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Official Community Reservation System

www.kumano-travel.com

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- ◆ Local Guides
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- ◆ Model Itineraries



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- ◆ Freedom to Discover
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- ◆ Secure Online Booking

Note: Reservations are required at least 7~10 days in advance.

Useful Words and Phrases

Hello	Konnichiwa こんにちは	Goodbye	Sayonara さようなら
Thank you	Arigato ありがとう	Excuse me	Sumimasen すみません
Do you speak English?			Elgo ga hanasemasu ka? 英語が話せますか?
I don't understand. / I don't know			Wakarimasen わかりません
I can't speak Japanese			Nihongo wa dekimasen 日本語はできません
Is it OK to take a photo?			Shashin o totte mo ii desu ka? 写真を撮ってもいいですか?
Yes	Hai はい	No	Iie いいえ
Would you please show me on this map where I am right now?			Kono chizu de genzaichi o oshiete kudasai. この地図で現在地を教えてください
Where is the XXXX ?			XXXX wa doko desu ka? XXXXはどこですか?
Bus stop	Basu-tei バス停	Trailhead	Tozanguchi 登山口
Help me!	Tasukete! たすけて!	Toilet	O-tearai /toire お手洗い/トイレ
			Isha ga hitsuyo desu 医者が必要です

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KUMANO KODO KOHECHI

Pilgrimage Route Maps



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KUMANO 熊野 Japan's Spiritual Origins

Kumano is an isolated sacred site of healing and salvation. It embodies the spiritual origins of Japan and has been a pilgrimage destination for centuries. The steep, lush mountains of the Kii Peninsula are blessed with a rich cultural and natural heritage. Walking the Kumano Kodo is an immersive Japanese experience for the intuitive, active traveler. Welcome!



Koyasan

Koyasan is an esoteric Buddhist monastic village set in the northern mountains of the Kii peninsula — a sacred site for spiritual training.



Kongobu-ji Temple

Kumano Sanzan

The main sites of worship in the Kumano region are the three Grand Shrines of Kumano: Kumano Hongu Taisha, Kumano Hayatama Taisha, and Kumano Nachi Taisha. As a set they are known as the Kumano Sanzan.



Kumano Hongu Taisha



Kumano Hayatama Taisha



Kumano Nachi Taisha

Kumano Hongu Taisha is situated in the heart of the Kumano. The austere shrine pavilions were originally located at Oyunohara, a sand-bank in the Kumano-gawa River.

Kumano Hayatama Taisha is located in Shingu city, where the impressive Kumano-gawa River empties into the expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

Kumano Nachi Taisha is built on a mountain side facing the inspiring Nachi water fall, which is the tallest in Japan and believed to be a deity.

UNESCO World Heritage

On July 7, 2004 three sacred sites (Kumano Sanzan, Koyasan, and Yoshino/Omine) and the pilgrimage routes that lead to and connect them, were registered on UNESCO's World Heritage list as the "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range".

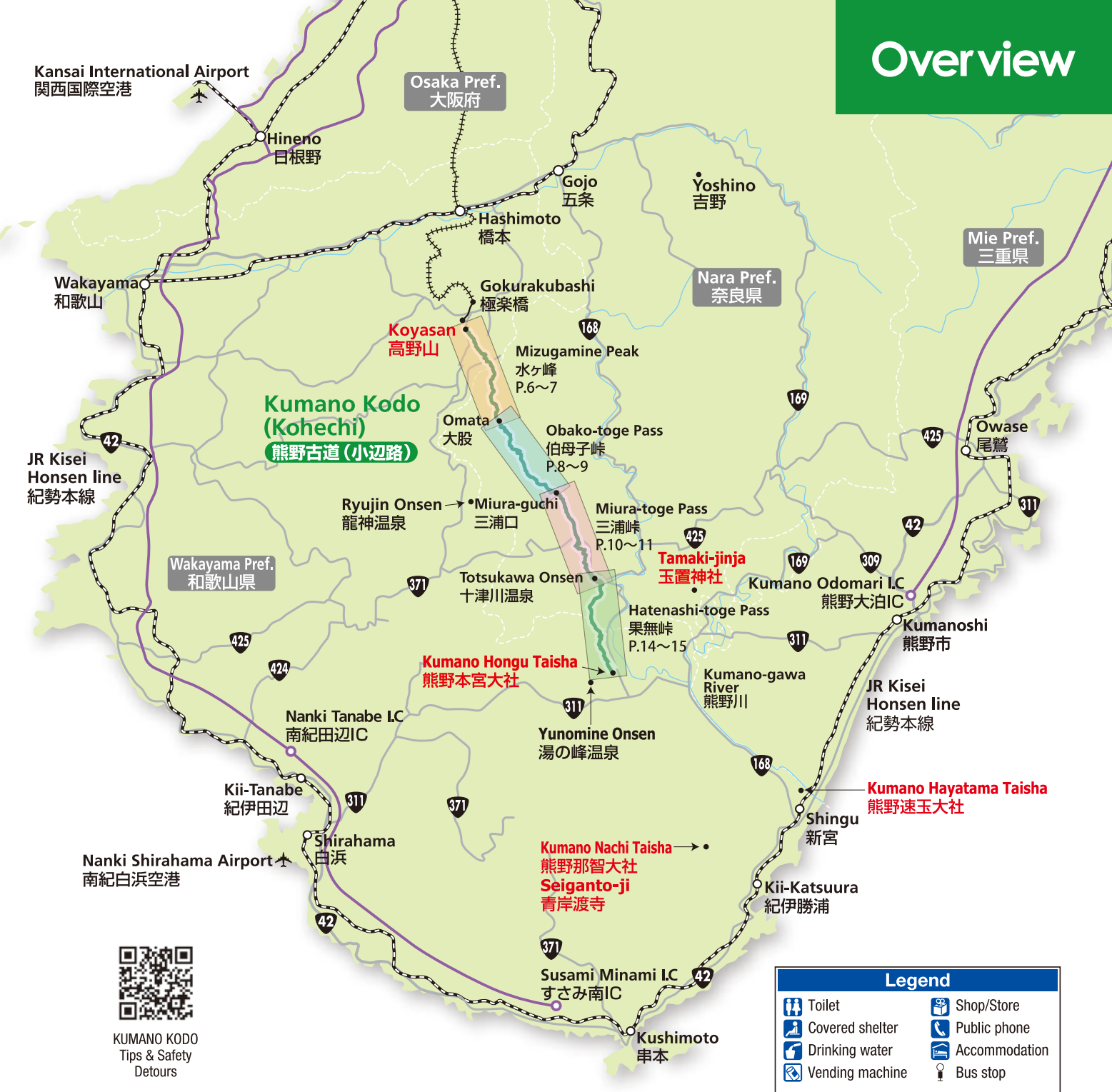


Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Route

For over 1000 years people from all levels of society, including retired emperors and aristocrats, have made the arduous pilgrimage to Kumano. These pilgrims used a network of routes, now called the Kumano Kodo, which stretch across the mountainous Kii Peninsula.

Kohechi Mountainous Route

The Kohechi route runs north-south through the center of the Kii Peninsula, linking the Buddhist temple complex of Koyasan and the syncretic Grand Shrines of the Kumano Sanzan. It is characterized by steep trails that cross over four passes in excess of 1000 meters elevation along its ~65 km length. It was formed in the 13th to 14th centuries.



Overview

IMPORTANT ⚠

The Kohechi route is a mountainous trail not suitable for beginners. The passes are high and subsequently weather is variable with much rain, wind and fog.

