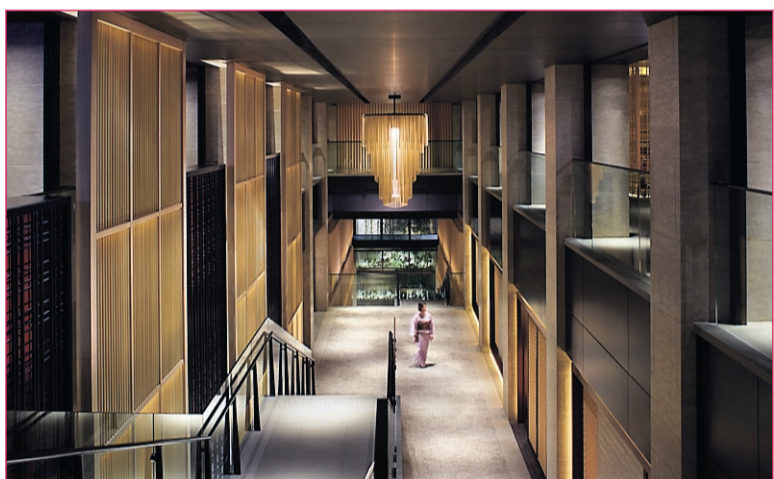




YOSHIDA SANSO RYOKAN

Even though ryokans are still governed by rules uncommon to other forms of accommodation around the world, nowadays they tend to be more welcoming to foreigners as the value of tourism from abroad becomes more recognised and appreciated. The refined Yoshida Sanso, in a peaceful and leafy part of Kyoto near Mount Yoshida, the location of a 9th-century shrine, manages to deliver uncommon levels of grace, history and tradition while also warmly welcoming foreign guests. The ryokan, set within a gorgeous garden, was originally built to serve as the second residence of Prince Higashi-Fushimi, uncle of the current Japanese emperor, Akihito. Rates start from ¥25,000 with breakfast.

See yoshidasanso.com



THE RITZ-CARLTON KYOTO

Ritz by name, ritz by nature, this boutique-like 134-room hotel is one of Kyoto's finest and comes with a giddily-high tariff to match. Aside from its fine Kamo-gawa River-side location, close to Pontocho, an atmospheric narrow laneway haunt of geisha festooned with restaurants and bars, is a veritable art gallery. The hotel's American designer commissioned local craftsmen and women to create the hotel's stunning interior design, including artwork and fittings, based on key words and feelings of import to the Japanese condition, namely serenity, movement, elegance, harmony and splendour. By the standards of most space-deprived Japanese hotels, the size of the well-appointed rooms and suites, is extremely generous at 45 square metres and more.

Doubles from ¥100,000 a night.

See ritzcarlton.com/Kyoto



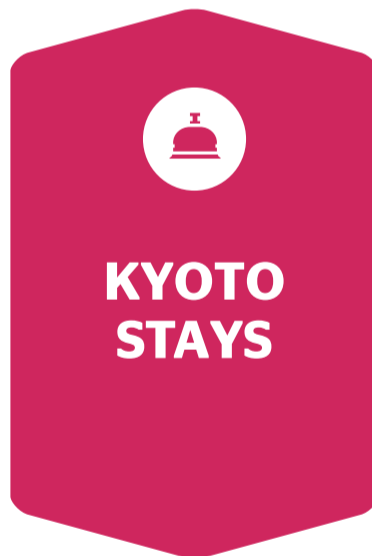
HOTEL GRANVIA KYOTO

Aside from the fact it's a top-notch five-star hotel, the biggest attraction for staying at the bustling, 536-room Hotel Granvia Kyoto is that it's conveniently situated inside the city's massive main station building, 20 years old this year. If you're arriving or departing by Japan's famed bullet trains, or shinkansen, meaning "trunk line", or perhaps one of a myriad other rail services, the Granvia is a mere short and covered walk away. And while the hotel, whose rooms have recently been refurbished, has its own array of restaurants, including a fine French-Japanese eatery, within the station are plenty of affordable places to dine around the clock.

Doubles from ¥41,200 a night.

See granviakyoto.com

Six of the Best



By
Anthony Dennis

Anthony Dennis visited Kyoto as a guest of Kyoto Tourism, Experience Japan and ANA (All Nippon Airways). See kyoto.travel/en/experiencejapan.com.au; anaskyweb.com



KYOTO TRAVELER'S INN

Kyoto, with its popularity among international travellers soaring, is becoming an expensive place to visit so if you're on tight budget you'll need a hotel that will leave you enough yen to enjoy the former ancient capital of Japan's other allures. Enter the Traveler's Inn, a hospitable superior budget hotel with an English-speaking owner that's next to many of Kyoto's major attractions. The Western-style rooms have recently been updated and brightly decorated by a local muralist who has also injected colour to public spaces such as the reception and stairwells. Off the lobby, just near the entrance to the hotel, is a pleasant light-drenched cafe and terrace, where breakfast is served daily. Doubles from ¥7020 a night.

See k-travelersinn.com



IORI MACHIYA STAY

The etiquette surrounding ryokans, or traditional inns, can be challenging for many first-time visitors to Japan (and even the odd regular one). But in Kyoto there's now an easier alternative that still allows for an authentic Japanese accommodation experience. Machiya, or traditional wooden townhouses with characteristically burnished facades, are a distinctive feature of Kyoto's densely populated neighbourhoods. Now the well-managed Iori Machiya Stay provides the opportunity for foreigners to stay in self-contained and luxurious traditional townhouses with locations throughout central Kyoto. It's even possible to have a splendid and rather elaborate vegetarian breakfast "home" delivered to your sliding door by van courtesy of Kyoto Izusen, a leading local restaurant. Rates for machiya are on application and depend on the type of machiya chosen..

See kyoto-machiya.com; kyoto-izusen.com; japanexperience.com



HYATT REGENCY KYOTO

Many a visitor to Kyoto, including this one, swear by this stylish 187-room hotel which tends to feel more like a lofty Park Hyatt than a lesser Hyatt Regency. The modern though unmistakably Japanese interiors – conceived in 2006 by Super Potato, the crack Tokyo-based design house – are a winner, right down to the elegant bedrooms with their colourful Japanese silk bedheads and wall decorations. One of the hotel's best attributes is its location slambang in the desirable Higashiyama district, nestled in the foothills of the city's eastern mountains, and close to many of Kyoto's no less than 16 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Doubles from ¥50,000.

See kyoto.regency.hyatt.com