

Information

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The heart is set free.

The Kii mountains tower over central Wakayama Prefecture wrapped in an evergreen envelope. To the north and south there are found two sacred lands nominated as World Heritages in "Koyasan" and "Kumano Sanzan". It is a rarity to have not one but two such prominent sites with so much to tell about Japan in the same prefecture. Only here will you encounter the charm of a spiritual world that for more than a thousand years has drawn mankind in a search of faith. Blessed with a wondrous natural environment of seas, mountains and rivers, and filled with oriental mystery, in Wakayama Prefecture, you can get away from everyday life and set your spirit free. Come and enjoy the rewarding experience of Wakayama Prefecture.

- 1 View of Mt. Koya**
Konpon-daito tower rises over the treetops in Koyasan.

Northern WAKAYAMA AREA

Northern Wakayama is where visitors can experience the mystery of the Orient plus the history and culture of towns where the scent of fiefdoms past remains even today. In the northeast, you will find the sacred land of "Koyasan" and, in the northwest, the prefectural capital of Wakayama.



2 Kongobu-ji Temple

Located roughly in the middle of Koyasan, Kongobu-ji Temple oversees some 3,600 temples across Japan as the head temple of Shingon Buddhism. It is one of the more prominent temples of Koyasan and a great place to enjoy the Japanese beauty of the fusuma – or sliding door – paintings by the Kano School and a rock garden with wave patterns designed in the sand. The temple is also known for its rhododendrons, a Natural Monument of Japan. They can be seen blooming between early and mid May.



3 Okuno-in Temple

The approach to Okuno-in Temple, which houses the remains of Kobodaishi, is a testimony to faith. The promenade cuts through a seemingly endless cemetery of some 400,000

tombstones where many famous people of the likes of local 18th century warlord Yoshimune Tokugawa are interned. The area around Okuno-in Temple is home to many species of wild bird and, from spring to early summer, it is a joyful competition of sweetly chirping cuckoos, little cuckoos, Himalayan cuckoos, bush warblers and more.

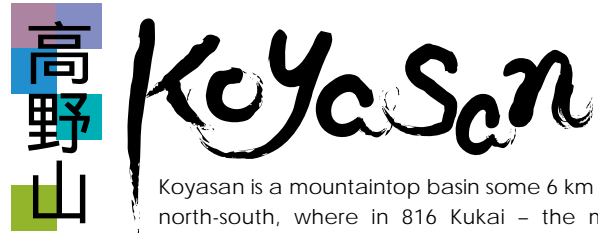


2 Mie-do Temple

Said to be where Kobodaishi chanted his prayers, Mie-do Temple takes its name – literally meaning "a revered portrait" – from the picture of Kobodaishi painted by Imperial prince Shinnyo. It is the only mountain temple with a gradually sloping roof and deep eaves, and its elegant beauty shows throughout the year.

3 Tokugawa Family Tomb

This tomb of the Tokugawa Family was built by third generation general Iemitsu Tokugawa in 1641 as side-by-side memorials. On the right is Yakushi-do Chamber that entombs Iyasu Tokugawa, while on the left is Ihai-do Chamber that entombs Hidetada Tokugawa. Both inside and outside, the structures exhibit the ornate stylishness of the Edo Period. The buildings are named Important Cultural Properties of Japan.



Koyasan is a mountaintop basin some 6 km east-west and 2 km north-south, where in 816 Kukai – the monk Kobodaishi – opened his first seminary for practicing the asceticism of the esoteric sect of Shingon Buddhism. The area is surrounded by mountains 1,000 m in height. During the heydays of the Edo Period, there stood over 2,000 temples, halls and cloisters. Today, it continues to observe the teachings of Buddha as the center of Shingon Buddhism.

