



# Japan Heritage Living with Whales

— A Story of Whales and People —

W A K A Y A M A

Publisher: Association for the Preservation of the Kumano Sea Whaling Culture  
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Official Website

In 2016, "Living with Whales," a story about whaling culture in coastal areas of Wakayama Prefecture bordering the Kumano Sea, was designated as part of the Japan Heritage.





# Japan Heritage Living with Whales

Famous for the Black Current, the Kumano Sea, which sparkles in the warm sunlight of its southern climate, has been home to whales since ancient times. Eventually humans living in the area came to hunt them, even as they respected and revered the gigantic creatures. At the same time, they valued the whales more than anyone, with the result that this story of whales and people was spun in the southern ocean.

The Kumano Sea is seen from Kajitori-zaki Point in the town of Taiji, where a traditional whaling lookout was located. The promontory that can be seen in the background is known as Tomyo-zaki Point.

People living in coastal areas on the southeast tip of the Kii Peninsula along the Kumano Sea, where the Black Current flows, have coexisted with whales since ancient times. In certain areas, organized whaling began during the early Edo period and developed into the region's largest industry. The enormous bounty of the sea provided people's livelihood, inspiring local residents to offer gratitude to the whales and use their enormous bodies without leaving anything to waste. Whaling continues to this day. Historic sites testify to the long-running connection between people and whales in the region, where whale-related festivals, traditional performing arts, and dietary culture continue to be passed down from one generation to the next.

In April 2016, "Living with Whales," the story of Kumano's whaling culture, was designated as part of the Japan Heritage by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The story takes place in Wakayama Prefecture in the city of Shingu and in the three towns of Taiji, Nachikatsuura, and Kushimoto. Of the three, Taiji has a particularly close association with whaling.

Located at the southernmost tip of Honshu, this area is also home to Kumano Sanzan, which along with Kumano Kodo make up the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range, a World Heritage site. Consider visiting Kumano, where the appeal of Japan Heritage by the sea mingles with that of World Heritage in the mountains, to witness this remarkable story of whales and humans!



1 Miwasaki Whale Dance, which offers a stirring recreation of practices of whaling (page 5) 2 An annual Archery Ritual held at Asuka-jinja Shrine to pray for safety at sea and bountiful catch of fish (page 5) 3 A "weathercock whale" on top of Kajitori-zaki Point Lighthouse (page 13) 4 The Kumano Sea as seen from Mt. Myoho, one of the three peaks of Nachi 5 A Fish Memorial on the grounds of Nachisan Seiganto-ji Temple (page 10) 6 A whale memorial at Kajitori-zaki Point Garden (page 13) 7 Cape Shiono-misaki Lookout (page 14) 8 Taiji Port, a base for whaling since the Edo period

## Japan Heritage

As part of its Japan Heritage program, the Agency for Cultural Affairs recognizes stories that communicate Japanese traditions and culture through the historical appeal and distinctive characteristics of various regions. The program was created in 2015 to facilitate regional development by actively utilizing the tangible and intangible cultural properties that serve as the basis for those stories. A total of 104 such stories have been recognized to date, including "Living with Whales" (as of April 1, 2025).



## Cover photographs

● Top *Illustration of Humpback Whale Caught in Nets*

From the collection of the Taiji Whale Museum

This photographic reproduction of an ancient picture scroll dates from the late 1960s. Whalers can be seen capturing a humpback whale with nets as it blows steam in the fishing grounds off Tomyo-zaki Point.

● Bottom *Illustration of Taiji Whaling and Whales*

From the collection of the Taiji Whale Museum

This picture scroll was created in 1861. The pictured scene depicts people making whaling boats and a variety of associated implements. The entire scroll is about 13 meters long and includes diagrams of 11 whales as well as whaling and other scenes.

## Contents

- The Japan Heritage story, festivals, and performing arts... Page 4
- Seeing, studying, and enjoying whales..... Page 6
- Model itinerary (1): Exploring Japan Heritage by the Sea and World Heritage in the Mountains ..... Page 8
- Model itinerary (2): Walking through town while enjoying the salt breeze off the Kumano Sea..... Page 12
- Model itinerary (3): Enjoying a scenic drive along the southernmost tip of Honshu..... Page 14
- Model itinerary (4): Exploring Japan Heritage, World Heritage, and geoparks on foot..... Page 15
- Recommended lodging in Kumano ..... Page 16
- Map and souvenir shops ..... Page 18
- Getting to and around Wakayama..... Page 19



# Japan Heritage Living with Whales Story

“Living with Whales,” a designated part of the Japan Heritage, is a story that communicates the whaling culture of the Kumano Sea. This pamphlet follows the thread of that story, which is based on the tangible and intangible cultural properties (the cultural properties that make up the Japan Heritage) found in the region.

## History of traditional whaling

In ancient times, the Japanese considered whales to be manifestations of the god Ebisu, who brings riches from across the seas. People gratefully utilized the whales that occasionally washed ashore as a source of food, and eventually they began whaling themselves as a means of livelihood.

Whales have been seen in coastal areas lying along the Kumano Sea, where the Black Current flows, since ancient times, and organized whaling began during the Edo period. Legend holds that the samurai Wada Chubee Yorimoto, who was from Taiji, pioneered the techniques of whaling, and he continues to be revered as the founder of whaling today.

Initially whales were caught using harpoons, but the subsequent creation of methods for capturing the creatures using nets led to the rapid development of whaling. In this approach, a fleet of boats would surround a whale, catch it in a net, and then attack it with harpoons. But this “fleet” was nothing like a modern fleet of boats, consisting instead of small craft that were rowed by hand. The whale would be attacked with a large number of harpoons of several different types and then killed with a large sword.

It is said that it was the descendants of soldiers who fought for the Kumano Navy and made a name for themselves long ago in the Genpei War who carried out this dangerous enterprise. They possessed bravery, a strong esprit de corps, excellent boat-handling skills, and extensive knowledge of the sea. These men provided the manpower that was the driving force behind whaling.

Geographical factors cannot be overlooked as one reason whaling flourished in this area. The Kumano Sea is bordered by an intricate, deeply indented coast set against precipitous mountains. In short, highlands from which whales could be quickly spotted and beaches where whales could be brought ashore were one factor in the rise of whaling here.



### Takatsuka Lookout Site

This site served as a relay station for communications between mountain lookouts.

Address: Taiji, Taiji-cho Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of the Takatsuka bus stop. [MAP] P18C4

### Whale Memorial

The only memorial monument built during the era of traditional whaling that remains standing today. Located on the grounds of Tomyo-ji Temple.

Address: Taiji, Taiji-cho Getting there: Located about 4 minutes on foot from the Gyokymae bus stop. [MAP] P18C4



## Prosperity brought by whales

To be successful, whaling requires people playing a variety of roles, including people to serve as lookouts in the highlands in order to find the mammals, people to transport whale meat, and people to manage, repair, and improve associated tools and implements. An individual known as the “whale manager” was responsible for butchering the animal and processing the carcass and its meat, most of which was salted and shipped. Communities were grateful for each catch and used every bit of the gigantic creature, extracting whale oil from the bones and skin and utilizing whiskers and tendons as material for use in tools and implements.

Whales offered enormous prosperity to the area, inspiring the saying that “one whale benefits seven villages.” It is reported that the landing of 95 whales in 1681 yielded profits in excess of 6,000 *ryo*.

Whaling enriched each community since behind those who were involved directly in the hunt were numerous others, including ship carpenters, blacksmiths, and meat-sellers. News of the area's prosperity reached as far afield as distant Osaka, inspiring Ihara Saikaku to note the wealth of Taiji in his work *The Eternal Storehouse of Japan*.

## Whaling culture, passed down

Although it differs in scale, whaling is still practiced in Taiji today. Along with the history of whaling in each community, tangible and intangible cultural properties that communicate the underlying culture provide a means of tracing the story of whaling.

Historic sites such as the Lookout Site and the Smoke Signal Site evoke the stirring heroism of traditional whaling. Monuments memorializing whales testify to the value people placed on the mammals and the gratitude with which they saw them.

