

Guided tour

Hiking, Touring



Japan



Tokyo to Kyoto

The **Nakasendo trail** linked Kyoto to Tokyo during Japan's feudal period. It was the 'road through the mountains' (as opposed to the Tokaido route which travelled the Pacific coast) travelled by feudal lords and their retinues, samurai, merchants, and travellers. Along the route were 69 'post towns', where weary travellers could rest before continuing on the next leg. Our journey will start in Tokyo, known as Edo during Japan's period of rule by the Shoguns. We will then spend **several days walking along the Nakasendo**. By day we will walk along the ancient route as it passes through beautifully preserved villages along an easy path, and by evening we will stay in traditional country inns enjoying exquisite regional cuisine prepared from the freshest ingredients, soak in natural hot springs, and enjoy the warm hospitality of our hosts. Enjoy bathing in hot spring water after a day on the trails!

Tour Details 2019

Dates: March 29
April 1, 7, 9, 16, 18
May 5, 13, 17
July 15
September 2, 9, 23
October 1, 13
November 7, 10

Cost: \$5995 per person

Single Supplement: \$750

Length: 12 days / 11 nights

Grade: Moderate

Starts: Tokyo / Ends : Kyoto



Fast Facts

- 11 nights accommodation in hotels and Japanese-style inns (Ryokan, Minshuku and Shukubo)
- All transportation between tour locations
- Daily breakfast & 7 dinners
- Services of local tour guide
- Entrance to museums, temples and other sights on the group's itinerary

ITINERARY

Day 1 Meet in Tokyo

Arrive at Narita International Airport and transfer by train to Tokyo. Meet the group at the hotel at 7 PM for welcome dinner.

Day 2 Tokyo

Our first full day in Japan will be spent on a walking tour of Tokyo, starting at Nihonbashi (the 'Japan Bridge') considered to be the zero marker point for all Japan's main roads since the Edo period. Afterwards, we visit Ueno and the Tokyo National Museum to see exhibits illuminating Japan of the Edo era, the heyday of the Nakasendo Trail. (If the Museum is closed because of a national holiday, we will visit the Kappabashi district, famous for selling kitchenware and small plastic models of food used in restaurant displays.) We continue on to the grand Meiji shrine and the fashionable Harajuku district. In the evening your tour guide will be on hand to offer suggestions for restaurants for dinner.

Day 3 Nakasendo Trail 3 km

Our journey through rural Japan begins with a journey from Tokyo to the remote Kiso valley. Over the next three days we will walk by day from village to village, staying by night in small, family-run country inns (ryokan). After a lunch of buckwheat noodles in the local town of Shiojiri, we will walk to Narai from Hirasawa, one of 11 'post-towns' along the Kiso valley section of the Nakasendo. Post-towns were resting places, where travellers could find accommodation and food as they walked between Kyoto and Edo (as Tokyo was then called). Hirasawa is known for its locally-produced lacquer ware, and there may be a chance to see the craftsmen at work. Stay in Narai, a beautifully-preserved post-town. Our lodgings will be an atmospheric traditional ryokan.

Day 4 Nakasendo Trail 6 km

On our second day there will be a 8 km walk from Narai to Yabuhara over Torii Pass and then we will continue by train to Kiso-Fukushima. There we will stay in a lovely traditional ryokan with its own natural hot spring. Soak in the indoor baths made of cypress wood or try the outdoor baths surrounded by trees.

Day 5 Nakasendo Trail 14 km

We will transfer from Kiso-Fukushima to Nojiri by train, and then walk along the Nakasendo Way to O-Tsumago, passing along the way through delightful small villages and rice fields. Another of the post-towns on the former Nakasendo trail, Tsumago has been preserved by strict self-imposed rules that prohibit the sale, rental or destruction of the handsome houses. It's a living museum, but one which is still inhabited by the local residents. We will arrive in the afternoon, with a little time to wander the streets.

Day 6 Nakasendo Trail walking & Osaka 8.5 km

From Tsumago we will walk to Magome, our last stop in the Kiso Valley. You will have lunch in Magome and time to explore the many small shops. We will transfer by regular and bullet train to Kyoto with a transfer on to Nara, and check in to our hotel.

Day 7 Nara

In the morning we have a guided walk of Nara. Many of Japan's greatest cultural treasures are concentrated in and around the city, with eight UNESCO World Heritage sites. Our visit concentrates on the area near Nara Park, where the Todaiji temple, Nigatsu-do and Sangatsu-do halls, Kasuga shrine, Shinyakushi-ji temple, Kofuku-ji temple, Shosoin treasure house, and Isuien garden are located. Cont'd...



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The park is also home to a thousand or more free-roaming deer. Todaiji's Daibutsu-den is the largest wooden building in the world, and houses a 16-metre tall bronze and gold image of the Rushana Buddha. Prior to being rebuilt three hundred years ago, the awesome structure was even bigger than it is today. In the afternoon, there will be free time to relax or wander through the old town.

Day 8 Yoshino

From Nara our journey takes us to the ridge top village of Yoshino, and a comfortable Ryokan. We will visit Yoshimizu Temple (connected to historical figures such as Minamoto no Yoshitsune, Emperor Godaigo, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi), and explore the area.

