



**APPALACHIAN
MOUNTAIN CLUB**
SINCE 1876

**Walking Japan's Spiritual Landscapes;
Kumano Kodo & Nakasendo Trails**

**November 1-14, 2027
Trip #2732**



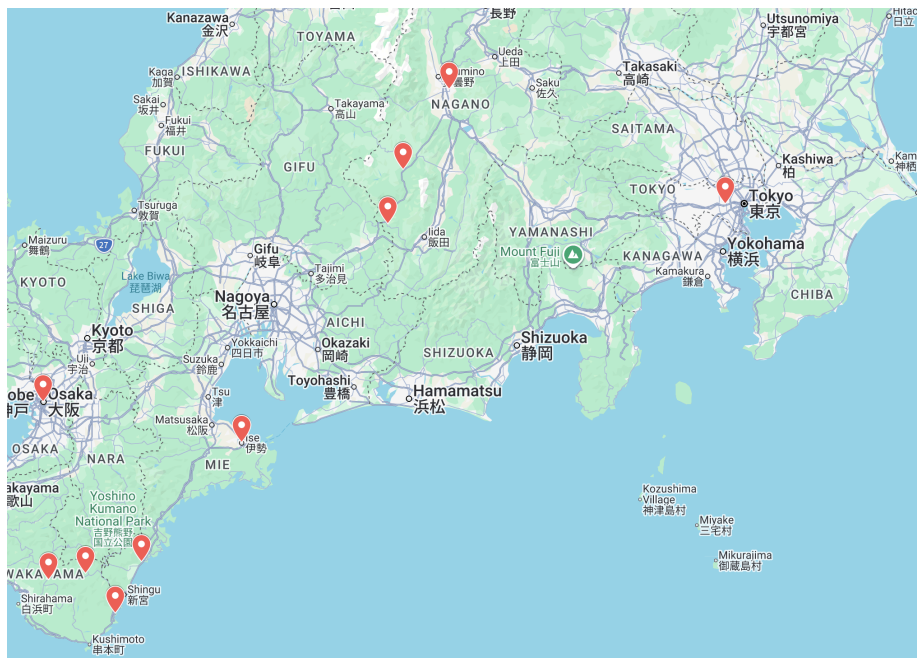
Seiganto-ji Temple photo by Oku Japan

Trip Overview

Experience Japan in its most authentic form on an immersive journey that blends legendary hiking routes, deep cultural connection, and breathtaking landscapes. Begin in Osaka with a warm welcome before setting out on the sacred **Kumano Kodo**, walking ancient pilgrimage trails through tranquil forests, timeless villages, and powerful spiritual sites. Hike coastal paths and mountain trails past waterfalls, cliffs, and shrines, and gain rare insight into local traditions, including encounters that reveal the spiritual heart of the region. The Kumano Kodo is the sister pilgrimage trek to the Camino del Santiago de Compostela and there is a dual pilgrim ceremony for those who have completed both Camino walks.

Continue through historic valleys and preserved post towns of the **Nakasendo Trail**, following centuries-old routes once traveled by samurai, merchants and pilgrims. The journey concludes in Tokyo, where serene gardens and a traditional tea ceremony offer balance to the city's vibrant energy. This is a richly layered adventure—designed for travelers who want meaningful miles, cultural depth, and a truly unforgettable experience of Japan.

Map of Accommodations and Sites of Interest



Trip Difficulty

This trip is rated Moderate (#4).

This trip features consecutive days of challenging trail walking, with hikes of six hours or more and significant ascents and/or descents. Elevation and distance are listed below each day's itinerary.

AMC Trip Rating System: [Ratings](#)

Daily Itinerary

November 1 Day 1 – Meet in Osaka and Welcome Dinner

Arrive in Osaka and make your way to the centrally located hotel. In the evening, meet our guide and fellow group members in the hotel lobby, followed by a welcome dinner at a local restaurant in the city.

