



TRAVEL PLAN

Kyoto – Cherry Blossom Week

6 nights in Kyoto during peak sakura season. Base: The Thousand Kyoto (Kyoto Station area). Itinerary clusters sights geographically to minimize travel time, with early-morning starts at the most crowded spots.

April 5 – April 11, 2027

7

DAYS

18

PLACES

18

PLANNED



1 The Thousand Kyoto (Hotel)

570 Higashishiokojichō, Shimogyo Ward, Kyoto
4.5★, next to Kyoto Station. Easy access to all transport. Book well in advance for sakura season.



2 Gion Shirakawa Canal

Motoyoshichō, Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto
Best at dusk — cherry trees reflect in the canal, lanterns light up the teahouses. Geiko spotting possible. Free, open 24h. Very photogenic, relatively uncrowded compared to Maruyama.



3 Maruyama Park

Maruyamacho, Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto
Free entry. The famous weeping cherry tree is lit up nightly until midnight. One of Kyoto's top hanami spots. Go early morning or at night to avoid day crowds.



4 Pontocho Alley

Kashiwayacho, Nakagyo Ward, Kyoto
Narrow lantern-lit alley running parallel to Kamogawa River. Best after dark. Mix of kaiseki, izakaya, ramen — every price point. Just walk in and pick what looks good.



Get an ICOCA/Suica IC card at Kyoto Station immediately on arrival — you'll need it for every bus and train this week. Take the Haruka Express from KIX (75 min, ¥3,600). Don't plan anything strenuous today — jet lag is real. Gion evening is low-effort and perfect for a first taste of Kyoto.

Arrival



Maruyama Park's weeping cherry (the "Gion no Yozakura") is lit up until midnight. Food stalls are set up all around — grab something to eat while you hanami. The park is free, open 24h. Crowds peak around 19–21h then ease off.

Evening



1 Philosopher's Path

Tetsugaku No Michi, Sakyo Ward, Kyoto

2km canal walk lined with hundreds of cherry trees. Peaks early April. Go at 7–8 AM before the crowds hit. Connects Ginkakuji area south to Nanzenji. Petals drift across the water — bring a camera.



2 Hyotei (3★ Michelin Kaiseki)

35 Nanzenji Kusakawachō, Sakyo Ward, Kyoto

450-year-old teahouse turned 3-Michelin-star kaiseki restaurant, next to Nanzenji. Reservations open on rolling 90-day basis online. Breakfast (asagayu porridge) is the most accessible and legendary — book that if dinner is full.



3 Nanzen-ji Temple

86 Nanzenji Fukuchichō, Sakyo Ward, Kyoto

Zen temple at the foot of Higashiyama mountains. Famous Meiji-era brick aqueduct. Free outer grounds; paid inner buildings. En route south from Philosopher's Path. Also next door to Hyotei (kaiseki).



4 Heian-jingū Shrine

97 Okazaki Nishitennocho, Sakyo Ward, Kyoto

Huge vermilion torii gate, gorgeous Shin'en garden paid entry (¥600). Yaebeni weeping cherry trees in the garden are spectacular in early April. Open from 6 AM.



5 Kinmata (Kaiseki Restaurant)

407 Dainichichō, Nakagyo Ward, Kyoto

200-year-old kaiseki restaurant near Nishiki Market. Lunch set is more accessible; dinner is multi-course kaiseki. Book in advance — highly sought-after. Closed Wednesdays.



Early start mandatory — Philosopher's Path is best at 7 AM before it becomes a river of people. Walk south from the Ginkakuji end. Hyotei breakfast is booked for 8:00 (confirm 90 days out). Kinmata lunch is booked for 13:00 — note it's closed Wednesdays so Apr 6 (Tuesday) is confirmed safe.

07:00



Hyotei: bring cash — most kaiseki restaurants don't take cards. Smart-casual dress. The asagayu (rice porridge) breakfast is the iconic dish here. Reservations open on a rolling 90-day window at hyotei.co.jp — set a calendar reminder to book on Jan 6, 2027.

08:00

**1 Arashiyama Bamboo Grove**

📍 Sagaogurayama Tabuchiyamacho, Ukyo Ward, Kyoto

Free, open 24h. Be there by 7 AM — later in the day it's shoulder-to-shoulder. The grove is short but the atmosphere is unique. Continue north to Jojakko-ji for cherry blossoms on the hillside.

**2 Togetsukyo Bridge (Arashiyama)**

📍 1-5 Sagatenryuji Susukinobabachō, Ukyo Ward, Kyoto

Iconic bridge over the Ōi River with Arashiyama mountain backdrop. Cherry trees line the riverbanks. Rickshaw rides available. Nearby: Daikakuji Temple, Nakanoshima Park for hanami picnic.



Take JR San'in Line from Kyoto Station to Saga-Arashiyama (17 min). Be at the bamboo grove by 07:00 — it's genuinely empty and magical this early. The grove itself is short (5–10 min walk through) so don't rush. Continue to Tenryuji Temple garden (¥500, opens 8:30) and then walk down to Togetsukyo Bridge for the river and mountain views.

07:00



Lunch in Arashiyama: Yoshimura soba restaurant at Togetsukyo Bridge has river views and great cold soba with tempura. Arrive before 11:30 or expect a wait — it fills up fast. Alternatively, grab yudofu (tofu hot pot) which is an Arashiyama speciality.

