

GOURMET TOURING IN JAPAN

12TH – 29TH MARCH 2016

PLUS THE **HOWARD HINTON** CONNECTION
THIS TRIP ALSO VISITS MANY OF THE LOCATIONS THAT
HOWARD HINTON PHOTOGRAPHED ON HIS VISIT IN 1904-1906

17 FULL DAYS OF TRAVEL

NARITA [1] HAKONE - KAWAGUCHI KO (MT FUJI) [3]
TAKAYAMA [3] KANAZAWA [2] KYOTO [3]
MATSUMOTO [3] KISO VALLEY and OBUSE –
YAMANOUCHI [1]

Starts on your arrival at Narita airport Saturday 12th March-pm

Finishes at Tokyo station Monday 28th March 2016-pm

The departure or return dates or locations can be varied by individuals.



The Kinkaku ji [Golden Pavilion – Kyoto]

Twin Share LAND CONTENT - \$7480

Single Supplement + \$570 all including t/s land travel content of \$2800

Included

- all accommodation - mainly Japanese style - a mix of superior Ryokans [Japanese Inns] and western bed hotels
- all meals - mainly Japanese - some choice of western food
- all land transport when using buses, rental cars and taxis
- visiting and taking photographs at the locations where HOWARD HINTON photographically recorded his travels in 1904-1906. Compare his photos with yours!
- enjoying Japanese onsens and baths
- visit many World Heritage locations including Mt Fuji
- an enormous variety of gourmet eating experiences
- adequate rest time and private time for couples

THIS EXCLUSIVE TRAVEL IS LIMITED TO ONLY 6 PEOPLE

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GENERAL INFORMATION:

These travel suggestions are prepared for a group of up to 6 friends wishing to travel together.

Several airlines provide services to Narita Tokyo including QANTAS, Jetstar and Japan Airlines [JAL]. They depart from different airports [Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Cairns] and at different times.

The air reservations are your responsibility and at your cost.

Many airlines have special fares from time to time.

The travel involves many train and 'rental car - people mover' sectors. The trains are designed and built to cater for long distance travel and most stations have lifts. **No bag carrying services are available. It is essential that the baggage taken to Japan is able to be managed by the individual, including any purchases! Previous travellers have made good use of the superb 'Japan Post' to send excess baggage/purchases to Australia.**

Typically a 62 cm 'wheelable' case and a light backpack is adequate. When planning any trip to Japan, think as the Japanese people do - minimalist.

Please note that climate changes alter the predictability of the weather, particularly the late winter/early spring season – sakura.

Daytime temperature ranges in the different regions should be between 8 deg min and 25 deg max so layers of light clothing will be good.

The indoor environments are very warm including all trains and buses.

It is possible to experience some late snow on the ground in the high mountain areas.

It is not always possible to obtain block bookings on the trains with everyone seated in the same area, particularly on a public holiday or weekends. Occasionally, people may be seated in different carriages. In these circumstances, the train design allows free walking between carriages so contact with the others is easy.

It is unusual for shops or other places of interest to be open before 10 .00 am. Accordingly, the departure time from the accommodation usually reflects this situation. For those wanting to get up early, say before 7.30 am, suggestions for local 'free time' places to visit can be made.

The food while travelling is nearly always traditional Japanese food although Japan has many fine French style bakeries so a coffee and cake/pastry is always available. In the larger cities, a wide range of western food is also available.

All meals are included but you should note the following:

All Ryokan and some hotel breakfasts [usually full buffet] are included.

Feedback from most people indicates that a large breakfast on every day is not wanted and is very time consuming.

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Hotel breakfasts are very expensive in Japan so to keep the cost of the trip as reasonable as possible, we have found that in the hotels with large rooms that self catering is the preferred option of previous travellers. We purchase high quality cereal, pastries, fresh fruit and yogurt and filtered coffee or tea and we eat in the large bedrooms. The hotels provide crockery and cutlery.

When eating, - hips, knees and ankles don't have to suffer –we nearly always use western style tables and chairs.

