

Nakasendo Highlights 6 days

Overview

The Nakasendo Way connects Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto via a 540 km trail through the stunning Japanese countryside and via authentic Japanese towns. The whole mountainous inland route traverses 69 post towns spread along the trail. Walk the most beautiful section via the Kiso Valley, also known as the Kiso-ji or the Kiso Road. The 27 km section that connects the four southernmost towns has become a very popular hiking trail in recent years. We include this section plus a lot more.

The Kiso-ji is a hilly path of ancient stone pavements and dirt trails that will lead you through landscapes alive with seasonal flowers, crystal clear waterways, and old endemic forests. The trail was used by samurai, farmers, merchants, and the public during the Edo Period of the 1600s and beyond. Its primary use now is for walkers to immerse themselves in real Japan.

Whats Included

- 5 nights stay in a family-run or small traditional minshuku, ryokan or hotel
- Superb traditional multi-course meals for breakfast and dinner each day (except one night in Karuizawa where there are so many options that you should decide)
- Walk with a light pack, with luggage transfers most days from accommodation to accommodation (please see Luggage Transfer section in General Info for details)
- Itineraries can be flexible to shorten the walking or slow the trip down by adding more rest days
- Enjoy worry-free navigation with Auswalk's authored comprehensive track notes and maps
- 24/7 support from our representatives on the ground

Itinerary

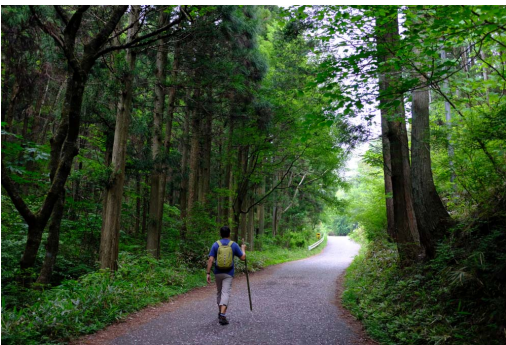


Day 1

Today is a travel day for you to make your way to the town of Nakatsugawa, where the old post town (Nakatsugawa-juku) has been extensively restored. This is a great place to explore at leisure and includes a number of traditional shops (eg Japanese sweets, sake etc.).

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Small family-run Minshuku, Ryokan or Hotel in Nakatsugawa



Day 2

Take a gentle walk through the outskirts of Nakatsugawa to the small post town of Ochiai-juku. From here we head up into the hills along the famous “Ochiai-juku stone pavement” to arrive at Shinchaya. Then easier walking along quiet country roads to the beautifully restored post-town of Magome-juku. Take some time here and explore! Then continue along rugged tracks through the forest over Magometoge Pass and down into the post town of Tsumago-juku. This town has also been wonderfully restored.

Shorter options for today’s walk:

Walk from Nakatsugawa to Magome (approx. 9 km), then catch a bus to Tsumago.

Catch the bus from Nakatsugawa to Magome and start the walk from there to Tsumago. (approx. 8.5 km)

Total distance: 17 km

Approx. time: 4 ½ – 5 hr

Ascent: 633 m

Descent: 529 m

Meals included: Breakfast and dinner

Accommodation: Small family-run Minshuku, Ryokan or Hotel in Tsumago



Day 3

Today’s walk is all about outstanding nature and enjoying the stunning Japanese landscape. Walk along trails that follow running streams and dense forest, and through small villages enjoying the Japanese cultural experience and friendly locals. The main route of the Nakasendo between Nagiso (Midono-Juku) and Nojiri-juku lay along the Kiso River. However, this route was often blocked due to flooding and landslides. At such times, the alternative “Yogawa Route” over Nenouetoge Pass was used instead. This is the trail you will walk today which takes you across

the hills and through mountain villages, visiting forests of tall cedars and striking deciduous trees. In autumn, this landscape is a blaze of colour.

Total distance: 16 km

Approx. time: 4 ½ – 5 ½ hr

Ascent: 654 m

Descent: 533 m

Meals included: Breakfast and dinner

Accommodation: Small family-run Minshuku, Ryokan or Hotel in Kiso Fukushima



Day 4

A shorter walk today and our last outing in the beautiful Kiso Valley. From the post town of Yabuhara, follow the Nakasendo Way over the famous Torii Pass to the beautifully restored post town of Narai. To get to the start of the walk in Yabuhara, take the train from Kiso-Fukushima. At the end of the walk in Narai, take the train to Nagano, then transfer to the Shinkansen to continue to c for the night. Note that travel time from Narai to Karuizawa is approx. 2 ½ – 3 hr. You will need to factor this into your day.

