

## The Best Day Walks in **CENTRAL HONSHU, JAPAN**

*Saturday 8 May – Saturday 30 May, 2027*



This tour explores the spectacular alpine and historic regions of Central Honshu.

Central Honshu is Japan's heartland and has at its core Tokyo, the enigmatic metropolis that entrances those who embrace its potent fusion of imagination, vigour and wealth. Tokyo is remarkably resilient; a megalopolis whose continual metamorphosis has made it one of the most interesting and liveable cities in the world.

Surrounding Tokyo is the Kanto Plain; to the north and east are Japan's Central Alps; to the west Mt. Fuji and further beyond is Nagoya, Japan's third largest city, a major centre of high-tech industry. The mountain ranges that roughly divide north from south also produce some of the most pronounced differences in climate; mild and dryer winters to the south contrast with the wintry weather to the north, where some of the greatest snowfalls anywhere on earth occur each year.

Crossing the region are ancient highways, including the famed Nakasendo Way and Tokaido Trail, connecting the elegant cities of Kamakura, Nikko, Matsumoto, Takayama, Kanazawa and Kawagoe, which flourished with the samurai's pre-eminence. The Boso and Izu Peninsulas, with a climate more akin to the sub-tropics, contrast dramatically with the more inaccessible interior of the Snow Country found to the north in Gifu, Nagano and Niigata. Here, hidden away in isolated valleys and on mountainsides, are beautifully kept post-towns and delightful villages, both redolent of a much older Japan. Mountain climbers scale the hundreds of peaks nearby, some soaring over 3,000m; while back in the south, close to the elegant presence of Mt. Fuji, surfers crowd the beaches on the Pacific Shonan Coast.

## Key Reasons for Walking in May

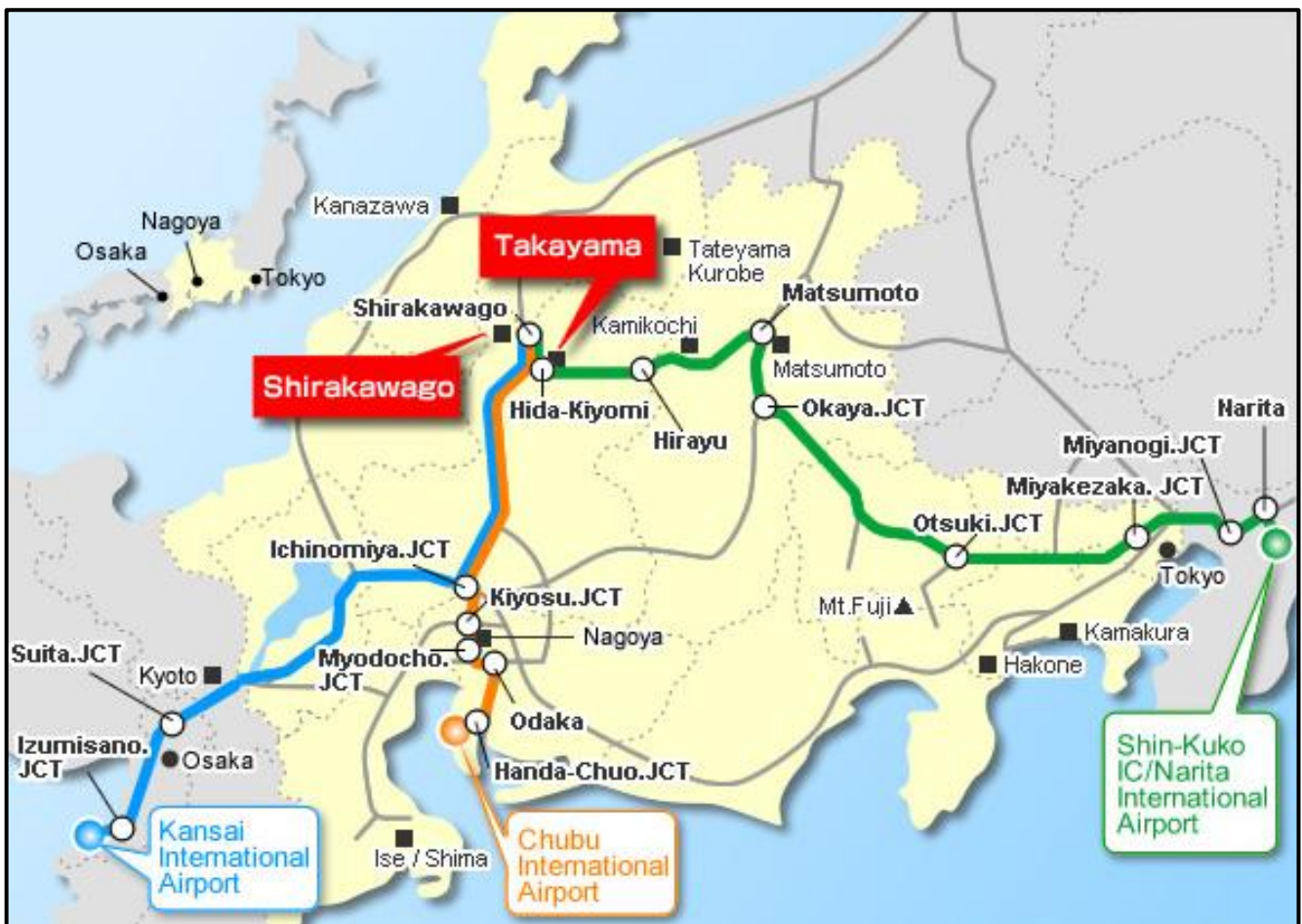
**Ideal Temperatures:** In central Honshu (like Tokyo and Takayama), daytime highs range from 20°C to 27°C. This is warm enough for light clothing but lacks the dangerous heat of July and August. May and June are excellent for walking in central Honshu because they offer a "sweet spot" between the winter cold and the intense humidity of late summer.

