



KUMANO KODO 'NAKAHECHI' ADVENTURE

Guided walk along the Nakahechi pilgrimage route

9 days | 8 nights

OVERVIEW

Journey to the southern region of Japans Kii Peninsula, an ancient and mysterious land where pilgrimage and spiritual training has occurred for centuries.

You will walk every step (literally) of the pilgrimage trail from Takijiri-oji, into the mountains and on to Daimon-zaka. This unique journey is ideal if you want to walk all of this Kumano Kodo Nakahechi Route without skipping a single step. Hiking the entire Main Trail, plus linking Akagi-goe, Kogumotori-goe, and Ogumotori-goe sacred trails, an adventure over 80km. Ideal for completionists.

This fully guided walking journey takes you to all 3 Grand Shrines of Kumano, Hongu Taisha, Nachi Taisha and Hayatama Taisha. You will also visit ancient sacred sites including Gotobiki-iwa boulder and Oyunohara, with its Torii Gate standing 34m tall, it's the largest in the world.

Enjoy walking with just a daypack and have your main luggage transferred daily to your overnight accommodation. At each mountain village you will stay in varying traditional-style accommodation, dine on lovingly prepared meals, and soak in onsens.

Dual Pilgrims and adventure seekers, come with us and immerse yourself in 1000 years of Japanese culture and history.

DETAILS

- Type: Challenge Trek Guided
- Adventure: Kumano Kodo 'Nakahechi' Adventure
- Destination: Kii Peninsula, Japan
- Group Size: Max 10 plus leaders

ITINERARY

Day 1 | Welcome to Tanabe

Welcome to Japan and the beautiful autumn colour that awaits. Your Kumano Kodo 'Nakahechi' Adventure begins today.

If travelling with our Big Heart Adventures leader from Australia, you will travel from Osaka Kansai Airport by train to Tanabe. If travelling separately, we can assist you in coordinating any plane and train transport you require pre-tour.

This afternoon we provide a casual walking tour including Tanabe's beach and main streets before checking into your overnight accommodation. Your accommodation is located only a short walk from Kii-Tanabe Station. Tonight we enjoy dinner together at a local restaurant nearby in the Ajikoji district.

Meals Included: Dinner
Walking Distance: n/a

BIG HEART ADVENTURES
more than just a trek...

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Day 2 | Takijiri-oji to Takahara

This morning we send our main luggage ahead and travel by bus to the Nakahechi trailhead behind Takijiri-oji. Following lunch we take the passage into the sacred mountains and hike 4km to the Takahara Village and its panoramic views of the Hatenashi mountain range.

We start the Main Trail at an altitude of 100m above sea level. We climb steeply to 400m through native and planted forest, passing an outcrop of large boulders and a cave called Tainai-kuguri, where you can test your faith by crawling through the narrow void. Our accommodation tonight is at a beautiful ridge-top lodge.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Walking Distance: 4km

Day 3 | Takahara to Chikatsuyu

After breakfast we collect our pack lunch and if able, we visit a nearby local craftsman and woodworking shop.

Then its time to get back on the Main Trail, up into the mountains and on to Hiki-gawa River. Today's walk has some steep inclines and downhill slopes on uneven terrain as we follow the trail from Takahara. We climb the Hashiori-toge Pass where the small Gyuba-doji statue is located. This statue shows Kazan, one of the first abdicated emperors to pilgrimage to Kumano, sitting on a horse and cow. Also, there is an optional steep side trip to the site of the legendary Three-Fold Moon before arriving at your overnight accommodation.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Walking Distance: 10km

Day 4 | Chikatsuyu to Hosshinmon-oji

A big day of hiking is front of us as we make our way towards Hongu. Your days trek begins on paved roads between Chikatsuyu village and Kobiro-oji, before entering the forest. We climb and descend a series of passes along the Main Trail, and follow some semi-permanent detours. Along a small stream we trek to a statue of Jagata Jizo, this statue is said to protect you from evil fatigue-inducing spirits.

