

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 7~10 days in advance.

Useful Words and Phrases

Hello こんにちは	Goodbye さようなら
Thank you ありがとう	Excuse me 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 はい	No 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 バス停	Trailhead 登山口
Help me! たすけて!	Toilet お手洗い/トイレ
	I need a doctor 医者が必要です

03/2021 printed

KUMANO KODO

OHECHI

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!



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.

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.

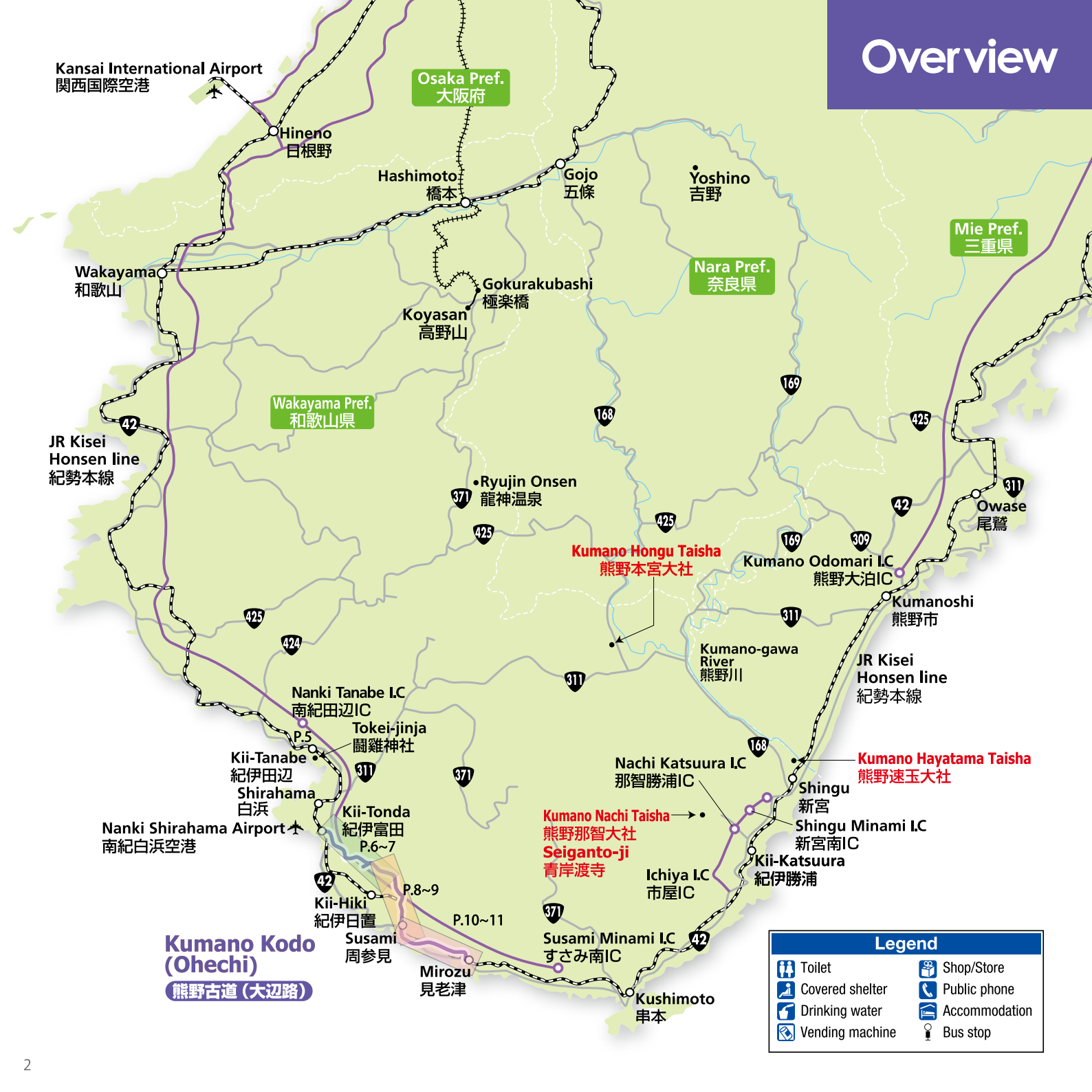
Kumano Hayatama Taisha is located in Shingu city, where the impressive Kumano-gawa River empties into the expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

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.

Ohechi Coastal Route

The Ohechi route runs along the southwest coast of the mountainous Kii peninsula between Tokei-jinja in Tanabe and Fudarakusan-ji in Katsuura. It was developed in the 15th century and used for both worship and tourism. The coastal landscape attracted many writers and poets during the Edo period (1603-1868).

