JAPAN TEXTILES & HANDCRAFTS TOUR

2–16 NOVEMBER 2027

retreat|recreate is delighted to present this 14 night/15-day women's-only textile & handcrafts tour of Japan.

Come and explore this fascinating country through the lens of its textile and handcraft traditions.

Visit specialist textile and handcraft museums, artisan studios and galleries, a flea market, temples & shrines and the cultural sites of Tokyo, Arimatsu and Kyoto. Participate in multiple hands-on workshops and handcraft experiences in silk weaving, kumihimo (braiding), bamboo tea whisk making, shibori, kintsugi, sashiko, ikat weaving and botanical dyeing.

Enjoy a traditional tea ceremony, engage with local artists, be inspired by incredible design and craftsmanship, shop for amazing textiles and handcrafts, and experience traditional Japanese culture and hospitality, all in the company of a small group (max. 12 women) of likeminded textile enthusiasts.

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ITINERARY

as at November 2026



Day 1 ***2 November***

TOKYO

Konnichiwa! Welcome to Japan! Make your way to our Tokyo hotel and rest and relax after your flight.

There will be a tour briefing this evening in the lobby of the hotel at 5:00pm (TBC). You'll receive your Welcome Pack and meet your guide and fellow travellers.

Following the briefing meeting you'll enjoy a **welcome dinner** at a delightful local restaurant.

Please arrange a flight arrival time (allowing for possible flight and traffic delays) that allows you to participate in the 5pm briefing meeting. You may wish to arrive a day or two earlier – we can assist with pre tour accommodation, subject to availability.

Meals: Dinner



Day 2 ***3 November***

TOKYO

Today, dive straight into your handcrafts itinerary with your first hands-on workshop, an indigo dyeing class.

Learn the art of creating 'Japan Blue' from a team of dye specialists and dye a scarf of your very own, using a variety of shibori techniques including pleating, clamping, folding or twisting.

A group lunch has been arranged (at own cost) at a delightful restaurant overlooking the Sumida River in downtown Asakusa.

In the afternoon explore the stunning **Sensoji Temple** before your next workshop, learning all about kintsugi, the art of repairing broken ceramics with gold powder and lacquer. Kintsugi, meaning 'golden seams', can be seen as a metaphor for embracing all of life's flaws, much like the Western trend of visible mending.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch











Day 3	***4 November***	***Day 4***	***5 November***	***Day 5***	***6 November***	***Day 6***	***7 November***	***Day 7***	***8 November***

TOKYO

This morning kick off the day with a visit to the private home of a renowned **kimono scholar and enthusiast**. Your colourful and very knowledgeable host will deliver a fascinating presentation on the history and types of kimono, display her own collection of kimono and obi, explain how they're made and generally answer all your kimono-related questions. It promises to be a morning to remember.

After lunch head to the fascinating **Edo Open Air Architecture Museum**. Stroll leafy streets filled with preserved Japanese houses and shops from various periods. Experience Japanese daily life in different eras, from the humble 200 year old farmhouse to the magnificent 20th century home of a local noble. The museum is always a favourite destination for our groups who enjoy the architecture but also the opportunity to appreciate the broader context within which the local handcraft traditions sit.

Meals: Breakfast

TOKYO

Kumihimo is the Japanese art of silk braidmaking. This morning, tour one of Tokyo's premier kumihimo studios, learn all about this ancient craft, and then learn how to use the traditional tools to create your own braided item in a private workshop just for our group.

After lunch explore the wonder that is **Nippori Textile Town** (or enjoy some free time). This entire street is filled with fabric shops, and every other textile delight you can imagine – haberdashery, leather, buttons, patterns, upholstery, quilting fabrics, silks, cottons, linens, second hand kimonos, and yet more fabric. Even if shopping isn't your thing, you're sure to find inspiration here.

Meals: Breakfast

TOKYO

This morning, visit the excellent **Japan Folkcraft (mingei) Museum,** filled with a stunning range of *mingei* (literally, craft of the common folk) items including ceramics, woodwork, basketry, textiles and cloth. A visit to this gallery is a marvellous introduction to the traditional handcrafts of Japan, providing an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the philosophy of aesthetics and the importance of the handmade in Japanese daily life.

In the late morning you'll enjoy a presentation at an exciting, high end **textile company** known for its innovative incorporation of technology to create fabric masterpieces. One of the designers will host the group and deliver a talk on her design process. It's always an incredibly inspiring visit.

There'll be some free time this afternoon, for your final day in Tokyo.

