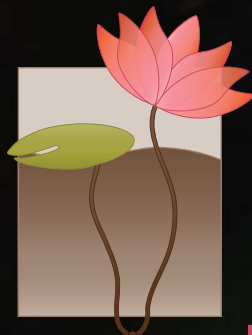


Sacred Japan

Koya-san & Kyoto

29 OCTOBER – 6 NOVEMBER 2010



inspired
traveller



*Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom,
at the moon only when it is cloudless?*

*To long for the moon while looking on the rain,
to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing
of the spring – these are even more deeply moving.*

*Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with
faded flowers are worthier of our admiration.*

Kenko Yoshida (from *Essays in Idleness*)

真言紅葉平安高野山京



Monks in the 'Garan' temple complex, Koya-san.
Photo courtesy of Varuni Kanagasundaram.

高野山京都真言紅葉平

Overview of Tour

BACKGROUND AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JOURNEY

Steeped in ancient traditions, spiritual practices and rituals, both *Koya-san* (Mt Koya) and *Kyoto* are ideal settings to experience the beauty and wonders of sacred Japan. *Koya-san* is a small world-heritage town high in the mountains and is perhaps Japan's most renowned spiritual location. It is home to *Shingon* (mystical/esoteric) *Buddhism*, with its emphasis on inner understanding and harmony between people and nature. *Kyoto*, the ancient capital, is especially loved for its superb gardens, serene temples and shrines, and old-world charm. Each of these unforgettable destinations truly captures the essence of Japan's rich cultural, spiritual and aesthetic traditions.

Some Highlights Include:

- Talks and discussions with Stephanie Dowrick on the priceless art of seeing deeply; Shingon Buddhism and its inspirations in our own lives; peace of mind practices; Haiku and journal writing.
- Staying in an exquisite traditional Shingon temple lodging and joining some of the daily rituals.
- Following a path through tall cedars and cypresses to reach *Okuno-in*, *Koya-san*'s most sacred site with its 200,000 tombs and its monuments to past emperors, shoguns and poets, and to the founder of Shingon who dwells in "eternal meditation".
- Experiencing a blessing ritual and meditative chants from one of *Koya-san*'s senior monks.

- Exploring the arts and crafts of *Kyoto* with a special emphasis on the Heian period and the weaving district.
- Strolling through "living art": the gardens of *Kyoto* on a private tour.
- Visiting the fascinating *Golden Pavilion* and the *Rengeo Temple* with its 1001 800-year-old statues of *Kannon* (*Kwan Yin*), goddess of compassion and mercy.
- Cultivating the exquisite practice of *Haiku* at *Kyoto*'s *Funaoka* mountain.

TALKS AND DAILY WORKSHOPS

Whenever our schedule allows it, Stephanie Dowrick will guide us in starting our day with a session of enlightening meditation. This will beautifully balance the easy, approachable *Tai Chi* with *William Suganda* that we will enjoy in *Koya-san*. Weaving through our time together, Stephanie will lead a series of informal but highly informative short workshops, with plenty of time for questions and discussion. Listening and discussing as a group – and getting to know one another around uplifting topics – will be a highlight of our time together. Stephanie's talks will help us to discover more about: *Koya-san*, home to *Shingon* (mystical/esoteric) *Buddhism*; contemporary *Buddhism* in the West and in *Japan*; *Kannon/Kwan Yin* – goddess of compassion; *Shintoism* – *Japan*'s original religion; practical everyday meditation; peace of mind practices; the priceless art of seeing deeply; guidance for journal writing and tuition in the exquisite meditative practice of *Haiku*. *William* will offer lively, approachable talks on Japanese language and culture.



Sunset over distant mountains from Koya-san.
Photo courtesy of Rebekah Hunter.



The quiet streets of Koya-san.
Photo courtesy of Varuni Kanagasundaram.

WHO WOULD ENJOY THIS JOURNEY?