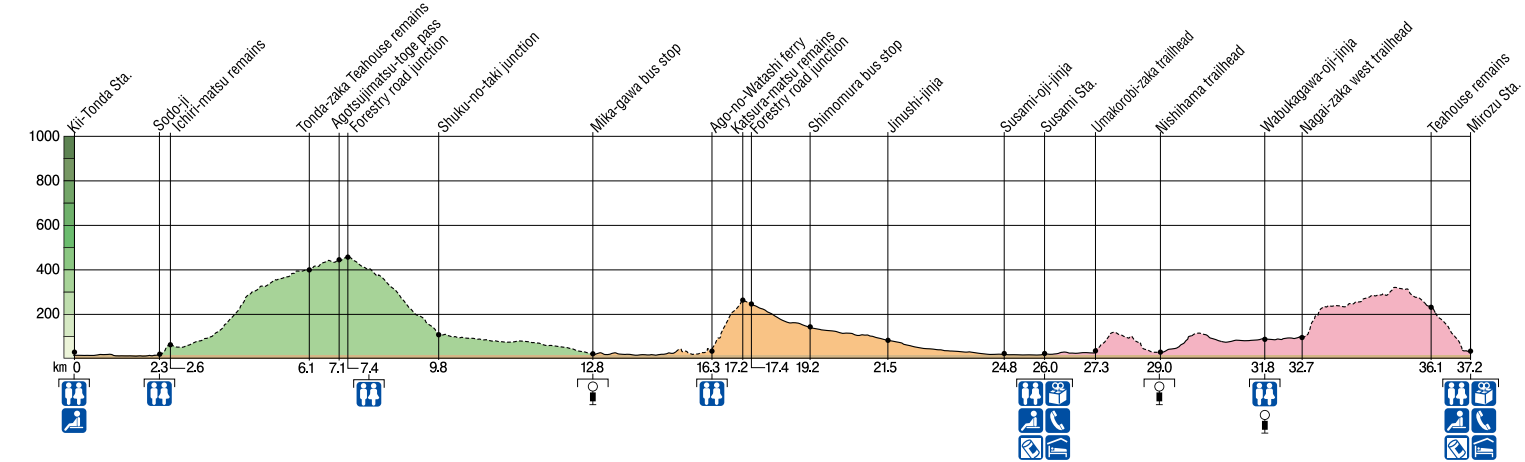
Overview



Tonda-zaka

Hotoke-zaka

Nagai-zaka



NOTE: The Ohechi runs along the mountainous coast of the Kii peninsula through smaller villages. Once away from the train line there is limited to no public transport. Please plan accordingly.

----- Unpaved trail —— Paved road	Tonda-zaka	~13	4~5	~470	~515	P.6~7
	Hotoke-zaka	~13	4~5	~330	~325	P.8~9
	Nagai-zaka	~11	3.5~4.5	~500	~495	P.10~11

Signs

Signage along the Ohechi route is variable with some sections that only have Japanese signs, especially in the areas that link trailheads to train stations through settled areas. Please be aware of your location and refer to maps while walking.



Tanabe Kumanokodo Gateway

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)



Travel Support Center

The KUMANO TRAVEL shop is dedicated to supporting visitors onsite. It is located within short walking distance from the Kii-Tanabe station and is run by bilingual English/Japanese speaking staff. Services include luggage storage, luggage shuttle, accommodation reservations, etc. Outdoor gear and local souvenirs are for sale.



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

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!

Restaurant Guide

Legend			
Bus Stop	Information	Japanese Tea	Fire Station
Onsen	Accommodation	Coin Laundry	Post Office
Parking	Bakery	Stamp	School
Toilet	Grocery Store	Public Wifi	Police Station
Public Phone	Japanese Sweets	Shrine	Hospital
Gas Station	Bento Lunch Box	Oji	Convenience Store
Bank	Dishware	Temple	

