

World Heritage

Kumano Kodo Iseji

English
Take free

熊野古道 伊勢路

*—Pilgrimage to Holy Sanctuaries
through the Paths of Prayer*

Mie Prefecture



World Heritage

Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range



Introduction of the Kumano Kodo Iseji



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※Note: not all the passes, paths, etc. shown here are registered as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

There are three sacred sites, namely the “Kumano Sanzan (Three Grand Shrines of Kumano),” “Koyasan” and “Yoshino and Omine,” in the Kii Mountain Range located roughly in the center of Japan, and different types of religion, such as Shinto based on nature worship, Buddhism introduced from China and developed in a unique way in Japan and Shugendo spread as a mixture of Shinto and Buddhism, have been fostered there.

In July 2004, the three sacred sites and the pilgrimage routes connecting them as well as their traditional cultures developed in harmony between nature and human beings over time were finally recognized by UNESCO as shared properties of all humankind and registered on its World Heritage List as “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range.”



“Kumano Kodo” as the Paths of Prayer that lead to Kumano Sanzan

Kumano Sanzan, which is known as one of the sacred sites in the Kii Mountain Range, consists of three grand shrines of Kumano, namely “Kumano Hongu Taisha” “Kumano Hayatama Taisha” and “Kumano Nachi Taisha” The origins of those shrines have something to do with nature worship respectively, but they came to enshrine the same deities called “Kumano Sansho Gongen,” which have been widely venerated by the public. Since ancient times, many people have made a pilgrimage to Kumano Sanzan from all over Japan, and the major pilgrimage routes, such as the “Nakahechi” from Tanabe to those shrines (through mountains), the “Ohechi” along the coast, the “Kohechi” connecting Koyasan and those shrines and the “Iseji” from Ise Jingu to those shrines, have been gradually formed as a result. The pilgrimage routes connecting those shrines and many different places are generally known as the “Kumano Kodo.”

“Kumano Kodo Iseji” as the Path to Connect the Two Major Sacred Sites

The “Kumano Kodo Iseji” is the path to connect Kumano Sanzan (Three Grand Shrines of Kumano) and Ise Jingu that is a very special sacred site for Japanese people. As the old proverb “Seven times to Ise, three times to Kumano” says, people in the Edo Period (1603 to 1868) generally had a strong desire to visit them in their lifetime. It is said that pilgrims in pilgrimage costume crossed a lot of steep mountains to get to Kumano to give a prayer to the deities enshrined there after they had visited Ise Jingu. Today, you can still enjoy the traditional landscapes and feel the rich history and culture of each area along the “Kumano Kodo Iseji”



Kumano Hongu Taisha



Kumano Hayatama Taisha



Kumano Nachi Taisha

Magose-toge Pass

Location: Kihoku Town and Owase City, Mie Prefecture
Walking route: approx. 7 km (approx. 3 hours on foot)



The Magose-toge Pass is a very popular site on the Iseji since it is relatively easy to cross. Its stone-paved path and forest of hinoki (Japanese cypress) are definitely worth seeing because they are said to be the most beautiful part of the Kumano Kodo.

Must-See Sites



1 Yonaki Jizo

"Jizo" is a guardian deity of children. The statue of Jizo enshrined here is believed to have mystical power to prevent children from crying at night.



2 Stone-paved path

The path here is paved with heavy natural stones as if they were lying over one another.



3 Magose Fudosen statue

This small temple, which enshrines the Buddhist deity "Fudo Myo-o" and the founder of Shugendō "En-no-Gyoja," is situated right by a beautiful waterfall with a height of about 20 meters.



Forest of Owase Hinoki (one of the Three Most Beautiful Artificial Forests in Japan)

The forest of Owase Hinoki (Japanese cypress in Owase) looks magical with a thick bunch of tall dark-green trees and sunlight filtering through their leaves.

