



Nakasendo and the Kiso Valley

SPRING 2027 TOUR | ITINERARY

- DAY 1** **Sunday 28 March.** Arrive in Ena (own arrangements) and meet at 2.00 pm at the small Ena station from where our luggage will be transported to our nearby traditional Japanese inn (ryokan). From the station we walk to the nearby 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. Afterwards we walk through the old part of town and pass 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 take a short visit. Our traditional inn for the next two nights is on the Nakasendo trail in Oii-juku.
- DAY 2** **Monday 29 March.** After breakfast we travel by private bus 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 there is the option to visit a restored Edo period inn where Emperor Meiji stopped on his tour to the area in 1898.
- DAY 3** **Tuesday 30 March.** Today is a shorter day of walking with free time in the afternoon. Over the morning we walk approximately 11 kilometres from Ena to Nakatsugawa. On the way into Nakatsugawa we stop at a local tea producer (if open) for a tasting and then continue on to Nakatsugawa, entering through the historic part of this former post town. We take a late lunch in Nakatsugawa at a local soba restaurant.
- After lunch there is the option of staying in Nakatsugawa and relaxing there or to visit nearby Naegi Castle to explore the remains there. Tonight we stay in a western style hotel in Nakatsugawa and eat at a local izakaya.
- DAY 4** **Wednesday 31 March.** Today is also a shorter day of walking (around 8 kilometres) but today's walk involves more climbs and descents than yesterday. In the morning we enjoy a leisurely breakfast (and maybe a coffee at a local coffee shop) before buying a picnic lunch (own cost) at a convenience store.
- From Nakatsugawa the path climbs uphill out of town before descending steeply to the next post town of Ochiai. At Ochiai we visit the old honjin (if open). Beyond Ochiai the path continues steeply uphill until we come to a very attractive but slippery stretch of ishida-tami (stone paving) where care needs to be taken.
- A charming inn at the end of this old piece of ishida-tami 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 we stay in a traditional inn in Magome and eat dinner out at a local restaurant. Today we walk approximately 8 kilometres.



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DAY 5 **Thursday 1 April.** Our walk today begins and ends in very well-preserved examples of the post towns along the Nakasendo: Magome and Tsumago. The walk to Tsumago from Magome is approximately 8 kilometres.

We begin the morning in the quaint post town of Magome. After breakfast (and perhaps a coffee in the popular coffee shop close to our inn) we have free time to explore Magome where the old trail narrows and winds up through this postcard-like town.

After meeting at the top of Magome we continue uphill out of town towards the Magome Pass. Just after the pass 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 a bento 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 taking private transport back to our inn in Magome about 25 minutes drive away. Tonight we eat at another of Magome's restaurants.

DAY 6 **Friday 2 April.** At over 16 kilometres*, today is a longer day of walking. After breakfast we take private transport further along the Nakasendo trail 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 charter bus to Kiso Fukushima, a journey of around 45 minutes. Our first stop on arrival at Kiso Fukushima is the public footbath (fed from natural hot springs) where we can rest our weary feet over a drink or ice-cream. From the footbath it is only a few minutes walk to our onsen hotel in the old part of town close to the Kiso river where we stay for two nights.

DAY 7 **Saturday 3 April.** 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.

We spend today in Kiso Fukushima and over the morning 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.



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DAY 8 **Sunday 4 April.** Today we each pack into our daypack a change of clothes for overnight as our suitcases will be transferred to our hotel in Matsumoto on Day 9.

We take a detour from the Nakasendo today to the highlands of Kaida Kogen plateau 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-notaki 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.

DAY 9 **Monday 5 April.** After breakfast we take private transport to Yabuhara, a town further up the Kiso Valley, 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 10 **Tuesday 6 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.

*The 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 2027 TOUR | GENERAL INFORMATION

TOUR PRICE

\$5,700 AUD per person twin/triple share. @#

DURATION

10 days/9 nights.

Tour Start Date: Sunday 28 March 2027. Tour End Date: Tuesday 6 April 2027.

Tour Start Point: Ena station. Tour End Point: Matsumoto. We will provide directions to Ena station.

GROUP SIZE

Minimum of 8 and a maximum of 13 participants[@] (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 9 nights (including breakfast each day).
- 9 dinners.
- 5 lunches (Days 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8).
- Transport as per the itinerary.
- Daily luggage shuttles (1 piece per person, maximum 70 litres/15 kilograms) with the exception of Day 8. On Day 8 (and the following day) 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 4 June 2026.