



Nakasendo and the Kiso Valley

SPRING 2024 TOUR | ITINERARY

DAY 1 **Monday 1 April.** Arrive in Nagoya (own arrangements) and check into our hotel. Meet in the hotel bar at 5:30 pm to enjoy a welcome drink with the group and discuss the next day's arrangements before dinner together at a local restaurant.

DAY 2 **Tuesday 2 April.** After an early breakfast, we travel by train to Iwamura, our first Edo period village of the tour. We change trains at Ena, where we leave our luggage*¹ for transporting to our inn tonight.

Iwamura was a castle town and we first hike up to the castle ruins. Afterwards we wander through the historic village and stop in at a local sake brewery for a tasting. We take lunch at a local restaurant and then return to Ena by train and 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. Our traditional inn for this evening is a short walk away. We pass through the old part of town and many buildings dating from Ena's time as a post town on the Nakasendo trail. The post town was called Oii-juku and the former house of the village headman of Oii-juku is now a small museum providing some insight into the life of a wealthy merchant family in the Edo period. If the museum is open we will take a short visit.

DAY 3 **Wednesday 3 April.** Over the morning we walk approximately 11 kilometres from Ena to Nakatsugawa. On the way into Nakatsugawa we stop at a local tea producer for a tasting and then continue on to Nakatsugawa, entering through the historic part of this former post town. We take lunch in Nakatsugawa at a local soba restaurant.

Whereas the morning walk is quite gentle and undulating, from Nakatsugawa the path climbs uphill out of town before descending steeply to the next post town of Ochiai. Beyond Ochiai the path continues steeply uphill until we come to a very attractive but slippery stretch of *ishidatami* (stone paving) where care needs to be taken. A charming inn at the end of this old piece of *ishidatami* marks the beginning of the Kiso Road section of the Nakasendo trail. From this point it is a 40 minute picturesque walk into the quaint post town of Magome. Tonight our group splits and sleeps in two different locations: one group at an inn on the trail into Magome and the other at a guesthouse in Magome. We eat together as a group at a restaurant in Magome. Today we walk approximately 19 kilometres *².

*¹There is no storage for large suitcases on the train we take to Ena on Day 2. If your luggage is too large to sit in front of you or to fit into the overhead shelf, or too heavy for you to lift up to the overhead shelf, your luggage will be shuttled from Nagoya to our inn on Day 3 (your cost) and your essentials for overnight can be placed in a separate bag for transporting from Ena station to our inn on Day 2.



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DAY 4 **Thursday 4 April.** Today we each pack into our daypack a change of clothes for overnight as our suitcases will be transferred to our hot spring hotel on the Kaida plateau on Day 5. Our 9 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 10 minute picturesque walk into the quaint post town of Magome. Here the old trail narrows and winds up through the postcard-like town to the Magome Pass.

After spending some time exploring Magome and collecting a picnic lunch, we continue uphill out of town. Along the way we stop at the Ichikoku-tochi teahouse, built in the Edo period. In return for a small donation, here we are served Japanese tea by local volunteers. We enjoy our picnic lunch in the nearby shelter. 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.

DAY 5 **Friday 5 April.** At 20 kilometres*², 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. On arrival we take a shuttle bus to our hot spring hotel on the Kaida plateau, around 25 minutes drive away. The Kaida plateau, 1200 metres above sea level, is at the base 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 Mount Ontake, considered one of Japan's holiest mountains. The Kaida plateau is also the home of the famous Kiso horse and our hot spring hotel is located close to the Kiso horse village.

DAY 6 **Saturday 6 April.** After breakfast we leave our luggage in reception for transporting to our hotel in Kiso Fukushima tonight. Today we take a break from walking the Nakasendo trail and spend the day in the highlands of the Kaida plateau.

After breakfast we walk a short distance to a bus stop and take a bus to nearby Nishino arriving around 30 minutes later. There we visit the Yamashita residence, the former home of the wealthy Yamashita family who breed Kiso horses, and now a prefectural treasure. We then hike part of the old Hida trail over the Nishino Pass (approximately 4 kilometres), with a detour to a viewpoint to surrounding mountains. After lunch at a local soba restaurant we take a public bus back to the Kiso horse village, and visit the horse stables before afternoon tea at a local café. We take the public bus back to Kiso Fukushima and our hot spring hotel there where we stay for the next two nights.



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- DAY 7** **Sunday 7 April.** Today we spend the day in Kiso Fukushima. 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.
- After breakfast we visit the reconstructed barrier station, Kozenji temple and the Yamamura Daikan Yashiki (entrance fees included). After lunch in the historic Ue-no-dan area everyone is free to spend the afternoon as they wish. Possible options include a hike to a nearby waterfall, a visit to a local sake distillery, browsing the shops (perhaps picking up some locally made lacquerware), or simply relaxing at the footbath fed by local hot springs in the Ue-no-dan historic area. Tonight we stay at another hot spring inn in Kiso Fukushima.
- DAY 8** **Monday 8 April.** After breakfast we travel by train 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. In the late afternoon, we have time to wander through the charming historical Nakamachi district with its interesting antique and curio shops. For our final dinner together we eat out at one of Matsumoto's fine restaurants.
- DAY 9** **Tuesday 9 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 Kanazawa and you may choose to continue travelling in the area.

*2The walking distance on most days can be shortened by taking a taxi or train part way. The cost of taking a taxi or train is additional to the tour price. Please contact us for further information about the options to shorten walking distances.

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



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SPRING 2024 TOUR | GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR PRICE

\$4,650 per person twin/triple share. *#

DURATION

8 nights.

Tour Start Date: Monday 1 April 2024. Tour End Date: Tuesday 9 April 2024.

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

GROUP SIZE

Minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12 participants on a twin 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. It is particularly difficult to cater to people with coeliac disease or who follow a strictly vegetarian diet.

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.
- 8 dinners.
- 5 lunches (Days 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7).
- Transport whilst on the tour.
- Luggage shuttles (1 piece per person, maximum 70 litres/15 kilograms) as per the itinerary - see note *¹ above. On Day 4 when our luggage is shuttled to our accommodation for the following night, you will need to carry your essentials for overnight 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 19 June 2023.