Restaurant Guide			
Local seafood	Full meals	Higher-end traditional restaurant	English Menu
Izakaya pub	Sushi	Udon & Soba noodles	Rice bowl restaurants
1 Ikeguchi 食べ処 いけ口	0739-25-2612	AM11:30~PM1:30 PM5:00~PM10:30	定休(月) Closes on Mon.
2 Konoha 喰いもんや この葉	0739-26-8180	PM5:00~PM10:30	定休(月) Closes on Mon.
3 Ichiyoshi 食べ処 一吉	0739-26-6811	PM5:00~AM3:30	定休なし Open all year
4 Goemon 五右衛門 一門店	0739-24-9151	PM4:30~PM11:00	不定休 Variable holidays
5 Wasabi 和さび	0739-25-7288	PM8:30~AM0:30	定休なし Open all year
6 Tokkuri とっくり	0739-24-7952	PM5:00~PM10:30	定休(日) Closes on Sun.
7 Ginchiro honten 銀ちろ本店	0739-22-3960	AM11:00~PM10:00 (Last Order PM9:00)	不定休 Variable holidays
8 Ginchiro tounouchi 銀ちろ塔の内店	0739-24-8666	AM11:00~PM10:00 (Last Order PM9:00)	定休(水) Closes on Wed.
9 Shinbe しんべ	0739-24-8845	PM5:00~PM10:30	定休(日) Closes on Sun.
10 Yoshihisa 鮨・割烹 よしひさ	0739-25-1782	PM5:30~PM11:00	定休(火) Closes on Tue.
11 Kanteki 紀州魚介庵かてき	0739-26-1081	PM5:00~PM11:00	定休(水と第3木) Closed on Wed. & every 3rd Thu.
12 Uogokoro 居酒屋 魚ごころ	0739-24-7822	PM5:30~PM11:00	定休(日) Closes on Sun.
13 Tokuno 居酒屋 徳乃	0739-24-1871	PM5:00~PM11:00 (Last Order PM10:30)	定休(火) Closes on Tue.
14 Yoshii zushi 吉位寿司	0739-22-2995	PM5:00~PM10:00	定休(木) Closes on Thu.
15 Horai zushi 宝来寿司	0739-22-0834	AM10:00~PM9:00	定休(月) Closes on Mon.
16 Zen 旬彩居酒屋 膳	0739-26-8551	PM5:00~PM11:30 (Last Order PM11:00)	定休(木) Closes on Thu.
17 Miyaji 味処 みや路	0739-26-3827	PM5:00~PM10:00	定休(日)と第3(月) Closes on Sun. & every 3rd Mon.
18 Yebisu 割烹 ゑびす	0739-22-0886	PM5:00~PM9:00	不定休(主に日) Variable holidays(mostlyly Sun.)
19 Sangen-jaya めはり本舗 三軒茶屋	0739-81-7707	AM11:00~PM2:00 PM5:00~PM8:00	定休(月) Closes on Mon.
20 Akihei 割烹 秋平	0739-22-0234	AM11:00~PM9:30	定休(火) Closes on Tue.



Tanabe

Tonda-zaka

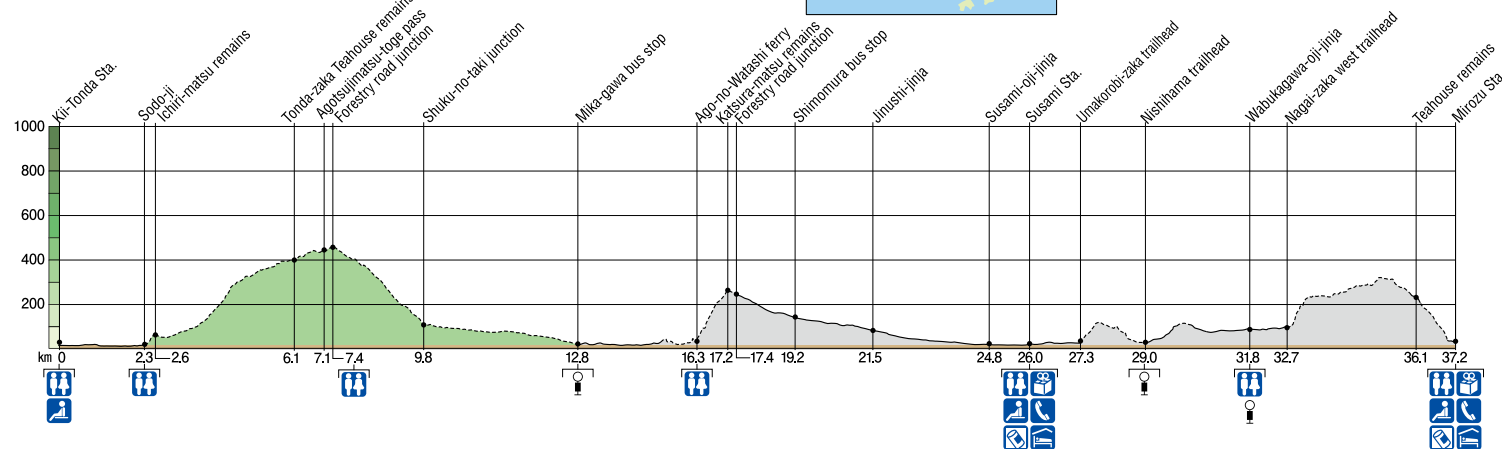
(Kii-Tonda Sta.~ Mika-gawa bus stop)

富田坂 (紀伊富田駅~三ヶ川バス停)

