

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2026 JAPAN'S HERITAGE TRAIL TOUR (DISCOVERY)

Start: Monday, 26 October 2026 from Tokyo
Finish: Saturday, 7 November 2026 at Kyoto
Duration: 13 days
Group size: 8 people
Cost estimate: AUD \$9,860 per person
Single supplement: AUD \$1,450 per person
Ref: GHC-26

TOUR OVERVIEW

2026 Japan's Heritage Trail Tour: From Shogun Cities to Mountain Villages is perfect for travellers who love nature, history, and the allure of Japan's lesser-known destinations. Step off the beaten path and follow in the footsteps of samurai, merchants, and pilgrims along the historic Nakasendo Way. This carefully paced walking tour blends scenic mountain trails, beautifully preserved post towns, and authentic rural experiences. Stay in traditional inns, enjoy regional cuisine, and soak in relaxing hot springs, all while discovering Japan's rich history and timeless culture.

Activity Level – Moderate: This tour is best suited for travellers in good health with a reasonable level of fitness, able to walk up to 10 km a day with some ascents and descents, occasionally on uneven terrain. Supportive, water-resistant footwear with ankle protection is strongly recommended (waterproof is ideal). Walking poles are optional but can be helpful if you'd like extra stability. Your main luggage will be transferred between accommodations, but you will need to carry a small day pack with personal items during each walk.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Mon 26/10/2026	Airport meet and greet on arrival	Welcome to Japan! Upon arrival at Narita or Haneda International Airport, you will be greeted by your Journey to the East guide and escorted to your hotel using public transport. Today is the official arrival day for this small-group journey, with no scheduled group activities. Your hotel is perfectly situated in central Tokyo, just steps from the glamorous Ginza district and within easy reach of attractions such as the historic Tsukiji Market. Take a stroll, unwind, and get ready for the exciting start of your 2026 Japan's Heritage Trail Tour tomorrow. Many guests choose to arrive a day or two early to relax and adjust	No meals	Park Hotel Tokyo [Queen/Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
			before the tour begins. We can often arrange extra nights in the same room reserved for your tour stay.		
2	Tue 27/10/2026	Guided tour of Tokyo	<p>This morning, begin at the serene Hamarikyu Garden, a former feudal lord's retreat famed for its tidal pond, graceful teahouses, and seasonal blooms. From here, take a short train ride to start your guided walking tour of central Tokyo. Stroll to the iconic Double Bridge and the Imperial Palace Plaza, framed by elegant black pines. As you take in the view, your guide will bring history to life with the story of the Meiji Restoration - when power shifted from the Shogun of Edo's feudal government back to the Emperor, marking the end of the samurai era. Continue to a vantage point overlooking the beautifully restored Tokyo Station, a red-brick architectural treasure, before walking through its bustling concourse to the Nihonbashi Bridge, the official starting point of all Edo-period highways, including the historic Nakasendo.</p> <p>After lunch, travel by subway to Ginza, Tokyo's most glamorous shopping and cultural district, where the afternoon is yours to explore at leisure - browse elegant boutiques, enjoy a café break, or discover hidden galleries. Later, return to the hotel for a short rest before gathering for a welcome dinner, the perfect opportunity to meet your fellow travellers and share your excitement for the journey ahead.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 8 km (5 miles) Elevation: mostly flat Terrain: sealed road and well-maintained path</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Park Hotel Tokyo [Queen/Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
3	Wed 28/10/2026	Guided tour of Mt Takao	<p>This morning, board a suburban train bound for the western edge of Tokyo and spend the day exploring Mt Takao (599 m / 1,965 ft). Beloved by locals and awarded three stars by the Michelin Guide, this easily accessible peak offers a refreshing natural escape and a haven for wildlife. A choice of walking trails caters to all fitness levels and interests, with the summit rewarding you - on clear days - with sweeping views that reach as far as Mt Fuji. Along the way, visit the historic Yakuoin Temple, founded in the eighth century and still an important place of worship. Beyond the mountain's scenic beauty, the area provides a glimpse into the daily lives of ordinary Tokyoites, far removed from the bustle and bright lights of the city centre.</p> <p>Return to your hotel by train, and enjoy a free evening to discover the flavours of Tokyo at your own pace - perhaps sampling local izakaya fare or seeking out a favourite ramen shop.</p> <p>Today's walk: 6 km (3.1 miles) Elevation gain/loss: 411 m (1,348 ft) Terrain: Sealed roads and well-maintained trails</p>	Breakfast	Park Hotel Tokyo [Queen/Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