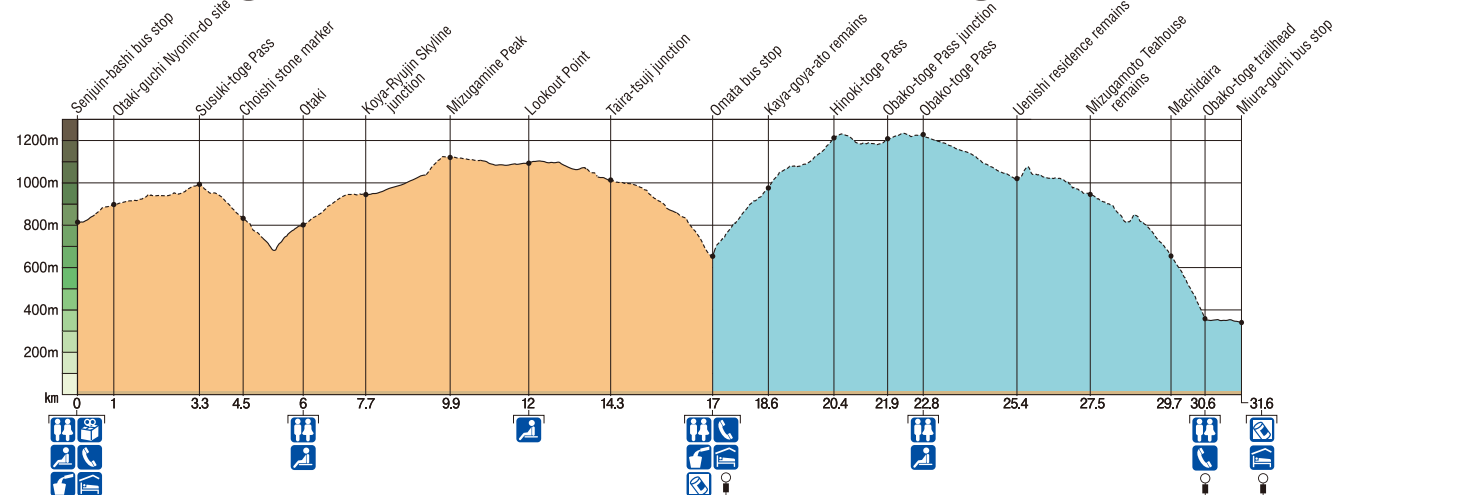
The northern passes are essentially snowed in during the winter months making these sections technically closed from late December to mid-March. (The Hatnashi-toge Pass in the south is open year-round.)

Good preparation and excellent fitness is essential to make the full four day trek between Koyasan and Kumano Hongu Taisha. Please travel safely.

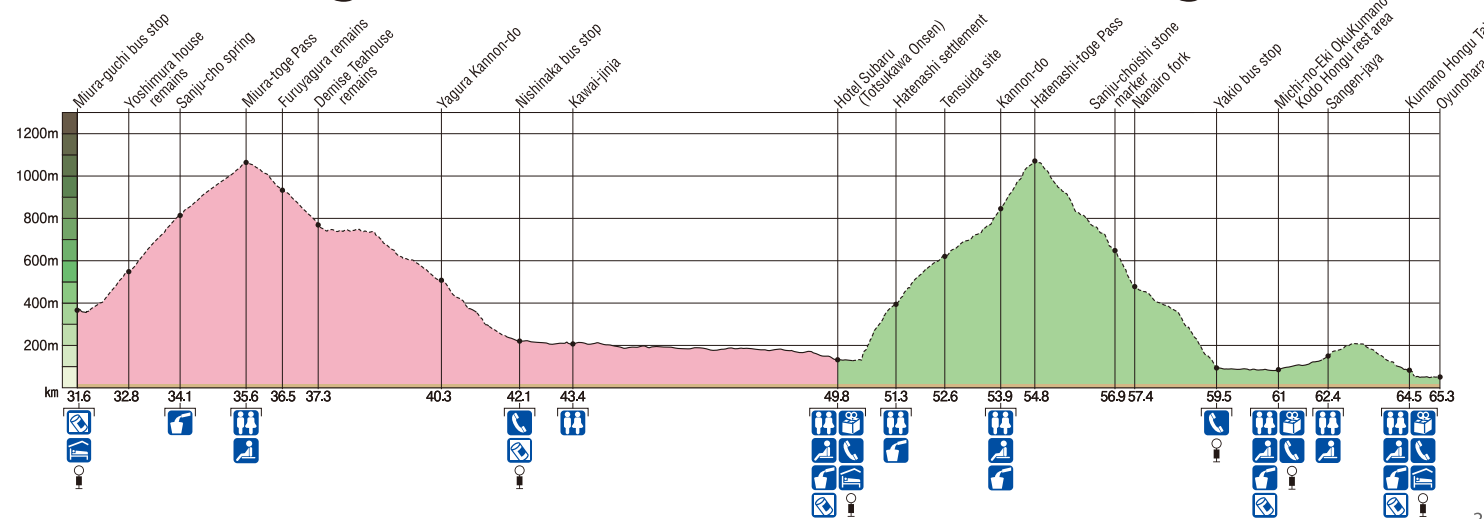
	Distance (km)	Time (hr)	Total Elevation Gain (m)	Total Elevation Loss (m)	
Mizugamine Peak (Koyasan~Omata)	~17	6~8	~690	~840	P.6~7
Obako-toge Pass (Omata~Miura-guchi)	~14.5	6~8	~740	~1090	P.8~9
Miura-toge Pass (Miura-guchi~Totsukawa Onsen)	~18	7~9	~815	~1050	P.10~11
Hatenashi-toge Pass (Totsukawa Onsen~Kumano Hongu Taisha)	~15.5	7~9	~1075	~1170	P.14~15
Hatenashi-toge Pass (Hotel Subaru~Yakio bus stop)	~10	5~7	~930	~990	P.14~15

IMPORTANT NOTE: Walking times vary greatly depending on weather, season, personal experience, and fitness. Please plan accordingly for a safe walk, as many people underestimate the difficulty of the terrain.

Mizugamine Peak

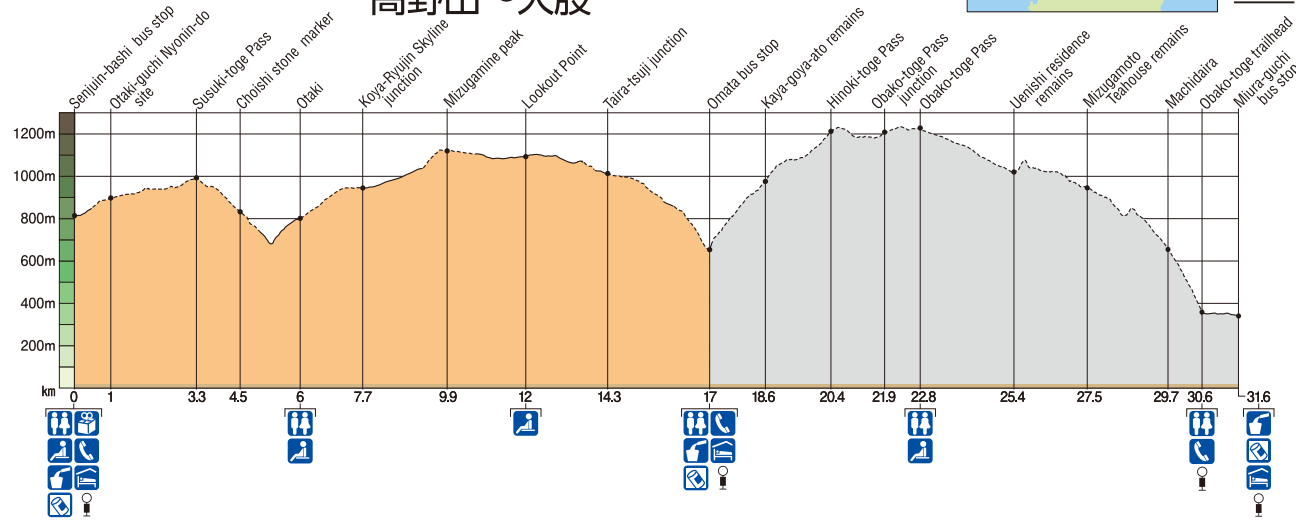


Miura-toge Pass



Mizugamine Peak (Koyasan~Omata)

高野山~大股



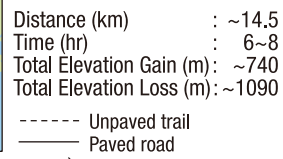
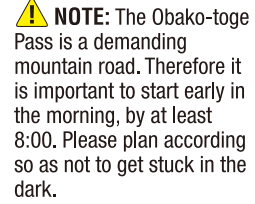
Koyasan Trailhead



Omata Trailhead



大股～三浦口



Field

Omata bus stop
大股バス停

Kwarabi-gawa River
川原樋川

Small road through houses

To Obako-toge Pass
伯母子峠へ

Continue from
Taira-tsuji junction
平辻から

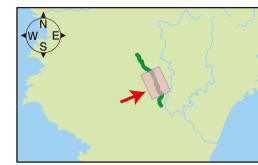
Stamps in Hotel Nosedaira
and Minshuku Kwarabiso

A map showing the route from the Jizo statue to the bus stops. The Jizo statue is marked with a black dot. A red dotted line leads from the statue to the Bitadani bus stop (三田谷バス停), which is marked with a black dot. A red solid line leads from the Bitadani bus stop to the To Miura-guchi bus stop (三浦口バス停), which is marked with a black dot. The map also shows the Kanno-gawa River (神納川) and the Obako-toge trailhead (伯母子峠登山口). A blue icon of a bus stop is shown near the Bitadani bus stop. A small inset photo shows the bus stop building. The map includes a scale bar from 0 to 100 meters and a north arrow.

