

## **Yusakamichi**

Before the Edo period (1603–1867), when the Tokaido highway was the main route through Hakone, travelers would use the ancient Yusakamichi road to cross this mountainous region. Established in the ninth century, the path begins at Hakone-Yumoto and traverses the hilly landscape of central Hakone before beginning a long descent toward Ashinoyu and Hakone Shrine. On the way, it passes Shojingaike, a pond known for the many stone Buddhist statues sculpted by people hoping for divine protection from the dangers of the road. In 1180, Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), the samurai lord who sought refuge at Hakone Shrine after his defeat in a battle against the mighty Taira family, traveled over the Yusakamichi. Yoritomo eventually reassembled his army, crushed the Taira, and in 1185 established the Kamakura shogunate, which was to maintain de facto control over Japan for almost 150 years. Yoritomo's triumph inspired generations of Minamoto family samurai to pay their respects at the shrine that had sheltered their lord, and gave the Yusakamichi its greatest period of prosperity. You can follow in these warriors' footsteps by walking the 10.4-kilometer length of the trail, which is now maintained as a hiking course.