Total distance: 7 km

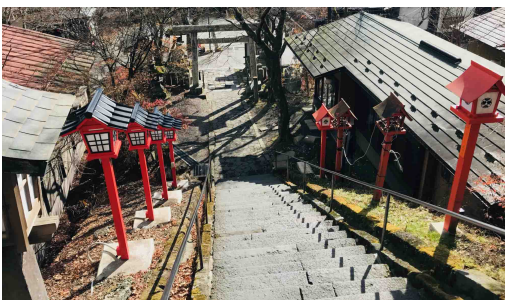
Approx. time: 2 – 3 hr

Ascent: 355 m

Descent: 317 m

Meals included: Breakfast and dinner

Accommodation: Small family-run Minshuku, Ryokan or Hotel in Karuizawa



Day 5

Now, far to the northeast of the Kiso Valley, we have one more opportunity to walk a section of the old Nakasendo Way. Today's walk leaves Karuizawa on a delightful path that weaves its way up forested hillsides to Usui Pass. At the top of the pass, take in the grand mountain views from Miharashidai, enjoy a break at one of the teahouses nearby, or visit the Usui Pass Kumano Kotai Shrine. Note that there is a bus service between Karuizawa and Usui Pass. Beyond the pass, the gently undulating path leads over forested hills with astounding display autumn colours in season, before a steep descent leads to Yokokawa. The last few km are gentle once more as you follow the historic rail trail that parallels the Old Usui Line. A spectacular finish to your Nakasendo walking holiday.

You have the option of finishing your walk at this point and making your way back to Tokyo. In this case, please book the 5-day Nakasendo Highlights trip. However, we strongly

recommend spending another night in Karuizawa and finishing your holiday after breakfast tomorrow morning.

Total distance: 16.5 km

Approx. time: 4 – 5 hr

Ascent: 325 m

Descent: 883 m

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Small family-run Minshuku, Ryokan or Hotel in Karuizawa



Day 6

Your holiday finishes after breakfast. Then you're ready to make your journey back to Tokyo.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation & Dining

You will spend each night in a traditional Japanese Minshuku or Ryokan-style accommodation. These Japanese guesthouses come in a number of styles ranging from traditional wooden structures to more modern hybrid hotels.

A Minshuku is a family-run accommodation that are often found in rural Japan. There is a fine line between a Minshuku and some smaller Ryokans, making it hard to distinguish between the two. Most Minshukus are very small, with only a few Japanese-style rooms, a bit like a Bed and Breakfast Japanese style. Staying at a Minshuku has its advantages, as it is a good chance to meet the local people and get right up close to the Japanese culture. The atmosphere is often like that of a home with traditional meals served much like at a Ryokan but with even more intimacy. Be prepared, as baths and toilets are often shared.

Ryokans have Japanese-style rooms with tatami mats, shoji sliding doors, and futons for sleeping on. Few Ryokan Hotels have rooms with actual beds. The rooms may or may not have ensembles, but be prepared for a little luxury when it comes to the heated toilet seats. The bathing area is often the pride of the Ryokan, especially when they're located in an onsen area. These are usually communal and separated by gender.

Meals are elaborate affairs from a western point of view served in a traditional dining area. A traditional Kaiseki set meal is what is usually offered. Sometimes there is the option of a buffet at the larger Ryokans.

Please note that we will endeavour to book the accommodation displayed. However, we will book alternative accommodation at the same standard if unavailable.

Other Important Stuff

TRAVEL TO NAKATSUGAWA

Tip – if you have not invested in a **JR Rail Pass** (only available outside Japan), you can save some money by buying a **Non-Reserved Seat** on the Shinkansen rather than a **Reserved Seat**. Check the Japan Transit Planner website (<https://world.jorudan.co.jp/mln/en/>) for approximate travel times and pricing.

You can get tickets from the JR ticket window just before the Shinkansen barrier gates. Even if you have a **JR Rail Pass** (which covers the cost of all JR line travel), you will need to show some sort of ticket to indicate your seat.

