

## PSA 17 - Take a Trip to the Past along Nagano's Ancient Roads - Trekking, Kayaking & Zen Therapy



During the Edo Period, many travelers passed through Nagano, such as feudal lords, peasants, mountain ascetics, monks and even ukiyo-e artists, looking for inspiration. On this trip, you'll walk along one of the major trails that connect Kyoto and Edo, the Nakasendo, as well as the spiritual trails of Mt. Ontake and Togakushi, while staying in ancient post towns and temple lodges. As you enjoy this beautiful natural setting, you'll find yourself slipping back in time to the Edo Period.

### Highlights:

- Trek along the historical Nakasendo
- Cleanse your body and mind with waterfall meditation at Mt. Ontake
- Kayak on Lake Suwa—famously depicted in the works of Hiroshige and Hokusai
- Taste sake at a several-hundred-year-old local brewery
- Listen to a special performance of kiyari, a chant performed during the Onbashira Festival
- Walk the Togakushi Kodo Trail—a haunt of mountain ascetics and ninja
- Seek enlightenment at 1,400-year-old Zenkoji Temple

**Location:** The host of the 1998 Winter Olympics, Nagano, is an outdoor sports mecca particularly famous for skiing and snowboarding. Often called the "roof of Japan," it boasts the highest mountain ranges in the country. It's a landlocked prefecture in the center of Honshu, the main island, and it borders more prefectures than any other in Japan, Despite being such a mountainous prefecture, access to Nagano is remarkably easy, especially thanks to the shinkansen bullet train and series of automobile expressways. It is in the countryside near the city center, which can be reached in about an hour and a half from Tokyo by shinkansen bullet train.

Actually, several hundred years ago, Nagano also had a highway connecting to the capital of Japan, Edo. Stretching from Sanjo Ohashi in Kyoto to Nihonbashi in Edo, it covered a distance of around 534 kilometers and had 69 post-towns along its route—26 of which are located in Nagano prefecture. The best-preserved portion of the Nakasendo Highway is a picturesque trail through the mountains that runs through the Kiso Valley in southwestern Nagano Prefecture.

This tour will start from Nagoya, which has developed as the castle town of the Owari, one of the three branches of the ruling Tokugawa family during the Edo Period. Then, you'll find yourself slipping back in time to the Edo period, going around Kiso, Suwa, Hakuba, Togakushi, and Nagano City in this journey.

## **Day-by-day Itinerary**

### **September 4th - Day 1 – Nagoya**

All of the clients for this tour will check-in at the hotel in Nagoya themselves. You will meet the other members with our guide at the hotel lobby and introduce themselves to each other. This evening, you have free time at leisure. The guide will give you a hand to explore the city.

### **September 5th - Day 2 - Trek along the historical Nakasendo**

After checking out from your hotel in Nagoya, you'll meet with your group at the hotel lobby and your guide will go over the schedule and details of the tour.

Next, you'll hop on a highway bus and head towards the start of the trekking course at Magome (approx. 80 minutes).

The trail stretching between the Magome and Tsumago post-towns is one of the most popular sections of the Nakasendo, a historical Edo Period (1603-1868) highway. Along the trail, you get to see wooden townscapes, stone statues and wayside shrines, tranquil waterfalls and streams—all largely unchanged since the road's heyday. A local English-speaking guide can tell you about the area as you explore on foot. In addition, traditional equipment used by travelers, like kasa hats and walking sticks made of hinoki cypress, are available for rent. Halfway to Tsumago, there is a rest stop at an old farmhouse with an irori hearth for lunch, a traditional bento box with kuri-okowa (roasted chestnuts and rice).

After arriving at your destination of Tsumago, a short break is scheduled to enjoy a local snack, goheimochi, and tea. Then, you also have time to stroll around town.

In the late afternoon, you'll depart Tsumago for your accommodation in Kiso Fukushima (around 50 minutes).

Kiso Fukushima was another post-town along Nakasendo. Enjoy a traditional Japanese hot spring lodge that faces the trail. For dinner, a Japanese kaiseki-style meal is ready to surprise you.

### **September 6th - Day 3 – Cleanse your body and mind with waterfall meditation at Mt. Ontake**

On your third day, you'll take a detour from the Nakasendo and visit an important spiritual destination that has attracted mountain ascetics for over a thousand years: Mt. Ontake.

