

## DAY 2 Shinchaya → Magome post town → O-tsumago → Tsumago post town

### 00 / Viewpoint

Just before turning out of view, be sure to look behind you, as the Hara's will most likely be waving you off.

### 01 / A local Suwa shrine



This is the entrance to a local Suwa shrine 諏訪神社. The Suwa deity was worshipped from ancient times as the god of hunting and agriculture, and more recently, as the god of national security. The main shrine, Suwa Taisha, is one of the oldest shrines in Japan and represents 10,000 smaller shrines nationwide (It is located near Lake Suwako, about 100km away). It is also famous for the Onbashira Matsuri festival, held every seven years, whereby devotees ride large fir tree logs down the mountain and erect them at the shrine. Due to the inherent dangers of riding the logs and standing them upright, this is also known as one of the most deadly rituals in Japan. You will notice the “shimenawa” rice straw rope and “shide” pieces of white paper designating that you are entering a holy spot. Follow the cedar-lined path back into the forest to see the shrine itself, being careful not to walk directly down through the center of the torii-gate, as this is traditionally considered the path of the gods.

### 02 / Shimazaki Toson

Shimazaki Toson (1872-1943) is one of many literary figures with connections to the Nakasendo, but Toson is the one with the closest and longest association. Toson was born and raised in Magome and he wrote about Magome, Kiso-Fukushima (where he had relatives by marriage), and the Nakasendo at length in his autobiographical novels.

### *More about Shimazaki Toson*

series of prints on Osaka and Kyoto, but it was for his various Toson was one of Japan's most accomplished novelists of the 20th century. His second novel, *The Broken Commandment*, established firmly a Japanese school of naturalism in literature which drew from European origins but was markedly Japanese. The naturalists strove to rid their writings of flowery language and artificial situations, preferring to write about individuals in their actual social settings. Thus, *Toson's Commandment* was a depiction of the attempt of a burakumin who tried to 'pass' himself as an ordinary Japanese; in the end, the tension and self-degradation of the protagonist's position is broken by self-confession.

Many of Toson's novels depicted social realism even more fully than *The Broken Commandment*; they were explicitly, and often painfully, autobiographical. In *The Family and New Life*, the author describes the events he and his family lived through. His books, therefore, provide the reader with thinly fictionalized accounts of the lives and experiences of people of Toson's class in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when so much was changing very quickly. *New Life* is a particularly exceptional novel which caused a sensation when it was published. It is a confessional which recounts Toson's affair with his niece, her pregnancy, and his flight to France.

In his last novel, *'Before the Dawn'*, Toson departed from the autobiographical form and wrote a semi-historical, semi-fictional account of his father's life during the period of the Meiji restoration. His family was of the farmer class in the Edo period, but were well off and the hereditary headmen of Magome village and owner of the honjin throughout the period. His father represents the experience of a member of the rural elite striving to participate in and experience the vast changes of the Meiji era. As with many of his generation, the stresses of the age led to great bitterness and disillusionment.

Many original manuscripts, including *Before the Dawn*, are kept in a former inn in Magome associated with Toson's family. The site of the honjin where Toson's father lived has become home to a memorial hall dedicated to this famous author.

### 03 / More on Magome post town



Period inns, restaurants, and shops selling pottery, clothing, and local Kiso wood products create a lively atmosphere in Magome. Most visitors eventually find their way to the site of the old “honjin” inn where Shimazaki Toson was born in 1872. Only a part of the original buildings remained after the fire of 1895, and a memorial hall to the author has now been built there. The geographic layout of the town on an incline, combined with the close juxtaposition of wooden architecture, made it particularly susceptible to fire, and in fact three homes burnt down here in 2012. (Locals all came together to put out the flames and, when asked, seem grateful to have “gotten off easy” with only three homes destroyed.) Kiso wood and lacquerware are especially famous, and though you will see more along the route, Magome has its share of good-quality wares. Many of the lighter wooden pieces are made of hinoki cypress, one of the five timbers that were illegal for commoners to use in the Edo-period (1600-1868). Due to their high value and use in building temples and villas of nobleman, commoners caught trying to smuggle this wood across domain borders paid the ultimate price: One head for one log.

04 / Magome food detail

After crossing the intersection and starting the climb through town, there is a convenience store on you left, which may be a good option for picnic lunch supplements. Magome and other towns along the Kiso valley are also known for two kinds of prevalent vending snacks : GOHEI-MOCHI五平餅 and O-YAKI お焼き.