Also, there is a 24 km walk stretching from the mausoleum of Kobodaishi at Okuno-in Temple to Jison-in Temple at the foot of Mt. Koya. Known as "Choishi-michi", it is marked every approximate 109 m – or cho – by a stone, pronounced choishi in Japanese, on which is etched the number of cho. There are 216 markers in all. Even today, many people on pilgrimage follow the walk as there are many key points of religious interest along the way to note Jison-in Temple, which was built by Kobodaishi, Niukanshofu-jinja Shrine, and Niutsuhime-jinja Shrine, the tutelary deity of Mt. Koya.

1 Daimon Gate

Guarded on each side by Vajra warriors sculpted by Uncho Hokyō, this stately gate serves as the main entrance to Koyasan. It stands 25.8 m tall and, from the front side, commands a marvelous view that, on a clear day, can reach as far away as Awaji Island in the Kōda Sea.





**Northern
WAKAYAMA
AREA**

5 Wakayama Castle (Wakayama City)

Its magnificent silhouette rising high above the Wakayama city center, Wakayama Castle is the symbol of the 555,000-goku domain of Kishu, one of the 3 Tokugawa families. Around the castle spreads out the green-rich Wakayamajo Park that is home to many wild birds. From late March to early April, the grounds are tinged the light peachy color of some 1,300 cheery trees including the prized Yoshino cherry. Also nearby are located the Wakayama Prefectural Museum and The Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama, where visitors can taste some of the local history and culture of Wakayama.



6 Toshogu Shrine (Wakayama City)

This well-known shrine is in a prime location on Wakaura Bay with a spectacular view of the sea. It was built by first generation liege Yorinobu Tokugawa on this pleasant hillside and can be reached via the 108 stone steps of the approach. The main hall is named an Important Cultural Property. Inside, you can see some masterpieces of the Edo Period in the statue by Jingoro Hidari and fusuma (sliding door) paintings by Tanyu Kano.

8 Negoro-ji Temple (Iwade Town)

This old temple was built by the monk Kakuban after he left Koyasan. By the end of the Muromachi Period, the area was a massive religious metropolis of some 2,700 halls and sanctuaries. This is the home of the Negoroshu, or crusaders, that valiantly fought as riflemen against the warlord Hideyoshi Toyotomi during his Kishu Campaign. This is also the birthplace of the "Negoronuri", famed lacquerware of Kishu. The grounds are colored by cherry blossoms in spring and autumn foliage in the fall.



5 Momijidani Garden (Wakayama City)

Located on the grounds of Wakayama Castle, this gorgeous garden can be enjoyed throughout the seasons but is particularly beautiful in autumn under the changing foliage. At the tea house, you can enjoy a bowl of freshly whisked green tea with a splendid view of the flowering gardens.

7 Kimii-dera Temple (Wakayama City)

This temple is perfectly located halfway up Mt. Nagusa in the southern end of Wakayama City. It is renowned as one of the most beautiful places to see early-flowering varieties of cherry blossom. If you climb the 230 stone steps to the temple, you discover a magnificent view of Wakaura Bay that, from this high perch, looks something like a miniature landscape.



10 Dojo-ji Temple (Kawabe Town)

Legend has it that this temple is where the tragedy of the maiden Kiyohime and the monk Anchin came to end. The two had met when Anchin was on pilgrimage to Kumano and fell in love. He had promised to return, but when he didn't, Kiyohime was outraged. She transformed herself into a snake to chase him down, eventually burning Anchin alive while hiding in the hanging bell of this temple. On the grounds are the remains of the Tomb of Anchin, where they say Anchin and the bell were buried, and the Tomb of Kiyohime.



9 The Birthplace of Soy Sauce (Yuasa Town)

Wakayama Prefecture is the birthplace of soy sauce and miso, two of Japan's most traditional tastes. Soy sauce was discovered here while making miso and eventually spread across all of Japan. They have been making soy sauce by hand in Yuasa since long ago.



