

Jabara Michi: Dragon's-Belly Path

This small path connecting the Danjo Garan temple complex to Kongobuji Temple is called the Jabara Michi, or “dragon’s-belly path.” Koyasan is thought to be laid out in a shape reminiscent of a reclining dragon, with the Danjo Garan as the head and the area up to Rengein Temple making up the body. The path here happens to be where the dragon’s belly would be.

However, *jabara* can also mean “snake’s belly,” a reference to a curious local legend about the priest Kukai (known posthumously as Kobo Daishi; 774–835), who founded Koyasan. According to this tale, when he first came up the mountain to establish his Buddhist monastic center, the area was wild and full of dangerous snakes. He fashioned a broom out of bamboo and proceeded to sweep all the snakes from Koyasan into a well.