

KUMANO TRAVEL

Official Community Reservation System

www.kumano-travel.com

KUMANO TRAVEL is an international award-winning community-based initiative; a bilingual (Japanese & English) online reservation system for the region.

SERVICES & PRODUCTS

- ◆ Accommodations Reservations
- ◆ Tours & Activities
- ◆ Local Guides
- ◆ Travel Services (eg. Luggage shuttle)
- ◆ Model Itineraries



WHY BOOK WITH KUMANO TRAVEL?

- ◆ Locally Owned & Operated
- ◆ Intimate Local Knowledge
- ◆ Quality Personal Service
- ◆ Freedom to Discover
- ◆ Responsible & Sustainable
- ◆ Secure Online Booking

Note: Reservations are required at least 20 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?	英語が話せますか?
I don't understand. / I don't know	わかりません
I can't speak Japanese	日本語はできません
Is it OK to take a photo?	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
	I need a doctor Isha ga hitsuyo desu 医者が必要です

5/2025 printed・発行

KUMANO KODO NAKAHECHI

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!



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 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

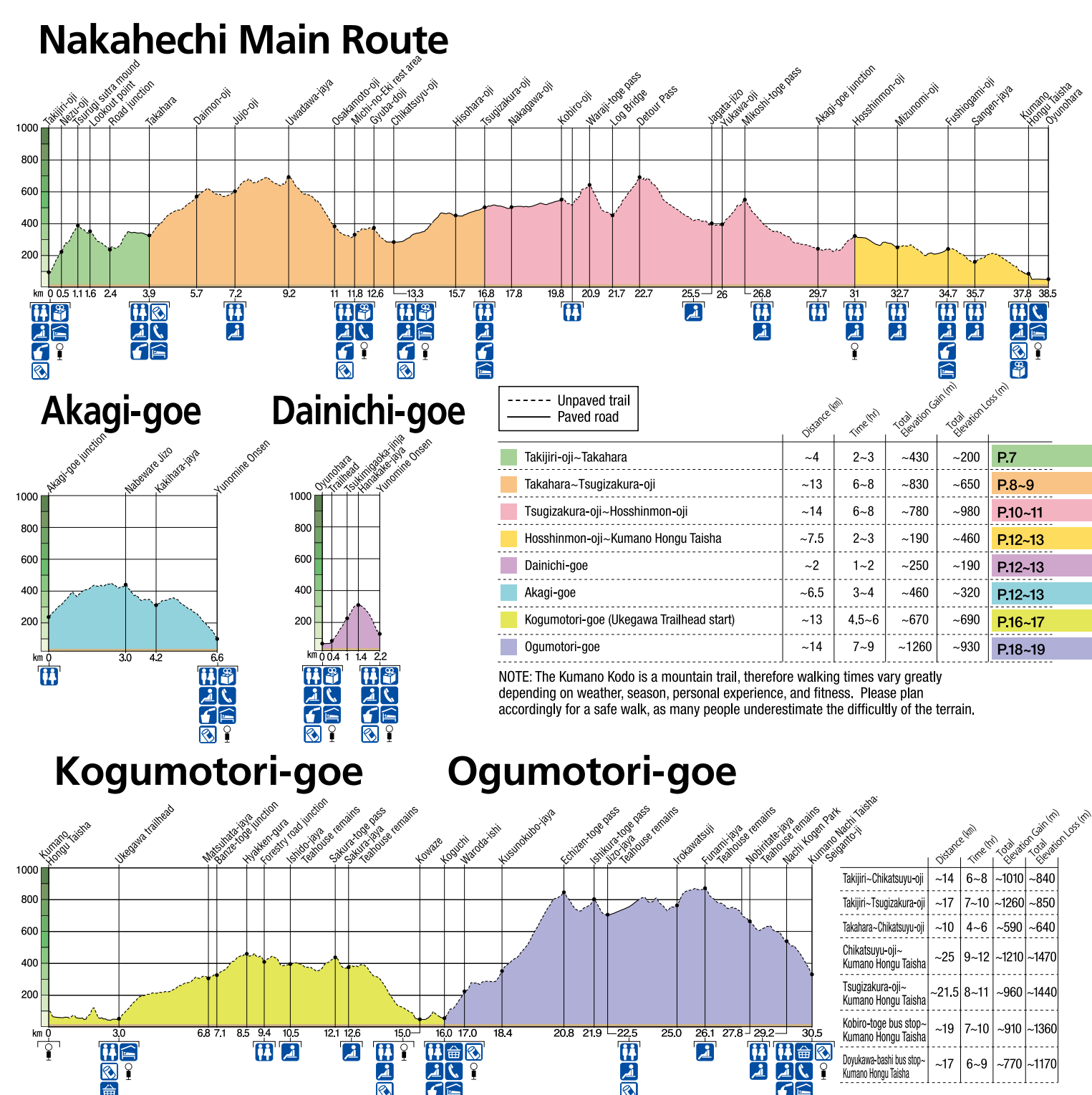
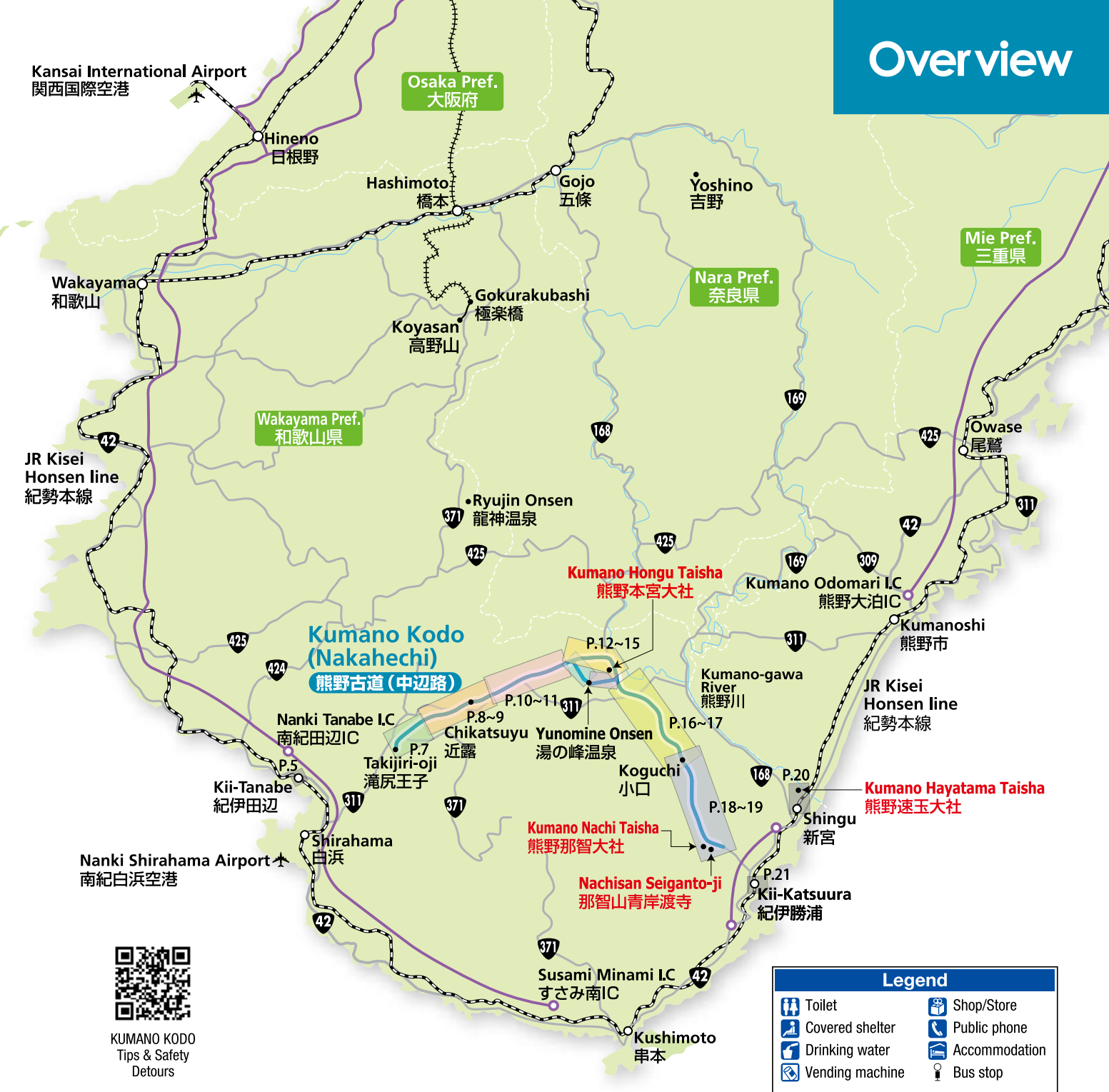
On July 7, 2004 three sacred sites (Kumano Sanzan, Koyasan, and Yoshino/Omine) and the pilgrimage routes that lead to and connect them, were registered on UNESCO's World Heritage list as the "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range".

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.

Nakahechi Imperial Route

The Nakahechi route has a rich history and is characterized by Oji shrines found along its length. The earliest records of this route date from the beginning of the 10th century. It is the most popular route to the Kumano Grand Shrines and historically was extensively travelled by the imperial family on pilgrimage from Kyoto.



Tanabe

Gateway to Kumano

Tanabe City is the historic and present day gateway to Kumano, a key location for both land and ocean transportation routes. It is a sleepy coastal city with a population of around 65,000, the largest in the south of the Kii Peninsula. Tanabe Bay is to the west with mountains rising in the East. Across the bay to the south is the Shirahama resort area.

Fishing and agriculture focused on Ume and orange production are the major industries. The mountains inland from the coast are covered with terraced orchards.

Access: JR Trains run daily from Kyoto and Osaka (~2.5 hrs)

Kii-Tanabe Station Area

The station area is the center of the older part of the city. Next to the Kii-Tanabe station is the Tanabe Tourist Information Center. Most of the other main sites are to the south-west of the station. Busses for the Kumano Kodo leave from Bus Stop 2 in front of the station.

