

NIC Walking Guides

⑤ Hiking on the Nakasendo

Part 2



NAGOYA INTERNATIONAL CENTER VOLUNTEERS

In part 1, the hike explored Magome-shuku 馬籠宿 and Tsumago-shuku 妻籠宿 on the Kisoji Highway section of the Nakasendo. This guide will take you on a hike of Ochiai-shuku, Nakatsugawa-shuku, and Oi-shuku on the Minoji Highway section of the Nakasendo.



The map above shows the 17 shukuba villages (stages) along the Minoji Highway section of the Nakasendo - which ran through current Gifu Prefecture. Magome-shuku (on the far right) is the last stage on the Kisoji Highway section before the road becomes the Minoji Highway.

From JR Nakatsugawa 中津川 take to a bus to Magome-shuku 馬籠宿 Get off the bus at the Kisojikuchi bus stop (where Part 1 ended).

This point was the border between Kisoji Highway and the Mino Highway.

The photo shows a path on the left side, this is the gateway to the Kisoji Highway



After crossing over the main road, you will soon arrived at the Ochiai-shuku village.

Ochiai-shuku 落合宿

Ochiai-shuku was the 44th shukuba (stage) on the Nakasendo from Edo (Tokyo) during the Edo Period. At that time, Ochiai-shuku was a small shukuba with only 75 houses. The following is an ukiyoe print of the landscape of the Ochiai-shuku area by Hiroshige Utagawa .



Below you can see photos of the Ochiai-shuku Honjin (an officially appointed inn in the Ochiai-shuku area) and Ochiai-shuku Waki-Honjin (subsidiary accommodation of Honjin). Both the Honjin and the Waki-honjin are still in existence, but the Waki-honjin has become an ordinary residence.



Honjin 本陣



Waki-honjin 脇本陣

Below you can see photos of the an old-fashioned pump well. Ochiai-shuku village had two big fires during the Edo Period.



The old and big pine tree (seen below) at the corner of the road marked the end of the Ochiai-shuku village during the Edo Period.



If you walk up the slope (to the top of the hill) along the Minoji Highway and take a look back towards Ochiai-shuku, you will be able to see the beautiful scenery of Mount Ena as well as the Magome-shuku stage located halfway up the mountain on the left-hand-side.



Nearby there is a stone pillar post (below) that reads “Ruin of Tateba-chaya”. “tateba-chaya” is a tea shop where travelers took a break, used located on a top of hill.



On the way to Ochiai-shuku, there is a stone pillar-post (below) that reads “shiraki aratame bansho”. This once was a check-point where travelers were rigorously checked to make sure any timbers or wood products were carried out without permission. This was because the mountains of the Kisoji area belonged to Owari Tokugawa family during the Edo Period.



- Cross over Route 256 and go down some stone steps. You will come to the gateway of Nakatsugawa-shuku. It is a journey of approximately 4 km between Ocuai-shuku and Nakatsugawa-shuku.

A kousatsuba can be found here. A kousatsuba was a contemporary public bulletin board. One was set up in each shukuba (stage) and village by the Tokugawa Shogunate for travelers and villagers.



Nakatsugawa-shuku 中津川宿

Nakatsugawa-shuku was 45th shukuba (stage) on the Nakasendo from Edo. During the Edo Period, Nakatsugawa-shuku was a large and thriving stage with a population of 1230, 29 inns, and 175 houses. The below ukiyoe was one of two that Hiroshige Utagawa drew of the Nakatsugawa-shukuba area during the Edo Period.



The Minoji Highway ran through the area that is now Nakatsugawa city center. The Honjin and the Waki-honjin of Nakatsugawa-shuku village once stood along the Minoji Highway, but now the Honjin have lo Waki-hojin has changed to the Nakasendo Historical Museum. The Honjin no longer exists, but the Waki-hojin is still standing and operated as the Nakasendo Historical Museum. Next to the museum is the old village shoya house (see below photo) – the former home of the village mayor; during the Edo Period the wealthiest man in the village was usually appointed as mayor by the district lord.