**Vibrant Greenery & Flowers:** May is the season of "Smiling Mountains" (yamawarau), where hillsides are a fresh, vivid green. You'll find spectacular azalea blooms on mountains like Mt. Yamato Katsuragi in May, and hydrangeas and irises at lower elevations in June.

**Accessibility of High Trails:** By late May or early June, snow has typically melted from high-altitude passes in the Japan Alps and along the Nakasendo Trail, making them safely walkable for the first time in the year.

**Paddy Field Scenery:** This is the peak rice planting season. Walking through rural basins (like Nara) offers serene views of flooded fields reflecting the sky as local communities work together.

**Fewer Crowds (Post-Golden Week):** After the massive Golden Week holiday ends in early May, popular walking paths become much quieter and accommodation prices often drop before the summer rush.



**21 days ex-Tokyo**

**Leader: Phillip Donnell**

**Price: \$9450 (excluding airfares)**

**(based on a minimum of 10 participants and subject to currency fluctuations)**

**Price is estimated at May 2026, so subject to change until fully paid.**

**PRICE INCLUDES:**

- Accommodation – shared rooms in self-contained hotels, cabins, motels, rental houses.
- Transport in a comfortable vehicle.
- Breakfasts (continental).
- Experienced Kiwi trip leader throughout.
- National Park entry fees, parking fees, toll road fees.

**PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- Flights to / from Tokyo.
- Airport transfer fees.
- Lunches and dinners.
- Travel insurance.
- Personal incidentals, excursions, and entry to attractions.

## **CENTRAL JAPAN 2027 ITINERARY**

**You should arrive in Tokyo in time for the initial briefing on Sunday 9 May at 8 a.m.**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>POSSIBLE WALK(S)</b>	<b>OVERNIGHT</b>
<p><b>Note:</b> A number of walks are listed as possibilities for each day. The group will select which walks they undertake from those listed, or others that we learn of.</p> <p><b>For further information on walks, go to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">AllTrails Japan</a>: Excellent for finding curated "short trails" under 5km. You can filter by difficulty (e.g., easy/moderate) and find popular routes like the Lake Megami Loop in Nagano or urban park walks in cities like Matsumoto.</li><li>• <a href="#">Japan-Guide.com</a>: The gold standard for practical travel info. Their hiking sections cover specific areas in central Honshu like Kamikōchi (famous for flat, scenic valley walks) and the Nakasendo Trail (specifically the 3-hour Magome-Tsumago section).</li><li>• <a href="#">Hike Master Japan</a>: Offers an interactive map with detailed trail guides for various peaks and valley walks across Honshu, including many lesser-known local paths.</li><li>• <a href="#">Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO)</a>: Their digital magazine often features themed "scenic trails" and nature walks perfect for casual tourists.</li></ul>		

