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Official Community Reservation System

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Note: Reservations are required at least 7~10 days in advance.

Useful Words and Phrases

Hello Konnichiwa	Goodbye Sayounara
..... こんにちは さようなら
Thank you Arigato	Excuse me sumimasen
..... ありがとう すみません
Do you speak English?	Eigo ga hanasemasu ka?
	英語が話せますか?
I don't understand. / I don't know	Wakarimasen
	わかりません
I can't speak Japanese	Nihongo wa dekimasen
	日本語はできません
Is it OK to take a photo?	Shasin o totte mo ii desu ka?
	写真を撮ってもいいですか?
Yes Hai	No iie
..... はい 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はどこですか?

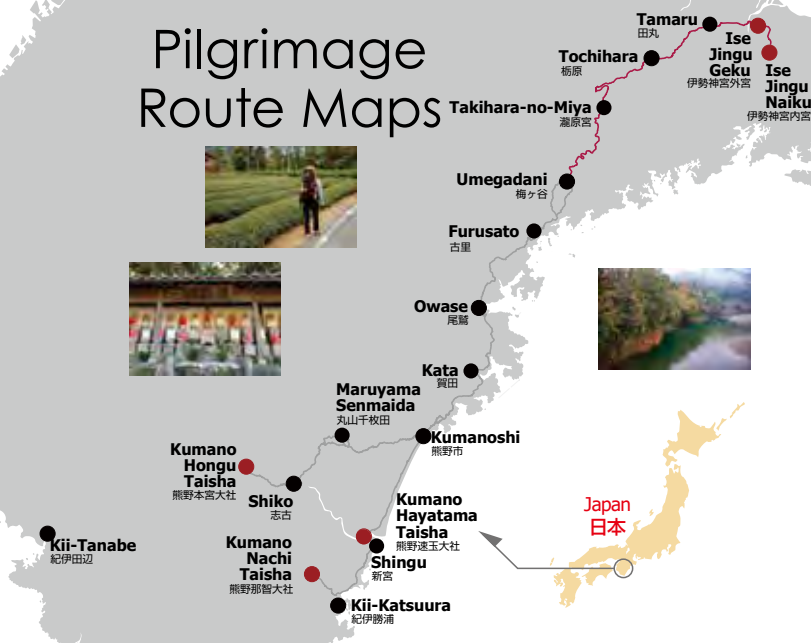
Bus stop Basu-tei	Trailhead Tozanguchi
..... バス停 登山口
Help me! Tasuketel	Toilet O-tearai/toire
..... たすけて! お手洗い/トイレ
I need a doctor Isha ga hitsuyo desu	
..... 医者が必要です	

03/2024 printed・発行

KUMANO KODO

ISEJI (North)

Pilgrimage Route Maps



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www.tb-kumano.jp

Mie Prefecture

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!



Ise Jingu



Ise Jingu is one of the supreme shrines in Japan with a direct and tangible connection between Japan's mythological origins and the Imperial family.

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.



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.

Iseji Eastern Route

The Iseji route runs along the east coast of the Kii Peninsula between Ise Jingu and the Kumano Sanzan. It was extremely popular in the Edo period (1603-1868) with the increase of pilgrims to the Ise. After paying homage, devotees would continue on the Iseji to Kumano. This route has a diversity of mountain passes, fishing villages, terraced rice fields, and beaches.

Overview

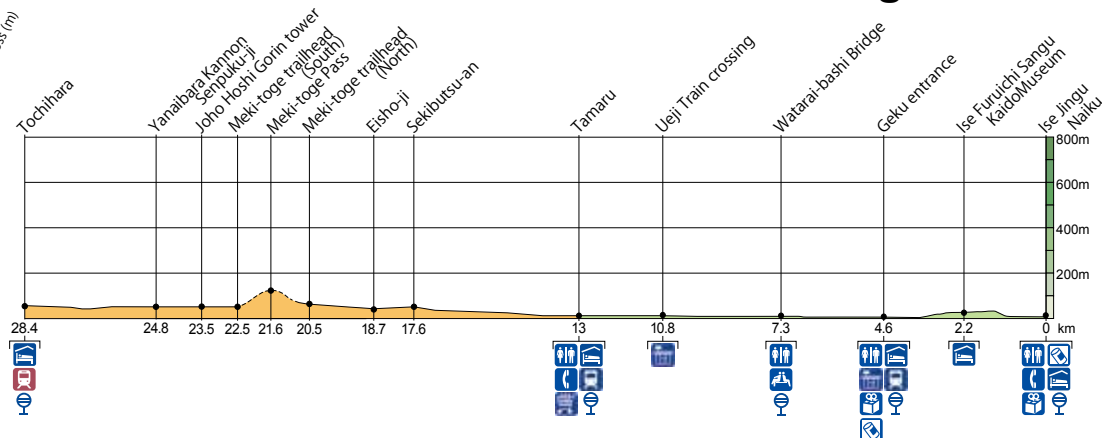


Legend	
	Toilet
	Public phone
	Convenience store
	Grocery store
	Shop/Store
	Vending machine
	Drinking water
	Covered shelter
	Accommodation
	Station
	Station nearby
	Bus stop

Tochihara~Tamaru

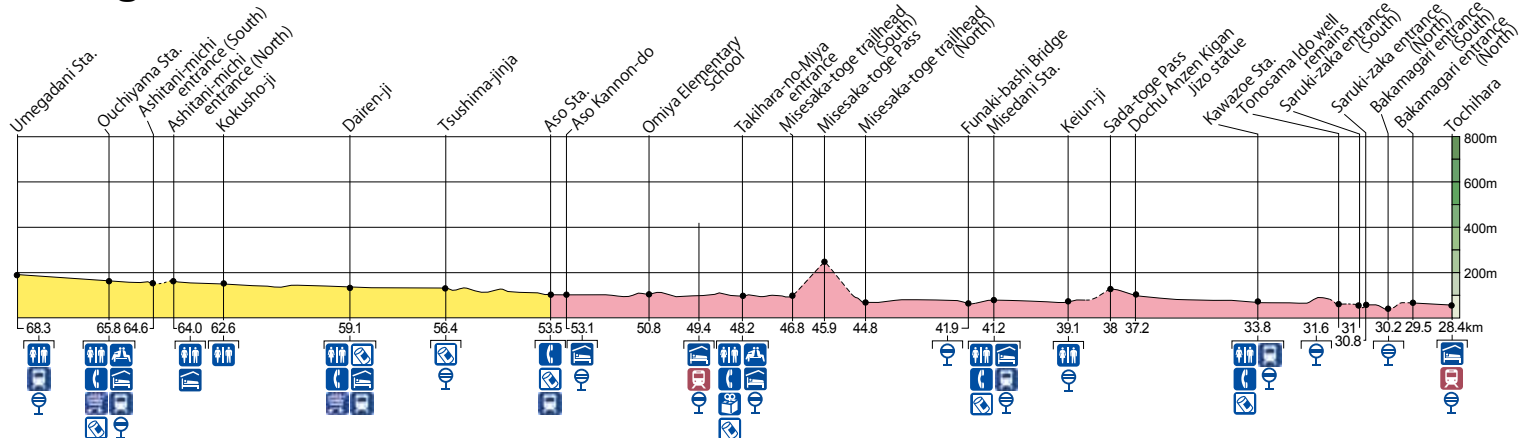
Tamaru~Ise Jingu Naiku

	Distance (km)	Time (hr)	Total Elevation Gain (m)	Total Elevation Loss (m)
Geku entrance ~ Ise Jingu Naiku	~5	1.5~2	~50	~70
Tochihara ~ Misedani Sta.	~13	3.5~4.5	~230	~200
Misedani Sta. ~ Aso Sta.	~13	4~5	~290	~280
Misedani Sta. ~ Dairen-ji	~19	5.5~7	~360	~320
Aso Sta. ~ Furusato Onsen	~31	8.5~11	~460	~610
Dairen-ji ~ Ouchiyama Sta.	~7	1.5~2	~70	~50
Ouchiyama Sta. ~ Furusato Onsen	~18	5.5~7	~320	~510

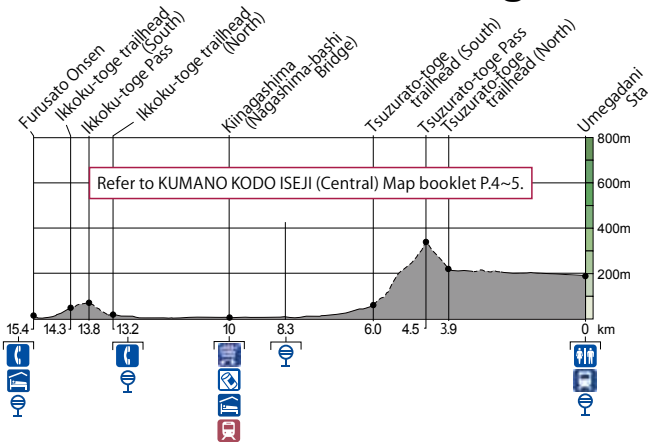


Umegadani~Aso

Aso~Tochihara



Furusato Onsen~Umegadani



	Distance (km)	Time (hr)	Total Elevation Gain (m)	Total Elevation Loss (m)	
Tamaru ~ Ise Jingu Naiku	~13	3~4	~130	~120	P.6~7
Tochihara ~ Tamaru	~16	4~5	~210	~180	P.8~11
Aso ~ Tochihara	~26	5.5~7	~510	~480	P.10~13
Umegadani ~ Aso	~21	5~7	~250	~170	P.14~15
Furusato Onsen ~ Umegadani	~16	4.5~6	~290	~510	Central P.4~5

----- Unpaved trail
 ——— Paved trail

Ise Gateway to Iseji

Ise Jingu

Ise Jingu is an expansive shrine complex just inland from the protected southern shore of Ise Bay in the central part of the main island of Japan.