TANABE Tourist Information Center

Hours: 9:00~18:00
(Open year-round)



Official Guide Book

For those looking for a more in-depth culture guide the Kumano Kodo Nakahechi Official Guide Book is the ultimate pilgrim's resource. For sale at or nearby tourist information centers in the region.



Tokei-jinja

Tokei-jinja Shrine was established in 419 A.D and derives from Kumano Hongu Taisha. Many imperial and aristocratic pilgrims paid homage here praying for safe passage into the realm of Kumano. Because the Kumano deities were manifested in Tokei-jinja Shrine, some pilgrims did not make the voyage into the heart of Kumano, but prayed here, subsequently worshipping the Kumano Sanzan from afar.



Ajikoji - Restaurant & Entertainment District

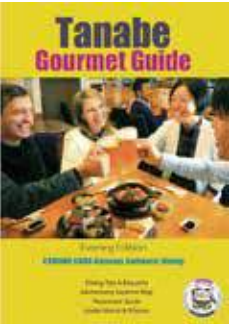
The entertainment area in front of the JR Kii-Tanabe station is called "Ajikoji" and is packed with over 200 restaurants and Japanese style pubs (izakaya). Every alley is full of quaint places to eat and drink.



Tanabe is a safe place for non-Japanese speakers to fully experience delicious local cuisine in an authentic environment, Kanpai!

Tanabe Gourmet Guide

The Tanabe Gourmet Guide is full of information, explanations, maps, and links for izakaya restaurants, bars, cafes, and Japanese cuisine in and around the Ajikoji entertainment district near Kii-Tanabe Station. Pick up a free copy from the TANABE Tourist Information Center or download.



tanabe en+



Café and shop selling local souvenirs across from Kii-Tanabe station.
Hours: 10:00~19:00

Essential Trail Conduct

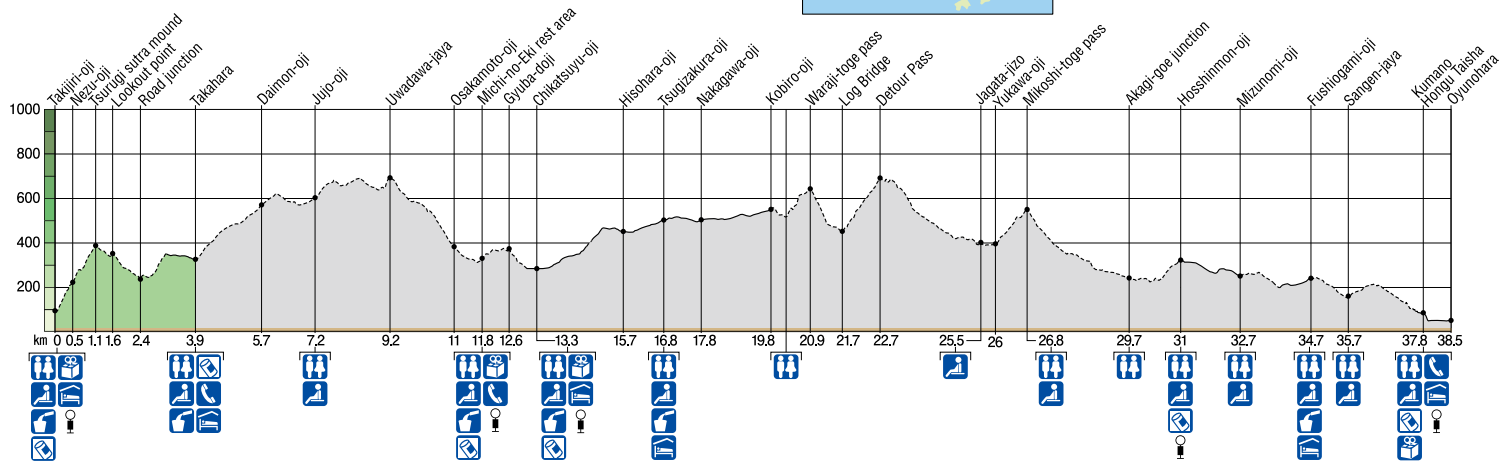
- **CHOOSE** the route that fits your abilities. **DO** some research to familiarize yourself with the trails and seasonal conditions.
- **PACE** yourself. **LISTEN** to your body and do not approach the Kumano Kodo as a race, taking breaks when needed.
- **WATCH** the trail surface, as it is varied and can be slippery.
- **LEAVE** no Trace. **PACK** out all garbage. The bins along the trail are for locals only.
- **EAT** and **DRINK** to keep hydrated and your energy up.
- **PASS** other walkers in a wide and safe part of the trail.
- **COMMUNICATE** with others when passing to facilitate a safe interaction.
- **STAY** close to the mountainside of the trail on steeper sections.
- **USE** walking poles for balance only. Do not put too much pressure on them as they may slip, and you can lose your balance.
- **BE AWARE** of where you are. There are numbered signposts along many routes. These are good markers to pinpoint location.
- Plan to **ARRIVE** at your accommodation by 17:00.



Tanabe

Takijiri-oji~Takahara

滝尻王子～高原



Kumano Kodo Signs

The Nakahechi route is well-signed in both Japanese and English. Please refer to your map and follow the signs to complete your walk safely.



Directional signs



Trail markers



Not trail markers



Along each of the sections there are numbered sign posts every 500 meters marked with this icon on the maps. Most are brown wooden sign posts, but on the southern portion of the Ogumotori-goe (1~17) they are made of stone.

KUMANO KODO KAN Pilgrimage Center

The Kumano Kodo Kan Pilgrimage Center, across the river from Takijiri-oji, is an information center with exhibitions on the Kumano Kodo and small outdoor shop. It is a good place to get an overview of the area before your walk.

Hours: 9:00~17:00
(Open year-round except new year's holidays)



Legend		
Oji shrine	Covered shelter	Bus stop
Toilet	Michi-no-Eki rest area	Shrine
Shop/Store	Drinking water	Public Wifi
Public phone	Sunrise, Sunset point	Post Office
Vending machine	View point	School
Accommodation	Stamp	Police Box
Information	Number markers every 500 meters	Unpaved trail
Onsen (Hot spring)	Camping	Paved road

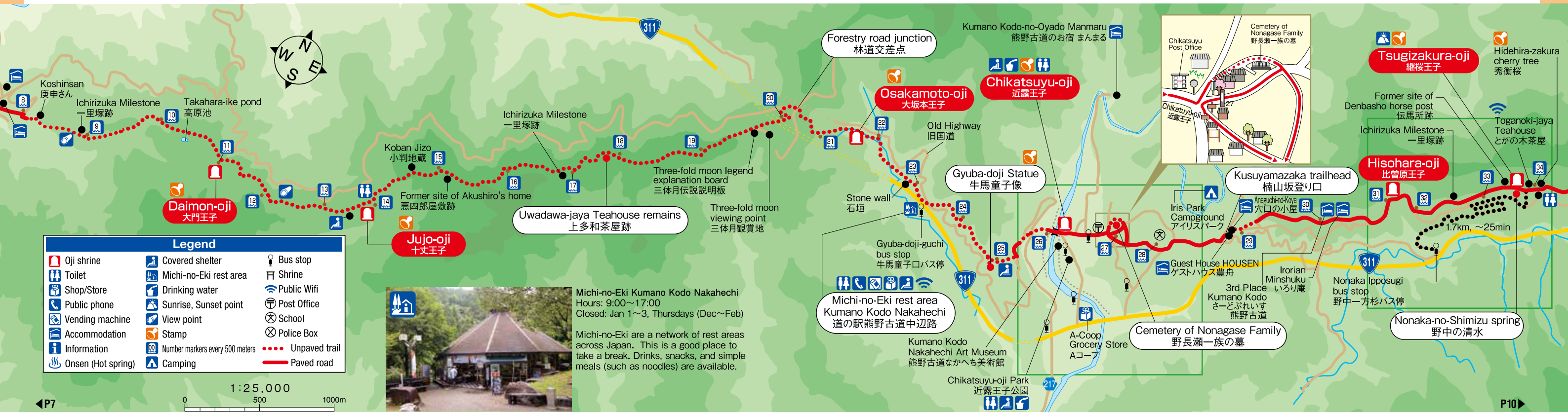
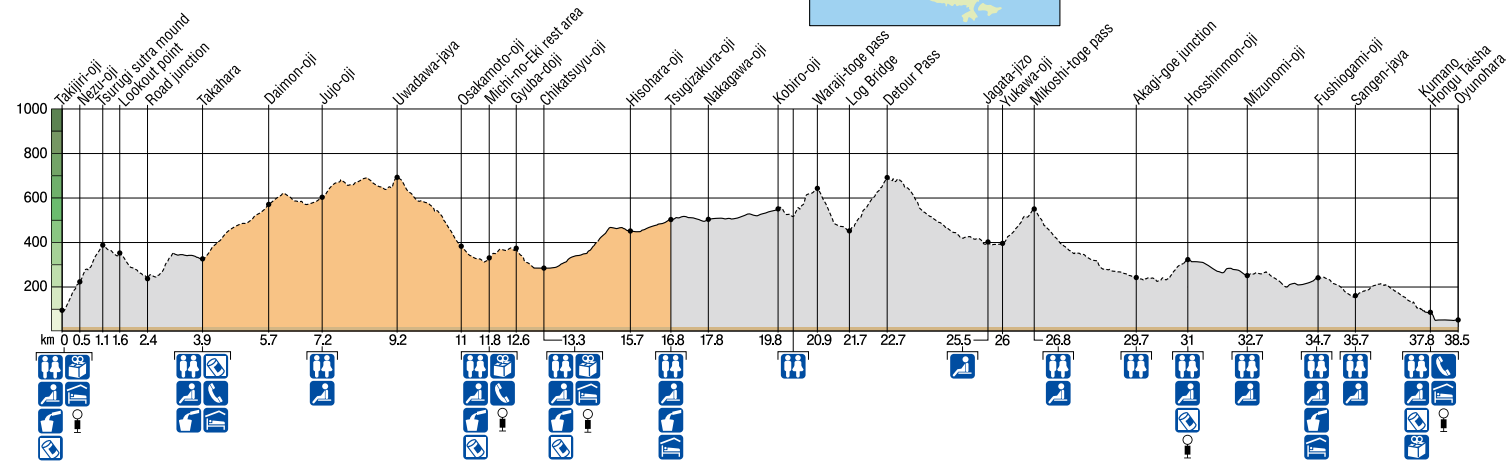
Takijiri-oji