THE JAPANESE ALPS (Days 1-7)		
Day 1 Sunday 9 May	<p>Travel Tokyo to Matsumoto (3h).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Matsumoto Historic District</b> (5km). Explore the original castle and merchant streets.</li> <li>○ <b>Matsumoto Castle Loop</b> (1h30m).. Historic 16<sup>th</sup> century fortress.</li> <li>○ <b>Alps Park Walk</b> (1h30m). Best panoramic views of city and Alps.</li> </ul>	Matsumoto
Day 2 Monday 10 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kamikochi Alpine Valley</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Travel:</b> ~1.5 hours drive to Sawando Parking . <i>Shuttle bus/taxi required into the car-free zone.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Taisho Pond to Kappa Bridge</b> (4km). Flat, riverside path.</li> <li>○ <b>Kappa Bridge to Myojin Pond</b> (6km round-trip). Pristine forest and shrine views.</li> </ul>	
Day 3 Tuesday 11 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Norikura Highlands</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Travel:</b> ~1.5 hours drive to <u>Norikura Kogen</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Zengoro Falls Loop</b> (6.3km). Forest path to a 21m waterfall.</li> <li>○ <b>Ushidome Pond</b> (2km). Quick scenic loop with reflections of Mount Norikura.</li> <li>○ <b>Sabondaki</b> (Three Waterfalls) (25min) Three unique falls side-by-side.</li> <li>○ <b>Ichinose Meadow and Great Norikura Maple</b> (2.9km, 45mins)</li> </ul>	Norikura Kogen
Day 4 Wednesday 12 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Altitude Plateau</b></li> <li>○ <b>Mount Norikura Tundra Walk</b> (5km). Drive to the 2,700m bus terminal (highest in Japan) for easy plateau walking.</li> </ul>	
Day 5 Thursday 13 May	<p><b>Travel Norikura to Takayama</b> (2h)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Higashiyama Walking Course</b> (5.5km). Quiet temple-lined route on Takayama's outskirts. 13 temples and 5 shrines.</li> <li>○ <b>Shiroyama Park</b> (1h). Castle ruins and city panoramas.</li> <li>○ <b>Hirayu Otaki Falls (45mins). Powerfall falls over 60m high.</b></li> </ul>	Takayama

Day 6 Friday 14 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>UNESCO Village</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Travel:</b> ~1.0 hour drive to <u>Shirakawa-go</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Ogimachi Village Exploration</b> (5km). Wander between traditional gassho-zukuri farmhouses.</li> <li>○ <b>Shiroyama Viewpoint</b> (20min one way). Best panoramic view of the valley.</li> </ul>	
Day 7 Saturday 15 May	<p>Travel <b>Takayama</b> to Magome in the <b>Kiso Valley</b> (2h)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Magome Post Town</b> (3km). Explore the steep, beautifully preserved cobblestone streets.</li> <li>○ <b>Magome Pass</b> (4.5km return, 2h). Captures the best viewpoints over the town.</li> </ul>	Magome
<b>HISTORIC TRAILS &amp; CULTURAL CITIES (DAYS 8–14)</b>		
Day 8 Sunday 16 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Nagasendo Trail: Magome to Tsumago</b> (8km). The most famous section of the ancient samurai road. Iconic Edo-period trail through forests and waterfalls.</li> </ul>	Magome or Tsumago
Day 9 Monday 17 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Extension to Nagiso</b></li> <li>○ <b>Tsumago to Nagiso Station</b> (3.5km). Gentle rural path.</li> </ul> <p><b>Travel</b> 3h30m to Kyoto.</p>	Kyoto
Day 10 Tuesday 18 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kyoto Canals &amp; Temples</b></li> <li>○ <b>Philosopher's Path</b> (3km). Scenic walk along the cherry-tree-lined canal.</li> <li>○ <b>Nanzen-ji to Ginkaku-ji</b> (3km). Link the temples with architectural highlights.</li> </ul>	
Day 11 Wednesday 19 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Thousand Torii Gates</b></li> <li>○ <b>Fushimi Inari Taisha Loop</b> (4.5km). Iconic walk through vermillion gates up Mount Inari.</li> </ul>	
Day 12 Thursday 20 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Arashiyama Bamboo</b></li> <li>○ <b>Arashiyama Bamboo Grove Loop</b> (2.7km). Paved path through towering bamboo.</li> <li>○ <b>Tenryu-ji Temple Grounds</b> (3km). Stroll through world-renowned Zen gardens.</li> </ul>	

