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*Japan
January
2026*



THE ARCHITECTURE EXPERIENCE

Chureito Pagoda (忠霊塔, Chūreitō)
in Yamanashi

AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COURSE ON THE
INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL METHODOLOGY
IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE IN JAPAN



TRADITIONAL VS CONTEMPORARY

Backdrop of the Osaka skyline,
as seen from the entrance of
Osaka Castle.

The architecture of **Japan** is characterized by its unique development. Historically, wooden structures have been prevalent, with raised floors and thatched or tiled roofs. While the architecture in Japan has been influenced by China and the Korean Peninsula, it has also developed its own distinct style that integrates with the natural environment and cultural traditions of Japan.

Traditional Japanese style gained recognition in the 20th century as a precursor to modern architectural concepts. Despite the influence of Western culture in modern times, Japan remains at the forefront of architectural design and technology that imbibes and reflects the country's culture.

Why Japan?

Japan's unique architecture, which blends traditional and modern styles, is a result of its history of Westernisation and the development of its own individual style. Japan has experienced periods of growth and decline in its economy and architectural style, but continues to be a leader in technology and innovative design. With no strict, singular style, Japan's architecture constantly evolves and produces some of the world's most creative designs. Visitors to Japan can witness the country's architectural diversity and experience the blend of tradition and modernity in its buildings and public spaces.



Kinkaku-ji
(金閣寺), Kyoto

THE ARCHITECTURE EXPERIENCE

The best approach to growing as an architect is to learn from experiencing and observing. **The Architecture Experience** aims to do just that – to take an existing project proposal and enhance its core architectural values by incorporating the ideals of traditional and modern architecture and building technologies.

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**14 DAYS,
20 PARTICIPANTS,
3 CITIES**

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These visits will focus on observing and learning about the importance of site sensitivity, different architectural techniques – active and passive, the importance of material selection and other aspects vital to sustainability. The visits will foster a deep understanding of building with an inclination to local designs and techniques while working on an existing project will illustrate the immediate applications and impacts of traditional ideals on contemporary architecture.

IMPORTANT PLACES VISITED



Designed by renowned architect Tadao Ando, the museum is an architectural innovation built at the site of the Sayamaike pond, nearly 15 meters under the river. This minimalist structure showcases the brilliant use of simple raw materials, the play of light and open spaces and the use of natural elements, primarily water in the design. Ando believed that instead of creating new things we should take good care of the architecture that exists in the built environment and this is evident in the design of the museum.

Understand the use of simple raw materials, natural elements and minimalist design in a contemporary context.



To symbolize Japan's tradition and modernity, architect Sachio Otani incorporated triangular shapes, inspired by Mount Hiei and Japanese pagodas. The design features a hexagonal pattern with trapezoidal walls and pillars, minimizing environmental impact while maximizing floor space. The building emphasizes lobbies and lounges, occupying 70% of the area, and offering scenic views through large windows. This fusion of tradition and innovation showcased Japan's identity on a global scale,

Visitors can observe the relationship of the built environment with the surroundings.

IMPORTANT PLACES VISITED



UMEDA SKY BUILDING

This iconic building consists of two forty-story towers that are connected at the top by a rooftop observatory, The Kuchu Tien Observatory which offers panoramic views of the city. Considered a marvel of contemporary architecture, the building's design also incorporates elements of traditional Japanese architecture, including a central courtyard that serves as a hub for pedestrian traffic and provides a sense of tranquillity amidst the hustle and bustle of the city.

Understanding modern building technologies like the "lift up" method and earthquake resistance



SHIBUYA CROSSING

Shibuya Crossing in Tokyo is a popular area with over 200 shops and restaurants, located beside Shibuya Station. The 47-floor Shibuya Scramble Square building serves as a landmark to navigate the area. It's considered the busiest pedestrian intersection globally, with over 260,000 pedestrians crossing on weekdays and up to 500,000 people on the busiest days. Road traffic jams are rare even during rush hour, making it a popular destination for visitors and locals alike. A survey in 2012 estimated 1.5 million pedestrians cross the intersection each week.

Visitors can observe the 'scramble' and understand the impact of population density and the built environment.



Project work by the
October 2019 batch - A pop
up pavilion design

CAPSTONE PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Architecture Experience is designed with the intent of enhancing architectural understanding. To this end, a short project is included as part of the experience. The idea of the project is to refine an existing project with the ideologies of integrating traditional methodology in contemporary architecture.

