

# A journey along the Kisoji touring Japan Heritage sites

(\* The course path is an example. \* The required time is a guideline including the time required to travel by car.)

## Historic course tracing post towns along the Nakasendo (from here the northern Kiso Road)



The Nakasendo connecting Edo (nowadays Tokyo) and Kyoto was tied together by 69 post towns. Eleven of these towns flourished along the Kiso Road section and maintain the cobblestone roads and quaint towns will make you feel as if you have taken a trip back in time to the Edo Period.



## Tour of hinoki cypress forest and waterfalls of the gods



In the deep forest valley, you can hear the solemn sound of water echoing from the Kiyotaki and Shintaki Falls. In the Akasawa Natural Recreational Forest, where the idea of forest bathing originated, you can enjoy viewing beautiful hinoki cypress trees more than 300 years old and the forest railway.



## From the checkpoint post town to the home to Kisouma (horses)

Fukushima Sekiyo was one of the four major checkpoints along the highway. Fukushima-juku features storehouses with namako (lattice) walls and houses built in the gakeya-zukuri (cliffhanging) style. The Kaide Highlands spreading at the foot of the sacred Mt. Ontake are home to adorable Kisouma (horses), sure to soothe your soul.



## Visiting the post town and traditional crafts (from here the southern Kiso Road)

Pass over the Toritouge Pass that connects the Narai-juku and Yabuhara-juku along the Kiso Road section of the Nakasendo. The quaint post town and traditional Kiso lacquerware and wooden crafts make this journey even more enjoyable.



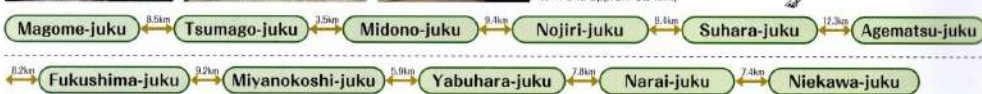
## Nakasendo Kiso 11 post towns - Walking journey



Why not take a leisurely stroll along the historic road that ties the 11 Kiso post towns. From the north or from the south, staying several nights to take a walking journey of the entire Road is quite popular in any season.



(The entire course of the 11 Kiso post towns is approx. 82 km.)



\*"Nakasendo walking guide map" Please inquire Kiso Tourist Federation.

## Kiso Area Cultural Heritage Revitalization Council

Information Secretariat: c/o Kiso Tourist Federation, Kiso Cultural Park, 4898-37 Hiyoshi, Kiso, Kiso-gun, Nagano Phone: 0264-23-1122 <http://www.kisoji.com/>

### Getting to Kiso

Mode	Route	Time
Train (JR)	Shinjuku → Shinjuku	.....3 hr 25 min
	Shinjuku → Nagoya	.....3 hr 20 min
	Nagoya → Shin Osaka	.....1 hr 23 min
	Shin Osaka → Shinjuku	.....2 hr 20 min
Car	Tokyo (Takaido I.C.) → Tokyo (Takaido I.C.)	.....3 hr 45 min
	Tokyo (Takaido I.C.) → Nagoya	.....3 hr 30 min
	Nagoya → Takayama	.....2 hr 10 min
	Nagoya → Takayama	.....2 hr 20 min
	Takayama → Shinjuku	.....1 hr 45 min
Express Bus	Shinjuku → Shinjuku	.....4 hr 10 min



日本遺産

# Japan Heritage THE KISO STORY

The Entire Kisoji is in the Mountains - Preserving the mountains, Living alongside the Mountains -





#### What is Japan Heritage?

Japan Heritage is something recognized by the Agency of Cultural Affairs as that which tells the story of Japan's culture and traditions through historic charm and characteristics rooted in an area. We aim to disseminate a comprehensive story both domestically and overseas and revitalize communities through the maintenance and use of the communities' various attractive tangible and intangible cultural assets.

# Japan Heritage The Kiso Story

## The Entire Kisoji is in the Mountains

- Preserving the mountains, Living alongside the Mountains -

In the Kiso area in southwestern Nagano Prefecture, the sacred mountain Mt. Ontake lies to the west and the magnificent Central Alps stand aloft to the east of the deep valley carved out by the Kiso River and the Kisoji section of Nakasendo.

The numerous overlapping mountains nurture the forests and water and remind us of Japan's original landscape, inheriting the profound history and unique culture and traditions.

### The Kiso Area and Wood Tax

Approximately 90% of the Kiso Valley is covered in forest, which means the limited arable land and cultivated crops were not sufficient to sustain the people of the area, and from the days of Hideyoshi Toyotomi, a wood tax was imposed in place of a rice tax. Rice was distributed to the people of the area and the plentiful forest resources supported life in Kiso.

### Strict Forest Preservation Policy

The precise grains of the Kiso-Hinoki cypress have been used preferentially in the building of temples and shrines from ancient times, and it has been used as the sacred wood for Ise Grand Shrine's Shikinen Sengu<sup>1</sup>.