Day 13 Friday 21 May	<b>Travel Kyoto to Shizuoka Coast (4h).</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Sunpu Castle Park</b> (4km, 1h30m)). Historic park loop in Shizuoka city.</li> <li>○ <b>Shizuoka Sengen Shrine Walk (1h).</b> Complex of seven shrines is famous for its intricate carvings.</li> </ul>	Shizuoka
Day 14 Saturday 22 May	<b>Travel Shizuoka to Fuji Five Lakes (Lake Kawaguchi) (1h30m)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Oishi Park to Nagasaki Park</b> (1.2km). Paved lakeside stroll with prime Fuji views.</li> <li>○ <b>Chureito Pagoda/Arakura (2h).</b> Iconic pagoda and Fuji view.</li> <li>○ <b>Mount Tenjo (1h30m).</b> Panoramic lake and mountain views.</li> <li>○ <b>Lake Kawaguchi Shore (1h30m).</b> Seasonal flowers and Fuji reflection.</li> <li>○ <b>Fugaku-Narasawa Loop (1h30m).</b> Volcanic caves and ancient forest.</li> <li>○ <b>Koyodai Trail (1h)</b> 360-degree view of Kiso Valley.</li> </ul>	<u>Fujikawaguchiko</u>
<b>MOUNT FUJI &amp; COASTAL RETURN (DAYS 15–21)</b>		
Day 15 Sunday 23 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Aokigahara Forest</b></li> <li>○ <b>Narusawa Ice Cave to Fugaku Wind Cave</b> (1km). Short lava forest walk.</li> <li>○ <b>Saiko Nature Trail</b> (6km). Explore the "Sea of Trees" on mossy volcanic rock</li> </ul>	<u>Fujikawaguchiko</u>
Day 16 Monday 24 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Lake Panoramas</b></li> <li>○ <b>Lake Yamanaka Loop (North Shore)</b> (6km). Flat lakeside path. Or full loop (13.4km,3-4h).</li> <li>○ <b>Outer Rim Mountain Loop (14km,5h).</b> The ridge loop through Mt. Ohira and Mt. Ishiwari is a popular alternative that overlooks the lake.</li> <li>○ <b>Sanko-dai Platform</b> (4km). Drive to Saiko and walk to the 360-degree viewpoint.</li> </ul>	
Day 17 Tuesday 25 May	<b>Travel Fujikawaguchiko to Hakone (1h30m)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Lake Ashi Cedar Path</b> (4km). Giant 400-year-old cedars along the shore.</li> <li>○ <b>Mt. Kintoki Hiking Course (2-3 hours):</b> A popular 4.6 km trail providing panoramic 360-degree views</li> </ul>	Hakone

	<p>of Mt. Fuji and the surrounding caldera. It starts from Kintoki Shrine or Miyagino.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Old Tokaido Road Trail (1-2 hours):</b> Hike along original cobblestone paths from the Edo period, passing the Hakone Amazake Tea House down to Moto-Hakone near Lake Ashi.</li> <li>○ <b>Mt. Myojingatake Hiking Trail (2-3 hours):</b> Offers a moderate, scenic walk on a ridge line, featuring great views of Mt. Fuji and Hakone's volcanic landscape.</li> <li>○ <b>Mt. Komagatake Hike (1-2 hours):</b> An accessible walk, often done by taking the Hakone Ropeway to the top, providing quick access to breathtaking views.</li> <li>○ <b>Chisuji Waterfalls Trail (1 hour):</b> A gentle walk leading to 3-meter high, picturesque waterfalls surrounded by lush greenery, ideal for a shorter, relaxed walk.</li> </ul>	
<p>Day 18 Wednesday 26 May</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Historic Tokaido Road</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Hakone Kyu-kaido</b> (5km). Sections of original Edo-period cobblestones leading to Amazake-chaya Tea House.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>Day 19 Thursday 27 May</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hakone to Izu Peninsula</b> <b>Travel:</b> ~1.5 hours drive to <u>Jogasaki</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Jogasaki Coast Trail</b> (9km). Dramatic volcanic cliffs and suspension bridges.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ito or Shimoda
<p>Day 20 Friday 28 May</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Izu Coastal Peaks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Mount Omuro Rim</b> (3km). A circular walk around the rim of a dormant volcano.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Travel:</b> ~2.5 hours drive toward Tokyo.</p>	Kamakura or Enoshima
<p>Day 21 Saturday 29 May</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kamakura to Tokyo Loop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Daibutsu Hiking Trail</b> (3km). Forest path connecting the Great Buddha and shrines.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Travel:</b> ~1.5 hours drive back to Tokyo.</p> <p><b>Departure flights should be booked for the next day.</b></p>	Tokyo

