

JAPAN – TOKYO, KYOTO, MOUNT FUJI & THE NAKASENDO PATH

12-days / 11-nights guided sightseeing & walking tour with optional extension to Nikko



This magical journey through Japan takes us from the bustling streets of Tokyo through rural Japan and along the historic Nakasendo Path to the historic capital of Kyoto, with a stay in Hakone National Park for spectacular views of Mount Fuji. Experience the ultramodern Japan of today, combined with ancient Japanese traditions in this fascinating country.

As well as many of the 'must-see' highlights, we explore parts of Japan seldom visited by tourists – the hot springs and onsens of Nagano and the small post-towns and villages on the 'road through the middle mountains'. Our multi-day walk on part of the Nakasendo Path offers lovely mountain scenery in the Japan Alps, and we stay in traditional inns (ryokan) and guesthouses (minshuku) for a taste of traditional Japan.

Highlights:

- Walk on the historic Nakasendo Path through the Japan Alps
- Explore the gardens and shrines of ancient Kyoto
- Walk by lakes and mountains in the shadow of Mt Fuji
- See the modern side of Japan in Tokyo and Kyoto
- Stay in ryokan and minshuku, traditional Japanese inns and guesthouses, for an authentic experience
- Try delicious and varied Japanese food

Dates: 10th April, 8th May, 6th November, 2019

Cost from: \$10,960 per person twin share. Single room supplement on request, only available in city hotels

Includes: 11 nights' of comfortable 3 or 4-star accommodation in en-suite rooms (except in ryokan and minshuku, which usually have shared facilities), half board from dinner on arrival to breakfast on departure (except 1 dinner), 3 lunches, full program of guided walks led by an experienced local leader, sightseeing and entrance fees, travel by coach/minivan, train and public transport, tips/gratuities

Not included: International flights, other meals, drinks, visa or passport charges, personal expenses.

Grading: Easy to Moderate. A mixture of part-day walks, moderate trails and city sightseeing. Walking over easy to moderate terrain, ranging from level countryside paths to trails of up to 8km with 510m of ascent. Days on the Nakasendo Path are unhurried with plenty of time to enjoy the scenery.

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Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive in Tokyo. Afternoon arrival and transfer to our accommodation in central Tokyo (2 nights). There will be some free time to explore before a welcome dinner. (D)

Day 2: Tokyo – We have a full-day guided walking tour of Tokyo, which is a huge metropolis with many different districts, each with their own individual character. From the ultra-modern neon lights and skyscrapers and to historic temples, gardens and shrines, our guided walk gives us an insight into Japanese life. (B,D)

Day 3: Yudanaka Onsen and the ‘snow monkeys’ – Journey from Tokyo into rural Japan to the traditional hot spring village nestled in the mountains of Nagano. A short walk takes us to visit the ‘snow monkeys’, bathing in the hot springs. The monkeys started coming to warm themselves in the outdoor springs here around fifty years ago, and a local lodge owner built them their own bath after feeling sorry for them during the cold winters. Our accommodation in nearby Yudanaka, in a long-established ryokan, has its own natural hot springs (humans only!), where you can relax this evening. (B,L,D)

Day 4: The Nakasendo Path – Over the next two days we walk in the remote Kiso valley, exploring rural Japan, an area of the country that few overseas visitors reach. We walk from village to village and stay by night in a small, family-run country guesthouse (minshuku). We carry our overnight items in a small daypack, while our luggage is taken ahead to Kyoto. We start near Midono, one of the 11 ‘post-towns’ along the Kiso valley section of the Nakasendo, at Nagiso. Post-towns were resting places, where travellers could find accommodation as they walked between Kyoto and Edo (now Tokyo). In days past this route was used by traders, feudal lords, and samurai as they made their way to and from the imperial capital. We walk to Tsumago, a charming post-town which has been restored over the last forty years by its residents. We stay in an authentic minshuku, a family-run guesthouse, in Tsumago or the nearby village O-Tsumago. (B,L,D)

Day 5: Nakasendo Path – A lovely walk today from Tsumago, past fields and houses, through forest and over the Magome Pass, to the sleepy village of Magome. We then continue on by bus, train and shinkansen (bullet train) to Kyoto, where we are reunited with our luggage. We stay four nights in Kyoto. (B,D)