It is composed of 125 shrines, centered around two main ones located ~5 km apart are: Kotaijingu (Naiku "Inner Shrine"), dedicated to Amaterasu-Omikami, and Toyo'uke-daijingu (Geku "Outer Shrine") dedicated to Toyo'uke-no-Omikami, the guardian deity of clothing, food and shelter. Amaterasu is the Sun Goddess and legendary ancestor of the imperial family.

HINT: It is recommended to spend a day before or after your walk to fully enjoy the sacred sites.

Naiku

Naiku's shrine grounds are expansive and includes many buildings and subsidiary shrines with the formal access for worshipers being across the Uji-bashi bridge. The main sanctuary is near the rear of the complex ~1 km from the entrance.

The main pavilion housing Amaterasu and the divine mirror are in the innermost courtyard enclosed within four rows of wooden fences.

Worshippers pay homage in front of the third-row gate. In this area it is strictly forbidden to take pictures or videos. Special ceremonies take place in the next level courtyard, but beyond that only the emperor and high-ranking priests are allowed.



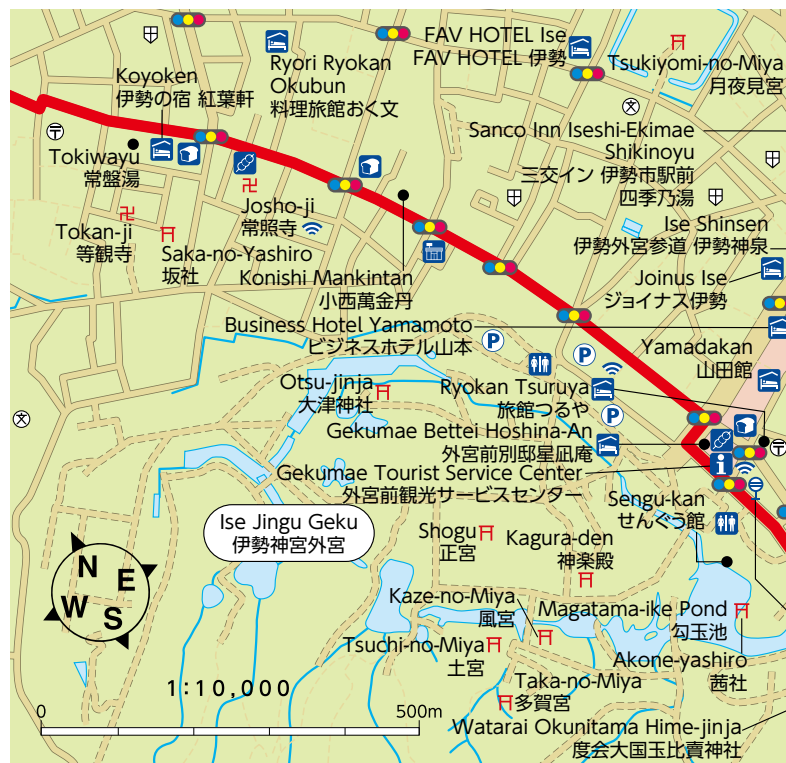
Geku

Geku is the other major shrine dedicated to Toyo'uke-no-Omikami, the guardian deity of clothing, food and shelter. It is a short walk southwest from the Iseishi station through a shopping district, although

not as pronounced as Oharai-machi, there is a diversity of shops and restaurants.

Unlike Naiku there are two entrances to the grounds. Like Naiku the atmosphere is solemn with the shrine approach on gravel amongst a mature, old-growth forest. Buildings that offer similar functions to Naiku are scattered over the grounds.

Near the main entrance is the Sengukan museum, which has exhibitions on the unique rebuilding ceremony that takes place every 20 years when all of the shrines in Ise are taking down and rebuilt from scratch.



Legend			
Toilet	Public Wi-fi	Parking	Temple
Public phone	Michi-no-Eki rest area	Gas Station	Unpaved trail
Convenience store	Stamp	Post Office	Paved road
Grocery store	Lodging	Police Station	Other Unpaved trail
Bakery	Coin Laundry	Fire Station	Other Paved road
Bento Lunch Box	Bank	School	
Japanese Sweets	Station	Hospital	
Information	Bus stop	Shrine	

Oharai-machi

Oharai-machi or "purifying town" is a district replicating Edo era streets near the entrance to the Naiku shrine. There is a plethora of traditional sweet shops, restaurants serving local food and snacks, souvenir shops, etc. along the 800-meter-long street.

In the middle is Okage-yokocho or "blessing alley", a collection of around 60 stalls selling foods, crafts, and nostalgic souvenirs. Oharai-machi is one of the most visited tourist sites in the area, bustling with visitors year-round.