4	Thu 29/10/2026	Nakasendo Trail (Ochiai to Magome)	<p>Leave the great metropolis of Tokyo behind as you board the Shinkansen and then an express train bound for Nakatsugawa, a small town nestled in the picturesque Kiso Valley.</p> <p>Today marks the first leg of your journey along the Nakasendo Way - one of the ancient highways linking Edo (modern-day Tokyo) to Kyoto through the rugged, forested mountains of central Japan. This route once bustled with merchants, samurai, and pilgrims, many of whom rested in the post towns that still stand today. In places, the original cobblestone path remains, shaded by cedar trees and dappled with sunlight, giving you the uncanny sense of stepping back into the Edo period.</p> <p>Your walk ends in Magome, a beautifully preserved post town. Here, the sloping cobblestone streets are flanked by traditional lattice-fronted houses, tea shops, museums, and old-fashioned inns, evoking scenes much as they would have appeared to travellers hundreds of years ago.</p> <p>This evening, experience warm Japanese hospitality at a minshuku guesthouse. You'll sleep in a traditional tatami room with futon bedding and enjoy a hearty home-cooked dinner shared in a cosy, family-style setting.</p> <p>Today's walk: 11 km (6.8 miles) Elevation gain: 260 m (853 ft) Terrain: Well-maintained nature trails with some sealed road sections</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Magomechaya [Japanese style room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
5	Fri 30/10/2026	Nakasendo Trail (Magome to Tsumago)	<p>fter a hearty homemade breakfast at your minshuku, you return to the Nakasendo Way to walk the celebrated 7.8 km trail from Magome to Tsumago - one of the most popular and scenic stretches of the route. Magome is unusual among the post towns for its steep, terraced setting. Its name, written with the characters for “horse” and “basket,” is said to come from the fact that travellers once had to leave their horses at local inns, as the slope was too steep for them to climb. Along the way, you’ll pass remnants of this history, with mountain paths, rustic tea houses, and sweeping valley views.</p> <p>Your destination, Tsumago, is regarded as one of the best-preserved post towns in all of Japan, its streets meticulously maintained to look much as they did in the Edo period.</p> <p>In the afternoon, transfer to your hotel, where you’ll stay in a western-style room with a private bathroom. While the accommodation offers modern comforts, it still embraces the warmth of traditional Japanese hospitality. In the evening, unwind in an outdoor onsen bath, letting the natural hot spring waters soothe your muscles after a day on the trail - a quintessential Japanese pleasure.</p> <p>Today’s walk: 12 km (7.5 miles) Elevation gain/loss: 200 m (656 ft) ascent, 370 m (1,214 ft) descent Terrain: Well-maintained nature trails with some sealed road sections</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel Fuki no Mori [Western bedroom]
6	Sat 31/10/2026	Nakasendo Trail (Tsumago to Kiso Fukushima)	<p>This morning, set out on foot from Tsumago to Nagiso Station, pausing to explore the atmospheric ruins of a former mountain castle and other intriguing historical landmarks along the way. Your route leads you to the remarkable Momosuke Bridge, Japan’s longest wooden suspension bridge and a designated Important National Cultural Property. Built in 1922 to transport materials to a downstream power plant, the bridge stretches 247 metres end to end, supported by three stone piers and four spans. While a shorter, cheaper crossing could have been constructed further downstream, its creator - flamboyant entrepreneur Momosuke Fukuzawa - chose instead to build here, prioritising elegance and grandeur over economy.</p> <p>In the afternoon, board a local train to Kiso-Fukushima, your destination for the night. Here, you’ll stay in a small onsen ryokan, where you can soak in soothing natural hot spring baths and experience the warmth of traditional Japanese hospitality.</p> <p>Today’s walk: 7 km (4.3 miles) Elevation gain: Less than 100 m (328 ft) Terrain: Well-maintained nature trails and some sealed road sections</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Kisoji no Yado Iwaya [Japanese style room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
