

PRINCETON
JOURNEYS

SOUL OF JAPAN

Osaka, Hiroshima, and Kyoto

October 15 – 25, 2027



With Bryan Lowe *12, Associate Professor of Religion

Dear Princetonian,

Join Princeton Journeys and discover a fascinating country where ancient customs, spiritual traditions, and modern innovation exist in remarkable harmony. This custom, Princeton-exclusive adventure showcases western Japan, from vibrant **Osaka** to **Nara**, **Hiroshima**, **Miyajima**, and **Kyoto**.

Explore Nara, where some of Japan's earliest Buddhist traditions took root; visit Hiroshima and the sacred island of Miyajima, home to the iconic floating torii gate and the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Itsukushima Shrine**; and enjoy three full days to explore the unparalleled cultural treasures of Kyoto, with visits to renowned temples, gardens, and landmarks including the **UNESCO-listed Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion)**.

Beyond Japan's iconic sights, this journey offers meaningful opportunities to engage with its living culture. Participate in hands-on experiences such as Japanese calligraphy, crane folding, and making *momiji manju*. Savor an array of unique flavors, from open-air food stall fare to exquisite kaiseki meals and a Zen Buddhist vegetarian lunch. Travel aboard the famed shinkansen bullet train; stroll through Koraku-en, one of Japan's Three Great Gardens; and relax with a traditional onsen experience at the Westin Miyako Kyoto.

With expert insight from Princeton Study Leader Bryan Lowe *12, knowledgeable local guides, and thoughtfully curated experiences, the **Soul of Japan** journey offers a deeper understanding of a country shaped by centuries of history, creativity, and resilience.

Bridget St. Clair

Bridget St. Clair
Director, Alumni Education and Travel
Princeton University



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WITH YOUR
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OR TABLET TO
REGISTER ONLINE



Bamboo forest, Kyoto

STUDY LEADER



Bryan Lowe *12 is an associate professor in the Department of Religion at Princeton. He specializes in Buddhism in ancient Japan. Lowe's first book, ***Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan***, received the John Whitney Hall Book Prize from the Association of Asian Studies, the most prestigious prize for books in Japan Studies. His second book, ***How Buddhism Spread in Japan, 650-850*** (September 2026), traces, for the first time, how Japan became Buddhist. Lowe has received generous support for his research from an ACLS Robert H. N. Ho Foundation fellowship, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Fulbright IIE, the Japan Foundation, and other organizations. Prior to coming to Princeton, he taught at Vanderbilt from 2012–2019. Before that, he received his PhD from Princeton's Department of Religion in 2012.

HIGHLIGHTS

Explore **Osaka Castle**, built in 1583 and now home to a multi-story museum

Visit the luminous **Temple of the Golden Pavilion**, Kinkaku-ji, and other breathtaking temples in Nara, Osaka, Ohara, and Kyoto

Participate in a series of **hands-on activities**, including momiji manju making, a calligraphy lesson, and crane folding

Marvel at the awe-inspiring and **iconic torii gate** on Miyajima Island

Savor the **flavors of Japan**, from simple vegetarian fare and open-air food stalls to exquisite *kaiseki* multi-course meals

Travel aboard the **high-speed rail shinkansen** ("bullet train") between Osaka and Hiroshima and from Hiroshima to Kyoto

Walk the paths of **one of Japan's Three Great Gardens**, Koraku-en, which symbolizes the moon and dates back to the 17th century

Experience a quintessential hot springs soak at the **on-site onsen** at the Westin Miyako Kyoto





Buddha, Todai-ji Temple, Nara



Peace Memorial Park, Hiroshima

ITINERARY

Friday-Saturday, October 15-16

Home / Osaka, Japan

Depart home on overnight flights to Osaka, Japan. Upon arrival on October 16 at Kansai International Airport, transfer with the group to the Imperial Hotel Osaka. Take time to relax and settle in after your journey. The remainder of the day is at leisure to rest or explore independently. IMPERIAL HOTEL OSAKA

Sunday, October 17

Nara / Osaka

Begin the day with a brief orientation followed by the first lecture of the program's educational series. Travel to Nara, Japan's ancient capital. Explore the city's remarkable heritage with visits to Todai-ji Temple, home to the world's largest bronze statue of Buddha, and Kasuga Taisha Shrine. Return to Osaka this evening for a private welcome dinner with your fellow travelers. IMPERIAL HOTEL OSAKA (B,L,D)