Scenic Sites



A Mt. Tengurasan (30 minutes from the Magose-toge Pass)

Climbing the ladder on the top of the mountain, you can fully enjoy a panoramic view of Owase City and the mountains around.



B Mt. Binshiyama (120 minutes from the Magose-toge Pass)

You can fully enjoy fantastic scenery from the huge rock that is located on the top of the mountain and looks like the back of an elephant!

Tourist Sites Around



Choshi-gawa River

The Choshi River boasts outstanding transparency from its upper to lower reaches. At its estuary, a "shimmering zone" resembling gomme syrup can be observed, where the boundary between seawater and fresh water fluctuates.



Camp inn Miyama

Camp inn Miyama is a camping site situated along the Choshi-gawa River. You can enjoy a barbecue, play at the riverside and refresh yourself in the middle of nature!



Owase Fish Market "Ototo"

This store, operated directly by a fisheries company, specializes in local fish and local specialties and boasts the freshness and variety of its products! The store also has a dining area, where seafood bowls (*kaisendon*) and sushi are highly recommended.



Matsumoto-toge Pass

Location: Kumano City, Mie Prefecture

Walking route: approx. 5 km (approx. 2 hours on foot)



It is easy even for beginners of mountain climbing to cross the Matsumoto-toge Pass since it is located at a relatively low altitude. You can surely enjoy walking along the pass with a beautiful stone-paved path surrounded by bamboo forest.

Must-See Sites



1 Stone-paved path Constructed in the Edo Period

This stair-like stone-paved path was constructed back in the Edo Period (1603 to 1868), and its sides are reinforced with well-built stone walls.



2 Jizo of the Matsumoto-toge Pass

According to legend, this statue of Jizo, a guardian deity of children, was wrongly shot by a sharp shooter because he mistook it for a specter. You can still see a scar in the lower left part of the statue.



3 Shishiiwa

The Shishiiwa (literally "Lion Rock") is a huge uniquely-shaped rock with a height of 25 meters. It looks like a lion roaring at the Kumano Sea.



4 Hana-no-Iwaya Shrine

Hana-no-Iwaya Shrine is the tomb of Izanami-no-Mikoto known as the mother of Japanese deities. It is also said to be the oldest Shinto shrine in Japan.



Kumano Grand Fireworks Festival
Annually held on August 17
Note: this event is postponed to a later date in case of rain or high waves.

Tourist Sites Around



Kumano City Tourist Information Center

Not only tourist information, but also bicycle rental and baggage storage services are available.



Michi-no-Eki Kumano Hana-no-Iwaya (Otsuna-chaya)

Otsuna-chaya is a shopping and restaurant complex that offers Hana-no-Iwaya-related products as well as delicious local specialties. You can also visit the Hana-no-Iwaya shrine Museum located on the same site.

Scenic Sites



A Onigajo

Onigajo (literally "Demon's Castle"), which extends for a distance of about 1.2 kilometers along the coast, consists of uniquely-shaped rocks created by wave erosion and rapid ground uplift.



B Oni-no-Miharashidai Lookout

It takes about 35 minutes from the Matsumoto-toge Pass to this lookout, where you can fully enjoy a panoramic view of the Kumano Sea for refreshment.

Other Must-See Sites on the Kumano Kodo Iseji

Besides the Magose-toge Pass and Matsumoto-toge Pass, there are also many other recommended sites on the Kumano Kodo Iseji. Please be sure to visit them as well.



Kumano-gawa River and Sandanbo
(Course ② on page 2)

The Kumano-gawa River has been registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a pilgrimage route through water. Sandanbo sail elegantly on the river before the wind. You can definitely have a very comfortable time enjoying the magnificent scenery around the river.



Yakiyama-goe
(Course ⑧ on page 2)


It used to be said that Mt. Yakiyama was the hardest place to cross in western Japan. This mountain has a lot of steep slopes, but is blessed with a beautiful stone-paved path, many historic sites and gorgeous scenery.