Meals: Welcome Dinner

Accommodation: Hankyu Gran Respire Osaka hotel or similar

November 2 Day 2 – Travel to Kumano Kodo & Walk from Takijiri to Takahara

Today, we will travel south by train and local bus to Takijiri, the gateway to the Nakahechi route, a historic path within the renowned Kumano Kodo pilgrimage network. From Takijiri, begin your hike along the Nakahechi trail, gradually ascending to the ridge-top village of Takahara. The walk takes around two hours and offers scenic views along the way. This evening, relax in a unique, green tourism farm and enjoy a dinner highlighting a rich selection of slow food, with locally sourced ingredients.



Takahara photo by Oku Japan

Walking distance: 4.5km / 2.8 miles

Elevation gain: 370m / 1,200 feet of ascent and 175m / 575 feet of descent. About 2 hours

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Akizuno Garten, a unique community property

November 3 Day 3 – Walk from Takahara to Chikatsuyu



Yunomine Onsen photo by Oku Japan

After an early Japanese-style breakfast, we set out on the trail, hiking through tranquil villages and rolling countryside dotted with historic Oji shrines. Stone-paved paths guide us through the steeper sections as we descend into Chikatsuyu. From there, we transfer to Yunomine Onsen, one of Kumano's legendary hot spring villages, where healing waters offer the perfect reward after a day on the trail.

Walking distance: 10km / 6.5 miles

Elevation gain: 480m / 1,575 feet of ascent and 520m / 1,700 feet of descent. About 4 – 5 hours

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner *(lunch will be a bento box)

Accommodation: Yunomine Onsen, Yunomineso or similar

November 4 Day 4 – Hike with *Yamabushi* from Hosshinmon-Oji to Hongu Grand Shrine (Forest Bathing)

From Chikatsuyu, we travel by local bus to Hosshinmon-Oji. We then walk a gentle section of the trail to the Kumano shrine at Hongu, one of the three 'Grand Shrines of Kumano.' At the heart of these sacred mountains, Kumano was said to be the entrance to the land of Yomi, the 'other world' which spirits travelled to in Japanese mythology. On our walk, we'll be accompanied by one of the few female yamabushi, or mountain ascetic priests. We'll learn more about the training of yamabushi and the shugendo faith. We will enjoy time for a forest bathing experience on the way. After visiting the



Hongu Shrine photo by Sue Christopherson

Kumano shrine at Hongu, with time permitting, we will walk the Dainichigoe to take us to Yunomine Onsen and our accommodation for the night or travel by local bus.

Walking distance Hosshinmon Oji to Hongu: 7 km / 4 miles

Elevation gain: 120m / 395 feet of ascent and 360m / 1,180 feet of descent. About 2.5 hours

Optional Walking distance Dainichigoe: 2.8 km / 1.7 miles

Elevation gain: 260m / 855 feet of ascent and 205m / 670 feet of descent. About 1.5 – 2 hours

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner *(lunch will be a bento box)

Accommodation: Yunomine Onsen, Yunomineso or similar

November 5 Day 5 – Hike from Koguchi to Nachi Grand Shrine

After an early breakfast, we will travel by taxi to the remote mountain village of Koguchi, where today's walk begins. We hike over the scenic Ogumotori-goe Pass, enjoying sweeping views. From the pass, we descend through forested trails to the spectacular Nachi Falls and the revered Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine, one of the three sacred Grand Shrines of Kumano. We then travel by local bus to our accommodation for the night in Kii-Katsuura, beautifully located along the coast. The hotel features relaxing hot spring baths and ocean views.

Walking distance: 14.8 km / 9.2 miles 6 hours

Elevation gain: 1,120m / 3,670 feet of ascent and 850m / 2,790 feet of descent

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner *(lunch will be a bento box)

Accommodation: Kyukamura Nanki-Katsuura or similar

November 6 Day 6 – Boat Ride on the Kumano River, Visit Shingu and Walk Onigajo

This morning, we will travel by private vehicle to the Kumano River and board a traditional wooden boat for a serene journey downstream, retracing the path of ancient imperial pilgrims. Arriving at Hayatama Taisha, one of Kumano's three grand shrines, we explore its sacred grounds before setting out on the Iseji Route of the Kumano Kodo. Our walk takes us over Matsumoto Pass, a historic mountain crossing once traveled by devoted pilgrims. We finish at Onigajō, where dramatic, wave-carved rock formations create one of Japan's most striking natural landscapes.

