

KYOTO, FOOD FIRST

Four days for two · mid-November · built for walkers

ONE-PAGE FIELD GUIDE
¥ = budget-friendly · ¥¥ = mid-range

November reality: this is peak autumn-leaf season, so eat early (lunch 11:00; dinner 17:30–18:00), expect queues at small noodle shops, and do not leave a specific small dinner to chance. The plan is deliberately light on temples: they are scenery between meals.

01 Nishiki → Kawaramachi → Ponto-chō ~7 km

BREAKFASTNishiki Market graze **WALK IN**
Start at 9:30–10:00: tamagoyaki, tsukemono, tofu doughnuts, tea. Share; save room.

LUNCH Menya Inoichi **QUEUE / NO BOOKINGS**
Elegant fish-stock ramen, 3 minutes from Kawaramachi. Be there by 10:40 or after 13:30.

WALK Teramachi & Shinkyogoku arcades → Kamo River at blue hour → Ponto-chō alley.

DINNER Pontocho Suishin Honten **BOOK 2–3 WEEKS**
Casual Kyoto vegetables, seafood and izakaya plates; book a 17:30/18:00 table. The alley itself is a poor walk-in bet in November.

Walk-in fallback: depart Ponto-chō and choose a busy-looking counter around Kiyamachi; do not wait beyond 30 minutes—have ramen/izakaya in the Kawaramachi side streets instead.

02 Philosopher’s Path → Gion ~9 km

BREAKFASTCoffee + pastry near Demachiyanagi **WALK IN**
Fuel up, then follow the canal south through leafy residential streets; enter Ginkaku-ji only if you want a short garden break.

LUNCH Omen Ginkaku-ji **QUEUE LIKELY**
Cold or hot udon with a tray of vegetables and sesame dipping sauce. Join by 10:45; this is not a dependable same-day reservation plan.

WALK Philosopher’s Path → Nanzen-ji lanes → Maruyama Park → Gion at dusk.

DINNER Kikkoya (Karasuma-Oike) **BOOK AHEAD**
Seasonal Kyoto-style small plates; make this the planned traditional dinner. Take a taxi/subway from Gion rather than sacrificing the meal to a long walk.

If Kikkoya is full: book any well-reviewed Gion/Ponto-chō izakaya with an online slot; avoid trying for kaiseki or counter sushi at the last minute.

03 Arashiyama → central Kyoto ~8 km

BREAKFASTArashiyama early start **WALK IN**
Arrive before 8:00. Walk bamboo grove, quiet back lanes and the river before the tour groups; skip a long temple visit.

LUNCH Arashiyama Yoshimura **NO BOOKINGS / QUEUE**
Handmade soba in a handsome house by Togetsukyō Bridge. Put your name down/opening-time queue, then stroll the river.

SNACK Yuba / matcha / seasonal sweets **WALK IN**
Pick one, not all three; Arashiyama rewards a light, grazing afternoon.

DINNER Menya Inoichi Hanare or downtown noodles **WALK IN / QUEUE**
Flexible, low-stakes dinner after the JR return—ideal after a substantial soba lunch. Arrive at opening; choose another nearby ramen shop if the line is long.

Optional splurge: Shoraian tofu-kaiseki, riverside Arashiyama **RESERVE WELL AHEAD**. Worth it only if a formal tofu meal is a priority; otherwise keep Yoshimura.

04 Fushimi sake district ~6 km

BREAKFASTFushimi Inari lower trail **WALK IN**
Go early, walk through the lower torii gates for 60–90 minutes, then take the train south to Momoyama/Fushimi.

LUNCH Kizakura Kappa Country **WALK IN**
Brewery restaurant: sake, Kyoto craft beer and hearty shareable dishes. No booking normally required, but arrive just before 11:30 or after 13:15.

AFTERNOONFushimi canals + sake tasting **WALK IN**
Walk the willow-lined district; choose a tasting at Gekkeikan/Fushimi Yumehyakushu. Have water—this is a leisurely tasting day, not a pub crawl.

FAREWELLReturn to Kyoto Station for anything you missed **WALK IN**
Use the station dining floors as the sensible final-night safety net, rather than crossing town for a fully booked “must-eat.”

More sake, less walking: Fushimi Sake Village is a flexible multi-stall option; peak-season tables can still mean a wait.

BOOKING TRIAGE — DO THIS NOW

Book: Pontocho Suishin (Day 1) and Kikkoya (Day 2), both for 17:30–18:00. For a formal counter meal/kaiseki, replace—not add to—one of these and book 4+ weeks out. **Do not book:** market grazing, Inoichi, Yoshimura, Kizakura; go early and accept a queue. Restaurant hours/closures change: reconfirm on the official site or booking page 1–2 days before.

PACE & TRANSPORT

Rule: one “anchor” meal per day; snacks fill the gaps. Use trains/subway for Arashiyama and Fushimi. Taxis are most useful Gion → Kikkoya. Mid-November is crowded: swap a packed sight for an extra café, bar or market lap—never the booked dinner.

Planning sources (accessed Aug 2026): Kyoto fall colours are typically mid-Nov–early Dec and November is busy: Savor Japan. Reservation guidance for autumn: Snow Monkey Resorts. Inoichi is no-reservation: Tabelog. Yoshimura does not take reservations: Leaf Kyoto. Kizakura lunch/dinner hours and no-reservation guidance: Kyoto Insider Sake Experience. Shoraian: official site.