

DESTINATIONS IN JAPAN'S HEARTLAND



Heartland JAPAN

<http://heartlandjapan.com/>

DESTINATIONS IN JAPAN'S HEARTLAND

ABOUT US

While most of the world knows Japan for its colorful contrast of modernity and tradition, there is yet another more introspective side to this fascinating country – a quieter side, where the people are still connected to the land, its harvest and ancient belief systems. This road less traveled leads to a wellspring of the nation's core beliefs and values, to rural and coastal communities in the heartland of Japan.

To truly understand Japan you must experience this quieter place, where you can feel the sea breezes of summer as the fisherman bring in their hauls. Where you can enjoy crisp frosty mornings while watching rice milling machines spit out perfectly white grains. Where you can smell freshly turned earth during the daikon harvest, or listen to the bubbling of fish in nuanced sauces in generation-old kitchen hearths. Welcome to the nation's bread basket, its heartland!

Our goal is to help non-Japanese visitors discover these hidden tourism assets in Japan's regional areas. We open up Japan's beautiful and bucolic countryside with such tools as digital information, fulfillment technology, unique tours, interesting activities and improved physical access. In so doing, we hope to reinvigorate Japan's local economies, improve cultural exchange and internationalization, and create centers of tourism excellence that will serve as models for other countryside communities as well.



**TSUWANO AND
HAGI-OKAN WALK**

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**TSUGARU AND
SHIMOKITA TRAIL**

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**KUMANO KODO
ISE-JI ROUTE TRAIL**

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ASO WALKING TOUR

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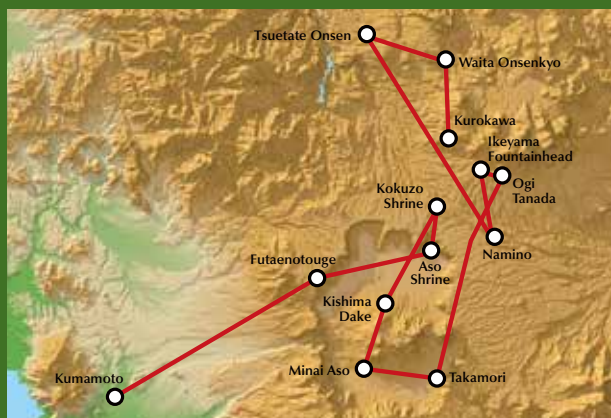
GUIDED LIVING WITH A VOLCANO ASO WALKING TOUR

Experience volcano trekking and
hot spring bathing in the Land of Fire

Duration
6 Days, 5 Nights
Start / Finish
Hiroshima / Kurokawa

Fitness Level
★★★
Skill Level
●●

Komezuka, Aso



HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience the heartland of Japan in the ancient and stunning landscape of Kumamoto, known as the “land of fire”.
- Hike Mount Aso, Japan’s most active volcano and one of the world’s largest caldera volcanoes.
- Explore scenic trails in Aso National Park and Aso Geopark, a UNESCO site.
- Trek Futaenotouge Pass, a historic route once traversed by samurai.
- Eat Kumamoto aka ushi, a Japanese beef renowned for its rich flavor and tenderness.
- Experience the relaxing Japanese custom of bathing in a hot spring.
- Enjoy a traditional Japanese performance of kagura.

OVERVIEW

The Aso Walking Tour is a fully guided tour, suitable for anyone who can walk for more than 1 to 3 hours in comfort. This is a 6 day, 5 night tour that will take you through the geographical highlights of Aso, a historical city in Kumamoto Prefecture located in the region of Kyushu.

On the surface, Aso is a place of tranquil beauty. Charming villages offer breathtaking views of Mount Aso. Yet underneath the beauty is a volatile force that cannot be tamed.

Dotted with volcanic mountains, Kumamoto Prefecture is frequently referred to as hi no kuni, the “land of fire”. Kumamoto is home to Mount Aso, Japan’s most active volcano and one the world’s largest caldera volcanoes.

DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

Day 1

Hiroshima – Kumamoto – Aso

Participants of the tour will meet at Hiroshima Station. From there we will take a shinkansen (bullet train) to Kumamoto Station before heading for Aso City, located 90 minutes away.

