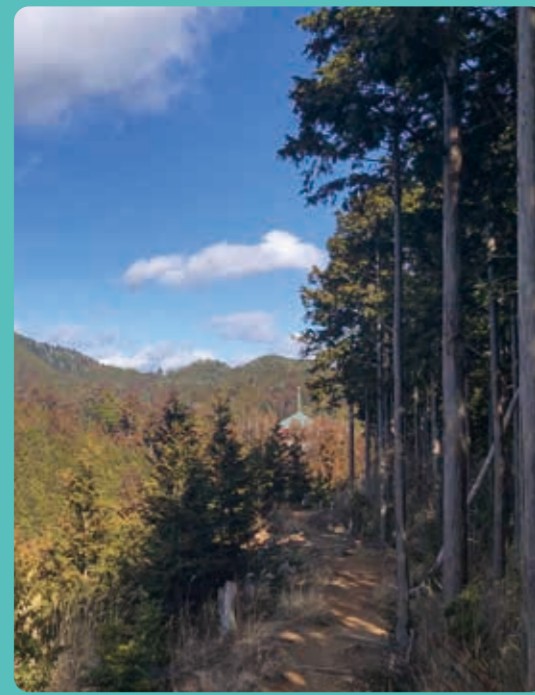


About the Nyonin-michi

The Women's Pilgrimage Route, or Nyonin-michi, is the route female pilgrims once used to circumnavigate Koyasan, which follows a 16-km course through the mountains encircling the sacred plateau. The Nyonin-michi routes came into heavy use during the Edo period (1603-1867), when these mountain paths functioned primarily as pilgrimage routes and access points for Koyasan. These routes also served as important transportation routes, connecting towns and villages on all sides of the sacred mountain. Seven official "gates" (guchi) along the Nyonin-michi functioned as entrances to Koyasan at various places along the trail.



Daimon Guchi Area

The Daimon Guchi Nyonin-do Hall was originally located at the top of a steep road up the side of the holy mountain that connected Koyasan and the Nyonin-michi with the Hashimoto area. This stretch of the Nyonin-michi passed the closest to Koyasan's sacred precincts, giving women and other travelers the best opportunity to glimpse the sacred buildings and hear the temple bells of Danjo Garan.



Ryujin Guchi Area

This particular Nyonin-do Hall offered travelers a view of the massive Daimon that serves as the official entrance to Koyasan's Danjo Garan Sacred Temple Complex. Women and other travelers could also glimpse the buildings inside Danjo Garan from nearby locations along the Nyonin-michi, and several times each day they could hear the ringing of temple bells. The shrine of the Tasuke no Jizo, a unique and sacred Buddha statue known for granting a single heartfelt wish to devout believers, sits only a couple of minutes' walk along the path from this locations.



Ainoura Guchi Area

The Ainoura Guchi Nyonin-do Hall stood beside the gate where the Nyonin-michi intersected with a path to the Koyasan plateau, as well as a road that led down the side of the sacred mountain to the village of Ainoura. On sunny days, this location offers spectacular views of the mountains of Wakayama to the south and west, especially when autumn foliage paints the mountainsides with vibrant colors. The slopes are also home to koyamaki, or Japanese umbrella pines, an evergreen species unique to Japan that has grown here for over 200 million years.



Tanigami Area

Each of the other seven Nyonin-do Halls was located beside a "gate", where roads led up to Koyasan from towns and villages at the base of the holy mountains and beyond. However, no road led up from the base of the mountain to this location. Here, a branching path led only down to the Koyasan plateau, making this a shortcut to Koyasan rather than a "gate" connecting the scared mountain to other parts of Wakayama. The Tanigami Nyonin-do Hall was located near the place where the trail begins the upward climb to Mt. Bente, a sacred peak dedicated to the goddess Benzaiten, whom Kobo Daishi enshrined there shortly after founding Koyasan.



Fudozaka Guchi Nyonin-do Hall

The Fudozaka guchi Nyonin-do Hall is the last remaining Nyonin-do hall on Koyasan. It sits west of the gates that once marked the limit beyond which women could not pass until after the start of the Meiji period. Before that time, religious restrictions prevented women from entering the sacred precincts. Construction of the first Fudozaka Guchi Nyonin-do Hall at this location was arranged by a nun named Kosugi. Today, she is considered a guardian deity of the Fudozaka Guchi Nyonin-do Hall.



Edo Period Nyonin-do Hall Guidebook Illustration

Kuroko Guchi Area

Although the precise location of the Kuroko Guchi Nyonin-do Hall is no longer known, the hall once stood along this portion of the Nyonin-michi. While many parts of the Nyonin-michi have been preserved as unpaved hiking trails, this stretch of the route now follows paved roads through a portion of Koyasan that developed after the sacred valley opened to female visitors during the Meiji period.