Day 9 Mount Koya

From Yoshino we will take the scenic train to Mount Koya, situated in a bowl-shaped valley filled with stands of cedar trees 800 metres up in the mountains of the Kii Peninsula. Since the 9th century, when the monk Kukai (also known as Kobo Daishi) founded the first temple and the Shingon sect of Buddhism, Mount Koya has been a place of religious devotion and ceremony. Today there are more than 100 monasteries, many of which have shukubo (temple lodgings). We will stay in one of the elegant temples, run by the monks, and dine on shojin-ryori (Buddhist vegetarian cuisine). There will be a guided walk through the vast Okuno-in cemetery, with thousands of graves and memorials to feudal lords and other past luminaries.

Day 10 Transfer to Kyoto

There will be the opportunity to get up early and join the Buddhist morning service if you wish. Afterwards, we will visit Kongobu-ji temple, the head temple of the Shingon sect. After lunch, we will travel by train to Kyoto. After checking in at the hotel, we can enjoy an evening walk in Gion, Kyoto's geisha district and there is always the possibility of seeing a geisha or maiko (apprentice geisha) making their way through the narrow streets.

Day 11 Kyoto

There will be a half-day walking tour this morning. First of all we will visit the Sanjo-ohashi Bridge, the western end of the Nakasendo Trail. From there, we will visit Ryoan-ji, with its famous rock garden of raked gravel and 15 moss-covered boulders. It is not possible to see all 15 boulders at once from any place in the garden. It is said that if you can see all 15 you have achieved enlightenment. Afterwards, we will visit the famous Kinkaku-ji, also known as the Golden Pavilion, originally built by the Ashikaga Shogun in the 15th century as a place of contemplation and rest. There will be free time in the afternoon so you can explore the area further or shop for crafts. In the evening, there will be a farewell dinner with your guide.

Day 12 Tour ends

Our tour ends today after breakfast at the hotel in Kyoto. Your guide will be on hand to offer assistance and advice for travelling to the airport if you have homeward flights, or onward travel if you are extending your stay in Japan.

Itinerary and hotels subject to change.



What to Expect

What will the weather be like? The daytime temperature will be around 16 to 20C (60's), there can be some rainfall, and best to bring rain gear, with cooler evenings. Sunscreen is a must, as is a hat with a brim.

What is the food like? Most meals will be Japanese cuisine. Vegetarian options are available, but limited. Lunches are not included, and travellers should bring Japanese cash to cover this and other minor expenses. Lunches will cost about \$10-15 per day, and evening meals when not included about \$20-35, not including alcoholic drinks. Tips are not required.

What are the hotels like? Modern western-style hotels are used in Tokyo and Kyoto. The rooms are generally smaller than equivalent hotels in the West.

Ryokan and Minshuku (Narai, Kiso-Fukushima, Tsumago)

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 by the staff. Evening meals are served together usually in the dining room, and are exquisitely prepared multi-course meals. Many ryokan have both en suite bathrooms (with the exception of some older buildings) and communal hot spring style baths (segregated by sex). They are the classic Japanese experience.

Shukubo (Mount Koya)

These are lodgings in Buddhist temples originally meant for pilgrims, but now open to anyone. The rooms are similar to ryokan or minshuku, though with fewer facilities. The food is excellent vegetarian Buddhist 'shojin-ryori' cuisine. It is a wonderful experience to stay in a shukubo and there is also the opportunity to join the early morning religious service.

Getting There

- Fly into Tokyo Narita airport, transfer to/from airport approx. \$50 per person each way.
- From Kyoto, take the train back to Tokyo for your onward flight home. Train fare is approx. \$100.



Things to Know

We have a small selection of hotels in Tokyo for your arrival or departure. The hotels start at \$350 per doubleroom for the tour hotel. Ryokan accommodations can be arranged as well.

For parts of the trip we will use public transport. This means that we will each need to carry our own luggage onto and off of trains, buses, etc., and stations often have stairs. With this in mind, please try to keep your baggage to a minimum, and use a suitcase/pack that you can easily carry yourself. A case with wheels is fine. Also, on two occasions we send the luggage ahead in order to make the long-distance transfers by bus and train more relaxed. This means that on certain nights, we will be without our main luggage, so please prepare a backpack or easily portable bag to carry your overnight items while walking or sightseeing. The forwarding takes place as follows:
Day 4, from Tokyo to Kiso Fukushima
Day 6, from Kiso Fukushima to Kyoto

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Airport transfers, flights, meals as not mentioned in itinerary, Entrance fees to museums, temples etc. not mentioned in the itinerary .

How to book your holiday

- Contact our office to make sure there is space available. One of our travel planners will walk you through the entire process.
- Download the reservation form from our site and send in completed form by fax or email. Once this is done, your space is confirmed and pre-departure packet will be sent.
- A deposit is required immediately, and final payment is due 60 days prior to the trip departure. Terms & Conditions are outlined in our Reservation Form.
- Plan your air travel as soon as possible.
- We encourage you to purchase travel insurance, either through us or a travel insurance provider directly.
- Ensure you are in proper health for the trip chosen. Contact us for more information on vaccinations, inoculations, and fitness requirements.