Festivals and traditional performing arts that celebrate whales provide a more immediate glimpse of the deep connections between people and whales. The region has maintained a variety of distinctive events that have been passed down from each generation to the next, including the passage of a gorgeously adorned ceremonial boat and the Whale Dance, which recreates the heroism of the whale hunt. Many elementary school students in the city of Shingu and in the town of Taiji learn the Whale Dance as part of their study of their local community. For people living in coastal areas along the Kumano Sea, whales continue to be a special and familiar presence. With its 400 years of history, the area's deep-rooted whaling culture remains alive to this day.



### Asuka-jinja Shrine

The shrine continues to hold traditional events celebrating whales, and the gorgeous main shrine has been designated as a Cultural Property by the Town of Taiji.

Address: Taiji, Taiji-cho Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of the Gyokymae bus stop. [MAP] P18C4



- 1 The passage of a ceremonial boat is the highlight of the festival, recreating the history of an area that prospered through whaling.
- 2 Kuroshima Island (left) and Taijima Island (right), which used to be part of a base operated by the Kumano Navy (page 8)
- 3 Taiji Port (in the background), where the mountains meet an intricately shaped coastline
- 4 Kajitori-zaki Point as seen from Tomyo-zaki Point
- 5 Statue of a Harpoon-thrower in Taiji Whale Beach Park (page 12)
- 6 *Scene of Whaling in Taiji Bay, Kumano* (from the collection of the Taiji Municipal Whale Museum). Although the title cites Taiji, the painting is believed to depict whaling as it was practiced in Koza.
- 7 The Denchu Dance, in which people dance in a circle, depicts hunters surrounding their prey.
- 8 The Taiji Whaling Festival is held in November.
- 9 Children participate in traditional events that have been passed down to the present day.
- 10 A Shinto ritual in which participants shoot arrows at a target. After the ritual, attendees take pieces of the target home with them.

Japan Heritage festivals  
and traditional  
performing arts that  
depict whaling culture

Photo 1

Date(s): Fourth Saturday and Sunday in July

### Mifune Sacred Boat Ritual, Kochi-matsuri Festival

Gorgeously decorated boats cross the water. It tells us that whaling was a proud industry in the region. This festival is designated as an Important Intangible Folk-cultural Property by Japan.

Location: Kochi Island and others [MAP] P18A2

Photo 7

Date(s): Mid September

### Miwasaki Whale Dance

The Whale Dance consists of the Denchu Dance, which represents the capture of a whale in a net, and the Aya Dance, which recreates the harpooning of a whale. The dance has been designated as an Intangible Folk-cultural Property by Wakayama Prefecture.

Location: Miwasaki Fishing Port [MAP] P18B2

Photo 8

Date(s): First Sunday in November

### Taiji Whale Dance

The Whale Dance consists of the Aya Dance, in which participants pretend decorative rods are harpoons, and the Fish Dance, in which participants catch a whale. The dance has been designated as an Intangible Folk-cultural Property by Wakayama Prefecture.

Location: Taiji Fishing Port [MAP] P18C4

Photo 9

Date(s): Sunday immediately before  
Coming of age day in January

### Shiogama-jinja Shrine *Semi* Right Whale Ritual

Running, white-clad children pluck a straw whale, or *semi*, from a target.

Location: Shiogama-jinja Shrine [MAP] P18A2

Photo 10

Date(s): Saturday immediately before February 14

### Hamanomiya Shrine Archery Ritual

Attendees at this annual festival held at Kumano Sansho-omiwasha Shrine compete to pluck a straw whale from a target after a Shinto ritual is held. They also break apart the target and take pieces of it home with them.

Location: Kumano Sansho-omiwasha Shrine [MAP] P18B1

Other events .....

Date(s): January 13

### Archery Ritual at Asuka-jinja Shrine

Participants in this Shinto ritual pray for safety at sea and a bountiful catch of fish. Attendees compete to grab lucky wooden charms made in the image of right whales.

Location: Asuka-jinja Shrine [MAP] P18C4

Date(s): August 14

### Isana Festival

The festival recreates the net-and-harpoon method of whaling practiced in Taiji Bay with a model of a whale that's about 9 meters long and a chase boat whose role is to drive the whale into the net.

Location: Taiji Fishing Port [MAP] P18C4

Date(s): The three-day weekend on which  
Sport and Health Day falls in October

### Annual Festival at Asuka-jinja Shrine

Crowds of young men carry portable shrines incorporating barrels filled with sake offerings through the town to thank the whales and pray for a bountiful catch.

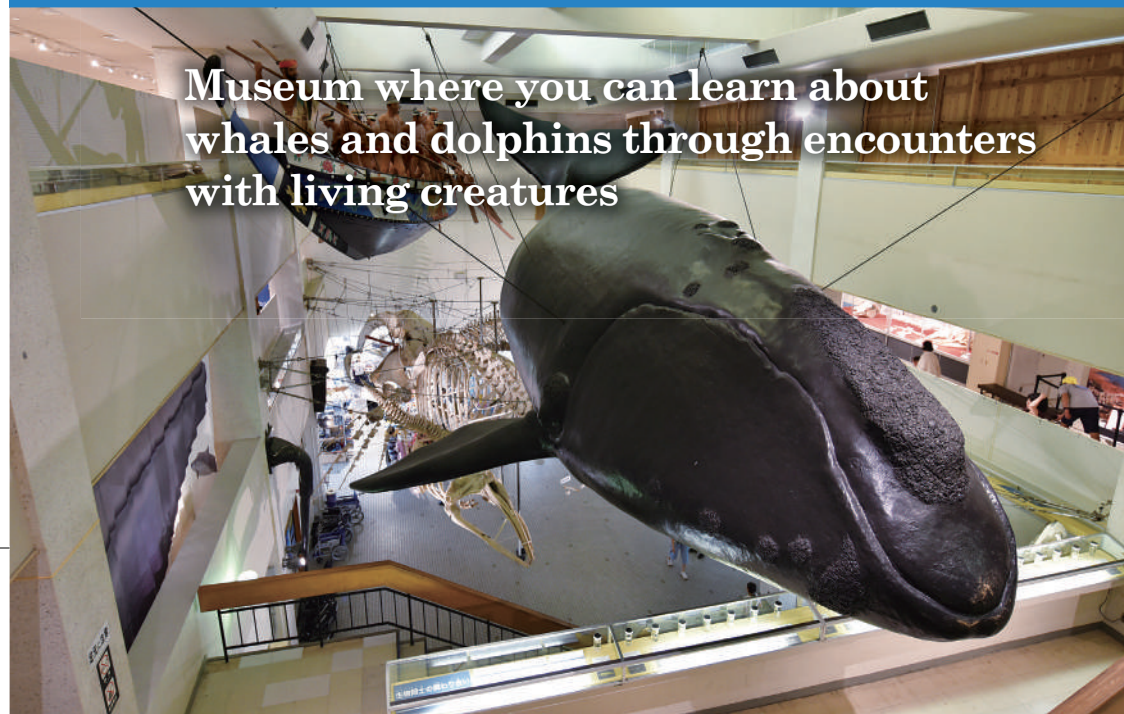
Location: Town of Taiji [MAP] P18C4



# Seeing, studying, and enjoying whales

In addition to exploring the backdrop of Japan Heritage, you can also encounter real, live whales in Kumano. A museum where you can study whales provides an opportunity to touch dolphins and whales and watch shows. And don't forget the excitement of whale-watching in the Kumano Sea!

## Museum where you can learn about whales and dolphins through encounters with living creatures



Impressive models hang from the atrium ceiling.

### Taiji Whale Museum

Located in Taiji Kujirahama Beach Park, Taiji Whale Museum, which is one of the few museums in the world to focus exclusively on whales, features a variety of exhibits and materials related to whales. The facility also holds whale shows as well as dolphin and whale encounters in its natural pool, which utilizes an ocean inlet.  
Phone: 0735-59-2400 Location: 2934-2 Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located at the Kujirakan bus stop about 5 minutes from JR Taiji Station via the Taiji Municipal Shuttle Bus. Hours: 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Closed: Open year-round. Admission: Adults, ¥1,800, elementary and middle-school students, ¥900 [MAP] P18C4



#### ● Main museum building

The museum features a variety of exhibits about whaling, from the era of traditional whaling to the present day. There are also skeletons and other materials about whale ecology. A life-size model of a right whale that's about 15 meters long and a model of a traditional whaling boat hang from the ceiling in the museum's three-story atrium.



