

# SPEND A DAY LIKE A LOCAL

Let's discover the real Kyoto through the eyes of a local guide of HANDS ON JAPAN!



If you are going to spend more than a few days in Kyoto, you definitely need at least one day doing super local stuff rather than hitting popular Buddhist temples as many as you can. There is much more to Kyoto than boasting some 17 World Heritage Sites and retaining the exquisite *maiko* culture intact for centuries. Look further beyond, and you can see traditions and modern cultures coexisting in harmony, and that is where an everyday, down to earth Kyoto can be found.



*Relax in a quiet Buddhist temple*



*Start a day with a cup of coffee*



*Bike to everywhere*



*Eat quality lunch at affordable price*



*Hang out by the Kamo River*



*Participate in a local event*



*Dine at a good old local izakaya*



*Share a bathtub with friends*



*Hike a mountain*

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## RELAX IN A QUIET BUDDHIST TEMPLE



On an occasion to visit a Buddhist temple on a day off, the locals would not go for a popular one: instead they put an effort to discover a spot that none of their friends have heard of before because only in such a place can you appreciate a temple's structure, nature, and garden in peace and quiet. Make no mistake, Daitokuji Temple is a well-known one, but as is often the case with a huge temple, there are a handful of so-called sub temples built around the main one. Those temples are much less crowded and equally worth seeing as the head temple, in my opinion. When the time is right, a monk might come out to greet you and walk you through the history of the establishment in person. The only problem is how you spot such a place on your own. But now that you have your guide, the problem solved!

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## START A DAY WITH A CUP OF COFFEE

The Kyoto people would love a cup of coffee along with a toast or two to kick off a day in a neighboring café. In fact, Kyoto is known for good cafes, both good old ones and modern ones, situated practically everywhere in town. One with a rather traditional look in particular, typically run by an elderly couple, is called *kissaten*, literally meaning “drinking tea shop.” We begin this ultimate local experience tour with a breakfast in a *kissaten* with over a half-century of history.



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## BIKE TO EVERYWHERE



Let's say you will start living in Kyoto City, then own a bicycle and it would instantly be your best mate. People here ride a bike to almost everywhere. There are mainly two reasons. One is that the size of the city is extremely compact while offering an incredible amount of interesting things to do, see, and eat within a reasonable cycling distance. Even on a narrow quiet street way off a broad avenue you will always discover something that makes you want to stop and go check out. The other is that the city is laid out in a grid pattern. So, it is very easy to figure out how to travel from A to B by just having look at a map. Let your guide lead the pack and explore the city just like the local people would do!

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## EAT QUALITY LUNCH AT AFFORDABLE PRICE



Sometimes Kyoto City goes by the name “city of college students” with university students making up nearly 10% of the population; more than any other cities in Japan. Many local restaurants in town have kept meeting demands of hungry students serving wallet-friendly AND quality lunch.

So, we will go check out one of them. Japanese style pork cutlet offered in this restaurant is so tender and thick at the same time that at the first bite you will consider moving into Kyoto. And yet a bill would not go over 1,000 yen.



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## HANG OUT BY THE KAMO RIVER



Almost always ranked among top 3 pick for favorite spots by the young locals, but, strangely enough, no where to be seen in a foreign visitors’ choice. If not in the dazzling heat in summer or the frigid cold in winter, the Kamo River is *the* place to come for a chat, exercise, reading and well, everything else you could do outside. Let’s grab something to drink and chill by the river for a while! You will simply love being there all day long. That said, the best time to come is early April with cherry trees bursting into bloom on the banks of both sides of the river.



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## PARTICIPATE IN A LOCAL EVENT



Thanks to the high density of temples and shrines in the city, there is always some sort of religious event which you can freely join, whether it be annual, monthly, or weekly, falling on the day of your Kyoto stay. For example, on every 25<sup>th</sup>, a lively festival and flea market is held in the precinct of Kitano Tenmangu Shrine. It is a good opportunity to experience a Japanese festive atmosphere with food stands selling local delicacies.

Even if you miss the 25<sup>th</sup>, a similar type of local festival can still be found on every 15<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, and many more on a daily basis. Don’t be shy to ask us what will be there to visit on a tour date!



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## DINE AT A GOOD OLD LOCAL *IZAKAYA*



Nothing feels as good as cold beer going down your thirsty throat after a bath. A good place to do that is a Japanese style pub, known as *izakaya*. It is typically a not-so-big establishment with a *noren* shop curtain hanged over an entrance where a shop owner along with, perhaps, his wife prepares dishes right behind a counter. It offers a wide variety of alcoholic beverages and homemade Japanese foods in a cozy atmosphere. The chances are, however, inside a restaurant is a total monolingual environment; menu-wise and service-wise, never to say that they are foreign guests-unfriendly. Still, being accompanied by a native will greatly help you find out what an *izakaya* is all about.

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## SHARE A BATHTUB WITH FRIENDS



There is one thing, and one thing only to do after back from a mountain climb: take a hot shower, but not in your hotel room. We have a public bath, or *sento* in Japanese to rinse off your sweat. Despite the number of public baths in Japan going down, the culture of going out for a bath has indeed remained in Kyoto. The feeling of soaking yourself in a hot bathtub after an exercise is sheer happiness, but hang on a minute, there are some etiquettes to follow in a public bath you should know. Lend your ears to the guide to enjoy the bath like a Japanese!



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## HIKE A MOUNTAIN



Kyoto City is surrounded by mountains with three directions, whose tops can mostly be reached. Among them, the Daimonji deserves a special attention. This 466m high mountain offers a breathtaking panoramic view of the city from the top. Even if you are not a regular hiker, no need to worry. The whole hike would take only about 1 hour or more. An early morning visit to the mountain would grant you the most rewarding breakfast ever at the top. A slow start would not let you down letting you capture the orange sun going down on the other side of the city. Needless to say, a view of the city lights is absolutely fantastic although a night attempt is slightly dangerous. The mountain attracts local people every day of the week, but not to the extent it's overcrowded. It's fair to say this is one of the most overlooked worth visiting sites in Kyoto.