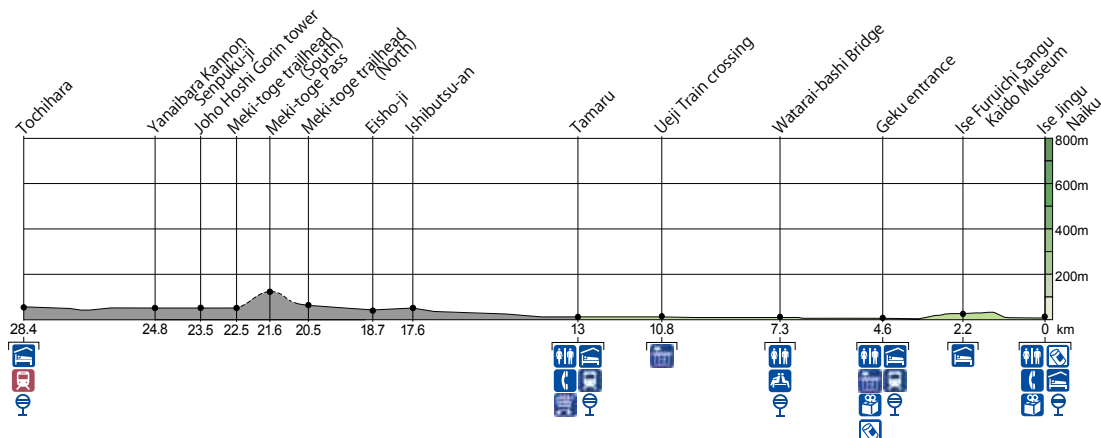


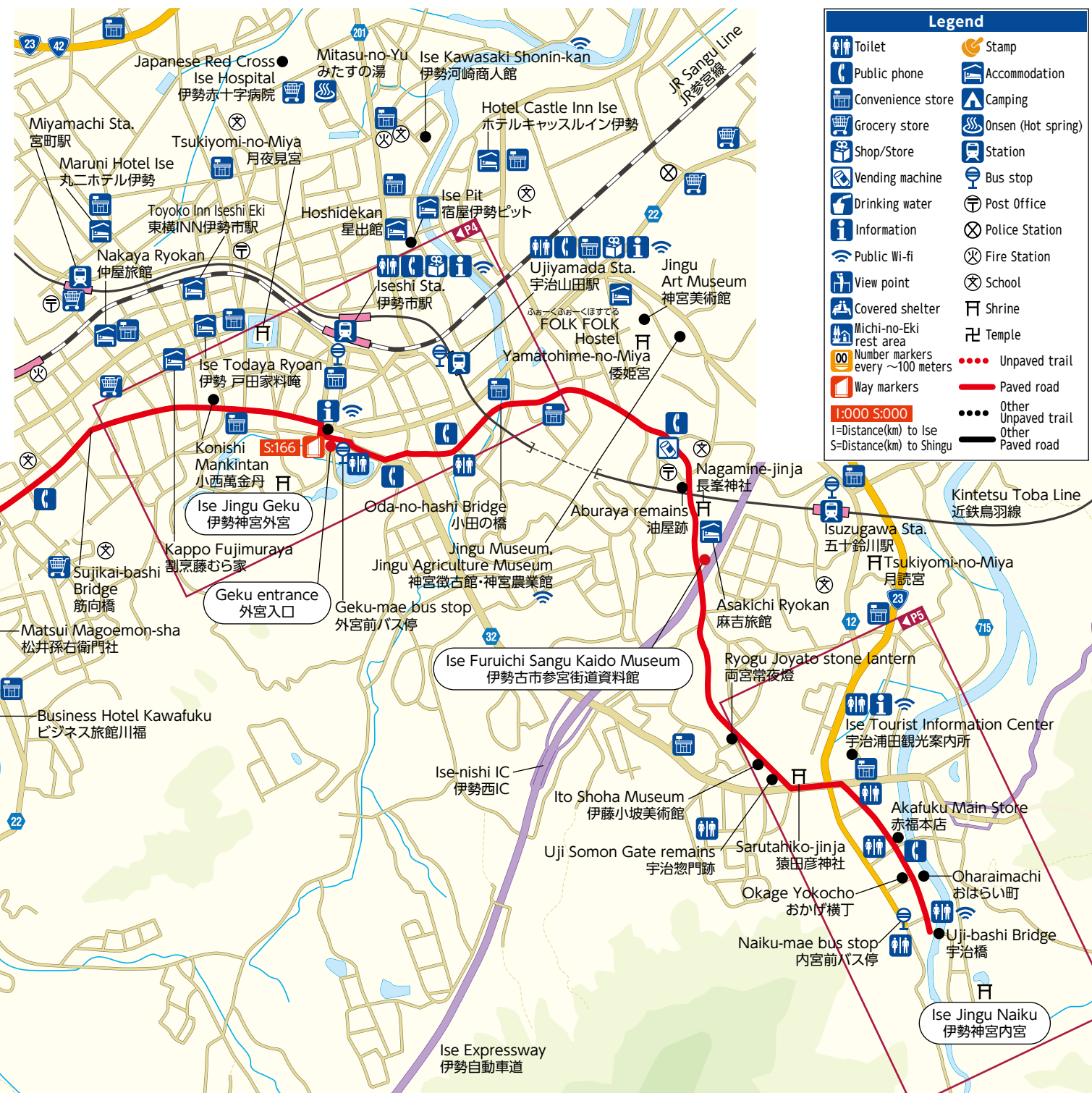
Tamaru~Ise Jingu Geku~Ise Jingu Naiku

田丸~伊勢神宮外宮~伊勢神宮内宮



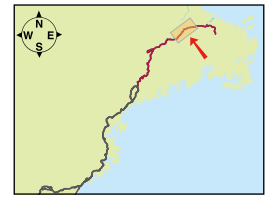
Distance (km) : ~13
Time (hr) : 3~4
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~130
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~120





Yanagihara~Tamaru

柳原~田丸



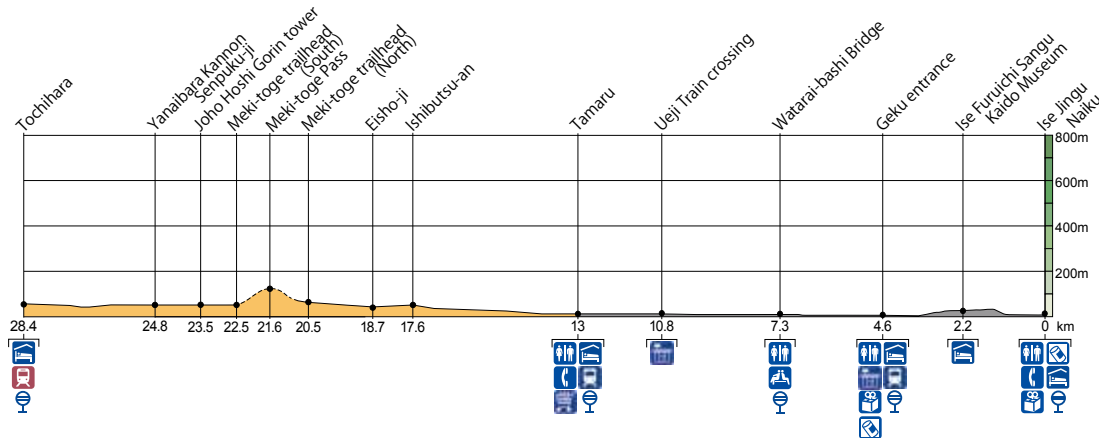
Tochihara~Tamaru

Distance (km) : ~16

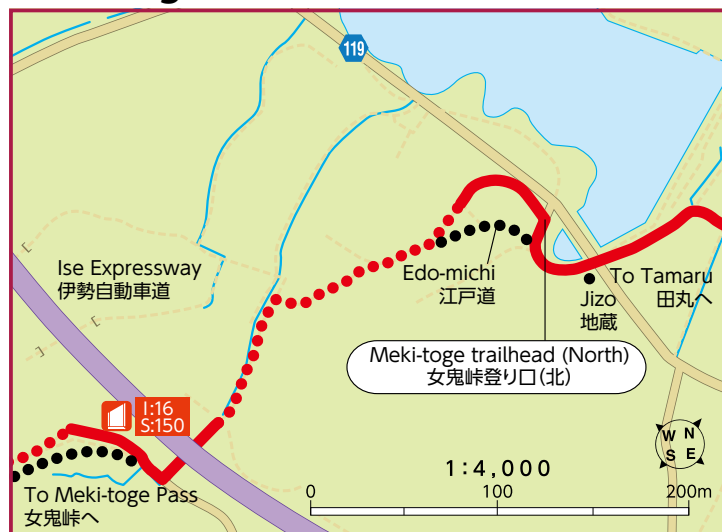
Time (hr) : 4~5

Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~210

Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~180



Meki-toge trailhead (North)



Tamaru



Legend			
Toilet	Public Wi-fi	Stamp	Police Station
Public phone	View point	Accommodation	Fire Station
Convenience store	Covered shelter	Camping	School
Grocery store	Michi-no-Eki rest area	Onsen (Hot spring)	Shrine
Shop/Store	Number markers every ~100 meters	Station	Temple
Vending machine	Way markers	Bus stop	Unpaved trail
Drinking water	1:000 S:000	Parking	Paved road
Information	I=Distance(km) to Ise S=Distance(km) to Shingu	Post Office	Other Unpaved trail
			Other Paved road