7	Sun 1/11/2026	Nakasendo Trail (Yabuhara to Narai)	<p>This morning, take a local train to the township of Yabuhara, the starting point for today's hike over the scenic Torii Pass and down through a valley to the village of Narai.</p> <p>The area around Yabuhara Station is mostly residential, but as you follow the old Nakasendo - the historic highway linking Edo and Kyoto - the streetscape begins to change. Modern houses give way to weathered wooden buildings, and remnants of Yabuhara's post-town past appear: traditional shops selling the town's famous orokugushi combs, narrow lanes, and hints of the Edo period in the architecture.</p> <p>The trail gradually steepens as it climbs towards the pass, with breaks in the forest revealing sweeping views of the town below. About a third of the way up, you'll visit Ontake Shrine, dedicated to the sacred Mt. Ontake. For centuries, weary travellers paused here to rest and pray before continuing their journey. On a clear day, you can see the mountain's peak rising majestically across the valley.</p> <p>Crossing the highest point of the trail - Torii Pass (1,197 m) - you begin a gentle descent into Narai, one of the best-preserved post towns on the Nakasendo. Take time to wander its charming streets lined with dark wooden facades. You will stay at another minshuku here tonight.</p> <p>Today's walk: 10 km (6.2 miles) Elevation gain/loss: 272 m (892 ft) ascent, 257 m (843 ft) descent Terrain: Well-maintained nature trails with some sealed road sections</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Oyado Iseya [Japanese style room with shared bathroom facility]
8	Mon 2/11/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Kaida Kogen	<p>This morning, a private minibus will transport you to Kaida Kogen, a highland plateau sitting between 1,100 and 1,300 meters above sea level and renowned as the birthplace of the Kiso horse. Spread across roughly 50 hectares, Kiso Horse Land is dedicated to protecting and breeding this rare and historic Japanese horse breed. As you explore the plateau, enjoy light walking along well-maintained trails, breathe in the crisp mountain air, and take in stunning views of Mt Ontake from multiple vantage points across the highlands.</p> <p>Tonight, you'll stay at a charming local hotel in Kaida Kogen, where your room offers scenic vistas of Mt Ontake and the surrounding highlands - a peaceful setting to relax and reflect on the day's experiences.</p> <p>Today's walk: 5 km (3.1 miles) Elevation: Nearly flat Terrain: Well-maintained nature trails with some sealed road sections</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Tsutaya Tokinoyado Kazari [Japanese style room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
9	Tue 3/11/2026	Transfer to Takayama and guided tour and free afternoon	<p>This morning, enjoy a scenic drive to Takayama, an atmospheric town nestled among the mountains and famed for its beautifully preserved streets of merchant houses dating back to the late 17th century. Explore the old town on a guided walking tour, visiting Takayama Jinya and wandering along historic streets lined with local sake breweries, miso shops, and artisanal craft stores.</p> <p>This afternoon is yours to enjoy at leisure, with endless possibilities in and around Takayama. For nature lovers, the Higashiyama Walking Course offers a 3.5-kilometre route past more than a dozen temples and shrines, the ruins of Takayama's former castle, and glimpses of traditional rural life. Alternatively, join a half-day guided cycling tour through the rice paddies of the Hida region, or simply meander through the old merchant district, exploring its converted museums, boutique sake breweries, and craft shops offering high-quality woodwork, lacquerware, and textiles.</p> <p>In the evening, gather with your group for a dinner at a local izakaya, sampling regional specialties and soaking up the warm, convivial atmosphere of Takayama.</p> <p>Today's walk: 3 km (1.9 miles) + optional activities Elevation: Flat Terrain: Town walking on sealed roads</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel and Spa Gift TAKAYAMA [Superior Twin Room]
10	Wed 4/11/2026	Guided tour of Takayama and Gokayama	<p>Start your day at Takayama's 200-year-old Morning Market, where colourful stalls brim with fresh local produce, handcrafted goods, and seasonal specialties. Take in the lively atmosphere as you explore the market, chatting with vendors and sampling regional treats. Afterwards, continue your guided tour of Takayama's historic sites, discovering the town's rich cultural heritage and well-preserved streetscapes.</p> <p>In the afternoon, travel to the UNESCO World Heritage village of Gokayama, a remote mountain settlement renowned for its traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses with steep thatched roofs. Wander through the village and soak in the tranquil mountain surroundings, reflecting on the rhythms of pre-modern life in these secluded valleys. Return to Takayama in the evening for another group dinner, sharing stories and experiences from a day immersed in history and natural beauty.</p> <p>Today's walk: 5 km (3.1 miles) Elevation: Flat Terrain: Town walking on sealed roads and village paths</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel and Spa Gift TAKAYAMA [Superior Twin Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