You'll walk along the Ontake Kodo trail with an English-speaking guide. After checking out of your hotel in the morning, your guide will go over the day's schedule, and then, you'll take a bus (approx. 60 minutes) to Tanohara, the 7th station of the Ontake Kodo (2,180m), where you can see fabulous scenery of 3,067m-high Mt. Ontake. (If the weather doesn't cooperate, we'll skip Tanohara and visit Ontake Satomiya Shrine instead.) From there, you'll travel by bus to Omata Sansha Shrine (approx. 15 minutes) and begin trekking. You'll wear the traditional clothing of mountain ascetics and walk along the forest trail, visiting two waterfalls and a number of small shrines.

At the end of the trail is Kiyotaki Falls, where you'll be instructed in takigyō (waterfall meditation) and try it for yourself. This was one of the rituals that ascetic monks would perform in order to purify their bodies and minds before entering Mt. Ontake.

Because this location is a sanctuary, the maximum number of people who can have the experience is 10. The number of people may be even smaller depending on the weather and the water volume.

Next, you'll head to a nearby lodge for lunch. You'll eat a meal not unlike what Mountain ascetics would have eaten. They ate a strict plant-based diet. However, the lodge makes their meals more accessible to the non-ascetic palate. Your instructor in waterfall meditation is the owner of the lodge, and he can go over the various ingredients and dishes that make up your meal.

After lunch, you'll take a bus to your accommodation in Kamisuwa Onsen (approx. 120 minutes).

You'll stay in a Japanese style hot spring hotel on the shore of Lake Suwa, where you'll have a welcome dinner featuring an abundance of local and seasonal products.

## **September 7th - Day 4 –**

### **Kayak on Lake Suwa—famous from the works of Hiroshige and Hokusai**

The area of Lake Suwa has been known as an important crossroads since the Edo Period, and it prospered due to the heavy traffic here. On this day, you'll go on an adventure and explore the history and culture of the area. After check-out in the morning, your guide will go over the day's schedule. Then, you'll start off with a kayaking tour, where you'll gaze upon the beautiful scenery of Lake Suwa and Mt. Fuji that once inspired the artists Hokusai and Hiroshige.

Next, you'll take a tour bus (approx. 20 minutes) to a restaurant for lunch. It is a local favorite and serves what many consider to be one of Japan's soul foods—unagi (grilled eel).

You'll take another bus ride (approx. 20 minutes) to Shimosuwa, a post-town where two historical roads once met. First on the tour is the Suwa Taisha, one of the oldest shrines in Japan. The kiyari is sung to the gods during the Onbashira Festival, the largest Shinto ritual in the Suwa area. You will have a special opportunity to observe this kiyari dedication. Next is the Iwanami-ya, the former principal inn (or honjin) of the post town with matcha tea and Japanese wagashi in the gardens.

Your last activity will be at the neighboring Kamisuwa post-town, a 15-minute bus ride away, where you'll visit Miyasaka Brewery. Established during the Edo Period, it has produced sake for hundreds of years and is known throughout Japan for its Masumi brand. At the brewery, you have the chance to taste-test sake while listening to a talk from the head brewer. Finally, you'll take a bus from Suwa to your next accommodation in Hakuba (approx. 100 minutes).

At your accommodation, you'll enjoy a barbecue dinner outdoors on the hotel grounds while taking in Hakuba's fresh mountain air.

## **September 8th - Day 5**

### **Harvest rice and hang out with farmers in Hakuba**

After having breakfast at your accommodation, head to the rice paddies with your guides for the day. They will tell you about the area's yukigata (snowscape) tradition and the importance they held to local farmers, as well as the basics of rice cultivation in Japan. (approx. 30 minutes). Walk along the canal, which is important for rice cultivation. (approx. 100 minutes).

For lunch, you'll cook your own local rice vegetables under the farmer's supervision (approx. 60 minutes).

In the event of rain, the rice-harvesting will be replaced with a visit to a local museum where you'll make your meal indoors instead.

In the afternoon, you'll have some free time to relax. Your guide will introduce some activities in Hakuba for those interested.

