

FOUR NIGHTS · KYOTO, JAPAN

Ichigo Ichie

One time, one meeting.

Aman Kyoto, in a secret garden at the foot of Mount Hidari Daimonji



A city of closed doors, opened quietly

Kyoto kept its finest rooms private for centuries. Four nights at Aman Kyoto open a few of them: a tea room entered on your knees, a temple the public never sees, an evening with a maiko. Every guide, host and seat is arranged in advance and out of sight.

I

Rare by design

Kyoto's oldest houses are by invitation only. These doors open through Aman Kyoto's relationships.

III

Minds, not just bodies

A dry garden of fifteen stones, a temple flower arrangement, a monk's kitchen.

II

Things most leaders have not done

Crawl into a four-and-a-half-mat tea room, dye cloth by stencil, spend an evening in an ochaya.

IV

Considered evenings

Omakase kaiseki at Taka-An, built around the 24 solar terms.



A forest garden inside the city

Aman Kyoto sits in Takagamine, in the hills of northern Kyoto, a stone's throw from the Golden Pavilion and sixteen other UNESCO sites. It is about thirty minutes by car from Kyoto Station, and a world apart.



The secret garden

Winding forest paths that change with the seasons.



The Living Pavilion

Lantern-lit, with a fire at its heart.



The onsen

Mineral hot-spring bathing at Aman Spa.

A first bowl of tea

Thirty minutes from Kyoto Station, a world apart.

15:00

Arrival at Aman Kyoto

Hosted by the Aman Kyoto team

Guests are met on arrival and shown to their suites and pavilions, with the garden outside every window.

Why: the forest closes behind you at the gate.

16:00

A Moment of Matcha

Led by the Tea House Senkutsu team

A bowl of matcha with seasonal sweets in the chair-style tea room beside the pond.

Why: the house's own welcome, taken slowly.

17:30

Secret Garden Walk

Led by an Aman Kyoto garden guide

A guided hour through the forest garden, with the Hidari Daimonji mountain above.

Why: the forest changes every season, so no two walks match.

19:30

Dinner at Taka-An

Led by Taka-An's chefs

Omakase kaiseki, drawn from the 24 solar terms of the Japanese calendar.

Why: a counter where the cooking is the conversation.



The hands, then the bowl

Cloth, tea and sweets, each made by hand.

09:30

The Art of Katazome

Led by a Japanese stencil-dye artist

Colour a motif from ukiyo-e or Kyoto townscapes by hand. The finished piece goes home with you.

Why: a craft once reserved for kimono, learned in one morning.

11:00

Chanoyu: The Tea Ceremony

Led by a master tea practitioner, in Tea House Senkutsu

In the four-and-a-half-mat koma, a house named by Urasenke grand master Zabosai Sen Soshitsu.

Why: a room you enter by crouching through a small door.

15:00

Wagashi and Matcha

Led by the Aman Kyoto team

Shape your own wagashi, then taste it with matcha.

Why: sweets that depict the season, eaten with the tea they were made for.

17:30

Onsen at Aman Spa

Led by the Aman Spa team

Hot-spring bathing as a Kyoto day ends.

Why: mineral water from the hills beside the resort.



Gold, stone and a closed door

The city's great sites, then its most private room.

09:00

Four Sites, One Morning

Led by a licensed Kyoto guide

The Golden Pavilion, the dry garden at Ryoan-ji, Ninna-ji, and Kamigamo Shrine, one of the oldest in the city.

Why: four of Kyoto's UNESCO sites in an order that avoids the crowds.

15:30

Ikebana in a Private Temple

Led by a temple ikebana teacher

Arrange flowers in an exclusive temple space, with a personal guide and private transport.

Why: a temple the public cannot enter, and an art taught only there.

18:30

An Evening with Maiko and Geiko

Led by a Geiko house in one of the five districts

A traditional dance performance, light conversation and a game of ozashiki in a discreet tea house.

Why: ochaya take guests by introduction only.



From the tea fields to a monk's kitchen

Where tea is grown, then how monks cook.

08:30

A Private Tea Farm in Uji

Led by a sixth-generation Uji tea grower

A plantation tour and the Honzu method, practised in Uji for over 400 years, then a tasting.

Why: tea hand-picked for six generations, tasted where it grows.

14:00

Shojin Ryori Cooking Class

Led by a Buddhist temple cook

Learn the vegan cuisine of Buddhist monks, then eat what you have made.

Why: a meal built on five colours and five flavours.

17:15

Bonkei Garden

Led by an Aman Kyoto gardener

Build a small landscape in a pot, guided by one of the resort's own gardeners.

Why: moss, soil and stone, in miniature.

19:30

A Farewell Kaiseki at Taka-An

Led by Taka-An's chefs, under Shinichiro Takagi

A final omakase menu at the counter.

Why: the closing dinner, in the season's own ingredients.



Slowly, then home

Nothing before breakfast, unless you want it.

08:00

A Walk to Koetsu-ji

Led by an Aman Kyoto guide

A 20-minute walk through the hills to the temple named for Koetsu Honami, master of several arts.

Why: a temple laid out by an artist who loved tea.

10:00

Breakfast and Farewells

Hosted by the Aman Kyoto team

A long breakfast, then transfers to Kyoto Station or the airport at each guest's own time.

Why: a gentle close.



GOOD TO KNOW

How the days run

Getting here

Kyoto Station is about thirty minutes by car. Osaka Itami is an hour away, and Kansai International about two hours by road or ninety minutes by express train.

Advance arrangements

Tea ceremonies, private temple visits and the Geiko evening are arranged by Aman Kyoto well ahead, in keeping with local etiquette.

Seasons

Cherry blossom in spring and maple colour in autumn are the great seasons. Summer and winter each have their own quiet.

Pace

Every day has one anchor and an open afternoon. Nothing is scheduled before breakfast.

See you in the garden.

Photography: Aman Kyoto (official images).