Takahara



高原～継桜王子

[illegible]

0 500m

Kumano Kodo To Hongu
熊野古道 至 本宮

Toganoki-jaya Teahouse
とがの木茶屋

Hidehira-zakura cherry tree
秀衡桜

Tsugizakura-oji
継桜王子

Minshuku Tsugizakura
民宿 つぎざくら

guest house MUI

Nonaka-no-Ipposugi Cedar trees
野中の方杉

guesthouse Mori Nonaka
guesthouse 森のなか

Kumano Kodo Inn Hagi Annex 1111
熊野古道 古民家宿 HAGI 別館 1111

Hisohara-oji
比曾原王子

Kumano Kodo Inn Hagi
熊野古道古民家宿HAGI

Old Trail Guesthouse
オルドトレイユ ゲストハウス

Guest House Yata
ゲストハウス八咫

Nonaka Ipposugi
野中一方杉

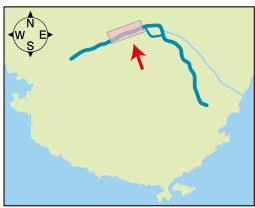
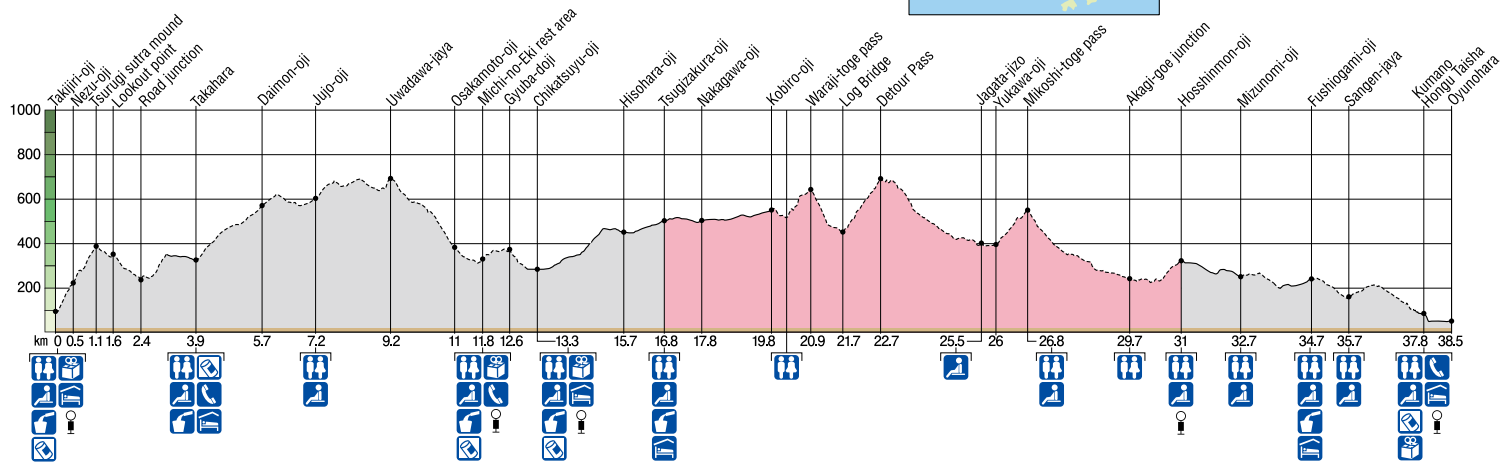
Nonaka-no-Shimizu Spring
野中の清水

Guest House Hiyodori
Guest House ひよどり

~25 minutes walk from
Tsugizakura-oji to Nonaka Ipposugi bus stop

Tsugizakura-oji~Hosshinmon-oji

継桜王子～発心門王子



Distance (km) : ~14
Time (hr) : 6~8
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~780
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~980

----- Unpaved trail
———— Paved road

Kobiro-toge Area



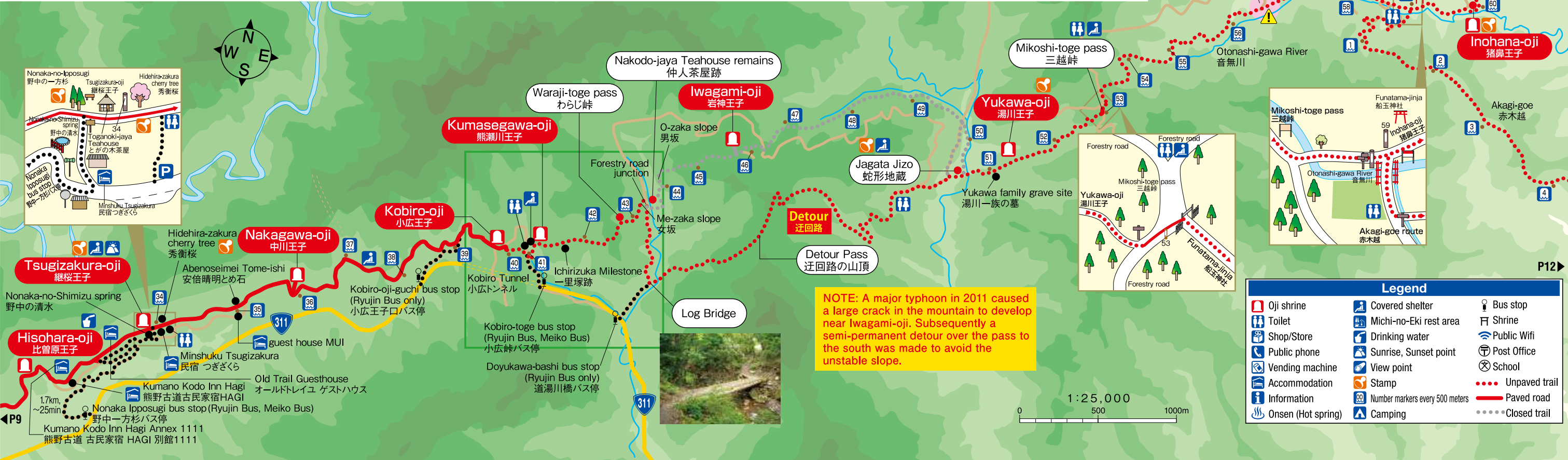
Walking Options from Chikatsuyu/Nonaka area

Full Walk:
Chikatsuyu-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha ~25km, 9~12hr
Tsugizakura-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha ~21.5km, 8~11hr

Intermediate Walk (use local bus):
Kobiro-toge bus stop to Kumano Hongu Taisha 19km, 7~10hr
Doyukawa-bashi bus stop to Kumano Hongu Taisha ~17km, 6~9hr

Highlight Walk (use local bus):
Hosshinmon-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha ~7.5km, 2~3hr
For those staying at Yunomine Onsen you can add the Dainichi-goe ~2km, 1~2hr

LINK:
Bus timetable number one on the following list.
www.tb-kumano.jp/transport/bus

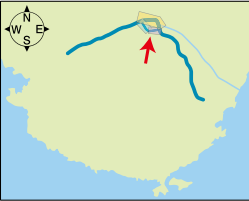


NOTE: A major typhoon in 2011 caused a large crack in the mountain to develop near Iwagami-oji. Subsequently a semi-permanent detour over the pass to the south was made to avoid the unstable slope.



Legend		

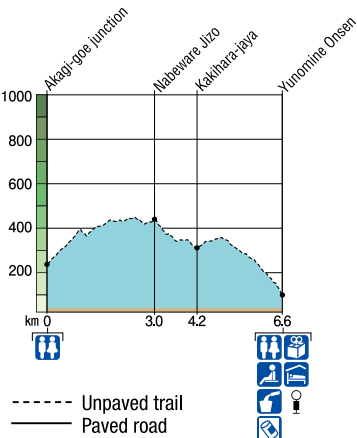
Hongu Area Walks



There are three sections of pilgrimage route in the Hongu area; the last section of the Nakahechi Main Route, Akagi-goe, and Dainichi-goe. The Hosshinmon-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha is a popular highlight walk. By combining these three it is also possible to do a full day loop walk. This Hongu Loop walk is usually done in a clock-wise direction starting either in Yunomine Onsen or the Hongu townsite.

