

# HAUTEROUTE JAPAN

## CLASSIC CLIMBS OF JAPAN

NORIKURA, SHIRANE, UTSUKUSHIGAHARA, FUJI

DAY  
1

### TODAY'S RIDE:

**Blue Monkey Lodge (Minakami) to Kusatsu**  
Approximately 100km with 2700m of climbing.

### TODAY'S CLIMBS:

Mt Azumaya (6.7km@5.1%) - Diado Pass (2.5km@5.5%)  
Kuresaka Pass (10.4km@5.5%) - Hanashiki HS (10km@3%)

### DESCRIPTION:

The first day will be a relatively easy day to get the legs warmed up and to adjust to riding in Japan. The first 50km is undulating with a few minor climbs to contend with before the group starts the ascent toward Kusatsu over the Kuresaka Pass. The first major challenge of the day is only rated a Category 2 climb, but is 10.4 km at an average gradient of 5.5% and climbs about 550m. This will also serve as a nice hors d'oeuvres and give the group a chance to get their climbing legs as they tackle the switchbacks nearing the summit.

After the descent off the Kuresaka pass the group will begin the final push to Kusatsu and rather than taking the main highway, will ride further north and pass through the serene mountain hot spring town of Hahashiki and the final climb of the day. A gentle climb on a tight mountain road will bring the rider to the overnight destination, the beautiful, but sulphuric scented mountain town of Kusatsu. A refreshing onsen in the natural thermal springs abundant in the town will help the legs to recover for the challenges due on Day 2.

Overnight Accomodation: Kusatsu

DAY  
2

### TODAY'S RIDE:

**Kusatsu to Hakuba**  
Approximately 115km with 2800m of climbing.

### TODAY'S CLIMBS:

Shibu Pass (16.7km@5.1%) - Kasagadake (3.6km@6.8%)  
Mt Sobatsubu (10.8km@3%)

### DESCRIPTION:

Day 2 is where the group will encounter their first hors categorie climb and on an active volcano at that. Mt Shirane (aka Shibu Pass) is 16.7km in length at a gradient of 5%, topping out at an impressive 2146m. Your host holds the course record for the climb, set in 2008 in the annual Kusatsu race with a time of 36:00min. Rest assured, he will not race today and will pace you up the climb happy with the reduced amount of lactic acid this time up the climb. After some compulsory selfies at the top of the pass, the group will descend before making the left turn to climb Mt Kasagadake (3.6km@6.8%) and the long descent toward Nagano.

The long 30km drop off the mountain will see the group battle their first series of the tight switchback corners that are synonymous with the climbs of Japan. The roads are impressive in the engineering, snaking up and down mountains, seemingly impossibly perched on the edge. It is not for the faint of heart and focus and bike skill are paramount to getting off the climbs. Rest assured, if the group is shy to begin with, they will have their fair share of these roads to contend with and will be masters by the end of the tour.

The group will traverse the lower part of Nagano city before emarking on the final run to Hakuba village, famed for the Winter Olympics and the famous powder snow during winter. A winding valley road will draw the the group into a gentle climb up Mt Sobatsubu (10.8km@3%) and the descent into Hakuba.

Overnight Accomodation: B&B Santana

DAY  
3

### TODAY'S RIDE:

**Hakuba to Norikura**  
Approximately 148km with 3700m of climbing.

### TODAY'S CLIMBS:

Shirakaba Pass (7.3km@6.5%) - Mt Norikura (22km@6%)

### DESCRIPTION:

If the HauteRouteJapan was Le Tour, then this would be the Queen stage. Day 3 will test the legs of even the best in the group, there is no hiding from the fact that it is essentially 60km and 2100m of pure incline. The goal today is the highest road in Japan, Norikura, which tops out at over 2700m. It is an impressive climb by itself, but first the group must get to it and will head south, hugging the ege of the mighty central alps as they travel the beautiful farming roads of Azumino.

Once connected with the main route that climbs the mountain pass to the neighbouring prefecture, the group will enter a land of tunnels and tight roads. Rather than taking the worst of the long wet tunnels, we swing left and head for the quieter roads of the Shirakaba pass (7.3km@6.5%). Once the regular training road of your guide on his regular foray into the slopes of Norikura, the group will emerge for the pass into a mountain plateau, with the summit of Norikura resplendent in the backdrop.

After a few minor undulations the group will start the 22km surge for the summit. Being that our overnight accomodation is in Norikura, it will be chance to lighten the pockets, grab a wind jacket and prepare for some great climbing and even better views once above the cloud line. Mt. Fuji and the high peaks of the Alps will pop above the clouds like islands in the white ocean, it truly makes the effort worth it. Enjoy a bowl of Ramen at the top or even send a postcard from the shop, the postmark will prove you were at the highest road in Japan, before a smooth high speed descent to the waiting outdoor hot springs.

Overnight Accomodation: Nothstar

DAY  
4

#### TODAY'S RIDE:

##### Norikura to Matsumoto

Approximately 106km with 2400m of climbing.

