



Sabakaido Multi-Activity Adventure

Pedal, Paddle & Hike the Historic “Mackerel Highway”

Cycle from Kyoto to the Sea - and from the present into the past - as you explore one of Japan’s oldest and most picturesque roads.

This tour relates the living history of the Sabakaido, or “Mackerel Highway”, an ancient road linking the former capitals of Nara and Kyoto to the once bustling seaport of Obama. Buddhist emissaries from the mainland, samurai lords, fish peddlers, and even the first elephant to set foot in Japan once trod this very route.

Due to the mountainous terrain over which it winds, today this road is nearly bereft of cars and modern buildings, making it ideal both for cyclists and those wishing to catch a glimpse of a vanishing Japan. As you glide past sparkling rivers, quaint villages, and dense forests, you’ll have opportunities to meet locals, sample delicious country fare, experience traditional accommodations, and learn about the unique culture that has evolved here over the centuries.

A flexible itinerary includes options for a variety of outdoor and cultural experiences such as sea kayaking, SUP, trekking, canyoning, fishing, and Zen meditation. Obama - while no longer a bustling seaport - remains home to a thriving fishing industry. You will also have the opportunity to board a fishing boat to observe the fishermen hauling the nets, witness a traditional auction, and taste the famous local seafood.



- 7 Days
- Small Group
- Fully Guided
- Support Vehicle
- Premium E-bikes
- 3-5 hrs/day cycling

Itinerary

Day 1: *Cycling Tour of Kyoto*

Kyoto is a city that's best explored on a bike. Its picturesque narrow streets, quiet lanes along scenic waterways, and relatively small footprint make it perfect for getting around by bicycle.

You will begin at the Imperial Palace with a brief orientation, followed by a ride through the spacious grounds. From there you visit some of the iconic highlights, as well as some off-the-beaten-path hidden gems - always taking the most scenic route with the least traffic.

The course can be modified to cater to your preferences, but generally will include visits to the Shimogamo Shrine, Temple of the Silver Pavilion, Philosophers Path, Nanzenji Temple, and historic Demachiyani Market - the original starting point of the Saba Kaido.

Options for shopping and cultural activities such as tea ceremony can also be arranged.

Accommodation options: A variety of Western Hotels & Traditional Japanese Inns are available
Total cycling: approx. 17 km

Day 2: *Cycling Into the Countryside*

After being transported to Demachiyani Station, you will board one of Kyoto's most scenic train lines. From the final station, Kurama, you will hike to the ancient hilltop Temple of Kuramadera, and later descend by cable car.

You then will saddle up and begin the steep climb to the top of Hanase Pass, rewarded by a long winding descent back in time past thatched villages and terraced rice paddies.

Accommodation options: Luxury traditional Inn, Riverside Glamping with Barbecue and Sauna, Rustic Country Inn
Total cycling: approx. 34 km

Day 3: *Cycling to the Sea*

Today's ride takes you past more breathtaking rural scenery, up another steep pass with stunning views, and down to the ancient seaport of Obama by the Sea.

Along the way, you will dismount in the hamlet of Onyudani to join a forest walk led by a local guide, and learn about "*sato-yama*", the border zone between mountains and arable valleys where villagers have existed in harmony with nature for centuries.

You will stop at a renovated farmhouse for lunch, and visit both a beautiful ancient temple and shrine, each over 1300 years old.

Accommodation: Traditional Machiya Townhouse
Total cycling: approx. 46 km

Day 4: *Exploring the Seaport of Obama*

This morning begins before dawn onboard a small fishing boat to observe the local fishermen reel in their nets. It is followed by a short tour of a "*sato-umi*". Similar to *sato-yama*, these are coastal areas where biological productivity and biodiversity have increased through human interaction. For those who wish to sleep in a little longer, it is also possible to view the unloading of the fishing boats onto the docks, and the subsequent live auction.

After a hearty traditional breakfast at a restaurant frequented by local fishermen, you will enjoy leisurely rides around town to sites including the historical Geisha district and a restored sea captain's home converted into a cafe. In the afternoon you will climb aboard a boat and cruise along the breathtaking cliffs of Obama's coastline, stopping at the famous Sotomo Arches - carved by the sea into the rock face.

Accommodation: Traditional Machiya Townhouse
Total cycling: approx. 12 km

Day 5: *An Outing with Local Fishermen, and a Ride to an Edo-period Post Town*

After a hearty traditional breakfast at a restaurant frequented by local fishermen, we embark on a cycling journey along rivers and rice paddies to Kumagawa Juku, a charming Edo-period post town. Along the way, you will stop for lunch at Miyagawa, an ancient hamlet - and *sato-yama* - that has been inhabited for nearly 2000 years.

Accommodation: Traditional Machiya Townhouse

Total cycling: approx. 22 km

Day 6: *Hike Up a Mountain Through Primeval Forest*

Today you will hike up into a primeval forest and along a ridge above Kumagawa Juku, offering spectacular views of the sea and surrounding mountains.

After descending, you will be transported to a beautiful lakes region near the sea, called Mikata Goko, where you will stay at a hot spring hotel.

Accommodation: Hot Spring Hotel

Hiking: approx. 12 km

Day 7: *Pedal and Paddle*

Ride along a cycling path along two of the lakes, and then along the coast of the Tsunegami Peninsula. Enjoy a lunch of freshly caught local seafood and, depending on the weather and your inclination, choose to paddle a SUP or sea kayak.

In the afternoon you will have a final hot spring bath and change of clothes. After visiting a sake brewery, you will be transported to Tsuruga where you can board the Bullet Train to Kanazawa, or an express train back to Kyoto.

Accommodation: N/A

Total cycling: approx. 20 km

How we promote responsible travel:

- Nearly all accommodations are small and locally owned, and many occupy renovated historic buildings.
- It leads travelers away from areas suffering from over-tourism, like Kyoto, to under-represented regions, like Obama and Kumagawa Juku, that are working to revitalize their economies through tourism.
- Its principal mode of transportation is cycling, which has a very low environmental impact.
- Food provided along the tour is sourced locally, organic whenever possible, and highlights traditional regional cuisine.
- Slow travel by bike allows for more meaningful exchange with the local population, and small groups lead by knowledgeable guides help assure positive interactions with communities.



Riding the Sabakaido



Riding the Sabakaido



Hiking Onyu Pass



View from Onyu Pass



Japanese Serow or "Kamoshika"



Nishigumi, Obama



Obama's own Geisha "Saya"



Obama's seacoast



Fisherman's Wharf, Obama



Sotomo Cliffs, Obama



Jinguji Temple Gate, Obama



Wakasahime Shrine, Obama



Myototsuji Temple, Obama



Riding along rivers and rice paddies



The Sacred Uriwari Falls



Kumagawa Juku



Mikatogoko "Five Lakes" Cycling Route



SUP from Tsunekami Peninsula



Sea kayak from Tsunekami Peninsula