These parts were used in chase boats in traditional whaling. They have been designated as a Cultural Property by the Town of Taiji.



Various tools used in traditional whaling, for example telescopes that were used to look for whales, are fascinating to view.

#### ● Dolphin and whale encounters



##### Beach encounters

Get into the shallow water with a trainer as you gently touch an actual dolphin and experience its size and movements. Duration: About 5 minutes.  
Hours: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Cost: ¥1,500  
\*Minimum height: 120 cm

##### Kayak adventure

Get into a kayak and paddle extremely close to pilot whales. In addition to observing the mammals from truly close quarters, you can feed them. Duration of encounter: About 10 minutes.  
Hours: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Cost: ¥1,500



##### Feeding encounter

Feed whales and dolphins from a pier and get a good look inside these creatures' large mouths. Recommended for guests who would like a "smaller-scale" encounter.  
Hours: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Cost: ¥300



#### ● Marine Aquarium (Marinarium)

Watch as blue-white dolphins, spotted dolphins, and white bottlenose dolphins swim through the museum's tunnel-shaped tank. You can't see these species at any other aquarium in the world!



Dolphins swimming overhead create a fantastic scene.

Touch a dolphin after the show! Cost: ¥300



#### ● Dolphin Shows

Don't miss a fast, dynamic performance by the museum's cute dolphins. After the show, you can even interact directly with a dolphin. Performance time: About 15 minutes.  
Times: 9:30 am, 11:30 am, 1:30 pm, and 3:30 pm Cost: Free (with museum admission)



Watch as cute dolphins perform.

#### ● Whale Shows

The museum hosts shows in its whale show area, which it creates by blocking off a natural ocean inlet. Pilot whales that are 5 meters long give impressive performances. Performance time: About 10 minutes.  
Times: 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, and 2:30 pm Cost: Free (with museum admission)

Watch as whales jump dynamically.



## Enjoy a super-exciting encounter in the Kumano Sea, where the Black Current flows!



Nothing's more exciting than a whale slapping the water with its tail as it dives (courtesy of Nanki Marine Leisure Service).

### Whale-watching

Enjoy whale-watching in the Kumano Sea, where the Black Current comes the closest to land. Species including large sperm whales, humpback whales, and pilot whales gather in the area from spring through fall, and you can also see dolphins and manta rays. Whether you encounter these enormous beasts depends on the weather and luck, but it's worth it to find excitement!



The captain offers an explanation to guests as they depart (courtesy of Nanki Marine Leisure Service).



Sometimes whales come right up to the ship (courtesy of Nanki Marine Leisure Service).

#### Nanki Marine Leisure Service

A veteran captain with more than 20 years of experience guiding will be your host. If you don't get to see any whales, you'll get a discounted ticket for next time or some fresh fish. Duration of trip: About 4 hours.  
Phone: 0735-54-0725 Location: 285-2 Ugui, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 10 minutes on foot from JR Ukui Station. Times: Trips depart at 7:00 am from late March to late September (at 6:00 am on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays). \*Reservations required at least one day in advance. Trips may be canceled in the event of inclement weather. Cost: Adults (middle-school students and older), ¥6,500; elementary school students, ¥5,000; children (age 3 and older), ¥2,000 [MAP] P18B1

### Sea kayak

In Moriura Bay, Taiji Town, you can see free-ranging whales and dolphins up close. It's an escape from the everyday that is sure to become a treasured memory.



#### Taiji Field Kayak

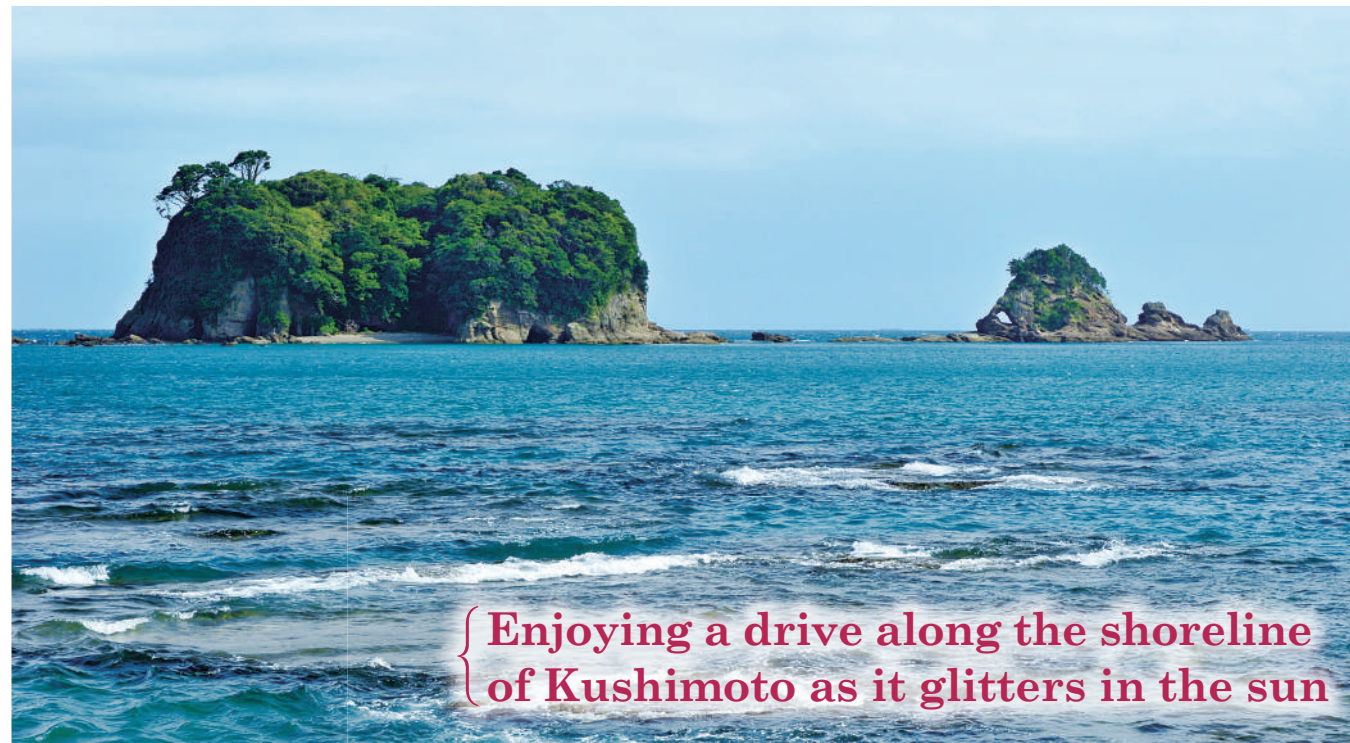
Even beginners can enjoy activities such as sea kayaking and SUP, which is like taking a leisurely stroll on the water. There is also a floating walkway where visitors can stroll through the middle of the bay for free.  
Phone: 0735-59-2200 Location: 685-27 Moriura, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located at the Motoura bus stop about 2 minutes from JR Taiji Station via the Taiji Municipal Shuttle Bus. Hours: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm (Reservations required. Reservations are not required for the floating walkway.) Cost: Standard kayak tour: Adults, ¥5,000, Children (3 years old to elementary school students), ¥3,000 Stand up paddleboard (SUP) tour: 10 years of age or older, ¥3,000 [MAP] P18C4



# Exploring Japan Heritage by the Sea and World Heritage in the Mountains

This section of the pamphlet introduces a number of model itineraries designed to allow you to explore not only the backdrop of the Japan Heritage story “Living with Whales,” but also other sights in the Kumano area. We start with a two-day, one-night itinerary that includes a visit to the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range, a World Heritage site. Get ready to bathe in famous hot springs, enjoy local delicacies, and experience the unique appeal of the Kumano region.

