The Pictureque Post Town of Magome-juku

Located at the southeastern edge of Gifu Prefecture, the city of Nakatsugawa borders Nagano Prefecture to the east. In fact, some districts of present-day Nakatsugawa were actually part of Nagano until relatively recently, making this a very unique area of Gifu with many foods and traditions that are not found elsewhere in the prefecture! It is a land blessed with pristine rivers and lush woodlands, and it is famous in Japan for its abundant harvest of chestnuts collected in the mountain foothills. Nakatsugawa is said to be the birthplace of kurikinton, an incredibly popular Japanese confectionary delicacy made using these chestnuts. Comfortably cool in the summertime, Nakatsugawa also boasts dazzling autumn scenery, specifically at Tsukechi Gorge, where serene waterfalls and clear emerald waters create an eye-catching contrast with the surrounding hot autumn colors. Finally, Nakatsugawa has preserved much of the way in which traditional Edo period culture, in the form of both Magome-ji -a fabulous old post town on the Nakasendo route - and the theater of local kabuki.
Walk the Nakasendo from Magome to Tsumago

The trail from Magome-juku to Tsumago-juku, the next post town over on the Nakasendo located in Nagano Prefecture, is one of the nicest and best maintained stretches of the entire route. You can enjoy the seven kilometer hike over the Magome Mountain Pass, which will take around three hours to complete. The countryside path is brimming with traditional Japanese charm and boasts beautiful ishidatami stone-paved portions, waterfalls along the road, and scenic observation points. There is a baggage forwarding service available at the Tourist Information Office in either post town (times and price detailed below); just hand over your luggage in one town and it’ll be waiting for you in the next! The map linked here is a great resource for those making the hike, which is said to take around three hours to complete. The Naegi Castle Ruins is a short hike – a round trip journey from JR Nakatsugawa Station will take about two hours – where you can enjoy a breathtaking view of the Kiso River, Mt. Ena, and the surrounding Nakatsugawa City spread out wide before your eyes. At various points along the hike it is possible to see cherry blossoms (in the spring), a beautiful sunset from atop a tall bridge, and the remains of abandoned railroad tracks. We recommend either exploring on your own, or taking a guided tour in English that also visits Magome-juku on the Nakasendo Highway.

The Zen Meditation Experience

Zen meditation, or zazen in Japanese, is performed in order to rid oneself of the worldly desires one possesses and of everything that keeps one tethered to this world, from various troubles and sources of anxiety to anger. The point of this Buddhist training ritual is to stop thinking and to concentrate one’s mind on one’s breathing. At first, it may be difficult to refrain from moving while seated for an extended period of time, and there will surely be a stray thought or two (or many more!) passing through your head. Ultimately, however, you will calm down and be able to clear your mind, leaving you feeling refreshed when the meditation session has ended. At Eisho-ji Temple (see above), you can enjoy a one-hour lesson in zazen, though “enjoyment” of course partly defeats the purpose of the meditation! Regardless, zazen is a fundamental element of traditional Japanese culture and the Japanese spirit, so don’t pass up this fantastic opportunity!

Complimentary confection or drink (No expiration date)

Tajimaya 佃屋

A 110-year-old inn with an atmosphere that harks back to the good old days in Japan, Tajimaya embraces both the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new. Guests can enjoy meals of home-grown rice and healthy foods around an irori hearth in the old and the new.

One pair of chopsticks made from Kiso hinoki/ cypress trees for every pair of guests (Valid until March 31, 2021)