**① O-YAKI IS A STEAMED OR GRILLED FLOUR-BASED BUN WITH VARIOUS SWEET AND SAVORY FILLINGS. THESE MAY BE (BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO) EGGPLANT (“NASUBI”茄子), PUMPKIN-SQUASH (“KABOCHA”カボチャ), DRIED/PRESERVED DAIKON RADISH (“HOSHI-DAIKON”干大根), SWEET RED BEAN PASTE (“ANKO”あんこ), WALNUT (“KURUMI”クルミ), BEEF (“GYUU-NIKU”牛肉), PORK (“BUTA-NIKU”豚肉), MUSHROOM (“KINOKO”キノコ), MUGWORT (“YOMOGI”よもぎ), AND CANOLA GREENS (“NOZAWANA”野沢菜).**

**① GOHEI-MOCHI IS POUNDED, GLUTINOUS RICE CAKE “MOCHI” COVERED IN A SWEET SAUCE AND GRILLED ON A STICK. THE SAUCE IS USUALLY SOY SAUCE, SUGAR AND WALNUT/PEANUT BASED, BUT IT MAY ALSO HAVE “SANSHO”山椒 (A TYPE OF JAPANESE SICHUAN MOUNTAIN PEPPER, ZANTHOXYLM) OR SESAME FLAVORING.**



05 / Café Kappe

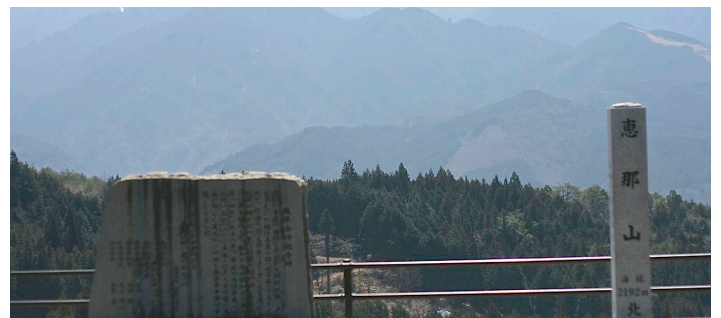


This is also a good place to pick up a sandwich to go for your picnic lunch. The teriyaki chicken 照り焼き is always a hit. Other options include a club “mikkusu-sando” ミックスサンド or toasted ham “hamu-sando” ハムサンド sandwich, as well as four different kinds of o-yaki buns (pumpkin-squash “kabocha” カボチャ, vegetable “yasai” 野菜, sweet red bean “anko” あんこ, and a mix of mushroom and minced pork “mikusu” ミックス).



06 / Viewpoint

This viewpoint will be your last chance to see Mt. Ena in full (2191m) in the distance. Say your goodbyes to the mountain and Magome, and either continue walking straight along the gravel, or stay true to the Nakasendo and follow the signs up and down the stone path to the left. Both routes arrive at the same point.



07 / Photo



08 / Photo



09/ Sights along the path



**i** **BEAR SIGNS:**  
 BY NOW, YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED THE BEAR SIGNS. ASIAN BLACK BEAR SIGHTINGS ARE VERY RARE, BUT NOT UNHEARD OF, SO BE SURE TO RING THE BELLS AS YOU PASS, ESPECIALLY IN THE LATE AUTUMN MONTHS (OCTOBER-NOVEMBER).



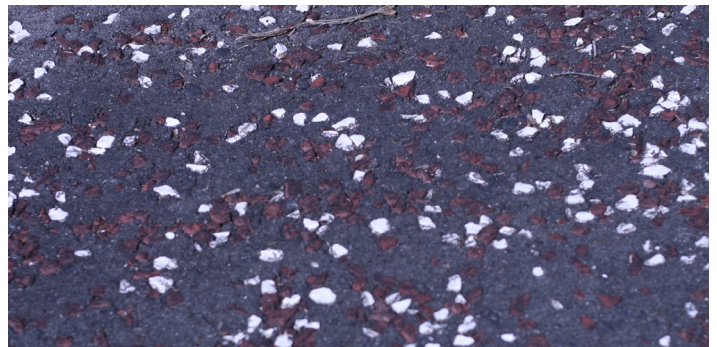
**i** **STACKED ROCKS:**  
 ALSO ON THIS PATH, YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THE STACKED ROCKS ON TOP OF THE DOSOUJIN OR NEAR JIZO STATUES. THIS IS A CUSTOM CARRIED OUT BY TRAVELLERS, LIKE YOURSELF, WHOM THESE GODS PROTECT. ITS ORIGIN IN JAPAN TRACES BACK TO THE STORY OF THE BODHISATTVA JIZO, WHO IS ABLE TO OPEN THE VARIOUS LEVELS OF HELL WITH HIS STAFF AND LIGHTS THE WAY WITH HIS MAGICAL JEWEL. IT IS SAID THAT JIZO PROTECTS LOST, OR PREMATURELY DECEASED, CHILDREN WHO ARE TRAPPED IN THE BUDDHIST "LIMBO"/ "PURGATORY" STATE. EVERY DAY, THESE CHILDREN STACK UP ROCKS TO BUILD UP KARMA, NOT FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR THEIR PARENTS, SO THAT THEY MAY BE REBORN TO THEM. UNFORTUNATELY, EVERY NIGHT, THE DEMONS COME TO KNOCK DOWN THESE ROCK PILES. JIZO HIDES THE CHILDREN WITHIN HIS CLOAK SO THAT THE DEMONS CANNOT FIND THEM, AND BECAUSE JIZO IS ALSO THE PROTECTOR OF TRAVELLERS, WE ARE OBLIGED TO HELP THE CHILDREN BY STACKING UP ROCKS ALONG THE WAY.

