



Full Itinerary & Trip Details

Shin-Etsu Trail - 5 Nights Half Track Hike - Nozawa Onsen, Japan



BEST TRAVEL AGENTS

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TRAVEL GUIDELINES

Trip Overview



PRICE STARTING FROM
\$762

DURATION
6 days

IDEAL AGE
9 to 99 year olds

STARTS IN → ENDS IN
Nozawaonsen → Nozawaonsen

STYLE
Hiking & Trekking

Itinerary

Introduction

The 80km Shinetsu trail, the best woodland trail in Japan, runs over the ridges of the Sekida mountains at about 1,000 meters above sea level, forming a boundary between Nagano and Niigata prefectures. It is one of the few long trails in Japan. This area is blessed with a rich ecosystem nurtured by Japanese beech tree forests. Historically, there were 16 passages connecting Nagano with Niigata. The forests are perhaps best known for their beech trees. The tall, well-shaped beech trees form a corridor of nature along the path. The earth-packed trail also makes it easy to walk. Spring (from mid-June to the end of July) and autumn (from mid-September to the end of October) are great seasons to visit the trail. In the spring, the last traces of snow can be seen among new greenery and flowers bursting into bloom. In the fall, hikers can enjoy the brilliant colors of autumn leaves. It takes 6 days and 5 nights to hike all the courses with accommodations. We offer a 3 day Short track, a 6 day Half Track and a 9 day Full track experience.

Day 1: Nozawa Onsen - Arrival (D)

Make your way to Nozawa Onsen, or take the Bullet train from Tokyo to Iiyama and we will pick you up from there. Once arrived at Nozawa Onsen, settle into your lodge style accommodation. The rest of the day is yours to wander and explore and take in the atmosphere of old Japan. Perhaps a mineral-rich hot spring bath at one of the 13 free onsens around the village. If you're feeling energetic you can rent mountain bikes, hike and kayak in the area, and local businesses offer yoga classes, Japanese cooking classes, art retreats and much more. There is a ton of things to do! The welcome dinner tonight provides a great opportunity to provide an insight to what you're about to experience.

Day 2; Manzaka Gap - Akaike Pond - Wakui (B,L)

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the trail for today's walk and meet our guide who will join you for the full day. Walking distance: approx. 16.3 km, 7 hours

The Shin-Etsu Trail consists of 6 sections, today we will hike through beautiful Japanese beech and birch forests over a hill to the Hakama Wetlands. Pass through Hakama Wetlands before taking a turn to the left to ascend Hakama Peak (1135m). From the summit of Hakama Peak, there is a great view of Mt Myoko to the west, and the space here makes it a great place to stop for a break. From there, descend to Akaike pond through a pleasant switchback trail. There are bathrooms and a parking space at Akaike pond.

From Akaike, walk over a small hill and through the beech forest to Numanohara Wetlands, which blossom with flowers after the spring thaw. Make your way towards Lake Nozomi and at

the top of the hill, Mt. Madarao, Hakama Peak and even Mt. Myoko can be seen on a clear day. Heading down hill along the trail, pass through a lovely forest before coming to the boat pier of Lake Nozomi. On a still day the reflection of Mt. Madarao appears out over the lake. The climb to the top (1022m) takes about 30-40min and reveals a superb view over the Iiyama Basin. From here, descend through the larch forest to the pond, known as Wakui Shin-ike then it is an easy 60min walk down the farm road, where it comes out onto route 292 in Wakui Village. From the car park here we will meet you and head back to Nozawa Onsen. The town is well regarded for its hot springs which are a relaxing diversion after a day of hiking.

Day 3: Hotokegamine Trailhead to Sekida Pass (B,L)

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the trail for today's self guided experience. The walking distance is 8.2km and takes about 6 hours. the Highest elevation: 1288m (Mt Nabekura) and the Lowest elevation: 830m (difference: 458m) This section is the start of the ridge walking with a hill climb up the gravel path to reach the beech forests. a short descent to the open fields brings you to the beautiful stands of 100 year old beech trees lining the trail from Kozawa Pass. For the climb up Mt Nabekura, the track narrows but once at the top, there is an excellent view of Mt Myoko, the Chikuma River and all the way out to the Sea of Japan if the sky is clear. There's a little ducking and weaving on the descent through the mishapen tree branches bent out of shape from the heavy winter snow falls in the area. Once at Sekida Gap, our van will meet you and head back to the Lodge. Tonight relax, shop, have a beer at the brewery or one of the bars in town. Wander the village at night, relax in a hot spring bath. Tomorrow is a well earned rest day!

Day 4: Nozawa Onsen (B)

Rest day today and after breakfast, the choices are many. Rent a bike for a more casual ride through the country side, visit some of the nearby villages and shrines, SUP, White water rafting, indulge in one of the many hot springs in the village. Take a day trip to Nagano, enjoy the local train ride from Iiyama to Nagano and explore the host city of the 1998 Nagano Olympics. (Local train cost 650 Yen one way, Shinkansen ticket 1300 Yen one way) There's great shopping, fantastic restaurants for lunch and one of the nicest temple areas in all of Japan. Zenjoki Temple is one of the biggest wooden structures in Japan and is impressive to see. Tonight, take a walk around the cobbled stone streets of the village, enjoy the night markets and there is no shortage of fabulous food options to choose from.

Day 5; Busuno Gap - Mt Amamizu

After Breakfast our van will then transfer you the start section 6,. This is the final section of the Shinetsu Trail leading to Mt. Amamizu, the northern endpoint. It is also one of the most aesthetically rewarding. This part of the trail is almost entirely shrouded in beautiful beech forests, with many viewpoints over the Niigata Delta. The section is 12.65km and will take about 7 hours, the highest point 1151m, lowest at 1015m above sea level.

The walk from Busuno Pass carries historical significance as both an old military route, and also as a trail used by Shugendo sect followers. The trail here is mostly gentle until the very end when it drops sharply. Of all the views of the Sekida Mountain Range, the one from Misaka Pass is the most spectacular. What's more, the Japanese beech forests at the foot of your destination at Mt Amamizu makes this hike all worth while. You have reached the end of your journey and we will be there with our van. Tonight, take a walk around the cobbled stone streets of the village, enjoy the night markets and there is no shortage of fabulous food options to choose from.

Day 6: Nozawa Onsen Departure (B)

After breakfast, check out is at 10am. If your heading back to Tokyo we will transfer you to Iiyama station and from there you can take the Hokuriku Shinkansen Bullet train onwards to your next destination.

What's Included

Accommodation

5 nights at Villa Nozawa staying in traditional Japanese style accommodation with comfy futon beds and shared bathroom facilities

Guide

- Day one of hiking includes a full day guide

Meals

- Breakfast daily
- Welcome dinner
- Boxed lunch provided on the 3 hiking days

Transport

- Roundtrip transfer Iiyama to Nozawa Onsen if required
- Roundtrip transfers to and from the trail section car parks

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