

# the heart of JAPAN



Kimono wearing experience



Sushi rolls



Kaga Yuzen shop, Kanazawa

*Japan is by no means backwards in coming forwards. Tokyo, Osaka, Hiroshima and even parts of Kyoto are all testament to a thriving sense of modernity, innovation and a passion for all things neon. Cavernous shopping malls are filled with gaggles of giggling teenage girls, karaoke bars reverberate with the latest J-Pop sounds and sales of the latest Nintendo games console are through the roof. And yet, scratch the surface a little and you will find that more traditional pastimes are still held very dear to the Japanese heart and what's more, are readily accessible to visitors to the country. Claire Barnes reveals the very best.*



Ikebana teacher, traditional pastime course



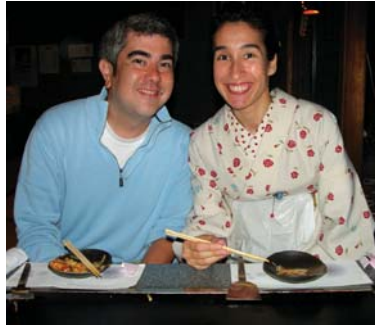
Mixed sushi



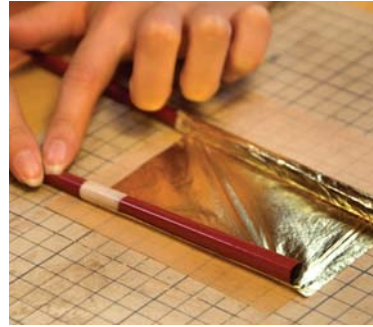
Kimono wearing course



Japanese green tea



Izumi and her husband Duncan



Gold leaf process, Kanazawa

## Traditional dwellings

Many Audley clients choose to spend a night in a traditional Japanese inn, a ryokan. If you would like to find out more about this unique accommodation we have developed an interactive guide to the experience at [www.audleytravel.com/ryokan](http://www.audleytravel.com/ryokan)



## Cultural courses & kimono tours in Kyoto

These short courses offer excellent avenues down which you can discover lots about traditional Japanese pastimes. Guests are escorted to a private local home to spend some time learning about, and taking part in, activities ranging from tea ceremonies to flower arranging and kimono wearing. If you are particularly interested in the beautiful art of kimono then we also offer a walking tour of Kyoto with our qualified kimono professional Izumi-san. Izumi, who wears kimono every day, will instruct you on how they are made, worn and stored and take you to visit several shops and workshops dotted about Kyoto to see some exquisite examples of this most beautiful of national dress. There is no pressure to purchase anything but should you wish to then Izumi can help you to find a bargain second-hand kimono, a washable cotton kimono or even a vintage kimono costing thousands of pounds. The kimono is a great way to find out about Japanese culture, history and society, as the patterns, use of colour and sizes have changed throughout the years and the illustrations are a display of Japanese traditions – seasons, wildlife and stories are all depicted in rich hues on delicate silk fabric.

## Cookery courses in Kyoto

Cookery courses offer you a real insight into the fantastic world of Japanese cuisine. If you have never eaten Japanese food before you may not be aware of the cacophony of delights (and a few unusual delicacies thrown in for good measure – bee larvae anyone?) which await you during your trip. Japan is a food lover's paradise - Tokyo has more Michelin starred restaurants than Paris - and during your cookery lesson you will have the chance to learn how to make some of the most beloved of Japanese dishes: sushi (fresh, raw fish placed on top of a morsel of vinegared rice), or tempura (fish and vegetables dipped in a light and crispy batter). When the lesson is over you even get to sample your creations!



Tempura

## Arts and crafts in Kanazawa

Kanazawa, on the western coast of the main island, has long been home to traditional arts and crafts and although now a busy and modern city, it has retained much of its former character in its samurai and geisha quarters. It is here, amongst the low housing and narrow, lantern lit alleyways that the thriving gold leaf industry can be found. Gold leaf has been produced in Kanazawa since the 16th century and is still used today in many Buddhist temples, on lacquerware and even in green tea. The Sakuda Gold Leaf museum in Kanazawa is a working factory and it is possible to observe the process of turning gold ingots into gold leaf less than 1/10,000 millimetres thick. Even the toilets here are lined with gold and platinum! Kanazawa is also famous for Kaga Yuzen silk dyeing which is used to create the exquisite patterns on kimono. It is a long, labour-intensive process, which explains why first class kimono can cost in excess of £10,000. In the well preserved Nagamachi area of Kanazawa you are also able to visit a Kaga Yuzen workshop and try your hand at silk painting some kimono fabric, as well as watching the masters at work.

Japan is the ultimate land of contrasts and I honestly don't believe there is anywhere else in the world where one can so easily step back in time from the throng of a neon, skyscraping metropolis into a realm of calm where tradition, etiquette and generation-old skills are the order of the day.

**Claire Barnes**  
Japan Specialist

## FACT FILE

A two week trip to Japan including the Kyoto cultural courses and a stay in Kanazawa costs from £2,600 per person, including return flights. Izumi's kimono tours are available at an extra cost depending on how long you spend with her. For details please call one of our Japan specialists on 01993 838 210.

