

JAPAN - THE NAKASENDO PATH & KYOTO

8-days / 7-nights inn-to-inn **SELF GUIDED** walk from Kyoto to Tokyo



Experience the 'road through the mountains', the Nakasendo Path, at your own pace on this self-guided walk. Our Nakasendo walking holiday combines the ancient with the modern Japan to offer a truly unique insight into the Land of the Rising Sun. Japan is a land of contrasts, where an appreciation for the contemporary combines with a reverence for tradition, where skyscrapers sit side-by-side with peaceful ancient shrines.

Journey from one ancient post-town to another, through forests of bamboo and Japanese cedar, staying in traditional Ryokan (travellers' inns) and Minshuku (family-run guesthouses), just like weary merchants, Samurai, feudal lords and their retinues did centuries ago. This self-guided walk includes a full briefing and most transport tickets. Start in Kyoto, with a full-day guided sightseeing tour. Then walk the best-preserved and most interesting parts of the Nakasendo Trail before being catapulted forward into modern-day Japan ending your tour in bustling Tokyo.

Dates: Daily on demand from March to November, 2021

Cost from: \$3870 per person twin share. Single room supplement on request

Includes: 3 nights of comfortable 3 or 4-star hotel accommodation in en-suite rooms in Kyoto and Tokyo; 4 nights in traditional Ryokan and Minshuku, which usually have shared facilities; 7 breakfasts, 4 dinners; train travel (by local train, limited express train, or bullet train) from Kyoto to the Nakasendo Trail and from the trail to Tokyo and for the intermediate train trips on the Nakasendo Trail; full day private tour in Kyoto with English-speaking guide; detailed route notes and maps; local telephone support, optional briefing in Kyoto.

Not Included: Flights or airport transfers, local transport on Kyoto day tour, meals not shown, drinks, entrance fees not mentioned, local Nakatsugawa-Magome bus, and personal expenses. Luggage transfers are not included but can be organised locally at extra cost.*

Grading: Easy to moderate. There are 5 days of walking on the Nakasendo Trail; daily walks are from 3km up to 19km, with up to 725m of ascent and 645m descent.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive in Kyoto

Make your way to the city of Kyoto, Japan's cultural and historical capital. Usually, accommodation is in a modern, Western-style hotel with private en-suite facilities. However if you prefer you can stay at an informal, Japanese-style Ryokan (travellers' inn) where you sleep on futons in tatami-mat rooms. As with the Japanese inns on the Nakasendo Trail, bathroom facilities are not attached to your room but 'along the hallway'. Dinner is not included, leaving you free to choose from the many restaurants on offer in Kyoto.

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Day 2: Guided sightseeing in Kyoto

An experienced professional guide will meet you at your hotel after breakfast to take you on a personal, full-day tour of Kyoto. You can opt to travel by bus and subway or by taxi – you pay for travel and entry fees on the spot. There are five different itineraries to choose from; we have included some of the most famous sights and some lesser-known spots. Your guide can either escort you back to your hotel around 5.00pm or to an alternative location of your choice. Dinner is not included tonight, ask your guide for recommendations.

Day 3: Magome to Tsumago

Walking distance @ 9km (3 hours)

Ride on the world-famous *shinkansen* (bullet train) from Kyoto to Nagoya. At Nakatsugawa, board a local bus for the short journey to Magome (paid locally). Before you begin your walk you may like to have lunch in Magome – perhaps try *gohei-mochi*, skewered sticky rice covered in a sweet paste of miso, sesame and walnuts. Walk over Magome Pass to Tsumago, one of the best-preserved and most evocative of the Nakasendo post-towns. Spend the night at a Minshuku (family-run guesthouse) in Tsumago or the nearby hamlet of O-Tsumago, with a delicious home-cooked Japanese dinner included.

Day 4: Tsumago/Nagiso to Nojiri

Walking distance @ 19km (6 hours)

The longest day on the trail is the hike from Tsumago or Nagiso to Nojiri. Walk through small valleys and past forests of bamboo and Japanese cedar, through some of the most remote scenery on the tour. Continue by train to Kiso-Fukushima. Stay at a lovely Onsen Ryokan (hot-spring travellers' inn) set in a peaceful valley above the town. Complimentary transfer from the station is provided by the Ryokan. The Ryokan has indoor and outdoor hot-spring baths, perfect for a soak to rest your weary legs. Dinner is included.

Day 5: Kiso-Fukushima to Yabuhara to Narai

Walking distance @ 7km (3 hours)

Your hosts at the Ryokan transfer you to Kiso-Fukushima after breakfast. In Kiso-Fukushima there is an optional, fairly strenuous, circular walk to a local waterfall. The circular walk is 7km and takes 2-3 hours. You can take this walk in the morning, before heading onwards to Yabuhara. Train tickets are provided for the short journey from Kiso-Fukushima to Yabuhara, starting point for the hike over the Torii pass to Narai. Narai is a well-preserved atmospheric post-town, and you stay here in a family-run Minshuku in the heart of the village. Your hosts will serve a home-cooked Japanese dinner.