The Howard Hinton connection.

In approximately 1904-1906, Howard Hinton, famous Australian philanthropist, travelled extensively throughout Japan and recorded his trip with well documented diary entries and photographs. The Hinton works are stored in the New England Regional Arts Museum [NERAM]. Consent has been given by NERAM to use the Hinton photographs of Japan for purposes not involving commercial displays. Accordingly, we can visit many of the locations and stand on the exact spot where Hinton took his photographs. I take a photo album and a PC and can show you the Hinton photos as you take your own photographs.

Time is allowed for such essentials as shopping, laundry and having personal time and space for couples.

The Yen is fluctuating dramatically against the Aus dollar. The 'cost' is based on a published yen value of A\$1.00 = Y 85. Until paid, variations may occur either way.

THE COST INCLUDES:

- All accommodation – Hotels and Ryokans
- All meals. The food ranges from:

breakfasts	Kaiseki, Hotel buffet, or simple fare purchase at local shops such as cereal, pastries, fruit
lunches	local restaurants using fresh local produce; or <i>o bento</i> or <i>eki ben</i> when travelling on the trains
dinner	at an Izakaya, [a pub] or a local speciality restaurant or in a Kaiseki Ryotei

[see notes below for information on **Kaiseki** Ryotei]
- Land transport including non JR trains, buses, taxis [when moving with luggage], rental cars, parking, road tolls and fuel.
Some people with mobility problems request 100% use of taxis rather than buses. In this case, the cost of the taxi is not included.

In Takayama, on previous visits, we have been able to arrange a Master Shakuhachi player, Yamaguchi san to present a private performance. IF Yamaguchi san is available, this performance is included.

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THE COST DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- airfare and airline taxes and a 14 day Japan Rail Pass
- entrances to places of interest or concerts other than the Shakuhaichi
- high level travel insurance – essential
- morning or afternoon tea or coffee / snacks
- alcoholic beverages with meals
- any accommodation consumables including telephone calls, mini bar,
- laundry costs, personal items and spending money
- any costs associated with any medical or any other emergencies

Travel arrangements can be made through an Armidale Licensed Travel Agent

NOTE You can travel to Japan earlier or leave later and make your own arrangements until the schedule commences/finishes. If you arrive earlier, we will meet by prior arrangement at Narita International Airport T2 or T3 depending on the airline OR the Hotel Marroad Narita on the evening of Saturday 12 March 2016.

On any day, individuals/couples can join the group or make their own arrangements or just ‘chill out’ at the hotel or Ryokan. It’s always up to you.

Natural disasters may mean that the travel ideas presented here may not always be possible. Flexibility is required if issues cause road blockages or transport problems.

The nominated hotels have been booked so no changes likely.

Some examples of the food we can enjoy



Part of a formal Japanese breakfast

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A nutritious mountain vegetable / noodle soup – an ideal lunch for 'travel' days



Eki ben – take away lunch - for consumption on the trains



Afternoon coffee and cakes

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Just a few dishes from a multi course formal dinner



***Another formal dinner – you can select normal tables if you want.
Hips, knees and ankles don't have to suffer!***

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Murray's birthday strawberry flan on 10th March 2011- tsunami day!!

What size steak would you like sir?



That's about A\$115.00 per serve in a relatively cheap Izakaya [Pub]

JAPAN GOURMET MEALS - HINTON PHOTOGRAPHY

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TAKAYAMA - KANAZAWA - KYOTO –
MATSUMOTO.-KISO VALLEY -.OBUSE –
YAMANOUCHI TOWN

SOME DEFINITIONS:

Shinkansen – The Bullet Train The newer models travel at around 300 k/m hour and carry over 2000 passengers. It takes about 8 minutes to walk from one end of the train to the other end on the platform, much more inside the train. In 2014, after 50 years of operation, the Shinkansen has an unblemished safety record. See below



One style of Shinkansen.

Local train - is an upmarket equivalent of the New South Wales XPT, spotlessly clean, on time and no graffiti. Food and toilets are available on the train. See below.