11:30



1 Kinkaku-ji (Golden Pavilion)

1 Kinkakujichō, Kita Ward, Kyoto

Open 9–17. Admission ¥500. The reflection of the gold-leaf pavilion in the mirror pond is one of Japan's great sights. Arrive right at opening to beat tour buses. Budget 45–60 min on-site.



2 Nijō Castle

541 Nijōjōchō, Nakagyo Ward, Kyoto

UNESCO World Heritage. 60+ varieties of cherry trees = one of the longest bloom seasons in Kyoto (late March to mid-April). Open 8:45–17. Admission ¥1000. Evening illumination during sakura season. Nightingale floors inside the palace are a must.



3 Nishiki Market

Higashiuiyacho, Nakagyo Ward, Kyoto

Kyoto's Kitchen — 400-year-old covered market, 5 blocks long. Go mid-morning to avoid peak crowds. Try: pickled vegetables, tamagoyaki, matcha sweets, yuba. Most stalls close by 18:00.



Kinkakuji opens at 9:00 sharp — be there at the gate. Tour buses start arriving at 9:30 and it gets very crowded fast. From Kinkakuji take bus 12 or 59 south to Nijo Castle (20 min). Nijo has 60+ cherry varieties so still likely in good bloom Apr 8. Evening illumination runs during sakura season if you want to return after dark.

09:00



Nishiki Market stalls start closing around 17:00–18:00 so aim to be there by 13:00–15:00. Go hungry — graze your way through rather than committing to a sit-down lunch. Best bites: dashi-maki tamago, pickled veg, matcha soft serve, fresh yuba.

13:00



1 Fushimi Inari Taisha

68 Fukakusa Yabunouchichō, Fushimi Ward, Kyoto

Thousands of vermillion torii gates up Mt. Inari. Free, open 24h. Go at 6–7 AM — the lower gates are photogenic but packed by 9 AM. Hike to Yotsutsuji junction (30 min up) for city views and solitude. Full loop is 2–3h.



2 Rāmen Yūga (Ramen)

609 Teianmaenochō, Shimogyō Ward, Kyoto

4.8★ ramen near Kyoto Station. Light soy/ginger broth, springy noodles. Small counter seating (~13 seats). No reservations — arrive early. A great quick lunch between sightseeing.



3 Pontocho Alley

Kashiwayacho, Nakagyo Ward, Kyoto

Narrow lantern-lit alley running parallel to Kamogawa River. Best after dark. Mix of kaiseki, izakaya, ramen — every price point. Just walk in and pick what looks good.



Fushimi Inari: take JR Nara Line from Kyoto Station to Inari Station (5 min, 2 stops). Free, open 24h. The lower torii gates are packed by 9 AM — be there at 06:30. Hike up to the Yotsutsuji junction (30 min) for city views and a big drop in crowd density. Full mountain loop is 2–3h. Wear trainers — the path is uneven stone steps.

06:30



Afternoon is intentionally free — use it to revisit any spot you loved, explore Teramachi Street for shopping, or just rest. Pontocho dinner is best enjoyed slowly — arrive around 19:30 and take your time picking a spot. Riverside terrace dining (kawayuka) may be open in April — look for places with decks over the Kamogawa.

Afternoon

**1 Kiyomizu-dera Temple**

📍 1-294 Kiyomizu, Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto

Open 6 AM — be there at opening. Iconic wooden stage above the hillside, sweeping city views. Admission ¥500. Night illumination during sakura season (18:00–21:00). Ninenzaka & Sannenzaka cobblestone streets below are great for shopping/snacks.

**2 Kōdai-ji Temple**

📍 526 Shimokawara-chō, Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto

Beautiful weeping cherry tree in rock garden. Night illumination during sakura season (until ~22:00). Admission ¥600. A 10-min walk from Kiyomizudera — easy combo. The spring light show projected on the garden is worth staying for.



Kiyomizudera opens at 6:00 AM — get there at opening for sunrise light on the wooden stage and almost no crowds. The approach streets (Ninenzaka, Sannenzaka) are great for breakfast — small cafes open early for visiting pilgrims. Ticket is cash only at the gate (¥500).

06:00



Kodaiji night illumination runs 18:00–22:00 during sakura season. Buy tickets online in advance (cheaper than at the gate, ~¥2,400–3,200). The light show is projected directly onto the garden — the weeping cherry under the lights is genuinely stunning. It's a 10-min walk from Kiyomizudera so easy to combine as a bookend to the day. Apr 10 is also the Okasai Festival at Hirano Shrine if you want an alternative evening.

18:00



1 Maruyama Park

📍 Maruyamacho, Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto

Free entry. The famous weeping cherry tree is lit up nightly until midnight. One of Kyoto's top hanami spots. Go early morning or at night to avoid day crowds.



Check your train or flight time and plan the morning accordingly. Maruyama Park is a 20-min bus ride from Kyoto Station (routes 100 or 206). If departing from KIX, Haruka Express leaves from Kyoto Station — allow 90 min travel + 90 min airport check-in. Hotel checkout is typically 11:00; ask the concierge to store luggage if your departure is later.

Morning