

TITLE: Kyo-Osaka Michi Fudozaka Pilgrimage Trail

The Kyo-Osaka Michi Fudozaka Pilgrimage Trail follows a portion of the historical route that once connected Koyasan with the cities of Kyoto and Osaka. The trail begins near Gokurakubashi Station, the lower terminus of the Koyasan cable car line. From there, the trail follows a steep, curving path which splits in two at Irohazaka slope. One trail follows the original Fudozaka course, while the second follows an easier route constructed in 1915 to replace the more difficult original trail. Today hikers can choose to follow either the newer, easier route or the more historical course. The two routes cross once, near the Kiyomeno Fudodo (Kiyomeno Fudo Hall), and become a single route once more at Hanaorizaka slope, approximately 400 m below the trail's endpoint at the Fudozaka Guchi Nyonindo Hall.

Near the Fudozaka Route grow forests of *koyamaki*, or umbrella pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata*), a conifer native to Japan that has grown on the slopes of Koyasan since prehistoric times. Because its needles grow in spiral patterns that resemble flowers and remain fresh long after cutting, branches from the *koyamaki* are often used in formal arrangements and as offerings at temples and graves at Koyasan.

Historically, routes like the Fudozaka Pilgrimage Trail were used not only by religious pilgrims but also by other travelers. People used the various routes up Koyasan, as well as the Nyonin Michi (Women's Pilgrimage Route), to travel and transport goods between locations on opposite sides of Koyasan and also to other places throughout Japan. The Fudozaka Pilgrimage Trail was one of the most important, and busiest, of these routes, and the Fudozaka Guchi Nyonindo Hall was a key meeting place and lodging point for the travelers using this route to climb the sacred mountain. For much of Koyasan's history, the Fudozaka Guchi Nyonindo Hall was also the closest women could get to entering Koyasan. Until the Meiji period (1868–1912), religious restrictions prohibited women from entering the sacred plateau. However, many women climbed the mountain and circled Koyasan using the Nyonin Michi.

In addition to the Fudozaka Guchi Nyonindo Hall, other buildings were constructed near the terminus of the Fudozaka Pilgrimage Trail at various times during Koyasan's history. The number and nature of these buildings changed over time to meet the needs of travelers on the Fudozaka and other travel routes.

The Fudozaka Pilgrimage Trail fell into disuse during the early Meiji period when trains, roads, and the Koyasan cable car replaced the hiking routes as the primary means of access to Koyasan. However, religious pilgrims and hikers continue to use this route, as well as the longer Koyasan Choishimichi Pilgrimage Route, to approach Koyasan on foot for recreational and religious purposes.