If you welcome the idea of travelling as a way of personal exploration and appreciate engaging with like-minded travellers with respect, kindness and support; if you are keen to benefit from the talks and workshops offered; if you are content to stay in a beautiful

Buddhist temple with shared accommodation and bathrooms, and savour exquisitely prepared vegetarian meals, and if you enjoy travelling by local transportation and on foot to visit places of interest, this journey is indeed for you. While this tour is not strenuous, you should be fit enough to walk unhurriedly with rests and stand for several hours most days and carry your own luggage.

TOUR LEADER – Stephanie Dowrick



Reverend Dr Stephanie Dowrick is widely known for her informed, highly engaging teaching, as well as for her success in bringing together key psychological, spiritual and ethical issues and making them newly relevant. She is the author of a number of life-changing books, including *Intimacy and Solitude*, *Creative Journal Writing*, *Forgiveness*

and *Other Acts of Love* and *Choosing Happiness*. Her most recent book is *In the Company of Rilke*. Stephanie has been the “Inner Life” columnist for **Good Weekend Magazine** since 2001, is a frequent guest on **ABC Radio**, and contributes to the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. She works often with Breast Cancer Network Australia, is an Adjunct Fellow at University of Western Sydney and an ordained Interfaith Minister. www.stephaniedowrick.com

CO-TOUR LEADER – William Suganda



William Suganda has for over a decade been creating and managing special interest group programs in both Australia and overseas. A graduate of the University of Sydney with majors in Japanese studies and psychology, he has also taken groups with Stephanie Dowrick to New Zealand and Japan. William has also lived in Tokyo while studying at Keio University. A Tai-Chi practitioner, William is also a professionally accredited Counsellor and Psychotherapist having graduated from the Jansen Newman Institute of Counselling and Psychotherapy. As Director of Inspired Traveller, his aspiration is to offer inspiring programs and spaces for individuals to retreat, reflect and restore their spirits and themselves.

Travel Itinerary

Included meals are indicated below as **B** – breakfast, **D** – dinner.

FRIDAY 29 OCTOBER

We meet at the **Nankai Namba Railway Station** in central **Osaka** mid morning and travel by local train and cable car to the sacred mountain site of **Koya-san**. Leaving Namba, the bustling entertainment and shopping hub of Osaka, we see densely situated houses and apartment jostle for precious space metres from the train track. This soon gives way to patches of brightly coloured kaki (Japanese-style persimmons) orchards that grow abundantly this time of year. Winding through the valleys of the **Izumi mountain range**, train stops become less frequent and a fertile mountain vista comes into view. At **Gokurakubashi** (meaning ‘bridge of immense ease/comfort’) station, we leave the train and walk a very short distance to board a large (very safe) cable car to take us to Koya-san. The autumn foliage will be visible as we ascend 1000 metres to the top. From the cable car station, we board a local bus that will directly take us to our temple lodging, a short distance away.

After time to settle in and relax, we meet for an orientation session including a gentle stroll around the streets adjacent to the temple area. Tonight, we enjoy a traditional temple vegetarian dinner in exquisite surroundings. After dinner we will gather for our welcome session and a brief introduction to Koya-san’s sacred history and **Shingon Buddhism** by Stephanie. **(B, D)**

SATURDAY 30 OCTOBER

After our morning meditation, Tai Chi and breakfast, we visit Koya-san’s **Daishi Hall** and experience an exquisite ritual of blessing and chanting by monks. For those interested in chanting the simple repetitive Shingon Buddhist chant during the ritual, William will explain its meaning and how to vocalise it before we enter the temple hall.

One of Koya-san’s two most holy spaces is the **Garan**, situated in the western part of this small town. The Garan, the central monastic complex of Koya-san was originally and still is the centre of ritual life of the religious community. We visit the **Great Stupa**, a symbol of the ideals of Shingon Buddhism. Reconstructed from the original design in 1937, it stands at 48.5 metres and the brilliant splendour of vermilion adorns the sanctum. The extensive compound of the Garan also includes the Kondo (main hall), Miedo (hall of the honorable portrait) and a large bronze bell. We then stroll through the western section of Koya-san passing parks and more temples. At the end of our path stands the Daimon, a large constructed gate with Kongo warriors on each side marking the main entrance by road to Koya-san.

In the afternoon there is ample time to rest before we gather for an informal workshop that will illuminate Japanese peace of mind practices, the priceless art of seeing deeply, guidance for journal writing and tuition in the exquisite meditative practice of Haiku.

