

Itado Pass

Itado Pass is the highest point on the historic Hagi Okan highway between the cities of Hagi in the north of Yamaguchi Prefecture and Hofu in the south. It is cut into the ridge of a mountain at an elevation of 537 meters and is less than 4 meters wide at its narrowest point. A trail leads from the pass to the summit of Higashi Hobenzan (734 m) where climbers can take in panoramas of inland and coastal Yamaguchi. There is also a stone monument near the pass which marks the border between the historic provinces of Suo and Nagato.

The Hagi Okan was one of the main routes through modern-day Yamaguchi Prefecture between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. It was used by everyone, from daimyo lords and their retainers to samurai, merchants, and laborers. The journey south-to-north over the mountain pass in the direction of Hagi is especially challenging because of the steep rise in elevation and the 42 switchbacks that climb to the pass.

Miners from local communities used the pass to cross over the mountain to work at the Ichinosaka Silver Mine, controlled by the ruling Mori family. Miners prayed to return safely from their labors at a small worship hall built on the pass. *Itado* means “shingle-roofed hall,” and while it is no longer standing, the name of the pass signifies its importance to those who walked the Hagi Okan.