

Practical Travel Guide - 408

KISO VALLEY



日本政府観光局 (JNTO)
Japan National Tourism Organization

JNTO Website : <http://www.jnto.go.jp>

Old Post Towns of Tsumago, Magome and Narai

Kiso Valley (木曾谷), or “Kiso-ji” as it is often called by the Japanese, is in the southwestern part of Nagano, the most mountainous prefecture located in central Japan. Surrounded by mountains such as the Central Alps to the east and the North Alps to the west, the deep valley formed by the Kiso River is filled with the refreshing fragrance of woodland trees. The old Nakasendo Highway, which was completed in the Edo Period (1603–1867) as a trunk road connecting Kyoto and present day Tokyo, went through the region, the most difficult section for travelers because of the deep forests and steep slopes. In those days it took three days to pass through the valley, where today, National Road Route 19 and the JR Chuo Line enable one to take the trip in a few hours. Vestiges of the old highway are well

preserved in the Kiso Valley. Among the 11 post towns situated along the road, Tsumago, Magome and Narai are the most protected and worth visiting. There you will be surprised to discover that the old days of Japan still exist. “Fuzoku Emaki Parade,” the most famous event in the region, takes place in Tsumago on November 23 every year. Local folks, dressed in various costumes of the Edo Period travelers, form a procession along the old highway.

Kiso-Fukushima (木曾福島), now the political and cultural center of the district, has valuable relics and museums, although the town as a whole doesn't retain much of the olden day atmosphere.

Access to Tsumago & Magome:

From	To	Type of transportation	Time required	Fare (¥)
Shinjuku Sta.	Shiojiri Sta.	JR Chuo Line “Azusa” “Super Azusa” (express)	2 hrs. 35 min.	6,710
Shiojiri Sta.	Nakatsugawa Sta.	JR Chuo Line (local)	2 hrs.	1,620
Nagoya	Nakatsugawa Sta.	JR Chuo Line “Shinano” “Wide View Shinano” (express)	50 min.	2,940
Nakatsugawa Sta.	Magome	Kita-ena Bus	30 min.	540
Nagoya	Nagiso	JR Chuo Line “Wide View Shinano” (express)	60 min.	3,280
Magome	Tsumago Sta.	Ontake Kotsu Bus	30 min.	600
Nagiso Sta.		Ontake Kotsu Bus	7 min.	300

Nezame-no-toko (寢覚の床)

This is a unique beauty spot where granite that has encroached into the Kiso River has taken a variety of shapes, and the formations have been given names that describe their shape, like Byobuiwa (Folding Screen Rock), Zoiwa (Elephant Rock), and Eboshiwa (Noble's Court Headgear Rock).

Magome (馬籠)

Commanding a view of Mt. Ena, this is the southernmost post town, noted as the birthplace of Japan's great man of letters, Toson Shimazaki (1872–1943). Old-fashioned houses, most of them inn or souvenirs shops nowadays, are lined along a 600-m curving slope. A 20-min. stroll through the town.

Toson Memorial Museum (藤村記念館)

10-min. walk from Magome bus stop. Halfway up the slope, this hall exhibits books, photos and other materials regarding the author. The hall is built on the site where Toson's home, Magome Honjin (an officially appointed inn for feudal lords), was located. Admission: ¥500. Open: 8:30–17:00 (Apr.–Nov.), 9:00–16:00 (Dec.–Mar.), 9:00–16:00 (Dec.28–Jan.3). Closed: 2nd Tue.–Thu. of Dec.

Toson and his family rest in the peaceful precinct of **Eishoji Temple** (永昌寺), off the main street, on a small hill. There are also several other museums and historical sites concerning

Toson and the post town in Magome.

Tsumago (妻籠)

The second post town from the south. After the construction of the Chuo Line and the national road in the early 1900s, Tsumago gradually lost its role as a relay station and was left behind in the massive development of the whole nation. Faced with a serious problem of depopulation, people of Tsumago found a way out by making good use of the old deserted village in the late 1960s, when the movement of preserving and restoring historical structures took place. In 1976, Tsumago was designated as a Protected Area for the Preservation of Traditional Buildings by the government. The preservation of Tsumago is supported by the efforts of the townspeople as well as by the charter, whose principles state that no part of the town should be sold, hired out or destroyed.

Now the landscape is perfectly that of the Edo Period, where even TV antennas or electric light poles are out of sight. Spending a night at one of these traditional style inns along the main street will become a memorial high light on the itinerary of your journey.