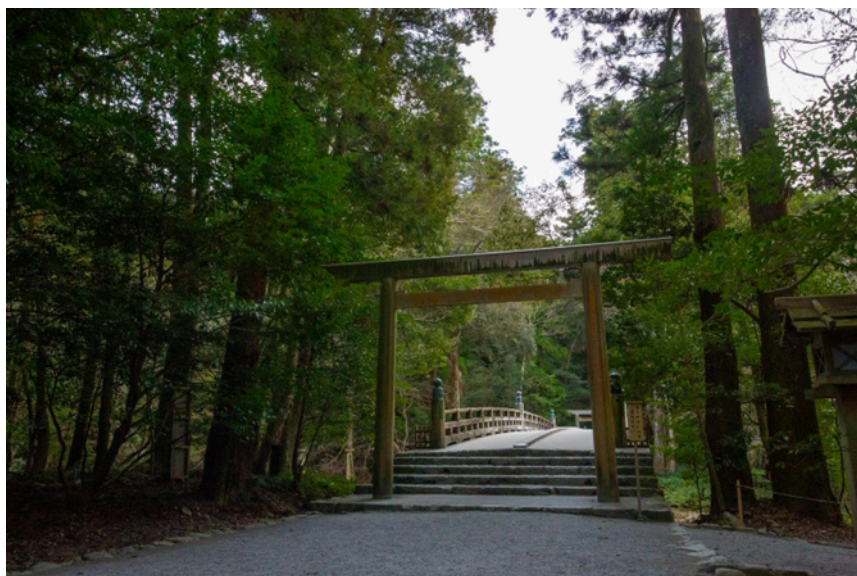
Walking distance: 4.1 km / 2.5 miles 2 hours

Elevation gain: 155 m / 508 ft of ascent and 155 m / 508 ft of descent

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Umihikari, Kumano city (hot springs hotel) or similar

November 7 Day 7 –Travel to Ise, visit Ise Shrine



Ise Shrine photo by Oku Japan

This morning, we will travel by train to Ise, home to Shinto's most sacred shrine. Set beneath towering cedar trees, Ise Shrine has been revered for over 2,000 years and is uniquely rebuilt every 20 years, symbolizing renewal and continuity. We will visit both the Outer Shrine and the Inner Shrine. Ise Shrine consists of two main areas: the Outer Shrine (Geku), dedicated to the goddess of food, clothing, and shelter; and the Inner Shrine (Naiku),

dedicated to Amaterasu-Omikami, the sun goddess and ancestral deity of the Japanese imperial line as well as the Japanese people. Visitors often notice the unique blend of ancient tradition and renewal here. These shrines are separated from the everyday world by torii gates. Visitors can offer prayers of gratitude from outside, as entry into the shrine buildings is restricted to preserve their purity. After exploring the shrine grounds, we continue to Ise city, where we will spend the night.

Walking distance: 2.9 km / 1.8 miles 1-2 hours

Elevation gain: Minimal

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Ise, Sen no Mori or similar

November 8 Day 8 – Travel to Kiso Valley, Hike the Nakasendo Trail from Ochiai to Magome

Today we will travel by train to Nakatsugawa, then take a bus to Ochiai and embark on our first hike along the historic Nakasendo Trail. Walk a paved section of the Nakasendo with traditional *ishidatami* stones, then explore the post town of Magome. This is one of many small towns where travelers could find accommodation and food while journeying between Kyoto and Edo (the former name of Tokyo). Tonight, stay at a hot spring resort hotel, nestled in a naturally scenic area at the foot of Mount Ena, right by the river. The hotel features indoor and outdoor onsen baths, separated by gender.