Kuroshima Island can be seen on the left, and Taijima Island on the right. The latter has a distinctive, eye-like hole.

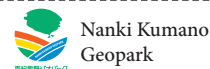


Enjoying a drive along the shoreline of Kushimoto as it glitters in the sun

Japan Heritage Geopark Kuroshima Island

Geopark Taijima Island

Location: Nishimukai, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 10 min. on foot down National Route 42 from JR Koza Station. [MAP] P18B3



Nanki Kumano Geopark

Nanki Kumano Geopark has been recognized by the Japan Geopark Committee, which certifies regions with valuable topographical or geographical features as geological parks, or geoparks. The park, which encompasses nine village, towns, and cities in the southern part of Wakayama Prefecture (the city of Shingu; the towns of Shirahama, Kamitonda, Susami, Nachikatsuura, Taiji, Kozagawa, and Kushimoto; and the village of Kitayama), consists of 107 geosites (as of April 2025) such as pile-shaped rocks that exhibit three different types of geological structures.



Geopark Hashigui-iwa Rock

Location: Kujinokawa, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of the Hashiguiiwa bus stop. [MAP] P18A3

A row of enormous, strangely shaped rocks extends 850 meters out to sea.



Visiting the town of Taiji, which is known for whaling

Japan Heritage Geopark Tomyo-zaki Point

Lighthouse Site, Lookout Site, Lookout Rest House Site, Smoke Signal Site Location: Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 15 minutes on foot from the Hiramikoenmae bus stop. [MAP] P18C4

You'll enjoy panoramic views of the Kumano Sea from this point, where there's also a restoration of an old-fashioned lighthouse.



Taiji Whale Museum

→Page 6



Whale-themed crafts make the perfect souvenirs of a visit to a town famous for whaling. (Hokoon Folk Crafts → Page 18)

The best place for whale cuisine in Taiji

Isana-no-yado Hakugei

This hotel and hot spring are located on Taiji Bay. Its restaurant, which is open for lunch, offers an extensive menu featuring the kind of whale cuisine you can only find in Taiji. From whale meat served over rice for ¥1,400 to full-course whale cuisine meals for ¥8,000, there's something for every budget.

Phone: 0735-59-2323 Location: 2973-4 Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of the Hakugeimae bus stop. Hours: 11:00 am to 2:00 pm (last order at 1:30 pm) Closed: Open year-round. [MAP] P18C4



Set of whale cuisine including deep-fried whale, whale sashimi, harihari-nabe hot pot, and other dishes, ¥2,500

Day 1

The most scenic spot in southern Wakayama Prefecture and a pair of islands with a connection to the Kumano Navy

On the first day, you'll head north along the Kumano Sea from Kushimoto Town at the southern tip of Honshu. You'll tour the town of Taiji, known for its history of whaling, and spend the night at Katsuura Onsen.

Your first destination, a series of pile-shaped rocks known as Hashigui-iwa Rock, is one of the most scenic spots in Wakayama Prefecture. A string of more than 40 column-shaped rocks of various sizes stand in the blue ocean as the rising and falling of the tides and the position of the sun create a scene of beauty that shifts continuously throughout the day. The rocks look like the piles of a bridge because they have been eroded by the constant action of the waves until only the hardest portions of the material remain. The site has been designated as a Natural Monument by the Japanese government and selected as one of the Nanki Kumano Geopark's geosites.

Next, you'll drive northeast on National Route 42 from Hashigui-iwa Rock until you see the islands of Kuroshima and Taijima in the Kumano Sea on your right. It is said that these uninhabited islands, which lie about 1 kilometer out in the estuary of the Koza-gawa River, once served as a base for the Kumano Navy. In addition, Kuroshima Island, which is the larger of the two, is revered as a sacred spot that figures in the ceremonial boat passage of the Mifune Sacred Boat Ritual, Kochi-matsuri Festival (page 5), which is part of the Kumano Sea's whaling culture. Taijima Island is named for its resemblance to a sea bream, or *tai* in Japanese.

● Day 1

JR Kushimoto Station

About 5 min. by car

Hashigui-iwa Rock

About 5 min. by car

Kuroshima Island and Taijima Island

About 30 min. by car

Isana-no-yado Hakugei

About 1 min. by car

Taiji Whale Museum

About 8 min. by car

Tomyo-zaki Point

About 20 min. by car

Katsuura Onsen (overnight)

To Katsuura Onsen for the night → Page 16



Boki-do Cave at Hotel Urashima, where you can enjoy a hot spring inside an enormous cavern

● Day 2

Katsuura Onsen

About 3 min. on foot to the entrance of Daimon-zaka Slope after parking in the Daimon-zaka Parking Lot (about 15 min. by car)

Daimon-zaka Slope (Kumano Kodo)

About 30 min. on foot

Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine

About 0 min. on foot

Nachisan Seiganto-ji Temple

About 0 min. on foot

Fish Memorial

About 15 min. on foot

Nachi Waterfall

About 15 min. by car after a 5 min. Kumano Kotsu bus ride from the Nachinotakimae bus stop (getting off at the Daimon-zakachushajomae stop)

Bodai

About 30 min. by car

Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine

About 7 min. by car

Kamikura-jinja Shrine

About 5 min. by car

JR Shingu Station

Visiting a point with panoramic views of the Kumano Sea, where there are historic sites related to traditional whaling

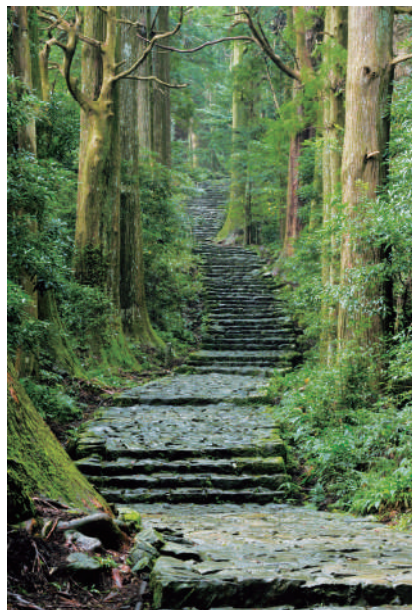
Next, you'll leave Kuroshima Island and Taijima Island to drive toward Taiji Town, which is considered to be the birthplace of traditional whaling and where people still hunt small whales along the coast. Many restaurants in the town serve whale-based cuisine that has been passed down through the generations as part of a dietary culture that is distinct to Kumano—and indeed, Japan. First, you'll enjoy lunch at Isana-no-yado Hakugei.

After lunch, you'll tour the Taiji Whale Museum (page 6), and then you'll head for Tomyo-zaki Point, which served as a highland lookout from which the traditional whale hunt was directed. From these cliffs, which afford panoramic views of the Kumano Sea, people long ago searched for whales. When they found them, they signaled groups of ships in the waters off Taiji by lighting fires and other means. This “command center” was the most important facility in whaling, and only the individuals in the whaling clan with the most power and authority could direct the hunt.

Today, Tomyo-zaki Point is home to a restoration of an old-fashioned lighthouse known as Tomyodai as well as a restored whale lookout. The Lighthouse Site and Lookout Site along with the Lookout Rest House Site and Smoke Signal Site are cultural properties that are part of this Japan Heritage story. Once you've envisioned how traditional whaling was carried out at this scenic spot, you'll head toward Katsuura Onsen, where you'll soak in the famous springs to wash away the fatigue of the day.



## Walking toward the sacred Mt. Nachi on an ancient cobblestone path



Countless pilgrims have traveled this sacred pilgrimage route, which is unique among World Heritage sites.

The vermillion-colored worship hall can be seen in the center of the photograph. The large camphor tree whose branches can be seen on the right is said to have been planted by Taira no Shigemori himself.



### Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine

**World Heritage** Phone: 0735-55-0321 Location: 1 Nachisan, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 10 minutes on foot from the Nachisan bus stop. Hours: 6:00 am to 4:30 pm Admission: Admission to the shrine grounds is free. [MAP] P18A1

This memorial monument was built by fishermen and others associated with the fishing industry to express gratitude to the whales and fish they catch.