Later, we can enjoy the ritual of our temple evening meal. **(B, D)**



Wise words foretelling the future – tying 'omikuji' notes in Kyoto Shrine.
Photo courtesy of Kezia Dowrick.



SUNDAY 31 OCTOBER

After meditation and Tai Chi, we meet for breakfast at the temple. Following breakfast, we will walk through the eastern part of town to visit **Okuno-in**, Koya-san's other holiest place. Tall cedars, cypresses and 500 year-old pine trees majestically straddle both sides of the 1.9km path to the shrine of **Kobo-Daishi**, the founder of Shingon Buddhism who is said to rest in eternal 'meditation'. 200,000 extraordinary tombstones lie along both sides of this path. This will be an unforgettable morning.

After lunch, we will have time to rest or write. Later we will meet together and Stephanie will expand our understanding of Shingon Buddhism and on Buddhism more generally, with particular emphasis on the joyful rewards of reflection and mindful seeing, both simple looking and using Haiku as a means of 'seeing deeply' and delightfully. We will have time to rest and refresh before our temple evening meal. (B, D)

MONDAY 1 NOVEMBER

This is our last day in Koya-san. In the morning we visit **Reihokan Museum** where you will see Buddhist statues, paintings, ritual implements and texts. There is an excellent Museum shop for buying reasonably priced exquisite gifts.

We leave Koya-san after lunch, travel by local bus, cable car and train to our hotel in the magnificent ancient capital, **Kyoto**.

After time to settle in, we gather for an orientation walk in the beautiful area near our hotel (including the *Philosopher's Walk*) and enjoy a group dinner at a local restaurant. (B, D)

TUESDAY 2 NOVEMBER

Today we meet two very special Australians who are long-time residents of Kyoto: **Kara Yamaguchi** and **Mark Hovane**. Kara will guide us through the charm of Kyoto's arts and craft with a special focus on the **Heian** capital and the weaving district. Mark will share with us his immense wealth of knowledge of Japanese gardens and will allow us to experience a rare glimpse of some gardens in an unhurried and meditative way. To enhance these experiences, we will divide our group into two and alternate our activities.

There is an optional walk in the late afternoon to visit the nearby **Funaoka Mountain**, the heart of the Heian capital with wonderful views of Kyoto. **Funaoka Onsen** (a charming and very traditional public bath-house) is also nearby for those wanting to soak themselves in a number of hot, cold and herbal water tubs and feel immensely rejuvenated! (B)

WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER

This morning Stephanie will give a talk on **Kannon / Kwan Yin** – goddess of compassion. This will greatly enhance our understanding of compassion in Buddhist philosophy, as well as our experience of visiting **Rengeo-in** on Friday.

After Stephanie's talk, we have ample opportunities to experience the many cultural events and celebrations that will take place throughout Kyoto as the Japanese celebrate '*Bunka no hi*' (Culture Day), a national holiday recognised as a day to commemorate peace and freedom and the promotion of culture. William will give you a guide of '*what's on*' and you will have the option of joining

him and Stephanie on a couple of optional activities or experiencing the rest of the day at your own leisure. Those wishing to have a more tranquil time can enjoy an optional **Ikebana** (art of Japanese flower arrangement) workshop with Mark Hovane at his Japanese home near the hotel (cost to be confirmed). (B)

THURSDAY 4 SEPTEMBER

Early this morning, we make our way to one of Kyoto's most famous icons, **Kiyomizu-dera**, a magnificent temple complex with sweeping views of Kyoto constructed in the early 1600 without the use of a single nail. The **Jishu shrine** located inside the complex is dedicated to a god of love and maker of 'good matches'. Leaving the temple we take a leisurely walk down a slight hill, passing numerous shops selling locally made goods including pottery. You might like to browse some of these shops and pick up some traditional porcelain or a Japanese teapot.