11 Plum Groves (Minabe)

Wakayama Prefecture is the largest producer of umeboshi – pickled plums – in Japan. This is where the prize plums known as "Nankobai" grow. Along a roughly 4 km stretch of the Minabe River, the hillsides are covered in plum groves that they claim can number as many as one million whichever way you look and whose fragrance carries over 40 km, truly the greatest in Japan. From mid January to the end of February, the area teems with people who come to see the plum blossoms.



Kishu Handball

The Kishu Handball is said to have originated as a play toy for the young ladies of the castle court. Vividly colored with carefully woven patterns, its beautiful presence makes it a popular keepsake and souvenir even today.

Banner of Kumano Hongu Grand Shrine (Hongu Town)
Since long ago, the three-legged sacred crow known as "Yatagarasu" has been revered as a deity. Its image appears on this banner as a symbol of the Kumano Hongu Grand Shrine.



Southern WAKAYAMA AREA

Southern Wakayama is where you can experience the unspoiled virgin landscapes of Japan in the azure waters of the Pacific Ocean and thickly forested mountains. It also covets "Kumano Sanzan".
Come and let your spirit play in the great outdoors and sooth your mind in the rural beauty of hot springs and the multifaceted history and culture of Wakayama's temples and shrines.



16 Kumano Hayatama Grand Shrine (Shingu City)
Sitting silently at the foot of Mt. Gongen, Kumano Hayatama-taisha is one of the three Kumano Grand Shrines. On the grounds of the vibrant cinnabar red shrine stands a giant Chinese black pine that is more than 1,000 years old. Named a Natural Monument of Japan, the faithful and hopeful stand before it and wish for safe travel, safety at sea and the blessing of finding true love. The museum of treasures has many rare artifacts concerning the pilgrimage to Kumano that are designated as National Treasures, such as a colorfully painted fan made of cedar and a ceremonial beaded belt.

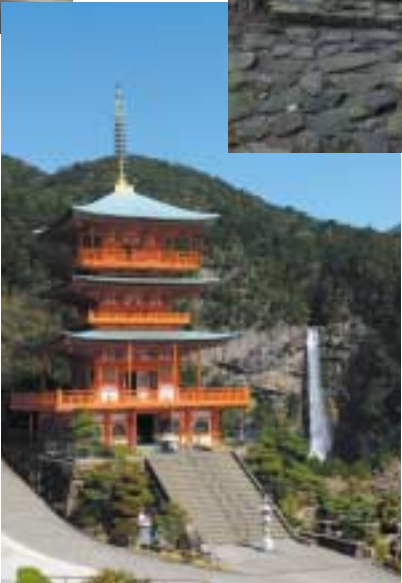


14 Kumano Hongu Grand Shrine (Hongu Town)
Kumano Hongu Grand Shrine is the heart of Kumano Sanzan where the faithful head for on pilgrimage to Kumano. It is the head shrine of more than 3,000 affiliated shrines across Japan. Until 1889, the main hall stood in Oyunohara on a sandbar where the Otonashi River and Iwata River converged, but part of the shrine was washed away by flooding, so it was moved to its present location. Climbing to the top of the stone steps that preserve the look of times past, you discover the awe-inspiring banner of the three-legged Yatagarasu crow that serves as the avatar of Kumano.



15 Kumano Nachi Grand Shrine (Nachi-Katsuura Town)
Nestled in a crack in Mt. Nachi, Kumano Nachi-taisha is one of three grand shrines of Kumano Sanzan. The 6 ornately decorated buildings located at the rear of the grounds are done in the Kumano style of gabled roof and the Gongen style of connecting the main hall and oratory by a stone-floored foyer. The museum of treasures puts rare artifacts on display such as ancient scrolls and mandalas, that bring you closer to the history and culture of the Kumano faith. Every year on June 14th is held a sacred but extravagant festival in the "Nachi-no-Himatsuri" (fire festival).

