

Futae-no-toge Mountain Pass [Futae Pass]

Futae Pass is connected to one of Aso's myths. According to legend, the deity Takeiwatatsu no Mikoto tried to empty the Aso caldera, which at the time was a giant lake, by kicking down its walls. Despite his efforts, the deity could not break through the walls because they were two layers thick. The word "futae" means two layers, hence the name of the pass.

The pass was also important during the Edo period (1603–1868), when daimyo lords of domains throughout Japan were required to travel to Edo every other year under the "alternate attendance" system (*sankin kotai*). This system allowed the Tokugawa shogunate to control the lords by requiring them to reside alternately in their own domain and Edo (present-day Tokyo). The move between residences was carried out in a long procession that was mainly undertaken on foot. The lords of Aso began their journey to Edo here, on a paved road called the Bungo Kaido. This road once stretched all the way to what is now the city of Oita on the east coast of Kyushu, where the lord and his entourage would board boats to cross to the island of Honshu.

Much of the Edo period (1603–1868) stone pavement can still be seen on the pass. Laying the pavement was a huge undertaking at the time, and people from several nearby villages joined in the effort. In a gesture of pride, some people from the village of Iwasakamura etched the name of their hometown into some of the stones. See if you can spot the inscription as you walk across the pass and relive a little bit of history.