Monday, October 18

Osaka

Explore Osaka, beginning with a visit to Osaka Castle, a historic landmark built in the 16th century and now home to a multi-story museum, then continue to Shitenno-ji Temple, one of Japan's oldest Buddhist temples. Enjoy dinner at leisure this evening, with an optional nighttime walking and tasting tour through the

vibrant Dotonbori district, known for its lively atmosphere, neon lights, and renowned culinary scene with open-air food stalls lining pedestrian walkways. IMPERIAL HOTEL OSAKA (B,L)

Tuesday, October 19

Osaka / Hiroshima

Depart Osaka by shinkansen (bullet train) for Hiroshima. Enjoy Hiroshima's local specialty, okonomiyaki, for lunch before visiting the Atomic Bomb Dome and Peace Memorial Park and Museum, which offer a powerful reflection on the city's history and its enduring message of peace. Continue to Orizuru Tower for an origami crane demonstration. This evening, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant. SHERATON GRAND HIROSHIMA HOTEL (B,L,D)

Wednesday, October 20

Miyajima / Hiroshima

Begin the day with a lecture from your study leader before traveling by ferry to the sacred island of Miyajima, considered one of Japan's most scenic destinations. Visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Itsukushima Shrine and its iconic torii gate, which appears to float above the water at high tide. Enjoy a hands-on *momiji manju* making experience, followed by lunch on the island and time to explore its charming streets, natural beauty, and

historic surroundings at your own pace. Return by ferry to Hiroshima, with dinner at leisure this evening.
SHERATON GRAND HIROSHIMA HOTEL (B,L)

Thursday, October 21
Hiroshima / Okayama / Kyoto

Depart Hiroshima by shinkansen (bullet train) for Okayama. Visit Koraku-en Garden, one of Japan's Three Great Gardens, a beautifully preserved 17th-century landscape featuring tranquil ponds, winding pathways, and carefully designed views that reflect traditional Japanese garden aesthetics. Continue by train to Kyoto, Japan's cultural heart, and walk to a local restaurant for dinner this evening.
WESTIN MIYAKO KYOTO (B,L,D)

Friday, October 22
Kyoto

Begin the day with visits to Ryoan-ji, home to one of Japan's most famous Zen rock gardens, and Kinkaku-ji (Temple of the Golden Pavilion), a stunning landmark covered in gold leaf and reflected in a tranquil pond. Continue to Tenryu-ji Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, for a traditional *shojin ryori* lunch featuring Zen Buddhist vegetarian cuisine, followed by a stroll through the bamboo forest followed by an afternoon calligraphy lesson. Enjoy dinner at leisure this evening to experience one of Kyoto's acclaimed restaurants.
WESTIN MIYAKO KYOTO (B,L)

Saturday, October 23
Kyoto / Ohara
Attend a third study leader lecture before traveling north to the peaceful village of Ohara. Visit Sanzenin Temple, renowned for its serene moss gardens, and Hōsen-in Temple, celebrated for its beautiful garden views, where you will also enjoy tea. Stop for lunch at a local restaurant before returning to the hotel for time at leisure. Relax in the Keage Onsen or explore the nearby Wild Bird Sanctuary at your own pace.
WESTIN MIYAKO KYOTO (B,L,D)

Sunday, October 24
Kyoto
Visit Kiyomizu-dera Temple, one of Kyoto's most celebrated landmarks, before strolling along the scenic Philosopher's Path and exploring Ginkaku-ji Temple, the Silver Pavilion. Continue with a visit to a traditional tea shop before gathering this evening for a farewell dinner featuring a maiko performance.
WESTIN MIYAKO KYOTO (B,L,D)

Monday, October 25
Kyoto / Home
Transfer by group coach to Kansai International Airport for return flights home. Alternatively, extend your journey with a post-trip extension to Kanazawa, a city celebrated for its preserved historic districts, traditional arts, and cultural heritage. (B)

**PROGRAM RATES
PER PERSON**
\$10,990 per person, double rate
\$3,000 single supplement

**POST-TRIP EXTENSION
RATES PER PERSON**
\$3,790 per person, double rate
\$1,050 single supplement



Kinkaku-ji, Kyoto

POST EXTENSION ITINERARY

Monday, October 25

Kyoto / Kanazawa

Depart the hotel for Kyoto Station and board the JR express train to Kanazawa. Upon arrival, visit Omicho Fish Market, a lively marketplace known for its fresh seafood and local specialties, followed by a visit to Gyokus-en Garden, one of Kanazawa's oldest private gardens, with a traditional tea ceremony experience. Check into the Hyatt Centric Kanazawa before walking to a local restaurant for dinner.
Hyatt Centric Kanazawa (B,L,D)

