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NANKI KUMANO G E O P A R K

📍Travel Guide *Tradition, Nature, and the Land in Rural Japan*



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Nanki Kumano Geopark Promotion Council

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Check out our promotional video!

Nanki Kumano Geopark 🔍



南紀熊野 ジオパーク

*This is where shifting tectonic plates
have formed rugged, profound landscapes;
where marine and terrestrial life have taken hold;
and where ancient traditions continue to thrive.*

Nanki Kumano Geopark

Top 8 Features



The Arts of Nature

Flat rock terraces, beautifully folded geological strata, “worm-eaten” rocks, and deep gorges – experience these timeless masterpieces shaped over hundreds of millions of years. Situated on an archipelago where four tectonic plates converge, Nanki Kumano boasts a remarkable diversity of rocks that forms an atelier of nature. (See pages 14-17)



Sacred Rocks

Some rocks are more than natural artworks – they are sacred. Discover the local faith that has been worshipped for centuries! (See page 4)



Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Routes

Inscribed on the World Heritage List, with over 1,000 years of history. Follow the historic trails once walked by emperors and aristocrats! (See pages 4-5)



Life in the Mountains

Deep mountains and a strategic location made this peninsula a pioneer of forestry. Float down the river and trace the legacy of log rafting! (See pages 8 and 17)



Living with Whales

Courtesy of Taiji Whale Museum

Whaling has been a traditional livelihood here for 400 years. Learn how people coexisted with these giant marine mammals! (See pages 9-10)



The Freshest Tuna

Katsuura Port boasts Japan’s largest catch of *nama-maguro*, or never-frozen tuna, caught by longline fishing. Savor the pure taste of fresh tuna! (See pages 8 and 10)



High-Latitude Coral Community

Thanks to the warm Kuroshio Current, this sea hosts one of the world’s northernmost large coral communities. Dive into a dazzling underwater world! (See page 18)



Coping with Geohazards

Facing earthquakes and floods for generations, locals have passed down knowledge of resilience. Uncover the hidden wisdom of the people! (See page 21)

NANKI KUMANO
GEO PARK



Nanki Kumano’s mild, humid climate envelops mountains rising directly from the long coastline of the Kii Peninsula. These mountains have shaped sacred sites linked to Japan’s ancient capital Kyoto for over a thousand years.

Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage Routes

One of the most compelling features of this region is the Kumano Pilgrimage, which dates back to the 10th century. Emperors, aristocrats from the ancient capital of Kyoto, and commoners alike walked these demanding trails through steep mountains. Follow these ancient paths and you become part of the living history of Kumano!

01 Gotobiki-iwa Rock of Mt. Kamikura | 神倉山のゴトビキ岩

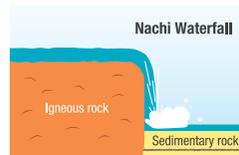


This sacred rock marks the legendary site where the Kumano deities are said to have first descended to earth. It is the central object of worship at Kamikura Shrine and the symbolic heart of the dynamic Oto Matsuri Fire Festival. Its rounded form was shaped by the long-term weathering of a massive igneous rock body. Climb over five hundred steep stone steps, and you will be rewarded with sweeping views over Shingu City and the Pacific.

02 Nachi Waterfall | 那智大滝



This 133-meter waterfall is one of the tallest in Japan. It is a sacred site, fronted by Hiro Shrine and hosting the Nachi no Ogi Matsuri (Nachi Fire Festival). The waterfall formed where hard, erosion-resistant igneous rock met softer sedimentary rock that was gradually eroded away.



03 Kumano River Boat Tour | 熊野川の川舟下り



This 90-minute guided ride follows the only “river pilgrimage path” of the Kumano Kodo. The journey reveals spectacular scenery shaped by unusual rock formations and waterfalls cascading down rugged cliffs.



<https://www.shinguu.jp/en/spots/detail/A0008>

04 Daimon-zaka Slope | 大門坂

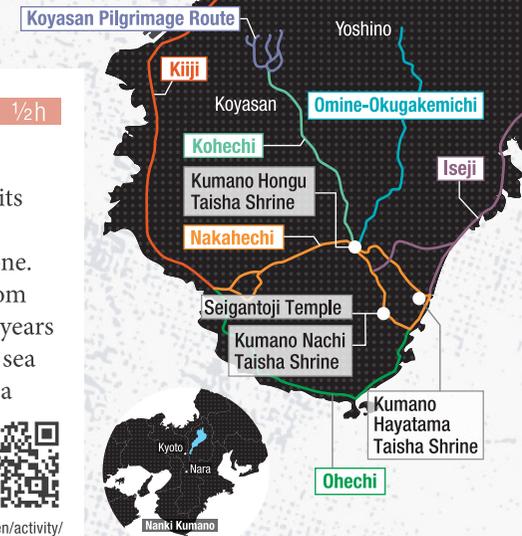


This iconic section of the Kumano Kodo is famed for its beautiful stone pavements, crafted from nearby sandstone. These rocks were formed from

sand deposited on the ocean floor about 16 million years ago, and some stones still preserve traces of ancient sea life, including burrows. Stop at the Daimon-zaka Tea House, where you can dress in historic Heian costumes for an immersive experience. A half-hour climb brings you to Kumano Nachi Taisha Shrine and Seigantoji Temple.