## HONSHU, JAPAN 2027

### Booking Conditions

1. Participants agree to all terms and conditions by signing the Registration Form.
2. Phillip Donnell and *Footsteps Walking and Travel Club* are not responsible or liable for any injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may arise from weather, pandemic, defect in any vehicle, vessel or aircraft, or through the acts or default of any person or company engaged in carrying out any of the arrangements of the trip. Everyone participates at their own risk. The separate waiver form must be completed.
3. We reserve the right to cancel the trip if minimum numbers don't eventuate. In such an event, all monies paid will be refunded. The minimum number for this trip is ten.
4. *Footsteps* reserves the right to make any modifications to the trip that may be necessary. The walks undertaken each day are determined by group consensus, but as far as possible we endeavour to meet your personal preferences.
5. The trip fee includes subsidisation of the leader/driver administrative and travel expenses, as well as a gift of appreciation/gratuity.
6. Registrations close on **1 February, 2027** or earlier if all the spaces are filled.
7. Registrations are accepted in good faith on a first comer's basis on receipt of the Registration form, Waiver form and passport scan. A deposit of \$500 per person is paid at the time of registration. The balance of the trip fee is due to be paid by **1 May, 2027**.
8. Our preferred method of payment is internet banking to Footsteps, Kiwibank PJ Donnell/Katrina Tulip 38-9002-0435674-03. Please write your surname and the name of the trip ("Japan") in the reference box.
9. Cancellations: If you need to cancel your registration for any reason, you must advise Phillip in writing as soon as possible. An email is acceptable, a phone call alone is not. Full refunds are given up to 90 days prior. Following that, refunds are by negotiation, with the aim of refunding the maximum amount possible. Travel insurance can cover you for unexpected changes of plan that have a valid reason. If you find a suitable replacement person, cancellation fees MAY be waived.
10. Personal travel insurance is compulsory. It is recommended that this includes Covid cover.

***Registration and waiver forms are below. Complete these and send them to us, with a copy of your passport, to secure your place. Then pay your deposit.***



Mount Fuji and the Chureito Pagoda

## ***Footsteps Walking & Travel Club of Aotearoa New Zealand Honshu, Japan 2027: Trip Registration Form***

Complete and send this (along with a passport scan and the waiver form) to our postal address (see base of page) or scan and email. The deposit required is \$500 per person. Our preferred payment method is internet banking into Kiwibank PJ Donnell/Katrina Tulip 38-9002-0435674-03 (with covering email please, or your surname/name of trip in reference column).

Your full name(s) and please underline or highlight your preferred first name(s):

Postal Address:

Day/Night phone:

Mobile:

Email:

Date(s) of birth:

Are you comfortable in close contact with like-minded travellers with all the give and take needed for harmony? Please extend your answers overleaf or on separate paper, or by email.

Specify any dietary requirements, allergies or medical conditions:

Contact person in NZ for any emergencies : name, address, contact phone numbers, email and the relationship to you. In the event of any emergency, this is the sole person you are authorizing us to liaise with

I/We have read the trip information and booking conditions. I / We enclose the deposit of \$500pp. I / We agree to pay the remainder of trip costs by the due date.  
(signed and dated by each person registering):

**FOOTSTEPS WALKING & TRAVEL CLUB OF AOTEAROA / NEW ZEALAND**

**RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY FORM**

**PROVIDER:** Footsteps Walking and Travel Club (Phillip John Donnell)("Footsteps")

**PARTICIPANT:**

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("the Participant")

I, the Participant, release and forever discharge and hold harmless Footsteps from all and any liability, claims, demands and damages, of whatsoever kind or nature, whether foreseeable or otherwise, either at law or in equity, which arise or may arise from the services and activities provided and arranged by Footsteps.

I understand and acknowledge that this Release and Waiver discharges Footsteps from any liability or claim that I may have against Footsteps in respect of personal injury, illness, medical treatment, death, property loss or damage, and otherwise howsoever, resulting from the services and activities provided and arranged by Footsteps. I hereby waive all such rights and remedies.

I accept that I participate in the services and activities entirely at my own risk.

I acknowledge and accept that this Release and Waiver:

- (a) Extends to and covers all contractors, agents, volunteers and employees of Footsteps; and
- (b) Binds the executors, administrators, successors, attorneys and assigns of both parties.

Signed by the Participant:

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_