

Willis's Walkabouts JAPAN: 15 October - 4 November 2017

This trip will be led by Walkabouts guide Rod Costigan. Besides spending six weeks working in Japan in 1989, Rod has done a number of more recent private trips including the Hokkaido walk and half of the two week Honshu walk offered here.

The trip takes you into Japan's fabulous mountain scenery in Autumn. Think botanic gardens and turn up the colour saturation.

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 take in the turning of the 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.



Southern Alps

Overview

Two walks, one on the main island, Honshu and one on the northern island, Hokkaido.

Highlights

Spectacular mountain terrain, gorgeous forests of birch, maple and larch, Autumn colours, cascades, isolated shrines.

Group size

Minimum 7, Maximum 10

Honshu – 2 weeks

Based on a walk the guide has done before



Mt Fuji viewed from the Southern



Shrine on the ridge to Mt Komagatake

Traverse the highest section of the ridgeline nicknamed the Southern Alps, not far from Tokyo, within view of Mt Fuji and yet relatively quiet once you are in it. Walking is on tracks. Camping is usually 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 80 km

Relief 2500m

Starting climb 1200m

Conditions

Some prolonged steep track walking. Quiet, but not remote in the sense that there are huts and even a ryokan (country guest house) on the route.

The high point is about 3500m asl so it can be chilly especially at night, but in fine conditions the temperatures are perfect for walking. If it rains, it can rain heavily. There is a small possibility of snowfall.

Hokkaido - 1 week

Based on a walk the guide has done before.

Crossing the range on the pointy tail of Hokkaido. The high point is Poroshiri Peak. This is the least frequented of the walks and mostly follows informal but well worn tracks. There might be some limited off track. Note, in general, Japan being a high rainfall region, forests are generally dense and off track walking is rarely practical below the tree line.

We will finish with a day trip to the highest mountain on Hokkaido, the volcano Asahi Dake (Peak of the Rising Sun, nothing to do with the beer).

Distance	44km
Relief	1300m
Starting climb	1300m
Conditions	

Just imagine a walk in western Tasmania in Autumn.

Very steep to begin. Cold on the ridges but comfortable in good weather. If we are unlucky we could experience a snowfall and the temperatures that go with that.



Morning mists between the conifers

Notes

Getting to Tokyo or back from Hokkaido

Webjet lists flights. Both cities have an airport train to get you into town.

Accommodation

Before the trip

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

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.



Misty late afternoon below Mt Notori

Catering

On the track

Leave dinners to the guide. Provide your own breakfast and lunches or by prior arrangement and for a small extra cost, take your chances with whatever the guide provides.

Between walks

Japanese meals. Can be just OK or can be quite an experience; between exquisite and confronting. But there is often an alternative down the street somewhere if it doesn't suit.

Last minute shopping.

Fabulous. But if we stick to the topic of walking gear...

Obviously it is best if you bring everything you need but if you forget anything, there are camping stores. In Tokyo, Montbell, Kyobashi 3-chome 1 Tokyo Square Garden 1 or L'Breath [that is really the name of a shop], 4 Chome-1-11 Shinjuku. In Sapporo, Montbell at 4 Chome-1 Kita 2 Jonishi or Columbia at the main railway station

Hours We will normally walk 4-8 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 gravel, some on hard ground.



Mountain shrine



Ash trees turning

Clothing and equipment These are an 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 buckets if we are unlucky. You need a waterproof pack or a pack liner/cover and sleeping bag waterproofed when packed.

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 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.

Swims Mountain streams offer washing opportunities but the combination of mountain climate and water temperature will make swimming uninviting. Between trips there will probably be opportunities to visit hot springs.



Lonely ridgeline, Southern Alps

Lowlights Walking will be confined to tracks as off-track is 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?

	<i>Stage 1 only</i>	<i>Full Trip</i>	
	2 weeks	3 weeks	
Start	15/10/17	15/10/17	You will also need to purchase a flight Tokyo – Sapporo (details to follow)
	Tokyo	Tokyo	
Finish	28/10/17	4/11/17	
	Tokyo	Sapporo	
Costs*	\$ 2,800 WillisWalkabouts	\$ 4,490** WillisWalkabouts	\$ ~500 You purchase
Total co	\$ 2,800	\$ 4,990	

Stage two is not offered on its own.

*Does include: All meals, accommodation and transport beginning Day 1 and concluding with arrival at Sapporo on Day 21.

Does not include: As per usual WW practice, breakfasts and lunches on the track are not included,.

Based on exchange rate, travel costs and accommodation costs on offer Oct 2016. Price is subject to change.

**The cost of the full trip includes the accommodation and transport costs between sections except the flight between Tokyo and Sapporo.

You will be given details when the trip has sufficient bookings to confirm that it will run.



Ladder climbing

Japan is not a cheap country. Our fee is \$4490, more than most of our other overseas trips but we include things like transport 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 Sapporo on Day 21.

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 cook 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.

As per our normal WW practice, breakfasts and lunches on the track are not included, but can be arranged at cost if you are willing to take a risk on preferences.

Notes

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. All bushwalks and change due to weather conditions. In the unlikely event of really foul weather at the start of a walk, we may wish to abort it, at least temporarily. If we get really foul weather later on, we may have to cut a route short.

Note 3. Our price is based on exchange rate, travel costs and accommodation costs on offer October 2016. The price is subject to change if the costs change.

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 walked off trail, have never camped in cold, windy and wet conditions, it will be harder for you to cope with the likely conditions than for a person who has had the relevant experience. 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.



Maple forest yet to turn

Conditions

1. A deposit of \$200 is payable on booking. This will be refunded in full if seven people have not booked by 1 June. Final payment is due by 1 August.
2. Our cancellation fees are \$200 before 1 June, \$1000 before 10 August and the full \$4490 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.