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Ryokan hotel – traditional Japanese accommodation, the futon [Japanese beds] are very comfortable and warm. **See below.**



The same room!! The staff change the room while we have dinner

‘Western’ hotel - a typical 4 - 5 star hotel but with a strong Japanese influence.

‘Tourist’ hotel - a comfortable 3 star hotel, has all the facilities you need, smaller rooms and are usually located very conveniently to the transport hubs.

Onsen – the area or location of the traditional hot bath taken by Japanese people as a relaxation. The hot spring bath [ofuro] is sometimes constructed of cedar that has a magnificent relaxing aroma when hot. The hot spring bath can be a private bath [usually the case in a Ryokan] or a gender segregated public bathhouse [called Onsen]. The hot spring bath is very common in Japan and forms an important part of the life of Japanese people. The onsen baths have very strict etiquette which will be explained to you.

Yukata – a traditional Japanese ‘dressing gown’ worn at dinner and also when walking inside and outside the Ryokan - very relaxing. See below



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Kaiseki Ryotei [restaurant]. Kaiseki is the pinnacle of Japanese cuisine where ingredients, preparation, setting and presentation come together to create a dining experience unlike any other. It is usually served in a private tatami room with views to your private garden and with access via the shoji [sliding paper walls and doors]. The service staff wear kimono. Please note that this trip includes some Kaiseki meals.



Just one course of maybe 15 at a Kaiseki dinner.

Sakura - blossom time is very special to Japanese people. We will possibly see blossom in Kyoto [the southern most stop in the travel plan]. BUT no guarantees are offered as nature will do whatever she wants and without asking us if it is convenient to our travel plans!!!



Blossom viewing in downtown Ueno - Tokyo

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YAMANOUCHI TOWN

Day 1 – Saturday 12 March AUSTRALIA TO NARITA AIRPORT [TOKYO]

Today is an air travel day then transfer to the Hotel Marroad – about 10 minutes

Accommodation 5* Hotel Marroad Narita 1 night

Regardless of your choice of airline, you are met on arrival and transferred by the Hotel shuttlebus to the Marroad International Hotel. Depending on your arrival time, how tired/hungry you are, dinner can be at the airport [a wide selection of good places are available] or the hotel, it's your choice.

Day 2 – Sunday 13 March

NARITA to HAKONE

Today is a short day travelling to the hotel at Hakone.

Accommodation Fujiya Hotel - Hakone.

[1st night of 3]

Total travel time for the day - approx 2.5 hours

We can travel from Narita airport hotel by 4 different styles of trains to arrive at the tiny village of Miyanoshita. The express trains to Odawara are contrasted with a small gauge zigzag railway on the last sector. Rental car from Odawara for 3 days.

Depending on the number of people and the luggage, an alternative is that we pick up the rental car at the airport [3 days] and have the experience of driving though Tokyo before we start exploring the Hakone area.

Both methods of transport take approximately the same time.

Either way, we will go through the mountains direct to the outstanding Hakone Open Air Museum that also houses a large Picasso collection [2.5 hours + required to see it properly]. The open air museum is a large open area of high class bronze and other 'installations'.

While you are visiting the Open Air Museum, I will check in to the hotel and as if by magic, your bags will be in your rooms ready for you to relax.



A few of the hundreds of bronze and other artworks at the Hakone open-air museum

JAPAN GOURMET MEALS - HINTON PHOTOGRAPHY

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NARITA - HAKONE and KAWAGUCHI KO (MT FUJI) TAKAYAMA - KANAZAWA - KYOTO – MATSUMOTO.-KISO VALLEY -.OBUSE – YAMANOUCHI TOWN

We stay at the famous and prestigious Fujiya Hotel [built 1878]. The Fujiya is a large old hotel like the Hydro Majestic in the Blue Mountains. This hotel has an amazing history and has large western style rooms. The hotel has a private hot spring bath in your room.

You can explore the unique interior of the hotel, the hotel museum and its Japanese gardens and/or the village of Miyanoshita at your own pace.

