Yoshino-Kumano

"Yoshi-Kuma" Established in 1936

National Park

Ministry of the Environment, Kinki Regional Environmental Office

Yoshino-Kumano National Park

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Yoshino-Kumano National Park Promotional Video

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Photos courtesy of:
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Sacred Mountains, deep Gorges, and the warm Ocean current

A broad swath of the pristine mountains, rivers, and ocean straddling Mie, Nara, and Wakayama prefectures, and the fascinating beliefs and cultures that thrived in the region were declared a national park on February 1, 1936.

Find the Eternal history/culture, and the Link of forests/rivers/ocean

Mountains of Yoshino-Kumano National Park

The mountains here on the Kii Peninsula have long been held sacred. Here, you will find otherworldly forests, dizzying waterfalls, impossibly big rocks and trees, all shrouded in a misty veil.

Odaigahara & Osugidani Gorge

Virgin forest 1,600m above sea level

The Odaigahara Plateau sits at the southern tip of the Daiko Mountain Range, which runs north-to-south along the border between Mie and Nara prefectures. This is one of Japan's most rainy places, with more than 3,500mm of precipitation a year. The rain is caused by the cooling of warm, moist air blown up and over the 1,695m high plateau peak of Mt. Hidegatake from the Kumano-nada Sea, and feeds a primeval forest of Japanese beech, spruce, and other local species. Meanwhile, the Osugidani Gorge on the eastern slopes of the Odaigahara Plateau is one of Japan's most picturesque, with a series of spectacular waterfalls, including the Dokura Falls, the Nanatsugama Falls, and the Senpiro Falls.

Even the Odaigahara Plateau has not been able to escape change over the years. The havoc of Typhoon Vera in 1959, increasing numbers of Sika deer, and the influx of people along the Odaigahara Drive Way have all contributed to changing the face of the forest. The Ministry of the Environment, however, is striving to restore the bush to its original lush, mossy splendor with a range of measures, including deer-proof fences.

A stand of withered spruces at Masaki Pass

The Nanatsugama Falls in Osugidani Gorge

A superb view as seen from Daigajura Cliff.

Japanese robin

Nishi (West) -Odai Area

Protecting primeval forests for the future

This 450ha stretch of parkland is home to a variety of flora, including Japanese beech, Nikko fir, and mosses, as well as priceless fauna such as the Odaigahara salamander and the endangered local Kii Peninsula species of the Asian black bear.

To protect the unspoiled bushland and ensure everyone can enjoy the peace and quiet of the deep forest, Nishi (West) Odai is designated a Regulated Utilization Area, where access is subject to request and approval.

(See reverse for expanded map.)

"Regulated Utilization Area" near Odai Shrine

Details of the Regulated Utilization Areas available at the Yoshino-Kumano National Park Odaigahara website.

Japanese maple trees in autumn around Remains of Kaitaku(reclaimed land)

Moss colony around Yamatodani Valley

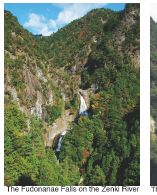
Omine Mountain Range

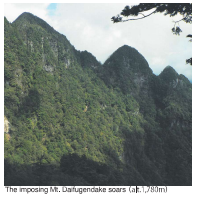
The highest, steepest mountain in Kansai

The Omine Mountain Range runs north-to-south in the heart of the Kii Peninsula, approximately 75km of mountains between 1,500 and 1,900 meters high, including the region's highest peak, Mt. Hakkyogatake.

Omine Okugakemichi Route, the path along the crest of the Omine Ranges, is part of the sacred sites and pilgrimage routes in the Kii Mountain Range listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. The area is of religious importance to practitioners of Shugendo, who have long believed that the gods reside in the very trees. Today, hikers and mountain dimbers share the trails with the faithful.

Many dimb to pray at Ominosan-ji Temple atop Mt. Sanjogatake


The Fudonnatse Falls on the Zenki River have a total drop of 160 meters


The imposing Mt. Daifugendake soars (a)1,780m)

Mt. Yoshino

A mountain alive with cherry blossoms

Mt. Yoshino is one of Japan's premier destinations for viewing wild cherry blossoms. In spring, the sight of the mountain clad from foot to peak in various shades of pink attracts visitors from all around.

These were originally sacred trees planted over time by practitioners of Shugendo to celebrate their founder, En no Gyoja, carving an image of their principle deity out of sakura wood. The trees continued to be planted to provide sacred wood for their shrine.

In addition, the famous Yoshino Cedar Forest, the pure forest of Japanese umbrella pine, a substitute for floral offerings to Buddhist deities, and groves of castanopsis, oak, and other warm-temperate species preserved as temple woods combine to create a vista like no other.