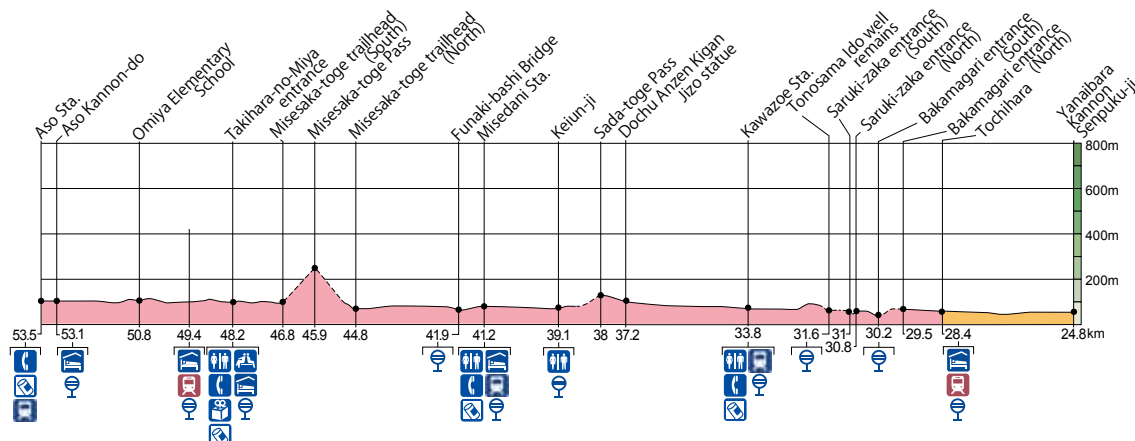
Takana~Yanagihara

高奈~柳原

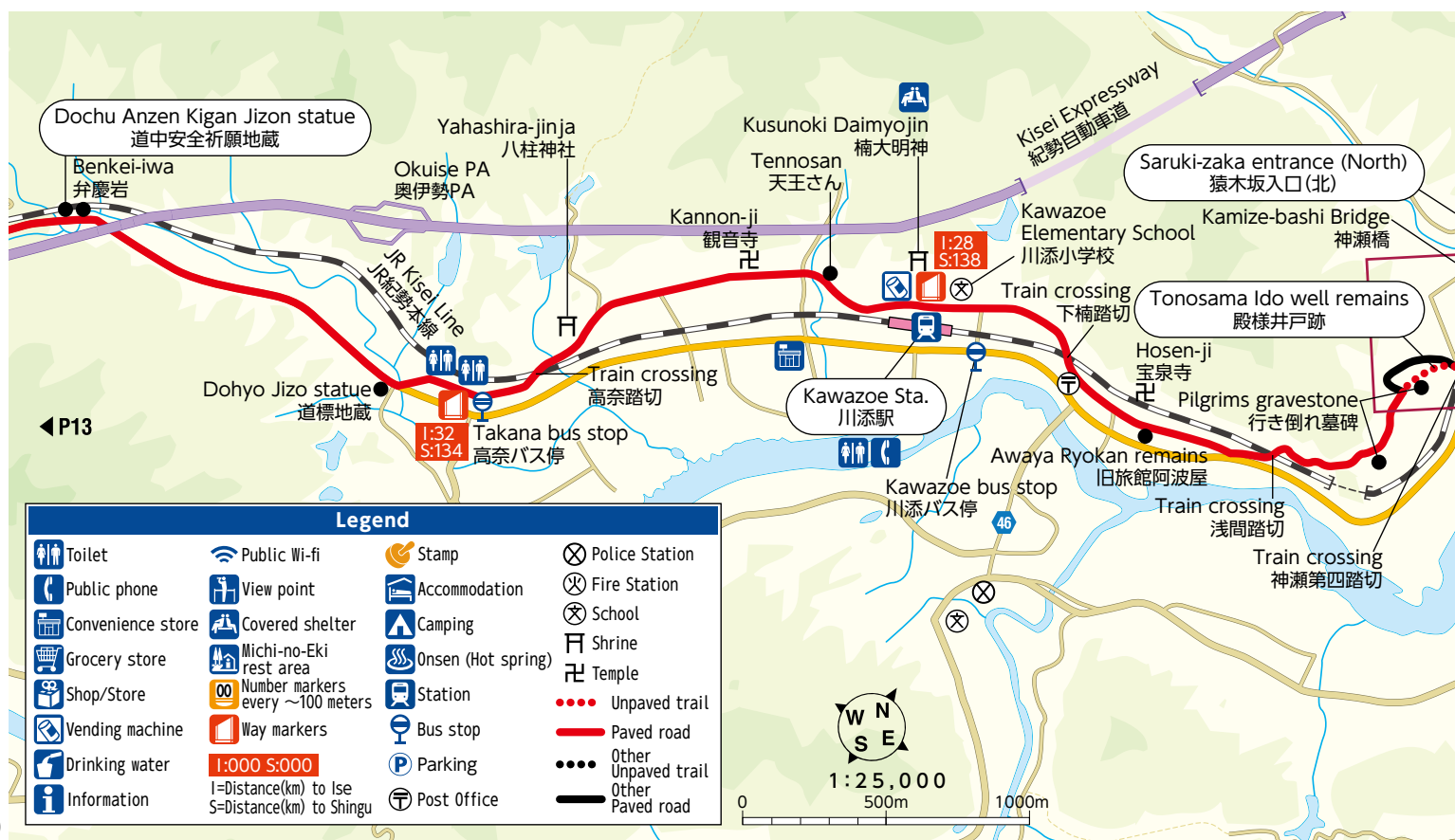


Aso~Tochihara

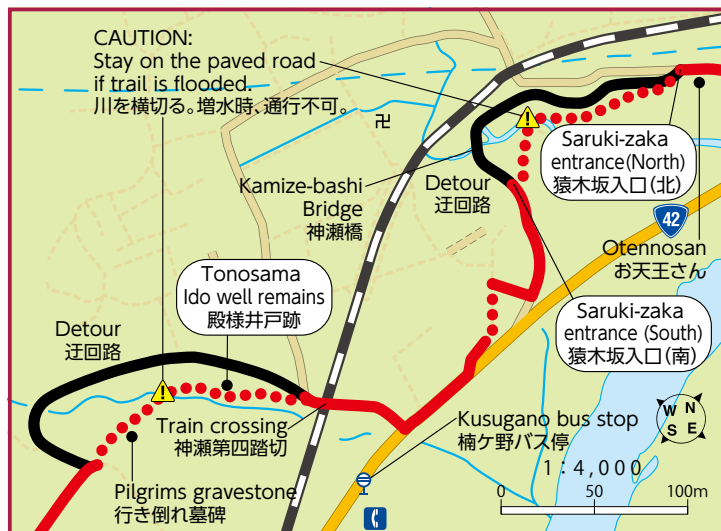
Distance (km) : ~26
Time (hr) : 5.5~7
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~510
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~480