In Miyanoshita, we take photographs at the Hinton locations.

A real treat is to have an afternoon tea sitting at the John Lennon - Yoko Uno table. Reservations are essential.

The Fujiya Hotel has large rooms with western beds. The hotel also has a public onsen for you to enjoy.

Hotel or self catered breakfasts are provided [see previous note on light breakfasts] and lunches/dinners will be in local restaurants. One dinner will be a Kaiseki dinner in a part of the hotel that was an Imperial Villa until 1935 when it was granted to the Fujiya Chain.



The outside and entrance to the Fujiya Hotel under light snow

In late winter, this very mountainous area could be covered with remnants of snow OR new growth – nature can do strange things so we have no guarantees.



Fujiya Hotel – twin bedroom



and the main stairway

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Day 3 – Monday 14 March

HAKONE

Accommodation is at the Fujiya Hotel

[2nd night of 3]

Today is a busy explore then relax day

We usually discuss individual interests over breakfast and plan accordingly.

After breakfast, we start exploring the Hakone area. This is a very mountainous hot springs region. Subject to cloud cover, there are many magnificent views of Mt Fuji [Fuji san]. This whole area has been popular as a hot springs [onsen] resort since the 9th century so there are many traditional villages and attractions including the natural beauty of the mountains and lakes.

We can visit the Lalique Museum. This is a superb display of original Lalique antique and modern glassware. Another magnificent display is in the Pola Art Museum.

For lunch, we may eat at a Japanese Gyoza restaurant famous for the dumplings similar to Chinese Yum Cha but with the taste, delicacy and beauty of presentation that is only Japanese.

In the afternoon, we can visit Ashino-ko [lake] and you can walk on the remains of the Tōkaidō walking track from Tokyo to Kyoto and see Hakone Yosegi Saiku (Hakone Wooden Mosaic Work) being made. Kaiseki Dinner at the Fujiya Hotel.

In Ashino-ko [lake], we take photographs at the Hinton locations.

Day 4 – Tuesday 15 March

HAKONE [full day]

Accommodation is at the Fujiya Hotel

[3rd night of 3]

Today is a full day exploration day.

After breakfast we travel for about 1 hour to Kawaguchi ko, the north face region of Mt Fuji and the 5 lakes area and we explore the ‘5 lakes’ area.

The ‘**must do**’ is a visit to a museum display of handmade silk kimono by master artist Itchiku Kubota, who is recognised in Japan as a ‘Living National Treasure’.

The other ‘**must do**’ subject to cloud cover, is to go to the 5th station of Mt Fuji – that’s as far as you can drive up Mt Fuji, the rest is walking.



The moods of Mt Fuji from Kawaguchi-ko [lake]

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Please note, Fuji san is very fickle – often covered in clouds. Anytime in the 3 days, if we see Fuji is clear, that becomes the top priority and we make a rush to get to the fifth viewing station. Everything else does not rely on ‘no clouds’ for enjoyment.

There is no shortage of places to visit – things to do. We can visit an open air onsen with a view of Mt Fuji from the baths!!!, maybe take in the drive around the five lakes, also we can catch a cable car to the top of one of the local mountains – again, subject to cloud cover, spectacular views of the lakes and surrounding mountains.

Day 5 – Wednesday 16 March

HAKONE to TAKAYAMA

4 hour train travel day to Takayama

Accommodation Rickshaw Inn Tourist hotel Takayama [1st night of 3]

Coin operated laundry on site. Japanese style rooms

2 very large superior rooms have been reserved, the first 2 bookings get a choice

This morning after breakfast, we drive or train down the mountain to catch your first bullet train from Odawara to Nagoya and then the Hida Express to Takayama.

After we arrive I will check you into the hotel while you can explore the area around the hotel.

The immediate area around the hotel is Heritage Listed and displays the old merchant quarters of this ancient town – hundreds of years old. See below.



The hotel has a large lounge room and a kitchen that will enable us to purchase and cook some of the outstanding quality Hida Beef and local vegetables. This beef is around A\$390.00 per kilo in the butchers shop so it will be about 150 gms each!!!!