En-route to Aso city you will walk the Futaenotouge Pass, an elevated mountain pass 683 meters (2240.81 feet) high. Futaenotouge Pass is a portion of the Bungo Circuit, a historic trail used by the feudal lords of the Kumamoto Domain to travel to Tokyo, in a practice known as sankin-kotai. Relive history and walk in the footsteps of samurai as you trek the 1.6 kilometer (1 mile) long stone paved “Ishi-datami no Michi”, the longest of its kind in Japan. Afterwards, all tour participants will gather for a lively dinner.

- Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
- Meals:** Dinner Provided.
- Total walking:** 1.6km (1 mile) / 1 hour.
- Total elevation gain:** 250m (820ft).



Futaenotouge Pass


Day 2


Aso – Minami Aso


After breakfast, we will depart for Aso Shrine. Along the way, we will stop at the former girls school, which was built in the early 20th century. The charm of this old building is accented by the sounds of bubbling water on the premises, due to the large presence of spring water in the area. Lining the sando (the procession to Aso Shrine) are plenty of unique shops that offer an impressive variety of souvenirs and delicious Japanese foods.


Afterwards, we will make our way to Kokuzo Shrine, marked by its impressive shinboku, a divine tree in which kami (spirits and deities) reside. We will also visit the 6th century megalithic tombs of Kami-Mikura and Shimo-Mikura.

Lunch will be at a local eatery, and is followed by an afternoon trek to Mount Kishima, one of Mount Aso's Five Peaks. From its summit take in the unobstructed views of the caldera's cone from the northwestern side. Dinner and lodging will be at a local establishment.

 **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.

 **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

 **Total walking:** 6km (3.7 miles) / 2.5 hours.

 **Total elevation gain:** 180m (590ft).



Kokuzo Shrine



Teno


Day 3


Minami Aso – Takamori

Today we will walk from Nishinomiya Shrine to Minamiaso Village and Yasaka Shrine. Note how the stone staircase of Yasaka Shrine and its torii, or gateway, are joined by the Megane Bridge, a famous arched stone bridge. From Yasaka Shrine we will venture in the direction of Nishinomiya Shrine for a 90 minute walk. Among the kami worshiped at Nishinomiya Shrine are the daimyojin, the “great shining deities” of Aso, Kosa and Takaki.

Lunch will be at a soba restaurant in Minamiaso Village, followed by a tour of nearby Takamori. We will visit Hizenya, a craft shop famous for producing Marukichi Soy Sauce and miso. Then to a sampling tour at Reizan, an iconic sake (rice wine) maker of Kumamoto. Dinner and lodging will be at a local establishment.

 **Accommodation:** Japanese inn / Hotel / B&B.

 **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

 **Total walking:** 7.5km (4.7 miles) / 1.5 hours.

 **Total elevation gain:** N/A.



Nishinomiya Jinja

Day 4


Takamori - Ubuyama - Namino - Ubuyama


After breakfast we will venture out to Ubuyama, a village located in the northeast portion of the Aso caldera. Our first stop is Higotai Park, famed for its collection of flowers, especially its higotai that bloom in summer.


From Higotai Park we will walk to Ogi Tanada, a picturesque rice terrace highly esteemed in Japan. After lunch, we will continue to explore Ubuyama's natural attractions such as the Ikeyama Fountainhead. The Ikeyama Fountainhead has been chosen as one of the 100 exquisite and well-maintained waters in Japan. From Ikeyama Fountainhead we will trek to Ikeyama Farm, home of aka ushi, a breed of small wagyu beef cattle known for its red coloring, tenderness and lack of excess fat. There will be ample opportunity to learn more about the breed at the farm.

Afterwards, enjoy a performance of kagura at Namino Kaurgaen. Kagura is the oldest performance art of Japan. It vibrantly depict tales of Japanese mythology. You may also explore the kagura-den, the building within a Shinto shrine where kagura is performed for kami (deities) during ceremonies. Following the kagura performance, we will dine and rest at a local establishment.

