

TITLE: Ainoura Guchi Nyonindo Hall Site

The seven locations where roads led down from the Nyonin Michi (Women's Pilgrimage Route) to the sacred plateau of Koyasan were historically referred to as "gates" (*guchi*), even though no physical barriers existed to block the path. The Ainoura Guchi Nyonindo 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. Because its long-lasting, fragrant needles grow in spiral shapes that resemble flowers, the *koyamaki*'s branches are often used in formal arrangements and as offerings at temples, shrines, and graves in Koyasan.

Travelers from Ainoura and other locations around the sacred mountain often climbed the slopes to worship at Koyasan, bringing with them special offerings that represented their region, town, or village. Carrying these items up the mountain for presentation at Koyasan demonstrated the pilgrims' devotion, respect, and religious faith.