JAPAN GOURMET MEALS - HINTON PHOTOGRAPHY

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TAKAYAMA - KANAZAWA - KYOTO –
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YAMANOUCHI TOWN



Common practice - Drinks and nibbles after a long day out at Takayama

Many restaurants in Japan specialise in one type of food so over the 3 days we have a selection of different types of food cooked to perfection.

Another night we will go to our favourite Izakaya [pub] where you cannot enter unless you can speak Japanese. Luckily I can mumble through the food and drinks orders.



Two views of the quirky little Izakaya called 'Kappa'

In Takayama, on previous visits, we have been able to arrange a Master Shakuhachi player, Yamaguchi san to present a private performance. IF Yamaguchi san is available, this performance is included.

JAPAN GOURMET MEALS - HINTON PHOTOGRAPHY

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YAMANOUCHI TOWN

Day 6 – Thursday 17 March

TAKAYAMA

Walking

Accommodation

Rickshaw Inn

Takayama [2nd night of 3]

Next morning, visit the nearby local markets and a high quality department store like our 'David Jones' to see the daily goods and furniture used by the Japanese people. Lunch will be at one of many local restaurants. Visit as many of the following as you want - inexpensive antique shops, the lacquer wear museum, antique puppet display, the festival floats display, a tea house to experience a tea ceremony.



The Hida no Sato Village is a large display of the original houses of the Japanese people who lived in secluded villages in the deep Japan Alps and whose houses were subsumed by the construction of a very large dam.

The houses are hundreds of years old and called 'Gassho Zukuri' meaning 'hands in prayer.' The houses have very steep thatched roofs like 'two hands' in Buddhist prayer. Late winter/spring is spectacular, particularly if some late snow is there.

See above for the village and the festival floats display.

If you choose, you can just rest and relax in this lovely quiet town. Dinner can be at an 'Unagi' [Eel specialty] restaurant.



Welcome to the Tea Ceremony



Cake and sweets – form part of the tea ceremony

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Day 7 – Friday 18 March

TAKAYAMA

Walking or taxis or rental car

Accommodation Rickshaw Inn

Takayama [3rd night of 3]

Touring day of Takayama – as relaxed or as busy as you decide

The choices described above cannot possibly be done in one day so you can select your own interests for day 7.

Takayama is famous for woodwork artisans, many chances are available to see them in action or you can wander around the streetscape. See below.



Day 8 – Saturday 19 March

TAKAYAMA to KANAZAWA

Travel approx. 3 hours by train

Accommodation Kanazawa Miyako Hotel 4*

Refurbished rooms have been reserved

Western style rooms

Night 1

We will catch a train to Toyama then to Kanazawa. After we book you into the hotel we visit the Higashi Hanamachi [lit: flower town] which is a famous heritage listed area of ochaya [tea houses where geisha entertained clients].

You can access an ochaya. [fee]

Meals will be planned when we are in Kanazawa as the selection is endless.

Day 9 – Sunday 20 March

KANAZAWA

Night 2

Kenrokuen Gardens. It is easy to arrange a tour guide for the gardens – this service is provided by retired enthusiasts and they provide extensive commentary in English.

Other places to see in Kanazawa include the morning fish markets where we have the freshest seafood for lunch, the samurai area, the Noh theatre, the Honda Family Museum [not cars] and the excitement of the red light district.

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YAMANOUCHI TOWN



Kenrokuen Gardens Kanazawa

Day 10 – Monday 21 March

KANAZAWA to KYOTO
night 1

Travel approx. 2 hours by train Accommodation Kyoto My Stays Hotel 3*
This hotel is located conveniently on a major bus route. It has smallish but efficient rooms with no special views. You can have a hotel breakfast or a large supermarket is close by where we can purchase breakfast supplies. Coin operated laundry on site.

Kyoto is extremely heavily booked at this time so the selection of Hotels is limited. We have used this Hotel previously and it is adequate for purpose.

In Kyoto, we take photographs at the Hinton locations.

