

Chokushi Kaido Road

The Chokushi Kaido (“imperial messenger road”) is a historic road leading to [Usa Jingu Shrine](#) that has long been traversed by *chokushi*, messengers who deliver offerings and read prayers to the shrine deities on behalf of the emperor. Though the name Chokushi Kaido used to refer to a longer part of an important trade route through northeastern Kyushu, it is now applied to the section of road between the [Kesho Ido Wells](#) and the [Kurehashi Bridge](#), a western entrance into Usa Jingu grounds. The Chokushi Kaido stretches out in a straight line for about a kilometer, offering a particularly scenic view when the sun sets at just the right angle.

The illustrated diary of the travelling artist [Minomushi Sanjin](#) (1836–1900) contains sketches of the *chokushi* procession of 1864, providing a valuable visual record of both the Chokushi Kaido and the imperial messenger’s visit at that time. At present, a *chokushi* is dispatched to Usa Jingu once every 10 years to participate in the [Rinji Hobeisai](#) ritual. The route that the messenger travels has changed with the advent of modern transportation, but he still makes part of the journey along the Chokushi Kaido in honor of tradition.

Although the Chokushi Kaido is no longer the primary approach to Usa Jingu, there are several noteworthy sites along the road, including the Kesho Ido Wells, [Kyoshuzuka Tumulus](#), [Hyakutai Jinja Shrine](#), and a shop that specializes in making goods from bottle gourds, a traditional Usa craft. In 2020, renovations were carried out with great care to maintain the atmosphere of the area, preserving the path once traveled by *chokushi* messengers and countless pilgrims heading to Usa Jingu. Utility poles and power lines were replaced with simple street lamps, and the road was repaved in a cobblestone motif. Stones from the original Chokushi Kaido that were unearthed during excavation are now used as decorative pavement along the section of the road in front of Hyakutai Shrine.