

THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW

THE NAKASENDO WAY

初次見到……中山道

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I FIRST TRAVELLED to Japan in 1983. Over the next 35 years I've returned more than 80 times, but amazingly I'd never set foot on the Nakasendo Way until a recent cultural pilgrimage with tour operator Walk Japan.

Spanning some 530 kilometres from Tokyo to Kyoto, the Nakasendo was an important ancient thoroughfare. In the early years of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868), a nationwide road system was established, with the Nakasendo being one of the major arteries of trade, frequented by merchants and travellers. If you walked 18 kilometres a day, it would take a month to go between Tokyo (known then as Edo) and Kyoto, passing through Gunma, Nagano and Shiga prefectures.

Today, touring the Nakasendo way on foot is a sweaty but pleasant walk through rolling hills and valleys. It's also a journey through time, as each path presents a different facet of Japan's history – with shrines, *torii* gates, Buddhist sculptures and battle sites along the way. The company of waterfalls and 1,000-year-old fir trees is also very welcome.

Traditionally, the route was laced with ancient 'post towns' known as *shukuba*, where travellers could spend the night. Today, thanks to popular and government commitment to preserving elements of local history and culture, much of the architecture and heritage prevails in these towns. Some of the best-preserved examples include Narai-juku, Tsumago-juku and Magome-juku, along the Kisoji part of the Nakasendo, where we sampled traditional food and a slice of everyday life that hasn't changed much since the Edo period. ■

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1983年我第一次到日本旅行，其後35年內，我前往當地80次以上。可是直到最近，我才跟隨Walk Japan舉辦的導賞團，首次踏足中山道，深入認識日本文化。

中山道由東京的日本橋為起點，終點是京都三條大橋，橫跨群馬、長野、滋賀等縣，全長約530公里，見證了17世紀初至19世紀中葉江戶時代的盛衰。

日本自德川家康得天下後，展開江戶幕府時代，全國各地大規模修建道路，中山道就是其中一條。當年商人行旅在這條路上絡繹不絕，是一條主要的貿易幹道。當年的旅人若每天步行18公里，30天就可走畢中山道全程。

沿著中山道徒步旅行，有如走進時光隧道，每走一段路，恍如深入歷史，有「重新認識日本」的感覺。道路雖不至崎嶇，但隨山勢起伏，行人順道而走，不免汗流浹背；而途中可見神社、鳥居、石雕佛像與古戰場，不時更可見到千年古杉，或者偶遇瀑布，徜徉其間，體驗日本傳統文化之美，令人心醉神迷。

中山道上沿途風景美麗，當年設有多個「宿場」，也就是供人休息住宿的驛站。由於日本政府與當地居民均致力推動文化保育，因此這些宿場中，有多座現在仍保存完好的舊建築，風土人情亦饒有古風；例如長野縣木曾町的奈良井宿、妻籠宿、馬籠宿等地方，彷彿時光停頓，讓人體驗江戶時代的生活面貌，並品嚐傳統食物的滋味。■

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Passage of time

Historic villages mark the way from Tokyo to Kyoto

時光隧道

從東京到京都之間沿途有多條歷史悠久的村落