#### TODAY'S CLIMBS:

Utsukushigahara Plateau (21.9km@5.6%)

#### DESCRIPTION:

Today offer the riders a chance for a easier day with just over 100km and only one HC climb to contend with. It will also serve as the final day for a shorter tour riders, so no excuses for those leaving to not push ahnd on the climb. After a long descent, we skirt around the south end of Matsumoto, the once home town of your guide and host. This is a special day for him, as the group will climb the Utsukushigahara Plateau climb, a 22km beast at an average of 5.6%. However, as sure as you guide will tell you, do not be fooled by the lesser gradient, there are sections of 20% that really test the legs. Utsukushigahara is also one of the Top5 hillclimbs races in Japan that are always hotly contested with domestic and international riders looking to make a name for themselves. In 2007, on his second attempt, your host won the overall championship, and this result was made even more special by the climb being his most visited local training course. It is important to connect with the climb!!

The group will enjoy the descent back down the mountain and enjoy a night in Matsumoto, able to enjoy the beautiful alpine town with some solid days behind them. A chance for some Sayonnara's too, as we bid farewell some new friends and rideing buddies, but for those continuing on, best not enjoy the hospitality too much as some big days lay ahead as we turn toward Mt Fuji and Tokyo.

Overnight Accomodation: Matsumoto

DAY  
5

#### TODAY'S RIDE:

##### Matsumoto - Chino

Approximately 121.9km with 3212m of climbing.

#### TODAY'S CLIMBS:

8961 Climb (6.1km@8%) - Suzuran Pass (6km@6%)  
Mugikusa Pass (18.2km@5.8%)

#### DESCRIPTION:

Day 5 and the riders are deep in the HauteRouteJapan. The legs will be tuned and the run to Tokyo is near, however a few challenges still await. Today is another deceptive parcours with most of the altitude gain acheived thorough undulating terrain. The group will leave the comfort of Matsumoto behind as they embark on a quest to climb the famed Mugikusa Pass, albeit via the stunning Kirigamine alpine highland and the Venus line. This will surely bring the cameras out as the group sweep along the top of the mountain at more than 1600m altitude. The cows up are are famed for their milk and the cyclist is rewarded for efforts to simply be there.

After tackling the relativley minor Suzuran Pas and dropping down to just below 1000m the group will begin the climb up the Mugikusa Pass, an 18.2 km climb with a 5.8% gradient. This mountain is another of the famed Top5, and in April of each year, regardless of the harshbess of winter, several thousand riders climb the mountain in many layers and finish often with snow walls well above their heads. Only in Japan!!

An easy roll off the mountain back down the same way swill bring the group to Chino for the overnight stop over. Rest will be important, as the folowwing two days will see the HauteRouteJapan meet Mt Fuji, where the lakes below will be circumnavigated and the climb up the infamous Azami Line on the final day.

Overnight Accomodation: Chino

DAY  
6

#### TODAY'S RIDE:

##### Chino - Mt Fuji

Approximately 138.7km with 2221m of climbing.

#### TODAY'S CLIMBS:

Motosu-Michi Climb (8.9km@5.6%)

#### DESCRIPTION:

Today is a transitional stage with only one major climb on the menu. The group will roll out of Chino and head out of the alps region for the flatter terrain that surrounds the base of Fuji. At about the 80km, the climb up to the first of the great lakes of Fuji will reward the riders at the top, it is a moderate climb about 9km in length at a gradient of 5.5%.

The remainder of the Day 6 will be a scenic roll in the shadow of Mt Fuji as the riders circumnavigate the beautiful lakes that surround the north side of the majestic volcano. Taking in the brilliance of Lake Motosu, Lake Shoji, lake Saiko and on to the final destination and overnight stop at Lake Kawaguchi. The relatively short parcours will allow the riders to explore the beautiful region, enjoy a refreshing beverage and celebrate the penultimate day of HauteRouteJapan.

Overnight Accomodation: Lake Kawaguchi

DAY  
7

#### TODAY'S RIDE:

##### Mt Fuji - Tokyo Olympic Stadium

Approximately 162.7km with 2840m of climbing.

#### TODAY'S CLIMBS:

Azami Climb (11.1km@10.1%)

#### DESCRIPTION:

The final day and to this point the group will have ridden more than 800km and climbed over 15000m, a fantastic achievement. However, it would not be HauteRouteJapan if we did not have a climb on the menu and what a climb it is. Mt Fuji is 3776m and the highest mountain in Japan and is also an active volcano which last erupted in 1707. There are a few routes up Mt Fuji and HauteRouteJapan needs the last climb to be a special test. Each Year the Tour of Japan have a Time Trial on a 11.1km section of road called the Azami Line. It is a brutal ascent with the profile mapping exactly the same as the mighty Zoncolan in Italy. Compact chainrings and 29T cassettes will be the order of the day as the gradient is steep, very steep. Your host and guide has twice won on this climb in various races and will be first to tell you the reward for the effort is worth it.

At 2000m, the riders are rewarded with stunning views and the comfort of warm bowl of ramen before the descent and the return trip to Tokyo. At this point the riding changes as we enter the outskirts of the city on our way to the final destination, Tokyo Olympc Stadium. On arrival, the HauteRouteJapan riders will have covered more than 950km with over 17000m of climbing across some the greatest mountain roads in the world.

Overnight Accomodation: Tokyo