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**PRE-TOUR
ASSIGNMENT,
ON SITE
OBSERVATIONS,
PROJECT REVIEW**

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This project will include a pre-tour assignment. Participants will be given an existing project in which they will have to conduct a basic SWOT analysis and identify areas that could be enhanced by ideologies of integrating traditional methodology in contemporary architecture. When on the tour, participants will review their on-site notes and observations and highlight important aspects that could be relevant to adapting and improving their own projects. At the end of the tour, participants will prepare and present a conceptual revision of the projects which will then be discussed and reviewed by the curator. The discussion will cover the feasibility and impact of their design modifications and how to proceed post-trip.



The National Art Centre, Tokyo

WHAT IS IN IT FOR ME?

Participants get to understand the significance of traditional architecture and how that has translated into contemporary ideologies that can be applied in an urban context.

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**RELEVANT
PROJECTS,
INTERNSHIP
OPPORTUNITIES,
UNDERSTANDING
THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN
TRADITIONAL AND
MODERN
ARCHITECTURE**

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From a learning perspective, participants get to understand how their domain of interest approaches sustainability in the urban context, and how they can work towards Sustainable Development Goals in their projects.

At the end of the Experience, participants will have an improved practical understanding of what they study in college and learn how to implement these strategies into their own projects, enhancing their portfolios.

Participants also get internship opportunities from our partners, and the more innovative their design proposal is, the better the chances of getting the internship.

EXPERIENCE OVERVIEW

DAY 1

Arrival in Osaka, Japan.

Orientation on the structure of the tour visits and project. Finalisation of teams and the participants' individual roles and responsibilities within the team will be defined.

DAY 2

Topics of discussion: Use of raw material and design with natural elements.

Places to visit: Osaka Prefectural Sayamaike Museum, Osaka Castle (outside visit) and Lake.

Cultural visit: Dotonbori, Shinsekai, Namba area.

DAY 3

Topics of discussion: Traditional construction methodology vs contemporary innovative techniques.

Places to visit: The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Umeda Sky Building.

Cultural visit: Umeda Station, Hankyu Centre.

DAY 4

Free Day

Evening arrival in Kyoto.

DAY 5

Topics of discussion: Relationship of buildings with natural surroundings, Functional living spaces.

Places to visit: Fushima Inari Taisha, Nanzen-ji Suikokaku, Old Mitsui Family Shimogamo Villa.

Cultural visit: Ninenzaka & Kiyomizudera area.

DAY 6

Topics of discussion: Zen gardens - creating calm in the chaos.

Places to visit: Kinkaku-ji, Ryōan-ji (Rock Garden), Ninna-ji (outside visit).

Cultural visit: Nishiki Market, Kawaramachi-dori Street.

DAY 7

Topics of discussion: Preservation of historically important architecture.

Places to visit: Kyoto International Conference Centre, KYOCERA Museum of Art, Kyoto City Hall.

DAY 8

Free Day

DAY 9

Evening Arrival in Tokyo.

Project discussion.

DAY 10

Topics of discussion: Earthquake-resistant building technology.

Places to visit: Mode Gakuen Cocoon Tower (outside visit), Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building observation deck, Meguro Sky Garden.

Cultural visit: Shibuya Crossing and neighbourhood walk, Hachiko Statue.

DAY 11

Topics of discussion: High-Density Environments.

Places to visit: National Art Center, Azabudai Hills, Tokyo Tower (outside visit), Kaminarimon, Sensō-ji.

Cultural visit: Nakamise-dori Street, Skytree view, Asakusa market visit, Akihabara market visit.

DAY 12

Topics of discussion: Influence of Contemporary architecture.

Places to visit: Tokyo International Forum, Studio Visit, Nobori Building.

Cultural visit: Ginza, Shinjuku and Harajuku area.

DAY 13/14

Free Day

Culmination of the tour, brief on submission of Capstone project.

Departure to India or home country.



Curator -
Ar. Rachita Bhonsle
(B.Arch)

CURATOR & TOUR LEADER

The Architecture Experience Singapore is curated by Rachita Bhonsle, who will also be accompanying the participants on the tour. Rachita is a senior architect at a private firm which specialises in high-rise buildings and high-density residential communities. She has a background in environmental policy management, sustainable design, and energy-efficient planning.

Rachita has worked mainly in the residential, hospitality and educational sectors. She is passionate about climatology-based design, the environmental impact of built spaces and sustainable site planning. These principles have driven her work for the last decade.