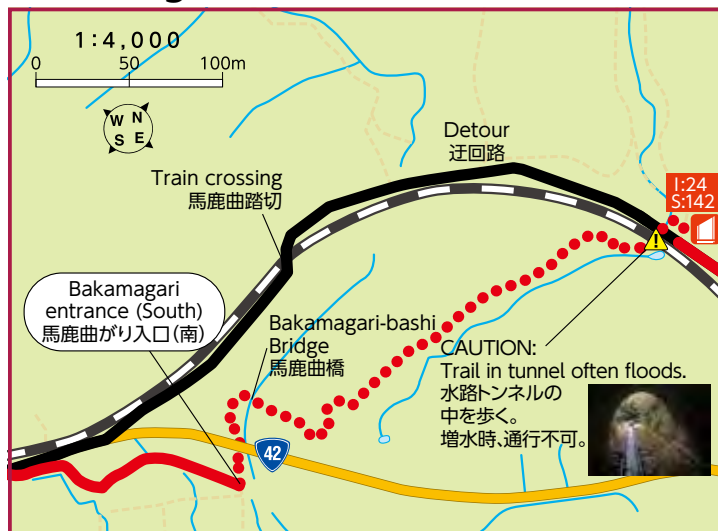
----- Unpaved trail
—— Paved trail



Kamize

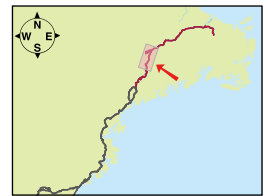


Bakamagari



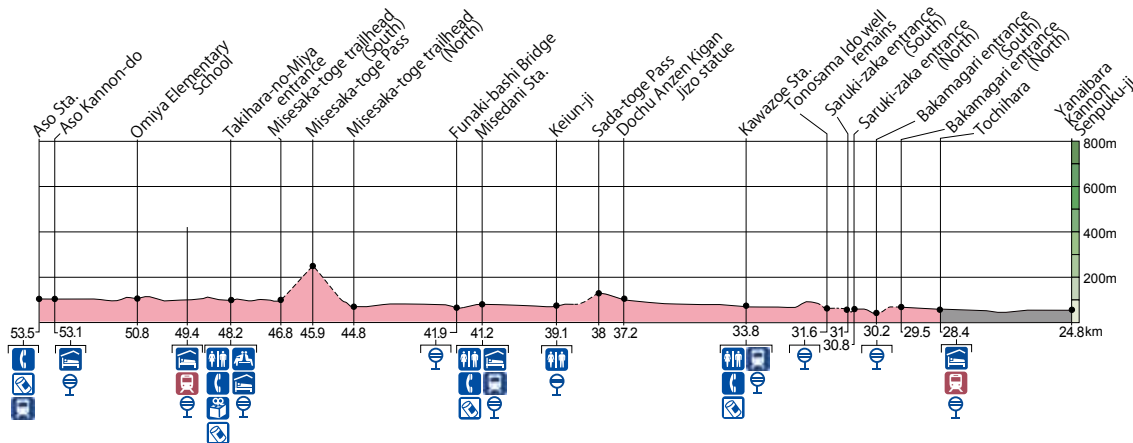
Aso~Takana

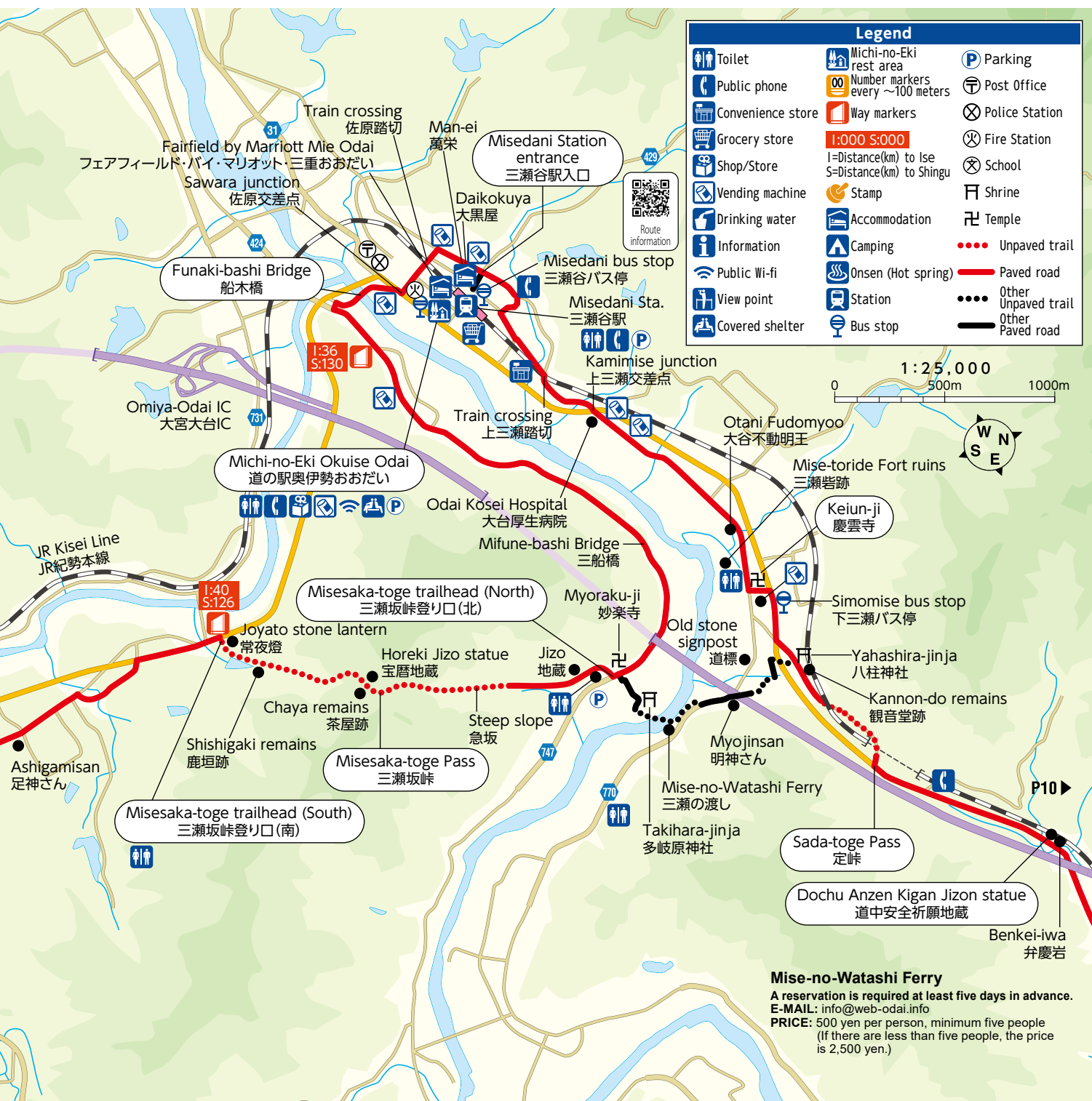
阿曾~高奈



Aso~Tochihara

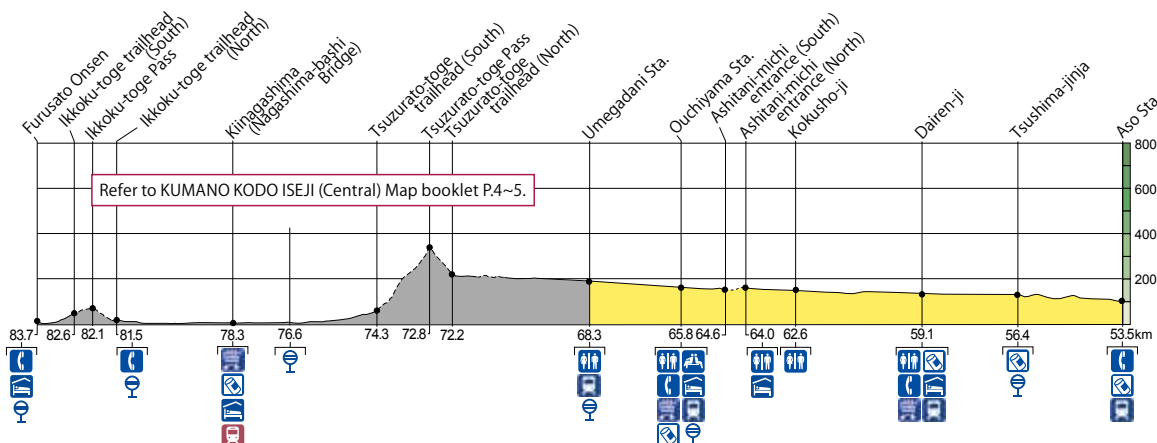
Distance (km) : ~26
Time (hr) : 5.5~7
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~510
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~480





Umegadani~Aso

梅ヶ谷～阿曽



Umegadani~Aso

Distance (km) : ~15
Time (hr) : 5~7
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~250
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~170

Furusato Onsen~Umegadani

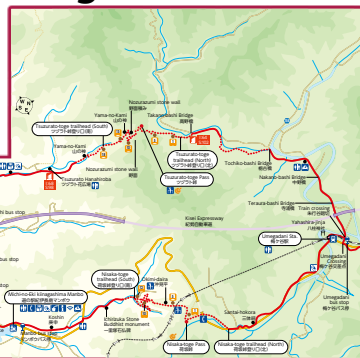
Distance (km) : ~16
Time (hr) : 4.5~6
Total Elevation Gain (m) : ~290
Total Elevation Loss (m) : ~510

----- Unpaved trail
—— Paved trail



Furusato Onsen~Umegadani

NOTE: This map is included in the KUMANO KODO ISEJI (Central) booklet P.4~5.

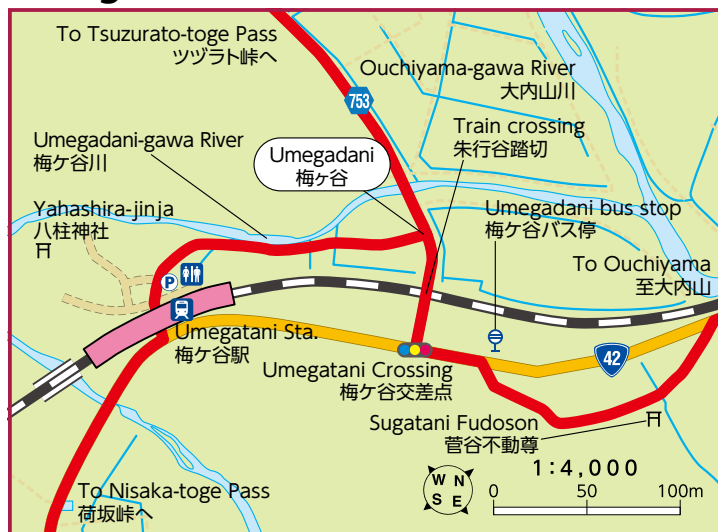


Legend

Toilet	Public Wi-fi	Stamp	Police Station
Public phone	View point	Accommodation	Fire Station
Convenience store	Covered shelter	Camping	School
Grocery store	Michi-no-Eki rest area	Onsen (Hot spring)	Shrine
Shop/Store	Number markers every ~100 meters	Station	Temple
Vending machine	Way markers	Bus stop	Unpaved trail
Drinking water	I=Distance(km) to Ise S=Distance(km) to Shingu	Parking	Paved road
Information		Post Office	Other Unpaved trail
			Other Paved road



Umegadani Sta.



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 some 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.

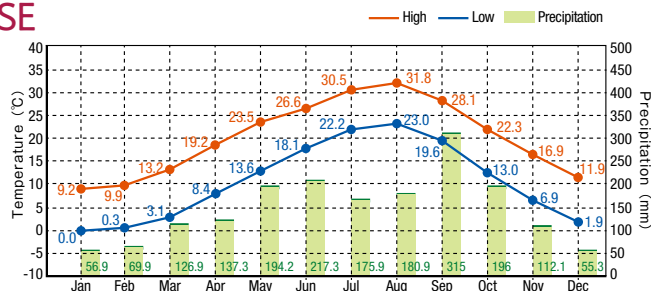
Weather

The Iseji 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 but on the coastal Iseji route snow is very rare. 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/

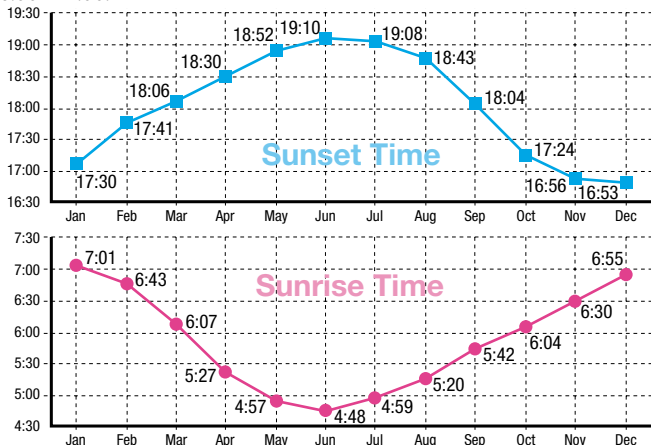
ISE



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 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 door 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 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 through!);
- 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

Below are basic overviews of ways to walk the Kumano Kodo Iseji route from a shorter highlight trip to a multi-day trek.

Highlight Walks



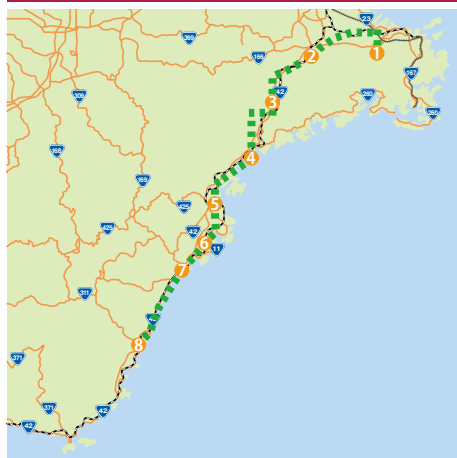
Ise City Highlight Walk

- Transfer to Ise Jingu Geku
- Walk to Ise Jingu Naiku (p.6~7, ~5km) **A**

Misesaka-toge Highlight Walk

- Train to Misedani Sta.
- Walk to Takihara Sta. (p.12~13, ~9km) **B**

Iseji Advanced Complete Trek



Day 1:

- Transfer to Ise Jingu Naiku, overnight **1**

Day 2:

- Walk to Tochiara (p.6~11, ~27km), overnight **2**

Day 3:

- Walk to Aso (p.10~13, ~25km), overnight **3**

Day 4:

- Walk to Furusato Onsen (p.12~15 and Central p.4~5, ~29km), overnight **4**

Day 5:

- Walk to Owase (~20km), overnight **5**

Day 6:

- Walk to Kata (~17km), overnight **6**

Day 7:

- Walk to Central Kumano (~18km), overnight **7**

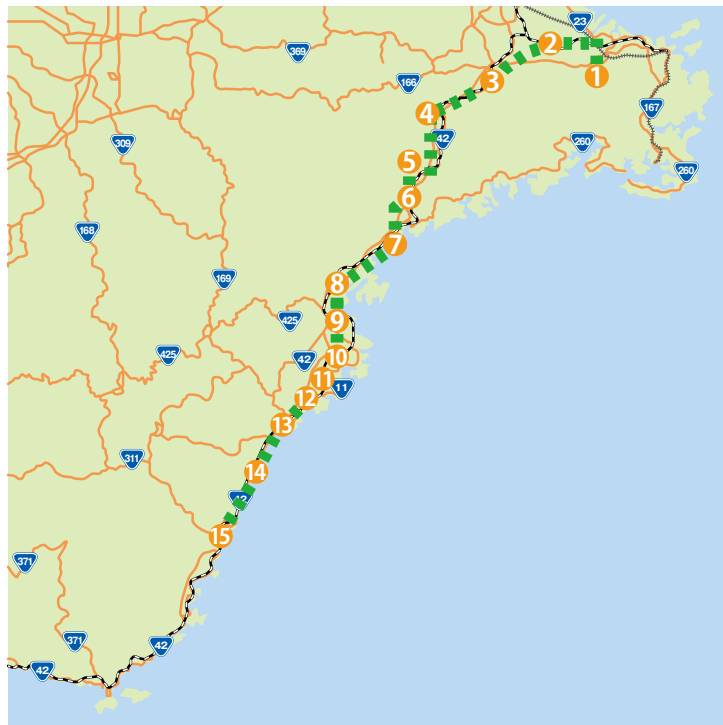
Day 8:

- Walk to Shingu (~23km), overnight **8**

Day 9:

- Transfer to next destination

Iseji Intermediate Complete Trek



Day 1:

- Transfer to Ise City, overnight **1**

Day 2:

- Walk to Tamaru (p.6~7, ~12km), overnight **2**

Day 3:

- Walk to Tochiara (p.8~11, ~15km), overnight **3**

Day 4:

- Walk to Misedani (p.10~13, ~13km), overnight **4**

Day 5:

- Walk to Kashiwazaki (p.12~15, ~18km), overnight **5**

Day 6:

- Walk to Ouchiya (p.14~15, ~7km), overnight **6**

Day 7:

- Walk to Furusato Onsen (p.14~15 and Central p.4~5, ~17km), overnight **7**

Day 8:

- Walk to Aiga (~14km), overnight **8**

Day 9:

- Walk to Owase (~6km), overnight **9**

Day 10:

- Walk to Mikisato (~12km), overnight **10**

Day 11:

- Walk to Kata (~5km), overnight **11**

Day 12:

- Walk to Atashika (~10km), overnight **12**

Day 13:

- Walk to Central Kumano (~8km), overnight **13**

Day 14:

- Walk to Atawa (~12km), overnight **14**

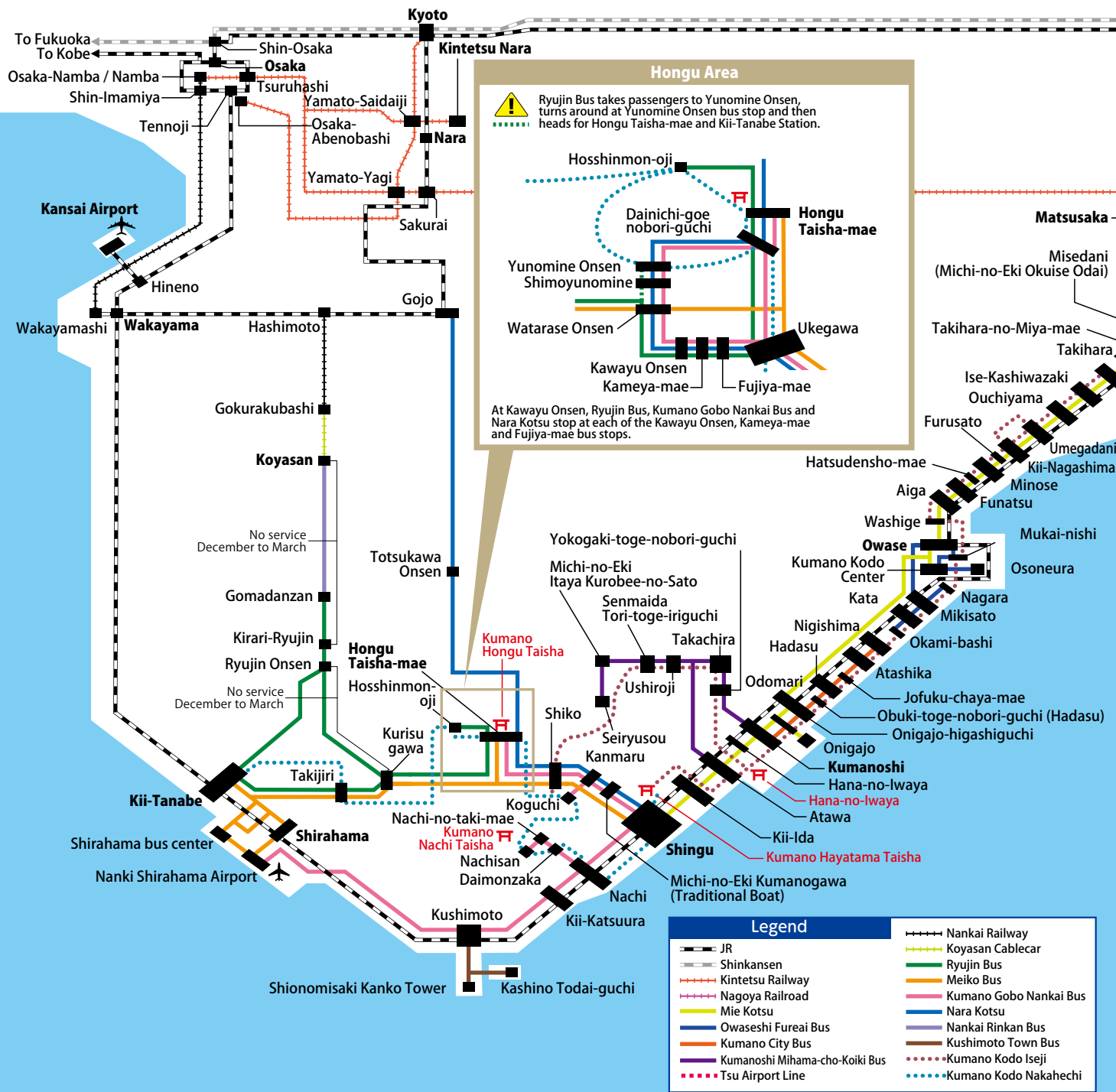
Day 15:

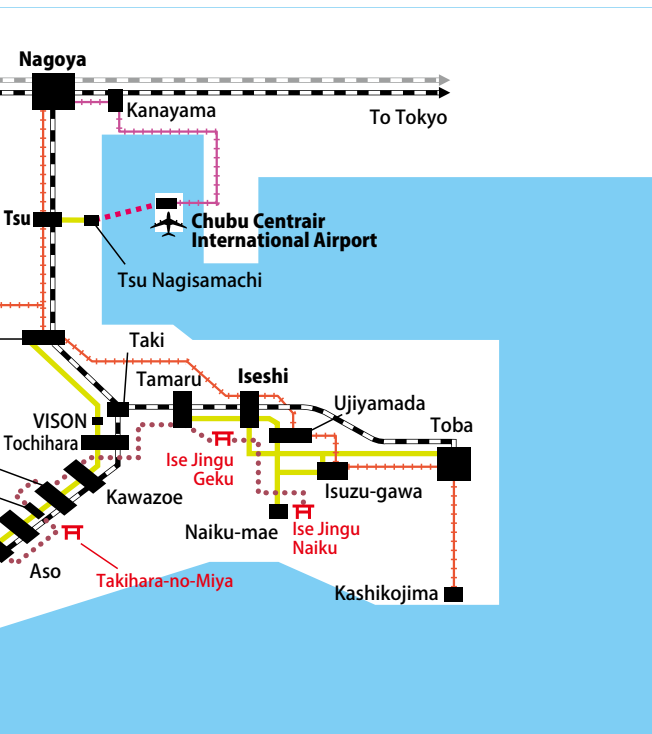
- Walk to Shingu (~11km), overnight **15**

Day 16:

- Transfer to next destination

Access

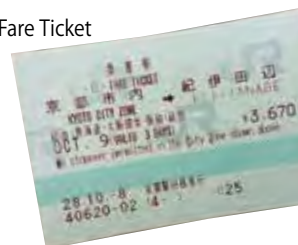




Tickets

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

Stations

Train stations serve as access to trailheads on the Iseji. 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>

● Umegadani (Local)



● Kii-Nagashima (Local, Express)



Trains

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 the peninsula. The JR Center express trains are called Nanki Wide View. Trains are an efficient way to access the Iseji route.



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" (ワンマン) or "one-man train" as the only staff onboard is the driver.



Bus

Local Busses are the main form of public transport once you leave the coast and head into the mountains. Busses are limited (especially along the Kohechi), so it is best to plan ahead and check the timetables.