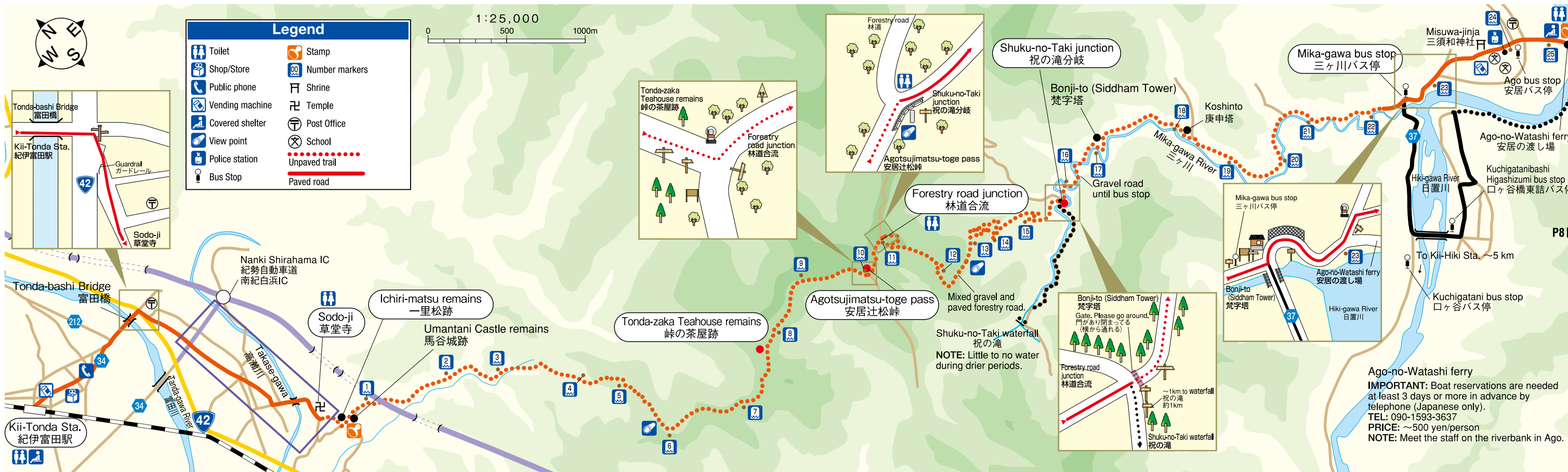


Distance (km) : ~13
Time (hr) : 4~5
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~470
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~515

----- Unpaved trail
—— Paved road



Sodo-ji Area



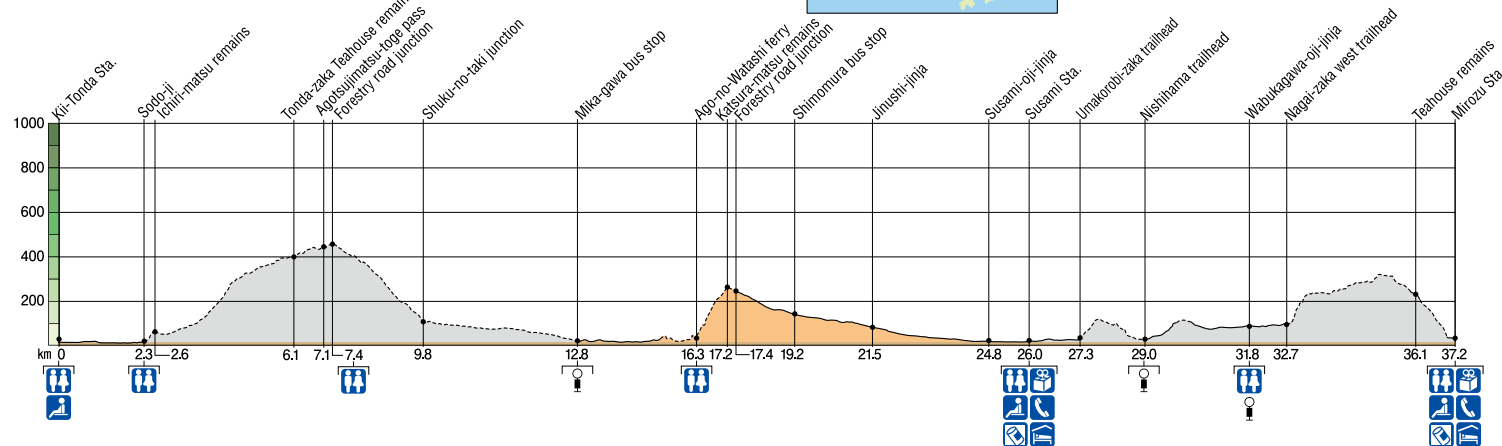
Hotoke-zaka (Mika-gawa bus stop~Susami Sta.)

仏坂 (三ヶ川バス停~周参見駅)



Distance (km) : ~13
Time (hr) : 3~4
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~330
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~325