<https://nachikan.jp/en/activity/>



05 Kogumotori-goe and 06 Ogumotori-goe | 小雲取越 & 大雲取越



As part of the Kumano Kodo, these routes link Kumano Hongu Taisha Shrine with Kumano Nachi Taisha Shrine and Seigantoji Temple. Their character reflects local geology: Ogumotori-goe is a steep route crossing hard igneous rock, while Kogumotori-goe follows gentler slopes formed on soft sedimentary rock. Both reveal the dynamic forces that shaped this sacred trail.

Kogumotori-goe



Ogumotori-goe



i World Heritage Site “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range”



紀伊山地の霊場と参詣道

First inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2004, this property comprises three sacred sites – Kumano Sanzan, Koyasan, and Yoshino & Omine – connected by pilgrimage routes leading to the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto. It is one of the world’s few World Heritage sites focused on pilgrimage networks, reflecting the fusion of Japan’s indigenous religion Shinto, centered on nature worship, and Buddhism, introduced from abroad. A core value lies in its cultural landscape: the sacred sites and their surrounding forests preserve a continuous, well-documented tradition of sacred mountains spanning more than 1,200 years. All the sites and routes on these two pages form part of this World Heritage site.

Traditional Festivals

With its rich history, Nanki Kumano preserves a vibrant tradition of festivals and performing arts that continue to thrive today. Here are some that are designated as Intangible Folk Cultural Properties by national or prefectural governments. Find one that matches your travel dates and join the locals!

February

Oto Matsuri Fire Festival

御燈祭

A dramatic fire festival at Kamikura Shrine in Shingu City. Around 2,000 men dressed in white dash down steep stone steps with flaming torches, creating a blazing river of fire.



February

Minato Festival of Kii-Oshima Island

大島水門祭

An annual celebration of Minato Shrine, rooted in an ancient legend of this port town.

December

Neneko Festival

ねんねこ祭

An annual festival in Kushimoto Town focused on babysitting.

November

Katata Festival

堅田祭

A 300 year old annual festival in Shirahama Town.

November

Oka Lion Dance

岡の獅子舞

A traditional lion dance in Kamitonda Town featuring a variety of programs.

September

Takashiba Lion Dance

高芝の獅子舞

A traditional lion dance in Nachikatsuura Town from the 18th century.

September

Miwasaki Whale Dance

三輪崎の鯨踊



July

Nachi no Dengaku

那智の田楽

A religious performing art staged during the Nachi no Ogi Matsuri (Nachi Fire Festival) in Nachikatsuura Town. Inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List.



July

Nachi no Ogi Matsuri (Nachi Fire Festival)

那智の扇祭り (那智の火祭り)

A breathtaking fire festival in front of Nachi Waterfall in Nachikatsuura Town. Twelve fan-shaped portable shrines descend the stone steps after purification by giant flaming torches.



July

Mifune Event of Kochi Festival

河内祭の御舟行事

A boating ritual at Kochijima Island on the Kozagawa River. The island is revered as sacred, with boats decorated as whales circling its shores.

August

Oar Dance

櫂踊

A dynamic dance using oars, long practiced in Nachikatsuura Town.