**World Heritage** **Geopark**

### Daimon-zaka Slope on the Kumano Kodo

Location: Nachisan, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: The entrance is located at the Daimon-zaka bus stop. [MAP] P18A1

### Nachisan Seiganto-ji Temple

**World Heritage** Phone: 0735-55-0001 Location: 8 Nachisan, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 10 minutes on foot from the Nachisan bus stop. Hours: 7:00 am to 4:30 pm Admission: Admission to the temple grounds is free. [MAP] P18A1

### Seiganto-ji Temple Fish Memorial

**Japan Heritage** Location: Located on the grounds of Nachisan Seiganto-ji Temple. [MAP] P18A1



The temple's main building has acquired the patina of time. The building houses its principal image, a statue of the bodhisattva Nyoirin.



### The best place to enjoy fresh raw tuna in Katsuura Bodai

This creative restaurant is popular for its fresh seafood, including raw tuna. The famous "Medium fatty tuna cutlet" is fresh tuna from Nachi-Katsuura, deep-fried at high temperature in one go, crispy on the outside and rare on the inside. The rice bowl of this medium fatty tuna cutlet priced at ¥1,800.

Phone: 0735-52-0039 Location: 5-1-3 Tsukiji, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located right next to JR Kii-Katsuura Station. Hours: 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm Closed: Tuesdays [MAP] P18C3



**World Heritage** **Geopark**

### Nachi Waterfall

Phone: 0735-55-0321 (Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine) Location: Nachisan, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 3 minutes on foot from the Nachinotakimae bus stop. Hours: Access to the falls is not restricted (the viewing area is open from 7:00 am to 4:30 pm). Admission: To the viewing area—adults, ¥300; elementary and middle school students, ¥200 [MAP] P18A1

Deep in a primeval forest, water flows dynamically over a huge, 133-meter cliff.

## Shingu, a city of World Heritage Sites at the mouth of the Kumano-gawa River

**World Heritage**

### Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine

Phone: 0735-22-2533 Location: 1 Shingu, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located about 20 minutes on foot from JR Shingu Station. Hours: 5:00 am to 5:00 pm (varies seasonally) Admission: Admission to the shrine grounds is free. [MAP] P18B1



Thanks to the beautiful contrast between green trees and its vermillion-colored building, this shrine is a particularly photogenic World Heritage site.

**World Heritage**

**Geopark**

### Kamikura-jinja Shrine

Phone: 0735-22-2533 (Kumano Hayatama-jinja Shrine) Location: 1-13-8 Kamikura, Shingu-shi Getting there: The entrance to the base of the mountain is located about 20 minutes on foot from JR Shingu Station. Admission: Access to the shrine grounds is free. [MAP] P18B1



Gotobiki-iwa Rock is accessible from the base of the mountain via a steep set of 538 steps.

### A city full of famous sites

Shingu City flourished as a town that was home to Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine and Shingu Castle. There are numerous historic sites in the city, including the ruins of Shingu Castle, as well as Jofuku Park, which tells the legend of Jofuku, a wizard who lived about 2,200 years ago in China and who is said to have come to Kumano in search of a miraculous medicine that would confer eternal youth and to have taught whaling and other skills while he was there. Shingu is also known as the birthplace of numerous cultural figures such as poet Haruo Sato and the novelist Kenji Nakagami. The Shingu City Sato Haruo Memorial Museum is located across from Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine.



There's a brilliantly colored, Chinese-style two-story gate in Jofuku Park. [MAP] P18C1

### Famous confections from a respected shop as souvenirs Kobaido

This Japanese confection shop was founded in 1868. Its flagship Suzuyaki sweets (from ¥400 for a package of 20) are bite-size treats made of sponge cake. People of all ages love the elegant sweetness of Wasanbon sugar.

Phone: 0735-22-3132 Location: 3-3-4 Ohashidori, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located about 10 minutes on foot from JR Shingu Station. Hours: 9:00 am to 9:00 pm (on Sundays, 9:00 am to 5:30 pm) Closed: Tuesdays and irregularly as scheduled [MAP] P18C1



The shop's fluffy Suzuyaki sweets seem to melt in your mouth.

### If you're looking for Pacific saury sushi...

### Jofuku Zushi Ekimae Branch

Jofukusushi is famous for Pacific saury sushi, a local specialty in the Kumano region. The chef always cuts the fish open from the back so as not to lose the savory flavor of its stomach meat, and the result is served by arranging the cut pieces in the shape of the whole fish, along with the head. With every bite, you can enjoy the refreshing aroma of yuzu citron vinegar.

Phone: 0735-23-1313 Location: 2-1-9 Jofuku, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of JR Shingu Station. Hours: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Closed: Thursdays [MAP] P18C1



Pacific saury sushi arranged in the shape of the whole fish, ¥1,050 (available for take-out, too).

### Day 2

## Experiencing what it was like to make a pilgrimage to Kumano long ago by visiting temples and shrines that have been registered as a World Heritage site

On the second day, you'll enjoy a trip along the Kumano Kodo to Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range, which have been registered as a World Heritage site.

In the morning, you'll head to Mt. Nachi. It's possible to visit these places by car or bus directly from Katsuura, but the best way to experience them is to park your car in the Daimon-zaka Parking Lot at the foot of the mountain and walk in from Daimon-zaka Slope on the Kumano Kodo, which people have used to make pilgrimages to the three sacred areas of Kumano, called Kumano Sanzan, since times long past. At Daimon-zaka Slope, which has retained the beauty of its appearance from those times, you'll walk along a 600-meter, moss-covered cobblestone path lined with giant Japanese cedar trees as you trace your way into the mountains.

After reaching the top of the hill and climbing the staircase, which is lined with souvenir shops such as Yamaguchi Kohodo (page 18), you'll arrive at Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine. Located right next to the shrine is Nachisan Seiganto-ji Temple. Since the two institutions developed together as one of Kumano Sanzan, they are both registered as World Heritage sites. First, you'll visit Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine. Situated at an elevation of about 400 meters, the shrine's bracing grounds, which overlook Nachi Bay, are home to a series of magnificent buildings. The main hall, which consists of six wings, has been designated as an Important Cultural Property by the Japanese government. Nachisan Seigan-ji Temple is known as the first place of Saikoku Kannon Pilgrimage to 33 sacred temples with bodhisattva images in western Japan. Its magnificent main hall is said to have been reconstructed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and it has also been designated as an Important Cultural Property by the Japanese government. As you face the hall, you can see the Fish Memorial, which is a registered Japan Heritage site, to the left. Next, you'll head down the steep cobblestone path to enjoy a view of Nachi

Waterfall. It is said that the Nachisan faith originated as a nature worship that revered these enormous falls as a deity. Hiro-jinja Shrine, which is associated with Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine, stands in front of the falls, and you can admire their sacred flow from a viewing area situated so close to their base that you can feel the spray from the water as it hits the rocks.

Next, you'll take a bus from the Nachinotakemae bus stop back to the Daimon-zaka Parking Lot and head by car to Bodai in Katsuura, where you'll enjoy a bowl of rice topped with fresh tuna for lunch. (Be sure to check the bus schedule in advance as service is limited.)

### Visiting a massive rock on top of a mountain that marks where the deities came down to earth

In the afternoon, you'll head to Shingu City, where you'll visit Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine, one of Kumano Sanzan. On its grounds, you'll find brilliant vermillion-colored buildings set against a backdrop of

green trees. You'll also visit Kamikura-jinja Shrine, where the historical origins of Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine lie. This ancient shrine is dedicated to the sacred Gotobiki-iwa Rock, an enormous rock located halfway up Mt. Kamikura.

Legend holds that the deities of Kumano originally came down to earth at the site of this rock during the reign of Emperor Keiko and built a new shrine (which became Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine) to welcome the deities. Consequently, Kamikura-jinja Shrine is known as the original shrine and Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine as the new shrine, and the entire area came to be known as Shingu, meaning "new shrine" in Japanese, as a result.

After visiting the two shrines, you'll take a walk in Shingu. Alternatively, you can visit Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine (located in the Hongu Town of Tanabe), which along with Nachi and Shingu makes up Kumano Sanzan. Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine is located about one hour by car from Shingu.