10 / Alternative Café

If, for some reason, you were not able to buy a picnic lunch in Magome, the restaurant on your left here is a decent alternative.



The path soon reverts to the familiar colored stone-speckled asphalt of the Nakasendo(now red and white, instead of yellow).



11/ Viewpoint



## 12 / Touge porter hamlet

In the prosperous heyday of Nakasendo travel, this Touge hamlet was known for its use of oxen to transport luggage from as far away as Nagoya and Matsumoto cities. It is mentioned in a scene from Shimazaki Toson's novel *Before the Dawn*, and the Nakasendo's only "Gyu-tou Kannon" ("oxen-headed Goddess of Compassion") statue lies on the Tsumago side of the pass. A local Kumano Shrine also lies at the end of the village on your right. One of over 3000 across Japan, this shrine is connected to a famous pilgrimage route that encompasses three holy mountains/larger shrines in Wakayama prefecture (about 300km southwest of here).

## 13 / Photo



## 14 / Magome Pass

Here, you officially cross from Gifu into Nagano prefecture. Take a look at the map next to the elevation marker to get your bearings, then head DOWN the FOREST TRAIL from here. Be careful in the early spring months, as there can still be some stubborn ice and snow on the path.



## 15 / More on ICHIKOKU-TOCHI "Tateba" Teahouse

ICHIKOKU-TOCHI "Tateba" Teahouse:

It is no accident that a structure of such opulent timbers (the large one in the center of the teahouse is a "keyaki"ケヤキ, or zelkova tree) exists at this point so near the pass and between post towns. Just down from Ichikoku, the rest area and gate here mark where there used to be a "shirokiaratame-bansho" 白木改め番所, or a "Checkpoint Charlie" for five types of valuable Kiso timbers. This lumber was coveted by those in power during the Edo period for its strength and resistance to decay, and it was often used in the construction of villas, palaces, temples and shrines. You may not have noticed, but you've actually been passing these trees for most of your trip. They are no longer illegal for commoners to cut down, but during the Edo period, one smuggled log would have cost you your head (and one limb, a limb). Stripping the bark for matchlock musket flint was also a capital offense. The five evergreen trees, called collectively the "Kisogoboku" 木曾五木, actually look fairly similar from afar, but are more discernible by their fronds:



{In order: "Hinoki" (Japanese cypress), "Sawara" (a species of false cypress), "Nezuko" (Japanese arborvitae, similar to cedar), "Asunaro" (also a type cypress), and "Koyamaki" (Japanese umbrella pine)}

## More about the Ichikoku Teahouse

During the Edo period, the Ichikoku teahouse was a rest stop for those who were waiting to make it through this timber checkpoint, as well as to spend the night in case they arrived after the gates had closed. Now, it houses a number of old agricultural devices, including a rice-straw rope-maker, a rice thresher and de-husker, and various tools used for preparing and maintaining the rice paddies themselves. Notice the fish above the traditional hearth as well: not only a symbol of water to keep embers from jumping out of the pit, it also holds the kettle in place. Lifting the fish head would release tension on the central pole and allow one to control the height of the kettle above the flames.



**i** ALSO WORTH NOTING AT ICHIKOKU TEAHOUSE: IF YOU GET MR. SUZUKI AS ONE OF THE VOLUNTEERS HERE, ASK HIM ABOUT THE “KISO-BUSHI” 木曾節 SONG. YOU MIGHT BE TREATED TO A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE.

## 16 / Haunted Sawara cypress tree

Not too far down this path, you will pass a Sawara cypress tree (marked by a sign on the right) that is estimated to be over 300 years old and is said to be haunted by a winged “tengu” demon. Some academics believe the red face and long nose of this mythological spirit can be traced back to the first shipwrecked Westerners who washed up on Japan’s coast and, later, to Portuguese sailors who visited Japan for trade (bringing with them Christianity, wine and guns). The image of the “tengu” demon has changed over time, however, and it more than likely that that its origins date back to the Indian Hindu eagle deity, Garuda.

**i** FARTHER DOWN THE PATH, YOU WILL PASS SOME JAPANESE CEDAR AND HINOKI CYPRESS TREES THAT ARE WRAPPED IN TAPE TO PREVENT THE ANIMALS (AND POSSIBLY “TENJU”) FROM SHARPENING THEIR HORNS AND CLAWS ON THEM.