



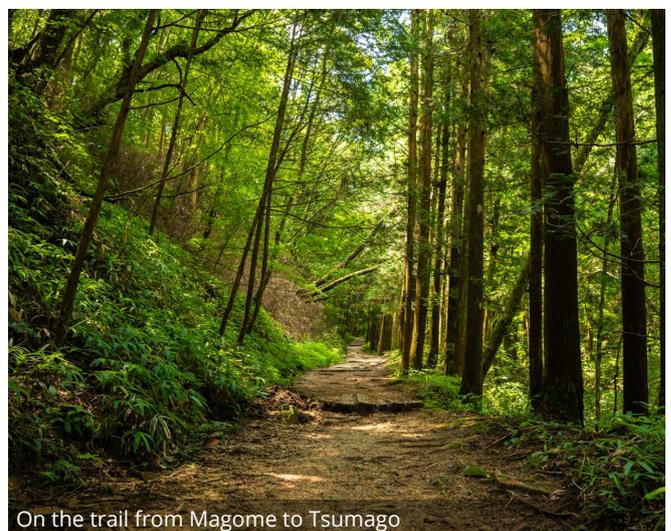
NAKASENDO SELF-GUIDED WALKING

Introduction

Weaving through the mountains of central Japan, the historic Nakasendo Trail connected Kyoto and Edo-period Tokyo. This trail stretches 534 km and the villages along the way, known as *juku*, provided accommodation for weary travellers walking along this route dating back to the seventh century. Some of the best-preserved post towns offer a real glimpse into the past, with wooden buildings lining stoned paths and the sound of watermills evoking a connection to those who have walked there centuries ago.

Amongst the 69 post towns along this ancient trail, Magome, Tsumago, and Narai stand out thanks to the conservation efforts made by the local government and people who have lived here for generations. With modern power lines and advertising boards being outlawed, the locals here have preserved the traditional townscape and unique history of this region.

We offer 3-day, 4-day, and 5-day versions of this historic walk.



On the trail from Magome to Tsumago

Details: 5-day hike

🕒 Tour length
5 days

🧑‍🦺 Type and trip level
Featuring paved village paths and unpaved forest trails, this is easy to moderate walk is our flagship Nakasendo hike. The longest days have 6 hours of walking with other days featuring 1 to 3 hours of walking, giving time for sightseeing in the lovely old Nakasendo post towns en route. The first parts of the route follow the Kiso Valley, and have some gentle climbs over low passes.

Itinerary

Day 1: Hike from Magome to Tsumago

📏 8.3 km / 5.2 mi
🕒 about 3 hours
⬆️ 326 m / 1,069 ft of ascent
⬆️ 430 m / 1,410 ft of descent
🏠 Minshuku (family-run guesthouse)
🍴 Dinner

We supply train tickets for your journey starting from Kyoto or Tokyo to Nakatsugawa, including a ride on the world-famous bullet train to Nagoya. At Nakatsugawa, you board a local bus for the short journey to Magome. Walk over Magome Pass to Tsumago, one of the best-preserved and most evocative of the Nakasendo post towns. Spend the night at a family-run *minshuku* in Tsumago or the nearby hamlet of O-Tsumago. Enjoy a delicious home-cooked Japanese dinner

Day 2: Hike from Tsumago to Nojiri

📏 18.4 km / 11.5 mi
🕒 about 6 hours
⬆️ 723 m / 2,275 ft of ascent
⬆️ 644 m / 2,112 ft of descent
🏠 Onsen ryokan (hot spring inn)
🍴 Breakfast, dinner

The longest day on the trail is a beautiful and varied hike from Tsumago to Nojiri. You may also choose the shorter alternative to Nagiso instead. The trail travels through small valleys and past forests of bamboo and Japanese cedar,

👑 Our most popular self-guided tour

🌸 Walking season
March until November

★ Highlights
Highlights include a visit to the historic Matsumoto Castle, picturesque views of the Kiso Valley and Karuizawa, and bathing in the thermal waters of an *onsen ryokan* (hot spring inn).

and breakfast included in your stay. After dinner, enjoy a stroll through the village streets in the magical quiet of the evening, wearing the *yukata* gown supplied by your inn.



The preserved post town Tsumago

through some of the most unspoilt scenery on the tour. Continue by train to Kiso-Fukushima, where you will stay at a lovely *onsen ryokan* (hot spring inn) set in a peaceful valley above the town. Complimentary transfer from the station is provided by the *ryokan*, which also features lovely indoor and outdoor hot spring baths.

We offer a shorter alternative of 1 hour (3.7 km / 2.3 mi). You can choose which option you prefer on the day—no need to decide in advance!

Day 3: Hike from Yabuhara to Narai

- 6.2 km / 3.9 mi
- about 3 hours
- 344 m / 1,128 ft of ascent
- 270 m / 885 ft of descent
- Minshuku (family-run guesthouse)
- Breakfast, dinner

Your *ryokan* will drive you back to Kiso-Fukushima after breakfast. We supply train tickets for the short journey from Kiso-Fukushima to Yabuhara, the starting point for the hike over the Torii Pass to Narai. Explore this atmospheric village before check-in at your family-run inn in the heart of the village. Your hosts will serve a home-cooked Japanese dinner and breakfast.



Day 4: Hike from Narai to Hirasawa

- 2.5 km / 1.6 mi
- about 1 hour
- negligible
- negligible
- Ryokan (traditional Japanese inn)
- Breakfast, Dinner

After breakfast, walk the short distance to the small town of Kiso-Hirasawa, famous for its lacquerware. There are many small shops selling beautifully crafted tableware and furniture. Board a train at Kiso-Hirasawa station for your onward journey to Karuizawa or Komoro for your final overnight stay. Both locations have lovely inns with a real sense of history and fine Japanese baths. Ride first to Matsumoto where you can visit the famous Matsumoto Castle before connecting onwards to your final stop—

total travel time by train is around three hours, not including the optional break of journey in Matsumoto. Arrive at your accommodation in time for a wonderful dinner with local produce.



Day 5: Hike from Karuizawa to Yokokawa and transfer to Tokyo

- 16.7 km / 10 mi
- 5-6 hours
- 372 m / 1,220 ft
- 862 m / 2,828 ft
- Breakfast

After breakfast, your final walk on the Nakasendo Trail is from Karuizawa to Yokokawa. Leaving Karuizawa, the trail takes you over the Usui-toge Pass and down a gentle descent along one of the

most beautiful sections of the Nakasendo. From Yokokawa, board the local train to Takasaki and change there for your ride on the bullet train to Tokyo. The train journey takes around two hours and you will arrive in Tokyo in the late afternoon or early evening.

The walk can be shortened by 3.3 km / 2 mi by a taxi ride at the start of the day.