

# Willis's Walkabouts HONSHU

## 4th – 17th October 2020

This trip will be led by Walkabouts guide Rod Costigan. Rod first 'discovered' the surprising wildness of Japan's mountains on a work trip over 30 years ago. This trip schedule brings together highlights from three more recent walking trips to central Honshu.

This trip takes you into Japan's fabulous mountain scenery in Autumn. Think botanic gardens on mountainsides.

Yes, Japan has lots of people, but you are thinking of the valleys. The mountains are surprisingly quiet. They are also steep, rugged and spectacular, supporting forests that are varied and downright gorgeous. That is, gorgeous even in summer. But we are trying to time this trip to leaves. It's a bit hard to predict which leaves will be turning when we are there, because each year is different and the main display starts at the top and gradually descends the 2000-3000m to the adjacent valleys. But that is just part of the charm. In the unlikely event that we miss the leaves, you still won't be disappointed.

Past years' feedback suggests that it would suit many Willis clients to bookend this trip with say, a week, of private mainstream travel. So, while previous Willis Japan offerings have focused on two or three long walks across three weeks, this year's itinerary is shorter, focuses on one region but is aimed more at being a selection of walking attractions. If you have more time, you might consider exploring Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima and other fascinating places before or after this trip.



*Southern Alps*

take in the turning of the

### Overview

#### Highlights

- Spectacular mountain terrain, gorgeous forests of birch, maple and larch, Autumn colours, cascades, isolated shrines.
- Classic northern hemisphere wildlife: most notably deer, serow and monkeys.
- An easy day doing Japan's most famous 'pilgrimage' trail.
- Fantastic wild views of the iconic Mt Fuji.
- Standing on several of Japan's highest peaks.



#### Group size

5 clients

## Mt. Amaka and Mt Kenashi – 1 day

As we will eventually visit most of Japan's highest peaks, it seems like a good idea to stop off for a quick look at the highest of all. Unfortunately climbing Mt Fuji outside 'the season' is frowned upon and possibly for good safety reasons. But given we will be passing on the way to the Southern Alps, we will stop off in roofed accommodation for two nights and get warmed up with a day walk up the ridge of Mt Amiga which will have great views back to Mt Fuji.

Distance: 6 km return to Mt Amiga with an optional extra 6 km to Mt Kenashi  
Climb: 800m/1000m  
High point: 1771m/1945m asl  
Conditions: Track walking. Roofed accommodation before and after this walk.  
Accommodation: Roofed



*Mt Fuji viewed from the Southern Alps*

## Southern Alps – 6 days, 5 nights

Traverse the highest section of the ridgeline known as the Alps Minami (Southern Alps), not far from Tokyo, within view of Mt Fuji and yet relatively quiet once you are in it. Includes the second highest peak in Japan, although that is not so much the point as the quality of the scenery. Lots of forest, and lots of track walking above the tree line. Occasional serow and monkeys to be seen.



We will start in the valley of the Haya River, climb through lush forests until breaking out onto the stony moonscape of Mt Notori. We will camp further along the ridge near a mountain hut and from there take a day trip to Kita Dake, the highest peak in the range which sits off the main ridge. From there it is another two days to a saddle where we can take an equally spectacular bus route out of the mountains.

Walking is on tracks. Camping is sometimes near a refugio style hut. There may be casual

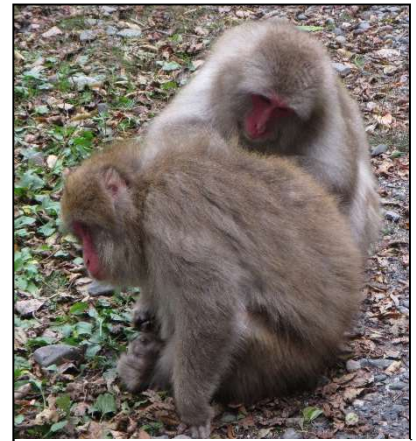
vacancies there for any of our wearier members who might want a break from camping (at own cost).

Distance: 42 km  
Relief (diff highest v lowest points): 2000m  
Starting climb: 1700m, but spread over 2 days  
High point: 3192m

Accommodation: Camping. Some managed mountain huts may be available for anyone who wants to opt for a softer option (at own expense).

Conditions: Starts with prolonged uphill track walking of variable grade over two days. Quiet, but not remote in the sense that there are managed huts on the route.

The high point is over 3000m asl so it can be chilly especially at night, but in fine conditions the temperatures are perfect for walking. On the risk side, if it rains, it can rain heavily. There is a very small possibility of snowfall.



*Wild monkeys are common but do not bother passers-by.*

### **Magome to Tsumago – 1 day, 2 nights**

This is probably the most famous of the Japan's iconic trails, the highlight of the ancient trade route from Osaka to Tokyo, but left isolated from major current day transport routes. It features homes, shops and tea houses that have been operating for hundreds of years.

In any other country it would be spoiled by its fame. But it still feels very fresh and authentic, at least at this time of year. A pleasant and not very demanding optional walk that also serves as a rest day. The intention – depending on timing and numbers of bookings – is to stay in the spacious and picturesque house that has been in your host's family for fourteen generations. Not so authentic, but pleasing anyway.. the villages here have cafes selling actual coffee, which is a bit unusual in Japan.