NOTE: Downloadable timetables are available online.

LINK: www.tb-kumano.jp/en/transport/bus/

How to Ride a Local Bus

Riding a local bus is easy once you learn the basic system as outlined below.



- ① Enter through rear door (or front door if only one)
- ② Take number ticket
- ③ Push button to inform driver that stop is wanted (it is also good practice to tell the driver where you want to get off when you board)
- ④ Match number ticket to the electronic fare chart at the front of the bus to determine fare (prices change according to distance travelled)
- ⑤ Change money if needed
- ⑥ Put money and ticket in fare box (exact fare)
- ⑦ Exit through front door

NOTE: Only 1000 yen bills can be changed for coins. So make sure that you have enough smaller bills before you get on the bus.

Useful Words & Phrases

- I would like to buy a one way express train ticket to Ise-shi station.
(伊勢市駅までの特急切符を買いたいです)
- Reserved Seat (指定席)
- Non-Reserved Seat (自由席)
- Platform (プラットフォーム)
- Transfer (のりかえ)
- Station (駅)
- I would like to go to the Naiku-mae bus stop. (内宮前バス停までお願いします。)
- Where is the Kumano Kodo trailhead? (熊野古道登山口はどこですか?)
- Bus stop (バス停)
- Transfer busses (バス乗り換え)
- Change money (両替)
- Number ticket (整理券)
- Bus fare (バス代)

Car Rental

Travelling by car is an option to see and visit the sites with more freedom, as public transportation can be limited in the countryside.

There are Rent-a-Car companies conveniently located at major train stations with a variety of vehicles types and price plans to meet almost everybody's needs. It is also possible to rent the car at one station and return it at another to avoid backtracking to where you started.

	TOYOTA Rent a Car	ORIX Rent a Car	Nippon Rent-a- Car	JR Rent-A- Car	NISSAN Rent a Car	Times CAR RENTAL
①	○	○	○		○	○
②	○	○	○	○	○	○
③	○	○	○		○	○
④	○	○				
⑤	○	○	○			○
⑥	○	○	○	○		
⑦	○		○	○		
⑧	○	○	○	○		
⑨	○	○	○	○	○	
⑩	○	○	○		○	○
⑪	○	○	○	○	○	○
⑫	○	○	○	○	○	
⑬	○	○	○	○	○	○

- ① Chubu Airport ② Nagoya Sta. ③ Tsu Sta. ④ Matsusaka Sta.
⑤ Ise-shi Sta. ⑥ Shingu Sta. ⑦ Kii-Katsuura Sta. ⑧ Kii-Tanabe Sta.
⑨ Wakayama Sta. ⑩ Kansai Airport ⑪ Shin-Osaka Sta. ⑫ JR Nara Sta.
⑬ Kyoto Sta.

NOTE: If you plan to rent a car in Japan, make sure to have a valid Japanese or International Driver's License. Confirm that a Japanese translation is needed or not before you come.

Drive Guide



Route Guide

伊勢へ七度、熊野へ三度

Seven times to Ise, three times to Kumano

The Kumano Kodo Iseji is a network of about 170 km of pilgrimage routes that connect Ise Jingu with the Kumano Sanzan on the east coast of the Kii peninsula. It is made up of north, central and south areas based on changes in topography. To trek the full length can take one to two weeks while staying at accommodation facilities, but many of the shorter passes can be enjoyed as day hikes because the trailheads are often located near train stations and bus stops.

North / Ise Plain and the Clear Miya-gawa River

The 70 km northern section begins at Ise Jingu Naiku and heads west towards Tamaru across the southern edge of the fertile Ise Plain after passing Geku and crossing the Miya-gawa River at Watarai-bashi Bridge. This section is mostly flat and on paved roads. As the route passes Tamaru and the mountains approach, it ascends to Meki-toge (120 m elevation) on an unpaved trail and reconnects with the Miya-gawa River at Okase. From here, pilgrims walk alongside the Miya-gawa River and its tributary, the Ouchiya-gawa River, to Umegadani. While walking along Route 42 and the old road, pilgrims pass through the large villages of Tochiyama, Kawazoe and Misedani, which have stations, and cross Misesaka-toge (elevation 256 m), the steepest pass in the north area. The Mise-no-Watashi Ferry (bookings required) operates from the side of Takiyama-jinja, located at the northern trailhead of Misesaka-toge so you can also use the ferry. After going down Misesaka-toge, pilgrims visit Takiyama-no-Miya, a superior affiliated shrine of Ise Jingu Naiku. About three-quarters of the trail has been walked now and it rises gradually while proceeding through the villages of Takiyama, Aso, Kashiwazaki and Ouchiya before reaching Umegadani.

Central / Cobblestone Passes and Small Fishing Villages

Starting from Umegadani, the central area of about 80 km to Hana-no-Iwaya is the core area of UNESCO World Heritage and the most popular section. Pilgrims go over a series of passes that connect small fishing villages and encounter cobblestone trails and stone monuments in places. It is an historic route with an ancient atmosphere. There are many mountains and the rocky coastline features dramatic inlets, sometimes with long finger-like bays lined with scenic beaches. The route turns into authentic mountain passes from Tsuzurato-toge, the headwater area of the Ouchiya-gawa River, or Nisaka-toge, enters Kii Province from Ise Province under the old geographical boundaries, and pilgrims encounter seascapes for the first time since leaving Ise Jingu Naiku. This area is rich in highlights with many photo spots, including the popular Magose-toge, Matsumoto-toge and Onigajo, and the most difficult place on the Iseji, Yakiyama-goe (elevation 647 m).

South / The Home of the Kumano Sanzan

From Hana-no-Iwaya, the route divides into one that goes south along the coast known as the Hamakaido, and a mountain route that connects Kumano Hongu Taisha in the shortest way known as the Hongudo. On the Hamakaido, pilgrims walk along Shichirimihama (the longest gravel beach in Japan), which continues to the mouth of the Kumano-gawa River, and aim for Kumano Hayatama Taisha. After that, from Kumano Hayatama Taisha, the route is the Nakahechi, and after crossing the small Koyazaka and Kokuji-toge, they visit Fudarakusan-ji before going around the highlights, Daimon-zaka, Kumano Nachi Taisha, Seiganto-ji, Nachi-no-Otaki Falls and Nachisan. With a single trail, the Hongudo heads towards Kumano Hongu Taisha, located in the heart of the Kii Peninsula. After crossing Yokogaki-toge, Fuden-toge and Tori-toge as though weaving through the mountains, pilgrims encounter the beautiful landscapes of Maruyama Senmida, which are among the top 100 terraced rice fields of Japan. After crossing the Kumano-gawa River and Banze-toge (elevation 415 m), one of the difficult places in the southern area, the route joins the Nakahechi at Kogumotori-goe and arrives at Kumano Hongu Taisha.

Iseji North

Ise Jingu Naiku

The shrine's official name is Kotai Jingu. This is the central shrine at Ise Jingu, the highest ranking shrine in Japan. Amaterasu-Omikami, the general guardian deity of the Japanese people, is enshrined here.

HINT: When you walk the Iseji, we recommend spending some leisurely time enjoying Ise Jingu and the surrounding area.

Rebuilding Ceremony

The Shikinen Sengu is the biggest ritual at the shrine. Every 20 years, in addition to the Shogu of the Naiku and Geku, 14 superior affiliated shrines and Uji-bashi Bridge, 1,576 items of 714 types of associated treasures and objects including the items that decorate the inside and outside of the main sanctuaries, swords, saddles and instruments are rebuilt or remade, and Amaterasu-Omikami relocates to an adjacent sacred site. The Shikinen Sengu takes place over nine years and is made up of 33 rituals and events combining the Okihiki log pulling event, the Oshiraishimochi white pebble carrying event, the Shinnomihashira dedication, the relocation ceremony and the last Mikagura ritual dance ceremony. Since the first relocation was carried out at the initiative of Emperor Tenmu in 690, this ceremony has been repeated for more than 1,300 years, with the 62nd reiteration completed in 2013.

You can see many of the associated treasures and objects used for 20 years at the Jingu Museum and the tools used at the Sengu-kan.



Furuichi

Furuichi, in the small hilly area in the middle of the pilgrimage road between Naiku and Geku, was a place for people who had completed the pilgrimage to the shrines to relax, and bustled with excitement as one of Japan's three great pleasure quarters alongside Yoshiwara in Edo and Shimabara in Kyoto. It is said that at its peak Furuichi had more than 70 brothels with more than 1,000 prostitutes. The area declined subsequently due to the opening of a new road built in the Meiji era so that people could bypass Furuichi and many buildings were destroyed by aerial bombing in 1945 during WWII. The only building that remains now is Asakichi Ryokan, and the area is a residential neighborhood.

Ise Jingu Geku

The shrine's official name is Toyo'uke-daijingu. The main enshrined deity is Toyo'uke-no-Omikami. He is the god who presides over the food of Amaterasu-Omikami of Naiku, and is revered as the guardian deity of clothing, food and shelter.

Sengu-kan

This is a museum at the entrance to Ise Jingu Geku where you can learn in detail about the full-size reproduction of the main sanctuary at Geku, the archive of the gods, images of the Shikinen Sengu rebuilding ceremony and other exhibits and technology.