17 Seiganto-ji Temple and Nachi Falls (Nachi-Katsuura Town)
Some 133 m high, 13 m across and 10 m deep at the basin, Nachi Falls are the largest waterfall in Japan. They are also the object of worship at Hirou-jinja Shrine, a separate shrine at Kumano Nachi Grand Shrine. You can get a front view of the falls from Seiganto-ji Temple that was built next to Kumano Nachi Grand Shrine.



19 Hosshinmon-Oji (Hongu Town)
Hosshinmon-Oji is one of the sanctuaries of high status. It used to be the entrance to Kumano Hongu Grand Shrine. The general Hidetada Fujiwara wrote in his journal during his 1109 pilgrimage to Kumano that he cleansed himself here in front of the large torii - Shinto archway - before entering the sanctuary.

熊野 Kumano

Since long, long ago, Kumano, in the southern end of the Kii mountains, has been known as the land of the gods. Faith in Kumano Sanzan - the three grand shrines of Kumano Hongu, Kumano Nachi and Kumano Hayatama - led emperors and nobility of the Heian Period to these unexplored regions in search of heaven on earth. This practice spread to commoners by the Edo Period. The pilgrimage to Kumano departs from Kyoto and follows a path through Fujishiro, Kainan, to Tanabe, where the road divides. From there, there are three routes: the Nakahechi that goes eastward into the mountains, the Ohechi that follows the coast southward and the Kohechi that heads south from Koyasan to Kumano Hongu and Kumano Hayatama Grand Shrines. On the belief that "penance is the road to salvation", the Nakahechi is the main route as it winds its way through steep treacherous mountains.

Still today can be found numerous shrines called "Oji" along the Kumanokodo Way. These shrines were built specifically to provide rest and lodging for travelers on pilgrimage to Kumano. When reaching one, the travelers would take rest and pray facing in the direction of Kumano. Today, the path followed on the pilgrimage to Kumano is preserved as the Historical Road of the Kumanokodo Way.



18 Daimonzaka (Nachi-Katsuura)
The lichen-covered stones and 800 year-old cedars make this stretch of the Kumanokodo Way look the way it did long ago. In the silence of the woods, you can almost hear the voices of noblemen talking on their pilgrimage to Kumano.

20 Nakahechi of the Kumanokodo Way (Nakahechi Town)
Nakahechi flourished as the main route of the pilgrimage to Kumano. The spreading mountains before you and the hamlets in between them recall times long ago. Located nearby the Tsugizakura-Oji, this teahouse has been here for 250 years. Even today, travelers on pilgrimage to Kumano stop to rest and enjoy a bite of the local cuisine.





21 Oto-Matsuri (Shingu City)

Every year on the evening of February 6th, Kamikura-jinja Shrine plays host to this highly animated demonstration of courage, as almost 2,000 men dressed in white with rope wrapped around their waste, cladding straw sandals and carrying a torch in one hand assail the steep 538 steps to Kamikura-jinja Shrine. The origin of this festival is rooted in the legend that the Kumano gods who descended upon Mt. Kamikura settled in Kumano Hayatama Grand Shrine.