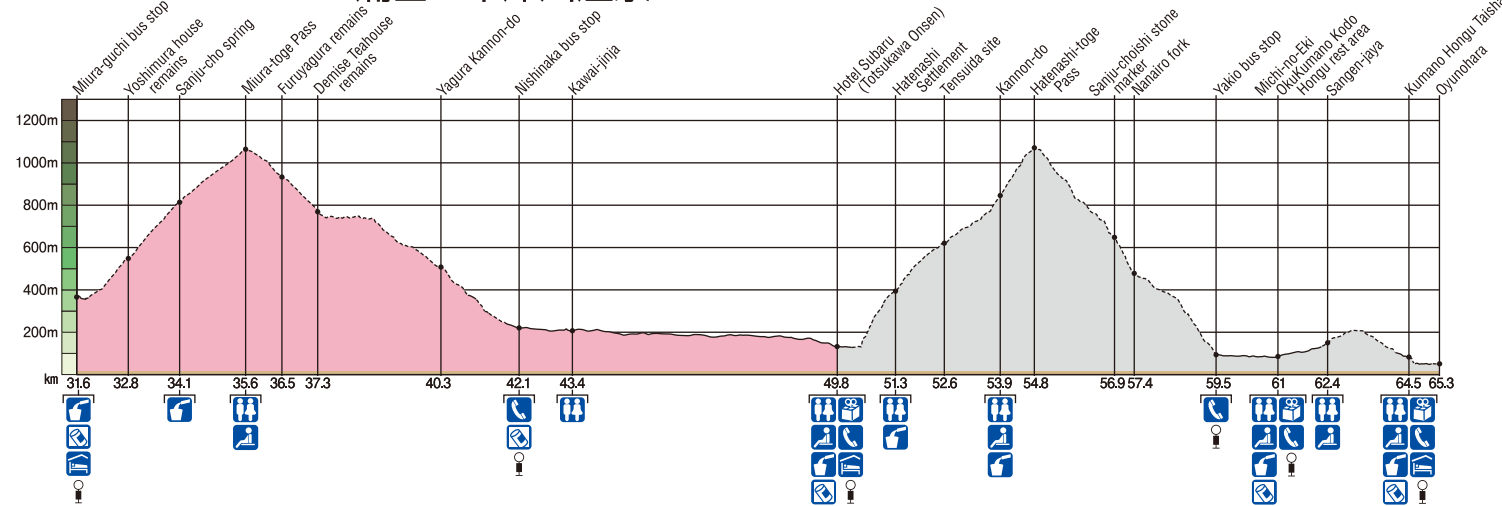


Miura-toge Pass (Miura-guchi~Totsukawa Onsen)

三浦口~十津川温泉



Distance (km) : ~18
Time (hr) : 7~9
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~815
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~1050
----- Unpaved trail
—— Paved road



Miura-guchi Trailhead



Nishinaka Trailhead



Totsukawa Onsen Hot Spring Aficionado Paradise

Totsukawa Onsen 十津川温泉 is an isolated hot spring paradise located in the heart of the Kii mountains. It is a small community spread thinly along the riverside squeezed next to the base of steep mountains. The main settlement overlooks a man-made lake formed by a dam downstream.



Kakenagashi

This mountain community is famous for the quality and amount of pure hot spring water which is used without recirculation or *Kakenagashi* かけ流し. Each accommodation features a hot spring bath and enjoying a soak in the soothing mineral waters is a must for any visit.



Hotel Subaru

Hotel Subaru is located along the Kohechi pilgrimage route. It is a large facility with lodging, restaurant, small souvenir shop, day use hot spring baths, and hot spring pool.

Even if you are not staying there it is worth a short rest stop. There is a bus stop in front of the building.



Yaen Bridge

A Yaen "bridge" is a self-propelled cable car. The passenger sits in the cart and pulls along with rope. This is the old fashion way of crossing the steep gorges and rivers in the area. Yaen is written with the characters "野猿", which directly translated means "wild monkey".

Yaen are now used more for visitors to experience than for actual transportation use. There is a Yaen behind the Hotel Subaru.

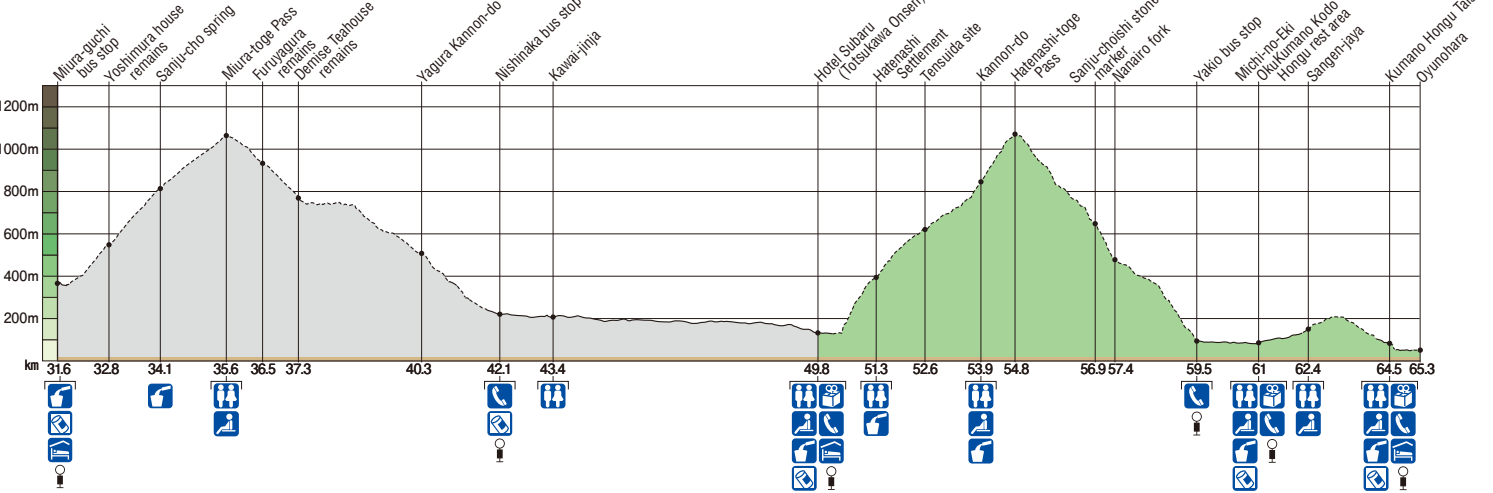


Totsukawa Onsen Area

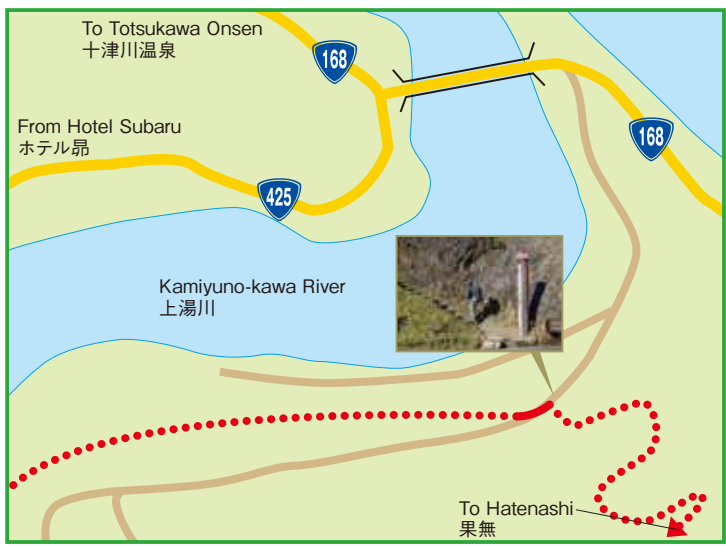


Hatenashi-toge Pass (Totsukawa Onsen~Kumano Hongu Taisha)