Accommodation: Roofed Distance: ~7 km

Relief (diff highest v lowest points): ~100m Starting climb: ~100m

High point: ~1000m asl



## Northern Alps – 5 days, 4 nights

A wide valley and mountain range in the middle of Honshu. Rugged peaks above the tree line, great views in all directions. A video of a day in Kamikochi in 2019 can be found at the foot of this invitation.

This range includes more of Japan's highest peaks, but again, that's not so much the point as the terrific views and a spectacular ridgeline.

Starts and finishes at Kamikochi, a locale famous for its wildlife. We will base camp in a side valley and do day trips. Exact routes and destinations will depend upon weather and the wishes of the group.

Accommodation: Camping on stony surfaces. Some managed mountain huts may be available for anyone who wants to opt for a softer option (at own expense).

Distance: ~45 km

Relief (diff highest v lowest points): 1500m

Starting climb: 500m

High point: 3200m asl

Conditions: The high point is over 3000m asl so it can be chilly and exposed but in fine conditions the temperatures will be perfect for walking. Camping will be at around 2000asl, On the risk side, if it rains, it can rain heavily. There is a very small possibility of snowfall. The ridge routes are more strenuous and more exposed than the Southern Alps. Some day walks might involve scrambling and some airy ladder climbs.



*On the path from Dakesawa Hut*



*View from Mt Mae-Hodaka*

## Notes

### Accommodation

#### Before the trip

Suggest you try AirBnB rather than we recommend something. Generally, Japanese can be relied on more than more than most people to be trustworthy and clean. Book somewhere reasonably close to a railway station.

#### Between walks

Simple hotel, ryokan or BnB accommodation will be arranged for you.

#### On walks

Self-sufficient camping. You need to be prepared as you would for a walk in the Australian High Country in Autumn or Western Tasmania in Summer/Autumn.



*Mountain hut*

### Catering

#### On the track

Leave dinners to the guide. Either catered by the guide or provided at mountain huts (included). Basic breakfasts provided but may be Japanese style savoury foods. Provide your own if preferred (not included). Provide own lunches. The guide will be available to assist with supermarket shopping on the day prior to the trip.

#### Between walks

Japanese dinners included. Generally these will be savoury with lots of vegetables and rice, a description which doesn't do them justice. If that doesn't suit, there is often an alternative down the street somewhere and convenience stores are everywhere. These days convenience stores sell some western style products like bread, muesli and chocolate. Fruit in these shops is limited in range but outstanding in quality.

### Last minute shopping

It is best if you bring everything you need but if you forget anything, there are good camping stores.

For food, if a supermarket doesn't jump out at you, you will find a well-stocked convenience store in every major station and every major city block.

**Hours:** We will normally walk 6-8 hours per day.

**Difficulty:** While walking will almost all be on tracks, the tracks may vary in condition, to the point of being rough at times. Each walk will unavoidably begin with a stiff climb, so you should climb a few big hills in preparation.

**Campsites:** Mostly quite roomy. Some on coarse gravel, some on hard ground.

**Clothing and equipment:** These are mountain environments. Although it is unlikely, a cold snap could bring snow. Pack and dress as you would for the Snowy Mountains in May or June.

**Packs and Waterproofing:** We can expect plenty of fine weather, but it can rain. You need a waterproof pack or a pack liner/cover and sleeping bag waterproofed when packed, just to be sure.

**Art:** No rock art! but the mountains do contain miscellaneous traditional shrines which add a certain charm.

**Culture:** If you have any interest in the language, strangely, bushwalking is a good way to get exposure. You



*Mountain shrine*

certainly won't be doing it all day, but when you do meet someone in the mountains, a simple casual conversation comes so much more easily than anywhere else. In small ways the Japanese aesthetic is all around you all the time, whether in the mountains or the city, even though in built up areas it's sometimes hidden in nooks and crannies.



*Lonely ridgeline, Southern Alps*

**Swims:** Mountain streams offer washing opportunities but the combination of mountain climate and water temperature will make swimming uninviting. Between trips there will be opportunities to visit hot spring bath houses.

**Lowlights:** Walking will be confined to tracks as off-track is mostly way too thick. Camping will often be at prepared sites, usually near to a mountain hut. Lots of hill climbing, generally in short bursts but beginning each walk with a generous climb. A few short ladders and chains in some awkward spots: highlights to some, but possibly concerning for anyone with an extreme

problem with heights.

**Highlights:** High peaks, long views, stunning forests, meeting Japanese people with similar interests, intriguing mountain shrines.

### **What does it cost?**

Estimated \$4990. To be confirmed in April 2020.

Based on exchange rate, travel costs and accommodation costs on offer Oct 2019. Price may be subject to change.

Does include: Dinners, accommodation and transport beginning Day 1 and concluding with arrival at Tokyo on Day 14.

Does not include: Lunches and breakfasts.

Japan is not a cheap country. Our fee is more than most of our other overseas trips but we include transport and accommodation which we do not include on most of the other trips.

