

**TITLE: Kotsugi Pass**

Kotsugi Pass sits between the sacred peaks of Mt. Tenjiku and Mt. Yoryu, about halfway along an 8.6-km stretch of the Nyonin Michi (Women's Pilgrimage Route) now known as the Koya Sanzan Course. Historically, this pass was known as Yamato Guchi, or "the Yamato Gate Route," because people from Yamato (now known as Nara Prefecture) once used this route to travel to Koyasan on pilgrimage.

A small wooden structure near the edge of the path enshrines a statue known as the Koyasu Jizo. For centuries, people have visited this shrine to pray in the hope that Jizo will bless them with children. Although the statue's exact age is unknown, carvings on the stone indicate this Jizo is at least several centuries old.

Kotsugi Pass is also famous for being the place where the renowned warrior lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) fled from Koyasan. According to local legend, Hideyoshi performed a tea ceremony on the holy plateau, despite the ceremony being forbidden on Koyasan. When the furious gods sent a thunderstorm to strike the peak, Hideyoshi fled on horseback through Kotsugi Pass to escape their wrath. Legend aside, it is known that Hideyoshi initially came to Koyasan intending to burn the holy precincts to the ground but had a change of heart and ended up an ardent patron and protector of the area.