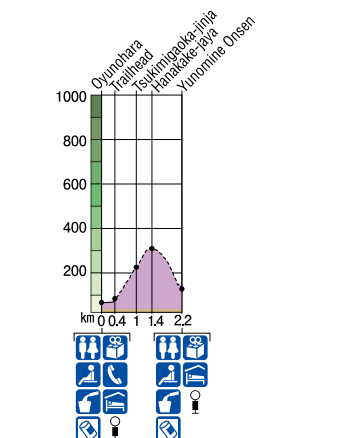
Akagi-goe 赤木越

Distance (km) : ~6.5
Time (hr) : 3~4
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~460
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~320



Dainichi-goe 大日越

Distance (km) : ~2
Time (hr) : 1~2
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~250
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~190

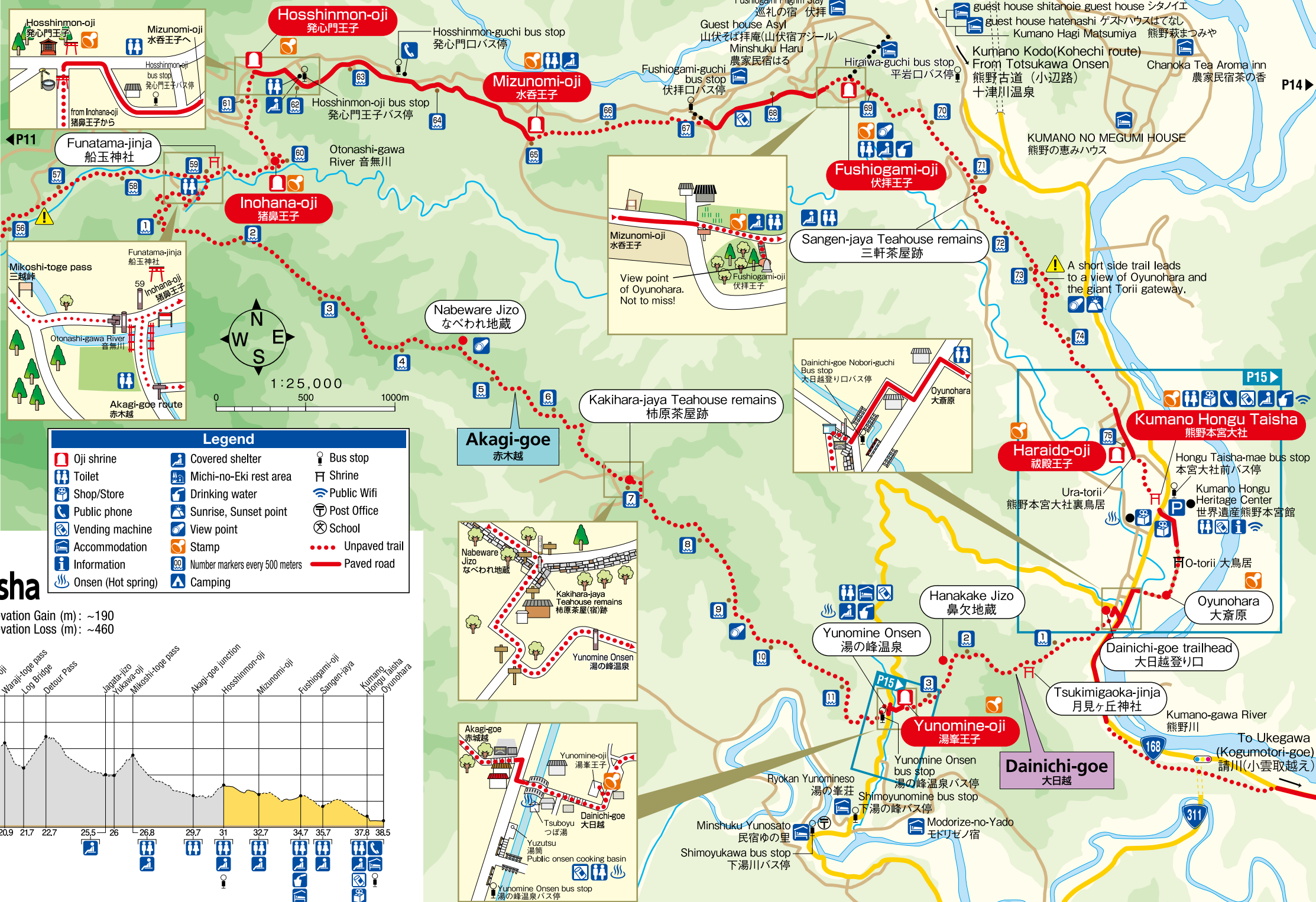
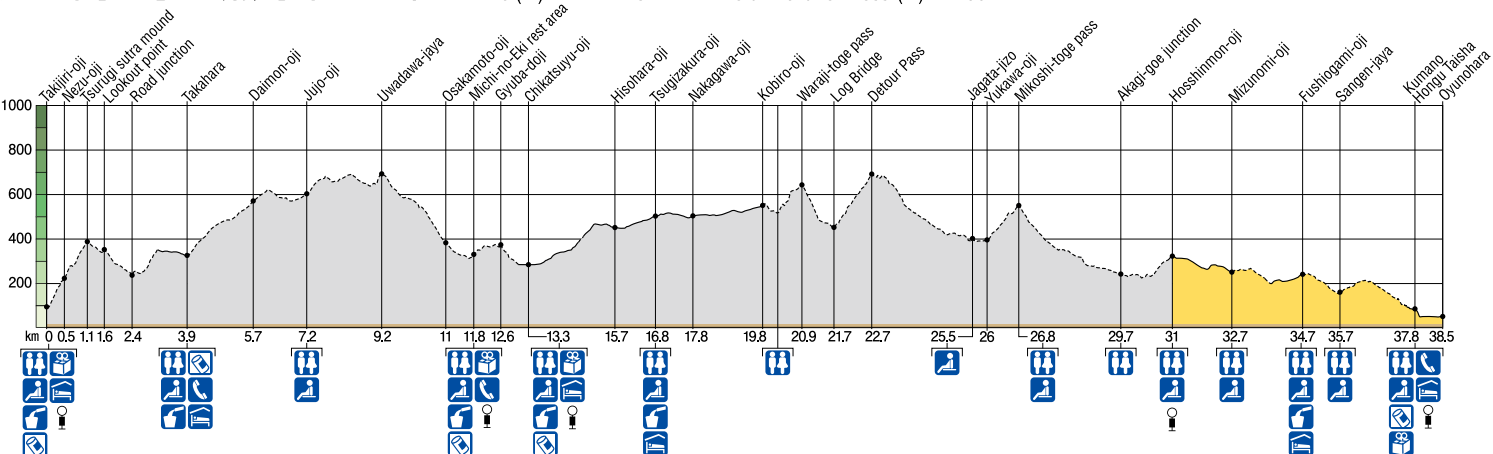


Hosshinmon-oji~Kumano Hongu Taisha

発心門王子~熊野本宮大社

Distance (km) : ~7.5
Time (hr) : 2~3

Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~190
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~460



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



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.

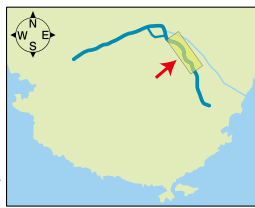
Capacity: 1~2 people
Time: up to 30 minutes private use
Price: 800 yen, 12 and under 400 yen
Hours: 6:00~21:00

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

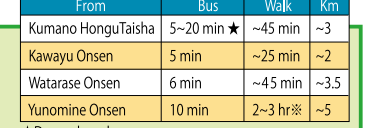


小雲取越(請川～小口)



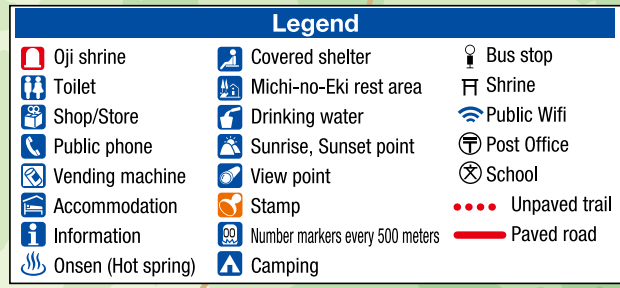
Koguchi Bus Info

Time & Distance to Ukegawa



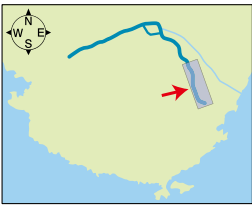
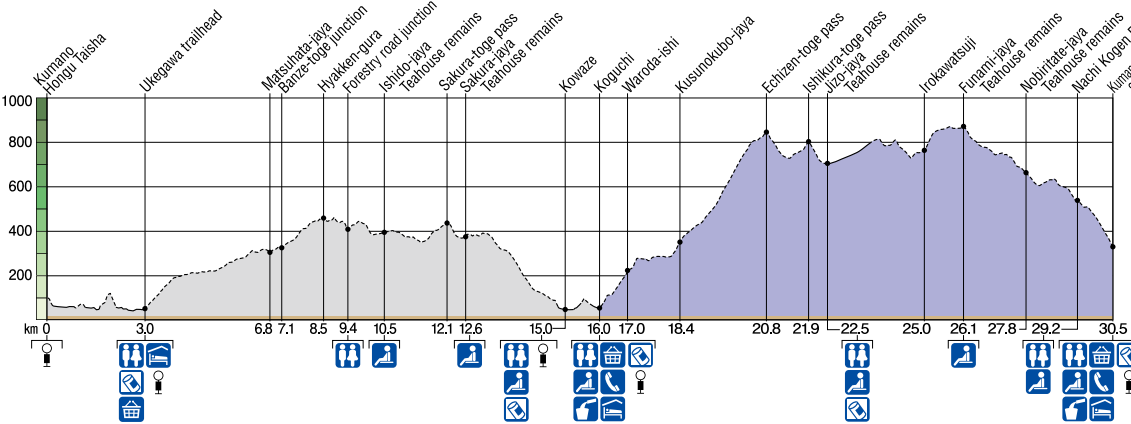
★Depends on bus
※Via Dainichi-goe to Hongu

A detailed map of the Koguchi Shizen-no-le area. The map shows a network of roads, including National Route 229 (blue line) and Route 44 (red line). A red dotted line indicates a trail that runs between houses. Key landmarks and facilities are marked with icons and text: a tunnel, a camping site with a registration point at Koguchi Shizen-no-le, a lodging house (Koguchi Shizen-no-le Lodging), a bus stop (Koguchi bus stop), a toilet in a former school, a Minakata Shop, and a Kumano Kodo Rodge "Kumoma" in Koguchi. The map also shows the Ogumotori-goe (Nachisan) and the trail runs between houses. A scale bar indicates 0 to 100 meters.



