

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2025 WALKING TOUR OF NAKASENDO AND TAKAYAMA (DISCOVERY)

Start: Friday, 7 November 2025 from Tokyo
Finish: Monday, 17 November 2025 at Tokyo
Duration: 11 days
Group size: 8 people
Cost estimate: AUD \$7,290 per person
Single supplement: AUD \$1,230 per person
Ref: GHC-25

TOUR OVERVIEW

The 2025 Walking Tour of Nakasendo and Takayama is a great option for those who love nature and history and would like to travel to off-the-beaten-path destinations of Japan. The tour will take you on well-paced daily walks along the Nakasendo Way – part of Japan’s ancient mountain highway between Tokyo and Kyoto – travelled by feudal lords, merchants and pilgrims for centuries. The historic walk along the Nakasendo trail looks much as it did all those years ago and takes you through mountains covered in autumn colour to the picturesque post towns of Tsumago, Magome and Narai. Along the way, you’ll sample regional cuisine, stay in rustic country-style inns and soak in thermal hot springs.

Each daily walking tour has been designed to pause to take in the cultural and historical interest spots, traditional architecture and the local way of life – providing unforgettable insights into Japan and its people. Apart from the walks, the tour is full of Japan's rural hidden gems taking you to hard-to-access places.

Activity Level – Moderate : Participants need be to in good health and fit. They must be able to walk up to 10 km a day with some ascents and descents, sometimes on uneven terrains. It is recommended to have good shoes that have ankle support and are at least water resistant, ideally waterproof. Walking poles are not a requirement unless you aren’t confident about your walking abilities. Main luggage will be transferred to the next accommodation, however, a day pack with personal items must be carried by the participants during the walks.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Fri 7/11/2025	Airport meet and greet on arrival	Welcome to Japan! On arrival at Narita or Haneda International Airport, you will be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel by public transport.	No meals	Mitsui Garden Hotel Kyobashi [Moderate Twin/Queen]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
			<p>Today is an arrival day for this small group journey and no group program is scheduled. Your hotel is located right in the middle of Tokyo near the glitzy Ginza. Why not take a stroll, relax and be ready to start the first full day of your 2025 Walking Tour of Nakasendo and Takayama.</p> <p>*Many of our guests arrive a day or so early to settle in before the tour starts. We can try arranging your additional night's accommodation in the same room as the tour.</p>		
2	Sat 8/11/2025	Transfer to and guided tour of Nagoya	<p>This morning, you will leave Tokyo on Japan's famous Shinkansen (bullet train). Japan's 4th largest city, Nagoya is your destination today. Upon arrival at Nagoya Station, your guide will take you on a guided tour covering the historic and modern industrial aspects of the city.</p> <p>You will first visit Arimatsu, a small town located along the stretch of Tokaido Way, one of five ancient highways of Japan. Arimatsu's number one claim to fame is its traditional tie-dye fabric, Arimatsu Shibori. Today you have an opportunity to visit a museum and old merchant houses to appreciate the local art and crafts. The next stop is SCMAGLEV. It was established in 2011 to introduce the evolution of high-speed railway technology through train car exhibits from local trains to the Superconducting Maglev train.</p> <p>Nagoya is also famous for its distinct food culture. You will sample some of those at lunch and dinner including sake tasting tonight.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: less than 5 km (3.1 miles) Elevation: flat Terrain: town walking on sealed road</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Nagoya JR Gate Tower Hotel [Western style room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
3	Sun 9/11/2025	Guided tour of Nakasendo	<p>You leave the great city of Nagoya behind and take an express train to the small town of Nakatsugawa in the delightful Kiso Valley.</p> <p>Today, putting on your walking shoes, you begin the first leg of your hike along the Nakasendo Way. The Nakasendo was one of the old highways connecting Edo (today's Tokyo) with Kyoto, passing through the mountainous terrain of the Kiso Valley. Here, some of the historic post towns where travellers would stay during their long journeys still stand. In some places, sections of the trail itself remain, allowing visitors to experience walking the Nakasendo for themselves. Going for a stroll on the cobblestone route and the twinkling of the sunlight through the trees really make you feel like a traveller in the olden days.</p> <p>Our first stop is the village of Magome, awarded a one-star rating by the Michelin Green Guide Japan. The cobblestone streets are lined with old, lattice-windowed residential houses, museums, tea houses, and old-style souvenir shops on both sides, a scene that very much resembles how the post-town looked in the Edo period hundreds of years ago.</p> <p>Here we stay at a charming minshuku guest house and sleep in a traditional Japanese room with futon bedding. Tonight, dinner is a hearty family meal at the minshuku.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 11 km (6.8 miles) Elevation: 260 m (853 feet) ascent Terrain: well-maintained nature trails and some sealed road</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Otsumago Tsutamuraya [Japanese style room with shared bathroom facilities]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