After walking on for a while from the shoya house, you will come to a masukata corner. The Tokugawa Government ordered each shukuba village to make a main road curved at a right angle in order to prevent infiltration by enemy troops. This was called a masukata.

- Turn left at the Masukata. There is another Masukata corner 200m from the first Masukata.



Around the second *masukata* corner there are several large houses lined up along the Mino Highway. Each house has an *udatsu* on the roof .



An *udatsu* is a small roof built over the main roof. During the Tokugawa Era, due to the high cost to build an *udatsu*, house owners with an *udatsu* were usually regarded as wealthy, an *udatsu* came to represent success.

The Nakatsugawa Bridge 中津川橋

You will soon arrive at the Nakatsugawa Bridge. The bridge crosses the Nakatsugawa River and in olden times the river was known as the Kawakamigawa River. During the Edo Period, the Nakatsugawa-shuku village ended at this point. Below is an ukiyoe painting by Hiroshige Utagawa of the area around Nakatsugawa-shuku village from the view point of the Kawakamigawa Bridge.



Ichirizuka 一里塚跡

An ichiri-zuku was a marker (much like a mile post) set up at regular intervals of 3.7 km along the Nakasendo Highway. The ichiri-zuku were set up at the beginning of the Edo Period by the Tokugawa Government and marked the distance from Edo. This marker was the 85th on the Nakasendo from Edo.



Chaya Honjin 茶屋本陣

Chaya honjin was a teahouse which only court nobles, federal lords, and hatamoto (direct retainers of the shogun) could use. During the Edo Period, chaya honjin were set up at the halfway point between two shukuba villages. Only people who had strong financial power were able to a Chaya honjin.



Chaya honjin

After the chaya honjin the road becomes a steep upward road, known as the Jinbeisaka-slope. On top of the hill is a park.



Walk down from the top of hill and you will soon approach Oi-shuku. There is a Oi-shuku Kousatsuba (photo below) at the gateway to Oi-shuku village.



Oi-shuku 大井宿

Oi-shuku was the 46th shukuba (stage) on the Nakasendo from Edo. During the Edo Period it had 110 houses, 41 hatagoya (inn), 8 teahouses, and a population of 466. It was the most prosperous shukuba village of the 17 shukuba villages along the Minoji Highway on the Nakasendo. This was due to the fact that Oi-shuku was not only a shukuba village along the Nakasendo Highway, but also a stop on the road between Nagoya (and Ise Shrine in current Mie Prefecture) and Zenkoji Temple (located in current Nagano Prefecture). The below ukiyoe by Hiroshige Utagawa shows the winter landscape of the Oi-shuku area.



Oi-shuku Honjin 大井宿本陣

(The official inn of the Oi-shuku area)

The original Oi-shuku honjin is still standing today and is located at a masukata corner on the Minoji Highway. Only court nobles, federal lords, and hatamoto (direct retainers of the Shogun) were allowed to have an overnight stay at a honjin. It was required that whoever managed the honjin needed to have strong financial power.



Turning to right at the Oi-shuku Masukata, follow the Minoji Highway to the center of Oi-shuku. Many old, large houses still stand along the road.

Hatagoya (inn) 旅籠屋

There used to be 41 hatagoya (inns) in Oi-shuku during the Edo Period. Some of them are still in business even now.



The Shoya House of Oi-shuku Village 庄屋

The village's shoya residence still stand today amongst the old, large houses along the road. During the Edo Period, a shoya was a village mayor who was not elected by village people, but by the district lord. The shoya was usually the richest man in the village area.



Travelling down the road soon leads to Oihashi Bridge. The bridge used to mark the end of the village.

The distance between Nakatsugawa-shuku and Oi-shuku is approximately 10 km. About 10 minutes from Oihashi bridge is Ena Station - a JR Chuoh Line station with regular services to Nagoya.