# Walking through town while enjoying the salt breeze off the Kumano Sea

In Nachi Katsuura Town, which is known for its fresh tuna, you'll visit an auction at the fish market and try your hand at painting a miniature whaling boat. In the town of Taiji, which is known for whaling, you'll explore the quaint fishing district and visit historical sites associate with traditional whaling. The main focus of this itinerary is taking leisurely strolls while enjoying the salt breeze.

**Traveling from Katsuura, which is known for its fresh tuna, to Taiji on an excursion ship**



You'll pass through areas where there are strangely shaped rocks such as Rakuda-iwa (in the foreground), named for its resemblance to a camel.

## Ki-no-Matsushima Islands Cruise

Phone: 0735-52-8188 Location: Katsuura, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Katsuura Tourist Pier is located about 8 minutes on foot from JR Kii-Katsuura Station. Hours: Departures from Katsuura Tourist Pier from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm (subject to change) Closed: Wednesdays. (Trip may be may be canceled due to the weather) Cost: Route A—middle school students and older ¥1,800; children aged four and over ¥900 (if disembarking in Taiji, ¥1,400 and ¥700, respectively) [MAP] P18C3



Route A takes 55 minutes (or 40 minutes to Taiji Kujirahama Beach Park).



Whaling ship "Daiichi Kyo Maru" landed in 2012

A monument depicting the tails of pair of whales greets visitors.



## Taiji Kujirahama Beach Park

Location: Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of the Kujirakan bus stop. [MAP] P18C4

Freshly caught tuna lie in rows at the fish market. You can watch the auction free of charge without reservations from the second-floor gallery.



©NACKT

## Guided tours of the raw tuna market auctions

Phone: 0735-52-6153 (Nachi-Katsuura Tourism Organization) Location: 7-8-2 Tsukiji, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 5 minutes on foot from JR Kii-Katsuura Station. Duration: About 60 min. starting at 7:00 am. Reservations required at least 3 days prior to market visit. For reservations, contact the Nachikatsuura Tourism Organization. Closed: Tuesdays and market holidays. Cost: Adults of junior high school age and older: ¥2,500 and up; elementary school students and younger: ¥1,500 and up [MAP] P18C3

Traditional Kumano whaling ships, from ¥1,320.



## Oguraya

Phone: 0735-52-0650 Location: 4-2-4 Tsukiji, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of JR Kii-Katsuura Station. Hours: 7:30 am to 6:30 pm Closed: Irregularly as scheduled [MAP] P18C3

## Trying your hand at painting a toy whaling boat

Katsuura, which is known for its hot springs, is known for fishing for fresh tuna using the longline method. One way to experience the world of fishing in Katsuura is to participate in a tour of the Katsuura Fish Market (reservations required) as part of a program offered for guests staying in inns that are members of the Nanki Katsuura Hot Spring Inn Association. The tour lets you view the market at Katsuura Fishing Port, where a tuna auction is held early in the morning, while a worker from the fishermen's cooperative explains how the system works. Rows of freshly caught tuna make for an impressive sight.

At Oguraya, a souvenir shop located in front of Katsuura Station, you'll focus on traditional Kumano whaling boats, a local toy. The boats, which are

shaped like whaling boats from the Edo period, are decorated with colorful designs such as Chinese phoenixes or chrysanthemums. The proprietor paints each one himself, and if you make a reservation, you can make your own.

Next, you'll head for Taiji while making your way past Ki-no-Matsushima Islands, a general name for a number of islands of various sizes that lie around the periphery of Katsuura Port, including Tsurushima Island, Kabutojima Island, and Rakuda-iwa. You'll depart on an excursion boat from Katsuura Tourist Pier. The basic Route A trip includes a stop at Taiji Kujirahama Beach Park, which is where you'll be disembarking. There are a number of sightseeing attractions in the area, including a whale museum (page 6).



1 The town's retro buildings have been designated as a Registered Tangible Cultural Property by the Japanese government. 2 A pleasant salt breeze blows in off the Kumano Sea. 3 Enjoy walking through the town with its rows of painted houses.

## Strolling through a fishermen's town where whaling culture lives on

The tomb has been designated as a Historic Site by Wakayama Prefecture.



## Gravesite of Yorimoto Wada, Whaling Founder

Location: Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 5 minutes on foot from the Gyokuyomae bus stop. [MAP] P18C4



You can find a whale drawing even at the bus stop



Sekimon (Rock Gate) is noted in the *Kiizokufudoki*, a chronicle of historical records compiled by the former Kiishu domain.

## Sekimon (Rock Gate)

Location: Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of the Sekimon bus stop. [MAP] P18C4

## Whale Bone Torii Gate

Location: Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of the Gyokuyomae bus stop. [MAP] P18C4



Constructed in 1985, the gate was inspired by the *Nippon Eitaigura* story. (The gate was rebuilt in 1996 and 2019.)

The local delicacy *tetsumen-mochi* makes a great snack or souvenir.

## Kamehachiya

Legend holds that a Buddhist monk from Kyoto on a pilgrimage to Kumano taught locals how to make *tetsumen-mochi* at the end of the Edo period, and the delicacy is still handmade today. Soft dough made from rice flour is filled with homemade sweet bean paste that has a simple sweetness. Don't be late—sometimes the shop sells out by lunch.

Phone: 0735-59-2258 Location: 3383 Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located 3 minutes on foot from the Gyokuyomae bus stop. Hours: 8:00 am until sold out Closed: Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays [MAP] P18C4



Available in white and mugwort varieties, ¥150 each.

## Itinerary

### Guided tours of the raw tuna market auctions

About 5 min. on foot

### Oguraya

About 7 min. on foot to Katsuura Tourist Pier to board the ship

### Ki-no-Matsushima Islands Cruise

About 40 min. by excursion boat

### Taiji Kujirahama Beach Park

About 25 min. on foot or about 3 min. by Taiji Municipal Shuttle Bus from the Kujirakan bus stop (located in the immediate vicinity of the Gyokuyomae bus stop)

### Whale Bone Torii Gate

About 5 min. on foot

### Gravesite of Yorimoto Wada, Whaling Founder (Junshin-ji Temple)

About 5 min. on foot

### Kamehachiya

About 5 min. on foot

### Sekimon (Rock Gate)

About 10 min. by Taiju Municipal Shuttle Bus from the Sekimon bus stop  
JR Taiji Station

Don't miss this great walk! From Tomyo-zaki Point to Kajitori-zaki Point

There's a walking trail stretching about 1.6 kilometers from the traditional whaling lookout at Tomyo-zaki Point (page 9) to Kajitori-zaki Point. As you pass through the highlands, you'll encounter signs explaining whales and dolphins, and there are plenty of scenic views of the Kumano Sea. Reflecting the fact that Kajitori-zaki Point was also a whaling lookout, there's a whale-shaped memorial in the site's grassy park.



There's also a spot where you can take a break on the trail.



There's a lighthouse on Kajitori-zaki Point, which sticks out into the Kumano Sea.

## Enjoying the cute retro look of the town's rows of painted houses

You'll walk south from the park to Taiji Fishing Port, which lies in the center of the town. Across from the fishermen's cooperative is Ebisu-jinja Shrine, which enshrines the deity of fishing and has a *torii* gate made of whale bones. The area is densely packed with houses, giving it the unique ambience of a fishermen's town. Many of these Japanese homes have lattices but have been painted in light colors. In the past, Taiji has produced many North American emigrants and whaling vessel crewmen, and it is said that they brought the custom of painting houses back with them from overseas. At Junshin-ji Temple you can find the Gravesite of Yorimoto Wada, Whaling Founder. The Wada family is a prominent family in this area, and it was

Chubee Yorimoto from the clan who is said to have initiated organized whaling using harpoons in 1606. A local cave known as Sekimon (Rock Gate) has been known as "Wada Family Rock Gate" since ancient times, reflecting a legend that it was the location of an enormous mansion owned by the family.

