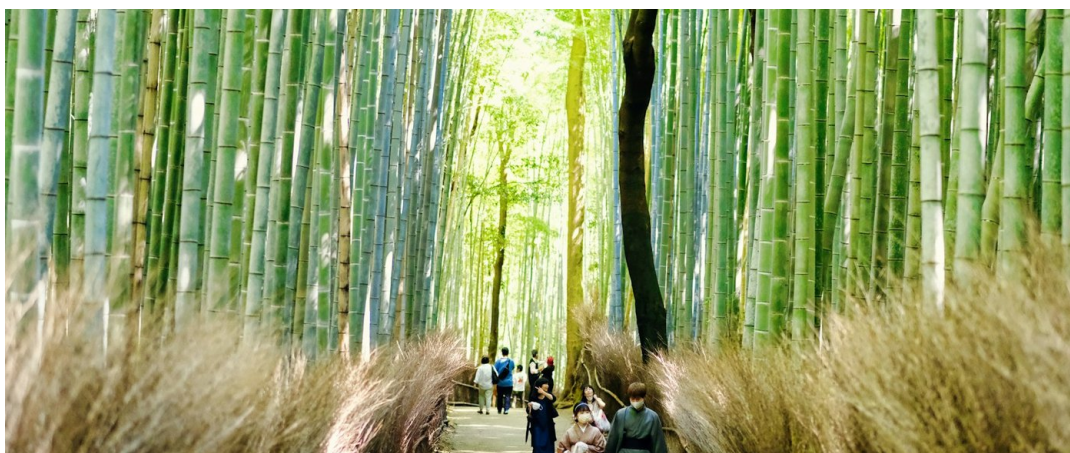
In the early evening, Gion's lantern-lit lanes are worth a slow walk. Some of these are private streets where photography is restricted — see the first-time-visitor notes below before you go.

Map links: • [Kyoto Station \(arrival\)](#) | • [Kiyomizu-dera](#) | • [Sannenzaka / Ninenzaka](#) | • [Yasaka Shrine](#) | • [Gion / Hanamikoji-dori](#)



Numbered pins match the map links above, in the same order.

Day 2 — Arashiyama — *Full day*



- Bamboo grove — walk it slowly, don't rush for the photo
- Tenryu-ji's UNESCO-listed garden
- Togetsukyo Bridge and the Katsura riverside

Arashiyama is the one area here where traditional architecture and nature sit within walking distance of each other — worth a full day rather than a half day.

The bamboo grove is the area's best-known sight — a short, shaded path through tall bamboo, best walked slowly rather than rushed for a photo. Nearby, Tenryu-ji is a UNESCO World Heritage temple with a pond garden considered one of the finest examples of Muromachi-period design. From there, it's a short walk to the Katsura River and Togetsukyo Bridge, a good spot to rest before heading back.

A scenic sightseeing railway (the Sagano Romantic Train) runs through the nearby river valley as a popular optional add-on. We've left it optional rather than building the day around it, since its schedule changes seasonally — confirm current timetables yourself if you want to add it (see the checklist).

Map links: • [Arashiyama Bamboo Grove](#) | • [Tenryu-ji](#) | • [Togetsukyo Bridge](#)



Numbered pins match the map links above, in the same order.

Day 3 — Fushimi Inari (morning) + Uji (afternoon) — *Full day, with a rail journey between the two*



