

# Kansai 関西

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Meandering through the fascinating Nara countryside past shrines, temples and 1300-year-old Emperor's tombs on the **Yama-no-be-no-michi hike** (p175)
- Making your way over ropes, chains, ladders and around waterfalls in the narrow gorge of **Yatsubuchi-no-taki** (p171)
- Meeting *inoshishi* (wild boar) and enjoying the city views on the **Rokku Gaaden hike** (p173) near Kôbe
- Walking through the colonnades of red torii (shrine gates) at **Fushimi Inari** (p159), within a stone's throw of Kyoto station
- Exploring the moss-covered alpine plateau of **Ôdai-ga-hara** (p183) at the start of the Ôsugi-dani hike
- Being hung off a cliff head first with a rope around your shoulders at the '*nishi-no-nozoki*' during your climb of sacred **Sanjô-ga-take** (see boxed text p180) – sorry, men only



While Kansai may lack the high peaks of Chûbu and the unspoiled wilderness of Hokkaidô, it offers some outstanding hikes within easy reach of the region's major cities – Osaka, Kyoto, Nara and Kôbe. There are literally hundreds of short day hikes easily accessed from the big cities, and two multi-day walks worthy of being listed among the best in Japan – the hike from the high plateau of Ôdai-ga-hara down into the Ôsugi-dani, and the hike across the rugged peaks of the Ômine-san range.

Surrounded by mountains on three sides, the Kyoto area is particularly rich in hikable terrain. Since many of Kyoto's hikes start or finish at mountainside temples, it's easy to combine physical and cultural pursuits in one outing. Likewise, hikes around Nara are rich in history, many of them follow ancient trade routes and pilgrimage trails. Both Kyoto and Nara are peppered with World Heritage sites. Further north, the Hira-san range offers good hiking, stunning views of Biwa-ko (Japan's largest lake) and Kansai's most exciting one-day hike, the Yatsubuchi-no-taki (Eight Waterfalls of Hira).

The region described as Kansai in this chapter is also known as Kinki. While the term 'Kinki' is actually a much more distinct geographical division, encompassing the prefectures of Shiga, Mie, Nara, Kyoto, Wakayama, Osaka, Kôbe and Hyôgo, the area is more frequently referred to as Kansai, a term that means 'west of the barrier'. This 'barrier' is an allusion to the historical barrier stations or checkpoints that separated Kansai from Kantô, the area 'east of the barrier'.

# Kansai Region 関西周辺