If you have time, you could also extend your trip to Tomyo-zaki Point and Kajitori-zaki Point. From either Sekimon (Rock Gate) or Kajitori-zaki Point, you can make your way back to JR Taiji Station by municipal bus. However, be sure to check the bus schedule as service is limited.



# Enjoying a scenic drive along the southernmost tip of Honshu

## Kushimoto Marine Park

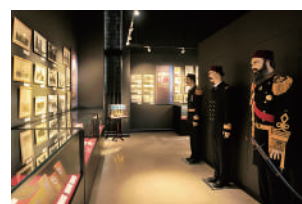
Phone: 0735-62-1122 Location: 1157 Arida, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 12 minutes by complimentary shuttle bus from JR Kushimoto Station. Hours: 9:00 am to 4:30 pm (ticket sales stop at 4:00 pm) Closed: Open year-round. (Sightseeing ship departures may be canceled due to inclement weather.) Admission: Ticket package to the aquarium, observation platform, and ship—adults, ¥2,800; elementary and middle school students, ¥1,600; pre-school children, ¥600 (Separate tickets are also available.) [MAP] P18A4



Enjoy watching marine life from the undersea tower and the sightseeing ship.



The aquarium reproduces the Kushimoto seascape.



## Turkish Museum

Phone: 0735-65-0628 Location: 1025-26 Kashino, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 3 minutes on foot from the Kashinotodaiguchi bus stop. Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Closed: Open year-round Admission: Adults, ¥500; elementary, middle school, and high school students, ¥250 [MAP] P18B4

The museum features exhibits of crewmembers' belongings. The accident claimed more than 580 lives, despite islanders' best efforts to rescue survivors.

## Cape Shionomisaki Lookout

Location: Shiono-misaki, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 7 minutes on foot from the Shiono-misakitodaimae bus stop. [MAP] P18A4

The Koza whaling superintendent, who was based in Koza Bay (Koza, Kushimoto-cho), kept watching for whales here.



## Touring Kii Oshima Island and Cape Shionomisaki and experiencing the area's beautiful coral sea

Kushimoto lies at the southernmost tip of Honshu. The Black Current keeps the area's water warm, and the waters of Kushimoto Marine Park are home to the world's northernmost table-type coral colony, which is inhabited by tropical fish. In addition to a half-submersible underwater sightseeing ship and undersea tower, the park includes an aquarium where guests can observe Kushimoto's marine life.

After viewing the area's beautiful ocean, you'll cross Kushimoto-obashi Bridge onto Kii-Oshima Island. On the way, you'll stop for break at Nagi Bread & Yuyano Café and then visit the Turkish Museum at Kashino-zaki on the eastern tip of the island, where you'll learn about the sinking of an Ottoman Navy frigate during the Meiji period when it struck a reef below



## Whale lookout at Kashinozaki Cape

Location: Kashino, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 8 minutes on foot from the Kashinotodaiguchi bus stop. Admission: Access to the lighthouse is not restricted. [MAP] P18B4

View the Kumano Sea from a walkway around the outside of Japan's oldest Western-style stone lighthouse at Cape Kashinozaki Whale Lookout.

## Take a break at a stylish bread cafe

### Nagi Bakery & Yuyano Cafe

This bakery and cafe attracts fans from far and wide in search of bread made meticulously using Japanese flour and its own variety of yeast. The extensive menu includes authentic hard loaves as well as sweet buns and breads made with local fruits and vegetables. Customers also love the shop's pizza, and there's a full selection of cafe drinks as well. Phone: 0735-65-0065 Location: 1158 Oshima, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 10 minutes by car from JR Kushimoto Station. Hours: 9:30 am to 6:00 pm (cafe: 10:00 am to last order at 4:30 pm) Closed: Mondays and Tuesdays (but open on holidays) [MAP] P18A4



Oven-baked focaccia topped with vegetables, ¥440. Ginger-flavored Perrier water, ¥540.

### Itinerary

- JR Kushimoto Station
- ↓ About 10 min. by car
- Kushimoto Marine Park
- ↓ About 20 min. by car
- Nagi Bakery & Yuyano Cafe
- ↓ About 10 min. by car to the Kashino-zaki Parking Lot, then about 3 min. on foot
- ↓ Turkish Museum
- ↓ About 5 min. on foot
- ↓ Cape Kashinozaki Whale Lookout
- ↓ About 20 min. by car to the Shiono-misaki Lighthouse Parking Lot, then about 7 min. on foot
- ↓ Cape Shionomisaki Lookout
- ↓ About 10 min. by car
- JR Kushimoto Station

# Exploring Japan Heritage, World Heritage, and geoparks on foot

## Kushima Island and Suzushima Island

Location: Miwasaki, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located about 12 minutes on foot from JR Miwasaki Station. [MAP] P18C2

### Relaxing with a foot bath

There's a foot bath fed by a natural hot spring at Miwasaki Fishing Port, providing the perfect way to give your feet a break after a long hike. The bath is free of charge. Hours: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Closed: Tuesdays and bad weather days.



Kushima Island, where Kishima-jinja Shrine is located. The island is also a breeding ground for internationally rare bird species.



Experience the surprising natural beauty of Suzushima Island.

Ojigahama Coast as seen from Koya-zaka Slope, which rises about 50 meters above the surrounding land. The route is an easy one, even for inexperienced hikers.



## Kumano Kodo Koya-zaka Slope

Location: Miwasaki, Shingu-shi Getting there: The trailhead on the Hirotsuno side is located about 15 minutes by car from JR Miwasaki Station. The trailhead on the Miwasaki side is located about 7 minutes on foot from JR Miwasaki Station. [MAP] P18C2



## Harpooners' Stone Shrine

Location: Miwasaki, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located about 17 minutes on foot from JR Miwasaki Station. [MAP] P18C2

This stone shrine can be found at Koukoinari-jinja Shrine. It is believed to have been built by a harpooner who served as the whaling superintendent at Miwasaki.



## Whale Lookout

Location: Miwasaki, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located about 20 minutes on foot from JR Miwasaki Station. [MAP] P18C2

Miwasaki's whaling superintendent kept watch for whales here. The site can be accessed via a branch road that takes you slightly away from Koya-zaka Slope.

## Walking along the ancient Kumano Kodo and enjoying views of the ocean on the way to Miwasaki, which played a key role in the history of whaling

Next, you'll take a walk that brings you face to face with Shingu's history and natural beauty. Your first destination will be Ukijima-no-Mori Island, a mysterious forest of about 5,000 square meters that seems in its entirety to be floating in a bog. The rare colony of plants, which have adapted to both hot and cold weather, has been designated as a Natural Monument by the Japanese government. Next, you'll feast on a lunch of fresh Kumano fish at Sushi & Japanese Cuisine Maeda. The shop Maffably (page 18) is also located close by, so don't forget to take a look. In the afternoon, you'll head over Kumano Kodo Koya-zaka Slope, a registered World Heritage site, on your way to Miwasaki, which long ago was a base of whaling. The route from Yakiniku Hige to the Koya-zaka Slope trailhead (on the



## Ukijima-no-Mori Island

Phone: 0735-21-0474 Location: 3-38 Ukijima, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located about 8 minutes on foot from JR Shingu Station. Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm (from December through February, until 4:00 pm). Closed: Open year-round Admission: Adults ¥100, children (age 6 to 11), ¥50 [MAP] P18C1

This highly unusual "island" is thought to have formed when dead plants accumulated to form a raft-shaped structure.

### Itinerary

- JR Shingu Station
- ↓ About 8 min. on foot
- Ukijima-no-Mori Island
- ↓ About 20 min. on foot
- Sushi & Japanese Cuisine Maeda
- ↓ About 25 min. on foot to the trailhead on the Hirotsuno side
- ↓ Kumano Kodo Koya-zaka Slope
- ↓ About 20 min. on foot
- ↓ Harpooners' Stone Shrine
- ↓ About 10 min. on foot
- ↓ Whale Lookout
- ↓ About 30 min. on foot
- ↓ Kushima Island and Suzushima Island
- ↓ About 12 min. on foot
- JR Miwasaki Station

## Taste the freshest local fish

### Sushi&Japanese Cuisine Maeda

This restaurant offers a la carte specialties such as fresh tuna and whale meat, as well as fresh local fish landed at the local fishing port.

