

TITLE: Rokuro Pass

Considered one of the best viewpoints on the Nyonin Michi (Women's Pilgrimage Route), Rokuro Pass is said to have received its name due to its spectacular views of the Kii Mountain Range and the Koyasan plateau. In Japanese, *rokuro kubi* means "to stretch the neck (or head)" in order to obtain a better view. Upon reaching Rokuro Pass, travelers often stopped to appreciate the misty peaks of the Kii mountains, the autumn foliage of Koyasan, and the mystical sound of temple bells ringing in the sacred valley.

Also known as the "gateway to Kumano," Rokuro Pass is one of the seven traditional "gates" or entrances to Koyasan. Each of the gates was located at an important historical crossroad where paths leading up the sides of the mountain intersected with both the Nyonin Michi and with trails leading down onto the sacred plateau. The roughly circular pilgrimage route circumnavigates the top of the sacred mountain and was used as both a transit route and a pilgrimage trail. From the Edo period (1603–1867) until the introduction of modern transit routes to Koyasan during the early Meiji period (1868–1912), Rokuro Pass and the Nyonin Michi were vital hubs connecting the Kumano region with the rest of Wakayama and Japan.

Although religious restrictions prevented women from entering Koyasan until the Meiji period, many women walked the pilgrimage route through Rokuro Pass, both as religious pilgrims and while traveling between locations on either side of Koyasan. From here, as well as from other places on the Nyonin Michi, men and women could see the temples and other sacred buildings of Koyasan, allowing them to "visit" these important sites without descending to the sacred plateau.