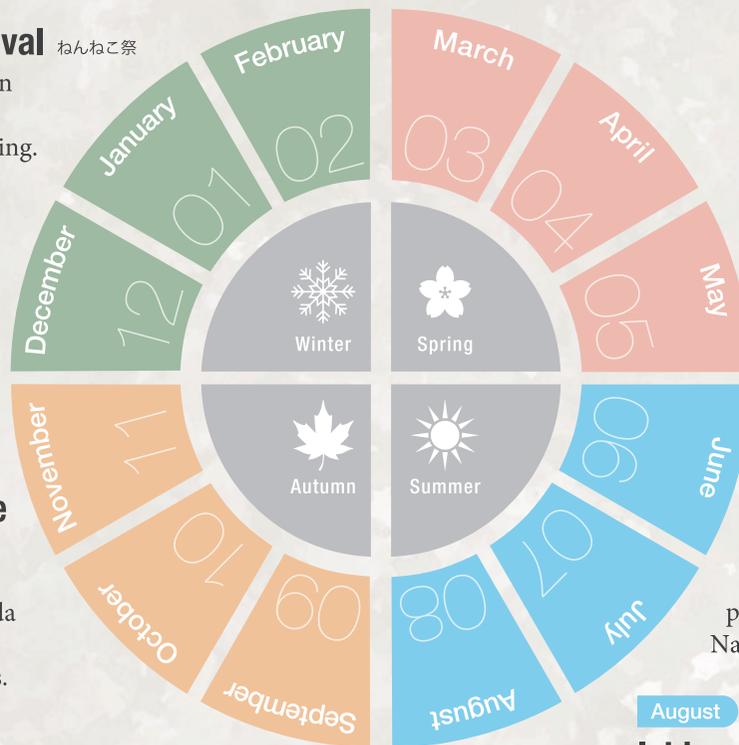
August

Ichinose Group Dance

一ノ瀬大踊

A traditional whaling dance preserved in Shingu City.

A group dance preserving old forms, passed down in Kamitonda Town since at least the 16th century.



October

Mifune Matsuri Festival (Kumano Hayatama Taisha Shrine Annual Festival)

御船祭 (熊野速玉大社例大祭)

A spectacular boating ritual. A striking red ceremonial vessel carries the deity, followed by nine rowboats racing around Mifune Island on the Kumano River.

i A Brief Guide to Visiting Shinto Shrines

1. Pass through the *torii* gate to enter sacred ground (avoid the exact center).
2. Purify your hands and mouth at the *temizuya* water pavilion.
3. Ring the bell, bow twice, clap your hands twice, and bow once more to greet the deity.



Traditional Livelihoods

Jutting into the Pacific Ocean, the Kii Peninsula is cloaked in rich forests and edged by rugged coastlines. This unique geography gave rise to diverse livelihoods, distinctive to Nanki Kumano. Some remain alive today, while others have transformed over time. Take a deep breath and immerse yourself in living local traditions!

07 Kitayama River Log Rafting | 北山川の筏下り

🕒 2h



The deep mountains and a strategic location near ancient capitals made this peninsula a pioneer in forestry. Kitayama Village was one of the major timber hubs. In the early modern era, logs were rafted downriver to Shingu at the river mouth, guided by skilled villagers. Although rafting ended in the mid-20th century with motorization, it has been revived as a unique tourism experience. Hop aboard this thrilling ride and discover the traditional techniques! Booking required, conditions apply, and public transportation is limited.



<https://www.kumano-travel.com/en/tours-activities/log-rafting-in-dorokyo-gorge-ikada-kudari>

08 The Freshest Tuna | 生まぐろ



Katsuura Port boasts Japan's largest catch of *nama-maguro*, or never-frozen tuna. Unlike many large markets, tuna here is sold fresh rather than frozen, thanks to a sustainable longline fishing method developed in the mid-18th century. Only mature tuna is caught individually with minimal stress or damage, ensuring ecological balance. Savor a variety of fresh tuna year-round in Katsuura, a natural harbor blessed with gentle waves and deep waters. Guided tours for early-morning tuna auctions are also available – don't miss this unique experience!



<https://nachikan.jp/activity/8588/>

Japanese Plum Farms | 梅林



Umeboshi (pickled plum) is a classic Japanese dish enjoyed with white rice. Wakayama Prefecture, containing most of the Nanki Kumano Geopark, boasts the nation's highest plum production thanks to its warm climate and excellent drainage. Visit in February to admire the beautiful plum blossoms!

Whaling | 捕鯨



Courtesy of Taiji Whale Museum

The Japanese have long revered whales as a source of life and prosperity. This region pioneered organized whaling about 400 years ago, supported by the Kuroshio Current and the deeply indented coastline. Whaling demanded teamwork – some spread nets, others used harpoons, while others processed the catch. Each whale sustained the entire community, and the tradition still lives on in festivals and performing arts such as whale dances. Today, you can enjoy whale watching from spring to autumn!

09 Taiji Whale Museum

| 太地町立くじらの博物館



Located in the town deeply connected with whales, the museum is one of Japan's few facilities dedicated to cetaceans. It highlights the history and culture of whaling, along with ecology of whales and marine life. Combining features of an aquarium, the museum offers dynamic whale and dolphin shows, and interactive programs such as touching dolphins or feeding whales. Learn and enjoy the world of whales!