In the middle of the main road, **Wakihonjin Okuya** (脇本陣奥谷), an officially appointed inn, whose designation is next to Honjin, is a three-storied structure all made of Japanese cypress. The present building was reconstructed in 1877 and it is now

open to the public to show its elaborate details. Behind the house stands a History museum. Admission: ¥600. Open: 9:00–17:00. (Enter by 16:45) Closed: Dec. 29–Jan. 1.

Nagiso Town Museum (南木曾町博物館)

This museum incorporates the Tsumagoyado honjin (Tsumago Inn) Wakihonjin Okuya and History Museum. General admission for the three facilities: ¥700. Open: 9:00–17:00. Closed: Dec.29–Jan.1

Hiking from Magome to Tsumago

The path between Magome and Tsumago is an ideal route to walk in Kiso if you have the time. The 3-hr. walk can be most enjoyable during the seasons of fresh verdure and autumnal tints. In winter (Jan. & Feb.), snow is about half a meter deep, and hiking boots are required. Luggage carrying service is available daily during Mar. 17–Nov. 30. Luggage is accepted at both Tourist Information Offices in Magome and Tsumago from 8:30 to 11:30 and arrives at 13:00. ¥500 per piece. There is a map on the 4/4 page.

Narai (奈良井)

Once called “Narai of a Thousand Houses,” it was the most prosperous post town in the valley. Designated as a Protected Area for the Preservation of Traditional Buildings, the town preserves the atmosphere of an old post town as well as Tsumago. The Narai Station, a small wooden structure, is unique, for it is kept up by the local senior citizens club instead of the railroad officials. Along the 1 km. long main street, there are five wells which, dating from the Edo Period, are still in use and appease the thirst of travelers.

Accommodations:

Name of facilities	Tel.	Room rate (¥)	Name of facilities	Tel.	Room rate (¥)
Magome			Narai		
Ryokan Iwatake (R)	(0573)69-2201	¥¥	Aoki (M)	(0264)34-3781	¥
Iroribata (M)	(0573)69-2026	¥	Iseya (M)	(0264)34-3051	¥¥
Umenoya (M)	(0573)69-2132	¥	Echigoya (R)	(0264)34-3011	¥¥
Magomechaya (M)	(0573)69-2038	¥	Kato (M)	(0264)34-2625	¥¥
Tajimaya (M)	(0573)69-2048	¥¥	Shimada (M)	(0264)34-2678	¥
Shirokiya (M)	(0573)69-2035	¥	Tsuchikawa (M)	(0264)34-3224	¥
Tsumago			Nagai (M)	(0264)34-2624	¥
Fujiya (M)	(0264)57-3186	¥	Narai-so (M)	(0264)34-3660	¥¥
Okameishi (M)	(0264)57-3043	¥	Ikariya (M)	(0264)34-3202	¥¥
Sakamotoya (M)	(0264)57-3111	¥	Kiso-Fukushima		
Shimosagaya (M)	(0264)57-3124	¥	Onyado Tsutaya (R)	(0264)22-2010	¥¥¥
Maruya (M)	(0264)57-3117	¥	Iwaya (R)	(0264)22-2015	¥¥¥
Tsutamura (M)	(0264)57-3235	¥	Yamamizuki Urara Tsutaya (R)	(0264)22-2145	¥¥¥
Kameyama (M)	(0264)57-3187	¥	Komanoyu (R)	(0264)23-2288	¥¥
Shimomura (M)	(0264)57-3158	¥	Sarashinaya (R)	(0264)22-2307	¥
Koshinzuka (M)	(0264)57-3029	¥	Moritomi Ryokan (R)	(0264)22-2303	¥¥
			Murachiya (R)	(0264)22-3186	¥
			Kiso Ryojoan YH (YH)	(0264)23-7716	¥

Remarks:

Rate per person.

H = Hotel

M = Minshuku (family-run inn)

R = Ryokan

PE = People's Lodge

Y = Youth Hostel

¥¥¥ = more than 15,000 yen

¥¥ = 8,001 yen – 15,000 yen

¥ = 8,000 yen or less

Folkcrafts such as **Nurigushi** (lacquered combs) and **Magemono** (round containers made of cypress) are famous items from this town.

Kiso-no-Ohashi (木曾の大橋), or Kiso's Big Bridge, is made of Japanese cypress that is about 300 years old and one of the biggest bridges without bridge pier. Beautifully curved, the bridge arches over the Narai River.