Caution: Please be wary of signs containing the kanji (pictured below).



車両 (Sharyo: Vehicle) 進入禁止 (Shinnyu Kinshi: Entry Prohibited) signs may be placed along the Nyonin-michi trail and should be disregarded by hikers. These signs are often Japanese only. This sign pictured above is located on the road coming to/from Mt. Manisan along Koyasan's Sanzan Route B.

Omine Guchi Area

This Nyonin-do Hall served as the gate to Mt. Omine, one of Japan's most sacred mountains, which played an important role in the training of yamabushi, or mountain ascetic priests. Mt. Omine is located approximately fifty kilometers east of Koyasan, in Nara Prefecture. For centuries, priests and pilgrims have traveled on foot between the holy mountain for training and as an act of worship.



Wildlife Caution:

Please be wary of the various wildlife along the Nyonin-michi and Sanzan hiking trails.

Suzume Bachi: Suzume (Sparrow) Bachi (Bee) is a Hornet which is most aggressive in the autumn season. They have a very painful sting and require immediate medical treatment. If you see one be sure to stay calm and move away from the area. Do not swat at it.

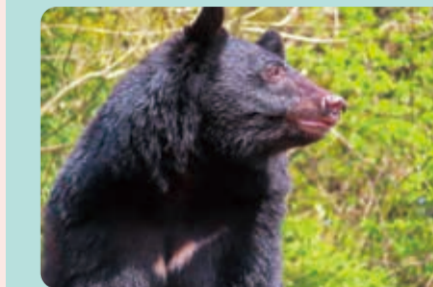


Mamushi (Japanese Pit Viper):

If bitten please seek medical treatment as there is a very effective anti-venom.



Bears (Kuma): Please be cautious of bears in and around Koyasan as well as signs pointing to what trails should be avoided due to bear sightings.



Weather: Koyasan is temperate most months out of the year with the hottest months being July to August, and coldest months ranging from December to February. During winter season it is common for Koyasan to experience lots of snow which may result in hiking trails being difficult to walk. Temperatures can go as low as -10 C. There may also be fallen trees due to high winds in Koyasan during storms. As the elevation is high, Koyasan does not become as humid as it may be down the mountain.

Rain: Koyasan experiences lots of rain which is great for the environment but makes hiking Nyonin-michi dangerous as the roads can become very slippery. Koyasan may also experience typhoons from time to time. Please exercise caution when hiking rocky areas as it is easy to slip and fall. This map is waterproof, so please feel free to use it regardless of heavy rain.



Otaki Guchi Area

The Otaki Guchi Nyonin-do Hall stood near Rokuro Pass, at the gate that connected Koyasan with Kumano. While traveling along the Nyonin-michi, some of these pilgrims would have stopped to rest, or spend the night, at the Otaki Guchi Nyonin-do Hall. The Otaki Guchi Nyonin-do Hall once offered one of the best viewpoints of the Koyasan plateau and Kumano mountains. Visitors wishing to experience the breathtaking Kumano peaks today can find a spectacular overlook just five minutes' walk along the Nyonin-michi on the way to the Ainoura Guchi Nyonin-do Hall Site.

To Nyonin-michi



To Kohechi Pilgrimage Route



Rokuro-toge Pass

Considered one of the best viewpoints on the Nyonin-michi, Rokuro-toge Pass is said to have received its name due to its spectacular views of the Kii Mountains, the autumn foliage of Koyasan, and the mystical sound of temple bells ringing in the sacred valley. Also known as the "gateway to Kumano", Rokuro-toge Pass is one of the seven traditional "gates" or entrances to Koyasan.



Edo Period Guidebook Illustration of Rokuro Pass

Nyonin-michi

Women's Pilgrimage Route



In Case of Emergency

Emergency Number: 119
In the event of an emergency please call the emergency help line 119 and request assistance. Service is available 24 hours a day. If you do not understand Japanese, please request English assistance and stay on the line. Translation services in Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Korean is available in most major areas.

Police: 110
A police station is located in the central part of Koyasan near the town hall. Please contact the police in the event of an incident that does not require immediate medical attention.

Hospital Search Engine
JNTO (Japan National Tourism Organization) offers a search engine for medical institutions with multi-lingual service.

Koyasan Healthcare Clinic
631 Koyasan Koya-cho, Ito-gun, Wakayama Prefecture 648-0211
Open 8:30-11:30, 13:00-16:00

Nyonin-michi Women's Pilgrimage Route
357 Koyasan, Koya-cho, Ito-gun, Wakayama 648-0211