For dinner, enjoy a traditional style of charcoal grilling, a robatayaki-style meal of local produce and fresh seafood from the Sea of Japan at a renovated storage house. A storyteller is there to immerse you in local folktales (30 minutes). Here, you can take in the atmosphere of a former post-town along the Chikuni Kaido, which served as a trade route connecting Japan's mountainous regions to the Sea of Japan.

## **September 9th - Day 6**

### **Walk the Togakushi Kodo Trail—a haunt of mountain ascetics and ninja**

After eating breakfast at your accommodation and listening to a short briefing from your guide, you'll take a bus to spiritual Mt. Togakushi. At the foot of Mt. Togakushi are five shrines that combine to form Togakushi Shrine: the Okusha, Chūsha, Hōkōsha, Kuzuryūsha, and Hinomikosha. They are connected by the Togakushi trail, which was frequented by mountain ascetics and pilgrims. You'll walk along this historical and spiritual trail and take in Togakushi's tranquil atmosphere with all of your senses (approx. 5 hours).

Togakushi soba is one of Japan's Three Famous soba varieties, so a trip here wouldn't be complete without trying it for yourself. For lunch, enjoy the delicate flavor of soba noodles made with local buckwheat flour and Togakushi spring water.

After trekking and lunch, you get to experience a display of Togakure Ninpo, a form of ninja martial arts, developed over 800 years ago in Togakushi, and visit the Togakushi Ninja Museum and Ninja Trick House.

Next, take a tour bus to your next accommodation in Nagano City.

The last accommodation on this tour is a temple lodge beside the national treasure, Zenkoji Temple. Dinner includes vegetarian shōjin cuisine made with plentiful local ingredients. The traditional flavors and colorful arrangement of these many small dishes are a big hit even with first-time visitors.

## September 10th - Day 7 (Last Day)

### Seek enlightenment at the 1,400-year-old Zenkoji Temple

After breakfast on your last day, there is one last daily briefing.

For those willing to wake up a little early (5:20 a.m.), you can watch Zenkoji Temple's morning service and then participate in zazen meditation (approx. 100 minutes). Your guide will first take you to the temple to watch the service, which has been held daily without fail for hundreds of years. And after that, you'll enter Daikanjin Temple and perform zazen

meditation with the instruction of one of the temple's monks. During meditation, you'll have the opportunity to recenter yourself after a long and rewarding tour of central Japan.

Then you'll return to the temple lodge and have a filling shōjin breakfast. Your guide will brief you on the day's travel schedule before you checkout. Finally, you'll ride the Hokuriku bullet train towards Tokyo where your guide sends you off to Haneda International Airport.

### Accommodations :

Date	Name of Accommodation
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4 Sep 2023	Meitetsu Grand Hotel, Nagoya Hotel Western style room with en suite bath and toilet
5 Sep 2023	On'yado Tsutaya or Iwaya Inn, Kisoji Ryokan Japanese style room with futon bedding on tatami, en suite bath and toilet 2-3 people per room, separated by gender
6 Sep 2023	Hotel Beni Ya, Suwa Hotel Western style room with en suite bath and toilet
7&8 Sep 2023	Hakuba Mominoki Hotel Hotel Western style room with en suite bath and toilet
9 Sep 2023	Shuku-bo Fuchinobo Shukubo Japanese style room or Japanese/Western hybrid room type using a futon. Shared bath and toilet 2-3 people per room, separated by gender

### What's included

- 6 nights' accommodation in hotels, ryokan and shukubo
- 6 breakfasts, 5 lunches, and 5 dinners
- Transportation between tour locations using highway bus, private vehicle, train and sometimes taxi
- Waterfall meditation experience
- Kayaking on lake Suwa
- Onbashira Festival experience
- Sake brewery tour and tasting
- Rice harvesting and rice cooking experience
- Visit to the Togakushi Ninja Museum
- Overnight stay at a Buddhist Temple
- Optional Zazen meditation experience
- Snacks and refreshments
- English speaking guides from the morning of day 2 in Nagoya, to Haneda airport on day 7

## **Not Included:**

- Airfare
- Arrival airport transfer
- Travel to Nagoya and from Haneda
- Personal expenses
- Drinks with meals

