



Kohechi

Kumano to Koya Self-guided walking 5 days

Introduction

The Kii Peninsula points south away from Kyoto and Osaka and is one of the most remote and mystical areas of Japan, despite its proximity to these great cities. Long a place of pilgrimage, the Kii Peninsula is the site of the three Grand Shrines of Kumano (Kumano Sanzan). From the 11th century, successive emperors and their families made the long and difficult



pilgrimage from Kyoto to Kumano. Several pilgrimage trails were established, among them the Nakahechi-do, Kohechi-do and Ohechi-do, collectively known as the Kumano Kodo ('Old Road of Kumano'). The Kumano Kodo Kohechi trail is the shortest route between the mountain-top Buddhist temple complex of Mount

Koya and the Kumano Hongu Taisha Shrine, spiritual centre of the Kii Peninsula. A UNESCO World Heritage area, the Kohechi trail covers some of the most strenuous Kumano Kodo sections over a total distance of 70km / 44 miles. Our walk visits the most scenic parts, from the Kumano Hongu Taisha Shrine in the south all the way through to atmospheric

Mount Koya, passing through rural forest trails and scenic villages. The trail offers local overnight stays in traditional hot-spring Onsen Ryokan, an intimate Minshuku farm stay and an atmospheric Shukubo pilgrim's lodging featuring traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine Shojin Ryori.

DETAILS

TOUR LENGTH AND PRICES

5 days

Please see the website for the prices we offer in each currency.

TYPE AND LEVEL OF TRIP

Village-to-village walking on the Kumano Kodo with 5 hikes of 4-8 hours

WALKING SEASON

Tours visiting the Kohechi area see snow in the winter months, so we recommend these tours from April to November.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

4 nights at Japanese inns along

the Kumano Kodo Kohechi trail; 4 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 4 dinners; Round-trip train tickets from Kyoto or Osaka; Detailed day-by-day itinerary and walking directions; Topographical maps; Local support by telephone and at our Kumano Kodo branch

ITINERARY

DAY 1 > Hike from Yagio to Totsukawa Onsen

From Osaka or Kyoto, head south by train to Kii-Tanabe and onwards by bus to Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine, spiritual centre of the Kii Peninsula and the start of the Kohechi trail. Take a short pre-booked and pre-paid taxi ride to Yagio where your walk on this ancient route begins. Follow a wonderful forested trail over Hatnashi-toge Pass with excellent valley views, fascinating cultural monuments (including a miniature Kannon statue pilgrimage) and picturesque villages. A brief bus ride avoids a short final stretch on a busier road at the very end of the walk. Finish the day with a relaxing thermal bath at your inn for tonight in Totsukawa Onsen.



Miuraguchi

Elevation gain: 855m / 2,805 feet of ascent and 755m / 2,475 feet of descent

Time required: 5 hours

Accommodation: Minshuku (Family-run Guesthouse)

Walking distance: 8.8km / 5.5 miles

Elevation gain: 985m / 3,230 feet of ascent and 935m / 3,070 feet of descent

Time required: About 4-5 hours

Accommodation: Onsen Ryokan (Hot-spring Travellers Inn)

DAY 2 > Hike from Nishinaka to Miuraguchi

Heading onwards from Totsukawa Onsen to Nishinaka by local bus, the section of the Kohechi trail to Miuraguchi offers some of the best views of the Kumano valley over the Miura-toge Pass and continues to the scenic, peaceful village of Miuraguchi or 'Gateway to Miura' where you stay tonight in an intimate Minshuku family-run guesthouse on a small farm.

Walking distance: 11km / 6.8 miles from Nishinaka to

DAY 3 > Hike from Miuraguchi to Nosegawa Onsen

After breakfast you leave Miuraguchi. The trail continues north along one of the most rural and challenging hikes in the Kumano region over the Obako-toge Pass to another scenic rural village called Omata. The hot-spring village of Nosegawa Onsen is your destination for tonight and is a short scenic riverside walk onwards from Omata. Your inn will pick you up from Omata if you prefer not to walk the last section to Nosegawa Onsen.

Walking distance: 13.7km / 8.5 miles from Miuraguchi to Nosegawa Onsen

Elevation gain: 1,150m / 3,770 feet of ascent and 850m / 2,790 feet of descent

Time required: 6-7 hours

Accommodation: Onsen Ryokan (Hot-spring Travellers Inn)

DAY 4 > Hike from Nosegawa Onsen to Mount Koya

Leave Nosegawa Onsen this morning and begin today's hike from the boundary between Nosegawa and Koya - it is also possible to walk the full distance from Nosegawa Onsen if you prefer a longer hike with some strenuous paved sections. On the final leg of the Kohechi trail to Mount Koya there are magical valley views as you traverse the peak Mizu-ga-mine. Arriving at the mountain-top temple town at the end of the walk delivers a great sense of achievement. Spiritual Mount Koya is a fitting reward for completing the pilgrimage route.

Walking distance: 7.3km / 4.5 miles from Nosegawa Onsen to Mount Koya (with an optional additional paved section of 9.2km / 5.7 miles)

Elevation gain: 325m / 1,065 feet of ascent and 465m / 1,525 feet of descent

Time required: 3 hours (6-7 hours including the optional additional section)

Accommodation: Shukubo (Pilgrims Lodging)

DAY 5 > Hike on the Choishi-michi trail, then travel to Osaka or Kyoto

On your final day, you have chance to explore more of Mount Koya, visiting the atmospheric Okunoin cemetery with thousands of graves and memorials to feudal lords and other past luminaries, and other monuments. Or undertake our optional, challenging hike on the Choishi Michi trail, the atmospheric original approach to Mount Koya lined with stone markers. Finally board the scenic Nankai railway line towards Osaka and Kyoto.

Walking distance: 15.5km / 10 miles

Elevation gain: 1,225m / 4,020 feet of ascent; 650m / 2,130 feet of descent

Time required: About 5 hours of optional walking

