

KUMANO KODO



Ogumotori-goe (Koguchi to Nachisan) (Nakahechi) | 大雲取越 (中辺路)

Distance: ~14.5 km

Time: ~6 to 8 hrs

Start : Koguchi

Finish : Nachisan

Access: Local Bus

~1 hr bus ride from the Hongu area (requires transfer at Kanmaru). ~50 min bus ride from Shingu (requires transfer at Kanmaru). It is easiest to stay overnight in Koguchi before walk.

Elevation Chart:



熊野古道

Koguchi trailhead



Stone staircase



The walk

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.

Dogiri-zaka

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

Waroda-ishi



Trail image



Near Jizo-jaya



Irokawatsuji



Funami-toge Pass



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

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.

If you stop and listen, you might be able to overhear their divine conversing.

Rises and falls

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.

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.

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.

Nachi-no-Otaki falls



Kumano Nachi Taisha



Seiganto-ji



Seiganto-ji



The seaside village in the distance is Katsuura, a famous fishing port for tuna, and hot springs.

The 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.

Nachi-no-Otaki falls

The last stone steps finish at the Nachisan sanctuary, with a view of Nachi-no-Otaki falls to the left. This fall is 133 meters high and 13 meters wide, it is the tallest waterfall in Japan and can be seen from far out on the Pacific Ocean.

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.

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.

Seiganto-ji

The wonderful wooden 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.

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

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.

After the walk

Most people choose to spend the night in the area after their walk.

There is a bus service running daily from Nachisan to the Kii-Katsuura station.