## **We provide & What to bring**

### **We provide:**

- First aid kit
- Safety equipment
- Kayaks, oars, and life jackets for kayaking day

### **What to bring**

#### ***Essential items:***

#### **Documents :**

- Passport
- Travel Insurance
- Travel Itinerary
- Cash and ATM card

### **Clothing:**

Comfortable clothing for hiking and activity, including lightweight flexible trousers for walking, t-shirts, shirts

Comfortable trekking shoes or lightweight trail boots (these need not be full ankle leather hiking boots)

Water shoes or sandals that grip at the heel or ankle (no flip flop style sandals)

Swimwear for waterfall meditation experience and kayaking

Socks

Waterproof jacket and trousers (ideally breathable)

Quick-dry clothing for your day of canoeing

Sun hat, sunglasses

Bandana or handkerchief (public toilets may not have hand dryers)

### **Personal items:** Toothbrush/toothpaste

Toiletry kit – tissues, shaving kit, deodorant, moisturizer, flannel/washcloth. Please note that body soap and shampoo are provided at accommodations

Sunscreen

Insect Repellent

Water bottle

Medicines and prescriptions

### **Gear:**

Trekking backpack, approximately 20 liters in size

Rain cover for backpack

Water bottle

Rain hat or folding umbrella

### ***Recommended items:***

- Thin fleece top – in the evenings, it can get quite cool in the mountains
- Trainers/sneakers or comfortable shoes for cities

- Camera Sunglasses
- Walking poles (a personal choice; most clients manage without but if you prefer to hike with walking poles please bring these with you).
- Quick-dry clothing for kayaking
- Cell-phone power bank
- Earplugs and eye mask
- Dry bag
- Additional snacks you typically enjoy while hiking
- Camera
- Larger bath towels (Japanese bath towels are small in size relative to those used in other countries. If you prefer to use a bath towel that can be wrapped around you, please bring this with you.)
- Earplugs and eye mask
- Eco laundry soap for handwashing of items
- Electrical plug/socket adapter (If you are bringing electronics from North America with a plug with 2 flat prongs then this should work in Japan. If you are coming from other countries, please bring a voltage converter and plug adapter for Japan.
- Small flashlight/torch

***Information we will need from you prior to your Pre-Summit Adventure:***

- Your height
- Your cycling and hiking experience
- Nationality, age, gender
- Details of an emergency contact
- Details of any allergies or dietary restrictions you may have
- Information on any chronic medical conditions and medication taken
- Your arrival date, flight details, and the name of the hotels you will be staying in before and after your Pre-Summit Adventure

Please note: accommodations will ask to see and photocopy your passport on check in. This is a requirement of Japanese law.

## ***Food***

### **Breakfasts and Dinners:**

Most meals will be Japanese cuisine, though breakfast in western-style hotels usually includes more familiar choices too. Dinner and breakfast in ryokan and minshuku are set meals, usually with a whole succession of different dishes. Meals are often served at set times, and dinner is usually prepared for 18:00 or 18:30. Your guide will advise you of mealtimes. On most days, your breakfasts and dinners are taken at your accommodations.

Alcoholic and soft drinks are not included with meals and you will pay for any such drinks consumed when you depart. Tipping is not customary at hotels and restaurants in Japan.

The key ingredient of every Japanese meal is rice, always white and sticky. Other key ingredients are soybeans, used in miso soup, tofu bean curd and soy sauce (pronounced shoyu). Seafood in its many forms features heavily, often being used in sauces or soups. Pickles are another key ingredient of the Japanese meal. Japanese food refrains from

heavy sauces and spices in favor of subtle flavors coming from the freshness of the ingredients themselves. Japanese restaurants abroad reflect only a small amount of the variety of dishes available in Japan, so it is likely you will experience a whole new range of tastes if this is your first visit!

Japanese meals generally consist of various small dishes served all at the same time. There is usually no specified order in which to eat. The Japanese use chopsticks (pronounced hashi) to eat their food, with the exception of 'curry rice', fried rice or other cuisines considered to be 'imports' to Japan.

There are two points of etiquette to be aware of with chopsticks. Never use chopsticks to pass food to another person's chopsticks and never place your chopsticks upright in a bowl of rice. These resemble Japanese funerary rites.