Ogumotori-goe (Koguchi~Nachisan)

大雲取越 (小口~那智山)



Distance (km) : ~14
Time (hr) : 7~9
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~1260
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~930

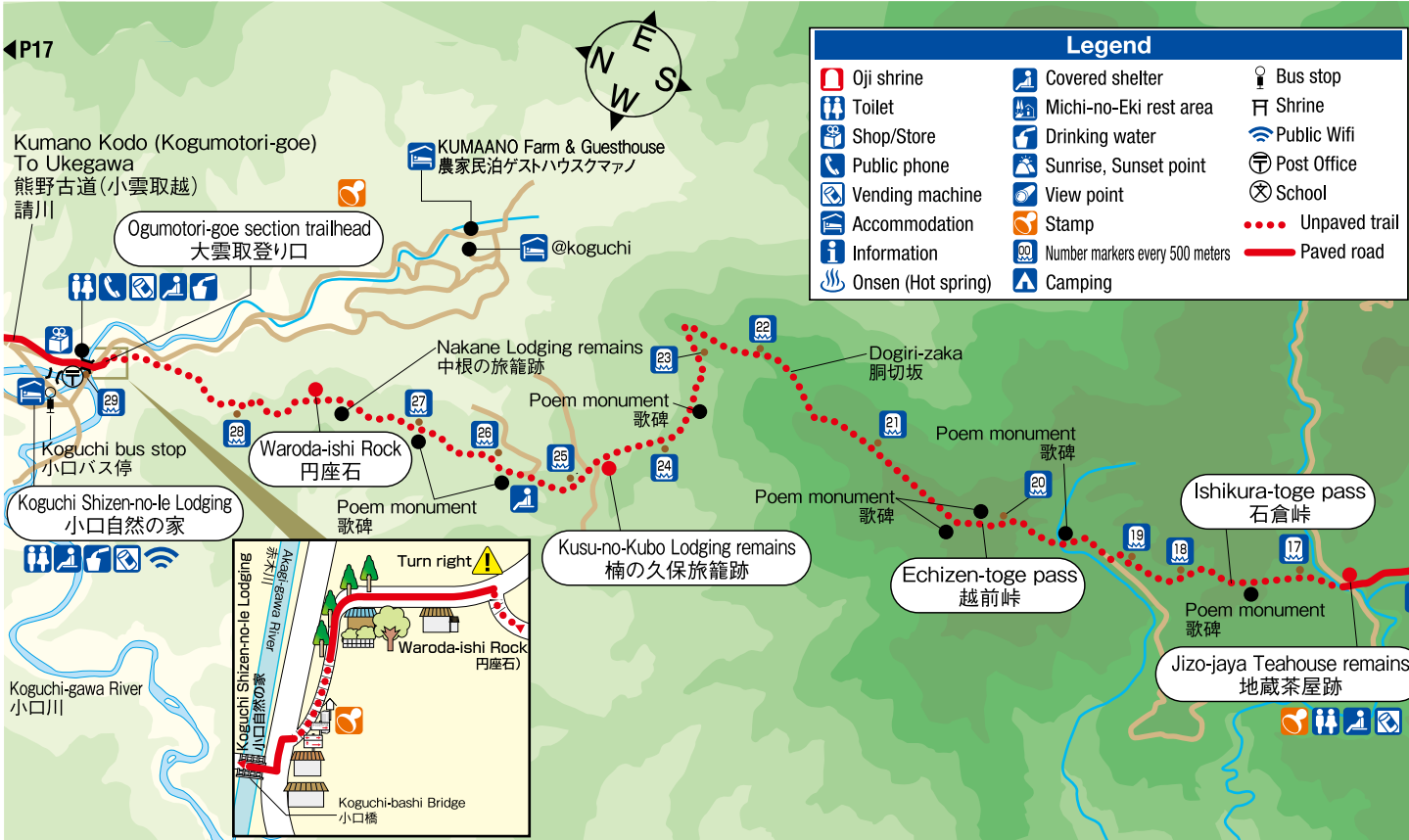
----- Unpaved trail
—— Paved road

NOTE: The Ogumotori-goe is a demanding day walk. Therefore it is important to start early in the morning, by at least 8:00. Please plan according so as not to get stuck in the dark.

Bus Access to/from Koguchi



Nachisan



Traditional Boat Tour

The Kumano-gawa was the main transportation route and pilgrims historically travelled between Kumano Hongu Taisha and Kumano Hayatama Taisha by boat.

There is a traditional boat tour which covers the lower half of this section of river, a unique way to experience the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route by water.

Dates: March to November
Morning: 10:00 ~11:30
Afternoon: 14:30 ~ 16:00
Price: 4,950 yen, 4-7 2,200 yen
Boat Center: Near "Michi-no-Eki Kumano-gawa 道の駅熊野川" bus stop.



Please arrive 30 minutes before departure.
Reservations required.

Address: Wakayama Prefecture, Shingu City, Kumanogawa-cho, Tanago 54-8
和歌山県新宮市熊野川町田長 54-8
TEL : 0735-44-0987

Gotobiki-iwa, Kamikura-jinja

Halfway up the east side of Mt. Gongen there is a large monolith. It is known as Gotobiki-iwa, and it is believed that the Kumano deities first descended here.

Nestled under Gotobiki-iwa is Kamikura-jinja shrine. Perched on the cliff side it offers panoramic views of Shingu city and the Pacific Ocean.



An ancient stone staircase leads from the base of the mountain to Gotobiki-iwa and Kamikura-jinja. The first section has such a steep incline that many people need to use their hands to scramble up.

Kumano Shingu Tourist Information Center

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



Nachi-Katsuura Town Tourist Information Center

Hours: 9:00~18:00 (Open year-round)



Legend			
Bus Stop	Information	Public Wifi	Fire Station
Gas Station	Convenience store	Post Office	School
Toilet	Shrine	Police Box	Hospital
Public Phone	Temple	Coin Locker	Stamp
Parking	Lodging		
Bank	Coin Laundry		
Coin Locker	Stamp		

Katsuura



Kumano Kodo Tips

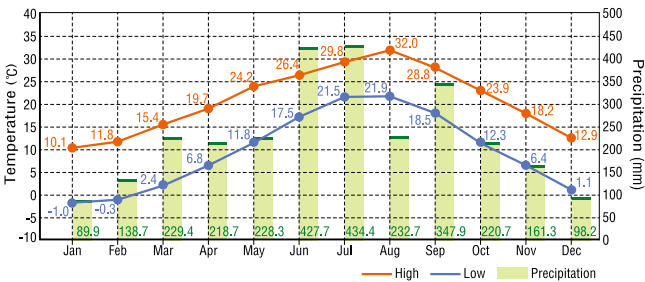
The Kumano Kodo (Nakahechi) is a diverse mountain route with a mixture of unpaved, uneven trails, ancient cobblestones and stairs, and paved roads through villages. There are many steep climbs and ascents, but the route is not technically difficult. The amount of preparation that is needed will depend greatly on which sections you will walk, the season you visit, and your personal level of experience and fitness. Please plan accordingly to fully, and safely, enjoy your pilgrimage walk. Proper preparation is the essential.

Weather

The Nakahechi route is open year round. The weather in the southern portion of the Kii peninsula is generally mild. The winters can see some freezing temperatures, and snow falls rarely at the higher elevations, usually melting quickly. Summers can be hot, humid and wet. Be prepared for rain year round.

LINK

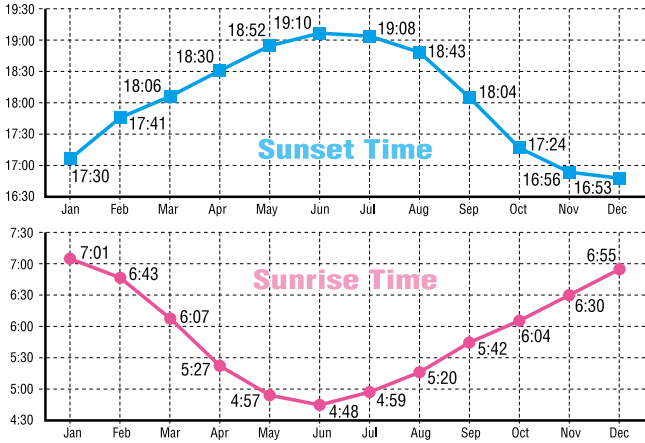
Japan Meteorological Agency: www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html
Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau: <https://www.tb-kumano.jp/en/kumano-kodo/tips/>



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.



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.

- Day pack
- 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
- 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

Let us take a load off your back! There are a few local service providers who offer daily luggage shuttle service, perfect for walkers on the Kumano Kodo. ※ 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

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 broader triangle shaped head of a pit viper. It is patterned with pale gray, reddish-brown, or yellow-brown background covered with a irregularly shaped lateral blotches. Its mature length is about 45~80 cm long. 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.



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.

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.

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/

Model Itineraries

Below are basic overviews of ways to walk the Kumano Kodo Nakehechi route from a shorter highlight trip to a multi-day trek.



