

# A GUIDE TO KOYASAN



## ■ Dai-mon Gate ■ MAP-①

The main gate to the entire Koyasan area. Reconstructed in 1705, it is a 2-story wooden structure standing 25.8m tall, with a Kongorikishi (protector deities) guarding on either side.



## ■ Reihokan Museum ■ MAP-②

A museum preserving important cultural assets of Koyasan, including national treasures.



## ■ Konpon Daito ■ (Fundamental Pagoda)

Daito was constructed by Kobo Daishi (Kukai) as a center for the study of Shingon (Esoteric) Buddhism.

In the center of this tower there is a statue of the "Universal Buddha" (Dainichi Nyorai) seated in the "Womb Mandala" (Taizokai) and surrounded by four protector Buddhas from the "Diamond World" (Kongokai). This is a unique three-dimensional mandala that is comprised of statues and brilliant paintings covering both the tower's walls and its 16 massive columns.



## ■ Mie-do Hall ■

Mie-do Hall was constructed as a Jibutsu-do Hall (building for enshrining Buddhist images) and Nenju-do Hall (building for chanting sutras) by Kobo Daishi (Kukai). The current edifice was reconstructed in 1847, and with its gently sloping roof and extending eaves, is one of the most elegant buildings in the entire area.



## ■ Kon-do Hall ■

Kon-do Hall was built in 819 by Kobo Daishi (Kukai) as a Kobo (lecture hall). The present building was reconstructed in 1932 and is used for major ceremonies of Koyasan.

## ■ Danjo Garan ■ (Sacred Temple Complex) MAP-③

Garan is a sacred area founded by Kukai (posthumously known as Kobo Daishi) as a place for the study of Shingon (Esoteric) Buddhism. The Kon-do Hall was constructed first, followed by the surrounding buildings. The erection of Konpon Daito required the greatest work among all the buildings. Many of the buildings you see now were reconstructed due to the loss of the originals because of fires caused by lightning, as lightning rods were unavailable in those days. The sole remaining original building is the Fudo-do, a designated national treasure.



## Koyasan Trivia

### Sanko no Matsu

It is said that Kukai was in search of a place for training and threw a Sanko to see where it would land when he returned from Tang Dynasty China. The Sanko was caught on this Matsu (pine tree), hence the tree became called as "Sanko no Matsu". It even appears as though the Sanko might have caused the pine needles to grow in groups of three. Quite interesting, isn't it?  
※Sanko (Sankosho) ··· Three-Pronged Vajra (a small, hand-held tool used in rituals)



## ■ Kongobu-ji Head Temple ■ MAP-④

In 1593, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the ruler of Japan at the time, had Seigan-ji Temple built to commemorate his deceased mother and to pray for the enlightenment of her soul. In 1869, this temple became known as Kongobu-ji Temple and the head temple of Koyasan. This temple is the head temple to about 3600 branch temples of the Koyasan Shingon Sect nationwide.



## ■ Nyonin-do Hall ■ MAP-⑤

Until 1872, women were prohibited from entering the grounds of Koyasan, a place for Buddhist training. For this reason, a Nyonin-do Hall (Building for Women) was built at each of the seven entrances, where it is said that women prayed at the temple grounds from here. This is the only one of the seven Nyonin-do Hall now standing, reminding visitors of its past.



## ■ Tokugawa Mausoleum ■ MAP-⑥

The mausoleum was built in 1643. The construction was ordered by the shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, and took 20 years to complete. The mausoleum shines with gold on the inside and is richly decorated with delicate designs. It enshrines the past shoguns Tokugawa Ieyasu and Tokugawa Hidetada.



## ■ Karukaya-do Hall ■ MAP-⑦

This is the legendary building where the monks Karukaya Doshin and Ishidomaru, without recognizing each other as father and son, practiced asceticism. Many paintings recounting the story can be seen inside the building.



## ■ Okuno-in ■ MAP-⑧

Over 200,000 tombstones and Buddhist memorials called stupas of people including famous samurai lords line up along with giant, several hundred year old Japanese cedars on either side of the 2km (1.25miles) path leading from the Ichinohashi Bridge. Kobodaishi Gobyu Mausoleum is located at the end of the path. The sacred religious centre is frequented by worshippers and pilgrims.



## ■ Mizumuke Jizo ■

These large Jizo (guardian deities) line up at the foot of the Gobyu no hashi Bridge. Visitors pour water here to pray for their ancestors.



## ■ Gobyu no hashi Bridge ■

When crossing over this bridge, you will enter the sacred ground of Kobo Daishi (Kukai). The names of 36 Buddhas of Kongokai (the Diamond World) are written at the back of the bridge.



## ■ Toro-do Hall ■

Toro-do was constructed as a building for worship facing Kukai's Mausoleum. The over 10000 lanterns were dedicated by worshippers and continue to burn endlessly.