Kyoto was first settled in the 7th century and became Heian-kyo, the capital of Japan. Today, Kyoto remains an important cultural and educational centre. It has approximately 20% of Japan's national treasures and 15% of Japan's cultural properties and is home to 17 UNESCO world heritage sites. The choices of locations to visit would be discussed and agreed but should remain flexible to take account of weather. Breakfast, lunch and dinner options are endless! Accommodation will be in a hotel rather than a Ryokan. Small western style rooms.

Typical sites of interest for 2.5 days in or around Kyoto could include:

- Kyoto National Museum;
- Kiyomizu – Buddhist temple being one of the most famous landmarks in the city;
- Gion which is the Higashi Hanamachi [lit: flower town] which is a famous heritage listed area of ochaya [tea houses where geisha entertained clients]. In the early evening it is possible to see Geisha or more often Maiko walking to the entertainment establishments; **see photo below**

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YAMANOUCHI TOWN



The secluded laneways in Gion and Pontocho – Kyoto

- The National Museum of Modern Art which has a magnificent display of craftsmen manufacturing traditional Japanese items such as fans, kimono, umbrellas, wood carving, and stone carving;
- The Philosopher's Walk, one of Kyoto's best-loved spots and follows a cherry tree lined canal meandering along the base of Higashi-yama [eastern mountains]. This was the favourite walk of a philosophy Professor in the mid 1800s;
- Purchase high quality second hand silk Kimono [not expensive];
- The Imperial Palace and gardens;
- Stroll the 4 km walkway of Torii at the Fushimi-Inara shrine;
- The Kyoto Handicraft Centre where a large range of handicraft manufacturing is demonstrated with sales available.

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- *Kinkaku-ji and gardens [the golden pavilion];*



Kare-sansui [Zen gardens] of Ryoan-ji;

Day 11 – Tuesday 22 March

KYOTO

We cannot do all the options available so you will select what you want to do – subject to weather etc.

Day 12 – Wednesday 23 March

KYOTO

We cannot do all the options available so you will select what you want to do – subject to weather etc.

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YAMANOUCHI TOWN

Day 13 – Thursday 24 March

KYOTO to MATSUMOTO

Today is a medium travel then relax day **Richmond Hotel Matsumoto [1st night]**

Train travel time approx 3 hours

4* hotel – western style

After a relaxed breakfast we travel from Kyoto by Shinkansen to Nagoya, then by an express train to Matsumoto where you can have some free time to explore the town or relax before dinner while I check you into the hotel. We know many quirky Izakaya's for dinner.

Matsumoto is a small city and again was not bombed during the war and therefore retains significant cultural heritage. The Matsumoto Castle and the attached museum is one of the best castles to see in Japan and so that is a must. We will visit the Castle/Museum on Saturday.



Matsumoto castle [Black crow]

Day 14 – Friday 25 March

MATSUMOTO to KISO VALLEY

Today is a travel day **Accommodation Richmond Hotel Matsumoto [2nd night]**

Car travel time approx 4 hours return

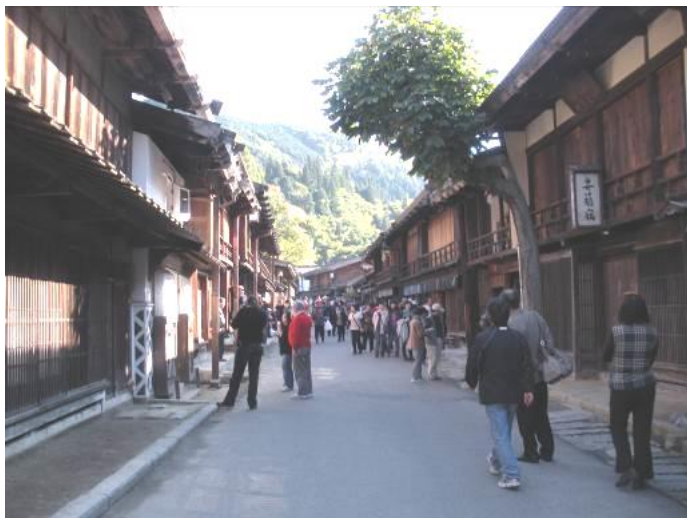
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After breakfast we pick up a rental car and venture through the spectacular Japan Alps to the Kiso Valley for a day trip to Magome and Tsumago and return to Matsumoto at night.