It's packs down upon reaching Hosshinmon-oji, the outermost entrance to Hongu Taisha's sacred precinct. From here we board the local bus and travel to our accommodation in Yunomine Onsen, a 40 minute scenic drive. If time permits we will boil some eggs in the naturally heated waters at Yuzutsu.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Walking Distance: 18km

Day 5 | Yunomine Onsen to Hongu via Hosshinmon-oji

You wake up having relaxed and bathed at Yunomine Onsen overnight, ready to trek to Kumano Hongu Taisha today.

From your accommodation we trek back to Hosshinmon-oji along the Nakahechi 'Akagi-goe' Trail. This 6km trail links Yunomine Onsen to the Main Trail and is an integral part of the 1000 year old Kumano pilgrimage tradition. Past pilgrims performed purification rituals in the piping hot mineral waters at Yunomine Onsen in preparation to worship at Kumano Hongu Taisha.

Joining the Main Route at Hosshinmon-oji our trek downhill to Hongu is a mixture of forest trails and isolated mountaintop villages with panoramic views. Just before reaching our day's destination we take a side trail for your first view of ancient Oyunohara and the majestic giant Torii gateway.

Here in Hongu you will receive your Dual Pilgrimage Certificate if you have completed the Camino in Spain and this section of the Kumano Kodo. Please let us know if you are eligible so that we can make prior arrangements before travel.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Walking Distance: 16km

Day 6 | Hongu to Koguchi

Its a 15 minute local bus ride back to Hongu first thing this morning. For Dual Pilgrims a drum ceremony will be arranged for you at the Taisha. Our journey continues down to the giant Torii Gate, gateway to Oyunohara. This sacred precinct is rich in history and a place to reflect. You have now trekked the entire Main Trail and Akagi-goe Trail sections of the Nakahechi Route. Next is the Nakahechi Kogumotori-goe Trail.

Starting at Oyunohara Torii Gate we walk to Ukegawa following the mighty Kumano-gawa River. Then it's into forested mountains, climbing and descending over passes as we begin our two day hike to Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine. At the highest point of the trail today you are welcomed with beautiful panoramic views of the 3600 peaks of Kumano.

Your accommodation tonight is downhill at Koguchi nestled in a valley by the Akagi-gawa River.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Walking Distance: 17km

Day 7 | Koguchi to Nachisan

Today we journey to the Nachi-no-Otaki waterfall in Nachisan. This final section of forest trail is regarded as the most challenging along the Nakahechi Route and involves multiple passes at an altitude above 800m. Named Ogumotori-goe, today's trail is less travelled due to its demanding nature, but the beautiful landscape and views make for a spectacular walk.

Entering Nachisans sacred precinct we have time to explore before completing our days trek at Nachi-no-Otaki. This worshipped



waterfall is the tallest in Japan with a drop 133m high and a crest 13m wide. It creates the perfect backdrop to a spectacular day of trekking. From here it's a short walk to our accommodation for the evening.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Walking Distance: 15km

Day 8 | Shingu and return to Tanabe

Nachisan is a spiritual and picturesque village, with the Three-storied Pagoda, waterfall and mountains as it's backdrop. Waking up here allows you an opportunity to visit the Kumano Nachi Taisha sacred precinct at sunrise before returning to your accommodation for breakfast.

This morning we continue our trek together to the lower valley. This small section of trail known as Daimon-zaka, is an ancient cobblestone staircase lined with centuries-old trees. It's a spectacular walk and at it's base you are framed by huge 'husband and wife' cedar trees. Having walked every step from Takijiri-oji to here is a great achievement and enjoyed by only a small number of Kumano Kodo walkers these days. It's at the lower valley where we board a local bus for our short drive to Shingu. Here, we walk to Gotobiki Iwa boulder, said to be the site where the Kumano deities first descended. An ancient stone staircase takes you to this sacred place with panoramic views over the Pacific Ocean. Then we walk to the 3rd Grand Shrine, Hayatama Taisha, to complete the Kumano Sanzan.

After enjoying lunch together at a little eatery, or you may choose takeaway, we board our train and travel back to Kii-Tanabe station. This afternoon we say goodbye to our local guide, and relax at our accommodation.

Meals Included: Breakfast
Walking Distance: 5km

Day 9 | Farewells and departures

Following breakfast we say our goodbyes and best wishes for ongoing journeys. Your Kumano Kodo 'Nakahechi' Adventure tour ends here in Tanabe.