<https://www.kujirakan.jp/en/>

i

Japan Heritage "Living with Whales"



Japan Heritage, designated by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, groups cultural assets into themes that highlight their historical context and significance. First designated in 2016, "Living with Whales" tells the story of whaling culture along this coastline, centered on Taiji and extending from Shingu to Kushimoto.

Local Cuisine

Japanese dishes such as sushi are now enjoyed worldwide, yet they differ from place to place. Each region has its own local tastes, and Nanki Kumano is no exception. Shaped by the area's mountains and oceans, as well as its history and traditional livelihoods, here are a few examples of its distinctive cuisine. Savor the local food and join the locals!

🍴 What to eat

Meharizushi | めはり寿司



White rice wrapped in pickled mustard leaves, traditionally prepared as lunch for mountain workers.

Pickled Plum | 梅干し



A classic Japanese comfort dish, with its pickled taste changing from place to place.

Tuna Dishes | まぐろ料理



A variety of fresh tuna dishes awaits, including sushi, sashimi, rice bowls, and even cutlets or pizza.

Whale Dishes | くじら料理



Locals enjoy a wide range of whale dishes, making use of every part without waste.

Chagayu (Rice Porridge) | 茶がゆ



Traditionally eaten in this mountainous region to save rice. Unlike other areas, roasted tea is used here.

Jibie (Wild-Game Cuisine) | ジビエ



Wild meat has recently re-entered Japanese cuisine. Enjoy venison and boar dishes.

Ayu (Sweetfish) | あゆ



A symbol of Japan's clear rivers. The Kozagawa River draws many anglers for this beloved fish.

Sanma (Saury) Sushi | さんま寿司



Saury is widely eaten across Japan, but Shingu's pickled saury sushi offers a truly local flavor.

Eel | うなぎ



One of Japan's favorite foods. In the Kozagawa River, eel is cultivated to help sustainability.

Moray Eel | うつぼ



Flavorful despite small bones. Enjoy this local delicacy in hot pots, deep-fried or as *tsukudani*.

🏠 Where to eat/buy

Supermarket



One of the best ways to enjoy local cuisine is by visiting supermarkets. Japanese supermarkets vary greatly by region, offering foods unique to each area. Tuna, eel, whale, pickled plums, and even ready-to-eat dishes such as *meharizushi* and *chagayu* can all be found here.

Izakaya (Japanese Pub)



If you're not in the mood or have no facilities to cook, stop by an *izakaya* near your accommodation. Usually run as small businesses, *izakaya* are rooted in each community and offer a wide range of local dishes. Menus differ from place to place, so choose carefully. Step inside and experience the locals' world!

i Wagashi (Japanese Sweets) and Sake | 和菓子と日本酒

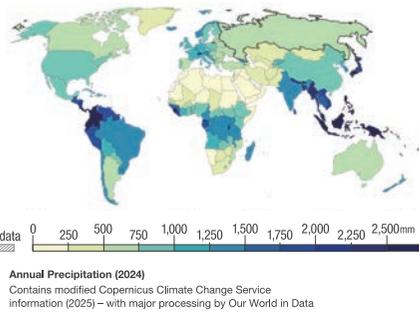
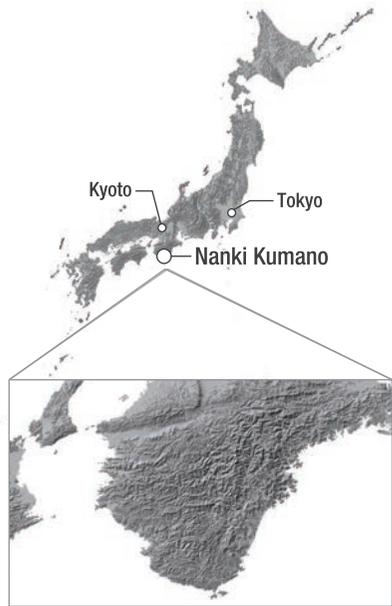


These are classic elements of Japanese cuisine enjoyed nationwide, including in Nanki Kumano – especially in the city of Shingu. Once a crossroad of river and marine transport, Shingu flourished as one of the peninsula's most cultured and refined towns.

i A Few Tips for Dining in Japan

- ✓ Some Japanese-style restaurants or *izakaya* may ask you to remove your shoes.
- ✓ Bringing outside food or drinks into restaurants is generally not allowed.
- ✓ Slurping noodles is widely accepted and considered normal.
- ✓ Leaving food uneaten is frowned upon, and taking leftovers home is generally uncommon.

