

EXPERIENCE JAPANESE RELIGIOUS CULTURE

The 2012 Religion and Culture Seminar will take participants to three Japanese locations: Tokyo, one of the world's largest cities and a center of religious and culture life both modern and traditional; Nikko, a cultural site near Tokyo; and Kyoto, a city famous for its ancient temples.

The trip is made possible through *Taisho University*—a major Buddhist university in the Tokyo area. Unlike other Buddhist schools, Taisho is run by four different Buddhist denominations in cooperation (Tendai, Pure Land and two branches Shingon) and, therefore, offers students the chance to interact with a wide variety of traditions. Taisho attracts not only students studying to become priests, but also students from every walk of life. In fact, most students at Taisho are drawn to its strong programs in Social Welfare as much as to its great Buddhist Studies programs.

“In just 12 days, I have learned more and been exposed to more Buddhism than is possible in a lifetime of reading and studying in the United States.”



Since ancient times, *Nikko* has been a place of religious practice. Located a short trip from Tokyo, today it is a major religious as well as tourist destination. In 1999 it was made a World Heritage site. The site today consists of two shrines and one Buddhist temple and their accompanying buildings. It was constructed to house the spirit of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa Regime, which ruled Japan from 1603-1868.

Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan, is home to some of the oldest religious structures in Japan. There over one thousand temples and countless other sites many of which are cultural heritage sites including the famous Golden Pavilion and the rock gardens of Ryoanji.



Outline

We begin our stay in the heart of Tokyo. Students are housed in the classic Japanese style rooms of the priests' dorms at Zojoji, a centuries old temple located just under Tokyo Tower.

Using Zojoji as our base, we travel each morning to Taisho University for lectures and cultural exchange with Japanese students. We then visit the headquarters of major new religious movements, ancient temples, and Shinto shrines. Free days have optional trips to shopping districts and parks.

One highlight is the three-day, two-night trip to Nikko. The trip begins at Manganji, a training temple and pilgrimage site. Before leaving Manganji students hike to its waterfall for a rare chance at waterfall practice. The rest of the Nikko trip is spent touring the famous world heritage sites.

After Nikko we travel by bullet train to Kyoto for three days and two nights of exploring the ancient temples and pathways of this beautiful city.

Join us for this rare opportunity!



“This trip has broken down what other teachers have told me, and taught me so much more through experience and personal insight from everyone we spoke with. I am indebted to both Western and everyone at Taisho.”



“The people of Japan were very kind and helpful. Once it finally came time for me to leave Japan and end trip, I found myself not wanting to leave at all. I only hope that I will be able to eventually return to Japan again.”

“[This trip] forever influenced my understanding of the depths of religious nature, the ways in which history should be remembered and preserved, and the influences both of these elements can have on present-day culture.”

The program offers students the chance to experience the rich religious and cultural life of Japan. Students will visit temples, shrines, new religious movements and museums, and attend lectures by Dr. Covell, Japanese scholars and others.

Dr. Covell earned his Ph.D. in Japanese Religions from Princeton and is currently the Mary Meader (Associate) Professor of Comparative Religion and Chair of the Department of Comparative Religion at WMU. Dr. Covell has drawn on his experience and contacts in Japan to put together a behind the scenes tour of Japanese religious life.

For pictures and comments from a past trip see:
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JAPANESE RELIGION AND CULTURE STUDY ABROAD SEMINAR



SUMMER 2012

“This was a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget. I was able to do and see things that most people in the U.S. will never get to do or see in their lives, and for that I am very thankful that I was able to go on this trip.”



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