Magome and Tsumago in the Kiso valley are Heritage towns, one having been restored to the condition it was hundreds of years ago. No power lines, gas meters or phone towers. The Nakasendo walking route from Tokyo to Kyoto was the inland route and in winter it is absolutely snow bound with up to 7 metres of snow. The towns we visit are just two of the walking 'post towns' used by travellers on the long walk.



Note – this photo was taken on a long weekend holiday. We will be there on a Friday so it will be very quiet.

Day 15 – Saturday 26 March MATSUMOTO city
Today is relaxed day with some free time to explore Matsumoto
Accommodation Richmond Hotel Matsumoto [3rd night]

In the morning after breakfast, you can visit the Matsumoto jo [castle] and the attached museum and if open, the Museum of Yukiyo-e [wood block prints].

The rest of the day is free time to explore the town.

Day 16 – Sunday 27 March MATSUMOTO to YAMANOUCHI via OBUSE
Today is short travel day
Accommodation Abura Tosen Ryokan [1 night]
Strictly Japanese style accommodation

This morning after breakfast, we take the 1 hour train to Nagano arriving at noon. We then pick up another rental car and drive to Obuse. Obuse is a very remote, small,

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17 FULL DAYS OF TRAVEL

NARITA - HAKONE and KAWAGUCHI KO (MT FUJI)
TAKAYAMA - KANAZAWA - KYOTO –
MATSUMOTO.-KISO VALLEY -.OBUSE –
YAMANOUCHI TOWN

quiet and beautiful town. It has a museum that has a collection of prints by Hokusai, the famous Yukiyo-e [wood block print] artist and other places of cultural interest.

We then drive on to Yamanouchi, a famous onsen town, set in a very mountainous area near the location of the Nagano winter Olympics. It is also the location of the famous snow monkeys who enjoy an outdoor onsen.

We drive and then walk to the Monkey Onsen. As it is late March, we cannot predict the snow levels. It is likely that you will experience snow, but if not, you will see the monkeys enjoying the onsen.

While you are at the Snow Monkeys, I will check you into the Ryokan.



Snow monkeys – they aren't the only ones to soak



How quirky is this?? Tired hikers soak their feet in a public foot soaker outside Yudanaka station!!

In the afternoon, we go to the Ryokan to enjoy another Kaiseki dinner, the hot baths and a sleep.

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Today is our wedding anniversary which we always try to enjoy in different locations in Japan. This Ryokan should be good!



A room in a Ryokan. While we have dinner, the staff re-arrange the room and have the futon out when you return. No English TV so after a long day, dinner, sake, a bath – have a zzzzzz A very relaxing environment.

Day 17 – Monday 28 March YAMANOUCHI town to NARITA AIRPORT
Today is a medium travel day then the overnight flight
Train travel time approx 4 hour+ 1 hour car

After a relaxing breakfast we have time for a last bath and travel from Yamanouchi by car to Nagano then by Shinkansen to Tokyo. Tokyo station is the end of the companion assistance. You then catch the Narita Express to Tokyo Narita International airport for your return flight to Australia.

If we have time, we can stop off at Ueno. Ueno is located about 10 km north of Tokyo cbd. Ueno offers a choice of frantic alleyways full of stall vendors and/or the Ueno Park which is a large park, peaceful for a major city and/or a visit to the Japanese National Museum. The Museum houses many huge collections as well as having special exhibitions from time to time.

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We know of a shop where they sell fine artists paper and note books etc, and this shop is very popular with people wanting to get a ‘high quality – cheap – light’ last minute gift.

Day 18 – Tuesday 29 March your early am arrival in Australia

Murray Giles

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