4	Mon 10/11/2025	Guided tour of Nakasendo	<p>After a hearty homemade breakfast at the minshuku, you are back on the Nakasendo Way and will walk the 7.8km trail from Magome to Tsumago – one of the most popular sections of the route. Magome is relatively unique among the post towns for being located on very precipitous terrain. It is said that the name Magome (written with "horse" and "basket") derives from the fact that travellers were forced to leave their horses at the inns because the road was too steep for horses to climb. You will see the remanence of it on the way. Tsumago is considered one of the best-preserved post towns throughout Japan.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you will transfer to your hotel. Tonight, you will sleep in a Japanese style room with a private bathroom, still with the old-style Japanese hospitality together with an outdoor onsen bath! Soaking in a natural hot springs bath after a day in the fresh air, you'll soon realise why visiting an onsen remains one of the ultimate pastimes for Japanese!</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 12 km (7.5 miles) Elevation: 200 m (656 feet) ascent, 370 m (1,214 feet) descent Terrain: well-maintained nature trails and some sealed road</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel Hanasarasa [Japanese style room]
5	Tue 11/11/2025	Guided tour of Nakasendo	<p>Today, firstly you walk from Tsumago to Nagiso Station dropping by a mountain castle ruins and many other interesting historical monuments. You then cross Momosuke Bridge, Japan's longest wooden suspension bridge, designated as Important National Cultural Property. It was built in 1922 to transport construction materials to a power plant downstream. Consisting of three stone piers and four spans, it is 247 meters from end to end. It would have been more economical to build the bridge further downstream, where the river is narrower, but Momosuke Fukuzawa, the flamboyant entrepreneur behind both the bridge and the power station, was less concerned with cost than with aesthetics and built a longer and elegant looking bridge here.</p> <p>This afternoon, you will take a local train to tonight's destination Kiso Fukushima. You will stay at a small onsen ryokan here.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 7 km (4.3 miles) Elevation: less than 100 m (328 feet) Terrain: well-maintained nature trails and some sealed road</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Kisoyado Iwaya [Japanese style room with private bathroom]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
6	Wed 12/11/2025	Guided tour of Nakasendo	<p>A local train transports you to the township of Yabuhara, where you begin your hike along a high mountain pass covered in autumn colour and down a valley to the village of Narai.</p> <p>Around Yabuhara Station is mainly residential. However, as you walk along the old Nakasendo, the main road of this quiet town, the buildings slowly begin to age. Now and then remnants of Yabuhara's post-town past pop up, like shops selling the town's specialty, orokugushi combs.</p> <p>From here, the trail grows steeper and steeper as it approaches Torii Pass. You stop from time to time as the woods part to reveal the splendid scenery of the town below. A third of the way along the trail is the outstanding Ontake Shrine, dedicated to Mt. Ontake, one of Japan's most spiritual mountains. Weary travellers would have stopped here to pray and rest a spell before continuing their journeys. On clear days, you can even see the peak of Mt. Ontake across the valley.</p> <p>After crossing the highest point of the trail, Torii Pass (1,197m), it slowly descends towards Narai. Narai is another beautifully preserved post town along the Nakasendo trail where you have time to explore its charming streetscape at your leisure before making your way to tonight's destination Kaida Kogen by private minibus.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 10 km (6.2 miles) Elevation: 272 m (892 feet) ascent, 257 m descent (843 feet) descent Terrain: well-maintained nature trails and some sealed road</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tsutaya Tokinoyado Kazari [Japanese style room]
7	Thu 13/11/2025	Guided tour of Kaida Kogen	<p>Kaida Kogen is a plateau, 1,100 to 1,300 meters above sea level, and the birthplace of Kiso horses. At around 50 hectares in area, Kiso Horse Land is where the dwindling population of Kiso horses are protected and bred. Beautiful views of the majestic Mt. Ontake can be enjoyed from various locations around the highlands. You will enjoy some light walking and crisp fresh air in the highlands.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you will continue the scenic drive to your next destination, Takayama. An atmospheric town surrounded by mountains and beautiful autumn foliage, Takayama is known for its beautifully preserved streets of merchant houses dating from the late 17th century. You will have an evening guided walking tour of the old town before settling into a small local izakaya restaurant for dinner.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 5 km (3.1 miles) Elevation: almost flat Terrain: well-maintained nature trails and some sealed road</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tokyu Stay Hida-Takayama Musubi-no-Yu [Western style room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