Timeline

- 2007-2012 B.Arch, MS Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore
- 2012-2014 Vishwannath Associates, Bangalore
- 2015 Graduate Certificate Program in Environmental Policy and Management – Major in Energy and Sustainability, University of Denver, Colorado, USA
- 2016 Rogue Architecture, Wheatridge, Colorado
- 2017-2023 Poornakriti Architects, Bangalore
- 2021 - Sustainable Site Planning, MITx
- 2024 - How to use Biomimicry in Architecture, Eduwik
- 2024 - Sustainable Building Design, MITx



Curator -
Ar. Atul Saraff
(B.Arch)

CURATOR & TOUR LEADER

The Architecture Experience Japan is co-curated by Atul Saraff, who will also be accompanying the participants on the tour. Atul is a practising architect based in Bangalore and also currently teaches at CMR School of Architecture. He has 12+ years of experience in the field, working with firms such as Mistry Architects - Bangalore, Mozaic - Goa, and Total Environment - Bangalore. Atul is an IGBC-accredited professional and focuses most of his effort on creating and teaching about environmentally conscious designs. Most of his experience is focused on the Residential and Hospitality sector.

Atul is an Alumnus of MS Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore.

Timeline

- 2007-2012 B.Arch. MS Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore
- 2012-2014 Mistry Architects, Bangalore
- 2014 IGBC Green accreditation
- 2014-2015 Mozaic, Goa
- 2015-2021 Total Environment, Bangalore
- 2021-Present - Design Principal at Saraff and Sharalaya Design House
- 2021-Present - Assistant Professor at CMR School of Architecture

ALUMNI TESTIMONIALS



AYUSHI MADAN
4th Year, Wadiyar
Centre For
Architecture, Mysore

Participant - The Architecture Experience Vietnam (Feb 2024)

The trip allowed me a very holistic experience of the cities, which is a first for me despite having been on quite a few “study” trips. It encompassed everything from contemporary and historically relevant site visits to vibrant day and night markets, offering insights into various aspects beyond architecture- food, culture, history, and so on. To our surprise and joy, the lively local New Year celebrations added a dynamic dimension, revealing various facets of the city's essence. It was encouraging to see studios and practices using sustainability and adaptive reuse as forefront agendas in a relatable urban context. I enjoyed seeing the variety in the typologies and languages of architecture within the same city. Would definitely want to explore more into the observations and learnings from Vietnam. There were a lot of spontaneous discussions encouraged and initiated by Atul Sir, that made me look a few more steps beyond just the surface and helped me catch onto certain aspects in a much more simplified way. He was really a great mentor to have on this trip!



SARAH SULEKHA
Architect

Participant - The Architecture Experience Japan (July 2023)

The learning experience was not only with regards to architecture, it also included learning about the social and cultural environment. I loved how I got to experience both contemporary and traditional cultures in parallel and also get the opportunity to interact with architects like Florian Busch as well as with the locals. Hats off to Rachita for being so patient and positive in every situation. She made me feel very comfortable. The team was very enthusiastic and comfortable to work with. The accommodation, transportation and every other basic need was very comfortably organised with the cost in consideration.. The team was very enthusiastic and comfortable to work with. The accommodation, transportation and every other basic need was very comfortably organised with the cost in consideration.



**TANUSHREE
MURKIBHAVI**
3rd Year, BNCA, Pune

Participant - The Architecture Experience Singapore (Feb 2024)

We learned a lot about urban planning, city-scale development, and how planning and sustainability go hand in hand. We visited exhibitions that reinforced those ideas and later got time to explore our ideas in the form of projects. The trip was a balance of both fun and academics. Rachita made the entire learning process more fun and carefree, which allowed us to explore more around the core concepts. Overall, I had an amazing time with her and am glad that she was our mentor. An Amazing experience, I understood new ideas and concepts from a new perspective. Site visits were the best, I got to learn a lot and also saw real-life applications of concepts related to urban planning.



SHHRRUTI JAIN
Architect

Participant - The Architecture Experience Sri Lanka (October 2019)

Studio and site visits were very well organised but what I loved the most were the interactive sessions that we had with various artists and architects in Sri Lanka. Conversations with them were an extremely enriching experience. I got a better understanding in material selection, and the integration of nature in the landscape was eye opening. Prithy and Kshitija curated the experience extremely well and I got to learn a lot from them. About the places as well as the field in general. It was a great experience altogether! Very well planned especially keeping in mind the fact that we were here for a decent number of days and have almost covered everything ranging from the historic places to the modern ones. This trip was worth the money and will definitely influence my design in the future.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

All our Experiences are aimed at implementing and solving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN.

Goal no. 17, Partnerships for the Goals, is key to our Experiences, since we work with a global team of experts to be able to add value to the learning of the participants.

The Architecture Experience focuses on 3 of the Goals primarily -



Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being



Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing
- By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement
- By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters



Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
- Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production



THE HAPPY LLAMAS

At **The Happy Llamas**, we curate Experiences for participants to show them how their domains work in the real world, and how they approach sustainability. Why?