Tsuzurato-toge Pass
(Course ④ on page 2)

"Tsuzurato" means a zigzag course. As indicated by the name, the Tsuzurato-toge Pass with a well-preserved stone-paved path reinforced with sturdy stone walls has a number of consecutive curves.

— Information to Support Your Trip —

 **Multilingual audio guide** (English, Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean and French)
Kumano Kodo Center has prepared a multilingual audio guide for use within the center.

As a Base for Your Trip Kumano Kodo Center



Kumano Kodo Center provides a lot of useful information to help you learn more about the Kumano Kodo. The building of the center, which was constructed using 6,549 trees of Owase Hinoki (Japanese cypress in Owase), has an air of elegance and dignity and gives visitors a deep impression because of its beautiful grain. It exhibits objects and documents related to the history, nature and culture of the Kumano Kodo and its surroundings. Besides, it also plays the role of a communication and learning site for visitors to the Kumano Kodo as well as local residents of this area.

Address 12-4 Mukai, Owase City, Mie Prefecture, 519-3625, Japan

Contact information 0597-25-2666

Access

From JR Owase Station, take a Fureai bus (bound for Kii Matsumoto) for about 10 minutes and get off at Kumano Kodo Center Mae Bus Stop. Alternatively, take a Mie Kotsu bus (Kumano Kodo Line) from Owase Ekiguchi Bus Stop for about 10 minutes and get off at Kumano Kodo Center Bus Stop.

URL <https://kumanokodocenter.com/>



Located next to Kumano Kodo Center

Yumekodo Owase

This complex facility features bathing facilities, where visitors can enjoy nationally rare deep-sea water baths and mist saunas, and locally sourced products available for sale. Moreover, there is also "Isabaya," a seafood restaurant operated directly by a fisheries company. They are all recommended for soothing tired bodies after hiking through a mountain pass.

URL <http://yumekodo.jp/>



Kumano Kodo Iseji Navigator



You can gain information on the Kumano Kodo Routes as well as other tourist sites using Google Maps.

URL <https://www.kodo.pref.mie.lg.jp/navi>



Mie Travel Guide

Please visit the following website for detailed information on accommodation, etc.

URL <https://www.kankomie.or.jp/>



Attractive Foods to Make Your Trip More Enjoyable

The area around the Kumano Kodo is filled with attractiveness thanks to its great nature, delicious foods, traditional craft products, onsen (hot springs), etc.



Bowl of rice topped with fresh Seafood

This area is famous for its fishing industry since it is blessed with fertile fishing grounds because of the Kuroshio Current! A wide variety of fish are caught and landed. Rice bowls topped with sliced fresh raw fish come highly recommended.



Owase Wappa

This handmade wooden box, which is made of high-quality Owase Hinoki (Japanese cypress in Owase), is a traditional lacquered product to represent this area. It is best used as a lunch box.



Mandarin Oranges

In this area, you can enjoy different types of mandarin oranges throughout the year. The oranges grown here taste incredibly sweet because of the mild weather and sea breezes of the area.



Kumano Jidori (The Local Brand Chicken)

Kumano Jidori are raised very carefully in the great nature of Kumano. Their meat is moderately tough and rich in flavor.



Onsen

Onsen (hot springs) can heal your body if you are tired after crossing a pass on foot. You can enjoy different health benefits since the nature of water differs depending on the onsen resort.



Himono (Dried Fish)

Fresh fish are dried to be sold as processed food. They become richer in taste and more non-perishable after they are dried.



Mehari-zushi (A Traditional Rice Dish)

Mehari-zushi is a large rice ball rolled in lightly-pickled takana leaves. It is generally believed that the origin of its name can be traced back to a Japanese word meaning "eye-opening." That means people cannot help but open their eyes wide because they are very surprised by its size and fine flavor.