Tuesday, October 26

Kanazawa

Enjoy a full day in Kanazawa, a city celebrated for its traditional crafts, artistic heritage, and cultural treasures. Visit a Kutani pottery kiln to learn about this distinctive style of Japanese ceramics, participate in a hands-on *wagashi* sweet-making workshop, and explore the D.T. Suzuki Museum, dedicated to the renowned philosopher and writer. Enjoy the evening at leisure with dinner on your own.

Hyatt Centric Kanazawa (B,L)

Wednesday, October 27

Kanazawa / Shirakawa-go

Travel to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go, a picturesque mountain village known for its traditional *gassho-zukuri* farmhouses and preserved rural landscapes. Explore this remarkable village before returning to Kanazawa for a festive farewell dinner at a local restaurant.
Hyatt Centric Kanazawa (B,L,D)

Thursday, October 28

Kanazawa / Home

After breakfast, transfer with the group to Komatsu Airport for return flights home. (B)

GENERAL INFORMATION

PROGRAM RATES INCLUDE:

All accommodations, meals, and excursions as specified in the itinerary, including nine breakfasts, eight lunches, and five dinners • All coach, ferry, and train travel • Comprehensive program of briefings, lectures and presentations • Group motorcoach transfer from Kansai International Airport to Osaka hotel on October 16 and from the hotel in Kyoto to Kansai International Airport on October 25 • Baggage handling, including luggage trucks • Gratuities to porters, waitstaff, guides, and drivers • Entrance fees • House wine, beer, and soft drinks with lunches and dinners • Professional tour manager and Japanese guide throughout the program

PROGRAM RATES DO NOT INCLUDE:

U.S. domestic and international airfare • Passport/visa expenses • Medical expenses and immunizations • Private airport transfers and transfers outside of group arrival and departure dates/times • Travel and trip cancellation insurance • Excursions that deviate from the scheduled tour options • Airline baggage charges • Meals not specified in the itinerary; dishes and beverages not part of the included meals; alcoholic beverages or soft drinks except as noted • Laundry or dry cleaning • Telephone, Internet and email charges • Room service • Other items of a personal nature

AIR ARRANGEMENTS

U.S. domestic and international airfare is not included in the program rates. Valerie Wilson Travel, Inc., can help with airline arrangements for this trip and can be reached at 877-376-1754 or by e-mail at tourflights@vwti.com. You are also welcome to book your air transportation through your local travel agent, an online travel site, or the airline of your choice. Further information about making flight arrangements will be sent to confirmed participants.

WHAT TO EXPECT

This program is moderately active and requires a good level of physical fitness. Travelers should expect daily walking up to three miles through cities, gardens, temples, shrines, and historic districts, often on uneven surfaces, stone pathways, and stairs. Some cultural sites may have limited accessibility, with few elevators or handrails. Comfortable walking shoes are essential, and participants should be prepared to be on their feet for extended periods.

The itinerary includes travel by coach, ferry, and Japan's renowned shinkansen (bullet train), as well as multiple hotel stays. While Japan's transportation system is efficient and easy to navigate with the group, travelers should be comfortable managing personal belongings during transfers and walking portions of the program.

October is one of the most pleasant times to visit western Japan, with comfortable temperatures and the beginning of the autumn foliage season. Weather can vary between destinations, so layered clothing and a light jacket are recommended.

Hotels throughout the program will be western-style accommodations with amenities similar to upscale hotels in the United States. The itinerary includes stays in Osaka, Hiroshima, and Kyoto, with an optional extension to Kanazawa. Travelers will also have the opportunity to experience traditional Japanese customs, including a tea ceremony, an onsen (hot spring) experience, and visits to historic temples and shrines.

This educational journey combines cultural exploration, hands-on activities, and meaningful encounters with Japan's history and traditions. Highlights include UNESCO World Heritage Sites, expert-led lectures, local guides, traditional cuisine, and experiences such as calligraphy, *momiji manju* making, and a farewell dinner featuring a maiko performance.

