



Nakasendo and the Kiso Valley

SPRING 2020 TOUR | ITINERARY

DAY 1 **Friday 17 April.** Arrive in Nagoya (own arrangements) and check into our hotel. Meet in the hotel bar at 5.30pm to enjoy a welcome drink with the group and discuss the next day's arrangements. Optional dinner together at a local restaurant (own cost).

DAY 2 **Saturday 18 April.** Today we each pack into our daypack a change of clothes for overnight as our suitcases will be transferred from Nagoya to our inn at Ena on Day 3. After breakfast, we travel by train first to Inuyama, where we make a brief stop to visit one of only twelve original remaining castles in Japan (entrance fee included). We then travel on to Mitake where we have lunch (included). From Mitake we start our 12 kilometre walk on the Nakasendo trail to Hosokute. We walk through woodland and rolling countryside, often on narrow pathways. Some sections of the path retain the original "ishidatami" or stone paving. The path climbs steadily uphill towards Hosokute. Along the way, and if open, we stop at a French café tucked into the mountains for afternoon tea. In Hosokute we stay overnight at a historical inn which has been operating continuously since the 17th century. The inn was rebuilt after a fire in the 1850s and still retains its mud walls, wooden pillars, paper screens and earth floor in the entrance foyer. Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

DAY 3 **Sunday 19 April.** Today's walk from Hosokute to Ena (formerly the old post town of Oii) is one of our longer walks at 21 kilometres. We follow a path that is over 1000 years old in places and again we walk along sections of ishida-tami, including a section that has only recently been rediscovered. About 2½ hours from Hosokute the trail passes through the quaint well preserved post town of Okute where a sacred cedar tree, thought to be 1300 years old, can be seen. In the afternoon we walk a very old section of the route known as the Jusan-toge (the thirteen passes) and we are rewarded with lovely views. The undulating path follows along the ridge tops before we descend into the town of Ena.

After arriving in Ena we visit the Hiroshige Museum of Art which exhibits ukiyo-e prints (entrance fee included). Here we have the opportunity to create our own prints based on traditional prints of the Nakasendo. We stay in a nearby traditional inn for this evening. Breakfast, dinner and a light lunch included.

DAY 4 **Monday 20 April.** Before breakfast we leave our suitcases in reception ready for sending ahead to our accommodation tonight. As we leave Ena we pass some buildings from its time as a post town on the Nakasendo trail. One, the former house of the village headman of Oii-juku, is now a small museum and provides some insight into the life of a wealthy merchant family in the Edo period.

Over the morning we walk from Ena to Nakatsugawa, another old post town, where we have lunch at a local restaurant. Whereas the morning walk is quite gentle and undulating, from Nakatsugawa the path climbs uphill out of town to the next post town of Ochiai. Beyond Ochiai the path continues steeply until we come to a very attractive but slippery stretch of ishida-tami where care needs to be taken. Our charming inn for the evening is close to the end of this old piece of ishida-tami and for centuries has marked the beginning of the Kiso Road section of the Nakasendo trail. Today we walk approximately 17 kilometres. Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.



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DAY 5 Tuesday 21 April. Today we each pack into our daypack a change of clothes for overnight as our suitcases will be transferred from here to our inn at Kiso Fukushima on Day 6. Our 10 kilometre walk today takes in two very well preserved examples of the post towns along the Nakasendo; Magome and Tsumago. We begin the morning with a 40 minute picturesque walk into the quaint post town of Magome. Here the old trail narrows and winds up to the Magome Pass through the postcard-like town.

After spending some time exploring Magome and buying a picnic lunch (own cost), we continue uphill out of town. Along the way we stop at the Ichikoku-tochi teahouse, built in the Edo period. Here we enjoy Japanese tea, served by local volunteers who share their knowledge of the area in English. The trail then turns gently downhill and we reach first the small village of O-tsumago and then a little further on, the delightful post town of Tsumago. Great effort has been made by the local community to ensure the veneer of this post town remains authentically as it did before the onset of twentieth century developments such as electricity and vending machines. If time permits, we visit the waki-honjin – an Edo period inn for travelling dignitaries – and museum (entrance fee included). Our accommodation this evening is at a traditional inn in Tsumago. Breakfast and dinner included.

DAY 6 Wednesday 22 April. At 20 kilometres, today is a longer day of walking and we leave early. We first walk about an hour to the town of Nagiso where we buy a picnic lunch (own cost) to eat along the route. Leaving Nagiso, we turn back away from the river and walk uphill over the morning through farms and pretty countryside along the original Nakasendo route to the Ne-no-ue Pass. We eat our lunch along the way and then descend rather steeply along a minor road to Nojiri, further along the Kiso River.

From Nojiri we take a 40 minute train ride to Kiso Fukushima where we stay the night in a charming hot spring inn. Kiso Fukushima was an important town on the Nakasendo trail, being the site of one of two barrier stations on the Nakasendo. The purpose of barrier stations was to prevent the movement of political hostages and arms and every traveller or porter was subjected to checking before being allowed to continue on their way. On arrival at Kiso Fukushima in the late afternoon we have time to wander through the Ue-no-dan historic area lined with traditional buildings and enjoy a footbath fed by local hot springs. Breakfast and dinner included.

