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Kumano Region, Wakayama

MAKE THE PILGRIMAGE TO THE ANCIENT LAND OF KUMANO TO EXPERIENCE JAPAN'S SHRINES, AGRICULTURE, AND WILDLIFE

Spiritual travel is an emerging trend to be reckoned with as Millennials—the generation that holidays the most—search for meaning in far-off lands. Kumano is definitely well-practiced at welcoming wanderers to its misty mountains and sweeping coastlines; it's been doing so for at least a millennia.

Though the Kumano region also spans some of Mie Prefecture (<https://travel.gaijinpot.com/destination/mie/>), it's in Wakayama (<https://travel.gaijinpot.com/wakayama-city/>) where you'll find the most famous section of the Unesco-listed Kumano Kodo (<https://travel.gaijinpot.com/a-guide-to-hiking-the-kumano-kodo/>) trail network. Hike along stone pathways lit by ethereal rays filtering through fragrant cedar trees towards the Kumano Sanzan (<https://travel.gaijinpot.com/kumano-sanzan-three-grand-shrines-of-kumano/>) (three shrines of Kumano). Here you'll pray to both indigenous Shinto and Buddhist gods, a testament to the harmony cultivated between the two religions throughout a formidable history. The extraordinary Nachi Taisha, one of the Kumano Sanzan, is the omnipresent poster child of Wakayama tourism—but one glimpse of the bright red three-story pagoda shrouded in the godly vapor of Japan's tallest waterfall and it's easy to understand why.

That harmonious spirit extends to the modern hospitality with which residents welcome visitors from around the world. In Tanabe City, the gateway to the Kumano Kodo, the multilingual tourism bureau runs a grassroots online reservation platform called Kumano Travel (<https://www.kumano-travel.com/en>) which links local guides and businesses to visitors. Try a farm-stay and harvest *ume* (Japanese plums) just outside of Tanabe, go whale-watching in nearby Katsuura, become a Shinto priest in Shingu, or sun yourself on the white sand beaches of seaside Shirahama.

(<https://www.google.com/n>)

Kumano actually made our first ever list of top destinations back in 2017 (<https://travel.gaijinpot.com/discover-top-destinations-in-japan/>) which proves just how enduringly captivating it is.

- ★ Don't miss: Would-be pilgrims should purify themselves first with a stay in the 1,800-year-old Yunomine hot spring town.
- 🗓 When to go: As with all of Japan, spring and autumn are the prettiest times to visit. Inexperienced hikers should avoid the rainy season (June to mid-July). Summer is sticky, but bearable in the mountains, and things heat up on July 14 when the dramatic Nachi Fire Festival takes place.
- 🚆 How to get there: Take the Shinkansen to Shin-Osaka and then a JR limited express train over to the Kii Peninsula. The train stops at major access points, including Tanabe City, along the way.

[Read More \(https://travel.gaijinpot.com/a-guide-to-hiking-the-kumano-kodo/\)](https://travel.gaijinpot.com/a-guide-to-hiking-the-kumano-kodo/)

Editor's note

Here at GaijinPot, the most important thing is you, the reader. So this year, we left it up to you to vote on what destinations you thought deserved to be visited in 2020. Sixteen nominee locations were chosen and put to a reader's vote based on three main criteria.

The destination:

1. Reflects advances in social/technological innovation and initiatives as they relate to tourism.
2. Has a major tourism event or new feature happening or implemented in 2020.
3. Reflects one of the main up-and-coming world travel and tourism trends determined via independent research.

Thanks to the readers' vote which took place over November, the list was whittled down to the incredible list of places above.

GaijinPot Travel giveaways

Stay tuned for updates on periodic giveaways (like hotel stays, onsen retreats and more!) via our Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/gaijinpot>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/gaijinpot/>). Follow us for updates.

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Traveling to one of these destinations? We want to know about it. Tag us on social media with #GaijinPotTravel (<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/gaijinpotttravel/>) (Your post may be featured on our site.)

MORE TRIP-SPARATION

(<https://travel.gaijinpot.com/where-to-party-for-new-years-in-japan-2019-20/>)