The Kiso-Hinoki cypress was put into jeopardy in the early Edo Period when an enormous volume was cut down for use in



Akasawa Natural Recreational Forest

the building of castles, such as the Edo Castle, Sunpu Castle, Nagoya Castle and the castle towns. The Owari Domain, which had jurisdiction over the Kiso Valley, issued a mountain and forest conservation policy preventing logging of Kiso's Five Trees<sup>2</sup> including the Kiso-Hinoki cypress. The regulation, which stipulated "one cypress per head, one branch per arm," was a tough economic control for the people of the area who earned their livings from lumber.

### Promoting Local Industry

With the restriction on mountain logging, the people of Kiso were encouraged to develop and produce local products rooted in the local natural climate. An effort was made to promote industries such as wooden products like magemono (items made from bent wood), lacquerware, and Orokugushi (wooden combs) made from the gomenshiraki<sup>3</sup> wood provided by the domain, silk cultivation, and Hyakuso (medicines and herbs) made by the Mt. Ontake holy men, and other products that made use of local characteristics. The farmers promoted raising Kisouma (horses), a horse miniature in stature and with a gentle personality resulting in several thousand horses in the latter half of the Edo Period sold on the horse market and used for the transportation of agricultural products. These various locally produced products spread from Edo to Kyoto along the Kisoji (Kiso Road) supporting life in Kiso.



Kisouma (horses)



Orokugushi combs



Narai-juku (Post Town)



Kisoshiki Product

wood distributed by the Owari Domain was made into cypress items and lacquerware, and along with the lacquerware town of Kiso Hirasawa, the area developed into a region known for its wooden and lacquerware items.

Tsumago-juku (Post Town) at the southern foot of the Tsumago Castle ruins was the smallest of the 11 Kiso post towns, however many people were employed by taverns and local manufacturers, and the lathe-turned wooden crafts from woodworkers and Araragi cypress hats by farming women with gomenshiraki permits were commercialized and spread throughout the country.

### Religious Belief in Mt. Ontake and the Kisoji

During the middle of the Edo Period, there was a surge in the worship of Mt. Ontake and visitors came from all over the country. The tens of thousands of reijin<sup>4</sup> monuments<sup>4</sup> found along the roadside on the way up the mountain speak to the depth of the worshippers' faith. Exchange and trade in Kiso was further promoted by the people coming and going to Mt. Ontake, and the soba and herbal medicines worshippers carried with them became known throughout the country as local specialties to be found at the foot of Mt. Ontake.

### Revitalization of the Cypress, Succession of the Soul

In recent years, the forest railway that runs through the lush Kiso-Hinoki cypress foothills of Mt. Ontake making the Kiso-Hinoki cypress once again synonymous with Kiso and the local industries, such as the Kisouma (horses) and traditional crafts, are now famous throughout the country.

The literary great, Toson Shimazaki begins his novel, "Before the Dawn" with "the entire Kisoji is in the mountains," expressing how the people of the Kiso Valley, mountains and rivers, and along the road cultivated their own unique lifestyles and culture "Preserving the mountains, Living alongside the Mountains" Their desires to "conserve the forest," "preserve the road and post towns," and "leave their traditional crafts for the next generation" live on in the people of the region even today, and shall be carried on for future generations.



Mt. Ontake



Tsumago-juku (Post Town)

<sup>1</sup> Shikinen Sengu: The main inner and outer sanctuaries and pavilions are rebuilt and the deities are transferred to the new buildings.  
<sup>2</sup> Kiso's Five Trees: Hinoki cypress, Sawara cypress, Nezuco cypress, Asunaro cypress, and Japanese umbrella-pine  
<sup>3</sup> Gomenshiraki: Wood resources of semi-finished products made from split timber whose use was permitted.  
<sup>4</sup> Reijin' hi monument: A monument built after one's death with the desire to have one's spirit returned to Mt. Ontake.

# Japan Heritage Kiso Journey

Past the winding cobblestone ridges, along the deep valley, the Kisoji part of the Nakasendo ties together the 11 post towns in the mountain gorge. If you stop and listen, you can hear the footsteps of travelers coming and going between Edo and Kyoto. The houses with latticed doors connected by their eaves as if lined up shoulder-to-shoulder stand almost exactly as they did in the Edo Period. Why not take a leisurely walking journey down Kisoji?



**7 Toritouge Pass (Kiso Village) D-3**  
Ontake Shrine is located here as well as monuments featuring Basho Matsuo's poetry.



**8 Japanese horse chestnut trees at Toritouge Pass (Kiso Village) D-3**  
A forest of giant legendary Japanese horse chestnut trees and Basho poetry monuments stand here.



**9 Orokugushi combs technique (Kiso Village) D-3**  
It is said if you brush your hair with the legendary Orokugushi combs it can relieve headaches.



**10 Mizukizawa Natural Forest (Kiso Village) D-3**  
A nature preserve with hinoki cypress and Japanese horse chestnut trees more than 300 years old.



**1 Narai-juku (Post Town) (Shioiri City) E-3**  
The most prosperous post town along the Kiso Road and it remains nearly as it was in its heyday.



**2 Lacquerware Town of Kiso Hirasawa (Shioiri City) E-3**  
Craftsman of the Japanese traditional craft, Kiso Lacquerware can be found in this town.