Meals: Breakfast

ARIMATSU

Pack an overnight bag as our luggage will be sent ahead to Kyoto today.

Leaving the bright lights of Tokyo, head by bullet train to the pretty town of **Arimatsu**, famous for its old district featuring beautiful *machiya* (traditional wooden buildings), and because it is Japan's famous shibori town.

Exploration of Japan's shibori traditions begins at the **Shibori Museum** where there are usually a few artisans on site demonstrating their craft. It's mind blowing to watch these master craftswomen tie the world's tiniest knots completely by hand at breakneck speed, readying the intricately patterned cloth for dyeing.

After the museum, visit a studio belonging to a **shibori artist** famous for his 'arashi' shibori cloth. Arashi means storm, and this particular pattern resembles the slanted rain in a heavy thunderstorm.

You'll spend tonight in **Nagoya**, the city most convenient to Arimatsu. Our Japanese style hotel has its own onsen so tonight's the night for a lovely soak!

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

KYOTO

This morning we are very excited to announce another very special experience, with a shibori workshop with the experts from what is probably the world's most famous and high-end company specialising in shibori. We are incredibly proud to be able to offer our groups the chance to learn from them. There'll also be the chance to visit their shop where you can admire, browse and purchase (if you wish) their stunning wares.

There'll be some free time to browse the remaining shibori studios and shops in Arimatsu's main street, then it's time to board the shinkansen to beautiful Kyoto!

Your luggage will be waiting for you at our lovely Kyoto hotel, which is centrally located and surrounded by the city's best restaurants and shops. We can recommend some excellent places to dine this evening.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 8 9 November

KYOTO

This morning you'll experience a quintessential Japanese experience – browsing one of its most famous (and best) **flea markets** in the grounds of a beautiful temple. There'll be antiques, bric a brac, textiles, basketry and all manner of treasures to explore and perhaps take home a bargain (or just a memory if you prefer).

Another of the highlights of our textiles and handcraft itinerary is a private sashiko workshop. You'll spend the morning learning all things sashiko and will each stitch your own envelope style pouch, perfectly designed to carry a pair of chopsticks, important documents or whatever you desire.

Before heading home, take a walk through the thousand orange torii gates of the stunning and iconic **Fushimi Inari Shrine**.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 9 10 November

KYOTO

Today it's time to learn all about The Way of Tea, in a private **Tea Ceremony**. This exquisite ceremony offers an insightful part of Japanese traditional culture.

Next, tune into the city's spiritual side with a visit to its most famous Zen temple, the UNESCO World Heritage listed and extraordinary **Kinkakuji Temple, otherwise known as the Golden Pavilion** as its two uppermost storeys are covered in gold leaf.

Nearby is **Ryoanji**, a beautiful temple and garden, featuring Japan's most famous rock garden. The raked gravel garden includes 15 carefully placed rocks, designed so you can never see all 15 no matter your viewing position.

Kyoto has flourished during its 1000 year long history. It's in this city that many aspects of Japanese culture were born, and the city enjoys a global reputation as a centre for traditional and modern craftsmanship. At the **Kyoto Traditional Craft & Design Museum** you'll learn about some of Kyoto's multitude of traditional handcrafts.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 10 11 November

KYOTO

More textile exploration today, beginning with a visit to a traditional silk weaving studio established in 1894. The third generation weaver will explain the studio's history and show examples of both traditional silk woven designs for kimono, obi and other high end textiles, and their own contemporary interpretations, all executed on enormous traditional floor looms for customers including the Imperial family, Japanese government and prestigious religious organisations. A tour of the weaving rooms follows, and the group can enjoy a silk weaving workshop on one of the traditional looms and weave a small piece of silk each.

In the afternoon, tour a **kyo-yuzen dyeing studio,** where they practise the traditional Kyoto style dyeing of cloth, while always developing new techniques and methods. You'll tour the impressive studio with its massive printing tables and thousands of silk screen templates. Kyo-yuzen dyeing originated from traditional hand drawn yuzen dyeing techniques developed in the 17th century, but its origins are from the 8th century!

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 11 12 November

KYOTO

Today features a very exciting day trip and a full day of textile workshops. Travel by private coach to a tiny village to visit the home and studio of two very inspiring weavers. One is an accomplished and well known ikat weaver, famous for putting a very modern spin on traditional Japanese ikat. His work is truly beautiful, as is his partner's modern, innovative and sculptural weaving.

