

Japan's Forests with Breathtaking Views: Selections from the Tourist Destinations in National Forest

Forests have provided both mankind – and indeed all living things – with safety, sustenance and security for an eternity. The lush greenery and gentle breeze of the forest is surely enough to rekindle nature's vigor in any soul.

With more than 70% of Japan landmass covered in abundant greenery, the Forestry Agency is working to create "Recreation Forests" to inspire as many as possible to rediscover the wonder of nature.

The best forests to visit have been carefully selected and compiled as "Japan's Forests with Breathtaking Views."

Know before You Visit: General rules for visitors

- 1 Help protect wild animals and plants. When you bring your pets, please mind your manners and give consideration to the surrounding environment.
- 2 Damaging trees or stealing any forest product is penalized by law. Even collecting plants covering the ground of forest are prohibited within protection forests designated by law.
- 3 Do not enter the area beyond walking trails, or public squares. Please follow the rules for each Recreation Forest such as no camping outside the designated area.
- 4 Do not enter the area with 'No Entry' or 'Keep Out' sign.
- 5 When making a stop for rest or any other purposes, please look around and confirm that the area is safe without any risk of being hit by falling branches or rocks.
- 6 Enjoy mountaineering on your own responsibility. Please ensure that you submit your plan for mountaineering to a police station in the area as well as to your family members, your friends or colleagues after checking out climate and other necessary information for mountaineering and fully being equipped. Please also fill in 'the Name List of Climbers and Visitors', which is placed at the mountain entrance.
- 7 Do not enter forests under bad weather conditions.
- 8 Do not dispose of any leftover food in the forest. Please take your garbage home with you.
- 9 Smoking is permitted only in special areas. Make sure to extinguish any fires, e.g. after smoking cigarettes.
- 10 Mountain paths are potentially dangerous to walk. Do not use smartphone while walking. When taking photos, please remain fully aware of your surroundings and do not bother other visitors in any way.
- 11 If you wish to use an unmanned aerial vehicle (drone), you need to submit prior written notice to District Forest Office. Please contact the nearest Regional Forest Office or District Forest Office of national forest beforehand.

Koyasan (Mount Koya) Recreation Forest Access Map



Access

By public transport:

- Gokurakubashi Station (Nankai Electric Railway) → about 20 minutes on foot (1.5 km)
- Nyonindo bus stop (Nankai Rinkan Bus) → about 10 minutes on foot (1.2 km)
- JR Osaka Station → (JR Osaka Loop Line (change trains at Shin-imamiya Station)) → (Limited Express Koya (Nankai Electric Railway): 100 minutes) → Gokurakubashi Station
- JR Osaka Station → (JR Osaka Loop Line (change trains at Shin-imamiya Station)) → (Limited Express Koya (Nankai Electric Railway) (change trains at Gokurakubashi Station): 110 minutes) → Koyasan Station (Nankai Rinkan Bus: 6 minutes) → Nyonindo bus stop

By car:

- From the Nara/Wakayama direction
Keinawa Expressway Katsuragi-nisihashi IC → (public road: about 45 minutes) → Daimon-Minami Parking Lot (Nankai Rinkan Bus: 12 minutes) → get off at the Nyonindo bus stop

Koyasan (Mt. Koya) Recreation Forest

Address : Koyasan National Forest, Koya Town, Ito County, Wakayama Prefecture

Management office contact details:
Wakayama District Forest Office
FAX : 0739-25-5433

National Forest Planning Division, Forestry Agency, MAFF

The Official Recreation Forests Website of the Forestry Agency
http://www.rinya.maff.go.jp/e/national_forest/recreation_forest/index.html



KOYASAN (Mt. Koya)

Recreation Forest



Forest on the sacred Koyasan plateau

Koyasan (Mt. Koya) Recreation Forest Map



Climate, flora and fauna

Although Koyasan is located in Wakayama Prefecture, which generally has a temperate climate, the seasons there arrive earlier than in the rest of the prefecture, and the temperature tends to be low throughout the year due to the area's elevation of approximately 800 m.

Construction of temples required long, thick logs because the buildings were tall and the rooms were wide. Therefore, the so-called six tree species of Koyasan (Sugi (Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*)), Hinoki (Japanese cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*)), Akamatsu (Japanese red pine (*Pinus densiflora*)), Momi (fir (*Abies firma*)), Koyamaki (Japanese umbrella pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata* (Thunb.) Siebold et Zucc.), and Tsuga (Japanese hemlock (*Tsuga sieboldii*))) were planted because they are appropriate for the climate and useful as timber. The current magnificent scenery is considered to be a result of the mountain forest system established in the mid-Edo period (late 17th to early 18th century CE). The trees—particularly Japanese cypress and Japanese umbrella pine—were protected, and logging of the six tree species for uses other than temple repairs was banned in 1813. In Koyasan's protected forest of rare Japanese umbrella pine, located adjacent to the Recreation Forest, a mix of tree species have been cultivated, mainly consisting of the six tree species of Koyasan. This forest was designated as a protected forest in 1918, and has been managed as such ever since.



Young Koyamaki trees (Japanese umbrella pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata* (Thunb.) Siebold et Zucc.)) sprouting

Attractions

The Koyasan (Mount Koya) Recreation Forest forms part of the Koya-Ryujin Quasi-national Park. A natural forest and a planted forest of old conifers create superb scenery. The area can be entered from the walking trail adjacent to "Nyonindo." The beautiful conifer forest can be explored via the Forest Therapy Road, which runs through Koyasan's protected forest of rare Japanese umbrella pine. Relax and enjoy the rich natural splendor of Koyasan's unique natural environment.



Forest Therapy Road

The adjacent protected forest preserves a natural forest consisting of 130- to 290-year-old trees, including the six tree species of Koyasan, which are appropriate for this sacred site. You can feel the history of the religious town of Koyasan and the trees that supported its development.

Geographical / topographical features

The forest is located on Koyasan, a flat area with an elevation of approximately 800 m surrounded by over-1,000 m mountains, in Koya Town, Ito County, in northern Wakayama Prefecture.

The name Koyasan (literally, "Mt. Koya") gives the impression of a mountain peak. However, Koyasan is in fact a flat basin 6 km from east to west and 3 km from north to south.



Looking toward Koyasan from Nyonindo temple

Historical / cultural features

Koyasan, where the Koyasan (Mount Koya) Recreation Forest is located, is a sacred site for the esoteric Buddhist Shingon sect, which was started by the priest Kukai, also known as Kobo Daishi, at the beginning of the Heian period (8th century CE). It is a unique religious site without parallel anywhere else in Japan, and is the location of more than 100 temples.

In 2004, Koyasan was registered as a UNESCO Cultural World Heritage site as part of the "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range." In addition, it marked the 1200th anniversary of its foundation in 2015. Koyasan has become an international tourist spot and receives large numbers of both domestic and international visitors.



Dai-mon Gate, the main gate of Koyasan and a symbol of the sacred boundary

Information

- Elevation(m) 580–740
- Area (ha) 25.09
- Entrance fee Free
- Operating seasons Accessible 24 hours a day
- Accommodation options [Outside the forest] 52 Koyasan temples can be used as Shukubo (temple lodging) (accommodations for worshippers). They all have their own histories and characteristics. Some are associated with famous samurai while others feature beautiful gardens and fusuma (sliding screen) paintings.
- Car parking capacity / parking charges Free parking for 200 vehicles at the Daimon-Minami Parking Lot