

## **Wakasa Kaido Road**

The Wakasa Kaido road was used since ancient times to transport seafood and other goods from the port town of Obama to the old capitals of Nara and Kyoto. During the Edo period (1603–1867), it was the most well-traveled road among the multitude of trade routes comprising the Saba Kaido (“Mackerel Road”) network. The Wakasa Kaido ran from Obama to Kumagawa-juku post town, over the Hozaka Pass through the mountains, south to the village of Kutsuki, and further south through Ohara and Yase, ending at Demachiyanagi in northern Kyoto.

### *Historical Records on the Role of Wakasa Kaido*

Records of shipments and business dealings conducted along the Wakasa Kaido in the Edo period, such as the *Obama ichiba nakagai monjo* (Obama Market Brokerage Archives), make it possible to estimate the scale of travel that occurred at the time. Other books published in the mid-eighteenth century contain descriptions of construction projects aimed at enabling shipping by riverboat between Obama and Kumagawa-juku, as well as data on how many hundreds of horses passed through the post town in certain years.

### *Part of a Pilgrimage Route*

In addition to being an essential trade route, the Wakasa Kaido road played an important role in religious life. A section of the road helped connect Matsuno’odera Temple and Hōgonji Temple, two stops along the Saigoku Kannon Pilgrimage route in western Japan that encompasses 33 temples dedicated to Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion. According to early eighteenth-century business records from Kumagawa-juku, sometimes hundreds of pilgrims stayed the night in the post town on their way along the Wakasa Kaido.