8	Fri 14/11/2025	Morning guided tour of Takayama	<p>Takayama's 200-year-old Morning Market is your first stop to check out its farm-fresh produce and handmade crafts. For the rest of the morning, you will continue visiting other historic sites of Takayama with your guide.</p> <p>This afternoon is your free time and there are endless options in Takayama. Hida region where Takayama is located retains a lot of rural features outside the town centre. If you are interested in more nature walks, we recommend the Higashiyama Walking Course, a 3.5-kilometer-long course, with more than a dozen temples and shrines, the ruins of Takayama's former castle and ordinary scenes of a rural Japanese town. The other active option is a half-day guided cycling through the rice paddies of the Hida region. Or you may simply like to stroll around the old merchant district and wander through its old buildings converted into small museums, boutique sake breweries and craft shops selling high-quality woodwork, lacquerware and textiles.</p> <p>Tonight you can choose your own meal from the lively restaurant scene of Takayama. Why not try Takayama specialty, Hida wagyu beef at a yakiniku restaurant?</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 3 km (1.9 miles) + free time Elevation: flat Terrain: town walking on sealed road</p>	Breakfast	Tokyu Stay Hida-Takayama Musubi-no-Yu [Western style room]
9	Sat 15/11/2025	Transfer to and guided tour of Matsumoto	<p>This morning you will travel by private minibus through the mountains to reach, Matsumoto. During Japan's feudal period, Matsumoto became an important castle town ruled by a powerful local clan. Today the city is popular for its cosmopolitan atmosphere, galleries, and stunning alpine settings. After arriving in Matsumoto, you will visit Japan's oldest wooden castle, and one of the nation's five castles designated as national treasures, the impressive Matsumoto Castle. You will also walk through the well-preserved old merchant district, Nakamachi and Nawate-Dori, to see the Namako-walled homes, and browse through shops selling Japanese-traditional crafts and items such as pottery, timberware and sake.</p> <p>Tonight's accommodation is another charming onsen ryokan, the last night to enjoy the soak in the hot spring and a kaiseki dinner.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 4 km (2.5 miles) Elevation: flat Terrain: town walking on sealed road, stairs in Matsumoto Castle</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tobira Onsen Myojinkan [Western room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
10	Sun 16/11/2025	Transfer to Tokyo	<p>After a heartwarming breakfast at the Ryokan, you will travel back to Tokyo where you started this tour by express train.</p> <p>Tonight you will stay at Shinjuku, a different side of Tokyo from your first stay. Shinjuku is a modern commercial suburb of Tokyo with several mega skyscrapers. It is also a great place for last-minute shopping with electric goods streets and many of Japan's famous retailers. Upon arrival back to Tokyo, you have free time until dinner.</p> <p>Tonight, enjoy the last meal with your fellow travellers in a restaurant overlooking the great city, of Tokyo.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Odakyu Hotel Century Southern Tower [King/Twin]
11	Mon 17/11/2025	Departure	<p>This morning after breakfast, your 2025 Walking Tour of Nakasendo and Takayama concludes. You can take an express train to Narita Airport, or a shuttle bus to Haneda Airport if you are leaving Japan.</p> <p>If you would like to continue your travel in Japan, we will be delighted to plan your personal post-tour extension to show you a different part of Japan. Please see our Extension Model Itineraries for inspiration!</p> <p>Note: The transfer cost to your departure airport is not included in our Small Group Tours (as we found many guests choose to stay in Japan a bit longer), but we are happy to arrange your transfer to your exit airport or next destination. Please see our FAQ for more details.</p>	Breakfast	
		Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accommodation as per itinerary ■ Meals as per the itinerary ■ Airport meet & greet on arrival ■ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans) ■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees included in the itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) 		

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		Exclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated) ■ Transfer on the last day ■ Travel insurance ■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages ■ Tips and gratuities (not routinely expected in Japan) ■ Transport during free time ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Visa (if required) 		