DAY 7 Thursday 23 April. Today we each pack into our daypack a change of clothes for overnight as our suitcases will be transferred from Kiso Fukushima to our hotel at Matsumoto on our final night. In the morning after an early visit to the reconstructed barrier station at Kiso Fukushima (entrance fee included), we take a detour from the Nakasendo to the Kaida Highlands on the edge of Mount Ontake, the second highest volcano in Japan (after Mount Fuji). Many people who travelled the Nakasendo trail to Kiso Fukushima were pilgrims on their way to nearby Mount Ontake, considered one of the holiest mountains in Japan. We travel by private bus to the start of today's walk with a brief stop at the Karasawa-no-taki waterfall along the way. We begin by climbing over the Jizo Pass and then down onto the Kaida Highlands, a plateau 1200 metres above sea level with views of Mount Ontake. We stop here for lunch (own cost) before taking a short bus ride to the start of our second walk for the day. We climb up and over the Nishino pass then descend to our hot spring accommodation for the night. In total, we walk approximately 11 kilometres today. Breakfast and dinner included.



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- DAY 8** **Friday 24 April.** This morning we travel by private bus to Yabuhara, a town further up the Kiso Valley from Kiso Fukushima, and rejoin the Nakasendo trail. From Yabuhara we walk approximately 8 kilometres up and over the Torii-toge pass to the next post town of Narai. Known as Narai of the Thousand Houses, Narai has a long stretch of well-preserved buildings housing many souvenir shops, cafes and restaurants. We have time to explore the town and buy an early lunch (own cost). From Narai we take a train to Matsumoto where we enjoy the last night of the tour at a charming historical Western hotel. In the late afternoon, we have time to wander through the Nakamachi district with its interesting antique and curio shops. Tonight we enjoy our last dinner together at a local restaurant. Breakfast and dinner included.
- DAY 9** **Saturday 25 April.** Our tour ends this morning but not before we visit Matsumoto Castle, built over 400 years ago (entrance fee included). Matsumoto Castle is nicknamed 'crow castle' due to its striking black appearance. From Matsumoto there are train connections to Tokyo and back to Nagoya. We are happy to assist with the purchase of train tickets for onward journeys. There are a number of other popular tourist destinations close by such as Takayama and Kamikochi and you may choose to continue travelling in the area. Breakfast included.

See next page for tour price, inclusions and other general information.



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SPRING 2020 TOUR | GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR PRICE

\$4,350 per person twin/triple share. *#

DURATION

8 nights.

Tour Start Date: Friday 17 April 2020. Tour End Date: Saturday 25 April 2020.

Tour Start Point: Nagoya. Tour End Point: Matsumoto. We will provide directions to our Nagoya hotel.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum of 12 participants on a twin/triple share* basis (plus two tour leaders).

TOUR LEADERS

Alison Weber and Carolyn Abbey. In the unlikely event that either Alison and Carolyn, or both, are unable to accompany this tour due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, we will endeavour to engage a replacement tour leader and will provide details as soon as possible.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Food allergies and strict dietary requirements are not common or well understood in Japan. The traditional Japanese inns where we stay and the restaurants where we eat are generally not able to cater to specific dietary needs. Soy sauce and fish stock are widely used in Japanese cuisine and most meals including breakfast will feature fish or seafood.

You may need to bring your own food or snacks to supplement the meal that is provided if you are a strict vegetarian or have dietary requirements, such as a gluten intolerance or have an allergy or dislike of seafood. If you have dietary restrictions, please contact us to discuss further.

ACCOMMODATION

We stay at traditional Japanese regional inns, mostly simple family run minshuku (guesthouses or lodges). Toilets and bathrooms are usually shared. At some inns the baths are communal (women and men are segregated) in keeping with traditional Japanese culture. By western standards these inns might be considered two or three star. Conversely in our opinion the meals and hospitality are four star or more. Our website has more information in the What to Expect section.

INCLUSIONS

- Twin share* accommodation for 8 nights (including breakfast each day).
- Welcome drink Day 1.
- 7 Dinners (Days 2-8).
- 3 Lunches (Days 2, 3 and 4. On Day 3 we provide a light lunch of locally made rice balls).
- Transport whilst on the tour.
- Luggage shuttles (1 piece per person, maximum 70 litres/15 kilograms) as per the itinerary. Apart from Day 4 when our luggage is shuttled to that night's accommodation, our luggage is shuttled to our accommodation for the following night. For the three nights you are without your luggage, you will need to carry your essentials for that evening in your daypack.
- Entrance fees as per the itinerary.

* As many of the inns we stay in are quite small and have a limited number of rooms, accommodation is provided on a twin share basis (subject to availability, triple share may be an option). Please contact us if you do not have a travelling companion to share with. On some nights and subject to availability we may be able to provide a room for single occupancy at an additional charge.

As indicated in our terms and conditions, the tour price is subject to change if there is a fall in the Australian dollar to yen exchange rate. There will be no change in the tour price once we have received full payment from you. The price reference date referred to in the terms and conditions is 22 February 2019.