Highlight Walks



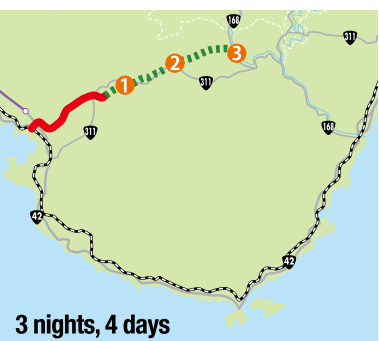
- Day 1:**
- Bus to Hongu area, overnight ①
- Day 2:**
- Bus to Hosshinmon-oji
 - Walk Hosshinmon-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha (p.12~13)
 - Bus to Katsuura, overnight ②
- Day 3:**
- Bus to Nachisan
 - Walk Daimon-zaka (p. 19)
 - Transfer to next destination

Highlight Walks



- Day 1:**
- Bus to Hongu area, overnight ①
- Day 2:**
- Bus to Hosshinmon-oji
 - Walk Hosshinmon-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha (p.12~13),overnight ②
- Day 3:**
- Bus to Michi-no-Eki Kumanogawa bus stop
 - Traditional boat trip to Shingu
 - Transfer to Katsuura, overnight ③
- Day 4:**
- Bus to Nachisan
 - Walk Daimon-zaka (p.19)
 - Transfer to next destination

Takijiri to Hongu Trek



- Day 1:**
- Bus to Takijiri-oji
 - Walk to Takahara (p.7), overnight ①
- Day 2:**
- Walk to Chikatsuyu/Nonaka (p.8~9), overnight ②
- Day 3:**
- Walk to Kumano Hongu Taisha (p.10~13), overnight ③
- Day 4:**
- Transfer to next destination

Takijiri to Hongu Trek



- Day 1:**
- Train to Tanabe, overnight ①
- Day 2:**
- Bus to Takijiri-oji
 - Walk to Chikatsuyu/Nonaka (p.7~9), overnight ②
- Day 3:**
- Walk to Kumano Hongu Taisha (p.10~13), overnight ③
- Day 4:**
- Transfer to next destination

Hongu to Nachisan Trek



- Day 1:**
- Bus to Hongu area, overnight ①
- Day 2:**
- Walk Kogumotori-goe (p.16~17), overnight ②
- Day 3:**
- Walk Ogumotori-goe (p.18~19), overnight ③
- Day 4:**
- Transfer to next destination

Takijiri to Nachisan Trek

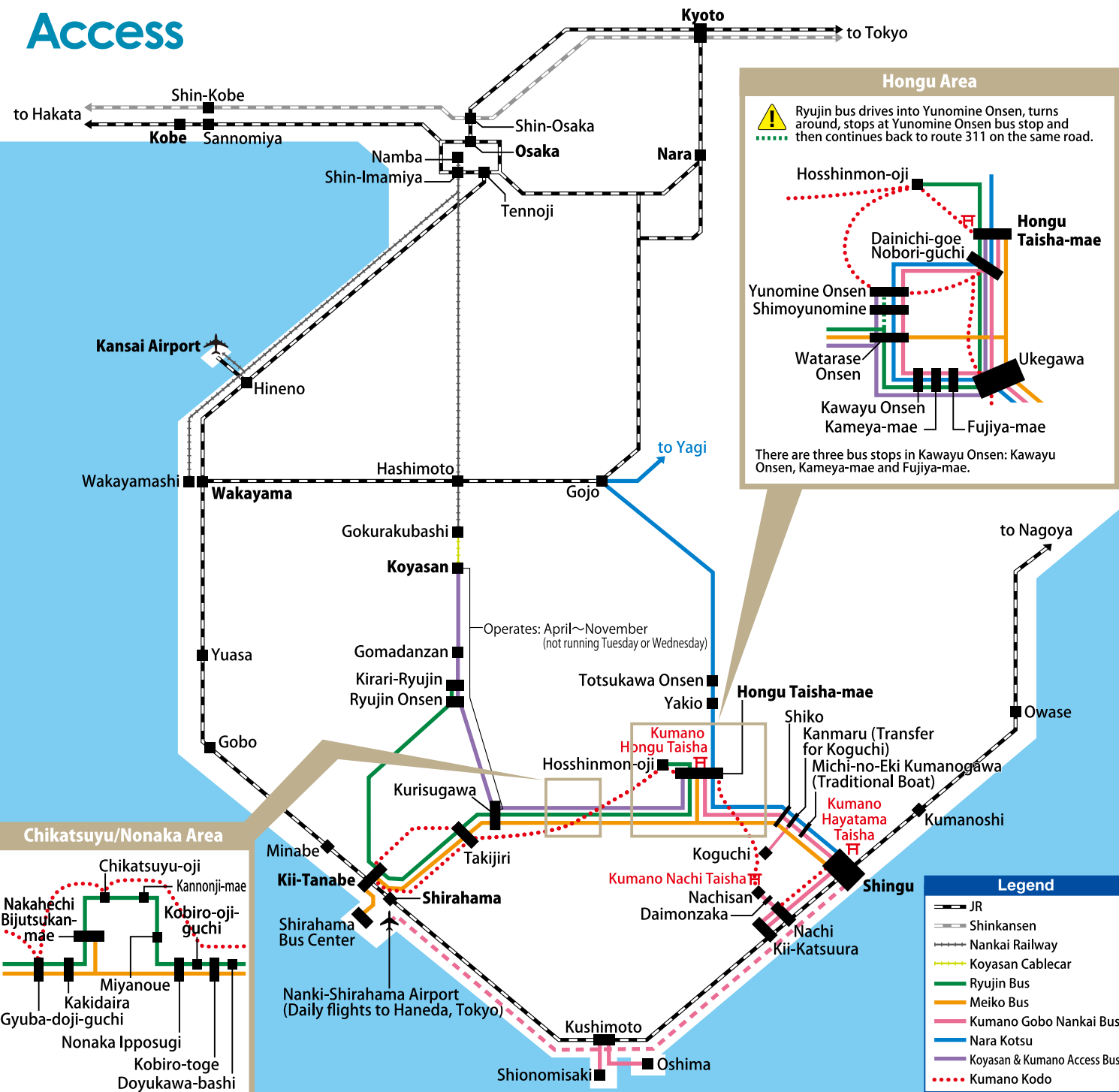


- Day 1:**
- Bus to Takijiri-oji
 - Walk to Takahara (p.7), overnight ①
- Day 2:**
- Walk to Chikatsuyu/Nonaka (p.8~9), overnight ②
- Day 3:**
- Walk to Kumano Hongu Taisha (p.10~13), overnight ③
- Day 4:**
- Walk Kogumotori-goe (p.16~17), overnight ④
- Day 5:**
- Walk Ogumotori-goe (p.18~19), overnight ⑤
- Day 6:**
- Transfer to next destination

HINT: Adding the last half of a highlight walk itinerary to a Takijiri to Hongu trek makes for an nice extension.

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

Access



Train

Train lines 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 Central express trains are called Nanki.

Trains are an efficient way to access the Nakahechi route.



Tickets

Tickets can be purchased at the Midori-no-Madoguchi counter at all major stations. An express train is the fastest way to travel to the area. For 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.

Fare Ticket



Limited Express Ticket



JR Passes

Using transportation passes can be a convenient and reasonable way to get around the area. There are two regional JR passes that cover the Kii Peninsula: Kansai WIDE Area Pass, and Ise-Kumano-Wakayama Area Tourist Pass

NOTE: Not all bus lines are covered by these passes.

LINK: www.tb-kumano.jp/en/transport/#passes

Useful Words & Phrases

- I would like to buy a one way express train ticket to Kii-Tanabe station. (紀伊田辺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, 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.



- Enter through rear door (or front door if only one)
- Take number ticket
- 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)
- Match number ticket to the electronic fare chart at the front of the bus to determine fare (prices change according to distance travelled)
- Change money if needed
- Put money and ticket in fare box (exact fare)
- 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.



Bus stop Number 2

Useful Words & Phrases

- I would like to go to the Takijiri bus stop. (滝尻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)

Route Guide

The Nakahechi route of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage network begins in Tanabe on the west coast and traverses the Kii peninsula east towards Kumano Hongu Taisha. In the Hongu area are two sub-routes called Dainichi-goe and Akagi-goe which lead to Yunomine Onsen.

From Hongu there are two routes south-east: a mountain trail (Kogumotori-goe and Ogumotori-goe) to Kumano Nachi Taisha, and a waterway route on the Kumano-gawa River to Kumano Hayatama Taisha, in Shingu city. The waterway route cannot be walked, but there is a traditional boat tour on the southern portion

Nakahechi Main Route

Takijiri-oji: Entrance to Kumano Mountains

Takijiri-oji 滝尻王子(82m) is a very important spot on the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage route and one of the five major Oji shrines. It is here that the passage into the sacred mountains begins—the entrance to the abode of the gods and Buddhist paradises of rebirth.



There were once extensive halls, a bath house, lodgings for pilgrims, and residences for priests, priestesses and monks located here. It was here during the golden age of the imperial pilgrimages to Kumano (12th & 13th centuries) that severe cold-water ablation rites were practiced repeatedly to purify body and spirit before worshipping. During the elaborate ceremonies that followed, sutras, prayers, dancing, sumo and poetry were offered to a mixture of local and Buddhist deities.

Present day, Takijiri-oji is the main trailhead for the Nakahechi route, a 40 minute bus ride from the JR Kii-Tanabe station. The round Kumano Kodo Kan Pilgrimage Center is located across the river from Takijiri-oji with introductory exhibitions about the pilgrimage route. There is a small shop in front of Takijiri-oji which sells souvenirs and beverage vending machines.

The trail is to the left side of the small shrine buildings. At the back a stone staircase climbs up around a large rock to begin the ascent to the Takahara 高原 settlement (317m).

NOTE: The trail starts off very steep, so take your time and set a slow pace.

What's an Oji?

Oji are subsidiary shrines of the Kumano Grand Shrines that line the Kumano Kodo to protect and guide pilgrims. These shrines house the “child deities” of Kumano, and serve as places of both worship and rest. The formation of these shrines has been attributed to the Yamabushi mountain ascetics, who historically served as pilgrimage guides.

Into the Mountains

Around 15 minutes into the climb, there is a set of large boulders. Some of these form a cave called Tainai-kuguri, where you can test your faith by climbing through the crack at the far end. Another boulder, the Chichi-iwa rock, is associated with a local legend.

There is a lookout point shortly after signpost 3 where a small climb up some stairs offers a glimpse over the mountains. Follow the stairs down the other side of the peak to join up with the main route below.

The trail crosses the road to Takahara between signposts 4 and 5. Cross the road and continue up the ridge. The last set of climbs brings you past an old TV tower which marks the entrance to Takahara settlement.

Takahara Kumano-jinja Shrine

Follow the gravel road past a series of houses and you will pass by the Takahara Kumano-jinja shrine surrounded by giant Camphor trees. This shrine is one of the oldest buildings along this section of the pilgrimage route.