Sanma Sushi (Saury Sushi)

Sanma sushi consists of lightly-pressed pieces of sushi rice topped with saury slices pickled with salt. This sushi is very easy to eat because of its firm-textured and odorless saury slices.



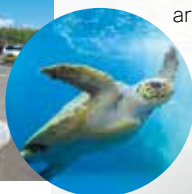
Michi-no-Eki Kihochi Umigame Park

This is a hub for the protection and awareness activities for endangered sea turtles, which also serves as a sea turtle aquarium where visitors can observe both sea and land turtles up close. At its museum, you can also learn about sea turtles from specimens and other exhibits.

URL <https://umigamekouen.com/>

Maruyama Senmaida

Along the Tori-toge Pass located to the west of the Matsumoto-toge Pass, there are thousands of tanada (rice terraces) known as "Maruyama Senmaida" on the slope of a mountain, which are said to be the most beautiful rice fields in Japan. You can see beautifully-shining rice fields throughout the months of May and June where they are filled with water for rice planting.



ACCESS MAP

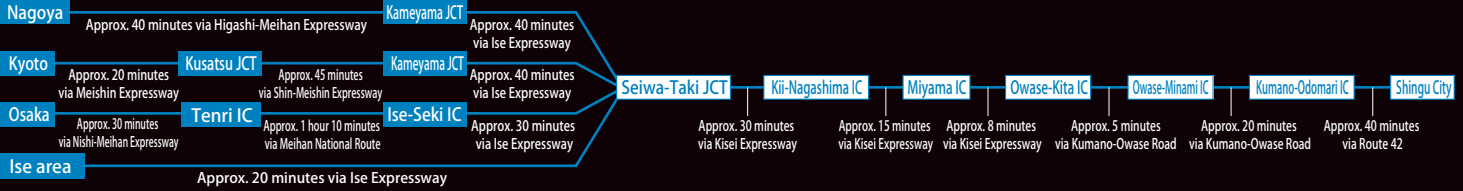


- Kumano Kodo Iseji
- Main national/prefectural road
- Expressway (dotted line: scheduled for construction)
- Private railroad
- Shinkansen
- JR(Japan Railway)
- Port
- Airport

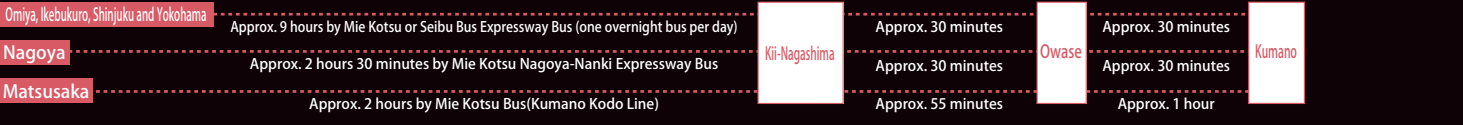
Access by Train



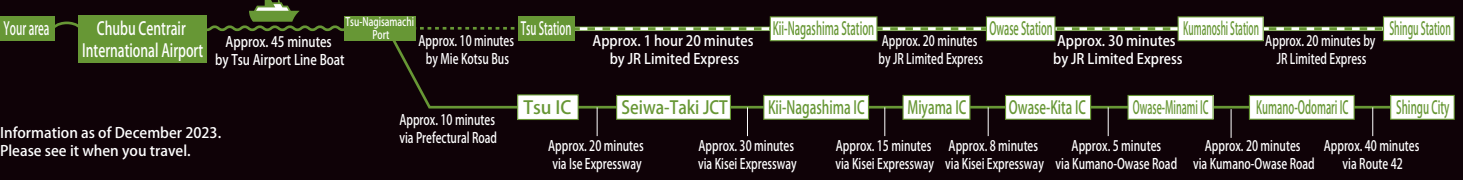
Access by Car



Access by Bus



Access by Air



Information as of December 2023. Please see it when you travel.