Walking distance: 8.3 km / 5.2 miles 3 hours

Elevation Gain: 326 m / 1,069 ft of ascent and 430 m / 1,410 ft of descent

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Accommodation: Nakatsugawa, Hotel Hanasarasa or similar

November 9 Day 9 – Hike the Nakasendo Trail from Magome to Tsumago



Magome photo by Oku Japan

This morning, we will take a short local bus ride to Magome, where we wander stone-paved streets lined with historic inns, traditional homes, and artisan shops. After pausing at a scenic viewpoint overlooking the valley, we set out on a classic hike through forested trails, quiet hamlets, and shrines to Magome-tōge Pass. We will then descend through bamboo groves, waterfalls, and riverside paths into the beautifully preserved post town of Tsumago. Enjoy free time to explore its 400-year-old streets, sample local specialties like gohei mochi, and soak in the atmosphere. A short walk leads us to O-Tsumago, where we settle in for the night.

Walking distance: 4.5 km / 2.7 miles 1.5 hours

Elevation Gain: 299 m / 980 ft of ascent and 49 m / 160 ft of descent

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: O-Tsumago, Tsutamuraya or similar

November 10 Day 10 – Hike Nakasendo Trail from Nagiso to Nojiri



Nakasendo Trail photo by Oku Japan

Today is the longest day on the Nakasendo Trail, offering a scenic and varied hike from Nagiso to Nojiri. The trail passes through tranquil valleys, bamboo groves, and forests of Japanese cedar, providing some of the most pristine landscapes of our journey. After arriving in Nojiri, the group will board the train to Kiso-Fukushima, where we stay overnight at a traditional inn. In the evening, we enjoy a cultural activity at the inn, offering a hands-on glimpse into local traditions.

Walking distance: 14.5 km / 9 miles 5 hours

Elevation gain: 630 m / 2,075 feet of ascent and 515 m / 1,685 feet of descent

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Kiso-Fukushima, Tsutaya or similar

November 11 Day 11 – Hike Nakasendo Trail from Yabuhara to Narai, Transfer to Matsumoto.

This morning, we will enjoy exploring the historic checkpoint in Kiso-Fukushima before a short train ride to Yabuhara, where our hike begins over the scenic Torii-tōge Pass. Steeped in legend, this mountain pass is marked by a torii gate built after a samurai victory in the 15th century, adding a powerful sense of history to the trail. We hike into Narai, once a thriving post town, wandering its beautifully preserved streets and traditional wooden buildings.

In the evening, we travel to Matsumoto and unwind at a traditional ryokan in Utsukushigahara Onsen, soaking in natural hot springs that have eased travelers' bodies since the Nara period between the years 710-794—the perfect reward after a memorable day on the trail.

Walking distance: 6.2 km / 3.9 miles 3 hours

Elevation Gain: 344 m / 1,128 ft of ascent and 270 m / 885 ft descent

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Matsumoto, Ryokan Sugimoto or similar

November 12 Day 12 – Sightseeing in Matsumoto and Onward Travel to Tokyo

Today we explore the storybook town of Matsumoto, known for its soba noodles, crisp apples, and striking Matsumoto Castle, one of Japan's most iconic fortresses. We then visit a sixth-generation miso brewery, where time-honored methods produce small-batch miso aged three years, rich in flavor and tradition. After enjoying a miso-inspired lunch, we will travel by train to Tokyo.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Tokyo hotel or similar



Matsumoto Castle photo by Oku Japan

November 13 Day 13 – Tokyo Sightseeing, Tea Ceremony & Farewell Dinner

Today we will dive into the energy and traditions of Tokyo, beginning at Sensoji Temple, the city's oldest and most atmospheric landmark. You'll experience a traditional tea ceremony, savoring the elegance and ritual of this timeless practice. Then we will explore Kappabashi, Tokyo's famous street known for kitchenware and culinary souvenirs. Both experiences are accompanied by our guide. To keep the experience personal, the group will split and rotate, so everyone enjoys both activities. After free time for lunch, we visit the Tokyo National Museum to discover Japan's artistic and cultural heritage. In the evening, we gather for a memorable farewell dinner, celebrating our journey and the connections made along the way.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Tokyo hotel or similar

November 14 Day 14 – Tour ends

After breakfast, our adventure will end. We will be available for any further travel assistance.