The group will be split into two groups of six. One group will learn the art of weft kasuri (*kasuri* is Japanese ikat, in which the weft is resist dyed prior to being woven through a plain warp, to create a pattern), while the other group will learn the art of dyeing variegated yarn with multiple colours. After lunch, the two groups will swap activities.

It's always an inspiring day of textile and handcraft workshops among the stunning rural mountain scenery and a highlight of our Japan textile tours.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Day 12 13 November

KYOTO

Deep in the heart of Nishijin, Kyoto's textiles district, is a famous **indigo dye studio** and bespoke shop of a family of extraordinary and inspiring dye masters. Your highly knowledgeable hosts will deliver a talk on traditional indigo dyeing and its associated techniques (shibori, katazome, sashiko etc) and introduce you to the studio's extensive collection of antique textiles.

This will be followed by a visit to a studio specialising in **tsuzure ori, or silk tapestry weaving**. The master weaver spent over forty years working as a master weaver at Japan's premier textile and weaving school before retiring to open his own studio. He will show the group around his tiny, atmospheric workspace and explain (and demonstrate) the techniques and history of the extraordinary tsuzure ori weaving, in which the weaver uses his or her specially serrated fingernail as the beater. It's truly as astonishing as it sounds.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 13 14 November

KYOTO

This morning, stroll around Gion, the famous geisha district, full of wooden tea houses and beautiful restaurants overlooking the river.

Then, it's off to another of Kyoto's famous handcrafts district – the **ceramics district**. We've scheduled a visit to the **Kawai Kanjiro House, an exquisite private family-run museum** that was once the home and studio of the late renowned and revered potter and co founder of the *mingei* movement, Kawai Kanjiro. The serene interior of the beautiful traditional wooden house is sure to inspire you, as is the enormous six chambered community 'climbing kiln' at the rear of the garden.

The afternoon is free for your own personal exploration, shopping or relaxation.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 14 15 November

KYOTO

Day trip to **Nara** today! Home of the famous Todai-ji temple, the temple's giant Buddha, the Kasuga Taisha Shinto shrine and the famous deer park, Nara is a lovely day out from Kyoto.

In addition to exploring beautiful Nara, we have lined up a tea whisk making class and demonstration. *Chasen* are the traditional bamboo whisks used when making matcha, or green tea. Carved from a single piece of bamboo, a chasen is instrumental in traditional Japanese tea ceremonies. The studio we'll visit is one of Japan's best, providing bespoke chasen to the imperial family and other noble families. This chasen studio is in a beautiful garden setting in an out of the way village where there are now only a few families making chasen the traditional way. Originally, the artisans in this village used to carve their chasen at night, to prevent intruders peeking in to observe their secret traditions!

This evening, gather for your farewell dinner. A chance to reflect on these two wonder-filled weeks together!

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner



Day 15 16 November

KYOTO

Your tour comes to an end today after breakfast. There are no activities planned for today and you are welcome to depart at any time. The hotel check out time is 11:00am unless you have booked a late check out, or are staying on for an extra day or two.

A list of suggested activities, venues, restaurants and handcraft shops and studios will be provided to travellers closer to departure, to help you plan your free time and/or additional days.

Meals: Breakfast

Price:

- Twin share: AUD$9950 per person
- Single supplement: AUD$1500

Inclusions:

- 14 nights/15 days accommodation as per itinerary
- 14 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 3 dinners
- Transport: trains, shinkansen, private coach, buses, taxis
- Hands-on handcraft & textiles workshops and experiences, artisan talks and demonstrations, studio visits, tea ceremony
- Entrance to all museums, galleries and excursion venues
- Luggage transfer between cities
- Services of local English-speaking accredited guide

Exclusions:

- International airfares
- Arrival & departure transfers
- Travel insurance
- Early check in or late check out
- Personal spending (souvenirs, laundry, phone, shopping etc)
- Meals and drinks not included in the itinerary
- Tip for the guide at conclusion of tour

Notes:

- The itinerary must be read in conjunction with the Booking Conditions, and the Trip Notes, to ensure the trip is right for you. Before completing an application form, please ensure you read the health and safety notes, and mobility expectations.
- Maximum group size is 12
- Minimum group size is 8
- We no longer pair up solo travellers on our Japan itineraries due to the small size of Japanese hotel rooms. Twin share rooms are only available to friends/relatives travelling together.
- The itinerary is full to ensure value for money, although there are short periods of free time. We recommend you add a few days before and/or after the tour for further exploration.
- This tour is fully escorted by one of our excellent Japanese English-speaking guides only. There will ***not*** be a retreat|recreate host accompanying this trip.