



Nakasendo and the Kiso Valley

SPRING 2025 TOUR 1 | ITINERARY

- DAY 1** **Monday 31 March.** 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 1 April.** After an early breakfast, we travel by private bus about one hour to where we start walking the Nakasendo trail, parts of which are thought to be over 1000 years old. We begin our walk at a stretch of "ishidatami" or stone paving that has only recently been discovered. Soon afterwards the trail passes through the quaint well-preserved post town of Okute where we visit Marumori, the Edo period home of a merchant which also operated as an inn. We collect our picnic lunch here.
- 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. Our walk today is just over 15 kilometres.*
- After arriving in Ena 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 Oi-juku and our traditional inn for this evening is in this area. A short walk from our inn is the former house of the village headman of Oi-juku, 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 make a short visit.
- DAY 3** **Wednesday 2 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. Our charming inn for the evening is at the end of this old piece of *ishidatami* and for centuries has marked the beginning of the Kiso Road section of the Nakasendo trail. Today we walk approximately 18 kilometres in total.*²



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DAY 4 **Thursday 3 April.** Our walk today takes in two very well-preserved examples of the post towns along the Nakasendo: Magome and Tsumago. The walk to Tsumago is approximately 9 kilometres with a further (optional) 3.5 kilometres walk to Nagiso at the end of the day.

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 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.

In Tsumago we visit the waki-honjin – an Edo period inn for travelling dignitaries - and museum (entrance fee included) before continuing a further 3.5 kilometres along the Nakasendo to Nagiso where we take a shuttle bus to our hot spring hotel about 20 minutes drive away. (There is an option to take the hotel shuttle bus from Tsumago directly to the hotel).

DAY 5 **Friday 4 April.** At around 16 kilometres, today is a longer day of walking.* After breakfast we take the shuttle bus back to 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 at Kiso Fukushima in the late afternoon we take a shuttle bus to our Japanese mountain retreat style hotel at the foot of the Kiso mountains a 15 minute drive away.

DAY 6 **Saturday 5 April.** Today we each pack into our daypack a change of clothes for overnight as our suitcases will be transferred to our hotel in Kiso-Fukushima on Day 7.

After breakfast our hotel shuttle bus takes us back into Kiso Fukushima. We take a detour from the Nakasendo today 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 shuttle 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 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.



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- DAY 7** **Sunday 6 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 take the shuttle bus back into Kiso Fukushima where 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 we have free time before a sake tasting at a local sake brewery. Possible options include a hike to a nearby waterfall, 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 a hot spring inn in Kiso Fukushima.
- DAY 8** **Monday 7 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 8 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 2025 TOUR 1 | GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR PRICE

\$5,250 per person twin/triple share. @#

DURATION

8 nights.

Tour Start Date: Monday 31 March 2025. Tour End Date: Tuesday 8 April 2025.

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 13 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. 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/triple 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 as per the itinerary.
- Luggage shuttles (1 piece per person, maximum 70 litres/15 kilograms) as per the itinerary - see note ^{*1} above. On Day 6 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 29 March 2024.