Meals: Breakfast



Tokyo Tower photo by Sue Christopherson

Accommodations, Meals and Transportation

The following types of accommodation are part of this trip:

Hotel (Osaka, Kumano, Kii-Katsuura, Nakatsugawa, Tokyo)

In Osaka and Tokyo, we stay in modern Western-style hotels. While these hotels often feature rooms that are small by Western standards, all rooms have en-suite facilities, air-conditioning, and a TV. Most rooms also have small refrigerators. The hotel in Kii-Katsuura is a mix of Western and Japanese-style and we stay in Japanese-style rooms. They feature gender-segregated public onsen baths.

Ryokan and minshuku (Takahara, Yunomine Onsen, O-Tsumago, Kiso-Fukushima, Utsukushigahara Onsen, Ise)

Ryokan and minshuku are traditional Japanese-style inns. While they may look like modern concrete or older wooden buildings from the outside, the rooms are always Japanese style with straw *tatami* mat

floors and futon laid out in the evening for sleeping. Some accommodations offer en-suite bathrooms, although most buildings generally provide shared facilities. Smaller inns offer bathing tubs used privately in turn by guests; bigger inns offer larger communal baths, segregated by gender. The onsen bathing culture is a classic experience in Japan which involves etiquette around cleansing and bathing in the nude. Oku Japan, our outfitter, will send everyone detailed instructions about these rituals.

Meals



Most meals will be Japanese cuisine. Vegetarian options are available, but they are limited. Strict vegetarian diets, vegan diets, or gluten free diets may not be possible due to the pervasiveness of the fish-based stock dashi and the use of soy sauce and miso in Japanese cuisine. Guests with dietary limitations will have more limited dining choices, and we recommend that guests with dietary limitations bring snacks.

Ekiben (Railway BentoBox) photo by Sue Christopherson

Summary of Daily Itinerary Table

Day	Activity	Overnight	Meals
1	Meet in Osaka & welcome dinner	Osaka (Western-style hotel)	D
2	Travel to Kumano Kodo, walk from Takijiri to Takahara	Takahara (Japanese lodge)	B, D
3	Walk from Takahara to Chikatsuyu	Yunomine Onsen (hot springs ryokan)	B, L, D
4	Walk with <i>Yamabushi</i> from Hosshinmon Oji to Hongu Grand Shrine - Forest Bathing.	Yunomine Onsen (hot springs ryokan)	B, L, D
5	Walk from Koguchi to Mount Nachi, visit Nachi Falls	Kii-Katsuura (hot springs hotel)	B, L, D
6	Boatride and visit Shingu, travel to Kumano, walk around Onigajo	Kumano city (hot springs hotel)	B, D
7	Travel to Ise and visit Grand Ise shrine	Ise (hot springs ryokan)	B, D
8	Travel to Kiso Valley, walk the Nakasendo Trail from Ochiai to Magome	Nakatsugawa (hot springs hotel)	B, L, D
9	Nakasendo Trail from Magome to Tsumago	O-Tsumago (minshuku)	B, D
10	Nakasendo Trail from O-Tsumago to Nojiri	Kiso-Fukushima (hot springs ryokan)	B, D
11	Nakasendo Trail over the Torii-toge Pass to Narai, transfer to Matsumoto	Utsukushigahara Onsen/Matsumoto (ryokan)	B, D
12	Sightseeing in Matsumoto and onward travel to Tokyo	Tokyo (Western-style hotel)	B, L
13	Tokyo sightseeing, Tea ceremony & Farewell dinner	Tokyo (Western-style hotel)	B, D
14	Tour ends		B

Weather

Early November in Osaka and Tokyo brings mild, comfortable autumn weather that's ideal for walking, hiking and sightseeing. Daytime temperatures typically range from **18–24°C (64–75°F)**, with cooler evenings around **14–16°C (57–61°F)**. Humidity is low, rainfall is lighter than earlier in the fall, and the air feels crisp and pleasant. Overall, it's one of the best times of year to be outdoors and explore Japan's cities and cultural sites.