Meals are included as noted in the itinerary, with select meals at leisure to allow travelers to sample Japan's diverse culinary offerings independently. Participants should be open to experiencing different dining customs and regional specialties throughout the program.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance for trip cancellation and interruption, medical problems, baggage loss and delay, etc., is highly recommended. Trip cancellation policies that apply to this expedition are included in this brochure. Information about travel insurance will be sent to confirmed participants.

GROUP SIZE

This Princeton exclusive program welcomes up to 30 participants.

A NOTE ABOUT RATES

Tour rates are based upon current fuel prices, currency values, taxes, tariffs, and a minimum number of participants. While we will do everything possible to maintain the listed rates, they are subject to change. If there are significant changes, details and costs will be advised prior to departure.

RESERVATIONS & PAYMENTS

Reserve your space online at https://account.criteriontravel.com/Booking/RefStart/PJ/271015_JPL_PJ/tour or mail the completed reservation form with your \$1,000 per person deposit to: Princeton Journeys, P.O. Box 5256, Princeton, NJ 08543. Balance of payment is June 17, 2027. After June 17, 2027, full payment is due upon registration. Final payment may be made by check, wire transfer or credit card (credit card payments will incur a processing fee of 2%).

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

Upon payment of the \$1,000 per person deposit, all reservations are subject to the cancellation provisions set forth below and by which the passenger agrees to be bound. Cancellations shall not be in effect until they are received in writing and confirmed by Princeton Journeys. Deposits are refundable (less a \$250 per person admin fee) if written notice of cancellation is received within 30 days of booking; after that, deposits are 100% nonrefundable. After the June 17, 2027 final payment deadline, all payments are 100% nonrefundable, regardless of booking date. Trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. **NOTE:** Neither Princeton Journeys nor Criterion Travel, the tour operator, accepts liability for any airline cancellation penalties incurred with the purchase of non-refundable tickets.

ITINERARY CHANGES

The itinerary presented for this tour is subject to modification and change by Princeton Journeys and Criterion Travel, the tour operator. Every reasonable effort will be made to operate the program as planned; however, should unforeseen world events and conditions require the itinerary to be altered, Princeton Journeys and the tour operator reserve the right to do so for the safety and best interest of the group. Any extra expenses incurred in this situation are the responsibility of the participant.

DISCLAIMER

Princeton University is pleased to facilitate travel opportunities for its Alumni and Friends through Princeton Journeys. Princeton Journeys works with tour operators to make available interesting and enriching travel opportunities for the Princeton family. Please note that neither the University nor Princeton Journeys conducts tours, nor does either act as an agent for guests interested in tours. Princeton Journeys acts as a facilitator with tour operators, and tour participants contract directly with tour operators to make arrangements for completing travel. Princeton Journeys encourages you to familiarize yourself thoroughly with the tour operator's cancellation and refund policies, and also to investigate available services such as trip cancellation insurance. The University is not responsible for changes to trips or travel arrangements or for losses or additional expenses resulting from travel. Complete program terms can be found: <https://alumni.princeton.edu/connect/princeton-journeys/terms-and-conditions>.

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Cover photo: Osaka Castle.
Back cover: Itsukushima Shrine, Miyajima (left) and Shitenno-ji Temple, Osaka (right).

SOUL OF JAPAN

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REGISTER FOR SOUL OF JAPAN

Please use the QR code above or click [here](#) to reserve your space online. You may also make your deposit check payable to Criterion Travel and mail to: Princeton Journeys, P.O. Box 5256 Princeton, NJ 08543. For more information or to reserve by phone, contact Princeton Journeys at journeys@princeton.edu or (609) 258-8686.

Name #1 (as it appears on passport) Princeton Affiliation

Name #2 (as it appears on passport) Princeton Affiliation

Mailing Address

City / State / Zip

Home Phone Mobile Phone

Email #1

Email #2

Payment Information

☐ Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ (\$1,000 per person), payable to Criterion Travel, to reserve _____ place(s) on Soul of Japan

☐ Please charge \$1,000 per person to my credit card (check one)
☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ AmEx

Name on credit card

Card # Exp. Date / CVV Security Code

Cardholder signature Date

Accommodations (not guaranteed)

Bed preference: ☐ One bed ☐ Two beds

Single Traveler (choose one)

☐ I prefer single accommodations (limited availability)
☐ I plan to share accommodations with: _____

I understand that if a roommate cannot be found by the final payment deadline of June 17, 2027, I will pay the single rate.

I/We have read the tour information section of the brochure and agree to the Terms and Conditions stated therein.

Signature (required) Date

Signature (required) Date

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