Take a peak around the back of the buildings to see more ancient trees which are estimate to be 800 to 1000 years old.

Takahara Settlement

Just down the road from the shrine is a parking area with wonderful panoramic views of the Hatenashi mountain range to the north.

Takahara is known as “Kiri-no-Sato” (Village in the Mist) because the scenic mountain vistas are often blanketed with mist. The valley below sometimes fills with fog, creating a beautiful sea of clouds.



Minamoto-no-Michikata, a nobleman who accompanied the retired emperor Gotoba on his pilgrimage to Kumano, composed the following waka poem:

高原や峰より出づる月かげは 千歳の松を照らすなりけり	In Takahara the moon Rising above the mountaintop Shines on a 1000-year-old pine
-------------------------------	--

Past Takahara

From the Takahara parking area the trail runs up and east along a small walking path between houses and terraces fields. This path is located directly south of the Takahara parking area on the other side of the road, look for a Kumano Kodo signpost pointing the way.

The trail from Takahara continues to climb into the mountains from the east end of the tiny settlement through the forest. About 1.5 hours past Takahara is the Jujo-oji clearing, a popular spot for picnic lunches.

The highest part of this trail is the remains of the Uwada-jaya Teahouse (~690 m) near signpost number 18. The trail then descends quickly past the Three-Fold Moon Viewing area associated with a legend about a Yamabushi mountain ascetic and his miraculous encounter with the Kumano deities.

Kumano Kodo Nakahechi Michi-no-Eki

The trail descends steeply, sometimes with switchbacks, until Osakamoto-oji where the trail follows a small creek. The pilgrimage route connects with Highway #311 just past the number 23 trail marker.

Across the highway is the Kumano Kodo Nakahechi Michi-no-Eki rest stop. The store sells local souvenirs, snacks and drinks, and has a collection of vending machines. There is a pay phone.

The public toilets are next to the parking lot and the Gyubadoji-guchi bus stop is directly in front of the rest stop.

Gyuba-doji Statue

A short climb from the rest stop leads to the Hashiori-toge pass and a collection of statues. The statue on the left is known as Gyuba-doji and depicts Retired Emperor Kazan (968-1008) as a boy riding a horse and cow. He was one of the first to make an imperial pilgrimage to Kumano.

To its right is a stone carving of Ennogyoja, the legendary founder of Shugendo, a mixed religion based on mountain ascetic practices. A third monument, a Hokyoin-to stupa dating from the 12th century.

Chikatsuyu Village

A short 10 minute walk descends to the valley bottom, Hiki-gawa River, and the small Chikatsuyu village. Chikatsuyu-oji is located on the left just past the bridge.

Over 900 years ago, groups of up to 300 pilgrims would be accommodated in the area. They performed cold-water purification rites in the river before worshipping. The buried remains of 13th-century religious artifacts were discovered close by, and until 1906 a large pavilion was located at Chikatsuyu-oji. It was dismantled because of an imperial edict to merge shrines.

There are public toilets, store, vending machines, and a bus stop in Chikatsuyu.

Tsugizakura-oji

This section follows the old highway through Chikatsuyu Village along the south side of Mt. Takao. As the road works its way up and east you pass a series of houses. There is a short section of dirt path just before trail marker number 29.

The paved road gradually climbs over 200 meters in elevation before reaching the impressive Tsugizakura-oji.

In the shrine grove of Tsugizakura-oji are the massive Nonaka-no-Ipposugi cedar trees (*Cryptomeria japonica*). Some have a circumference of 8 meters, and are believed to be up to 800 years old. The branches are all pointing to the south, towards Nachi Falls and the power of Kannon's Fudaraku paradise. They are called "ipposugi",



meaning "one direction cedars".

This shrine, along with its trees, was scheduled to be demolished in 1906 as part of the government's shrine consolidation program. It was saved by Minakata Kumagusu (1867-1941) , an eccentric genius researcher and avant-garde environmentalist. He was fiercely opposed to shrine mergers as they destroyed outstanding pockets of biodiversity, along with the beliefs and faith of the local people.

Nonaka-no-Shimizu Spring

The Nonaka-no-Shimizu spring, one of the 100 famous waters of Japan, is located just below the shrine.

There are many poems written about the Nonaka-no-Shimizu spring including a Haiku written over 300 years ago by Hattori Ransetsu, one of the pupils of the famous Haiku poet Matsuo Basho.

すみかねて 道まで出るか 山清水	Crystalline Clear Inundating the Trail Mountain Spring Water
------------------------	--

HINT: Fill up your water bottle here for some delicious refreshment.

Kobiro-toge

The Kumano Kodo follows the old highway from Tsugizakura-oji to Kobiro-toge pass. Pilgrims often travel by bus to the Kobiro-toge area to shorten this section of walking.

The trail can be accessed from the Kobiro-toge bus stop, or further up highway 311 at the Doyugawa-bashi bus stop .

Here the trail enters the forest, climbing and descending a series of passes.

Detour

Because of damage to the trail there is a ~4 km detour from Nakado-jaya Teahouse remains to Jagata Jizo, south of the main pilgrimage route.

The trail follows a forestry road for a short time to a small log bridge across the river to the left. The route then makes the long climb over the Iwagami-toge pass and then descends to the Jagata Jizo, following another forestry road for part of the way.

Beware! Daru!

Travelers in the area are sometimes overcome by daru spirits, serpent-like witch creatures capable of assuming invisible form, penetrating the human body, and inflicting a variety of painful torments. A local legend recommends never to eat all of your lunch, as it is best to have some extra nourishment to fight off the fatigue-inducing daru!

Mikoshi-toge to Hosshinmon-oji

From Jagata-jizo the trail crosses a small river and climbs to Mikoshi-toge, the last of the major passes on this section. From Mikoshi-toge the path descents through cedar and cypress plantations to the Otonashi-gawa River.

Just before sign post number 59 and the Funatama-jinja shrine, is a trail junction south for the Akagi-goe section of the Kumano Kodo which leads to Yunomine Onsen. Continue past the Funatama-jinja shrine along the forestry road. After a few minutes the trail climbs to the right to the Hosshinmon-oji.

Hosshinmon-oji

Hosshinmon-oji is known as the "gate of awakening of the aspiration to enlightenment" and marks the outermost entrance to Kumano Hongu Taisha's sacred precincts.

The section from Hosshinmon-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha it is a mixture of forest trails and isolated mountaintop villages, and makes for a wonderful highlight day walk, with panoramic viewpoints to be found along the way.



The route follows a road east through Hosshinmon village from here to Mizunomi-oji. Keep a look out for the folk-art wood carvings.

Mizunomi-oji

Mizunomi-oji is known as a shrine with a water source. A stone monument was erected here in 1723 by the feudal lord of the Kishu domain (present-day Wakayama prefecture).

There are also small stone Jizo statues to the left of the fountain. Jizo is a Bodhisattva, or a being that compassionately refrains from entering nirvana in order to save others, and is one of the most popular deities in Japan. Jizo is the saviour and protector of children and travelers, but also takes on other forms of folk belief. The small Jizo on the right is spit horizontally in the middle. People put coins in the crack

and pray for relief from their backaches.

The trail enters the forest at Mizunomi-oji, the site of an old school house, and exits at the west end of the Fushiogami settlement, with its numerous tea plantations and terraced fields. The trail through the Fushiogami settlement is on the road.

Fushiogami-oji

Fushiogami-oji is where pilgrims fell to their knees and prayed after catching their first glimpse of the Grand Shrine in the distant valley below.

There is a story that took place here at Fushiogami-oji that epitomizes Kumano. Around 1000 years ago Izumi Shikibu, a famous female poet, was on pilgrimage and started to menstruate at Fushiogami-oji. Purification is an important element in Japanese religion and blood is considered impure, so women who were menstruating were not allowed to worship. She was terribly distraught at not being able to pay homage and composed a poem in her distress.

はれやらぬ みのうきぐものたなびきて つきのさわりも なるぞかなしき	Beneath unclear skies, my body obscured by drifting clouds, I am saddened that my monthly obstruction has begun.
---	---

That night the Kumano deity came to her and replied

もろともに ちりにまじわるかみなれば つきのさわりも なにかくるしき	How could the god who mingles with the dust suffer because of your monthly obstruction?
---	--

Even deities suffer from impurities, so Kumano does not exclude anyone from worshipping here. Compared with other sacred sites in Japan where women were banned, anyone was welcome in Kumano regardless of sect, class or gender. Openness and acceptance is a fundamental theme of the Kumano faith. A monument to Izumi Shikibu is located here at the lookout point.

There is a covered rest area here where locals serve handmade snacks and coffee made with hot spring water (days in operation may change). This is a popular place to eat a picnic lunch box.

From here the trail descends through the forest past Sanger-jaya to the Kumano Hongu Taisha.

Sanger-jaya

Sanger-jaya is the junction of the Nakahechi and Kohechi routes. Watch for the historic stone sign post. The Kohechi is the mountainous route to Koyasan in the north. 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 Sanger-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.

The stairs lined with offering flags lead to route 168. Across the street is the Kumano Hongu Heritage Center and Hongu Taisha-mae bus stop.

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.

Dainichi-goe

The Dainichi-goe route is a short but relatively steep trail over Mt. Dainichi that links Kumano Hongu Taisha with Yunomine Onsen. It is through a forested area mainly of cedars and cypress.

The trailhead is located in the south of the Hongu town site, just off of route 168 on the old 311 highway. There is a brown wooden sign located on the first set of stairs pointing the way.



The first section passes through a set of houses. Please respect the privacy of those living there. The trail starts off steep and continues like this most of the way, so take your time and set a slow pace.

NOTE: Please watch your step as there are some tree roots and rocks along the trail which can be slippery, especially when wet.

Tsukimigaoka-jinja

About 20 minutes into the walk is the Tsukimigaoka-jinja shrine. It traces its roots back to local Shugendo worshippers. This shrine is associated with the Kumano Hongu Taisha grand shrine. Notice the tall trees in the shrine ground, and the difference in their bark. The bark from the trees are harvested and used for the roofs of the shrine pavilions of the Kumano Hongu Taisha.