Many Japanese dishes come with different sauces and garnishes. Japanese people never put soy sauce on their rice, though they do dip their sushi in it before eating, and they pour it on grilled fish as well.

### **Lunches**

Lunches are included from Day 2 through Day 6 and consist of local specialties. These will be served at local restaurants and establishments and showcase the food culture of the Nagano area and Satoyama living.

## ***Travel to the meeting point***

Your Pre-Summit Adventure begins in Nagoya, a major city with its own international airport. If you are flying in to Japan's International airports in Tokyo or Osaka and traveling directly to your Pre-Summit Adventure, Nagoya is easily accessed by bullet train, a network of high-speed railway lines in Japan

## **Getting to your Nagoya Hotel from Narita International Airport or Haneda International Airport:**

If you are arriving at Narita airport, there are many options available to travel between Narita Airport and Tokyo station, but the most convenient and simplest of these when connecting to the bullet train is to travel by Narita Express, or N'EX , and then connecting to the bullet train to Nagoya. You can purchase your ticket right at the airport and can also make seat reservations for your journey. The N'EX journey to Tokyo takes approximately 55 minutes. Taxis are very expensive (around \$300) from the airport to Tokyo so public transport is both your more ecologically friendly and economical option.

Tickets from Narita Airport to Nagoya with reserved seating are approximately ¥14,320 per person. The journey from Tokyo Station to Nagoya Station takes approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes on the fastest class of shinkansen. If you are connecting from the N'EX to the shinkansen at Tokyo station, leave yourself ample time (30 minutes) to connect to your bullet train at Tokyo station due to the size of the station. Connections may also be made at the smaller Shinagawa station and can be made in 15 to 20 minutes.



If you are arriving at Haneda station, take the Tokyo Monorail from Haneda Airport to Hamamatsucho Station (20 minutes), then transfer to the JR Yamanote Line to Tokyo Station (5 minutes) ¥660. Tickets from Tokyo station to Nagoya with reserved seating is approximately ¥11,500.

Your hotel is located in the Nagoya station complex. Follow the signs in the station to the Sakura dori exit and turn right at the police station or Koban. Follow the building past Meitetsu Nagoya Station and Kintetsu Nagoya Station. You will see the hotel sign on your right. It is a 5-minute walk to the hotel. The hotel sits above the Meitetsu Department Store Men's Building.

### **Getting to your Nagoya Hotel from Central Japan International Airport / Centrair:**

If you are arriving at Central Japan International Airport or Centrair, the private Meitetsu line will take you directly to the Meitetsu Nagoya station. The journey takes 30 minutes and costs approximately ¥1,520.

Follow the signs in the Meitetsu Nagoya Station through the food street to the hotel elevator, which will be on your right. From 22:00 to 5:30 this access way is closed. In this case, exit Meitetsu Nagoya Station on the Sakura dori side, turn right, pass the Kintetsu Nagoya Station and you will see the hotel sign on your right. The hotel sits above the Meitetsu Department Store Men's Building.

## ***Accommodation***

### **Hotels**

Japanese hotels will always have western-style rooms and occasionally Japanese-style tatami rooms too. They have the same amenities as those in other countries, although room sizes are generally smaller.

**Ryokan** Ryokan are traditional Japanese inns, and a visit to one is a highlight of a trip to Japan. Rooms are invariably simply but elegantly decorated, with tatami matting. Most ryokan have large, communal segregated baths, and it is common to bathe either before or after dinner. Dinner will usually be served in a dining room, but occasionally in your room. In most ryokan, dinner is very elaborately prepared and presented with carefully chosen seasonal ingredients. While you have been eating, the ryokan staff will have laid out your futon in your room, ready for sleeping.

### **Shukubo**

Shukubo is temple lodgings for pilgrims, though they welcome all travelers. Rooms are Japanese style with tatami mats, with shared facilities. Food is served in a dining room by the monks and is vegetarian shojin-ryori cuisine. Staying at shukubo is a memorable experience, and you will have the chance to rise early and attend the morning prayer. It is important to remember that they are religious institutions.

PLEASE NOTE: Wearing yukata (cotton robes) or sleeping wear is not acceptable at the 'morning service' (morning prayer).