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Kyoto

Kyoto may be full of hushed streets steeped in tradition and hidden institutions run by kimono-clad custodians but don't be fooled: there's more to this captivating city than timeworn teahouses and graceful *geiko*. Japan's former capital has its own distinct identity, dialect and dishes, and beyond the Buddhist temples and Zen gardens you'll find a dynamic city that's constantly evolving. Slip off your shoes and step right in.

Need to know

Kyoto calling

- House rules:** If you're new to staying in a traditional *ryokan* (Japanese-style inn), don't expect to find a bed. After dinner, staff will roll out a futon mattress encased in crisp sheets and topped with a soft quilt.
- Local lingo:** Like most Japanese cities, Kyoto has its own dialect. Known as *Kyoto-ben* or *Kyo-kotoba*, it has a delicate, elegant intonation and pronunciation.
- By invitation only:** The business of *ichigen-san okotowari* – new customers not welcome without an introduction – has protected Kyoto's finest institutions and their loyal clientele for generations.
- Route finders:** Although the city centre is laid out in a grid, directions can be confusing. Both locals and taxis tend to locate a place by its proximity to two intersecting streets.
- Holey moley:** There will be plenty of times where you're asked to take off your shoes upon entering *ryokan*, restaurants and temples. Don't embarrass yourself by padding around in socks riddled with holes.

Hotels

Settle down

- The Ritz-Carlton Kyoto, Central**
Riverside peace and quiet

Local artisans have brought an authentic touch to the Ritz-Carlton's design, which incorporates tranquil Zen gardens and a collection of 400 works of contemporary Japanese art.
Kamogawa Nijo-Ohashi Hotori, Nakagyo-ku
+81 (0)75 746 5555
ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/japan/kyoto

- Hoshinoya Kyoto, West**
Traditional accommodation

A modern reinterpretation of Japan's traditional *ryokan*, Hoshinoya Kyoto has 25 rooms with river views, western beds and cedar bathtubs.
11-2 Genrokuzan-cho, Arashiyama, Nishikyoku-ku
+81 (0)50 3786 1144
hoshinoyakyo.jp

- Genhouin, East**
Serene setting

This peaceful five-room Japanese inn is housed in a century-old wooden building renovated by late architect Akira Watanabe.
77 Okazaki Hoshoji-cho, Sakyo-ku
+81 (0)75 752 1110
genhouin.co.jp

Food and drink

Plate expectations

- Shiki Nakamura, North**
Solo effort

Masai Nakamura trained in kitchens around Kyoto and is now a one-man operation, serving multicourse lunches and dinners. The corn, orange juice, edamame and cucumbers he uses are all sent directly from his parents' farm.
491-40 Nakatsukasa-cho, Kamigyo-ku
+81 (0)75 841 8515
shiki-nakamura.com

- Monk, Northeast**
Wood-fired wonders

Monk serves inventive contemporary cuisine using local ingredients. A master of wood-fired cooking, owner-chef Yoshihiro Imai starts early every morning, visiting farms in Ohara for fresh vegetables, herbs and flowers.
147 Jodoji Shimomomiamida-cho, Sakyo-ku
+81 (0)75 748 1154
restaurant-monk.com

- Honke Daiichi Asahi, Central**
All-day ramen

This decades-old shop is easily recognisable by its lengthy queue of diehard fans. They line up for the thick *tonkotsu* (ramen) with soy sauce – strong or weak – and green onion and bean sprout toppings.
845 Higashi Shiokoji Mukai hata-cho, Shimogyo-ku
+81 (0)75 351 6321
honke-daiichiasahi.com

- Rokuyosha, Central**
Coffeehouse-meets-bar

Rokuyosha was started by Minoru Otono and his wife in 1950 and today is run by their sons Takashi and Osamu. The ground floor opens at 08.30 to serve breakfast, while from 18.00 the wood-panelled basement becomes a bar.
36 Daikoku-cho, Nakagyo-ku
+81 (0)75 241 3026

- Bar K-ya, Central**
Whiskey a-go-go

Owner-bartender Junichi Kurono's extensive menu includes seasonal cocktails and Scottish and Japanese whiskies. Sit at the seven-metre-long African Bubinga wood counter and watch the exemplary bartenders in action.
103 Yaoya-cho, Nakagyo-ku
+81 (0)75 241 0489

Retail

Wondrous variety

- 45R, Central**
Dyeing to be worn

45R is famous for *aizome* (indigo) dyed clothes made in Japan. At the Kyoto branch you can find the brand's full line-up for men and women, including indigo-dye shirts, smart-casual tweed suits, Supima organic-cotton jeans and hand-woven Indian Khadi blouses.
61 Masuya-cho, Nakagyo-ku
+81 (0)75 252 0045
45rpm.co.jp

- Arts & Science, Central**
Mixed disciplines

South Korean-born, Hawaiian-raised Sonya Park made her name as a fashion stylist before founding Tokyo-based Arts & Science in 2003. She now has three shops in Kyoto, each offering thoughtfully made clothes and accessories.
459 Himokuchi-cho, Nakagyo-ku
+81 (0)75 253 0980
arts-science.com

- D&Department Kyoto, Central**
Kyoto-centric designs

Selling "long-life" designs specific to Kyoto, this shop is a joint venture between D&Department, Bukko-ji Buddhist temple and Kyoto University of Art and Design. Among the items on offer are saké made in Fushimi by Fujioka Shuzo.
397 Shinkai-cho, Shimogyo-ku
+81 (0)75 343 3217
d-department.com

- Naito Shoten, Central**
Brush with greatness

Sachiko Naito's shop near Sanjo Bridge sells a mix of handcrafted items, including traditional hand-tied scouring brushes made of *shuro* (hemp palm), brooms for sweeping tatami mats and artists' brushes made of sheep, boar and horse hair.
Sanjo Ohashi Nishizume, 112 Nakajima-cho, Nakagyo-ku
+81 (0)75 221 3018

Vocabulary

Talking the talk

- Conbini:** Convenience store
- Dori:** Street
- Geiko/maiko:** Geisha/trainee geisha
- Genkin/Kaado:** Cash/card
- Kanpai:** Cheers!



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