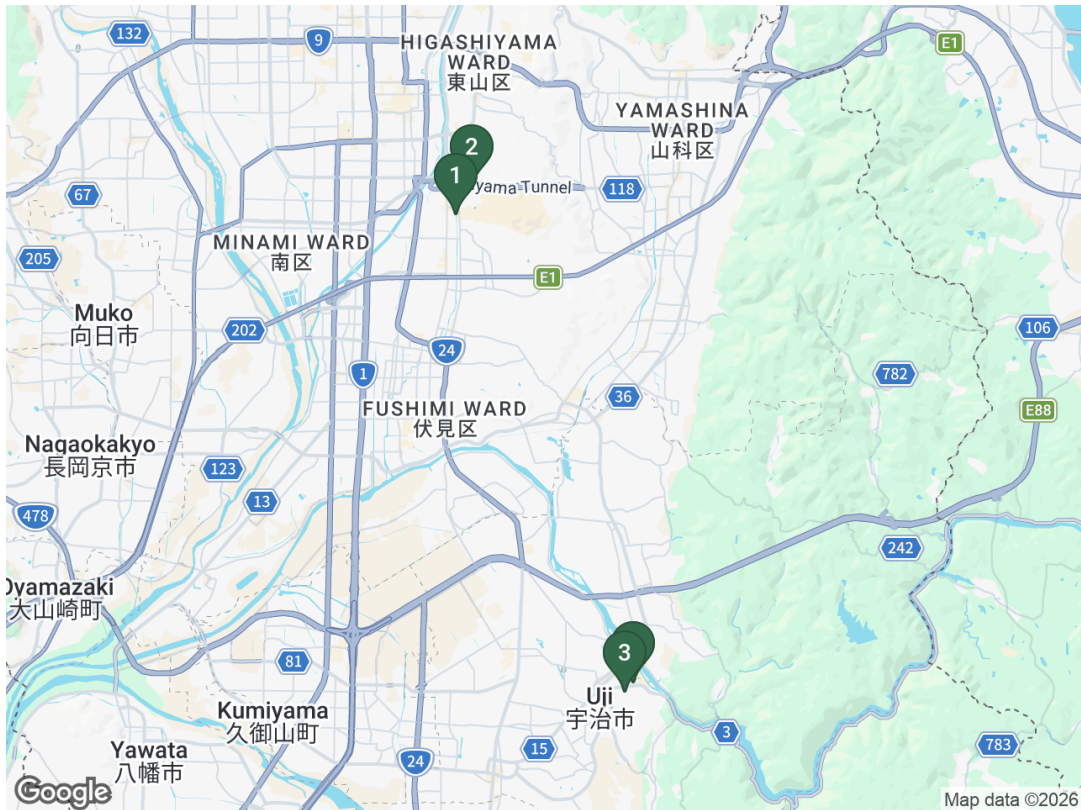
- Fushimi Inari's torii gates, early in the day
- Turn back at Yotsutsuji — the summit is optional, not the goal
- Uji in the afternoon: tea culture and a slow riverside walk

Fushimi Inari Taisha is best visited early, both for lighter crowds and cooler walking conditions — its thousands of vermilion torii gates form a path that climbs the mountain behind the shrine.

Important for this trip: you don't need to reach the summit. Many visitors turn back at Yotsutsuji, a four-way junction roughly partway up with an open view over the city, and treat it as a natural stopping point. Given the preference for avoiding long climbs, we'd treat Yotsutsuji as the goal, and go further only if it still feels comfortable.

In the afternoon, Uji is a quieter contrast — a town closely associated with Japanese tea culture, with a wide river through its center. Byodo-in, a Heian-period temple reflected in its own pond, is the area's best-known landmark. The pace is naturally relaxed: riverside walking, tea-focused shops as a district rather than any one storefront, no need to move quickly.

Map links: • [Fushimi Inari Taisha](#) | • [Yotsutsuji junction \(approx.\)](#) | • [Byodo-in, Uji](#) | • [Uji River](#)



Numbered pins match the map links above, in the same order.

Day 4 — Northern Higashiyama — *Full day, but flat and unhurried*



- Ginkaku-ji's moss and sand gardens
- The Philosopher's Path — close to flat, ~2 km
- Nanzen-ji and its Meiji-era brick aqueduct

This is the most couple-friendly, least strenuous day in the itinerary, and a good one to place mid-trip once the jet lag from day one has worn off.

Start at Ginkaku-ji (the Silver Pavilion), known for its moss garden and raked sand garden. From there, the Philosopher's Path follows a cherry-tree-lined canal for roughly two kilometers to Nanzen-ji — close to flat

the whole way, an easy, conversational walk rather than a hike.

Nanzen-ji, at the southern end, is a large Zen temple complex notable for a red-brick Meiji-era aqueduct running directly through the grounds — an unusual mix of Western engineering and traditional temple architecture.

Map links: • [Ginkaku-ji](#) | • [Nanzen-ji](#)



Numbered pins match the map links above, in the same order.