Late in the afternoon, we will visit Kyoto's other most famous site, the truly stunning **Kinkaku-ji** (the Golden Pavilion), situated on the edge of '*Mirror Lake*'. (B)

FRIDAY 5 NOVEMBER

In the morning, we are privileged to visit **Rengeo-in** ('*hall of the lotus king*'), a Buddhist temple dating from 1266. The temple is famed for having the longest wooden altar in the world, and especially for its 1001 carved wooden statues of **Kannon** (Kwan-Yin) that are more than 800 years old. This is a deeply sacred site where photography is strictly forbidden and the prayers and meditations of a thousand years are palpable in the air.

We will gather in the garden afterwards to reflect with Stephanie on the art of deep seeing that has been a theme throughout our journey.

Later we travel by local transport to visit the **Heian-jingu** ('*shrine of peace*'), an outstanding Shinto Shrine with one of Japan's largest torii (shrine gate) at its entrance.

There will be time to rest before we gather and enjoy our last group dinner at local restaurant specialising in traditional Japanese cuisine. (B, D)

SATURDAY 6 NOVEMBER

After breakfast, we conclude our time together with guided mediation then time to share our insights, ask questions, and reflect on the unique experiences and gifts offered by Sacred Japan. (B)

For those flying to Sydney or elsewhere, William will give you detailed instructions on how to travel to Kansai International Airport by train. For those joining the second Japan journey will travel with Kara Yamaguchi to Kurama Mountain ('Reiki mountain') at the conclusion of this morning's final group get-together. For those staying on in Kyoto or travelling to other parts of Japan, William will give you detailed information how to travel to your next destination.



Tour Costs

TOUR COSTS

\$4,180 per person (based on twin-share accommodation).
\$550 supplement for sole occupancy of a single room (in Kyoto).

TOUR INCLUSIONS

The following arrangements are included in the above tour cost:

- Accommodation for 8 nights during the tour with daily breakfast.
- Dinners as indicated in the travel itinerary.
- Services of your tour leader and co-tour leader during the tour.
- Workshops and talks by Stephanie Dowrick during the tour.
- Internal travel by local transport (trains and buses) (see important information below).
- Transfer of your main luggage (one per tour participant) from the temple lodging in Koya-san to hotel in Kyoto.
- Visits to temples, shrines, museums and gardens mentioned in the itinerary.
- Private garden tour and exploration of weaving district in Kyoto.
- Day passes in Kyoto to use on public buses.

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

The following arrangements are not included in the above tour costs:

- Air travel (see recommended group flights).
- Overnight accommodation in Osaka before the start of the tour.
- Travel and medical insurance (this is a requirement).
- Lunches and dinners and excursions not included in the itinerary, including suggested visits on free days.
- Personal expenses and incidentals.

SUGGESTED GROUP FLIGHT

The suggested group flight is with Jetstar between Sydney and Osaka. Flight schedules are subject to change at the discretion of the airline carrier.

THURSDAY 28 OCTOBER 2010

Depart Sydney on *Flight JQ 15* at 8 am, arrive Cairns at 10.10 am.

Depart Cairns on *Flight JQ 15* at 12.20 pm, arrive Osaka International Airport at 7.10 pm.

SATURDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2010

Depart Osaka International Airport on Flight JQ 20 at 8.20 pm.

SUNDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2010

Flight JQ 20 arrives Gold Coast at 6.25 am.

Depart Gold Coast on Flight JQ 409 at 9.40 am, arrive Sydney at 12.05 pm.

SUGGESTED GROUP ACCOMMODATION ON THURSDAY 28 OCTOBER 2010

In order to meet the group in the morning of Friday 29 October at Osaka's Nankai Namba Railway Station, ANA Gate Tower Hotel Osaka, 1 Rinku Orai Kita, Izumisano, Osaka is recommended for those travelling on the suggested group flight from Sydney. The hotel is situated about 10 minutes away by shuttle bus from Osaka International Airport. If you would like us to book your accommodation at this hotel, please indicate this in the application form.



The enchanting Golden Pavilion, Kyoto.
Photo courtesy of Kezia Dowrick.



Japanese family visiting a Kyoto temple.
Photo courtesy of Kezia Dowrick.



Additional Information

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please read the following important information:

Exchange rate – the tour is priced in Japanese Yen using the exchange rate of 1 AUD = 0.83 YEN. If the Japanese yen drops considerably in value against the Australian dollar, we will need to adjust the tour costs appropriately and notify you before the final payment is due.

