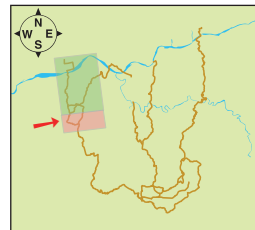
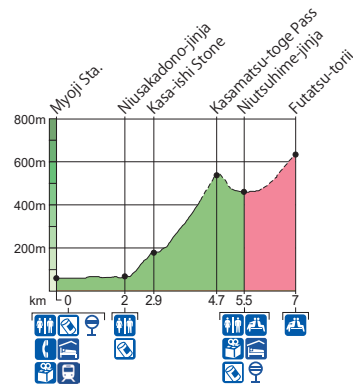


Mitani-zaka
(Myoji Sta. ~ Niutsuhime-jinja)
三谷坂(妙寺駅~丹生都比売神社)



Mitani-zaka	
Distance (km)	: ~5.5
Time (hr)	: 2~3
Total Elevation Gain (m):	~510
Total Elevation Loss (m):	~100
Hatcho-zaka	
Distance (km)	: ~1.5
Time (hr)	: 0.5
Total Elevation Gain (m):	~180
Total Elevation Loss (m):	~10
----- Unpaved trail	
——— Paved trail	

	Distance (km)	Time (hr)	Total Elevation Gain (m)	Total Elevation Lost (m)
Kasamatsu-toge Pass ~ Ropponsugi	~1	0.5	~20	~60
Ropponsugi ~ Niitsuuhime-jinja	~1.5	0.5	~10	~120
Furu-toge Pass ~ KAMIKOSAWA Sta.	~3	1~1.5	~430	~60
Myoji Sta. ~ Niitsuuhime-jinja ~ Futatsu-torii ~ KAMIKOSAWA Sta.	~10.5	3.5~5	~750	~570

Hatcho-zaka

八町坂

Mitani-zaka

The route from Myoji Station to Niutsumi-jinja is mostly a paved road with forested trail in the upper reaches. It is an ancient pilgrimage route connecting the Amano plateau and Kino-kawa River area, connecting to Koyasan via the Choishi-michi.

Mitani-zaka slope is also called Chokushi-zaka slope as it was used by chokushi (emperor's messengers). Even with the sharp incline, it was supposedly preferred, as a shorter route, than Choishi-michi.

Niusakadono-jinja

Niusakadono-jinja is the starting point for Mitani-zaka and is one of the Niu Shrines dedicated to Niutsuhime-no-Okami and Koya-myojin.

The Oicho Ginkgo tree is a dominate feature with a 5 m trunk circumference, and height close to 30 m. The best time to see the tree is late fall, usually around November when the leaves change color to bright yellow.

Niusakadono-jinja shrine is said to have been named after the first sake offering made to Niutsuhime-no-Okami when the deity first descended to earth.



Persimmon Orchards

The trail climbs out of the valley through persimmon orchards offering views of the Kino-kawa River valley.

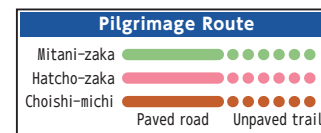
Kasa-ishi Stone

A fascinating rock balancing act is the Kasa-ishi or “conical shaped hat stone”. Legend states that when Kobo Daishi’s Kasa hat blew away it was caught by this rock.

This stone tower with capping rock can be viewed as an early form of stupa.

Hokire Jizo Statue

Hokire Jizo is a 3-faced sculptured Buddhist statue dating from the early Kamakura era (1192-1333) carved into a boulder. It is called Hokire Jizo in reference to the crack that appears to cut the cheek.



Amano Plateau

Once over the pass the trail arrives in the lovely bucolic setting of the plateau and Niutsuhime-jinja.

Niutsumime-jinja

Niutsuhime-jinja dates to prehistoric times with the first pavilions built about 1700 years ago. It is believed to be founded by Emperor Ojin (reigned from 270-310). The shrine controlled a vast amount of land in the northern Kii Mountains.

Main Pavilion

A large arching bridge leads to the main pavilion, a reconstruction from 1469. The enshrined deity is Niutsuhime-no-Okami, believed to be the younger sister of the sun goddess Amaterasu-Omikami. This deity is revered as the god of agriculture and protector of Koyasan.



Canine Guides

It was a messenger of Niutsuhime and his black and white dogs that escorted Kobo Daishi to the present location of Koyasan, which he subsequently founded.

Vermilion Protector

The “Ni” in Niutsuhime refers to the cinnabar ore which is the raw material of the color vermillion. “Niu” is a geographical reference to a the local of a vein of it. The ancient local Niu clan controlled the mining of the ore and is believed that they enshrined Niutsuhime.

Vermilion was painting on temples and shrines as protection from evil.

Divine Wind

During the attempted Mongol invasion of Japan in the Kamakura period (1185-1333), it is believed that Niutsuhime-no-Okami took the lead in creating the divine wind that kept them from the shores of Japan.

Hatcho-zaka

The Hatcho-zaka slope connects the Choishi-michi and Niutsuhime-jinja.
The junction is at Futatsu-torii.

Futatsu-torii

The twin Shinto gates called Futatsutorii are said to have been built by Kobo Daishi. They are made of granite standing ~6m tall, a single post weighs ~4.5 tons. The pair is presumed to belong to Niutsuhime-jinja.

There is a covered lookout point nearby with views over the Amano plateau.