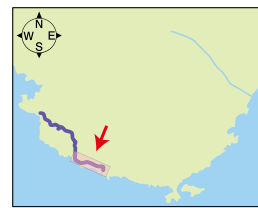
----- Unpaved trail
—— Paved road



Susami Station Area

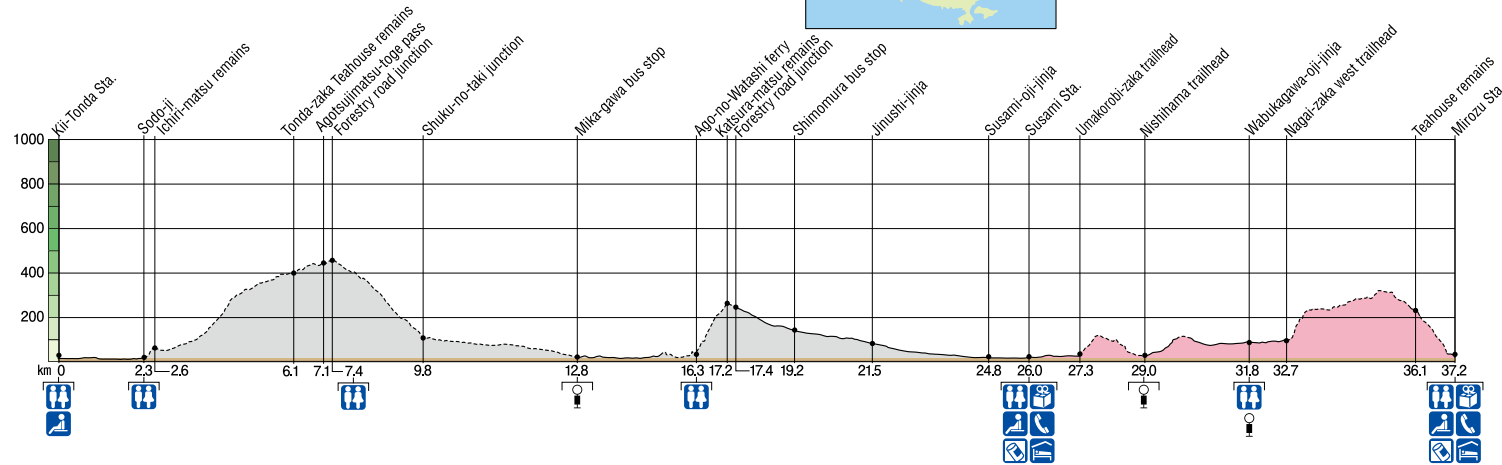


Nagai-zaka (Susami Sta.~Mirozu Sta.) 長井坂 (周参見駅~見老津駅)



Distance (km) : ~11
Time (hr) : 3~4
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~500
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~495

----- Unpaved trail
—— Paved road



Susami Station Area



Mirozu Station Area



Kumano Kodo Tips

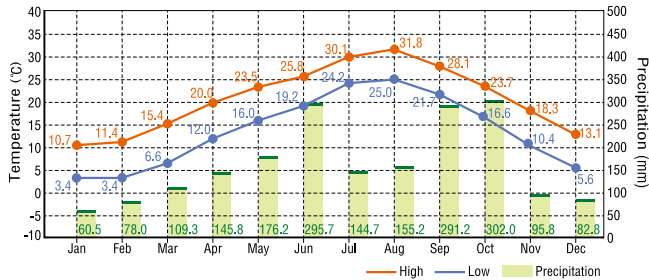
The Kumano Kodo is a diverse mountain route with a mixture of unpaved, uneven trails, ancient cobblestones and stairs, and paved roads through villages. There are many steep climbs and ascents, but the route is not technically difficult. The amount of preparation that is needed will depend greatly on 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 Ohechi 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

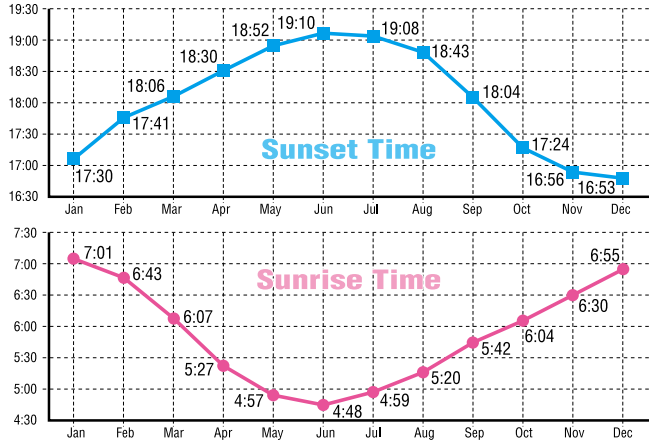
Japan Meteorological Agency: www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html
Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau:
www.tb-kumano.jp/en/kumano-kodo/weather/



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

Sections of the Ohechi can be done as day hikes while being based in Tanabe, Shirahama or Susami, using the coastal train line to access trailhead such as the Tonda-zaka and Nagai-zaka day walks.

As there is no accommodations near the trailhead between Tonda-zaka and Hotoke-zaka combining these sections is possible as a longer, full day walk.

NOTE: At most of the train stations only local trains stop, so best to plan accordingly as there is limited service. See page 17 for more information.

Tonda-zaka Day Walk



It is possible to walk Tonda-zaka (p.6~7) in either direction. Please note that the southern trailhead is located inland from the Kii-Hiki station.

There is limited public transportation in this area so the two most common ways to connect the Kii-Hiki station and trailhead near the Mika-gawa bus stop is by taxi or walking.

Taxi and community bus reservations must be done in Japanese.