Tour viability – we need a minimum of 10 participants for this tour to proceed. We will limit this tour to a maximum of 18 participants plus your tour leaders.

Single supplement – only applies for the hotel in Kyoto. There is no accommodation for single use at the Buddhist temple in Koya-san.

If you are traveling on your own – and are happy to share, we will do our best to allocate for you a twin-shared room with a congenial traveller.

Travel and medical insurance – you will need to take adequate travel and medical insurance to participate on this tour and to provide a copy of your insurance certificate before departure. You can purchase travel and medical insurance from our travel agent (details below).

Travelling on the suggested group flight – the benefit of travelling on the suggested group flight is that you will be travelling from Sydney with a tour leader. However, this is entirely optional and it might suit your needs better to meet at Osaka's Nankai Namba train station at the start of the tour.

Pre-departure meeting – this will be held about 30 days before the tour's departure in Sydney. Important tour information along with travel notes will be distributed. If you don't live in Sydney or cannot attend, we will post these documents to you and will contact you by phone to answer any questions you might have.

Drinks with included meals while on tour – water and Japanese tea are included.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

In Koya-san, we will stay for three nights in a traditional Buddhist temple with beautiful gardens and Japanese style rooms with tatami mats, thin but decorated walls and opaque sliding doors. You will be sleeping on comfortable futons and sharing a room with 2 – 3 other participants. The rooms are equipped with a low rising table, cushions, heating and often a lovely view of the temple garden. Shared bathrooms and western-style toilets are located close to your room. In Kyoto our proposed hotel for five nights in the delightful Westin Miyako Kyoto Hotel situated in the peaceful Higashiyama district and a short distance to the Heian Shrine. Rooms are very comfortably equipped and presented with private facilities and amenities you can expect from a Westin hotels and resorts group. Please note that while non-smoking rooms have been requested, this will be subject to availability and at the discretion of the hotel.

You will be served exquisitely prepared and presented traditional vegetarian breakfasts and dinners in Koya-san. Subtle in flavour, these meals are skillfully prepared without any use of garlic or onion. Cooking preparations have been passed from monk to monk and chef-to-chef for more than one thousand years. There are also a number of small cafes and eateries in Koya-san that

serve local delicacies as well as typical Japanese food. In Kyoto we will be blessed by a terrific range of Japanese and western-style cuisine. Some of the best traditional Japanese meals can be found in Kyoto. On days when we are making independent arrangements for dinner, the group will be given several recommendations for eating together.

LUGGAGE

As many Japanese railway stations do not have lifts or escalators, it's important that you travel as lightly as possible. Please do not take more luggage than you can comfortably carry by yourself. There will be a special luggage transfer of one suitcase per person from the temple lodging in Koya-san to the hotel in Kyoto. As this is an overnight service, you will need to bring with you a small overnight bag to use while your main suitcase is being transferred.

OPTION TO EXTEND YOUR STAY IN JAPAN

At the end of this tour, you have the option to join William Suganda and Kara Yamaguchi on a second tour of Japan. The Sacred sites of Japan: from Reiki Mountain to Okinawa starts directly after this tour and you will have the opportunity to travel to remote parts of Japan including Okinawa and Yakushima. For more details, please visit: www.inspiredtraveller.com.au

TO BOOK

To secure your place on this tour, please complete the application form and send it with your \$500 deposit to:

By post Anthony Kleverlaan
Bluesky Travel Group
Suite 109A Pacific Square
727 Anzac Parade
MAROUBRA NSW 2035

By fax 02 8347 7676

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For all specific enquiries about the tour including the travel itinerary, suggested group air travel, and health and fitness, please contact:

William Suganda at *Inspired Traveller*
Phone **02 8005 0978**
Email william@inspiredtraveller.com.au

If your enquiry specifically relates to additional travel arrangements to complement this tour, payments and travel/medical insurance, please contact:

Anthony Kleverlaan at *Bluesky Travel Group*
Phone **1300 665 109**
Email anthony@blueskytravelgroup.com