 **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.

 **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

 **Total walking:** 6km (3.7 miles) / 2 hours.

 **Total elevation gain:** N/A.



Ogi Tanada



Nabegataki Falls



Kagura



Tsuetate Onsen

Day 5

Ubuyama - Tsuetate - Waita - Oguni - Kurokawa

Today you will be able to experience the relaxing Japanese custom of bathing in an onsen, or hot spring. After breakfast we will head to Tsuetate Onsen town, located in the mountains that straddle Kumamoto and Oita Prefectures. Steam dances between the Japanese inns and shops. The murmuring of its namesake, the Tsuetate River, adds to the appeal of this attractive onsen town.

The narrow back allies carries a nostalgic atmosphere, and have been carefully maintained since the 1930's. They are referred to as Sedoya, meaning "the house behind the other house."

Afterwards, we will head to Waita Onsen village. With its collection of 6 hot springs located at the base of the 1,500 meter tall Mount Waita, it overlooks Kumamoto and Oita Prefectures.

A visit to the town of Oguni, Horai Yoshimi Shrine and a trek to Nabegataki Falls follows lunch. Horai Yoshimi Shrine is distinguished by its 700 year old towering twin cedars, while Nabegataki Falls boasts a 20 meter (65.6 feet) wide curtain of cascading water. There is even an accessible spacious area behind the falls.

The final onsen of the day is Kurokawa Onsen, a village with an assortment of some 25 different hot springs and outdoor baths. Food stands, Japanese inns and souvenir shops line the streets, creating a charming atmosphere that is the perfect escape from urban life.

After dinner we will head for Hirano-Dai, also known as Lover's Hill, to take in the starry skies and beautiful panoramic views of Aso caldera. To the east of Lover's Hill are the Kuju Mountains; to its south lie Minamiaso. We will return to our lodging to close the night.

- Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
- Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
- Total walking:** 8km (5 miles) / 3 hours.
- Total elevation gain:** N/A.



Waita Onsenkyo

Day 6

Kurokawa

The Aso tour concludes after breakfast. Your tour leader will be happy to assist you in finding your way to your next destination.

- Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
- Meals:** Breakfast provided.
- Total walking:** N/A.
- Total elevation gain:** N/A.



Kurokawa

Note: There's a possibility that itinerary may be modified.

GUIDED

FISHING VILLAGES AND OLD SAMURAI TOWNS

TSUWANO AND HAGI-OKAN WALK

Coastline trail and old highway in San'in

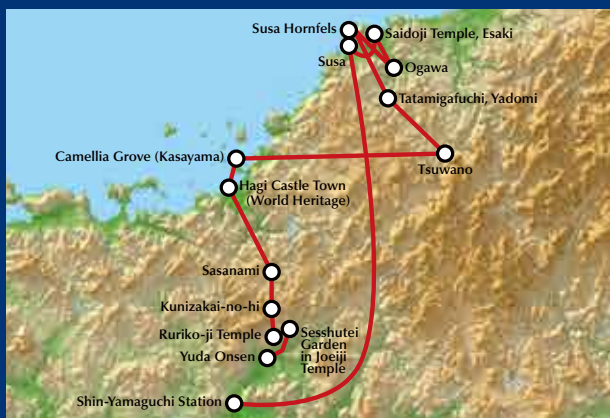
Duration
7 Days, 6 Nights

Start / Finish
Hiroshima / Yuda Onsen

Fitness Level
★★★

Skill Level
●●●

Esaki fishing harbor, Hagi



HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience the heartland of Japan in fishing villages, as well as rural settlements.
- Walk a portion of the Hagi-Okan Highway, a circuit once traversed by the samurai.
- Explore the exceptionally well-preserved city of Hagi.
- Examine the history of Shinto, Buddhism and Christianity in the city of Tsuwano.
- Board a squid fishing vessel manned by a local fisherman.
- Enter the world of Japanese mythology and enjoy a dynamic performance of Iwami Kagura, a flamboyant and traditional Japanese art of storytelling.

OVERVIEW

The Tsuwano and Hagi-Okan Highway tour is a breathtaking journey across Japan's Chugoku region, located on the western part of the main island of Honshu. This tour will take you between Shimane and Yamaguchi Prefectures. By visiting towns and villages that are seemingly frozen in time, we will experience the rich and unique history of Japan and this region.

Our tour begins with a taste of authentic life in the heartland of Japan, in the scenic village of Suda. From here you will walk in the footsteps of samurai and traverse a portion of the historical Hagi-Okan Highway. Before the tour culminates in Yamaguchi, the peaceful capital of Yamaguchi Prefecture, you will be in awe at the "open-air museum" city of Hagi and explore the fusion between Eastern and Western religions in the city of Tsuwano.

DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

Day 1

Hiroshima – Shin-Yamaguchi – Suda

The tour will start at Hiroshima Station where the group will take a shinkansen to Shin Yamaguchi Station. From Shin Yamaguchi the group will traverse the Chugoku Mountains with a 90 minute bus ride. Our destination is Suda, a tiny fishing village in the San'in region. Thus our journey begins near the border of Shimane Prefecture.

We will also enjoy a scenic 40 minute drive along a portion of the Sea of Japan coastline, designated as Kita-Nagato Kaigan Quasi-National Park. Take a sunset stroll along the pristine beach on the grounds of Suda Wan Ecology Camping Ground, and be memorized by the magnificent views of the sea in its natural beauty, all accented by crepuscular rays.

Later that evening, we head to Tamagawa Hot Springs to experience the therapeutic Japanese custom of public bathing in a natural hot spring.

- Accommodation:** Cabin.
- Meals:** Dinner provided.
- Total walking:** N/A.
- Total elevation gain:** N/A.




Day 2

Suda – Esaki – Ogawa – Suda

Enjoy the sight of boats docked in the shining emerald green harbor at the fishing village Esaki.

We will then head to Saido-ji Temple built in the early 15th century, followed by a leisurely stroll on a slightly elevated hilly promenade along the coastline. Lunch will be at a local restaurant,

followed by a tasting of world class local sake.

-  **Accommodation:** Cabin.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** 4km (2.5 miles) / 3 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 50m (164ft).



Saidoji Temple

Day 3

Susa – Yadomi – Tsuwano

We will trek out to Mount Kouyama, which stands 533 meters high on a cape jutting out into the Sea of Japan. Perched on the summit is a Shinto shrine and the destination of our morning journey.

We then board a squid fishing vessel manned by a local fisherman, and then to the Susa Hornfels.

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** 3km (1.9 miles) / 3 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 286m (938ft).



Susa Hornfels

Day 4

Tsuwano

From the Taikodani Inari Shrine, with its one thousand vermillion torii gates, we will take the chair-lift to the ruins of Tsuwano Castle.

Here we will enjoy our dinner of soba (buckwheat noodles), a local specialty. Afterwards we will enjoy a performance of iwami kagura, a vibrant and traditional Japanese theatrical dance frequented by the locals.

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** 5km (3.1 miles) / 4 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 357m (1171ft).



Iwami Kagura



Taikodani Inari Shrine

Day 5

Tsuwano – Hagi

After experiencing the town's crafts, we will head to Tsubaki Gunseirin, a camellia grove of some 25,000 camellia trees. The grove covers an area of nearly 10 hectares.

From here we trek to the summit of Mount Kasayama in the center of Kita-Nagato Kaigan Quasi-National Park.

Next up is Hagi Seaside Market, the oceanfront "Kitchen of Hagi", where local producers supply only the freshest ingredients. Lunch will be at a restaurant that features the fresh delicacies of seafood caught off the coast.

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with hot spring baths.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch & dinner provided.
-  **Total walking:** 10km (6.2 miles) / 3 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** Total elevation gain: 112m (367ft).



Kasayama camellia gregarious plants forest







Hagi castle town

Day 6

Hagi – Hagi-Okan – Yuda Onsen

Highlights of this busy day are the Buddhist temple Rurikou-ji, Kouzan Park and the Japanese garden Sesshu at Jouei-ji Temple. The pagoda at Rurikoji is one of the greatest architectural feats of the Muromachi period. It is the 10th oldest pagoda in Japan, and is considered one of the three famous pagodas in Japan.

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** 8.2km (5 miles) / 2 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 300m (984ft).



Hagi-Okan







Rurikoji Temple

Day 7

Yuda Onsen

Today you can even try your hand at traditional Ouchi-nuri lacquerware, as well as experience other sights around the town.

Your accommodation is conveniently located near JR Yuda Onsen Station. Your tour leader will be able to assist you in purchasing tickets as well as directing you to your final destination without a problem.

-  **Accommodation:** N/A.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast provided.
-  **Total walking:** N/A.
-  **Total elevation gain:** N/A.