An Overview of Nanki Kumano

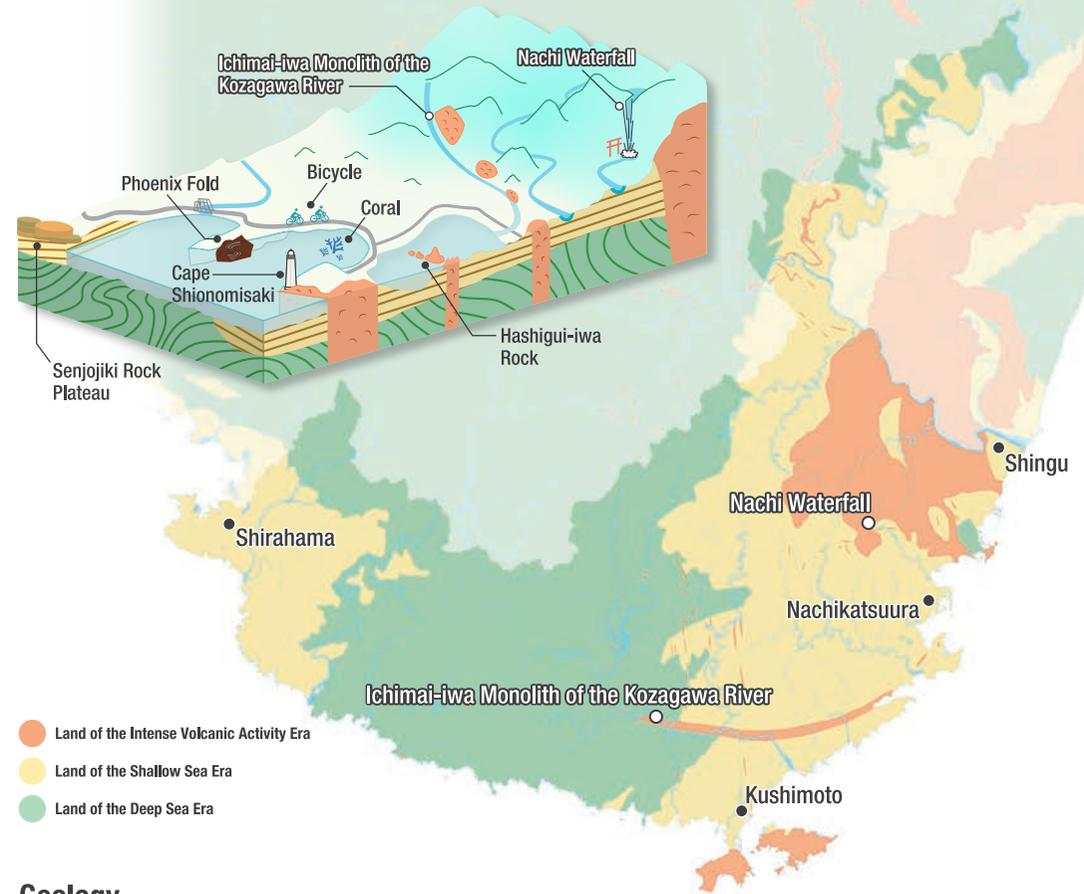


History

Over millennia, the people of Japan have developed a deep spiritual reverence for natural features such as trees, waterfalls, and rocks. This nature worship, together with Buddhism, gave rise to the flourishing Kumano Pilgrimage. Since the 10th century, emperors and aristocrats traveled from the then-capital Kyoto. Local communities earned their livelihoods in various ways, including forestry or whaling over the past 400 years. As a hub of timber and charcoal, the city of Shingu prospered as a castle town throughout both the early modern and modern eras.

Geography

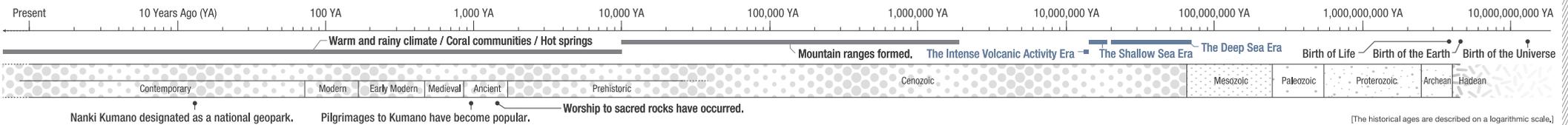
Behind this rich cultural history lies distinctive geography. The Kii Peninsula is dominated by steep mountains, where settlements occupy narrow coastal plains and river valleys. The warm Kuroshio Current flows just offshore, moderating temperatures and supporting exceptional marine biodiversity. Rainfall is among the highest not only in Japan but also in comparable latitudes worldwide. Together, these factors nurture lush laurel forests and even large coral communities that extend unusually far north for their size and diversity.