Mt. Yoshino's varied attractions bring a range of visitors in all seasons, including pilgrims to historical spots and hikers along the Kinki Long Trail.

Yoshinomikumari-jinja Shrine set amid lush bushland

Lose yourself in the serenity of the Okusenbon cherry blossoms

Catch your breath — Mt. Yoshino has numerous viewing decks along its paths. Scenes of nearby picturesque towns and distant Mt. Kongo and Mt. Katsuragi will take your breath away.

Major Shrines

Kumano's fascinating religions

Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine, Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine, Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine, and Nachisan Seigantoji Temple are the major places of worship in Kumano, accessed by the ancient Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Routes. There are different routes for different starting points, each with mossy stone markers and stone-paved sections along the way that speak of the routes' age.

The Kumano River, which divides Mie and Wakayama prefectures, has long been considered an important part of the pilgrimage route as it connects the major shrines.

Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine

Once built on an island in the Kumano River, the shrine was relocated to its current spot in 1891 after flooding in 1889. Part of the pilgrimage route from here to Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine can be taken by boat along the Kumano River.

Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine

Situated at the mouth of the Kumano River, the shrine is nestled against the towering Mt. Chihogamine. There is also a path to Kamikura Shrine, where Hayatama's deity is said to have descended for the first time.

Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine

This shrine was founded to worship a deity believed to reside in the Nachi Falls (Japan's tallest waterfall), behind which expands a virgin forest from which ethnologist Minakata Kumagusu (1867-1941) collected myxomycete, and which remains unspoiled to this day.

Nachisan Seigantoji Temple

Once called Nyorin-do after the Cintamani Cakra Buddhist mantra, this temple is the first stop of 33 on the Saigoku Kannon Pilgrimage.

Even now, as one of the main sites for Shugendo, the temple bustles with worshippers.

Boating down the Kumano River

Seigantoji Temple three-story pagoda and the Nachi Waterfall

Stone-paved Daimon-zaka along the Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Route

Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine

Rivers of Yoshino-Kumano National Park

The Odaigahara Plateau and the Omine Mountain Range are in one of Japan's most rainy regions. The Kumano River, fed by waters from the Omine Range, and the Kitayama River, fed by waters from the Odaigahara Plateau, merge and feed into the Kumano-nada Sea, a vital link between mountain and ocean. Moreover, the area is peppered with spectacular waterfalls, such as the Nachi Falls—Japan's tallest.

Kumano River & Kitayama River

The Kumano River was long a central, beneficial part of local life, being used for transporting lumber and a range of goods used by residents. Today, visitors can try cruising down the Kitayama River on rafts like those used to transport lumber.

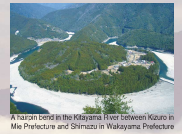
The Doro-kyo Gorge

Doro-kyo Gorges

Carved out of the rock face by the river, the towering gorge walls are breathtaking in scale. The gorge names in order from upstream: Nanairo-kyo, Okutoro, Kamidoro and Shimodoro (Dorohacchō). Visitors can enjoy punting, don't forget to look up for a spectacular view!

Nachi Waterfall

Nachi Waterfall have long been revered by worshippers of Hiro-jinja Shrine, a branch of Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine, as a repository in which their deity resides. It is Japan's tallest waterfall, with a drop of 133 meters and a pool ten meters deep. The water gushing forth from the mountains of Kumano is a sight to behold.


A hairpin bend in the Kitayama River between Kozuro in Mie Prefecture and Shimozu in Wakayama Prefecture

Kawayu Hot Springs

Dig into the riverbed of the Otou River, a tributary of the Kumano River, to release natural 70°C or more hot spring water that mixes with cool river water to create your own personal spa bath.

Coasts of Yoshino-Kumano National Park

From the Kumano-nada Sea to Senrinohama Beach in Wakayama Prefecture, the Yoshino-Kumano National Park is surrounded by ocean. Here, the warm Kuroshio Current meets the cold northern waters, creating a rich, diverse ecosystem that has long sustained local populations, despite the complex currents and costal features that have made navigation a hazard. But tsunami and other natural disasters have taught these communities to respect Mother Nature.

A natural art display along the coastline!

Visitors flock to this area to see a broad variety of topographical scenes, including the gently curving coastline, a complex array of bays, and archipelagos.

Kumano-nada Sea

Cape Tategasaki

Cape Tategasaki, Onigajo Rocks

Mountains jut out into the sea along the coastline from Owase to Kumano, scarred with bays of all sizes. The massive rockface of Cape Tategasaki and the sea caves at the Onigajo Rocks are the highlights of the many strange wave-beaten rock formations.