Kiso-Hirasawa (木曾平沢)

One station north of Narai, is noted for lacquer wares.

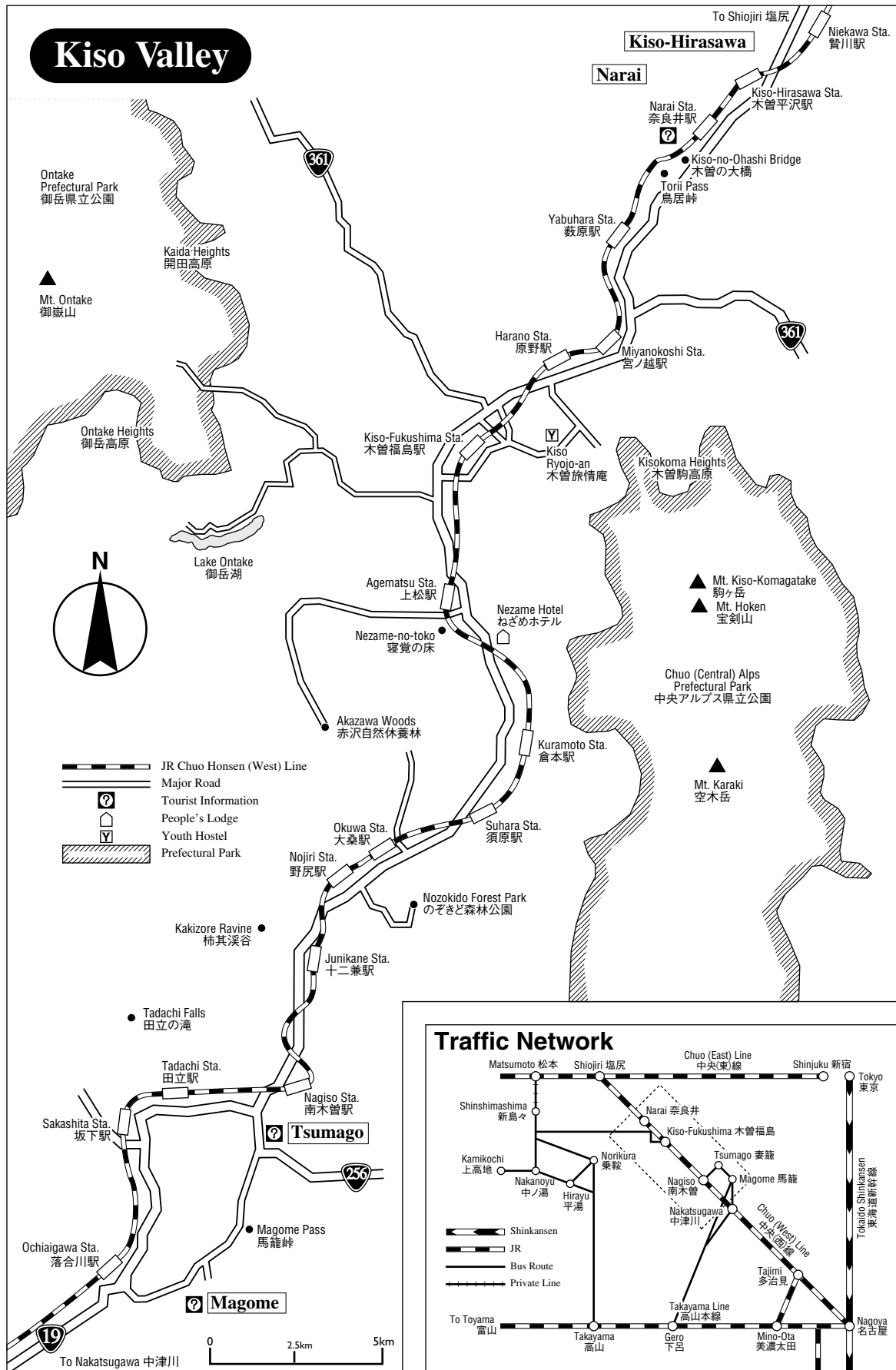
Kiso Lacquerware Museum (木曾漆器館), displaying works of ancient to modern times, is 10 min. on foot from the station. Admission: ¥240. Open: 9:00–17:00 (–16:00 Dec.–Mar.). Closed: Mon. (open when Mon. falls on a national holiday and closed the following day.) & Dec. 29–Jan. 3.

