

NIC Walking Guides

-A Day Trip From Nagoya- #26 - Hiking on the Nakasendo

Part 6: From Ota-shuku to Unuma-shuku



NAGOYA INTERNATIONAL CENTER

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Introduction

With a population of 2.2million, Nagoya. The capital of Aichi Prefecture is the core city of Japan's fourth largest metropolitan area.

As commerce, industry, and culture flourished in the Edo Period, Nagoya grew into a thriving metropolis. Nagoya has continued to grow since Ieyasu Tokugawa, founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate Government, built Nagoya Castle in 1612.

A culture and tradition of manufacturing blossomed during the Meiji Period and is still developing today.

Nagoya is conveniently located at the top of Ise Bay, a train or car ride away from many spots of historical, and cultural interest. The old Tokaido and Nakasendo Highways, which connected Kyoto and Tokyo in the days before rail, are easily accessible for a day trip from Nagoya.

This guide has been prepared for foreign residents of Nagoya and visitors who are interested in exploring local tourist attractions, on and off the beaten path. This guide is one of a series of walking guides which cover various areas in and surrounding Nagoya.

Contained in this guide is a model walking route for specified area. You will a number of points of cultural and historical interest, situated in and near the specified location. A short explanation of the history of each point has also has been included.

We hope that you find this guide useful.

Mino-kaido Highway 美濃街道

There were two main highways between Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto during the Edo Period. One was the Tokaido Highway which ran along the Pacific Ocean, and the other was the Nakasendo Highway which passed through the mountainous region of central Japan. There were 69 shukuba villages (stages) along the Nakasendo Highway between Edo and Kyoto during the Edo Period.



Shukuba map of Mino-Kaido

The map above shows the 17 shukuba villages (stages) along the Mino-kaido Highway section of the Nakasendo - which runs through current Gifu Prefecture. Ota-shuku is located approximately 40 km north of Nagoya.

Access: From Nagoya take a Meitetsu railway train to Unuma Station 鵜沼 on the Meitetsu Railway. At Unuma change to the JR Takayama Line and get off at Mino Ota Station 美濃太田; it is the second stop.

Ferry bridge at Ota 太田の渡し

There were no bridges across the Kisogawa River in this area during the Edo Period, so people had to cross the river by ferryboat. It was said that the ferry bridge was one of three big chokepoints on the Nakasendo Highway at that time.



Ferry bridge at Ota-shuku



The ruins of the ferry bridge

Yusenji Temple 祐泉寺



The Mino-kaido Highway runs along the Kisogawa River around this area. Yusenji Temple is an old temple which was constructed in 1474. There is a “suikinkutsu” 水琴窟 at the corner of the garden, which makes a beautiful sound when one drop of water drops into a small hole.

Ota-shuku 太田宿

Ota-shuku was the 51st shukuba village (stage) from Edo on the Nakasendo Highway during the Edo Period.



Population: 508.

Number of houses: 118

Honjin 1

Waki-Honjin: 1

Number of inns: 20

Length of shukuba village: 673m

Picture: Map of Ota-shuku village

Old Komatsu-ya Store 旧小松屋 (Current Ota-shuku Information office)

During the Edo Period, a family ran a store named Komatsu-ya. Currently it is open as the Ota-shuku information office. Maps and guide booklets of Ota-shuku are available free of charge there. Traditional tools, furniture, and other goods are displayed in a good preserved condition.



Ota-shuku Honjin 本陣 (an officially appointed inn in the Ota-shuku area)

Accommodation facilities were ordered to be built in each shukuba village by the Tokugawa Government. Only court nobles, federal lords, and hatamoto (direct retainers of the Shogun) were



allowed to stay overnight at these honjin. Ordinary people were not allowed to use them. It was therefore necessary that whoever managed the honjin should have strong financial power; these inns were passed down through the family. It is said that Kazu-no-miya, a member of the Emperor's Family, once stayed overnight at the Ota-shuku honjin on the way to Edo from Kyoto. Today, only a gate is preserved.

Gate of the Honjin

Ota-shuku Waki-honjin 脇本陣



The waki-honjin assisted the honjin when honjin could not accommodate all guests. Ota-shuku waki-honjin is preserved today as a privately owned residence. Half of the house is used as the owner's residence and the remaining half is open to the public. The house has an additional roof over the main roof called " Udatsu ", which was built as a fire protection wall. It was said that a " Udatsu " is a symbol of wealth.

Ota-shuku Waki-honjin

Masukata 枡形



The shukuba village was also constructed with the aim of defending the Tokugawa Government. In order to prevent infiltration by enemy troops the Tokugawa Government made a main road curved at a right angle in each shukuba village.

Ruins of the Magistrate's Office 代官所跡

Ota Elementary School lies at the side of the old Mino-kaido Highway. During the Edo Period the magistrate's office was situated at the current primary school. One of officers who worked for the magistrate's office was the father of author Shoyo TSUBOUCHI (18959 - 1935), who was born and had spent his youth there. Shoyo was a famous scholar of English literature at the beginning of the Meiji period and the first man to translate many of Shakespeare's works into Japanese.



Ota Elementary School

Ruins of Sarubami Castle 猿ばみ城



The ruins of the Sarubami Castle are found on top of a mountain situated along the Kisogawa River. During the civil war period in Japan, Nobunaga ODA, an Owari provincial lord, had to take over the castle in order to conquer the Mino provincial area. At last he succeeded in taking the strongly defended castle after repetitive attacks.

There is a village at the foot of the mountain called Katsuyama. Katsuyama 勝山 means mountain victory in Japanese. It is said that Katsuyama was named in honor of that victory.

Iwaya Kannon 岩屋観音

The Nakasendo Highway turns into a mountain pass from Route 21. A small Kannon Temple was set up at the end of the road. The Highway then continues downhill following the Kiso River.



Mino-kaido Highway



Iwaya-Kannon Temple

Uto Pass うとう峠



The Nakasendo Highway runs across under Route 21 and turns into another mountain pass again. Getting up close to the Uto Pass, the road is paved with stones and beautiful hydrangea flowers.

Uto Pass Ichiri-tsuka うとう峠一里塚



An ichiri-tsuka was a marker (much like a mile post) set up at regular intervals of 3.7 km along the Nakasendo Highway, marking the distance from Edo. The Uto pass ichiri-tsuka was 100th on the Nakasendo Highway from Edo. There were two markers from Ota-shuku till this Uto Pass - Kobi Ichiri-tsuka and Torikumi Ichiri-tsuka, but both markers no longer exist today.

Photo: Uto pass Ichiri-tsuka

Ruins of Kosatsuba 高札場址

After passing by the Uto Pass Ichiri-tsuka, Nakasendo Highway turns into Unuma Town. Going downhill you can see Inuyama Castle in the distance. Going on further there is Akasaka Shrine 赤坂神社. During the Edo Period *kosatsuba* was set up at the gateway to the shrine; a *kousatsuba* was a contemporary public bulletin-board set up in each shukuba village by the Tokugawa shogunate for travelers and villagers.

From here is a 15-20 minute to Unuma Station. The Total walking distance from Mino Ota to Unuma is around 12km and should take approximately 3 hours.



Inuyama Castle



Gateway to Akasaka Shrine

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