4 km Waymarkers

From Ise Jingu to Kumano Hayatama Taisha, wooden waymarkers have been erected every four kilometers that indicate the distance to the destination from that point. The starting post is at the entrance to Geku. These waymarkers were erected by Mie Prefecture government in 2009.

Yanagi-no-Watashi Ferry

Two kilometers west of Geku, the trail intersects with the sacred Miya-gawa River, an historical site for purification before worshipping at Ise Jingu. There was a ferry service here until the Miyagawa Railway Bridge and the wooden Watarai-bashi Bridge were built in 1897 and 1911 respectively. Many teahouses lined the banks and because of the numerous willow trees (yanagi), the crossing was known as Yanagi-no-Watashi. Further downstream was another crossing known as Sakura-no-Watashi after its many cherry trees (sakura). There are currently about 700 cherry trees and it is one of Japan's 100 famous cherry viewing sites. The Miya-gawa is a large river flowing into Ise Bay, 91 km long with a watershed of 920 km². Its source is the upper reaches of the Odaigahara mountain range, which straddles Mie Prefecture and Nara Prefecture and receives an enormous amount of rain, more than 4,800 mm a year. Because of the high rainfall it is prone to flooding and many flood banks have been built since the Edo Period, including the Miyagawa Tsutsumi bank. The stones used in the Oshiraishimochi white pebble carrying event during the Shikinen Sengu rebuilding ceremony are taken from the Miya-gawa river.



Tamaru

Tamaru thrived as a post-town at the intersection of the road to Kumano and the road to Ise, as well as the road to Yamato. As the departure point for the Kumano Kodo Iseji, here pilgrims would change into their white pilgrimage clothes to continue their journey south. Tamaru can therefore also be described as the original starting point of the Kumano Kodo Iseji route.

Tamaru Castle remains

Tamaru Castle was built by Kitabatake Chikafusa in 1336 during the warring years of the Northern and Southern courts. Because of its proximity to Ise Jingu, it was embroiled in many battles as a strategic point. In 1575, Oda Nobukatsu, second son of Oda Nobunaga took over from the Kitabatake clan as part of his father's invasion of Ise, building a three-story castle tower and becoming castellan. The castle tower was burnt down in 1580. During the Edo Period, Tamaru became the domain of the Kishu Tokugawa family. The castle was largely dismantled during the Meiji Period at the end of the 19th century, but some remains, including the foundation stones of the castle tower, stone walls and the moat, are still there.

Ishibutsu-an

There are 33 stone Buddha images at the Ishibutsu-an that were donated by people from across the country in 1805. These are the same as the Kannon (Buddhist goddess of mercy) images found on the pilgrimage to the 33 temples in the Kinki area with statues of Kannon, and there is also a monument on the premises engraved with Kannon, the pilgrimage guide. In addition, an old poem is written on the Kannon-do praying for safety on the road to Kumano.

Meki-toge Pass

This is the first pass on the Iseji after you start walking from Ise Jingu and is 120 m high. When you start to climb from the north trailhead, the paved road turns into a dirt trail and what seem like ruts from old wagons that have passed through are scarred into the bed rock. In addition, the narrow passage excavated from the phyllite remains, with the area around it overgrown with bamboo.

At the south trailhead, there is a line of low, forest-covered mountains and you pass through idyllic villages along the Miya-gawa River. This was the main road until a tunnel was built in 1934.



Yanaibara Kannon Senpuku-ji

This is a Shingon sect temple in Yanaibara, Odai Town. The temple is dedicated to the eleven-faced Kannon Bodhisattva. Many people visit, seeking the safe delivery of children and marriage.

Tochihara

Ise tea, a famous product of the area, is grown here, with well-trimmed tea plantations everywhere. The main street is lined with tea shops, and although historically there were many lodges for pilgrims, today only two remain, including Ryokan Okajimaya. It is about 28 km from here to Ise Jingu Naiku, but if you are a pilgrim with good legs and depart in the early morning, you should be there by evening.

Bakamagari

This has always been a difficult place, with the Fudotani-gawa River running through a deep valley. Because the trail needs to twist and turn to follow the topography, it came to be known as the Bakamagari or “foolish turns.” The entrance is currently closed due to the construction of a railway so walkers enter by passing through a dark passage under the road. Once you are safely through the passage follow the valley to pass by the remains of a teahouse. Cross the old wooden bridge and walk under the highway bridge to rejoin route 42.

Caution: During times of high water do not attempt to follow this part of the trail. Please take a detour on the paved road.

Otennosan

This is a wooden shrine where statues known locally as Otennosan are enshrined. From the left, they are Koshin, Tsushima-Daio, Kotai Jingu and Yama-no-Kami.

Koshin

A koshinto or koshinzuka is a monument or pillar often erected at the entrance to a village to protect it from epidemics and calamities. 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 while everybody slept during the night of this day, the Sanshi (three worms or entities) inside the body would escape and ascend to report the sins of the person to the Celestial Gods, resulting in a shorter lifespan. It developed into a faith under which believers would stay up all night to prevent this.



Yama-no-Kami

Yama-no-Kami is believed in as the spirit that protects the mountain, and is considered to be a female deity with fertility, fecundity and life-giving powers. It is an ancient animistic belief and phallic symbols are often given as offerings and Yama-no-Kami is worshipped to appease natural disasters. Yama-no-Kami has a strong relationship with agriculture, and is said to descend from the mountains to be the god of fields in the spring and return to the mountains when the harvest ends in the fall. There are many places where Yama-no-Kami is enshrined along the Kumano Kodo.

Saruki-zaka

After passing Otennosan, pilgrims walk through a bamboo grove on a dirt road, descend a steep slope to the Wakitani-gawa River, cross the riverbed and go up to Kusugano.

Caution: During times of high water, do not attempt to follow this part of the trail. Please take a detour on the paved road.

Kamize-bashi Bridge

If you look upstream from Saruki-zaka, you can see a bridge nicknamed “Megane-bashi” or eyeglass bridge, an arched bridge constructed of brick in 1904. With a total length of 17 m, one of the two original bridges was buried for the construction of the railway and only one currently remains.

Tonosama Ido well remains

Water springs into this well, cool and surrounded by trees, all year, and it was named “Tonosama Ido well” or the “Lord’s well” because it was frequented for rest by the regional Feudal Lord on his falconry outings.

Sada-toge

After Meki-toge, this is the second pass from Ise Jingu and is currently paved. There were two tea houses here on either side of the road. It is also known as Sakase-toge.

Mise-no-Watashi Ferry

Historically, pilgrims would head to the riverbank at Yabashira-jinja to cross the Miya-gawa River by boat. Takiyara-jinja, an auxiliary shrine of Ise Jingu Naiku, is located on the opposite bank to the Misesaka-toge pass. The boat disappeared around 1955, but the service was restored in 2009 by the local Mise-no-Watashi Ferry Conservation Group. A reservation is required to use the service.

Odai Town Tourism Association

Reservation: A reservation by telephone is required at least five days in advance.

Tel: 0598-84-1050

Price: 500 yen per person, minimum five people
(if there are less than five people, the price is 2,500 yen)

e-mail: info@web-odai.info



Funaki-bashi Bridge

The bridge piers of this road bridge spanning 90 m and built of brick across the Miya-gawa River in 1905 remain as originally constructed. The bridge is registered as a National Tangible Cultural Property. As the Mise-no-Watashi Ferry is not currently in operation, pilgrims head for Misesakato pass by crossing this bridge.

Misesaka-toge

With an elevation of 256 m, starting from the north trailhead, this pass is a continuation of steep, meandering slopes surrounded by cedar and cypress trees. Close to the pass are the remains of a teahouse and the Horeki Jizo statue, which was enshrined here in 1756. This feels like the first authentic mountain pass of the Kodo after departing from Ise Jingu.

Takihara-no-Miya

The enshrined deity of Takihara-no-Miya is Amaterasu-Omikami. Takihara-no-Miya is one of the superior affiliated shrines of Ise Jingu, and Takihara-no-Narabi-no-Miya is located alongside it in the same grounds. The layout resembles Naiku with a long shrine approach. The purification place is at a nearby stream and the buildings are rebuilt in accordance with the Shikinen Sengu rebuilding ceremony. Some historians hypothesize that Takihara-no-Miya could be the prototype of Naiku.

Dairen-ji

This is a temple of the Soto school opened in 1569. In the temple grounds, there are thunberg's meadowsweets, azaleas, crape myrtles, and other trees and flowers, including some big acorn and oak trees that are several hundred years old. Dairen-ji is known as the flower temple.

Ashitani-michi

This is a flat dirt road of about 600 m surrounded by cypress forest along the Ochiyama-gawa River. There are some viewing points with beautiful scenery along the way.

Tochihara ~ Umegadani

Between Tochihara and Umegadani, pilgrims walk parallel to the JR Kisei Main Line and there are accommodation facilities scattered around Tochihara Station, Misedani Station, Takihara Station, Aso Station, Ise-Kashiwazaki Station and Ochiyama Station. When walking through the northern section, we recommend reserving accommodation in consideration of factors such as your physical condition.

KUMANO KODO



Download Maps
www.tb-kumano.jp/