Yabuhara (藪原)

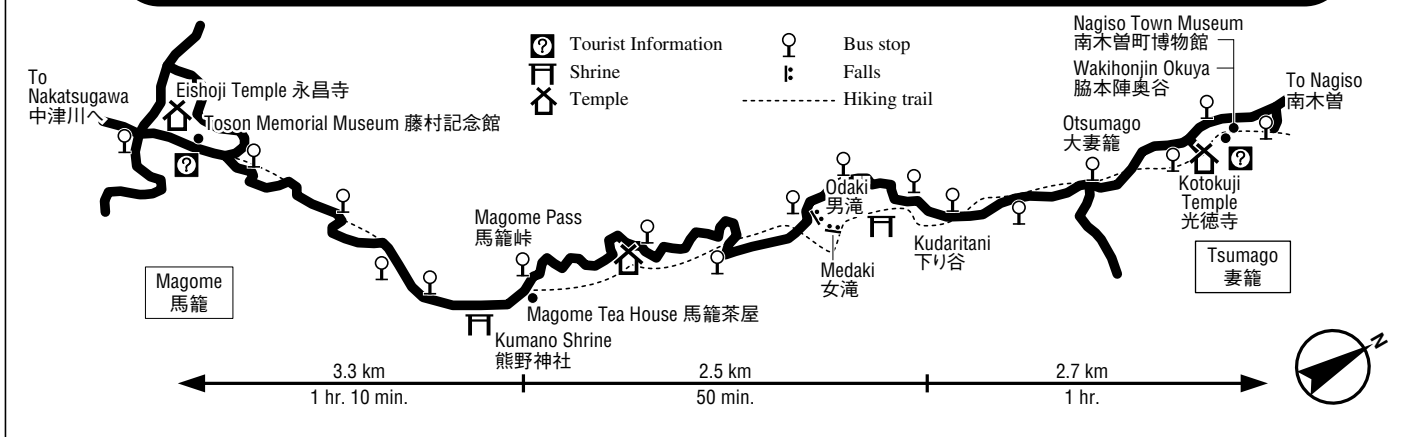
South of Narai, is known for wooden combs called Orokugushi. The process of making combs by hand can be observed at several workshops left in the town.

Torii Pass (鳥居峠)

With an altitude of 1,197m., Torii Pass was an important milestone on the Nakasendo, an Edo Period route connecting Kyoto and Tokyo. The pass can be enjoyed on a pleasurable 3-hr. trek between JR Narai Sta. and Yabuhara Sta. Wonderful scenery and the atmosphere of old Japan await you on this approximately 6 km. route. Near the top you'll find the Ontake Shrine and Maruyama Park.



Hiking Course between Magome and Tsumago



Tourist Information Center (TIC)

TIC of Japan National Tourism Organization is your helping hand while in Japan. Its main services are providing travel information and free literature on Japan such as tourist spots, transportation, and accommodation, etc, and suggesting tour itineraries.

1st Fl., Shin Tokyo Bldg., 3-3-1, Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-0005 Tel. 03-3201-3331
Open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Closed: Jan. 1st)



information

TOURIST INFORMATION

(Visit Japan Information Network)

Magome Tourist Information Center:

4300-1, Magome, Nakatsugawa City Gifu Pref.
(馬籠観光案内所) Tel.(0573)69-2336
9:00-17:00. Closed: Dec. 29-Jan. 3. Reservations for inns are made here.

Tsumago Tourist Information Office:

2159-2, Azuma, Nagiso-cho, Kiso-gun, Nagano Pref.
(妻籠観光案内所) Tel.(0264)57-3123
9:00-17:00. Closed: Dec. 29-Jan. 3. Reservations for inns are made here.

Narakawa Area Information Center:

Narai, Shiojiri City, Nagano Pref.
(楢川地区観光案内所) Tel.(0264)34-3160
10:00-16:00 (Jan.-Mar.), 9:00-17:00 (Apr.-Dec.)
Closed: Mon. & Wed. in Jan., Feb. & Mar. Information of inns in Narai is available here, but no reservations are made.
Please note that only Japanese language is spoken on the telephone.

All information, including transportation schedules, fares, prices and accommodation charges, which is contained in this leaflet is based on data as of August 2012, and is subject to change without notice. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of all information, regrettably errors do occasionally occur. Therefore, you should check with organizations concerned for updated and accurate information on your chosen destination. JNTO shall not be liable for any loss or damage of whatever nature that may arise as a result, directly or indirectly, from the use of any of the information or material contained in this leaflet.