Day 5 — Nijo Castle — *Light* — departure day



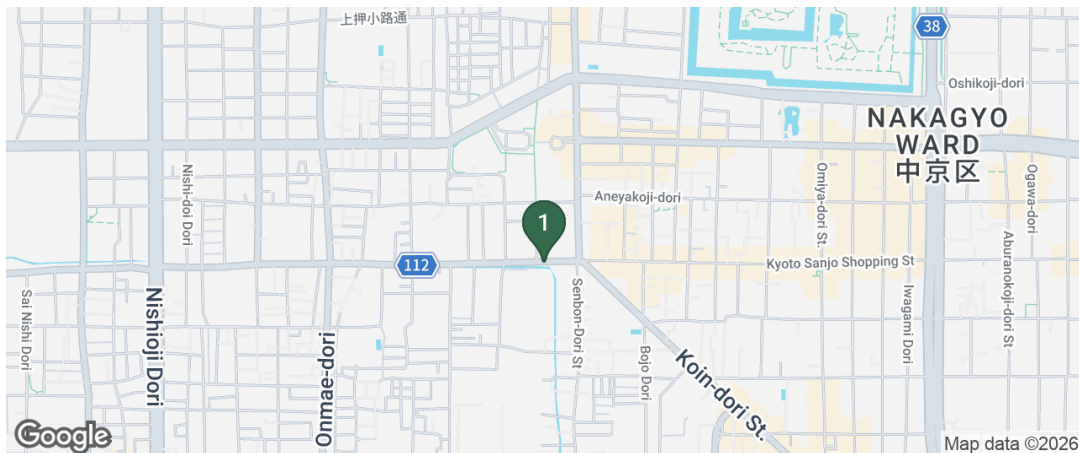
- Nijo Castle's reception halls and "nightingale floors"
- Fully subway-accessible — easy on a luggage day

The last day assumes you'll be travelling with your luggage, so it stays to a single, easy, subway-accessible destination rather than trying to fit in one more full day.

Nijo Castle is a fortified palace complex from the early Edo period, known for its ornate reception halls and "nightingale floors," designed to chirp underfoot as a security measure. Where days one through four center on temples, shrines, and nature, Nijo Castle closes the trip on a different note — palace and castle architecture.

The castle is reachable end-to-end by subway, which keeps this day simple on a morning when you may also be managing check-out and luggage.

Map links: • [Nijo Castle](#)



Numbered pins match the map links above, in the same order.

What we deliberately left out

Ohara, and the Kibune/Kurama area, both offer the kind of nature-forward, less-crowded scenery that would suit this trip's interests well. We considered both and left them out of this itinerary, not because they aren't worthwhile, but because they sit far enough from central Kyoto that fitting either in would mean a longer transit day, which runs against the relaxed, no-rushing pace this trip asked for.

If a future trip allows for one more day, either of these would be a natural addition — worth keeping in mind for next time rather than squeezing into this one.

Where to base yourself

Area	Works well for	Trade-off
Shijo / Kawaramachi	Central location, on the subway's Karasuma Line and within walking distance of private-rail stations (Hankyu, Keihan); reaches all five days without difficulty. Also has the widest range of business and mid-range hotels, so it tends to be one of the more budget-friendly areas to book.	A busy commercial district — less quiet, traditional atmosphere.
Kyoto Station area	Easiest for arrival and departure days; pairs well with the JR travel on day 2 and day 3. Similar price range to Shijo/Kawaramachi, with plenty of business-hotel options.	Less atmospheric, and a bit further from Higashiyama and Gion.
Gion / Higashiyama	The most atmospheric option; day 1 and day 4 are within easy walking distance.	Ryokan and higher-end stays are more common than business hotels here, so prices run higher; late-night transport is more limited.
Arashiyama	Lets you experience the bamboo grove and riverside early or late, before or after the crowds.	Far from every other day, and skews toward ryokan and higher-end stays rather than budget options — using it as a base adds both transit time and cost.

For this specific trip, we'd suggest Shijo/Kawaramachi for all four nights, with no mid-trip change of hotel. Day 1 and day 4 are reachable on foot or by a short bus ride, day 2 and day 3 are a short rail hop from nearby stations, and day 5 is still within easy reach of the subway — so there's no point in the trip where you're moving with luggage. A split stay (for example, two nights in Shijo and two nights in Higashiyama) would give you a more atmospheric couple of nights, but we didn't build it into this plan, because the cost of packing up and moving mid-trip works against the relaxed pace this trip asked for.

Getting around, day by day

We list which categories of transit serve each day, not specific lines, times, or fares — those change, and the exact best option depends on where you're staying.

Day 1: Mostly on foot. If based in the Shijo area, Higashiyama and Gion are within walking distance or a short bus ride.

Day 2: Arashiyama is reachable by JR, by a private railway, or by a local tram line — which is most convenient depends on where you're based.

Day 3: Fushimi Inari and Uji sit on the same JR line, so the whole day can be done without changing rail operators; a private-rail alternative also exists for part of the route.

Day 4: An efficient one-directional flow works well: bus up toward the Ginkaku-ji side, walk the Philosopher's Path down to the Nanzen-ji side, then subway back to your base.

Day 5: Fully reachable by subway, in both directions.

A note on bus and transit passes: Kyoto's day-pass products for city buses and the subway have changed more than once in recent years, including discontinuations aimed at easing overcrowding on buses. Rather than name a specific pass here, we'd suggest checking the Kyoto City transit authority's current information before your trip to see what day-pass options exist when you travel — it's on the self-research checklist.