Geology

Underlying both the history and geography is the region's remarkable geological story. The land of Nanki Kumano is composed of three major geological bodies formed through the subduction of tectonic plates: accretionary complexes from the Deep Sea Era (70-20 million years ago), forearc basin sediments from the Shallow Sea Era (18-15 million years ago), and igneous bodies from the Intense Volcanic Activity Era (15-14 million years ago). Over millions of years, these terrains have risen and been sculpted by relentless erosion, creating the dramatic cliffs, folded strata, sea caves, and striking rock formations that characterize the landscape today. The scenery before us continues to change, shaped each day by the forces beneath the earth.

i Chronology of Earth and Human History



Spectacular Rocks and Landscapes

Beyond its pilgrimage heritage, the region's spectacular rock formations and dynamic landscapes set it apart from other rural areas in Japan. Its remarkable diversity creates an open-air atelier of nature. Become a spectator of these timeless masterpieces shaped over hundreds of millions of years!

10 Engetsuto Island | 円月島



This small, uninhabited islet lies just off the coast of Shirahama. Its defining feature is a full-moon-shaped opening at its center. Around the spring and autumn equinoxes, the setting sun aligns perfectly within the hole, creating a moment of pure natural beauty and romance. Formed by sea erosion, this work of art is carved from conglomerate rock made of gravel and sand.



11 Senjojiki Rock Plateau | 千畳敷



Senjojiki, literally “one thousand tatami mats,” is a broad, flat rock terrace reaching into the Pacific, where layered sandstone and pebbles reveal ancient wave patterns and trace fossils.

12 Sandanbeki Rock Cliff | 三段壁



This rugged 30-meter cliff, sculpted by wave erosion, reveals layers of sand and pebbles deposited in a shallow sea and later hardened by heat. Visitors can reach a sea-level cave via a paid elevator.

13 Torike Cave | 鳥毛洞窟 遊 1/2h



A large sea cave located at the western end of the Shihara Coast. Its two wide-open chambers were shaped by natural erosion. Access is possible only at low tide. Please watch out for falling rocks.

14 Sukuma-dani Gorge | 救馬溪



A boundary between two geological eras can be seen on the temple grounds. Erosion created a natural hollow here, and the upper layer displays weathering along with concave patterns called “tafoni.”

15 Phoenix Fold | フェニックス褶曲 遊 1 1/2h



One of the geopark's most striking geological sites, featured as a representative example in school textbooks nationwide. This tectonic fold was formed underground by subduction, a process in which the movement of tectonic plates forces deep-sea sediment toward the land. Located on a rugged coast, it can be reached only via a short but steep trail and at low tide. A guide is mandatory, and advance booking is required.



<https://susami-kanko.com/geopark-guide-phenixfold/>
(in Japanese only)

16 Kuroshima Islands | 黒島



Comprising the islands of Oki no Kuroshima and Oka no Kuroshima, along with several offshore reefs, this area offers a rare phenomenon: when conditions are right near low tide, waves collide from opposite directions. Savor the spectacular scenery created by the shifting tides and steadfast islands from the nearby café.

17 Hashigui-iwa Rock | 橋杭岩



This striking row of rock pillars stretches for about 850 meters in a straight line from the mainland toward Kii-Oshima Island. Composed of igneous rock, magma that rose through sedimentary layers and solidified, it was later exposed when the softer surrounding strata eroded away. Scattered nearby are *tsunami-ishi*, stones known to have been moved by tsunamis.

18 Taki-no-hai | 滝の拝



Along a 200-meter riverbed, deep potholes can be found. The heat-hardened strata resist lateral erosion, forming deep vertical potholes when stones are circulated by the swirling current.

20 Mushikui-iwa Rock in Takaike | 高池の虫喰岩



This igneous rock formed during massive eruptions about 15 million years ago. Weathering created its *mushikui*, or worm-eaten appearance called “tafoni.” Saltwater seeping into tiny cracks evaporated and formed crystals that flaked the rock and gradually enlarged the holes.

19 Ichimai-iwa Monolith of the Kozagawa River | 古座川の一枚岩



This immense monolith rises 100 meters high and 500 meters wide, formed from pyroclastic rock created by massive eruptions 15 million years ago, standing unbroken without a single fissure.

21 Kajitori-zaki Point | 梶取崎



The cape offers breathtaking views of the Pacific from cliffs formed by thick sandstone strata. Over century ago, this site served as a mountain lookout used by whaling crews to spot whales and direct offshore boats. Visitors can see traces of old smoke-signal stations used to communicate with fishing fleets, along with a historic lighthouse.

