

KUMANO KODO

Takahara to Tsugizakura-oji (Nakahechi) | 高原から継桜王子へ (中辺路)

Distance: 13 km

Time: ~ 5 to 8 hrs

Start : Takahara

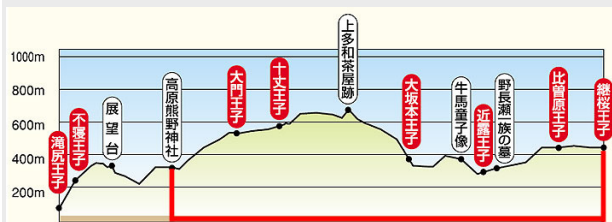
Finish : Tsugizakura-oji (Nonaka Area)

Access: Local Bus

The nearest bus stop is Kurisugawa on route 311.

It is a ~30 minute walk up hill to Takahara

Elevation Chart:



熊野古道

Takahara views



Kumano Kodo



Takahara village

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:

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 walk

The trail from Takahara continues to climb into the mountains from the east end of the tiny settlement through the forest.

Gyuba-doji statue



Chikatsuyu village



Chikatsuyu-oji



About 1.5 hours past Takahara is the Jujo-oji clearing, a popular spot for picnic lunches. There is a toilet here.

The highest part of this trail is the remains of the Uwada-jaya Teahouse (~690 meters above sea level) near signpost number 18.

The trail then descends quickly past the Three-Fold Moon Viewing area to the creek by Osakamoto-oji.

The Three-Fold Moon is a legend about a Yamabushi mountain ascetic and his miraculous encounter with the Kumano deities.

Kumano Kodo Nakahechi Michi-no-Eki

From Osakamoto-oji the trail follows a small creek until the pilgrimage route connects with Highway #311.

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. The public toilets are next to the parking lot.

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 one 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 Shugendō, a mixed religion based on mountain ascetic practices. A third monument, a Hokyoin-to stupa dating from the 12th century.

Chikatsuyu

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

There are public toilets here. Vending machines and a bus stop are a short walk up the road.

Towards Tsugizakura-oji

This section follows the old highway through Chikatsuyu Village along the south side of Mt. Takao.

Tsugizakura-oji



As the road works its way east you pass a series of collection of houses. There is a short section of dirt path just before trail marker number 29.

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

Tsugizakura-oji

In the shrine grove of Tsugizakura-oji are the massive Nonaka-no-Ipposugi cedar trees (*Cryptomeria*). Some have a circumference of 8 meters, and are believed to be up to 800 years old.

The branches area 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.

Toganoki-jaya

The Toganoki-jaya Teahouse building is located next to the sanctuary. It has a very photogenic thatch roof, but unfortunately doesn't serve any tea.

Nonaka-no-Shimizu Spring



Toganoki-jaya



Nonaka-no-Shimizu Spring

The Nonaka-no-Shimizu spring, one of the 100 famous waters of Japan, is located just below the shrine. Fill up your water bottle here for some delicious refreshment.