Note: There's a possibility that itinerary may be modified.

GUIDED BELIEFS AND MYTHOLOGIES OF A NATION KUMANO KODO ISE-JI ROUTE TRAIL

Experience roads of old pilgrimage

Duration
7 Days, 6 nights

Start / Finish
Nagoya / Nachi Katsuura

Fitness Level
★★★★

Skill Level
●●●●

Yata Fire Festival, Oyunohara, Kumano



HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience the ancient and stunning landscape of Ise, known as "The Holy City".
- Explore Japan's most sacred shrine, Ise Grand Shrine.
- Trek from Ise to Futami and explore famous sights such as Meoto Iwa along the way.
- Trek the traditional pilgrimage and UNESCO World Heritage Kumano Kodo route, from Ise Grand Shrine to Kumano Sanzan.
- Enjoy the spectacular rock and cave formations at Onigajo, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Admire the iconic views of the spectacular cascading waterfall at Nachi Falls, and the traditional Nachi Taisha in Wakayama Prefecture.
- Experience the relaxing Japanese custom of bathing in a hot spring.

OVERVIEW

Mie Prefecture has historically played a strong role in linking Japan, thanks to the pilgrimage routes that run through Ise to the Ise Grand Shrine.

Originally founded in 4 BC, Ise Grand Shrine is a vast shrine complex comprising of 125 shrines. It is dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu, and is also commonly believed to be the home of the sacred mirror Yata no Kagami, making it one of the most important sites in the Shinto religion.

Since the Edo period, those visiting Ise would continue their pilgrimage along the Iseji Route to Kumano. The course is known for its variety of natural landscapes, cobblestone paths and bamboo groves.

Kumano Kodo is the collective name for the old highway, and has been registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

Day 1

Nagoya – Ise

Tour participants will meet at the Shinkansen South Gate of Nagoya Station. Here we board a train bound for Ise. Here we find our accommodations, which will be a traditional Japanese Ryokan.

Accommodation: Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.

Meals: Dinner Provided.

Total walking: N/A.

Total elevation gain: N/A.

Day 2

Ise – Futami

First we head to the Outer Shrine of Ise-jingu. Many restaurants and souvenir shops have opened up along Geku Sando, so you'll be able to grab lunch here before heading onwards to the Inner Shrine. After we will freely wander around the districts of Oharai-machi. Here you'll stumble across several hidden gems, including Japan's smallest sake brewery, a store specializing in sake cups, and various other food and souvenir shops along the way.

Accommodation: Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Total walking: 2km (1.2 miles) / 2 hours.

Total elevation gain: N/A.







Geku, Ise Jingu

Day 3

Futami – Umegadani – Kii Nagashima

You might be able to catch a view of Mount Fuji between the Meoto-iwa as the sun rises along the Futami coast.

After breakfast we will head to Futami Okitama Shrine and the auxiliary Ryugusha shrine, before being transported by minibus to Kumano Kodo's Tsururato Pass.

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** 8km (5 miles) / 3 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 157m (515ft).



Meoto Iwa, Futami





Meoto Iwa Omotesando, Futami

Day 4

Kii Nagashima – Sugari – Oni-ga-jo

We embark on a course that follows the Ikkoku Pass, Hirakata Pass and Kumagaya-michi, while enjoying the views of the Kumano Sea with its islands.

After lunch, we head to Owase. Here we explore by foot the traditional fishing villages of Sugari, before continuing along the coast to Kumano's Onigajō.

-  **Accommodation:** Hotel.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** 7km (4.3 miles) / 4 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 113m (370ft).







Kumano Kodo

Day 5

Oni-ga-jo – Kumano

Before continuing our journey along the Kumano Kodo trail, we will head to the shrine where the deities of Izanami and Kagutsuchi are enshrined. Fuden-toge Pass passes through serene cedar forests, where you'll discover beautiful environments of the countryside and the surrounding mountains. We continue along the moss-covered stone path toward our goal of Maruyama Senmaida – said to be the home of Japan's best rice terraces.

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** 8km (5 miles) / 4 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 211m (692ft).