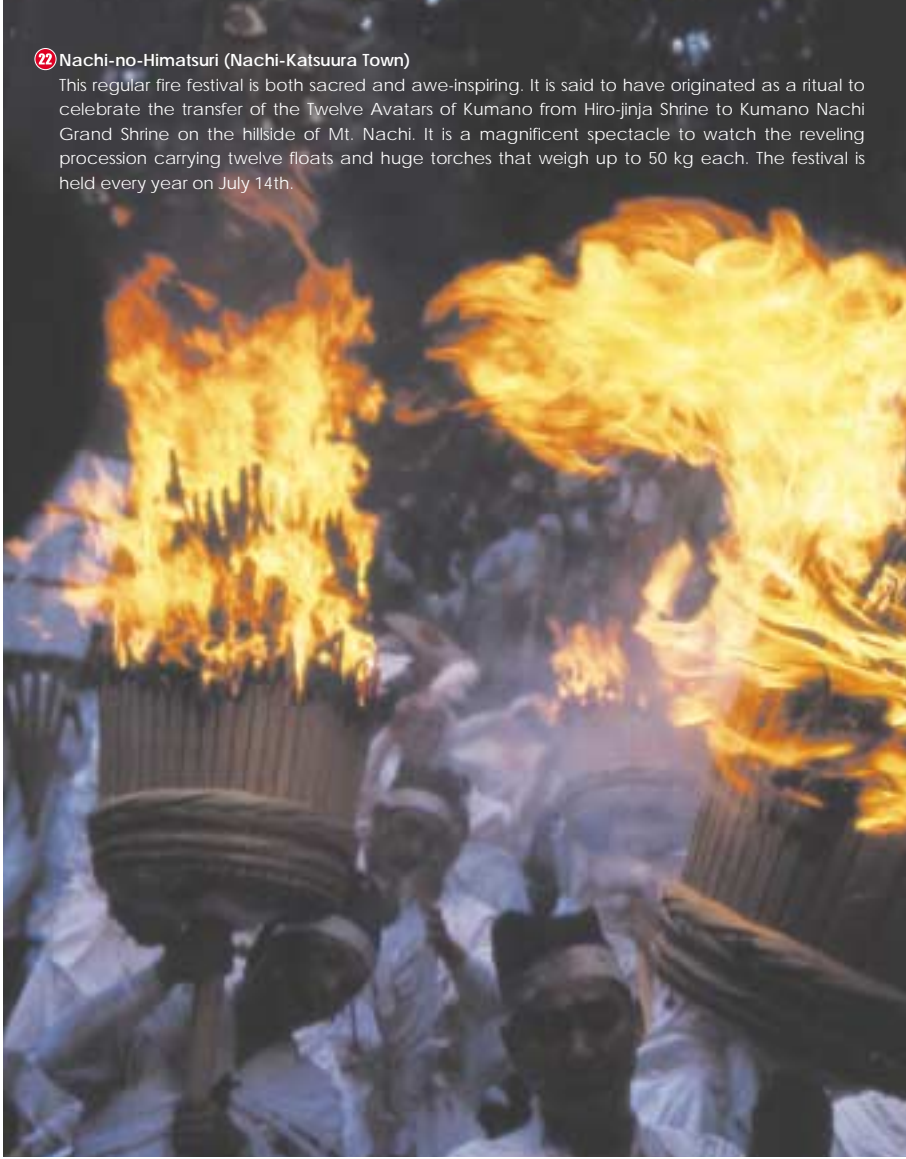


21 Kamikura-jinja Shrine (Shingu Town)

They say this is where the Kumano gods descended from the heavens. A bolder known as "Gotobiki-iwa" is the object of worship of this shrine. From the main hall perched some 60 m above the ground, you get a commanding view of Shingu.

22 Nachi-no-Himatsuri (Nachi-Katsuura Town)

This regular fire festival is both sacred and awe-inspiring. It is said to have originated as a ritual to celebrate the transfer of the Twelve Avatars of Kumano from Hiro-jinja Shrine to Kumano Nachi Grand Shrine on the hillside of Mt. Nachi. It is a magnificent spectacle to watch the reveling procession carrying twelve floats and huge torches that weigh up to 50 kg each. The festival is held every year on July 14th.



**Southern
WAKAYAMA
AREA**



23 Hashikui-iwa Rocks (Kushimoto Town)

Stretching some 850 m from Kushimoto towards Oshima Island are found about 40 odd-looking rock formations. The name, literally meaning "bridge pilings", comes from the way these rocks look like the pilings of a bridge that links Kushimoto with Oshima Island. There is also a legend that claims Kobodaishi, the monk who founded Koyasan, built this natural marvel. Its silhouette at sunrise is truly a sight worth seeing.