22 Ki-no-Matsushima Islands | 紀の松島



This coastal area features small islands sculpted by waves from heat-hardened sedimentary rock, making them more resistant to erosion than surrounding strata. Many islands also contain sea caves formed along fractures, best viewed by an hour-long cruise boat.



<https://www.kumano-travel.com/en/tours-activities/ki-no-matsushima-cruising>

23 Bentenjima Island | 弁天島



Extremely hot water once flowed through underground cracks, hardening the rock and making it more resistant to erosion than the surrounding strata. This process gave the island’s striking shape. At low tide, visitors can walk ashore and explore the island, which is also revered as a sacred site marked by a picturesque red *torii* gate.

24 Dorohaccho Gorge | 瀨八丁



<https://www.shinguu.jp/en/spots/detail/A0083>

07 Kitayama-kyo Gorge | 北山峡



<https://www.kumano-travel.com/en/tours-activities/log-rafting-in-dorokyo-gorge-ikada-kudari>

Both gorges are deep valleys carved by the Kitayama River. Their steep cliffs formed when sedimentary rock was heated and hardened by nearby magma, making it resistant to river erosion. Dorohaccho Gorge features a gently flowing river that can be explored by cruise boat, while Kitayama Gorge presents a dramatic V-shaped valley where visitors can enjoy adventurous log rafting.

Gifts from the Earth

All comes from the earth. The mountains, coastlines, rainfall, and warm currents have created a rich natural environment in this region, embracing coral communities, both natural and cultivated forests, and soothing onsen (hot springs). Feel the living connection between the land and all that dwell upon it!



Coral Community | サンゴ群集



Thanks to the Kuroshio Current, one of the earth's largest warm currents, this temperate sea hosts coral communities normally found in tropical or subtropical regions. As the northernmost communities of their scale, they serve as key indicators of global climate change. Protecting these corals helps protect the planet.

25 Kushimoto Marine Park Center | 串本海中公園



One of Japan's pioneering facilities dedicated to marine ecology, established in the 1970s. The complex includes an aquarium, an undersea tower, a diving park, a research institute, and even a restaurant and souvenir shop. Experience the true underwater world from the tower – reaching depths of 6.3 meters.



<https://www.kushimoto.co.jp/english/>

i Kushimoto Coral Communities (Ramsar Site)

The Ramsar Convention promotes the conservation and wise use of all wetlands as part of sustainable development. Ramsar sites are wetlands designated under this convention, and the Kushimoto Coral Communities were added to the list in 2005.

26 Minakata Kumagusu Museum | 南方熊楠記念館



A museum honoring Minakata Kumagusu (1867–1941), a local naturalist, biologist, and folklorist. After spending 14 years studying abroad in the US and UK, he collected fungi, algae, insects, and plants around Nachi while contributing to nature conservation nationwide.



<https://www.minakatakumagusu-kinenkan.jp/english/>

Onsen (Hot Springs) | 温泉



Despite the lack of volcanic eruptions over the past 10 million years, the area is rich in onsen. This continues to attract scientific interest regarding their geothermal origins. It is home to several historic onsen, including Shirahama Onsen, dating back to the 7th century, and Yukawa Onsen, to the late 5th century.

i How to Enjoy Onsen in Japanese Style

Most onsen have separate baths for men and women, indicated on the curtains. Tattoos and swimsuits are generally not permitted. Leave your belongings in the changing room. You may bring a small towel but never place it in the bathwater. Before soaking, sit and wash thoroughly without splashing others. Once clean, enter the baths and relax.

27 Ugui Visitor Center | 環境省 宇久井ビジターセンター



The center serves as an information hub for Yoshino-Kumano National Park. Exhibits feature local geology, along with displays and specimens of wildlife. Located on the Ugui Peninsula, various trails extend through surrounding laurel forests, where seasonal bioluminescent mushrooms appear, as well as along the coasts and tidal zones.



<https://www.ugui-vc.jp/>
(in Japanese only)

i Yoshino-Kumano National Park | 吉野熊野国立公園

Yoshino-Kumano was a landmark in the history of Japan's national parks. Designated in 1936 as one of the early parks, it is renowned for its spectacular coastline and dense forests. Later, in 1970, it became one of the first parks to include marine zones.

i Forests of the Southern Kii Peninsula | 紀伊半島南部の森林



Thanks to its steep mountains, abundant rainfall, and warm currents, the area is covered in rich forests. Laurel forests once dominated the lowlands, but rising timber demand over past centuries gradually transformed the region into a national forestry pioneer, cultivating coniferous trees such as *sugi* (Japanese cedar).