**3 Magemono (Shioiri City) E-3**  
Soba and tea tools made from bending thin Kiso-Hinoki cypress boards.



**4 Nakamuras' Residence (Shioiri City) D-3**  
Typical machiya-style home from the Edo Period that belonged to a comb wholesaler.



**5 The place where sobakiri originated (Shioiri City/Motoyama-juku) E-2**  
In a famous book of poetry from the Edo Period, it is noted as the area where sobakiri originated.



**6 Kiso Lacquerware production tools & products (Shioiri City) E-3**  
The traditional techniques of this beautifully polished Kiso lacquerware have been passed down for generations.



Visiting the post town and traditional crafts (from here the southern Kiso Road)

From the checkpoint post town to the home to Kisouma (horses)

1  
2  
3  
4



**11 Kisuuma [horses] (Kiso Town-Nagiso Town) C-3**  
Precious native Japanese Kisuuma (horses) can be found at the "Kiso Uma-no-sato" in Kaida Highlands.



**13 Fukushima Sekisyo Museum (Kiso Town) D-4**  
One of the four checkpoints along the highway in the Edo Period.



**15 Mt.Ontake Reijin'hi Monuments (Kiso Town-Otaki Village) B-4-C-4**  
Monuments erected with the desire for one's soul to return to Mt.Ontake after death.



**17 Kiso-odori and Kisobushi (Kiso Town) D-4**  
The dance is in offering to Yoshinaka and the Kisobushi is a traditional folk song that sings of the area's river loggers.



**19 Takase Museum (Kiso Town) D-4**  
The home where literary legend, Toson Shimazaki's elder sister, Sono lived and served as checkpoint guard.



**20 Kiyotaki Falls (Otaki Village) C-4**  
A sacred waterfall for cleansing the mind and body before climbing Mt. Ontake.



**12 Yamamura Daikan Yashiki Museum (Kiso Town) D-4**  
The estate of the Yamamura family, the local magistrate who promoted local industry in the Kiso Valley.



**14 Yamashitas' Residence (Kiso Town) C-3**  
The Honmune-style home of the Yamashita family, owner of many Kisuuma (horses).



**16 Rapposho Festival (Kiso Town) D-4**  
Children parade with torches and visit the grave of Yoshinaka Kiso.



**30 Tsumago-juku [Post Town] (Nagiso Town) C-6**  
A post town symbolic of the Kiso Road and still maintaining an atmosphere of the Edo Period.



**31 Hayashi's Residence (Nagiso Town) C-6**  
A large estate once belonging to the Tsumago-juku (Post Town) waki-honjin proprietor and wholesale dealer.



**32 Historic Road (Nagiso Town) C-6**  
The former condition of the Nakasendo, like the cobblestone road, remain intact today.



**33 Tsumago Castle ruins (Nagiso Town) C-6**  
Castle ruins that look down upon Tsumago Post Town, built in the Warring States Period.



**34 Joshoji Temple (Main hall, priest's quarters, gate) (Okuwa Village) D-5**  
The temple in Suhara Post Town where ancient documents archiving soba-kiri have been found.



**35 Aterakeikoku Ravine (Okuwa Village) C-5**  
Kiso's Five Tree forest, the gorge is beautiful with its emerald green waters.



**22 Hyakuso Monument (Otaki Village) C-4**  
"Holy medicine" passed down through the invention and integrity of the first practitioner at Mt. Ontake.



**34 Ichikokutochi-tateba-chaya (Nagiso Town) C-7**  
A tea house that flourished as a resting place for travelers along the highway.



**35 Nagiso Rokuro crafts (Nagiso Town) D-7**  
A traditional technique where wooden items are shaped with a plane while being turned on a lathe.



**36 Araragi Cypress hats (Nagiso Town) C-6**  
Handwoven rain hats made by women weaving thin strips of hinoki cypress.



**37 Soba**  
Soba is the local specialty of the Kiso Valley, said to be where soba-kiri first began.



**38 Sunki-zuke pickles**  
Pickles unique to the Kiso Valley, made with lactic acid and without salt from turnip leaves.



**Kiso wooden crafts**  
Local Kiso products that utilize the characteristics and beauty of each of the hinoki, sawara, and koyamaki cypresses.



**28 Kiso Forest Railway (Otaki Village-Agematsu Town) C-5**  
With rails throught out the Kiso Valley, it helped the timber industry make dramatic progress.



**26 Kisonokakehashi Cliff Bridge (Agematsu Town) D-4**  
One of the Kiso's eight scenic sights. Monuments featuring Matsuo Basho poetry can be found here.



**27 Hakusan Shrine (Okuwa Village) C-5**  
Built in 1334, it is the oldest remaining shrine building in Nagano.



**24 Nezamenotoko Gorge (Agematsu Town) D-5**  
One of the Kiso's eight scenic sights. It is famous for the beauty of the gorge and the legend of Urashima Taro.



**26 Akasawa Natural Recreational Forest (Agematsu Town) C-5**  
A forest of natural Kiso-Hinoki cypress trees where the idea of forest bathing originated. A forest railway runs through here.