25 Rafting on the Kitayama River (Kitayama Town)

This thrilling and wet natural roller-coaster ride takes you down the rapids of the Kitayama River on a raft. This is the only place in all of Japan where you can enjoy such an opportunity. The season goes from May to September. Reservations absolutely required.



24 Shirahama Beach (Shirahama Town)

This is the hallmark beach of the hot spring resort of Shirahama. There are 600 m of white sandy beach arching in a bow-like shape on Kanayama Bay. Add to that the rows of palm trees just beyond the white sands and the area is adrift in a tropical mood. This is one beach that makes you feel like you are in a resort.



26 Cruising in Dorokyo Gorge (Kumanogawa Town)

This is the best gorge in the Nanki area. The grandiose beauty of the Kitayama River flowing between the steep rock faces has been named both a Place of Scenic Beauty and a Natural Monument of Japan. You can fully enjoy this natural wonder of grand scale aboard a water jet on the "Dorokyo Mawari" cruise.

27 Kishu Binchotan Charcoal (Hikigawa Town, etc.)

Kishu Binchotan is a traditional charcoal with a thousand years of history. It is a hard high-grade charcoal made from locally grown ilex that is carefully prepared by skilled craftsmen in an original kiln. Featured by a gentle flame and mild temperature, it brings out the best in grilled foods. It is named an Intangible Cultural Property of Wakayama Prefecture.





Wakayama Noodles

This is a specialty of a new Wakayama. The unique flavor of the noodles and broth in this ramen has become popular throughout Japan in recent years.



Kodai Suzume Sushi

This sushi delight is made with locally caught baby sea bream – said "kodai" in Japanese – on tightly fisted rice. It takes its name "Suzume", meaning "sparrow", from the shape that resembles a dancing sparrow.

Mehari Sushi

These rice cakes are made by wrapping freshly cooked rice in salted mustard leaves. The dish began as a lunch for men who worked in the mountains or rafted on the river. The simple taste is irresistible.



12 Shojin Cuisine

This vegetarian cuisine was born from the austere lifestyle of the monks of Koyasan who refrained from eating meat and fish because of the Buddhist precept against the killing of animal life. Koyadofu (dried tofu) and Gomadofu (tofu with sesame) are two ingredients from Koyasan that are indispensable to Shojin cuisine and a vital source of protein and nutrition for the monks of Koyasan.

Tuna Sashimi

Katsuura is the number one port in Japan for fresh tuna and the largest tuna fisheries base in the Kinki area. You have definitely got to try fresh mouth-watering tuna sashimi.



Chagayu

Kayu – or gruel – has been an everyday meal in Japan since long ago. It is made by boiling white rice until almost mushy. Chagayu is white rice boiled in roasted tea. In Wakayama, where there is not a large amount of arable land, the local people have loved it for a long, long time. This rustic delight has the aromatic fragrance of tea and goes down easily.



美味

Gourmet

Taste the wide variety of local cuisine that has developed in the rich natural environment of the seas, mountains and rivers of Wakayama.



18 Ryujin Spa (Ryujin Village)

This ancient hot spring is over 1,300 years old and said to have been discovered by Kobodaishi. Having been protected and patronized for its therapeutic effects by local lords over the centuries, the springs also go by the name of "Tonosama no Yu", literally "springs of the lord". It is also known for the effect it has on beautifying the skin because of the rich amounts of radium.

There are hot springs all across Wakayama Prefecture. You will find plenty of interesting ways to enjoy bathing including a prized soak in an open-air bath nestled amongst beautiful natural surroundings.

Hot Spring 癒し



30 Katsuura Spa (Nachi-Katsuura Town)

Alongside Shirahama Spa, Katsuura Spa is a great example of the hot spring wonders you will find in the Nanki area. Rich amounts of hot water spring all over the area from the wave-battered peninsula on Katsuura Bay and coves on the shore to small islands. There are also popular hot springs such as the "Bokido" which is located inside a grotto.



