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 travelers 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 four 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!

**DETAILS**

**DATES & PRICES**
Please see website

**TOUR LENGTH**
12 days

**TYPE AND LEVEL OF TRIP**
Active - 4 days of walking and hiking from 2 to 5 hours per day on flat paths and mountain trails with some short climbs. This tour is suitable for those who are in reasonable shape and can walk over rough ground for up to 5 hours. Whilst on the trail you will need to carry a small to medium daypack.

**WHAT’S INCLUDED**
Transport including Bullet Train, accommodation, English-speaking tour guide, luggage forwarding, entrance fees, daily breakfast & 7 evening meals included. The tour ends in Kyoto.
Not included are international flights, drinks with meals, lunches and 4 evening meals, airport transfers.
Four days of village-to-village walking on the old Nakasendo trail – Imperial Nara and Kyoto – modern Tokyo - the mountaintop village of Yoshino - visit sacred Mount Koya and stay in a shukubo (temple lodging) – relax in the bath at a lovely hot spring ryokan – travel on the bullet train
DAY 1 ➤ Meet in Tokyo
Meet at the hotel in the evening. There will be a Welcome Dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Accommodation: Hotel

DAY 2 ➤ Sightseeing in 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 'centre of Japan' and 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.

Accommodation: Hotel

DAY 3 ➤ Nakasendo Trail from Kiso-Hirasawa to Narai
Our travels through rural Japan begin with a journey from Tokyo to the remote Kiso valley. Over the next three days we will walk from village to village, staying in small, family-run country inns (Ryokan and Minshuku). After the opportunity to enjoy a lunch of buckwheat noodles in the local town of Shiojiri, we walk from Kiso-Hirasawa to Narai. Kiso-Hirasawa is known for its locally-produced lacquerware 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 Minshuku.

Walking distance: 2.5km / 1.6 miles
Elevation gain: negligible ascent and descent
Time required: 1 hour
Accommodation: Minshuku (Family-run guesthouse)

DAY 4 ➤ Narai to Kiso-Fukushima
On our second day on the Nakasendo Trail, we walk from Narai to Yabuhara over the Torii Pass and then 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.

Walking distance: 6.2km / 3.9 miles
Elevation gain: 270m/885 feet ascent; 344m/1,128 feet descent
Time required: 3 hours
Accommodation: Onsen Ryokan (Hot-spring Travellers Inn)

DAY 5 ➤ Kiso-Fukushima to Tsumago
We transfer from Kiso-Fukushima to Nojiri by train and then by a short taxi ride to the Nenoue-Toge pass. We walk along a lovely section of the Nakasendo Trail through delightful small settlements and rice fields to Tsumago or the nearby hamlet of O-Tsumago. Only a few decades ago, Tsumago was neglected and falling into disrepair, but through concerted efforts by its residents it has been saved and restored. Now this post-town on the Nakasendo Trail is 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.

Walking distance: 14km / 8.7 miles
Elevation gain: 344m/1,129 feet ascent; 723m/2,275 feet descent
Time required: 4.5 hours
Accommodation: Minshuku (Family-run guesthouse)
DAY 6 > Nakasendo Trail walking day 4 & Nara
From Tsumago we walk to Magome, our last stop in the Kiso Valley. The trail from Tsumago to Magome is the most beautiful and best-preserved part of the Nakasendo Trail. There will be time to eat lunch in Magome and explore the many small shops along the picturesque main street. You might also try gohei-mochi, skewered sticky rice covered in a sweet paste of miso, sesame and walnuts. We will travel by regular train and then Bullet Train to Kyoto, connecting onwards to Nara, where we check in to our western-style hotel.

Walking distance: 8.3km / 5.2 miles
Elevation gain: 430m/1,410 feet ascent; 326m/1069 feet of descent
Time required: 3 hours
Accommodation: Hotel

DAY 7 > Nara
In Nara, we have a guided walk in the morning. Many of Japan's greatest cultural treasures are concentrated in and around the city, with eight UNESCO World Heritage sites - Todai-ji Temple, Kofuku-ji Temple, Kasuga Taisha Shrine, Kasugayama Primeval Forest, Nara Palace Site, Ganko-ji Temple, Yakushi-ji Temple and Toshoda-ji Temple. Many of these sites are in or near Nara Park, home to a thousand or more free-roaming deer. We will visit two of these World Heritage sites, Kasuga Taisha Shrine and Todaiji temple - its Daibutsu-den is the largest wooden building in the world, housing a 16-metre tall image of the Rushana Buddha in bronze and gold. Prior to being rebuilt three hundred years ago, the awesome wooden structure was even larger than today. There will be some free time to relax, visit a Japanese garden or wander through the old town.

Accommodation: Hotel

DAY 8 > Yoshino
From Nara, our journey takes us to the ridge-top village of Yoshino, and a comfortable Ryokan. Yoshino is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most famous places in the whole of Japan for viewing cherry blossom in the spring. We will visit Yoshimizu Shrine (connected to historical figures such as Minamoto no Yoshitsune, Emperor Godaigo, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi), and explore the area.

Accommodation: Ryokan (Travellers Inn)

DAY 9 > Mount Koya
We take the scenic train to Mount Koya, situated in a bowl-shaped valley filled with stands of cedar trees high in the mountains of the Kii Peninsula. Since the 9th century 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 stay in one of the temples and dine on shojin-ryori Buddhist vegetarian cuisine. We visit Kongo-ji temple and walk through the vast Okuno-in cemetery. Tomorrow morning, there is an opportunity to rise early and join the Buddhist morning service.

Accommodation: Shukubo (Pilgrims lodging)

DAY 10 > Transfer to Kyoto
We take the train to Kyoto and check into our hotel. Kyoto was Japan's capital for many centuries and is still regarded as the country’s cultural heart. In the evening, we enjoy a walk in Gion, Kyoto's geisha district and there is the possibility of seeing a geiko (fully-fledged geisha) or maiko (apprentice geisha) making their way through the narrow streets.

Accommodation: Hotel

DAY 11 > Kyoto
There is a guided half-day walking tour this morning. We first visit the Sanjo-ohashi Bridge, the western end of the Nakasendo Trail. We continue to Nanzenji, a tranquil Zen Buddhist temple whose history dates back to the mid 13th century. We then stroll along the Philosopher's Path, with craft shops, cafes, shrines and temples beside the clear waters of a small canal. The path ends near Ginkakuji, the Silver Pavilion. There is free time in the afternoon so you can explore the area further or shop for crafts. In the evening, there is a Farewell Dinner with your guide.

Accommodation: Hotel

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 on onward travel if you are extending your stay in Japan.