Day 6: Kyoto – Kyoto, the western end of the Nakasendo Way, was the capital of Japan from the 8th Century until 1868 when the capital was moved to Edo (now Tokyo). It was not bombed as heavily during WWII as other parts of Japan so it has retained more of its historic buildings and gardens. In the morning, we stroll the ‘Philosopher’s Path’, a delightful walk beside a canal lined with cherry trees in eastern Kyoto, then in the afternoon we walk in Gion, Kyoto’s geisha district, where there is always the possibility of seeing a geisha or maiko (apprentice geisha) making their way through the narrow streets. (B,D)

Day 7: Kyoto – In the morning we visit the Myoshin-ji temple complex, a real ‘hidden gem’ of Kyoto, then Kinkaku-ji, the Golden Pavilion, surrounded by a Japanese garden, which was originally built by the Ashikaga Shogun at the end of the 14th Century. We also visit Ryoan-ji to see its famous Zen rock garden of gravel and boulders – if you can see all fifteen boulders at one time then you have achieved enlightenment! (B,D)

Day 8: Kyoto – Free day to explore Kyoto. Your guide can suggest places to visit, such as Nijo Castle, the former residence of the Shogun, or Kiyomizu Temple with its wonderful view of Kyoto. (B)

Day 9: Hakone – We travel by shinkansen and bus to Hakone, a famous hot spring town near Mount Fuji. Your luggage will be sent ahead to Tokyo, so you’ll need to pack overnight items for the two nights in Hakone. We stay at a lakeside hotel with wonderful views of Mount Fuji (weather permitting). After checking in, we walk to the Hakone Check-Point Museum. On the old Tokaido route between Kyoto and Tokyo, this was where authorities ensured travellers had permission to travel and carry goods between the cities. There is some time to explore Hakone independently before dinner. (B,D)

Day 10: Hakone National Park – We have a full day in Hakone. We walk along the ‘sugi-namiki’, lined with Japanese cedar trees, to Lake Ashi-no-ko where we may see demonstrations of Japanese parquetry if the workshop is open. We then walk a part of the old Tokaido highway, the ‘East Sea Road’, once the alternative to the Nakasendo. We arrive back to our hotel mid-afternoon and have free time before dinner. (B,D)

Day 11: Hakone and Tokyo - A morning boat ride across Lake Ashi-no-ko, to travel on a series of funicular railways through the Hakone volcanic ranges. We walk to see the volcanic fumaroles bubble up, before enjoying lunch on the other side of the mountain. After lunch we take the bus back to Tokyo. (B,L,D)

Day 12: Departure day - Morning transfer for our return flight home. (B)

Optional extension to Nikko (at extra cost):

Nikko is an historic town set against a stunning backdrop of wooded hills and national parklands, about 2 hours north of Tokyo, and has been sacred to the Japanese for 1200 years. It is a UNESCO World Heritage-listed site. The ornate buildings of the Toshogu Shrine were created in memory of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the shogun who united feuding lords to create a unified nation of Japan. The area is also well-known for its beautiful autumn foliage in October and early November.

Included in Nikko extension: Nikko transport pass, 2 dinners and 3 breakfasts, 2 nights in Japanese style inn, 1 night in western style hotel, entrance fees for sites in Nikko, guide services on the afternoon of day 13, and all day on day 14.

Your guide on the main tour will advise of the best way to reach Tobu Asakusa station (at own cost), and will provide all necessary documentation. It is advisable to travel with a smaller backpack to Nikko, and leave your main luggage in Tokyo. On arrival in Nikko you will be met by your local expert guide who will introduce you to the magnificent sights of the UNESCO site of Nikko.

Day 13: Travel to Nikko by train from Tokyo, afternoon guided sightseeing in Nikko. Stay in a Japanese-style inn in Nikko for two nights. (D)

Day 14: Guided walking in the Senjogahara marshlands of Oku Nikko, an area of outstanding natural beauty north of Nikko. The marshlands are home to a wide variety of plant and birdlife. (B,D)

Day 15: Return to Tokyo by train, free afternoon in Tokyo. Overnight in Tokyo in a Western-style hotel (B).

Day 16: Tour ends after breakfast.



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Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

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