

Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1- Travel to the Kii Peninsula, Hike Takijiri to Takahara



Travel south along the coast by train to Tanabe (2 hours), then transfer by local bus (40 mins) to Takijiri, at the beginning of the Nakahechi, part of the network of ancient pilgrimage trails known as the Kumano Kodo, or Kumano Ancient Trail. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Kumano Kodo became popular from the 11th century as a place of pilgrimage from Kyoto by Emperors. The Kii Peninsula, which extends south from Nara and Osaka, has long been considered sacred in Japan, the entrance to the

land of Yomi, the mythical afterworld. It is also the site of the three sacred shrines of Kumano, the Kumano Sanzan. Continue with a 2-hour hike to the small mountain-top village of Takahara, where we stop for the night. Our accommodation is a delightful Japanese-style ryokan built by local craftsmen in wood with rooms affording a spectacular view over the surrounding mountains. There are hot spring baths made of *hinoki* (cypress wood) and the sumptuous evening meal is made with organic locally-sourced ingredients.

Hiking: 3 miles, 2 hours (820 feet ascent, negligible descent)

Meals: Breakfast & dinner

Accommodation: Minshuku in Kurisugawa or Japanese style lodge in Takahara

Day 2 - Hike Takahara to Chikatsuyu



Starting from Takahara, continue eastwards along the Nakahechi pilgrimage trail. Along the path you pass small *jizo* bodhisattva statues, placed there by locals to protect travelers. There are also the sites of old *chaya* (tea houses), which provided rest to pilgrims right up until the early 20th century. Descend to the village of Chikatsuyu, and your accommodation for tonight.

Hiking: 7 miles, 4 hours (1,150 feet/350 metres ascent, 1,180 feet descent)

Those who do not want to walk can transfer by local bus (30 mins)

Meals: Breakfast & dinner

Accommodation: Minshuku in Chikatsuyu

Day 3 - Hike Chikatsuyu to the Grand Shrine at Hongu



From Chikatsuyu take a local bus to Nonaka and Tsugizakura-ōji, one of the many small shrines along the route. Nobles would rest at these sub-shrines, called ōji, to refresh themselves and compose poems. You then hike one of the most scenic sections to Hongu Grand Shrine, passing on the way through ridge-top villages. The symbol of the shrine is the mythological three-legged raven, representing the Hongu, Nachi, and Hayatama shrines – the same motif as the one used by the Japan Football Association. The three-legged

crow was in mythology sent to guide Emperor Jimmu, on his journey from Kumano to the Yamato Plain. After visiting the shrine, transfer by local bus (15 mins) to Kawayu Hot Spring. You stay overnight in a historic ryokan.

Hiking: 24km / 14.9 miles (820m / 2,700 feet of ascent and 1140m / 3,740 feet of descent) 9 hours requiring an early start.

We offer two shorter alternatives of 7 hours (15km / 9 miles) or of 2 hours (7km / 4 miles), using a local bus from Chikatsuyu to shorten the walk. You can choose which option you prefer on the day - no need to decide in advance!

Meals: Breakfast & dinner

Accommodation: Ryokan in Yunomine Onsen or Kawayu Onsen

Day 4- Hike the Dainichigoe and Akagigoe



Spend a leisurely second night in the picturesque hot-spring village of Yunomine Onsen or Kawayu Onsen part-way along the trail. On this extra day we offer two different optional walks on new sections of the trail, which can be combined if you wish. We also offer unique cultural experiences, such as travelling by boat along the Kumano River, making your own traditional Japanese Washi paper or undertaking a spiritual meditation session.

Walking distance: 8.8km / 5.4 miles (plus 7km / 4 miles from Hosshinmon-oji to Hongu)

Elevation gain: 610m / 2,015 feet of ascent and 585m / 1,920 feet of descent

Time required: 3-4 hours (plus 2 hours from Hosshinmon-oji to Hongu)

Today's shorter optional walk is 1.5 hours (2.8km / 1.7 miles) on the Dainichigoe trail between Yunomine Onsen and Hongu. You can walk both ways, or ride one way by bus. Or combine the Dainichigoe trail with the Akagigoe trail for a satisfying full-day hike.

Accommodation: Onsen Ryokan (Hot-spring Travellers Inn)

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 5 - Hike from Ukegawa to Koguchi



Before or after breakfast, take time to explore the atmospheric village where you spent the night. Today's journey begins with a short bus ride to Ukegawa on the banks of the Kumano River. From Ukegawa, you start on the Kogumotorigoe path, which heads up to the Kogumotorigoe Pass before descending to the remote village of Koguchi. The trail is not difficult and today's hike should take you about 4 hours. A warm welcome and good food await you at an engaging lodge created from a former school building. Explore along the river and have a swim if the weather is warm.

Hiking: 12.4 km / 7.7 miles (520m / 1,705 feet of ascent and 500m / 1,640 feet of descent), 4 hours

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Japanese Lodge

Day 6 - Hike to Nachi Grand Shrine and waterfall



The final section of the trail takes you from Koguchi up to the Ogumotorigoe Pass with a glimpse of the Pacific Ocean. It then descends to Nachi-san, the location of Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine, one of the three Grand Shrines of Kumano and Nachi-taki waterfall. Stay overnight either in the small village of Nachi-san close to the shrine, or take a local bus for the twenty-minute ride to the port town of Kii-Katsuura with wonderful views over the island-studded bay. Enjoy dinner and breakfast served by your hosts at your accommodation.

Hiking: 15.1 km / 9.3 miles (980m / 3,215 feet of ascent and 920m / 3,020 feet of descent), 6 - 7 hours

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Minshuku (Family-run Guesthouse) or Japanese-style Hotel

Day 7 - Kii-Katsuura and onwards by train to Osaka or Kyoto



Kii-Katsuura is an active fishing port and has a lively early morning fish market. Enjoy the views out over the island-studded bay. There are intriguing backstreets and a traditional covered shopping arcade to explore, too. We provide train tickets for you to board a train at lunchtime, travelling back around the Kii Peninsula and arriving in Osaka or Kyoto mid to late afternoon.

Meals: Breakfast