29 Hongu Spa – Yunomine Spa, Kawayu Spa and Watarase Spa (Hongu Town)

Not far from Kumano Hongu Grand Shrine is a host of great hot springs. This includes Yunomine Spa which is said to be the oldest hot spring in Japan having been frequented for 1,800 years, Kawayu Spa where hot water springs from anywhere you dig on the riverside, and Watarase Spa where you will find a kurhaus and hot spring pool in the narrow gaps between the mountains.



28 Shirahama Spa (Shirahama Town)

This is one of Japan's three oldest and most famous hot springs, besides a great example of the hot springs that riddle Japan. Even emperors made the long trip from far away Kyoto to heal themselves in the warm waters and bask in the beauty of the great outdoors. Today, it is the biggest resort in the Nanki area and visited by many tourists every year.



Spring	9~19
Summer	22~30
Fall	13~24
Winter	5~10



Traffic Access

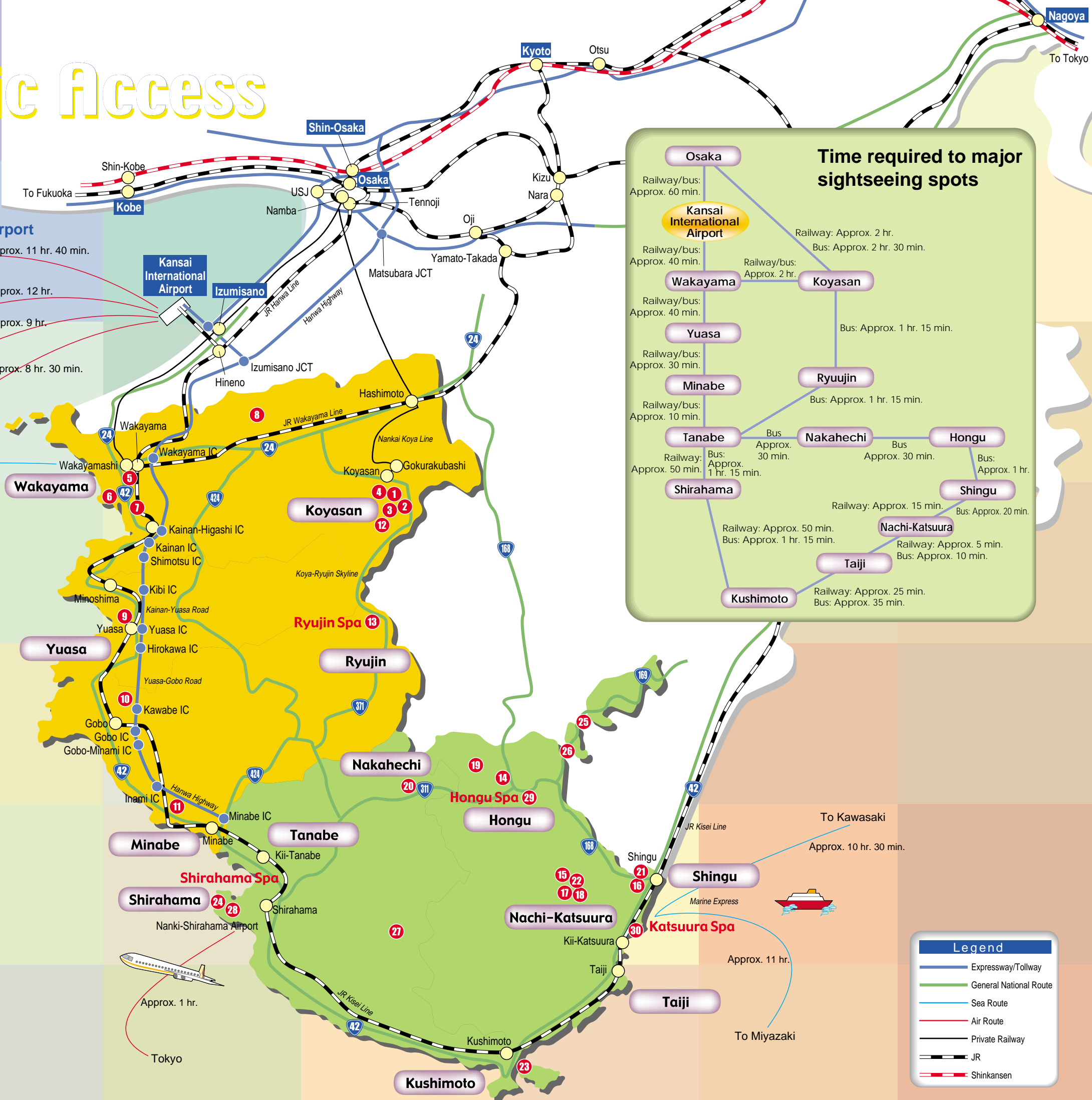
Hours required from world's major cities to Kansai International Airport