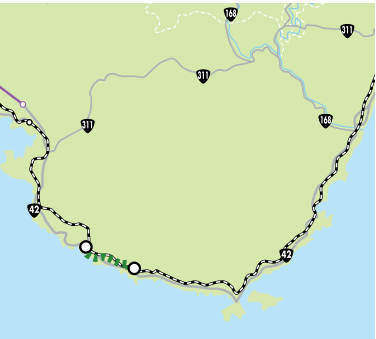
Kii-Hiki & Mika-gawa Access Options

WALKING
Route: Kii-Hiki Station to Mika-gawa bus stop, on road #37
Distance: ~5 km
Time: ~1.5 hr
Total Elevation Gain: ~90 m
Total Elevation Loss: ~80 m

TAXI
Route: Kii-Hiki Station to Ago area.
Company: Meiko Taxi, Kii-Hiki Station Office
TEL: 0739-52-2155 (Japanese only)
Price: ~2000 yen
NOTE: There is only one taxi based here and the driver is on holiday on Sundays and national holidays. It is best to call in advance to make a reservation (Japanese only). If you plan to use a taxi it is often easiest to take the train in the morning to Kii-Hiki and walk from south to north. The taxi can then be reserved to correspond to the train arrival time.

COMMUNITY BUS
Route: Kii-Hiki Station to Ago area.
Company: Meiko Taxi, Main Office
TEL: 0739-42-2727 (Japanese only)
Price: ~300 yen
NOTE: Limited bus times with reservations needed for most departures. Does not run on Sundays or national holidays. Call directly for information (Japanese only).

Nagai-zaka Day Walk



The Nagai-zaka (p.10~11) is the most popular day walk on the Ohechi route which runs between Susami and Mirozu train stations.

Walking in either direction is possible, but monitoring train times at Mirozu station is important as only local trains stop there. From west to east is a more common direction of walking.

Three-pass Trek



Day 1:
● Train to Tanabe/Shirahama, overnight ①
Day 2:
● Train to Kii-Tonda
● Walk Tonda-zaka and Hotoke-zaka (p.6~9), overnight Susami ②
Day 3:
● Walk Nagai-zaka (p.10~11), overnight Mirozu ③
NOTE: You can also take the train to stay in Susami, Tanabe, Shirahama, etc. at the end of the walk.
Day 4:
● Train to next destination

Ago-no-Watashi Ferry

There are two ways to cross the Hiki-gawa river between the Tonda-zaka and Hotoke-zaka:

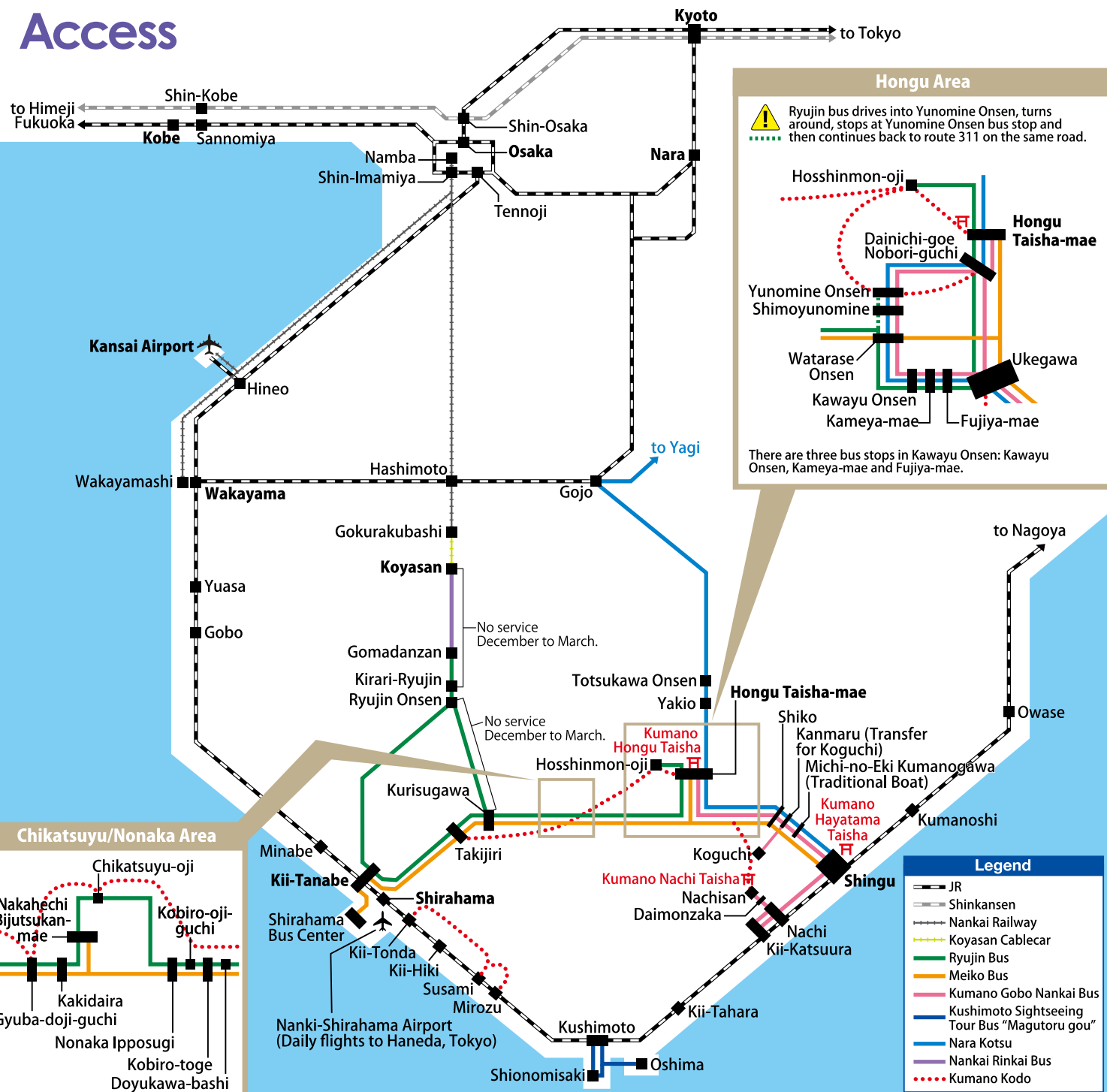
- ① Walk over a bridge, through a small settlement and then scramble along the river bank trail. (~3.5 km, ~1 hr from Mika-gawa bus stop)
- ② Cross with a traditional wooden boat ride (~5 min trip) at Ago. (~1 km, ~15 min from Mika-gawa bus stop)



