

Stone Signpost

Left or Right?

The carving on this stone combines practical directions for travelers on the Yogawa-michi with a relief image of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, holding a lotus flower. (Travelers would take the Yogawa-michi route when floods or landslides made the traditional Nakasendo route down in the valley impassable.)

The text on the left of the goddess reads, “Left for the road to Nojiri,” and the text on the right reads, “Right for the local mountain road.” We know when the stone was erected because the date is carved into it: “Tenth month” on the left side, and “Year 10 of the Horeki era” (that is, 1761) on the right. The slightly ornate, curved tip of the stone is a typical mid-Edo-period flourish.