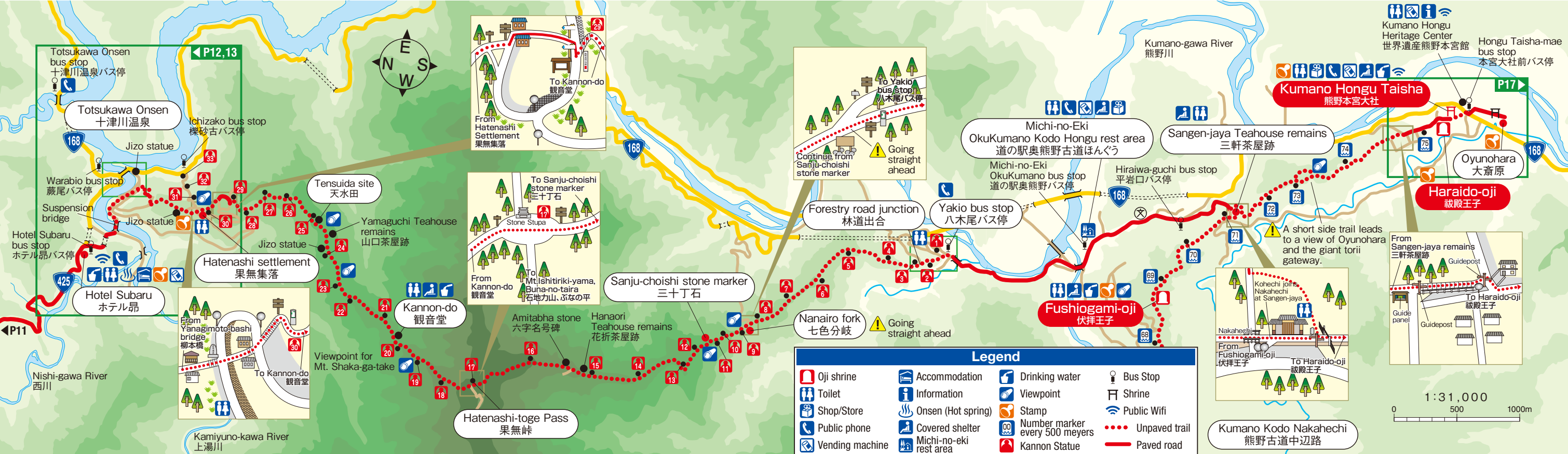
十津川温泉～熊野本宮大社



Hatenashi Trailhead



Yakio Trailhead



Hongu Area



Kumano Hongu Heritage Center

The Kumano Hongu Heritage Center is the focal point for visitor information in Hongu. There are two halls: North and South.

In the South hall is the tourist information center and permanent exhibitions about the World Heritage property "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range".

The North hall features permanent exhibitions about the Hongu area, a multi-purpose hall and temporary exhibition space. Permanent exhibitions are bilingual Japanese and English.

This center is a must visit for those interested in learning more about the region's unique cultural landscape.

Hours: 9:00~17:00
(Open year-round)

Free Admission



Yunomine Onsen



Japan's Spiritual Hot Spring

Yunomine Onsen is an isolated hot spring tucked into a small valley. It is one of the oldest hot springs in Japan and intimately connected to the Kumano Kodo as pilgrims used the hot mineral waters for purification rites.



Tsuboyu Bath

Tsuboyu is a historic bath in the creek near the center of Yunomine Onsen.

Capacity: 1~2 people
Time: up to 30 minutes private use
Price: 800 yen, 12 and under 400 yen
Hours: 6:00~21:00

First come, first serve. Buy tickets at the counter near Toko-ji temple.

※ No swimming suits, soap or shampoo allowed.
LINK: www.tb-kumano.jp/en/onsen/yunomine/#tsuboyu



Kumano Kodo Tips

The Kumano Kodo (Kohechi) is a mountain trail with 4 passes of over 1000 meters elevation. There are many steep climbs and ascents, and near the tops of Obako-toge Pass and Miura-toge Pass sections with steep drops beside the trail. Near the village areas there are sections on paved roads. To attempt the full trek good preparation and a high level of experience and fitness is necessary. Please plan accordingly to fully, and safely, enjoy your pilgrimage walk.

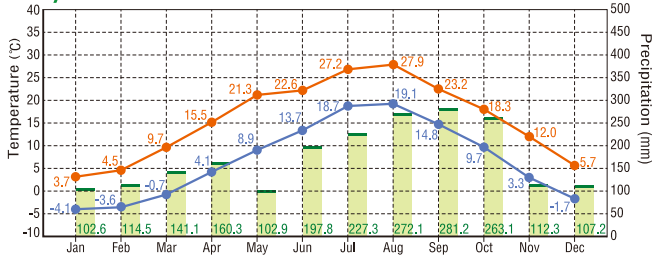
Weather

Weather on the Kohechi is variable because of the large elevation difference. Passes receive much rain and wind from ocean storms being blown over the peaks, and are often covered in fog. The weather in the southern portion of the Kii peninsula is generally mild. The winters can see some freezing temperatures, and high snow accumulation on the northern passes especially Obako-toge Pass. Summers can be hot, humid and wet, with cooler temperatures at the higher elevations. Be prepared for precipitation year round.

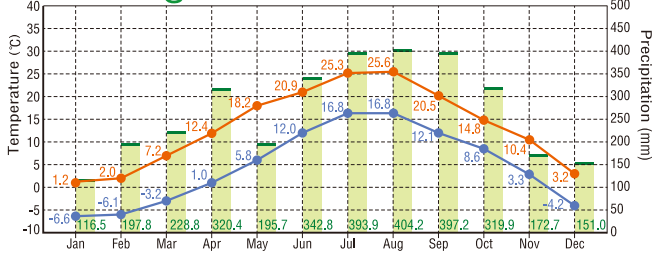
LINK

Japan Meteorological Agency: www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html
Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau:
www.tb-kumano.jp/en/kumano-kodo/weather/

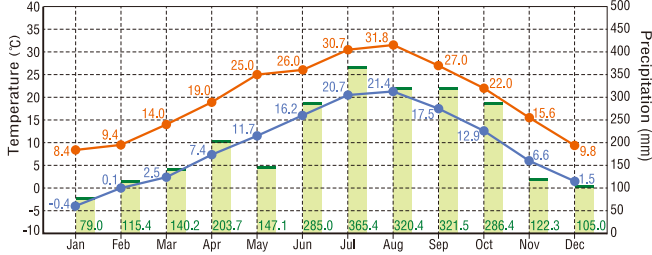
Koyasan



Obako-toge Pass



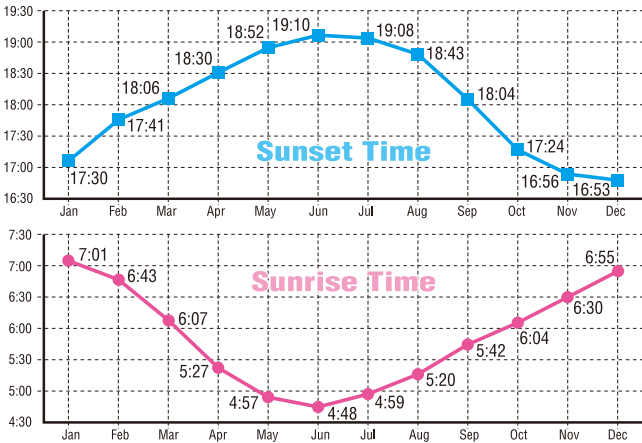
Totsukawa Onsen



Daylight

Daylight times vary greatly with winter having the shortest days. It is always best to leave early to arrive early, and be aware when sunset is so as not to get stuck in the dark while still on the trail.

NOTE: It gets darker earlier in the valleys where most of the villages are located. The best time to check-in to accommodations is 16:00~17:00.



Route Closures During Winter

IMPORTANT NOTE: The northern passes are essentially snowed in during the winter months making these sections technically closed from late December to mid-March. But the Hatenashi-toge Pass in the south is open year-round.

Clothing & Footwear

Proper clothing and footwear are essential, especially if you are planning for a longer, multi-day trek.

Review the average temperatures for the time of your walk and be prepared for seasonal variability.

Dressing in layers in clothes that dry easily is recommended: avoid cotton. Sturdy, worn-in, walking footwear is essential.

Gear

The type of gear that you will need varies with the duration and extent of your walk. The following is a general list of recommended items.

- Well-fitting backpack
- Rain gear (a foldable umbrella is convenient)
- Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen
- Collapsible walking poles
- Water bottle
- Camera
- Small first aid kit, with Band-Aids, etc.
- Small flashlight, headlamps are a good option
- Maps



Water & Liquids

It is important to carry water or liquids during your trek or walk. Natural water sources along the trail have not been tested. In the villages and settlements are small shops or vending machines where drinks can be purchased. Especially during the hotter season, it is important to keep well hydrated.

HINT: Fill up your water bottles at the accommodations before departure.

Luggage Shuttle

Daily luggage shuttle is only available between Totsukawa Onsen and Kumano Hongu Taisha for the Hatenashi-toge section. For the other passes it is necessary to send luggage ahead with a transport company such as Yamato Transport. For example send luggage from a convenience store in Koyasan to an accommodation in Totsukawa Onsen. Then use the daily luggage shuttle for the last leg. ※ Some restrictions apply.