Katsuura, Taiji

Visitors flock to this archipelago landscape to see of islands large and small. Katsuura is home to numerous hot springs, and has retained its fishing village charm throughout its history as a base for deep-sea fishing. Taiji is a whaling base, and the Taiji Whale Museum offers a glimpse at the local culture.

Hashigui-iwa Rock

Hashigui-iwa Rock, Umikongo Rock Formation

Hashigui means "bridge pillar," so you can see how this unusual formation of 30-something variously-sized rocks got its name. The Umikongo Rock Formation juts out into the sea where waves crash violently against the skerry.

Cape Shionomisaki

Cape Shionomisaki

The southernmost point of Honshu Island offers views of the sun rising and setting over the Pacific Ocean that will make you gasp in wonder.

Camel Rock in the foreground

Shichiri Mihama Coast, Ojigahama Coast

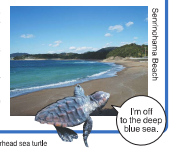
A pebble beach describes a lazy arc north-to-south for around 30 km against beautiful views of Japanese black pine windbreakers and clusters of seaside plants such as hibiscus hamabo.

The Shichiri Mihama Coast

Taiji Whale Museum

Help us protect the sea turtles!

Several beaches along the Kii Peninsula coastline are vital spawning grounds for loggerhead sea turtles. Local residents patrol the area during spawning seasons to keep the turtles safe, and vehicle access to Shichiri Mihama and Ojigahama is restricted between May and September, and all year round at Senrinohama. Please help to protect these precious creatures.



A baby loggerhead sea turtle

The Kareki-nada Coastline to Shirahama

The Phoenix Fold

The Phoenix Fold

The Phoenix Fold is testimony to the sheer power of Mother Nature as solid rock has been folded and curved into strange shapes. Rare anywhere in the world, this is a major attraction of the Nanki Kumano Geopark.

Sandanbeki Rock Cliff

Sandanbeki Rock Cliff, Senjojiki Rock Plateau

Sandanbeki is two kilometers of spectacular coastal cliff soaring 50 meters above the water. Senjojiki is the result of rising seabed worn flat by an eternity of crashing waves. The crash of the waves against the rocks and the setting sun will be highlights of your trip.

Senjojiki Rock Plateau

Engetsuto Island

Officially known as Takashima Island, Engetsuto was chosen as one of the 100 best sunset viewing spots, and is a favorite of photographers—and lovers—who come to capture the moment when the setting sun sits in the hole in the rock.

Engetsuto Island

Tanabe Bay

Cape Tenjin-zaki

Here at the birthplace of Japan's National Trust movement, low tide exposes a broad, flat rock base where people love to play and see the wildlife.

Cape Tenjinzaki

Kashima Island

Long worshipped as a protector of the sea, the forest on Kashima Island, beloved of famous biologist Minakata Kumagusu who fought against the amalgamation of the area's shrines, is home to much warm-region plant life and is an official Natural Monument of Japan. It is also a vital breeding ground for fish, and a typical example of how Tanabe cares for and benefits from both island and sea. (Permission from the Tanabe City Board of Education needed to land.)

Kashima Island

Hatakejima Island

The island houses Kyoto University's Seto Marine Biological Laboratory, which has long monitored the local waters and overseen the recovery of Tanabe Bay from its former decline. (Permission from the Kyoto University Seto Marine Biological Laboratory needed to land.)

The world's northernmost table coral colony!

Let's peek into the sea!

In shallow waters, the skerries, seaweed beds, tidal flats, and coral here are vital spawning and child-rearing grounds for many species that sustain the ecosystem. The waters west of Cape Shionomisaki, warmed by the Kuroshio Current but not tropical, yet are home to various colorful species found in tropical waters, so it is a popular snorkeling and diving spot.

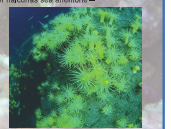
Protecting local coral beds

Plagues of crown-of-thorns starfish, sea snails and other creatures that eat coral, are threatening local coral colonies. To protect the priceless local coral colonies, local authorities and diving businesses have teamed up to monitor the coral and no the area of the threat.

A diver removing crown-of-thorns starfish

Halcurias sea anemone

A sunken reef in the waters of Minabe Bay called Shogase serves as the nation's largest breeding ground for halcurias sea anemone—the species was first discovered in Japan right here. To ensure the future of this extremely rare species in this popular diving spot, it is forbidden to remove or damage the anemone here.


Halcurias sea anemone

There's so much to do!

Delicious cuisine!