TRAVEL FROM TOKYO TO NAGOYA

Take the **Tokaido Line Shinkansen** bullet train from Tokyo Station to Nagoya.

Approx. travel time 1hr 45mins.

Tip – try to get a window seat on the right-hand side of the train for possible views of **Mt Fuji** on a clear day.

TRAVEL FROM OSAKA TO NAGOYA

Take the **local train from Osaka to Shin-Osaka**. Take the **Tokaido Line Shinkansen** bullet train from Shin-Osaka Station to Nagoya. Approx. travel time 48mins.

TRAVEL FROM NAGOYA TO NAKATSUGAWA

On arrival in Nagoya, take the **JR Chuo Line (Rapid)** from Nagoya to Nakatsugawa. The Rapid service stops less often than the Local service. Both are of the same price and stop in Nakatsugawa. Approx. travel time 1 ¼ hr. Cost (if no JR Rail Pass) approx AUD \$18.

The free “**Japan Direct**” rail app is very useful. Enter your station of origin and destination and all services, travel times, and costs are displayed. There is also an option to select for routes when travelling “**with Japan Rail Pass**”, too.

HIGH SEASON CHARGES

In Japan, there are some periods when locals travel en masse as they are on holiday. These times are best avoided as the accommodation costs escalate considerably (more than double). It would make a lot of sense if you could avoid these times. Otherwise, see below for high-season periods. This could lead to the cost of the trip increasing by 30% or more.

NEW YEAR PERIOD – 30TH DECEMBER TO 4TH OF JANUARY

GOLDEN WEEK – GENERALLY BETWEEN 29TH APRIL TO 5TH MAY

OBON PERIOD – MID-AUGUST (BETWEEN THE 10TH TO 20TH OF AUGUST)

Please speak to the office to get a **quote** for the above times

DEPARTING FROM YOKOKAWA OR KARUIZAWA TO TOKYO

At the end of your holiday, you will have details for travelling back to Tokyo from either Yokokawa Train Station or Karuizawa.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

For most days on this walk you will need to take some form of public transport whether that is a bus or a train to your accommodation for the night or to start or shorten the days walk. The journey times vary from 10mins to 50mins depending on the day. On the day when you travel to Karuizawa the train journey will take 2.5 – 3hrs. We provide a comprehensive public transport document with detailed instructions on which buses and trains to catch. Please note these trips are unable to be pre-booked and you will need to pay directly on the day they are not included in your package.

If you have any questions about the public transport on this holiday please feel welcome to call or email the office.

LUGGAGE TRANSFERS

This walk has the luggage transferred most days; we will let you know when we can't move the bags due to the remoteness. The luggage will be waiting for you at the following accommodation. In the evenings, you will be supplied with a yukata (Japanese Gown) to wear, so you will need to carry only essential items on those days when your luggage isn't available.

AVAILABILITY

This walk is best undertaken in autumn and spring, however, many people walk in summer and take advantage of the many waterways to take a swim. Winter is brutal due to snow, and the accommodations are often closed.

WEATHER

From the end of March, the temperature begins to increase. In summer it's quite warm and humid but still good for walking, particularly if you enjoy warmer temperatures and taking a dip in a

stream.

The walk is offered in winter but bring some warm clothes and good rain gear. The area is just as beautiful if not more and is not busy at all. Soaking in an outside onsen in the cool of the night is one of those real authentic Japanese experiences that you can look forward to after a big day on the track.

As walkers, we believe spring and autumn are the best times as the weather is perfect for walking.

See the weather information about the average [local weather at different times of the year](#).

INSURANCE

We require that you have adequate travel insurance against potential losses, damage or injury, including cancellation costs and loss of luggage.

For all trips requiring international travel, you must have purchased travel insurance including medical evacuation coverage.

We also charge a cancellation fee if you cancel your walking holiday after we have confirmed it to cover costs incurred by our suppliers and in the office. See the [FAQ section](#) for more information.

INFORMATION PACK

For nearly 30 years we have taken pride in providing seamlessly organised walking holidays, but we know, even with that in mind, that you'll have many more questions. You will receive a detailed information pack and itinerary approximately 6 weeks out from departure outlining all the fine detail and much more.

CONTACT

If you have any questions, feel free to ask one of our destination consultants. You can get in touch with us via our [contact form](#), email us at info@auswalk.com.au, or call us on +61 3 9597 9767.