Geoparks and Geohazards

Celebrating Geological Heritage



Our planet Earth has a 4.6-billion-year history, shaped by massive extinctions, climate changes, and shifting tectonic plates – all of which are recorded in geological heritage. UNESCO Global Geoparks celebrate these traces of our planet’s past, and Nanki Kumano is one of Japan’s national geoparks, designated in 2014.

Geoparks and Their Activities



Geoparks celebrate geological heritage, but that is not their only focus. Each area also holds diverse natural and cultural heritage rooted in its geology. Geoparks may further encompass a wide range of intangible heritage, including local festivals, traditional livelihoods, and the wisdom passed down through generations. All of these form essential elements of geoparks.



Nanki Kumano Geopark’s activities are built on three pillars: protection, education, and tourism. This guide is naturally part of the tourism pillar, serving as a storyteller that weaves together traditions, living nature, and earth science. By connecting people and the

land, past and present, and visitors and residents, the geopark enhances the value of this area and passes it on to future generations.

Code of Conduct



Observe all laws and regulations that protect the heritage within the geopark.



Leave plants, animals, and rocks in their natural state.



Take your trash home to preserve natural beauty.



Avoid entering dangerous places.



Respect local livelihoods and culture.



Celebrate the earth’s heritage and pass it on to future generations.

Earthquakes and Tsunamis



Students studying tsunami.

Japan has experienced numerous earthquakes and tsunamis throughout its history, and Nanki Kumano is no exception, facing the potential risk of a Nankai Trough earthquake. In 1944, the Showa Tonankai Earthquake triggered a catastrophic tsunami that struck Nachi Bay, sweeping away railway tracks and destroying the station. Two years later, in 1946, the Showa Nankai Earthquake generated another tsunami, with waves exceeding six meters in some areas. Since then, more than 30 tsunami warning signs and monuments have been erected to pass down the memories and lessons of past disasters.

Take the following actions in case you experience an earthquake



Take cover under a desk or table. Shield your head with a cushion, bag, or some other protective covering.



Open the door. If a door is structurally damaged during an earthquake, you will not be able to evacuate.



Evacuate by following the instructions of announcements and of local officials.



Watch out for rockfalls and landslides near mountains and cliffs, and move away from any such areas.



Do not ride in elevators due to the possibility of aftershocks.



If you are riding in a car, train or bus, follow the evacuation instructions of officials or staff.

Typhoons and Heavy Rain

Known for its extremely high rainfall, the region has repeatedly suffered landslides and flooding, including the Totsukawa Flood in 1889 and the Kii Peninsula Flood in 2011. A local legend recounts Hikogoro, who sacrificed himself to build a riverbank to protect his village from the Tonda River’s frequent floods – reflecting the community’s longstanding fear and respect for nature’s power.



The bridges over the Tonda River are notable for having no railing – a design intended to mitigate damage during floods and enhance resilience.

Take the following actions in case you encounter heavy rainfall



It is dangerous to be near mountains or the sea, so be sure to stay away from them.



If you are outdoors, there is a risk of injury from falls or being struck by flying debris.



Check the latest information on TV and on the internet, and consider how to evacuate.

NANKI KUMANO GEOPARK MAP

How to Reach Here

- ✓ From Tokyo: by plane (approx. 1 hr 10 min to Shirahama)
- ✓ From Osaka: by limited express train (approx. 2 hrs 30 min to Shirahama)
- ✓ From Nagoya: by limited express train (approx. 3 hrs 30 min to Shingu)

How to Get Around

The geopark area spans roughly 100 kilometers. Here are some tips:

- ✓ Take a train to move between towns – services run every 1-2 hours.
- ✓ Within each town, use local buses or rent a bicycle.
- ✓ Rental cars are also recommended, offering greater flexibility for your trip.

- Bicycle Rental
- Airport
- Major Station
- Railway
- Expressway
- Road
- Geopark
- World Heritage Site
- Ramsar Site
- National Park

Nanki Kumano Geopark Center

Opening Hours: 9:00-17:00,
Open Everyday Except Dec 29 - Jan 3, Admission Free

The center serves as a gateway to the region's geology, nature, and culture, with numbers of hands-on exhibits.



https://nankikumanogeo.jp/eng/geopark_center/



Geopark Guide



The best way to explore is with a guide. English-speaking guides can be arranged upon request.



<https://nankikumanogeo.jp/guide/>
(in Japanese only)

Bicycle Rental



Bicycle rentals, including e-bikes, are available, with KMICH offering a wider one-way rental network.



<https://kmich.jp/en/#e-bike>

Cycle Train



Bring your bicycle on the train – conditions apply, but no reservation or extra fee required.



<https://www.westjr.co.jp/global/en/train/cycletrain/>