Destination	Approximate Flight Time
Paris	Approx. 11 hr. 40 min.
Frankfurt	
London	
Vancouver	Approx. 12 hr.
Los Angeles	
San Francisco	Approx. 9 hr.
Detroit	
Honolulu	Approx. 8 hr. 30 min.
Gold Coast	
Brisbane	

Ferry Approx. 2 hr.

- 1 View of Mt. Koya, Konpon-daito Tower
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- 3 Okuno-in Temple, Tokugawa Family Tomb
- 4 Daimon Gate
- 5 Wakayama Castle, Momijidani Garden
- 6 Toshogu Shrine
- 7 Kimii-dera Temple
- 8 Negoro-ji Temple
- 9 Birthplace of Soy Sauce
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- 30 Katsuura Spa








Time required to major sightseeing spots

Time required to major sightseeing spots

- Osaka**
 - Railway/bus: Approx. 60 min. → **Kansai International Airport**
- Kansai International Airport**
 - Railway/bus: Approx. 40 min. → **Wakayama**
- Wakayama**
 - Railway/bus: Approx. 40 min. → **Yuasa**
 - Railway/bus: Approx. 2 hr. → **Koyasan**
- Yuasa**
 - Railway/bus: Approx. 30 min. → **Minabe**
- Minabe**
 - Railway/bus: Approx. 10 min. → **Tanabe**
- Tanabe**
 - Railway: Approx. 50 min. → **Shirahama**
 - Bus: Approx. 30 min. → **Nakahechi**
- Shirahama**
 - Railway: Approx. 50 min. → **Kushimoto**
 - Bus: Approx. 1 hr. 15 min. → **Tanabe**
- Koyasan**
 - Bus: Approx. 1 hr. 15 min. → **Ryuujin**
- Ryuujin**
 - Bus: Approx. 1 hr. 15 min. → **Nakahechi**
- Nakahechi**
 - Bus: Approx. 30 min. → **Hongu**
- Hongu**
 - Bus: Approx. 1 hr. 15 min. → **Shingu**
- Shingu**
 - Railway: Approx. 15 min. → **Nachi-Katsuura**
 - Bus: Approx. 20 min. → **Nachi-Katsuura**
- Nachi-Katsuura**
 - Railway: Approx. 5 min. → **Taiji**
 - Bus: Approx. 10 min. → **Taiji**
- Taiji**
 - Railway: Approx. 25 min. → **Kushimoto**
 - Bus: Approx. 35 min. → **Kushimoto**
- Kushimoto**
 - Railway: Approx. 50 min. → **Tanabe**
 - Bus: Approx. 1 hr. 15 min. → **Tanabe**

Legend

-  Expressway/Tollway
-  General National Route
-  Sea Route
-  Air Route
-  Private Railway
-  JR
-  Shinkansen