Hanakake-jizo

On the ridge line is the Hanakake-jizo. It is carved into a rock along the trail. Just after this Jizo carving the trail descends down the west side of Mt. Dainichi.

You know you are getting closer to Yunomine Onsen when you can smell the sulfur from the hot springs in the air drifting up the side of the mountain.

Yunomine Onsen

The trail terminates near the Tsuboyu bath in Yunomine Onsen. Yunomine Onsen has a history of over 1800 years and was the site of hot water purification rites.

Enjoy a hot spring bath here after your walk at the public baths, and snack on an egg hardboiled in the public cooking basin. You can purchase eggs for boiling at a few shops in town. These eggs make for a perfect bite to eat after a walk on the Dainichi-goe.

Akagi-goe

The Akagi-goe route links Yunomine Onsen and Funatama-jinja, which is on the main Nakahechi route. It is a mountain trail that climbs up and over a ridge. This section is often used by walkers to make a loop with the Nakahechi section from Hosshinmon-oji to Kumano Hongu Taisha.

The trailhead in Yunomine Onsen is just upstream from Tsuboyu bath across the road from Yoshinoya Ryokan.

Kakihara-jaya Teahouse Remains

The remains of this teahouse includes the abandoned teahouse itself, a residence, and cemetery. The Kakihara-jaya teahouse was mentioned in a compilation of history and folklore from the Edo Period (1603-1868) showing that it was an important stop on this section of pilgrimage route. This site was inhabited until the mid 1970s.

Nabeware Jizo

The name of this Jizo statue, erected in 1803, is associated with a legendary episode that took place during Ippen Shonen's pilgrimage to Kumano. Shokai, Ippen Shonin's servant, was one day boiling rice in a clay pot for his master's lunch. Suddenly, the water in the pot completely disappeared, and it cracked from the heat.



This pass subsequently became known as Nabeware ("Ruined Pot"), and later this Jizo was named Nabeware ("Cracked Pot").

Kogumotori-goe

The Kogumotori-goe is the first day of a two day from the Hongu area to Kumano Nachi Taisha. It is a climb and descent over a pass, and is mostly in the forested mountains.

Trailhead

The trailhead is located just south of the Ukegawa bus stop. The trail starts off passing by a set of houses. It feels as if you are walking through people's backyards, which you are! Please be respectful of the villagers' privacy.

The trail is a gradual and continuous climb to Hyakken-gura. Sometimes through stands of cedar and cypress, and other times through native forests on lovely ridges.

Hyakken-gura

After the Ise-ji trail junction the path traverses the north side of Mt. Nyohozan, meandering back and forth with the curves of the small ravines that run down the slope.



At the 5.5 kilometer point in the trail the impressive Hyakken-gura look out surprises walkers with a lovely panoramic view of the 3600 peaks of Kumano.

Just after Hyakken-gura is a junction with a forestry road. The trail continues directly across the road, but if you turn right and walk down a short way there are toilet facilities.

Sakura-jaya Teahouse Remains

The trail rises and falls past the forestry road junction, sometimes gradual and the odd time steeper, but generally at the same elevation to Sakura-jaya teahouse remains.

The views down to the valley and across to the mountains are on the other side are impressive, and offered an advantage to proprietors of tea houses in the past.

It is said that when the owners of the teahouse saw pilgrims approaching from far off in the distance, they would start to cook mochi rice cakes and boil water for tea, to have things ready to serve just as the pilgrims would arrive at the teahouse.

Into the Valley

After the remains of Sakura-jaya teahouse the trail descends rapidly into the valley below with glimpses onto the Akagi-gawa river. Near the base of the slope is a short but slipper section of cobblestone. Notice the small prayer tablets near the statue which are offerings by Yamabushi mountain ascetics who walk this trail for spiritual training.

NOTE: Please be careful here as the moss covered stones can be treacherous, especially when wet.

Koguchi

Near the river you walk past some houses before walking over the bridge. In the past a short ferry ride took pilgrimages across this section of river. There is a toilet here and the Kowase bus stop.

Turn right and walk up the road (route 44) for about 1 kilometer. After passing through a short tunnel you can see the small settlement of Koguchi.

Ogumotori-goe

The Ogumotori-goe is the second day of a two day from the Hongu area to Kumano Nachi Taisha. It is one of the toughest sections of the Nakahechi section of the Kumano Kodo. It is a climb and descent over a pass, and is mostly in the forested mountains. There are no facilities along this path, so pack a lunch. The trail begins by passing through a small set of houses.

Waroda-ishi Rock

"Waroda" means "round shaped cushion" and "ishi" means "rock". The three symbols carved into Waroda-ishi are called "Bonji", Sanskrit characters assigned to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

From left to right they represent Kannon (Bodhisattva of Mercy), Yakushi (Medicine Buddha of Healing) and Amida (Buddha of Compassion and Wisdom), which are worshipped at Kumano Nachi Taisha, Kumano Hayatama Taisha and Kumano Hongu Taisha respectively.

According to the Shinto-Buddhist syncretism philosophy of the region, the local Shinto deities are considered manifestations of the above Buddhist figures. It is here that the Kumano deities are believed to meet and chat over tea.

Dogiri-zaka

Directly translated Dogiri-zaka can be translated as "Body Breaking Slope", and is an appropriate name for the mid-section of the walk which climbs almost 800 meters in elevation ~5 kilometers.

For hundreds of years pilgrims have laboured up and down this seemingly endless slope. Even the famous poet Fujiwara Teika (1162-1241) was at a loss of words after wading this section, stating in his pilgrimage diary from 1201 that, "This route is very rough and difficult; it is impossible to describe precisely how tough it is".

Please take your time, and watch your step on some of the slippery rock staircases. Also take note of the ancient stone walls of past terraced rice paddies.

Jizo-jaya Teahouse Remains

From Echizen-toge pass at the top of Dogiri-zaka there is a series of shorter climbs and descents to Funami-jaya teahouse remains. Just after signpost number 17 the trail joins a forestry road for ~1.3 kms. At this junction is the Jizo-jaya teahouse remains, toilet facilities and covered sitting area. The trail then runs parallel a forestry road for most of the rest of the course, crossing it a couple of times in the process.

Moja-no-Deai, Abode of the Dead

A smaller peak to the south is called Mt. Myoho an upper sanctuary of Nachisan, and graveyard. Mt.Myoho is considered the "Mount Koya for women", the historic headquarters for the itinerant Kumano bikuni nuns. The souls of the dead gravitate to these higher mountains, where spirits inhabit this section of the trail.

Funami-toge Pass

The vastness of the Pacific ocean spreads out before you on a clear day at Funami-toge pass, where you can see the complicated, and rugged coastline. The seaside village in the distance is Katsuura, a famous fishing port for tuna, and hot springs.

Final Descent

From Funami-toge pass the trail makes a sharp descent down to the Nachi Kogen Park. Walk down through the left hand side of the park and you enter into the typical cedar and cypress forest. Stone staircases increase and trees become larger as you get closer to the trailhead at Nachisan.

Nachisan

The last stone steps finish at the Nachisan sanctuary, with a view of Nachi-no-Otaki falls to the left. To the immediate left is a small shop and toilet facilities. To the right is the Seiganto-ji temple and the Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine.

The Nachi-no-Otaki is 133 meters high and 13 meters wide, the tallest waterfall in Japan.

It is a sanctuary of Kumano Nachi Taisha and thus has been protected since ancient times and is used for ascetic training by mountain monks who practice Shugendo, a mixed religion of foreign and indigenous beliefs. You can walk down to near the base past the three-storied pagoda after visiting the shrine grounds.

Nachisan Seiganto-ji

The wonderful wooden Nachisan Seiganto-ji is a Tendai Buddhist temple founded in the early 5th century. Legend holds that a Buddhist priest from India drifted ashore and experienced a revelation of Kannon, the Buddhist deity of mercy.

Nachisan Seiganto-ji Temple is also the first sacred place of "Saigokujunrei", or pilgrimage to 33 Kannon which started in 1161.

NOTE: When swinging the rope for the gong (the largest in Japan), do not let go of it, but rather do an exaggerated whipping action.

Kumano Nachi Taisha

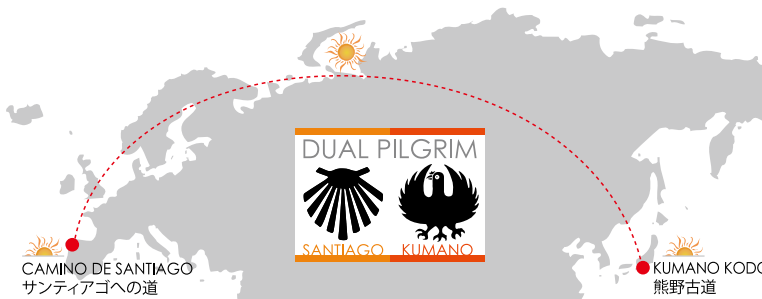
Past the Seiganto-ji temple and through a small gate is the brightly colored Kumano Nachi Taisha, one of the three grand shrines of Kumano.

Notice the giant camphor tree with its broad branches high over the building. Pilgrims can be reborn by walking through the trunk of this massive old-growth tree.

From Nachisan it is a 25 minute bus ride to the JR Kii-Katsuura station on the coast.



DUAL PILGRIM



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



Stamp Lists

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)
- Ogigahama Mizugori Site, Tokei-jinja, two sites or more on Ohechi route, plus a visit to Kumano Hayatama Taisha, Kumano Nachi Taisha, and Kumano Hongu Taisha

CREDENTIAL

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



STAMPS

Stamp are mostly located in small wooden stands. 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

NOTE: Registration takes ~15 min and cannot be mailed out.

MORE INFORMATION

www.tb-kumano.jp/en/world-heritage/dual-pilgrim/