Day 6: Narai to Kiso-Hirasawa

Walking distance @ 3km (1 hour)

After breakfast, walk the short distance to the small town of Kiso-Hirasawa, famous for its lacquerware. There are many small shops selling handcrafted tableware and furniture. Board a train at Kiso-Hirasawa station for your onward journey to Karuizawa or Komoro for your final overnight stay. Both locations have lovely inns with a real sense of history and fine Japanese baths. Ride first to Matsumoto where you can visit the famous castle. Matsumoto Castle, is built on the plains and completely surrounded by cherry blossom in the season. Then connect onwards to your final stop – total travel time is around three hours, not including the optional stop in Matsumoto. Arrive at your Ryokan in time for a dinner with seasonal, local produce.

Day 7: Karuizawa to Yokokawa, onward travel to Tokyo

Walking distance @ 17km (6 hours)

After breakfast, your final day on the Nakasendo Trail is from Karuizawa to Yokokawa. Leaving Karuizawa, walk over the Usui-toge Pass, where teahouses surround Kumano shrine, then descend along a peaceful, undeveloped section of the trail through misty green forests. There is also the option to shorten the walk by 3.3km by taking a taxi at the start of the day (paid locally). From Yokokawa, board the local train to Takasaki and change there for your ride on the *shinkansen* (bullet train) to Toyama. The train journey takes around three hours to Tokyo, where you stay in a Western-style hotel for 1 night. Dinner is not included tonight as Tokyo offers an endless choice of restaurants.

Day 8: Tour ends in Tokyo. Tour ends after breakfast.



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TOUR BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR JAPAN

Accommodation: Tours stay in 3- or 4-star hotels or in traditional Japanese Ryokan, Minshuku and Shukubo.

Hotels are European style with ensuite bathrooms, but rooms tend to be smaller than in Europe.

Ryokan and Minshuku are traditional Japanese-style inns. They may be in modern concrete or older wooden buildings but the rooms are always in the Japanese style with tatami (straw) matting and futons laid out in the evening. Dinners are served together, usually in the dining room, and are exquisitely prepared multi-course meals. Some Ryokan have ensuite bathrooms, though older buildings generally offer shared facilities.

Minshuku are usually family-run. They have tatami-mat rooms, with futons laid out in the evening for sleeping. Most Minshuku do not have ensuite bathrooms as they are in older traditional wooden buildings. Compared with a Ryokan, they are usually (but not always) slightly less formal, but the service and food is just as good. Smaller inns offer domestic scale bathing tubs used privately in turn by guests; larger inns offer communal spa-style baths, segregated by gender. They are the classic Japanese experience.

Shukubo are lodgings in Buddhist temples originally meant for pilgrims, but now open to anyone. Rooms are similar to Ryokan or Minshuku, though without ensuite facilities. The food is excellent vegetarian Buddhist 'Shojin-Ryori' cuisine. It is a wonderful experience to stay in a Shukubo and there is the opportunity to join the early morning religious service. Service is provided by Buddhist monks, who are courteous and friendly, but please remember that Shukubo are not full-service hotels. They are attached to temples in sacred places such as Mount Koya and some temples of Shikoku.



Meals: Most meals will be Japanese cuisine. Vegetarian options are available, but limited. Strict vegetarian diets, vegan diets, or gluten free diets will be difficult to accommodate due to the pervasiveness of the fish-based stock dashi and the use of soy sauce and miso in Japanese cuisine. Tips are not required in Japan.

* **A note about luggage transfers:** For **SELF-GUIDED** tours luggage transfers are not included and we recommend you adopt the Japanese way using the reliable *Takkyubin* courier service. During the tour, you can send larger items of luggage ahead by courier so you don't carry too much and to make the long-distance transfers by bus and train more relaxed (avoiding handling larger items of luggage through stations and on trains). Larger items of luggage do not re-join you on the same day, and you will not have access to them on certain nights so bring a daypack to carry your overnight items.

The inns used provide soap, shampoo, towels, slippers and Yukata robes, which are worn inside after check-in. Wear your Yukata for dinner, in your room and when walking about, even outdoors. You do not need extra evening clothes and can travel light. Luggage lockers are often available while walking or sightseeing.

Outdoor Travel offers guided or self-guided walking holidays in many parts of the world including China, the USA, Southern and Eastern Africa, the Milford Track or Abel Tasman in New Zealand, the Flinders Ranges or Tasmania in Australia and also in the UK, Ireland and in Europe. Popular in Europe are England's **Coast-to-Coast** trail or Scotland's **West Highland Way**, the **Ring of Kerry** in Ireland the **Camino de Santiago** in France and Spain, Italy's **Amalfi** or **Cinque Terre** Coast or the Pilgrim's Road to Rome, the **Via Francigena**.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

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