LINK

www.tb-kumano.jp/en/kumano-kodo/luggage-shuttle/

Money/ATM

Carry enough Japanese yen in cash, as many facilities and service providers do not accept credit cards, and places to exchange money are limited. If you do need to withdraw money, the ATMs at the post offices are the best option. Hours are limited especially on weekends.

HINT: Check with your credit card company before your visit to confirm if your credit card is OK to use for withdrawals at Japan Post Bank ATMs.

LINK

www.jp-bank.japanpost.jp/en/ias/en_ias_index.html

Wifi & Cell Phone Reception

Free Wifi is available at most accommodations. Cell phone reception can be limited on the trail.

Electricity

The voltage in Japan is 100 Volt. Electrical plugs have two, parallel flat pins: Type A.

HINT: bring an adapter if needed, as most accommodations do not have them.

Safety

Earthquake & Tsunami

Japan is prone to frequent natural disasters, such as earthquakes. Tsunamis are large waves caused by earthquakes. If you are near the coast and a large earthquake hits, head to higher ground immediately.

NOTE: Tsunami warning sign shown at right.



Extreme Weather & Typhoons

The Kii peninsula is one of the wettest areas in Japan. It juts out into the Pacific ocean in the path of storms. Heavy rains and winds, especially from typhoons, can cause flash flooding, landslides, and damage from flying debris. Keep up to date with the weather forecast and avoid walking during extreme weather conditions.

Slippery Stones

Most injuries on the Kumano Kodo are from slips and falls on the stone lined trails. The old cobble steps are particularly slippery when wet. Please take your time and be careful where you step.

Mamushi Snake

There is one main species of snake that is venomous in the area, the Japanese Mamushi (*Gloydus blomhoffii*). It has the broad, triangular-shaped head of a pit viper. It is patterned with pale gray, reddish-brown, or yellow-brown background covered with irregularly shaped lateral blotches. Its mature length is about 45 to 80 cm. They can sun themselves in or around the trail. Use a flash light when walking round in the evening so as not to step on one by mistake. If bitten seek medical attention immediately, while keeping the affected area as immobile as possible.



Mukade Centipede

The Mukade is a giant centipede, and its bite can be painful. They are black with yellow-orange legs. They like to hide in hiking shoes, so check your boots in the morning before putting your feet in. They are active in the hot and humid months.



Suzumebachi Hornet

The Suzumebachi is a giant hornet which can have a painful sting. If you see a nest avoid the area. They can be the most aggressive into the fall season.



Asiatic Bear

There are two species of bears in Japan, the Higuma or brown bear found in Hokkaido and the Tsukinowaguma or Asiatic bear (*Ursus thibetanus japonicus*) found on the other three main islands of Japan: Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. Tsukinowaguma means “moon circle bear” because of the distinctive white crescent marking on their chest. There are not many left in the Kii Peninsula and they are hardly even seen.

The risk of a bear encounter is very small. Encounters are almost always with people who are foraging in dense forest for mushrooms and other wild vegetables.

But it is always best to be aware of your surroundings when walking. Look and listen to the nature around you to avoid any possible issues.

In Case of Emergency

Seek the assistance of someone nearby. Even if they do not speak English they will try to understand and help. 119 is the emergency help line and a translation service in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Korean is available in most areas.

Accommodations

Accommodations along the trail are mostly Japanese style with tatami mat flooring in the guest rooms and dining area. These rooms are versatile with a low table moved to the side to lay down futon mattress to sleep. In the hot spring areas, there is a larger range of standards, from small family run minshuku guesthouses to larger traditional inns. Accommodations are limited in the smaller areas.

Reservations are highly recommended as walking up to lodgings is not custom.

NOTE: Reservations can be made online at the Kumano Travel community reservation system.

LINK: www.kumano-travel.com

Meals

A trek along the Kumano Kodo is a culinary journey. Meals at the guesthouse and inns are Japanese style. Ingredients vary from the coastline to mountain side often featuring fresh, local ingredients. Rice is a staple and eaten at most meals. Open your mind (and mouths!) to try these new and delicious foods.

HINT: Practice with chopsticks before you come.



Bedding (Futons)



Bedding in the Japanese style guesthouses are futon mattresses laid onto the tatami mat flooring.

HINT: Japanese pillows can sometimes be hard, so if you need a soft pillow consider bringing along an inflatable pillow to make your sleep more comfortable.

Yukata

Yukata are cotton gowns to wear in and around a Japanese style accommodation. They are also used as pajamas.

Fold the left side over the right and tie the belt around your waist.

HINT: Wearing something underneath can save yourself from an embarrassing moment if you are not used to sitting down with a gown on!



Tatami

Tatami are straw mats used as flooring in traditional Japanese rooms.



There are a few general rules to follow in a tatami room.

- Do not wear slippers on the tatami.
- Keep the tatami dry, for example do not leave a wet towel or rain soaked gear on the floor.
- Avoid dragging tables or heavy luggage over the tatami, as this may tear the surface.

Slippers

Staying at a traditional Japanese accommodations keeps you busy with your footwear.

Basically there are three sets of footwear:

- ① Your outdoor shoes, which are left at the door;
- ② your indoor slippers, which you wear around the facility (not on the tatami though!);
- ③ and toilet slippers, which are only for use in the toilet area.

Baths (Onsen)

Japanese baths are the ultimate place to relax and wind down after a day's walk.



Hot springs are common in the area and baths featuring these mineral waters are called onsen.

How to Bathe

The very essence of the bathing routine is as below for both hot spring and communal baths.

- ① Take off clothes in change room
- ② Rinse or wash body
- ③ Soak in bath
- ④ Relax and enjoy!

Be observant. Watch (But don't stare!) the people around you so that you know what is going on.

Most places follow these general guidelines but some do differ slightly. The main thing is to remember to keep the bath water separate from the washing water, and be polite and courteous to other bathers.

NOTE: For a full guide to the Japanese bath visit the following page online.

LINK: www.tb-kumano.jp/en/onsen/how-to-take-a-japanese-bath/

Shrines

The themes of purification and offerings repeat themselves during a visit to the shrine. The general flow of worship is to:

- Wash hands and rinse mouth at the purification basin (often near the entrance to the shrine).
- Make the bell ring by shaking the rope.
- Offer some coins in the offering box, if you wish.
- Bow twice deeply.
- Clap your hands twice.
- Then bow once deeply.



Omamori

An Omamori is an amulet used for many reasons including warding off evil, for traffic safety, health, etc. The word mamori (お守) means protection, with omamori meaning honorable protector. They often describe on one side the specific area of luck or protection they are intended for and have the name of the shrine or temple they were bought at on the other.



Ema

Ema (絵馬) are votive plaques used to make requests or wishes to the deities. This practice dates back hundreds of years to the 8th century. Ema directly translated means horse picture. Originally horses were given as offerings to shrines and over time this turned into offering images of horses. These days there are many motifs used including zodiac signs



Goohoin (Goshimpu)

The Kumano Goohoin or Goshimpu (ご奉印) is a powerful amulet distinctive to the Kumano Sanzan Grand Shrines. Its main purpose is to ward off evils, avert calamities and bring good fortune. It is often displayed on house doors and in rice fields. Originally the amulet was composed of a red tear drop-shaped stamp, but to distinguish it from others, a background wood-block print with an intricate design of stylized crows and double lined good-fortune jewels was added. Each Kumano Sanzan Grand Shrine has a different version based on the same theme.



Pilgrimage Etiquette

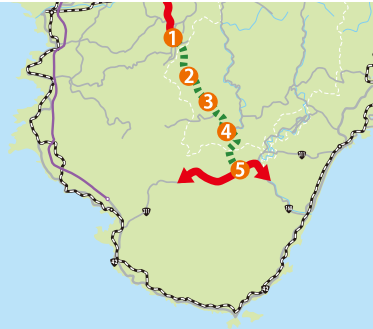
Please abide by the following guidelines while enjoying the Kumano Kodo.

- Preserve the area as "heritage of all humankind".
- Respect the faith of past and present worshippers.
- Keep the routes clean - carry out all waste.
- Protect the local flora and fauna - do not remove or introduce animals or vegetation.
- Stay on the routes.
- Be careful with fire - prevent forest fires.
- Be prepared - plan your trip and equip yourself properly.
- Greet others with a smile and warm heart.

Model Itineraries

Below are two basic walking overviews of the Kohechi. One is a full traverse and the other is a one day hike on the southern Hatenashi-toge Pass section. Both of these itineraries can be done in either direction or linked up with the Nakahechi route from Hongu.

