

【Tōge no Sanjūsan Kannon Course】

The Tōge no Sanjūsan Kannon Course is an intermediate nature trail that climbs 640 meters from the Kanbayashi bus stop to the Sun Valley bus stop. The 5.6-kilometer upward climb takes approximately three and a half hours, but the course can also be done downhill, in reverse, which takes about two and a half hours.

The course leads past 33 stone statues of Kannon, the Buddhist deity of mercy and compassion. This trail was once part of an old road that ran from Shiga to the town of Kusatsu, and the statues served both as guideposts and as places of worship where travelers could pray for the safe completion of their journeys.

Kannon is considered a protector of travelers, and statues of the deity can often be found along roads. The Lotus Sutra describes Kannon as having 33 manifestations, and subsequently pilgrimages encompassing 33 Kannon statues are quite common. In fact, the statues here are modeled on those of the temples in the famous route in the Kansai region known as the Saigoku Kannon Pilgrimage Circuit.