Maruyama Senmaida



The largest torii gate in Japan, Oyunohara




Day 6

Kumano – Nachi Katsuura

We begin by heading to Kumano Hongu Taisha, before heading to Oyunohara where we come across Japan's largest torii gate. Its sheer scale towers over the surrounding countryside.

At the nearby Kamikura shrine you'll discover the sacred giant rock, Gotobiki-iwa, located on the mountaintop.

After lunch tour participants will explore Kumano Nachi Taisha shrine and Nachi Falls.

-  **Accommodation:** Hotel.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** N/A.
-  **Total elevation gain:** N/A.







Nachisan Seigantoji Temple and Nachi Otaki

Day 7

Nachi Katsuura

Farewell at Nachi-Katsuura.

-  **Accommodation:** N/A.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** Breakfast provided.
-  **Total elevation gain:** N/A.

Note: There's a possibility that itinerary may be modified.

GUIDED LIVING IN GRAND NATURE TSUGARU AND SHIMOKITA TRAIL

Experience tradition
in the north end of Honshu island

Duration
7 Days, 6 Nights

Start / Finish
Tokyo / Hakodate

Fitness Level
★★

Skill Level
●●●

Hotokegaura, Sai, Shimokita Peninsula



HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience Japan's rugged north and learn its unique cultures.
- Walk around the Sannai Maruyama, a relic of a pre-historical period that spanned 15,000 to 2,300 years ago.
- Explore the exceptionally well-preserved Edo era city of Kuroishi and its rustic hot-springs.
- Walk along Oirase Stream, a natural gem of Japan.
- Visit Osorezan (Mt. Osore), one of the most sacred places in Japan, believed to connect this world with the afterlife.
- Explore spectacular Hotoke-ga-ura's rocks resembling statues of Buddhas.
- Board a vessel in Oma and watch bluefin tuna fishing, Japan's most coveted tuna.

OVERVIEW

The Tsugaru Shimokita Walk tour is a stunning journey through Japan's Tohoku region, which is located in the northern part of the main island Honshu. The region is well known for its countryside, mountains, lakes, hot springs, high quality rice and harsh winters. Settlement of Tohoku initially occurred between the 7th and 9th centuries, well after civilization had been firmly established in other parts of Japan.

Our tour begins in Aomori City, the prefectural capital which began its life as a port town. From here we will explore the culture, history and food of Tsugaru and Shimokita. In both areas, the most astonishing and unforgettable experience may be their breathtaking natural beauty. Places such as Oirase Stream, Osorezan (Mt. Osore) and the Hotoke-ga-ura Coastline are revered by nature lovers and photographers.

Throughout the tour, allow yourself to take in the ways of the people who endured in this rugged land.

DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

Day 1

Tokyo – Shin-Aomori – Aomori

The tour will start at Tokyo Station where the group will take a shinkansen (bullet train) to Shin Aomori Station. First we head to Sannai Maruyama Historical Site, the largest discovered Jomon site in Japan. We will walk through recreations of the settlement, which was first inhabited 4,500 to 5,000 years ago. We will also view the numerous excavated items at the site's museum.

Continuing to Komakino Jomon Ruins, we can see a circular stone ceremonial site constructed in the late Jomon period. After first stopping at the site's museum, we continue on to the actual site by foot. Not only can we glimpse back into the ancient past of Japan, but we also can see magnificent views over Aomori City from the site.

From our hotel, the group will move to an authentic Japanese pub to enjoy some of the regional cuisine of Aomori.

- Accommodation:** Hotel.
- Meals:** Dinner provided.
- Total walking:** N/A.
- Total elevation gain:** N/A.







Sannai Maruyama Historical Site

Day 2

Aomori – Kuroishi – Oirase

After breakfast at a local fish market, we head to Nakano Momiji Mountain, home to a shrine which boasts 600 year old great cedar trees. Then we will explore Komise Street, popular for its preservation of buildings from the Edo period of Japan, to experience a powerful performance of Tsugaru Jamisen and drink local sake.

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** 2km (1.2 miles) / 2 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 263m (863ft).







Tsugaru Jamisen in Kuroishi

Day 3

Oirase – Asamushi Onsen

As we slowly make our way along the path to Oirase stream, take in the vibrant nature. With its many waterfalls, Oirase Stream is a natural gem of Japan and a truly memorable experience. Our destination is Choshi Otaki Waterfall. This majestic waterfall is over 7 meters high and 20 meters wide. Afterwards, we will have lunch in Nenokuchi (Lake Towada).