Koyasan to Kumano Hongu Taisha Trek



5 nights, 6 days

- Day 1:**
- Transfer to Koyasan, overnight ①
- Day 2:**
- Walk Koyasan to Omata (p6~7), overnight ②
- Day 3:**
- Walk Omata to Miura-guchi (p8~9), overnight ③
- Day 4:**
- Walk Miura-guchi to Totsukawa Onsen (p.10~11), overnight ④
- Day 5:**
- Walk Totsukawa Onsen to Kumano Hongu Taisha (p.14~15), overnight ⑤
- Day 6:**
- Transfer to next destination

Option: Stay an extra night in the Hongu area to enjoy the hot springs then continue walking on the Nakahechi for two more days to Kumano Nachi Taisha.

Hatenashi-toge Pass Day Hike



2 nights, 3 days

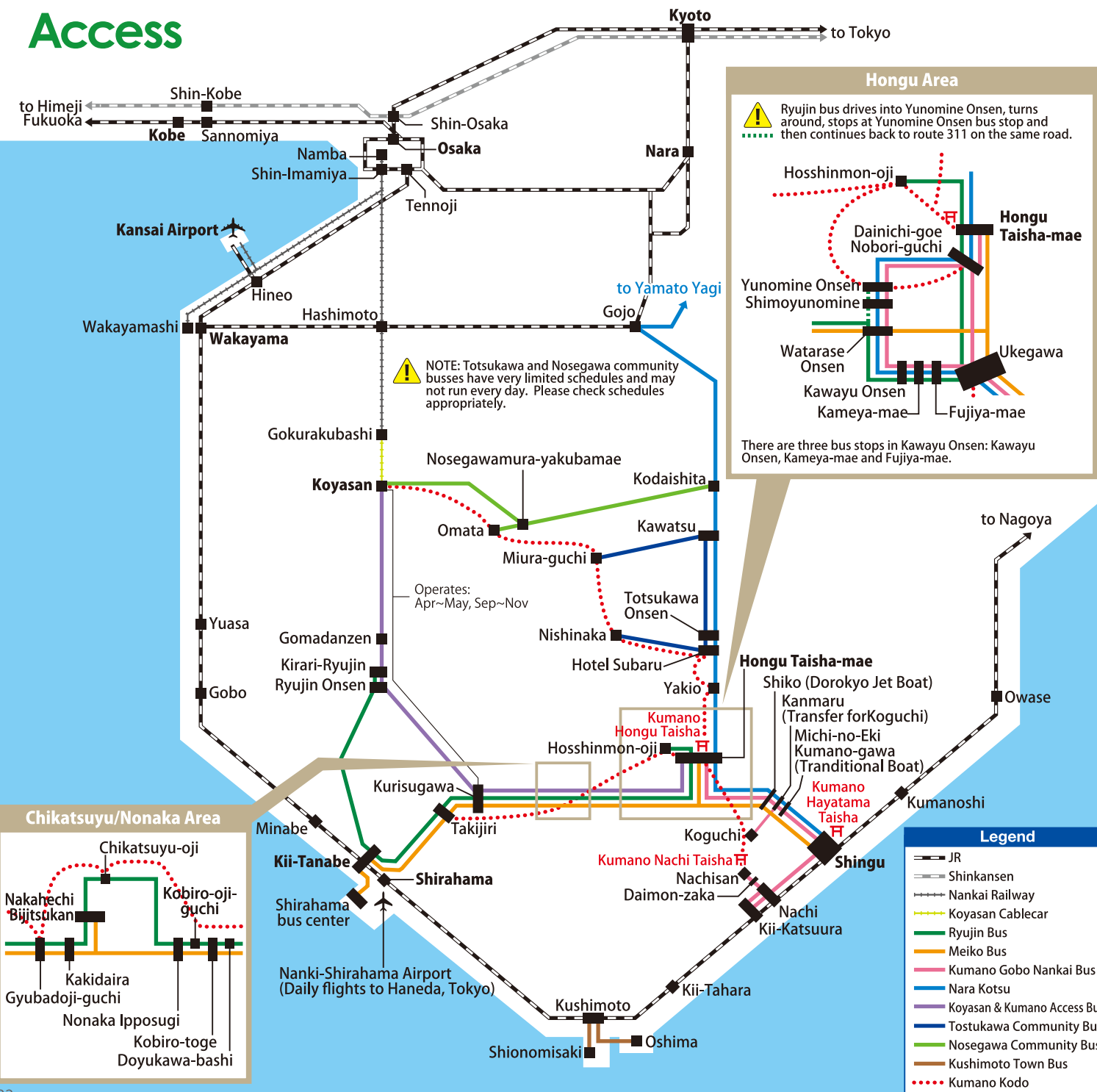
- Day 1:**
- Transfer to Totsukawa Onsen, overnight ①
- Day 2:**
- Walk Totsukawa Onsen to Kumano Hongu Taisha (p.14~15), overnight ②
- Day 3:**
- Transfer to next destination

Option: This hike can be done on a trip from the Hongu area. If you are walking the Nakahechi, spend a few days in Hongu and do this walk to experience a little bit of the Kohechi route.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The northern passes are essentially snowed in during the winter months making these sections technically closed from late December to mid-March. But the Hatenashi-toge Pass in the south is open year-round. Please plan and prepare carefully for these advanced treks.

See more itineraries and details online.
LINK: www.tb-kumano.jp/en/itineraries/list/

Access



Trains

Trains are an efficient way to access the trailheads for the Kumano Kodo.

The Nankai Railway line to Koyasan leaves from Nankai Namba train station in Osaka. Depending on which train you take a transfer in Hashimoto may be necessary. Gokurakubashi is the last station. From here a short, steep cable car ride leads to Koyasan station. The trains and cable cars are timed to easily connect between the two. From Koyasan station it is a short public bus ride into Koyasan village.



JR train lines between Wakayama city and Gojo via Hashimoto where they connect with the Nankai line. Train lines also run along the coast of the Kii Peninsula. One line runs from Osaka on the west coast (JR West), and the other runs from Nagoya on the east coast (JR Central). They overlap between Kii-Katsuura and Shingu on the south east. The JR West express trains are called Kuroshio, after the ocean current that flow off of the peninsula. The JR Center express trains are called Nanki Wide View.

From Hongu take a local bus to either Shingu or Kii-Tanabe to connect with the coastal train services.

Tickets

Tickets can be purchased on site at all major stations. An express train is the fastest way to travel to the area. For JR express trains two tickets are issued, a basic Fare Ticket and a Limited Express Ticket. Keep both tickets for the duration of the trip, as you will need them to exit the station on arrival.



Useful Words & Phrases

- I would like to buy a one way express train ticket to Koyasan station. (高野山駅までの特急切符を買いたいです)
- Reserved Seat (指定席)
- Platform (プラットフォーム)
- Station (駅)
- Non-Reserved Seat (自由席)
- Transfer (のりかえ)

Bus

Local Busses are the main form of public transport once you leave the coast and head into the mountains. Busses are limited (especially along the Kohechi) so it is best to plan ahead and check the timetables.

NOTE: Downloadable timetables are available online.

LINK: www.tb-kumano.jp/en/transport/bus/

How to Ride a Local Bus

Riding a local bus is easy once you learn the basic system as outlined below.



- ① Enter through rear door (or front door if only one)
- ② Take number ticket
- ③ Push button to inform driver that stop is wanted (it is also good practice to tell the driver where you want to get off when you board)
- ④ Match number ticket to the electronic fare chart at the front of the bus to determine fare (prices change according to distance travelled)
- ⑤ Change money if needed
- ⑥ Put money and ticket in fare box (exact fare)
- ⑦ Exit through front door

NOTE: Only 1000 yen bills can be changed for coins. So make sure that you have enough smaller bills before you get on the bus.

Kii-Tanabe Station Bus Stop

Busses for the Kumano Kodo depart from bus stop number 2 in front of the Tanabe Tourist Information Center next to the Kii-Tanabe station.

HINT: Tell the bus driver where you want to get off when you board the bus.



Useful Words & Phrases

- I would like to go to the Yakio bus stop. (八木尾バス停までお願いします。)
- Where is the Kumano Kodo trailhead? (熊野古道登山口はどこですか?)
- Bus stop (バス停)
- Change money (両替え)
- Bus fare (バス代)
- Transfer busses (バス乗りかえ)
- Number ticket (整理券)

Signs

There are a diversity of signs on the Kohechi route depending on the municipality the trail is running through. For the most part they are wooden, brown with white lettering in both Japanese and English. In the Totsukawa village area there are also stone signpost. Please pay attention to signage to follow the Kohechi safely.