IMPORTANT: Boat reservations are needed at least 3 days or more in advance by telephone (Japanese only).
TEL: 090-1593-3637
PRICE: ~500yen/person
NOTE: Meet the staff on the riverbank in Ago.

A possible routing could be:
● Arrive by train at Kii-Tonda station ~8:00.
● Walk Tonda-zaka arriving at Ago ~12:00.
● Ferry across river.
● Walk Hotoke-zaka to Susami station.

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 Wide View.

Trains are an efficient way to access the Ohechi 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)

Stations

Train stations serve as access to trailheads on the Ohechi walks. Some are smaller with no permanent staff servicing only local trains, while others are larger where both local and express trains stop.

It is best to check train times in advance and it is not a busy train line.

LINK: Train timetable search engines.
<http://www.tb-kumano.jp/en/transport/train/#search>



Kii-Tonda (Local)



Kii-Hiki (Local) This train station is further from the trail.



Susami (Local, Express)



Mirozu (Local)

Local Trains

At unstaffed stations serviced by local trains, tickets can be paid for on the train with the driver who is stationed at the front of the first carriage near the entrance and exit. These smaller local trains are called "wan-man densha ワンマン電車" or "one-man train" as the only staff onboard is the driver.



Route Guide

Tonda-zaka

Kii-Tonda Station

The Tonda-zaka route begins as Kii-Tonda station walking through the village to cross the Tonda-gawa river. Cross the road on the other side of the bridge and go behind the guardrail to follow a side road down. The scenery becomes more varied spotted with rice paddies and fields until you come to Sodo-ji.

Sodo-ji

Sodo-ji is a branch temple of a Zen sect and was restored in 1774. It is known to have a fine collection of famous calligraphy. The distinctive gentle slope of the stone foundation is impressive and photogenic. Follow the trail to the right of this foundation to begin the walk into the forest.

Ichiri-matsu

The first landmark is the remains of Ichiri-matsu, a milestone marking the distance in ri, a classic Japanese counter with the equivalent of about 4 km. Pine trees were often planted at such sites, but unfortunately no tree remains.

There are four noticeable stone monuments in the vicinity with sacred Buddhist mantras and divine Sanskrit characters representing Buddhists divinities. One monument was erected for the repose of the souls of the deceased.

Umantani Castle Remains

The remains of a feudal period castle are located on a slightly elevated ridge, featuring the remnants of enclosures, dry moats, and protective trenches. Once of its functions is believed to be the monitoring and control of the Ohechi.

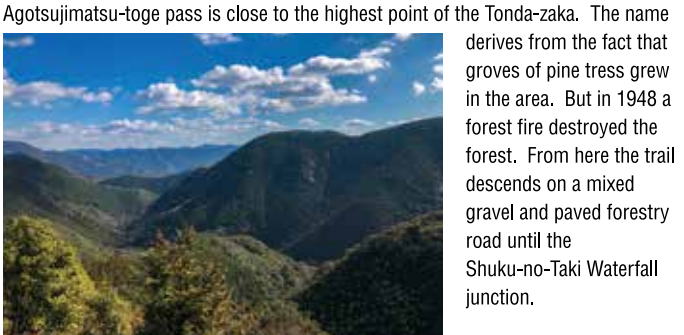
Shirahama Lookout

As the trail climbs, looking back offers scenic views of the Shirahama peninsula to the northwest.

Tonda-zaka Teahouse Remains

Teahouses were critical infrastructure of pilgrimage routes in the area, offering places of rest, nourishment and social exchange. This teahouse appears in the travelogues of writers and artists including an episode from a 1804 journal. It is believed to have been operating until approximately 1919.

