

Kyushu Olle Ureshino Course

Origins of the Olle Hiking Course

The term *olle* comes from the local dialect of Jeju Island in South Korea. In Korean, the word refers to a narrow path between a street and someone's doorstep. This idea evolved into a series of walking trails that cover the entire coast of the island. The course offers access to a variety of pleasant landscapes, from beaches and small villages to farms and forests.

The Jeju Island Courses

On Jeju Island there are currently 26 walking routes—21 main routes and 5 subroutes—extending a total of 425 kilometers. The trails vary in difficulty, and hikers can pick which ones suit them best. Passports can be purchased from the Jeju Olle Information Center and hikers may collect stamps along the route, receiving a certificate of completion if they finish all the routes.

The Kyushu Olle Courses

Kyushu Olle is the name of a network of 21 walking courses (as of February 2021) on the island of Kyushu that collectively form a sister version of the Jeju Olle. Kyushu Olle was originally created to attract visitors from South Korea and is designed to showcase seasonal views of the region throughout the year. To qualify as an official Olle course, each route is strictly regulated and monitored by the Olle organization in Jeju to ensure that the course is easy to follow and offers a variety of experiences.

The Ureshino Course centers around the hot-spring town of Ureshino, known for the silken texture of its bathing waters. The alkaline water is said to help cleanse and promote healthy skin as well as to cure certain skin ailments. The area is also known for its tea farms, and Ureshino tea is considered among the best in Japan.

The Ureshino Course begins at the Hizen Yoshida Pottery Hall, which showcases Yoshida ware, the style of pottery and porcelain for which the area is known. A short

walk uphill leads to Daijōji Temple, famous for its rows of statues of the guardian deity Jizo and Yoshiura Shrine.

Continue along the course to visit “Gongen-san,” the water deity said to have dwelled in the cave for the past 1,000 years, and to visit the Thirteen Buddhas. Then walk uphill to the Bozuhara Pilot Tea Garden to take in views of tea plantations against a scenic mountain backdrop. On a clear day the path has a good view of the Ariake Sea, known for its role in transporting the raw materials for ceramics produced in Ureshino. From here, the course winds into the hills and takes hikers to the 22nd Century Asian Forest and its grove of dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) trees, “living fossils” once thought to have gone extinct a million years ago. Todoroki Falls is next, considered a sacred place and the setting of the legend about two deities in love who were separated, then reunited by the actions of modern humans. The course finishes at Siebold’s Footbath, where hikers can soothe their tired feet in the silky-smooth, hot-spring water.

Key Points

The Ureshino Course is 12.5 kilometers long and takes between 4 and 5 hours to complete. It is recommended for intermediate to advanced walkers. The route is well signposted. Keep an eye out for the horse-shaped markers known as *kanse* with their heads pointing in the direction of the Course. Wooden arrows and arrows painted on stones also serve as pointers. Ribbons are placed every 100 to 200 meters to keep walkers on track, and signs mark 40 rescue points at 300-meter intervals in case of emergency. All signposts are color-coded in blue and red. Blue indicates the standard walking course and red indicates a route deviating from the main course.