We believe that the world has a lot to offer, and only on going out and engaging with different cultures in different corners of the world can one get a holistic view of life, and evolve personally and professionally. We also feel strongly about the need to make this planet, the only one that we have, more sustainable.

Keeping these two thoughts in mind, we work with domain and subject matter experts to co-curate Experiences where we inspire today's youth on how to make this world a better place to live for themselves and their peers, and creating positive global impact in their domains of interest.

We invite you to join us in this journey, and be a part of an inclusive and global community of changemakers!

Contact Us

ankit@thehappyllamas.com

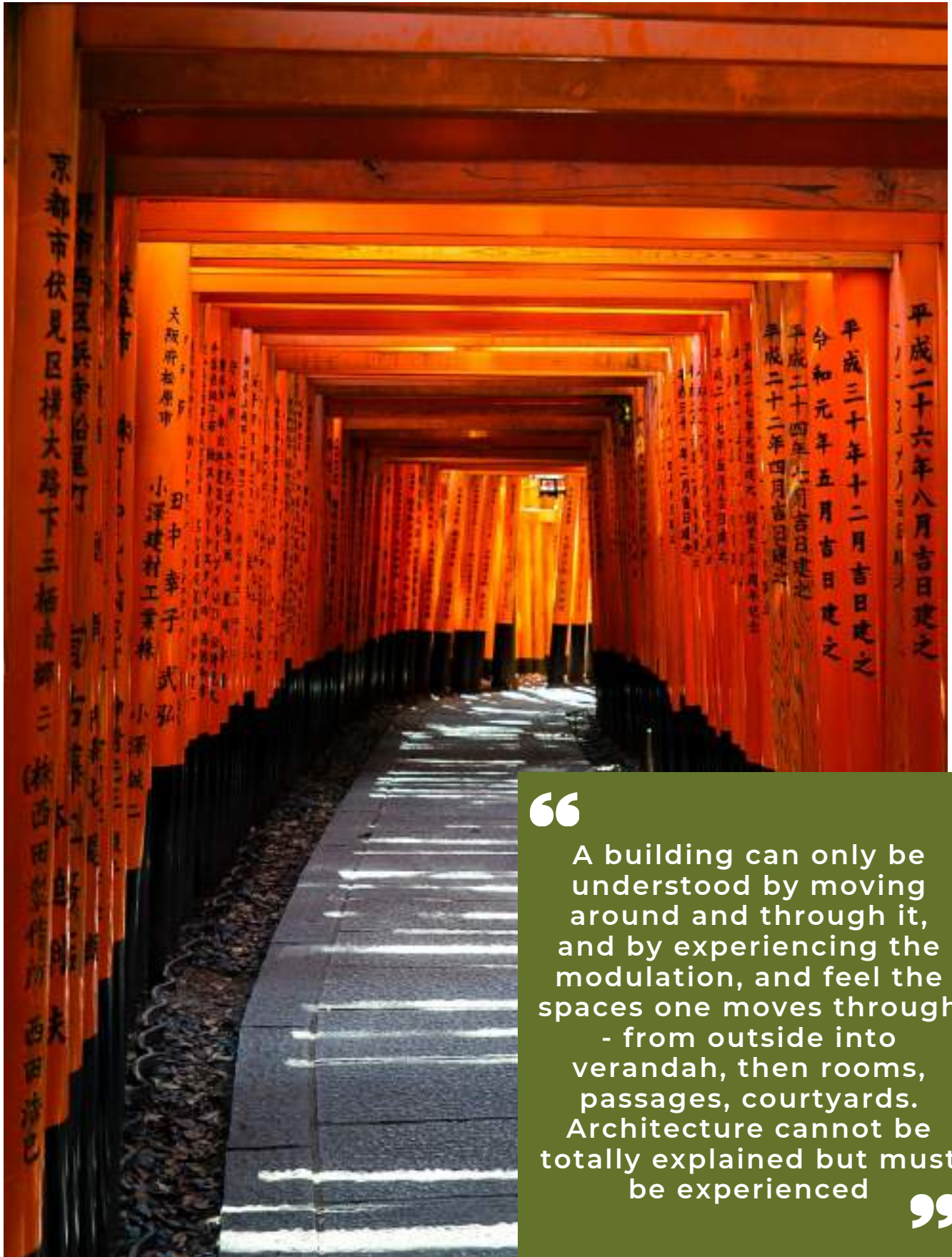
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WE ADHERE TO WORK TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Fushimi Inari-taisha 伏見稲荷大社 shrine, Kyoto

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A building can only be understood by moving around and through it, and by experiencing the modulation, and feel the spaces one moves through - from outside into verandah, then rooms, passages, courtyards. Architecture cannot be totally explained but must be experienced

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GEOFFREY BAWA