Route Guide

Overview

The Kohechi route is a mountainous trail not suitable for beginners, but for those with experience multi-day trekking in an isolated mountain environment. It is a four day walk covering ~65 km, traversing a high mountain pass over 1000 m in elevation every day.



Weather

The passes are high and subsequently weather is variable with much rain, wind, and fog. The northern passes are essentially snowed in during the winter months making these sections technically closed from late December to mid-March. (The Hatnashi-toge Pass in the south is open year-round.)

Lodging

Accommodations are available in Koyasan, Omata, Miura-guchi, Totsukawa Onsen, and the Hongu area. Miura-guchi has limited options. Reservations are highly recommended and essential so as not to get stuck in the mountains without a place to stay.

Transportation

Public transportation is limited especially between Omata and Miura-guchi which are located on different sides of a major mountain range and only serviced by community busses focused on children getting to and from school. Please check and enquire locally to get the most up-to-date information on bus options.

Preparation

Good preparation and excellent fitness is essential to make the full four day trek between Koyasan and Kumano Hongu Taisha on the Kohechi. Please be prepared and travel safely.

Mizugamine Peak (Koyasan~Omata)

Overview

This section starts in Koyasan and finishes at the Omata bus stop. There are longer sections on paved roads: near Otaki, on the Koyasan-Ryujin Skyline road, and a forestry road after Mizugamine Peak. The trail is generally wide and easy to walk, with some steep sections into river valleys near Otaki (Odonogawa River) and the Omata bus stop (Kawarabi-gawa River).

Trailhead

The trail starts in the center of the spiritual sanctuary of Koyasan, heading south to the west of Kongosanmai-in along a gravel road ascending until the Susuki-toge pass.

Sacred Koyasan

Koyasan has many sites to see including the mystical Okunoin cemetery, so it is recommended to stay a night or two here in a temple.

Nyonin Michi

At the ~1 km point along the road the trail joins the Nyonin-michi Women's Pilgrimage Route for ~500 m. There was a ban on women in Koyasan until 1872. Around the perimeter of the precinct were Nyonin-do, or women's temples, where females could pray from a distance. The Nyonin-michi was the circuit route connecting these temples.

Otaki

Otaki is a small settlement built onto the mountainside. There are toilets, covered shelter, stamp, and a small shrine located here. Watch for plantations of Koyamaki trees (Japanese Umbrella-pine). These evergreen conifers have thick green leaf-like needles and are endemic to Japan—a living fossil with no close relatives.

Koya-Ryujin Skyline

After Otaki the trail climbs to the scenic Koya-Ryujin Skyline road which runs along the ridgetop between Koyasan and Gomadanzan, before descending to Ryujin Onsen. The Kohechi follows this road for about 1.5 km. Be careful of vehicles.

Mizugamine Village Remains

Mizugamine was a settlement that flourished during the middle of the Meiji period until 1952 when the village was abandoned because of new transportation routes and lack of agricultural land.

Forestry Road

The trail joins a forestry road soon after Mizugamine Peak which winds along the ridgeline of the mountains offering panoramic views.



Omata Bus Stop

The trail runs along the road in sections before descending swiftly to the Kawarabi-gawa River. At the base of the slope is the Omata bus stop, toilet, pay phone, and stamp.

Obako-toge Pass (Omata~Miura-guchi)

Overview

This is often considered the most challenging and “wildest” day of the trek. The trail is entirely in the mountains with much of it at high elevation. It is one of the highest peaks in the region taking the brunt of storms that rise up the mountain range from the ocean. Weather can be fierce and change quickly, often with foggy conditions. The valleys below can be fine weather with heavy rain at the peak.

The trail has a very different feel on the either side of the Obako-toge pass. The north side has wider trails with easier gradients. The south side is more of a wilderness trail with some spots that are narrow with steep slopes.

Trailhead

The trailhead starts at the Omata bus stop. Cross the road and head up the narrow alley between the houses to the top of the small settlement where the trail changes from paved road to dirt trail.

Kaya-goya-ato Remains

Historically there used to be several teahouses at Kayagoya. Local seniors speak of five houses in the past, but three were burned down due to a fire. The area was inhabited until the mid-1980s. At that time, there were the main buildings, barns, woodsheds, 4000 square meters of rice fields, and surrounding fields.



Obako-dake Junction

At the Obako-dake junction there are three trails. To the right the trail leads west along a ridge line to the Mt. Gomadanzan area. The trail straight ahead continues up the ridge line to Obako-dake Peak. The trail to the left is the main Kohechi route which traverses the northern slope until the Obako-dake pass, where there is a non-serviced shelter and toilet.

Narrow Trail

The atmosphere of the trail changes quickly after the pass, turning into a smaller

mountain trail through mature beach forest. Before reaching the Uenishi residence remains there is a short narrow part with a steep slope, prone to slides. If the trail looks to be in very poor condition, it is often recommended to scramble up and over the affected section to the other side.

Uenishi Residence Remains

The Uenishi residence has a recorded history from the 17th century. The 1682 Kumano Annai-iki guide, states that there was a house here. During the early Edo period, there was an inn and was inhabited until 1934. Cows and extensive vegetables fields were kept.

Stories told by the nearby villagers speak of the old road used both as a transportation route for goods and pilgrimage trail: The packhorse drivers would take a short break and drink tea at Uenishi before heading down the mountain. Spring and summer brought energetic pilgrims who would stay at the inns overnight—singing and enjoying themselves until late into the night.

Heading South

The trail south of Uenishi residence remains climbs up the ridge line. There is an old trail that heads down, don't take it. Remember that you need to climb the ridge immediately after the clearing. If there is heavy fog sometimes it is difficult to locate the trail on the south side of the remains.



Mizugamoto Teahouse Remains

“Mizugamoto” means water source and it is believed that Kobo Daishi founded this holy spring. A sign once venerated its dramatic healing properties.

There is a tale of an eccentric old woman who lived here, with eerie resemblance to a “Yamamba” mountain witch from Japanese folklore. She had a strange appearance with disheveled hair that was a mix of red and white: a pale face with big wrinkles, large gleaming eyes, and shiny white teeth—people feared her discomforting presence.

Machidaira

The name Machidaira comes from an episode of history, when Prince Otonomiya (1308-1335) escaped to Kumano to flee from warring rivals. He was said to have waited here for one of his retainers: “Machi” wait and “Taira” broad or flat.



There are records of a temple, tea house, and “Sekisho” checkpoint from the Edo era.

Miura-guchi

The trail meets the road at the valley bottom following it through the small settlement of Miura-guchi. Nearby is Mitadani bus stop with a toilet and pay phone.

Miura-toge Pass (Miura-guchi~Totsukawa Onsen)

Overview

The first 10 km is a mountain trail up and over the Miura-toge pass. The last 8 km is on route 425 parallel to the Nishi-gawa River to Totsukawa Onsen.

Trailhead

From Miura-guchi bus stop the trail threads by some buildings to a metal suspension bridge across the river. From here it is a steady and constant climb to the pass.





Yoshimura House Remains & Windbreak Cedar Trees

This site was an important waystation between Obako-toge pass and Miura-toge pass with a travelers inn. It was occupied until 1948.

The large cedar trees served as a windbreak and are estimated to be 500 years old with a circumference of 4~8 m.

Miura-toge Pass

The trail finishes climbing at Miura-toge pass where there is a toilet and covered shelter. A forestry road runs along the ridge. Cross straight across the road to find the trail.



Furuyagura Remains

Documents describe Furuyagura as the site of two tea houses. The last inhabitants left in 1935. Nearby is a Jizo statue and Namu Amida Butsu monument.

A legend of treachery and murder haunts the remains. In the early 17th century a monk surprised and attacked travelers, murdering them to collect money to join the Siege of Osaka, a series of battles between warring feudal lords.

Demise Teahouse Remains

This area had teahouses and accommodations until 1910 with many rice paddies cultivated by nearby residents.

Yagura Kannon-do

This small structure was rebuilt in 1955 and houses three stone sculptures: Nyoirin-Kannon Bosatsu (center),

Jizo Bosatsu (left), and Kannon Bosatsu (right). The Nyoirin-Kannon Bosatsu is from the Edo period. The Jizo Bosatsu has an inscription from 1725 and is believed to help people recover from ear disorders by rubbing its head while praying.

Nishinaka Bus Stop

The trail crisscrosses a forestry road before reaching the valley bottom and Nishinaka bus stop. From here it is a gentle walk along route 425 through small settlements often with nice views of the river.

Hotel Subaru & Totsukawa Onsen

Hotel Subaru is an accommodation along the trail with hot spring baths available for day use. It is ~2 km further to the central part of the Totsukawa Onsen. Totsukawa village spreads along the coast of a man-made lake.