Trip Price

The AMC Member price is \$7995.00. The non-member price is \$8095.00. To join the AMC - (\$50 individual, \$75 family) click [here](#).

Included in the tour cost

- Accommodation in hotels and Japanese-style inns (ryokan and minshuku)
- Meals as marked in the table above and in each day's itinerary. 1 drink with welcome and farewell dinner; 13 Breakfasts, 5 Lunches, 12 Dinners.
- Transportation between tour locations; this will normally be by train (bullet trains, limited express trains and local trains), bus, and taxi. On Day 4 and 6 we will travel in 2 vans hired by Oku Japan.

- Full-time services of an English-speaking tour guide
- AMC provided evacuation insurance
- Entrance fees for museums, temples, and other sights in the itinerary
- Luggage transfer of one bag during hike days.

Not included in the tour cost

- Flights to and from Japan
- Airport transfers
- Additional Travel Insurance - highly recommended
- Meals not included in the table above
- Drinks, snacks, and other food items that are not included in the set meals
- Miscellaneous items that are purchased independently
- Optional taxi ride for those preferring a shorter hike on Day 5
- Some entrance fees to museums, temples etc. not included in the itinerary

Participant Expectations

This is a shared group experience, and while we spend many hours together, there will also be time for personal space and individual exploration. We kindly ask that everyone contributes positively to the group dynamic and helps create an enjoyable and supportive atmosphere for all. Japan has a rich culture rooted in respect and consideration for others; we will be guided through important cultural customs, and we ask that participants approach them with openness, mindfulness, and a spirit of appreciation as gracious guests in the country. A complete packing list will be included in the first newsletter.

Application Process

We expect a group size of 12 people, plus the 2 leaders. This trip is likely to be filled quickly. To register for the trip, please use our online application. [Application to join AMC AT Walking Japan's Spiritual Landscapes 27XX – Fill out form](#)

After you fill out the online application, mail a deposit check for \$3500.00 payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club to:

Sue Christopherson, 29 Old Pine Island Road, Newbury, MA 01951.

The balance of \$4495.00 is due March 15, 2027.

Your check will not be deposited, and you will not be accepted on the trip until the leaders have determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good fit.

Terms, Conditions and General Information

Until the trip is confirmed to run on schedule, you may cancel with a full refund of your trip deposit. Please review the full AMC-AT cancellation policy found in this document: [AMC Adventure Travel Standard Terms and Conditions](#). By applying for this trip, you agree to the provisions of the AMC-AT Terms & Conditions, including that you have read and understand the stated [Trip Cancellation Policy](#). You are welcome to contact the leaders with any questions you have about this policy before you submit your application.

Trip Leaders



Sue is a psychologist who has led mindfulness-based retreats in wilderness settings. She is certified by the School of Outdoor Mindful Leadership at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. As an avid hiker and cyclist, she has traveled throughout Europe, the US, and parts of Asia. She has led many weekend hiking and cycling trips with the AMC Boston Chapter since 2019 and has led hiking/mindfulness trips to Costa Rica as well as cycling and hiking trips to Tuscany and Puglia, Italy with AMC's Adventure Travel.

Sue Christopherson chrstphrsn9@gmail.com



Dee is an Adventure Travel Leader who has led trips in Glacier National Park, Baja Mexico, Spain, Morocco, Nepal, Croatia and a two-week hiking trip to Austria. She has been leading hikes, weekend trips, and paddling trips with the AMC Western Mass and Worcester Chapters since 2018. Her passion is hiking and kayaking which has taken her around the world, traveling extensively to Nepal, New Zealand, South America, and Europe.

Dee Dice deedice29@gmail.com