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch & dinner provided.
-  **Total walking:** 7.5km (4.7 miles) / 3 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 200m (656ft).



Oirase Stream

Day 4

Asamushi Onsen – Noheji – Mutsu

Today we head to Hachimangu Shrine, which is believed to have been constructed around 1282 AD. We then continue on for a trek on the nearby Yachiyama Mountain trail. At the summit you can enjoy beautiful views of the blue waters of Mutsu Bay. The many islands dotted throughout sea seem to float on the waves.





-  **Accommodation:** Hotel.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch & dinner provided.
-  **Total walking:** 6km (3.7 miles) / 3 hours.
-  **Total elevation gain:** 180m (590ft).

Day 5

Mutsu – Sai – Oma

We head out to see the famed Osorezan (Mt. Osore), a place seen to connect this world with the afterlife. It is one of the three most sacred mountains of Japan.

After we continue to the small fishing village of Sai. Keep your eyes open for Japan's famous snow monkeys! Here we will enjoy a meeting with a local Kabuki performer, who performs a style called Fisherman's Kabuki.

-  **Accommodation:** Japanese inn with onsen thermal hot spring baths.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** N/A.
-  **Total elevation gain:** N/A.



Osorezan (Mt. Osore)







Fukuura Fisherman's Kabuki, Sai

Day 6

Oma – Hakodate

Oma is famous all over the country as the source of "Oma tuna", regarded as the highest quality of Bluefin tuna.

In Oma we will board a tuna boat and head straight into the thick of battle, to catch the highly sought after prized Bluefin tuna. If lucky, we may have the chance to observe our hosts engage in a fight with these monstrous fish, which can weigh more than 200 kilograms. Fish this size can sell for millions of yen at auction.

-  **Accommodation:** Hotel.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.
-  **Total walking:** N/A.
-  **Total elevation gain:** N/A.



Oma







Tuna fishing boat, Oma

Day 7

Hakodate

Finally, if you hope to travel to another area in Hokkaido such as Otaru or Sapporo, the leader accompanying will help you to buy JR tickets.

-  **Accommodation:** N/A.
-  **Meals:** Breakfast provided.
-  **Total walking:** N/A.
-  **Total elevation gain:** N/A.


Note: There's a possibility that itinerary may be modified.



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 info@heartlandjapan.com

TOUR LEVELS

As the tours we offer at Heartland Japan focus on nature and the outdoors, there is some level of fitness required. Our itineraries provide a guide for the level of activity expected for each day.

We understand that each person is different, so what may be hard for one person may be easy for another, so we try to keep this guide at an average level. Other factors such as weather will also have an effect.

Our guides are locals and/or experienced in the areas of our tours, so please feel free to contact us directly for a more personalized opinion.

FITNESS LEVELS

- ★ You should be okay to carry your own luggage for up to an hour, and climb stairs. Most long distance travel will be by public transport or car.
- ★★ Additionally to level 1 requirements, you should be able to walk around 5km per day. Longer walks are over mostly flat ground, and range from 1 to 3 hours.
- ★★★ Additionally to level 1 requirements, you should be able to walk around 15-25km per day. Walks may include some hills, but not over extended periods of time. Walks range from 3 to 5 hours per day.
- ★★★★ Additionally to level 1 requirements, you should be able to walk around 15-25km per day. Walks will include some longer ascents and descents over hills. Walks range from 5 to 6 hours per day.
- ★★★★★ You should lead an active lifestyle with regular exercise. Walks over 6 hours per day, up to 25km per day should not be a problem, even when carrying your luggage. The path will include longer ascents and descents. Walks range from 6 to 8 hours per day.

SKILL LEVELS

- Walking on roads and stair climbing.
- Walking on well-made paths and flat earth surfaces.
- Walking on forest trails which may not be even surfaced. The use of walking poles or sticks is recommended.
- Walking mountain paths, which may include loose rocks. Walking poles and proper hiking shoes are recommended.
- Walking a full variety of paths, including over rocks and loose surfaces. Hiking boots and walking poles must be used.

Top: Yokobori Kagura, Namino, Aso. Right: Hagi-Okan.