Hatenashi-toge Pass (Totsukawa Onsen~Kumano Hongu Taisha)

Overview

The Hatেনashi-toge pass is a steep climb and descent. From Yakio bus stop the trail follows route 168 before joining the Nakahechi route at Sangenjaya until Kumano Hongu Taisha. This pass makes for a good day walk without traversing the entire Kohechi trail and is open year-round. Busses travel daily between Totsukawa Onsen, Yakio, and Hongu.

Trailhead

From Hotel Subaru the trail runs through an old tunnel to a pedestrian suspension bridge. A dirt path leads through a set of houses before beginning the ascent. After crossing a road the trail climbs swiftly up the ridge-line with sections of ancient cobblestone staircases.



Thirty-Three Kannon Statues of Hatেনashi-toge Pass

Thirty-three statues of Kannon line this mountain trail beginning at Ichizako in Totsukawa Village (No.33), Hatেনashi Settlement (No.30), Hatেনashi-toge Pass (No.17), and Yakio Settlement in Hongu Village (No.1).

Kannon is a Buddhist deity often referred to as the Bodhisattva of mercy, and is represented as both male and female. A Bodhisattva is a being that compassionately refrains from entering Nirvana in order to save others. Kannon is the most widely revered of all Bodhisattvas and temples in Japan have more images of Kannon than of all the other deities combined.

Kannon is capable of assuming thirty-three manifestations suited to the time, the place, and the individual. In Japan, it is common to travel to each site that houses these diverse forms of Kannon to complete a pilgrimage circuit. These statues were contributed and erected by the citizens of Totsukawa Village, Shingu City, and Hongu Village between 1922 and 1923.

Hatেনashi Settlement

Hatেনashi settlement is a scenic ridge-top hamlet with a panoramic backdrop of mountains, a key site in the registration of the area as one of "The Most Beautiful Villages in Japan".

The trail climbs through the settlement, often next to people's homes, so please offer respect to the local residents.

Tensuida

These fields are rare examples of ridge-top rain-fed rice paddies. Rice production requires large quantities of water for irrigation to be successful. They were managed by the owner of the nearby Yamaguchi Teahouse and display the efficient and innovative use of the abundant rainfall in the region.

Yamaguchi Teahouse Remains

The Yamaguchi Teahouse was an important stop along the Kohechi pilgrimage route and was mentioned in various historical documents. A stone wall running east-west remains where the structure once stood. On the east side, a grove of Japanese cedars served as a windbreak. Nearby, stone statues of Jizo and the Eleven-faced Kannon watch over passing travelers.

Hatেনashi Kannon-do Temple

There are three stone statues enshrined in the Hatেনashi Kannon-do Temple: Shokannon, Juichimen Kannon, and Fudo Myo-o.

Although Kannon Bodhisattva appears in many manifestations, the basic and unchanging one is called Shokannon, which is seated in the middle.

The Juichimen Kannon (Eleven-faced Kannon), standing on the left, represents the ten sacred vows of the Buddha to protect worshippers from disaster and harm.

Fudo Myo-o, the Immovable Mantra King, is on the right, seated in front of an aureole of flames. This wrathful deity has the power to crush all obstacles to enlightenment and convert anger into salvation. He is a patron deity of the Yamabushi mountain ascetics. Since ancient times, this site has been a place to pray for safe passage in the area.

Hatেনashi-toge Pass

The Hatেনashi-toge pass is small and abrupt with the trail quickly descending the south face of the mountain. It is the eastern end of the Hatেনashi mountain range, a



dominant feature of the region.

Hongu Viewpoint

Between Kannon number 11 and 12 is a scenic lookout viewpoint of the Kumano-gawa river twisting through the mountains and Hongu village.

Yakio Bus Stop

At the base of the mountain is the Yakio bus stop. From here the Kohechi follows route 168 south. It is a popular trailhead for those planning to walk only the Hatেনashi-toge pass mountain trail.

Michi-no-Eki OkuKumano Kodo Hongu Rest Area

This rest area serves as the local grocery store. There is also a small restaurant serving simple meals. From here continue on 168 to the Hiraiwa-guchi bus stop where the route follows a forestry road up the mountainside to Sangen-jaya.

Sangen-jaya

Sangen-jaya is the junction of the Nakahechi and Kohechi routes marked with an historic stone sign post. Here once stood three tea houses alluding to its importance.

A replica of a Sekisho checkpoint stands on the site. Sekisho were systemized in the Edo period (1600-1868) and found on all of the major routes in Japan. Their main purpose was to control the movement of people and collect tolls.

NOTE: Halfway between Sangen-jaya and Kumano Hongu Taisha (near number sign post 73) is a short side trail to a lookout point that is not to be missed!



Kumano Hongu Taisha

Kumano Hongu Taisha is one of the three grand shrines of Kumano. The trail enters the grounds from the north. The pavilions have gone through periodic rebuilding after damage from fires and floods but the architectural style has remained consistent for over 800 years. Notice the graceful cypress bark roof and distinctive bronze ornaments on the roof top.

Yatagarasu Three-legged Crow

An interesting motif that can be found in the Kumano Sanzan is the Yatagarasu three-legged crow. It is believed to be a divine messenger and supernatural guide, who helped the first emperor of Japan navigate the impenetrable Kumano mountains in the Japanese creation myth. The three legs represent heaven, earth and mankind. A modern day use of the Yatagarasu is in the logo of the Japanese Football association.

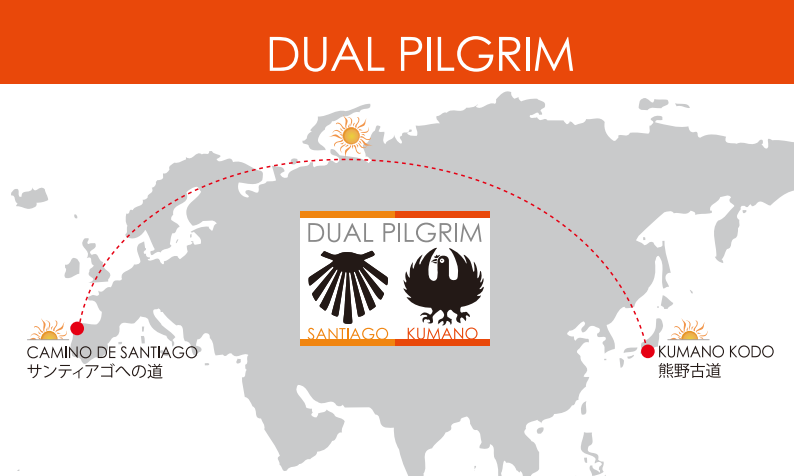
Oyunohara

Oyunohara is the original site of the Kumano Hongu Taisha. In 1889 a flood destroyed the shrine and it was moved to its current location. In the clearing the expansive, raised earthen platform still exists.

A massive Torii gate marks the entrance at almost 34 meters tall and 42 meters wide. It is built of steel and erected in the year 2000.

Hongu & Onsen

South of the Kumano Hongu Taisha stairs lined with offering flags lead to route 168. Across the street is the Kumano Hongu Heritage Center and Hongu Taisha-mae bus stop. From here local busses link to three hot spring areas with accommodations: Yunomine Onsen, Kawayu Onsen, and Watarase Onsen.



ARE YOU A "DUAL PILGRIM"?

If you have completed both the Kumano Kodo and Way of St.James then you are a "Dual Pilgrim".

To receive the Dual Pilgrim status, pilgrims must complete one of each of the following:

WAY OF ST. JAMES

- at least the last 100 km on foot or by horse, or
- at least the last 200 km by bicycle

KUMANO KODO


- Takijiri-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha on foot (~38 km) or
- Kumano Nachi Taisha to / from Kumano Hongu Taisha on foot (~30 km) or
- Hosshinmon-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha on foot (~7 km) plus a visit to Kumano Hayatama Taisha and Kumano Nachi Taisha or
- Koyasan to Kumano Hongu Taisha on foot (~65 km)

CREDENTIAL

Credentials are available at the information center next to the Kii-Tanabe station.



STAMPS

Stamp are mostly located in small wooden stands or accommodations. Watch for the  icon on the maps.



REGISTRATION SITES IN JAPAN

Kumano Hongu Heritage Center 世界遺産熊野本宮館 100-1 Hongu-cho Hongu, Tanabe City, Wakayama Prefecture , 647-1731	Tanabe Tourist Information Center 田辺市観光センター 1-20 Minato, Tanabe City, Wakayama Prefecture, 646-0031
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NOTE: Registration takes ~15 min and cannot be mailed out.