First time in Japan: what's worth knowing

01 Temples and shrines close earlier than you might expect

Most stop admitting visitors well before evening, some considerably earlier. This is the single most common scheduling mistake first-time visitors make — build your day around finishing sightseeing by late afternoon, and confirm the actual last-entry time for anywhere you specifically want to see (see the checklist).

02 IC cards work across almost everything

A rechargeable IC transit card is generally usable across different train and bus operators, and often at convenience stores too, which is useful in a city like Kyoto where several different companies run the trains and buses. Exactly how you obtain and reload one can change, so we've left the specifics as a checklist item rather than stating them here as fixed.

03 Cash still matters

Card acceptance has grown a lot, but some smaller temple and shrine admission counters, and some small shops, are still cash-only or cash-preferred. Don't plan a full day around cards alone.

04 Bus boarding can be the reverse of what you're used to

Depending on where you're from, the door you board through and the point at which you pay may be reversed from your home country's convention. Watch what other passengers do, or check signage at the stop.

05 Photography restrictions in parts of Gion

Some of Gion's narrow private streets restrict photography, largely to protect the privacy of local residents and geiko/maiko who live and work there. Signage marks these streets clearly — the simplest approach is to follow whatever is posted rather than trying to remember a rule in advance.

06 Shrine and temple etiquette differ slightly

Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples have slightly different customs around approaching, bowing, and paying respects. Nothing here is complicated, but it's worth a quick read before you go so it doesn't feel unfamiliar in the moment.

07 Luggage can be a bigger logistical question than expected

Station coin lockers fill up quickly in busy periods, and whether your accommodation will hold bags before check-in or after check-out is worth confirming in advance rather than assuming. Luggage-forwarding services, which move bags between locations for you, are also an option some travelers use — worth knowing exists as a choice, even if it's not something this guide recommends specifically.

08 Some bookings are still phone-only

A number of smaller restaurants, ryokan, and experiences in Japan still take reservations by phone only, with no online option. This is simply a fact about how business is done in many places, not something specific to this itinerary.

09 You'll walk more than you think

Five days of Kyoto sightseeing adds up to more walking than most first-time visitors expect, even on the “light” days in this itinerary. Comfortable, broken-in shoes matter more than most other packing decisions.

10 The season changes the experience, not just the weather

Cherry blossom season (spring) and autumn foliage season draw significantly larger crowds to exactly the areas in this itinerary — the same walk that feels unhurried in a quieter month can feel very different during peak bloom or peak foliage weeks. If your dates fall in one of those windows, build in extra time and lower expectations around pace.

Self-research checklist

Anything that changes over time — hours, fees, fares, and schedules — belongs here, not fixed in the text above. Check each box yourself before you go.

- ☐ Confirmed opening hours and last-entry times for each place you plan to visit, for your actual travel dates
- ☐ Checked whether your travel dates fall on a holiday, closure day, or special/limited-viewing period at any of these sites
- ☐ If travelling during cherry blossom or autumn foliage season, factored in the likely crowd impact on pace and timing
- ☐ Checked for any major festivals or events on your dates that could affect crowds or access
- ☐ Confirmed with your accommodation whether they'll hold luggage before check-in or after check-out
- ☐ Checked the current IC transit card options — how to get one and how to reload it
- ☐ Checked whether a current day-pass option exists for buses or the subway, and what it covers
- ☐ Worked out how much cash you're likely to need, and where you can withdraw or exchange it

[] For anything that needs a reservation, confirmed whether it can be booked online or is phone-only

If the weather turns

Only the two outdoor-centered days have an alternative built in — the other three center on temple and shrine buildings that work in any weather.

Day 2 (Arashiyama): Both the bamboo grove and the riverside are outdoor, weather-exposed elements of this day. On a wet or very hot day, Tenryu-ji's temple buildings and covered garden-viewing areas offer an indoor-leaning alternative, and the covered shopping streets near the station area give you somewhere dry to spend part of the day without losing the area entirely.

Day 4 (Northern Higashiyama): The Philosopher's Path itself is fully outdoors. If the weather turns, both Ginkaku-ji and Nanzen-ji have indoor hall and pavilion areas you can spend more time in, and you can shorten the canal walk between them rather than skip the day — a taxi or bus can cover the same stretch if needed.

The map and the full guide

This sample pairs with a Google My Maps map, organized into layers by day. Open it here:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=19a8W7suUsgKI8YjH-zybQKBaFsoZTA>. The live web version of this sample is at: plan.moristack.com/sample. To start your own request, visit plan.moristack.com/request.

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