

Ogumotori-goe Jizo-do Hall

Not far from the Jizo-jaya Teahouse Remains on the Ogumotori-goe route stands the Jizo-do Hall. This unassuming building houses 32 statues of the bodhisattva Jizo, said to watch over travelers.

A Fishmonger's Donation

According to an inscription on the site, the original Jizo-do Hall and its contents were donated in 1707 by a fishmonger named Rokube from the city of Sakai, in Osaka. The statues inside are the original ones, but the hall itself has been periodically rebuilt, as uninhabited wooden structures deteriorate quickly in the mountains. The most recent rebuilding took place in 2015.

Originally, the Jizo-do Hall had 33 statues. The location of the missing statue is unknown. According to one local legend, it roams the Kumano Kodo, secretly helping travelers in need.

A Shugendo Site

The Jizo-do Hall is regularly visited by *yamabushi*, practitioners of Shugendo. Shugendo is a tradition of mountain asceticism that combines elements from Buddhism, Shinto, and Taoism. Kumano was a major Shugendo center in medieval times, and *yamabushi* even appear in the 500-year-old painting called the Nachi Pilgrimage Mandala.

In recent decades, the assistant head priest at Seiganto-ji has led a Shugendo revival in Kumano. *Yamabushi* enter the mountains to practice austerities in summer and spring, and leave wooden plaques called *hide* (pronounced “hee-day”) at various statues and shrines as they pass them. Many *hide* can be found in the Jizo-do Hall at these times of year.