If travelling to Australia, you can travel to Osaka Kansai Airport by train with our Big Heart Adventures leader.

Meals Included: Breakfast
Walking Distance: n/a

INCLUSIONS

Travel

Luggage transfers daily to accommodation (1 bag per person)
Train from Shingu Station to Kii-Tanabe Station on day 8

Meals

All meals and snacks as per the itinerary
B x 8 | L x 6 | D x 7

Accommodation

2 nights 'Western Style' room in Tanabe on first and last night
6 nights 'Japanese Style' twin share while on the trail
(Accommodation will change based on each days finishing location)
An Onsen (Japanese bath) is offered at each night's accommodation

Activities

Professionally guided and walking every step along the Kumano Kodo Nakahechi route
Visit the Kumano Sanzan (all 3 Great Shrines)
Gotobiki Iwa boulder
Daimon-zaka staircase
Nachi-no-Otaki waterfall
Oyunohara Torii Gate
Drum ceremony for Dual Pilgrims
Nature connection activities on trail

Safety

2 Guides – our local guide (bilingual) and a leader from Australia
Group First Aid kit and emergency communication device
Leaders certified in Remote Area/Wilderness First Aid
Qualified Bushwalking Leaders

Environmental

Small group guided experience
Leave No Trace principles
Invitations to connect with nature
Reduce waste through recycling, reusing and composting
Park entry fees

Big Heart Extras

Big Heart Adventures designed ioMerino hiking top
Big Heart Adventures designed head sock
Big Heart Adventures journal
Guided pre-departure training walks and or program (trip specific)
Discount card for pre-departure purchases at Exurbia
A charity contribution to our Give Back program

EXCLUSIONS

- International and domestic flights
- Travel arrangements to the start and from the end of the tour
- Local bus tickets during the tour (budget AUD\$35)
- Comprehensive Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Meals and drinks not stated on itinerary
- Items of a personal nature

FITNESS REQUIREMENT

- A good level of fitness is required to walk the trails on this trip
- You will be walking pack free (day packs only)
- You will walk on a variety of surfaces on undulating trails including some steep inclines/declines and rocky trail
- Our longest walking day is 18km and we walk 7 consecutive days on this adventure
- Trail rating: Moderate

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Eligible Past Traveller Discount applies if you've travelled with us on any of our guided tours which were 5 days duration or longer
- Read terms and conditions before booking
- Itinerary and price subject to change at any time
- Travel Insurance is recommended. Get a quote from Covermore or Go Insurance
- Note weather, group member welfare and a range of circumstances outside our control can mean last minute changes to our itinerary are necessary once on tour. Detours may be in place
- A very limited number of single rooms are available on a first-come basis. Single rooms are not available for night 3
- Please contact us before booking any flights. Depending on flight arrival and departure times extra nights accommodation may be required at own expense
- A minimum number of travellers are required for this trip to depart so ask someone to join you. If minimum numbers aren't reached, we may decide to still go or we will provide a full refund
- Rooming is twin share on the trail
- Japanese style accommodation and food is traditional on the Kumano Kodo. Sleeping upon futons placed on the floor and a variety of cuisines is offered exclusively for the region. Not all dietary requests may be catered for and must be declared at the time of booking. Please note that dietary requirements

cannot be added while travelling on this tour

- If you have additional needs please connect with us, we're committed to being inclusive and accessible

ADVENTURE LEADERS

Our experienced and knowledgeable local guide (bilingual) and a leader from Australia are with you for the journey (2 leaders). Our team is qualified, experienced and super friendly. We will ensure you have a fun and connecting adventure. Leaders are certified in Remote or Wilderness First-Aid. All leaders carry a group first-aid kit, emergency communications device, emergency documentation and equipment.

PACKING LIST

A detailed packing list is provided prior to travel

- Gear you will need:
- Rainproof jacket and pants
- Daypack (35 litre approx.)
- Water bottles/hydration kit (min 2Ltrs)
- Personal medications
- Clothing suitable for walking that is quick drying and breathable – consider merino/synthetic clothing
- Sun protection such as hat, sunglasses and suncream, insect repellent
- Sleeping attire

ACCESSIBILITY

Requires following bush trails carrying a day pack with some steep sections. Accommodation and transport includes stairs. Please talk to us about your accessibility needs before booking