11	Thu 5/11/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Nagoya	<p>Rise early for a scenic journey as you catch an express train from Takayama to Nagoya, winding through picturesque valleys and enjoying views of the Japanese countryside along the way. Upon arrival, step into history with a visit to Nagoya Castle, a magnificent fortress renowned for its golden shachihoko (mythical tiger-headed carp) and beautifully restored interiors.</p> <p>After a lunch featuring Nagoya's regional specialties, continue your exploration at the Sword Museum, where centuries of Japanese craftsmanship and samurai heritage come alive through exquisitely crafted blades and historic artifacts.</p> <p>As evening falls, discover a different side of Nagoya with your guide on a pub-hopping adventure, hopping between cozy local bars to sample a variety of regional dishes and artisanal craft sake. Return to your hotel for an overnight stay in Nagoya, reflecting on a day filled with history, culture, and culinary delights.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Nikko Style Nagoya [Deluxe Twin / King Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
12	Fri 6/11/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Kyoto	<p>This morning, board a short Shinkansen ride from Nagoya to Kyoto, your final destination. Once Japan's imperial capital for over a thousand years, Kyoto is the cultural heart of the nation - home to ancient temples, exquisite gardens, and traditional crafts. It was here that courtly culture flourished, the tea ceremony refined its graceful rituals, and seasonal aesthetics became central to Japanese life.</p> <p>Your guided exploration begins in Sagano, a serene outer suburb of Kyoto. Starting at the popular Arashiyama, stroll through its enchanting bamboo grove, where towering stalks sway gently overhead and sunlight filters in soft green hues. Emerging from the forest, you'll find yourself in a tranquil rural landscape scattered with hidden temples and quiet lanes. After a lunch of delicate tofu cuisine - a Kyoto specialty - you'll continue to Adashino Nenbutsuji, a temple adorned with hundreds of weathered stone Buddha statues, each with its own silent story.</p> <p>On your return to the city, visit the iconic Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion). Originally built as a shogun's retirement villa in the 14th century, its top two floors are covered in brilliant gold leaf, reflecting in the surrounding pond and symbolising the harmony between heaven and earth.</p> <p>This evening, gather with your fellow travellers for a farewell dinner, sharing memories and laughter as you celebrate the journey you've shared.</p> <p>Today's walk: 7 km (4.3 miles) Elevation gain/loss: 148 m (486 ft) ascent, 37 m (121 ft) descent Terrain: Well-maintained rural path</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	The Royal Park Hotel Kyoto Sanjo [Deluxe Twin]
13	Sat 7/11/2026	Departure	<p>After breakfast, check out of your hotel, marking the conclusion of your unforgettable 2026 Japan's Heritage Trail Tour.</p> <p>From Kyoto, you may choose to return to Tokyo by bullet train or catch a domestic flight from Osaka's Kansai International Airport for your international departure.</p> <p>If this is your first visit to Japan, we warmly recommend extending your stay to explore Kyoto and its surrounding regions further - rich with traditional culture, historic temples, gardens, and charming towns. We would be delighted to assist in planning a personalised post-tour extension, introducing you to another captivating side of Japan.</p>	Breakfast	

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		Inclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 12 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns) ■ All breakfasts ■ 3 lunches and 10 dinners ■ Exclusive activity access ■ Airport meet & greet on arrival in Tokyo ■ Hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ Airport transfer by public transport on departure ■ All local transport (train, bus and private minivans) ■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees are included in the itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) 		
		Exclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated) ■ Travel insurance ■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (except the 1st drink at each meal) ■ Tips and gratuities ■ Transport during free time ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-lockers, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Visa (if required) 		