### **What do you get for the fee?**

You get all main meals, accommodation and transport beginning Day 1 and concluding with arrival at Tokyo on Day 14.



*Ladder climbing*



You get expert advice on the things to bring, the probable weather, etc. You get someone who will handle the mundane details of making the travel arrangements, doing the food shopping for the walks, organising accommodation etc. You get someone who will provide all the group equipment (billies, stoves, etc) and who will provide all the evening meals on the walks allowing you to relax and enjoy yourself. You also get a small, like-minded group of people with whom you can share your experiences.



*A tight campsite among the fir*

### **What you don't get?**

You do not get a guide who will hold your hand and make every decision for you. You must be prepared to take on a much greater degree of responsibility than on most other tours. All members of the group, including the guide, are expected to work together in establishing how the group will function, who will lead on the walks, who will look after the stragglers, etc.

Accepting the responsibility that goes with a trip like this is part of the experience we offer. It is one of the things that sets our trips apart from the vast majority of "adventure" trips on the market. For those prepared to accept this responsibility, it makes the experience doubly rewarding. Those who are not prepared to accept such responsibility would be better off going on a "normal" tour.

### **Important Footnotes**

**Note 1.** A large majority of those who have taken part in our overseas tours are Australian so all prices are quoted in Australian dollars. We have had several people from other countries take part by making their own travel arrangements to and from the start and finish points.

**Note 2.** The itinerary may change due to unforeseen conditions. Such disruptions are unlikely, but bad might be caused by typhoons (cyclones), earthquakes or volcanic eruptions.

**Note 3.** Our price is based on exchange rate, travel costs and accommodation costs on offer October 2019. The price is subject to change if any of these change substantially before the trip is confirmed.



*Maple forest, yet to turn*

### **Is it for you?**

This trip is not for the average tourist. We can neither control nor predict the weather, only accept it as it comes. If you do not want to take the necessary responsibility and/or you cannot obtain the necessary equipment, it is not for you. Good physical fitness and a good mental attitude are both necessary. If you have never carried a pack on an overnight walk, have never camped in windy and wet conditions, it will be harder for you to cope if conditions turn against us than for a person who has had that experience. Our past experience has shown us that a fit, experienced 70 year old may cope better than a fitter 25 year old who does not have experience in coping with adverse conditions.

### **Booking Schedule**

April 1	Price confirmed and bookings open
April 30	Bookings close
May 7	Trip will be confirmed. If bookings are insufficient, deposits will be refunded.
August 1	Final payment due.

## Conditions

1. A deposit of \$2000 is payable on booking.
2. Our cancellation fees are \$1000 after 1 June, \$2000 before 1 July and the full \$4990 after 1 September.
3. All participants are responsible for obtaining the necessary passport and visas and must have some form of travel insurance. We need to see proof of your travel insurance before departure. We need this as a condition of our own insurance.

If you would like more information, please email [walkabout@bushwalkingholidays.com.au](mailto:walkabout@bushwalkingholidays.com.au) and cc to [rod@greenstock.com.au](mailto:rod@greenstock.com.au).

More photos appear on the following pages.

A video of Kamikochi in 2019 can be found at <https://youtu.be/uwoiJzC8NRg>

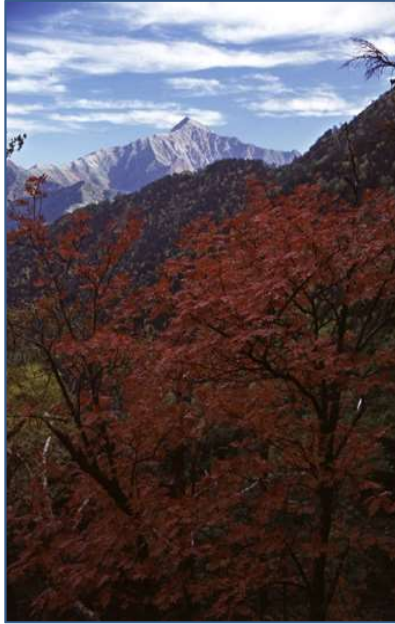




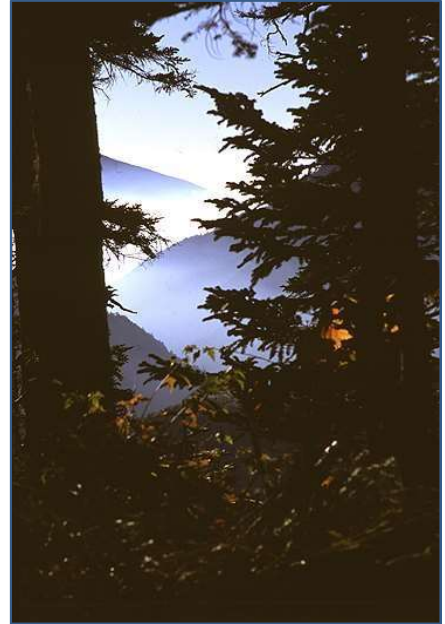




A Japanese garden – whichever way you look



Kita Dake, the high point of the Southern Alps



Morning view, Southern Alps