Agotsujimatsu-toge Pass



Shuku-no-Taki Waterfall

A side-trip leads to Shuku-no-Taki waterfall, with a flowing drop of ~10 meters. The name of the cascade is from a celebratory event when a wealthy landowner included it as part of his daughter's dowry. Shuku means congratulations or celebration. From here follow a gravel forestry road which runs parallel to the Mika-gawa River.

Bonji-to

This memorial tower is engraved with the sacred Sankrit characters believed to represent Buddhist divinities including those of Amida (Buddha of Compassion and Wisdom) and Kannon (Bodhisattva of Mercy), two of the most worshipped in Japan and part of the main triad of deities worship at the Kumano Sanzan grand shrines.

Koshinto

A Koshinto is a monument or pillar often erected at the village entrance to protect it from epidemics and calamities. This area was the boundary of previous settlement nearby.

Koshin is a folk belief with Taoist origins dating back to the Heian period (794-1185). According to the ancient sexagenary calendar, every 60th day was Koshin day. It was believed that on the night of this day while sleeping, the Sanshi (three worms or entities) in the body would escape and ascend to report the sins of the person to the Celestial God, which would result in a shorter lifespan. To prevent this, believers would stay up all night, which developed into an important event of the faith.

Mika-gawa bus stop

The Mika-gawa bus stop is located were the trail meets route 37, the main road that runs the length of the Hiki-gawa River. It is ~5km from here along the road southwest to Kii-Hiki train station.

Hotoke-zaka

Ago Settlement

To the east of Mika-gawa bus stop is the small settlement of Ago build on a wide bend in the river were rice cultivation takes place.

Ago-no-Watashi Ferry

Pass through the village to the riverbank where ferries have crossed since ancient times. This service was discontinued in 1954 but revived in 2005 after the designation of UNESCO World Heritage. It costs 500 and requires to be booked in advance (see p.15).

Another way to cross the river is by using a bridge downstream. The riverbank section of this route is not often maintained (see p.15).



Katsura-matsu Remains

On the opposite side of the river the trail climbs steeply for ~1 km until Katsuu-ra-matsu remains. The playful name means “wig pine tree” because of a tree that stood here with the appearance of sporting a hair piece.

Hotoke-zaka Teahouse Remains

This teahouse operated until ~1940. Until the completion of the rail line in 1935, there was a lively cattle market held nearby monthly, highlighting its conduciveness as a meeting and trading site.

Unmaintained Trail

Across the forestry road is the traditional route, which is closed partway because of lack of maintenance and the wishes of the local landowner. If you attempt this section please proceed with caution.

Jinushi-jinja

Jinushi-jinja is a prime example of the strong and ancient nature-worship belief system of the indigenous culture. There is no shrine pavilion here, but rather the nature itself is the object of worship.

Susami Station

The route continues south along route 222 until it enters the small coastal village of Susami passing by the Susami-oji-jinja shrine and Manpuku-ji temple before arriving at Susami train station.

Nagai-zaka

Overview

Nagai-zaka is a series of passes between Susami Sta. and Mirozu Sta. The main Nagai-zaka section is on the eastern half. This is probably the most popular section of the Ohechi because of its diversity of scenery and ease of access from the train line.

Coastal Road

Leaving Susami Sta the trail follows the road offering picturesque views of the rocky coastline.

Umakorobi-zaka Trailhead

The Umakorobi-zaka trailhead is a little tricky to find because it is in the rear of a concrete industrial site. Walk through the facility to the rear and you can find a sign and a staircase leading up into the forest.

Lookout Point

On the descent there is a short side-trail through native forest to a lookout point, which is well worth the detour there and back.

Nishihama Trailhead

Once the trail reaches the coast line again it runs along route 42 until a small side road leading back into the mountains. This junction is called the Nishihama trailhead. Nishihama means “east beach”.

Tao-no-Toge Pass

The Toa-no-Toge pass is a lovely short trail, up and over a rise, before descending to rejoin the road.

Wabukagawa-oji-jinja

The trail follows a paved road through a scattering of homes that line a valley with terraced rice fields. The Wabukagawa-oji-jinja shrine is a conglomeration of different shrines from different time periods dating back to ancient times. The old growth shrine grove is impress with Camphor, Cryptomeria, Nagi and Muku trees.

Nagai-zaka West Trailhead

Continuing along the road leads to the west trailhead of the Nagai-zaka proper.

Danchiku

Danchiku is an ancient road construction technique where soil and clay are built up and pounded to level the surface for ease of passage. The beautifully manmade ridge lines are intelligently constructed to blend in with nature creating a long-lasting and aesthetically pleasing trail.



Teahouse Remains

Along the way there are multiple ocean-view lookout points before arriving at the remains of a teahouse where currently radio towers stand.

Nagai-zaka East Trailhead

Follow a paved road briefly before beginning the decent through the forest to the east trailhead. From here it is a short walk to Mirozu train station.

Mirozu Station

Mirozu is a small, local train station with a stunning backdrop of dramatic shoreline. If the small café is open, enjoy a well earned drink and soak in the views while waiting for the train.