

The Aizu-Numata Kaido: From Hinoemata (Fukushima Prefecture)

The Aizu-Numata Kaido is a historic route that winds for approximately 16 kilometers through mountains and highlands over the border of present-day Fukushima and Gunma Prefectures. During the Edo period (1603–1867), the road was a primary means of transportation and trade between the villages of Hinoemata in Aizu (Fukushima) and Katashina in Numata (Gunma). The route can be walked in either direction from the Nanairi or Oshimizu trailheads. The scenery along the road is part of Oze National Park.

A bountiful land

In Fukushima, the road was called the Numata Kaido, referring to where it led. The villagers of Hinoemata took advantage of the abundant natural environment through traditional practices of logging, hunting, and fishing. Wood from Japanese thuja (a type of cypress) and northern five-needle pine trees was split into roof shingles that were traded or sold along the

route. Hunters sought game such as bear and rabbit in the mountains. The rivers and streams of Oze had plentiful char and other fish that became a staple of the local diet.

Mountain, marsh, and forest

From Numayama-toge Pass, a trail leads to Oe Marsh, where a rich variety of alpine plants thrive. Behind the Numayama-toge Pass Rest House is the Michigizawa section of the Numata Kaido, a woodland of giant beech, conifers, and Japanese horse chestnut trees. The beautiful cascade of Dakikaeri Falls (25 m) is a main attraction of the Michigizawa area. The route through Michigizawa leads to Nanairi, the starting point of the

Numata Kaido.

Oze: a symbol of environmental conservation

Cultural figures, including botanists and artists, as well as passionate residents, helped establish Oze as a tourist destination in the twentieth century through publications, exhibitions, and civic advocacy. Some also

led efforts to protect the land from large-scale development projects. A number of initiatives to mitigate the impact of tourism and preserve the environment were enacted between the 1960s and 1970s and remain in place today. As a result, the name Oze has become synonymous with conservation in Japan.