Phone: 0735-23-2057 Location: 2-10-30 Hashimoto, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located about 25 minutes on foot from JR Shingu Station. Hours: 11:00 am to 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm (Last order at 8:30 pm on Sundays) Closed: Mondays (but open on holidays) [MAP] P18C1



Deep-fried whale meat, ¥1,375.

Hirotsuno side) can be a little difficult to follow, so you may want to take a taxi for that.

It's a great idea to take a stroll along Ojigahama Coast before setting out for Koya-zaka Slope. From the trailhead, you can walk underneath the Kisei Main Line bridge, which parallels the road, to gain access to the beach\*. There's a viewing area a little way up Koya-zaka Slope from which you can see Ojigahama Coast, and if you go a little further, there are two Japan Heritage sites: the Harpooners' Stone Shrine and the Whale Lookout.

Next, you'll descend the hill and proceed along the coast until you reach Miwasaki Fishing Port. Kushima Island and Suzushima Island both lie beyond the fishing port and can be reached by walking along the embankment. The islands are covered with coastal plants that favor a warm climate, for example crinum, which produces white flowers during the summer. It's worth taking a look at the intricate topography that was formed by natural forces acting on Suzushima Island.

\*The area underneath the bridge is prone to flood after heavy rain, making Ojigahama Coast inaccessible.



# Recommended lodging in Kumano

This section introduces hotels and inns that make a great jumping-off point from which to explore the many sights of Kumano. Find one you like and enjoy a leisurely trip in this appealing region.



## Hotel Urashima

This enormous hot spring resort hotel occupies the entire peninsula that separates Katsuura Bay from the Kumano Sea. Its four shore-side buildings are linked to a building on a mountaintop by underground corridors and house a total of 404 guest rooms. Guests enjoy visiting the hotel's four baths, including Boki-do Cave, a hot spring in a large cavern facing the Kumano Sea.

Phone: 0735-52-1011 Location: 1165-2 Katsuura, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 8 minutes on foot from JR Kii-Katsuura Station and then about 3 minutes by launch from Katsuura Tourist Pier. Cost: From ¥14,300 per night, including two meals [MAP] P18C3

### Day use of baths

Hours: 9:00 am to 7:00 pm (doors close at 6:00 pm) Closed: Irregularly as scheduled Cost: Adults, ¥2,500; children, ¥1,250



The hotel's Japanese-style rooms face Katsuura Bay. There are also various other types of rooms.



The hotel operates a series of launches shaped like tortoises and other creatures to ferry guests to and from Katsuura Tourist Pier.

Boki-do Cave, where you can enjoy a hot spring inside an enormous natural cavern that's 50 meters deep

## Kushimoto Mercure Wakayama Kushimoto Resort & Spa

This large resort hotel is located high on a hill. It offers 36-square-meter Western-style rooms and 10-tatami Japanese-style rooms as well as an extensive selection of restaurants serving Japanese, French, and other cuisine. Its outdoor hot spring rock bath offers panoramic views of Hashigui-iwa Rock and the Kumano Sea.

Phone: 0735-62-7771 Location: 1184-10 Sangodai, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 3 minutes by car from JR Kushimoto Station (shuttle bus service is available). [MAP] P18A3



## Taiji Hanairodori no Yado Kayu

This inn and hot spring are located in Taiji Kujirahama Beach Park. It offers a variety of room types, including Kayutei, a special floor featuring more elaborately designed rooms. All rooms have ocean views. The hotel's large garden is filled with blooming flowers in every season.

Phone: 0735-59-3060 Location: 2906 Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 5 minutes by Taiji Municipal Shuttle Bus from JR Taiji Station (get off at the Kujirakan bus stop). Cost: From ¥17,050 per night, including two meals [MAP] P18C4

### Day use of baths

Hours: 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm Closed: Irregularly as scheduled Cost: ¥1,100



Kayutei rooms feature a *sukiya*-style design that offers guests a premium space in which to enjoy their stay.



Guests can enjoy the feel of the salt breeze off the ocean in the hotel's outdoor rock bath, which is fed by a natural hot spring.

# Nanki Katsuura Onsen

There are a variety of inns and hotels around the Port of Katsuura in Katsuura Onsen, one of Wakayama Prefecture's most famous spas. Many

of these facilities take special pride in operating outdoor baths with spectacular views, and many also allow day use of their baths.

Kishu Cho'mon no Yu, an outdoor bath with spectacular views where you can relax as you listen to the sound of the ocean's waves



## The azure island accommodation Kumano-bettei NAKANOSHIMA

This hotel is located on a small island in Katsuura Bay, accessible by a guest launch that leaves from Katsuura Tourist Pier. It has six high-volume hot springs, and all of its outdoor baths, including Kishu Cho'mon no Yu at the water's edge, are fed by hot water from those springs. The hotel also prides itself on cuisine that features plenty of tuna and other seafood. The hotel rebranded and opened in 2019 with the concept of the sacred Kumano.

Phone: 0735-52-1111 Location: 1179-9 Katsuura, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 8 minutes on foot from JR Kii-Katsuura Station and then about 3 minutes by launch from Katsuura Tourist Pier. Cost: From ¥34,100 per night, including two meals [MAP] P18C3



There are two buildings on an island in the Sea of Kumano: the modern Japanese-style "Nagi-no-sho" and the Japanese-style "Chomonte".



The Japanese modern style "Nagi-no-sho" guest rooms are highly functional and enjoy a sophisticated design.

Shiomi no Yu, an outdoor bath that lets you enjoy the beautiful seascape as if you were on your very own private beach



## Hotel Nagisaya

This hotel enjoys a quiet location deep in an inlet that is set a little bit apart from the town of Katsuura. Both its Shiomi no Yu outdoor bath and its large bath, which features a small aquarium, are fed by water from a hot spring located on the hotel's grounds. The alkaline water of that spring feels smooth on the skin and is held to have beautifying effects.

Phone: 0735-52-0015 Location: 955-1 Yukawa, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 5 minutes by shuttle bus from JR Kii-Katsuura Station. Cost: From ¥14,300 per night, including two meals [MAP] P18C3

### Day use of baths

Hours: 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm Closed: Irregularly as scheduled Cost: Adults, ¥1,100; children, ¥550



The hotel's single building is situated in a wooded area that is surrounded by the beautiful ocean.



Guest rooms feature views of the tranquil inlet.

[With open-air Hot springs observation bath] Deluxe Corner Suite(Ocean View)



## KAMENOI HOTEL NACHIKATSUURA

The hotel has been renovated and reopened with new guest rooms, lobby, game corner, and open-air restaurant. A new library where you can learn about our history has also been established. The cuisine has also been redesigned to welcome you.

Phone: 0735-52-0333 Location: 216-19 Katsuura, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun Getting there: Located about 10 minutes on foot from JR Kii-Katsuura Station. Cost: From ¥12,800 per night, including two meals [MAP] P18C2



"Takimi-no-yu" garden open-air bath with a view of Nachi Bay and the mountains of Kumano.



Mysterious lobby with recreation of Nachi Falls and Kumano Kodo.

## Shingu Hotel New Palace

This hotel, the biggest in Shingu City, offers an extensive selection of room types, including single, single twin, and Japanese-style options. It also has a Japanese restaurant and a large bath, where guests can relax after a long journey. A light buffet breakfast is included.

Phone: 0735-28-1500 Location: 2-2-22 Tankaku, Shingu-shi Getting there: Located about 8 minutes on foot from JR Shingu Station. Cost: From ¥6,600 per night (single room) [MAP] P18C1

### Day use of baths

Hours: 4:30 pm to 11:00 pm Closed: Irregularly as scheduled Cost: ¥600



The hotel's guest rooms are well-furnished and relaxing. Wi-Fi is available in all rooms.



Guests love the hotel's large bath.

Information about other inns and hotels can be found at the following links:

- Shingu Tourist Association  
Phone: 0735-22-2840 <http://www.shinguu.jp/>
- Nachi Katsuura Tourism Organization  
Phone: 0735-52-5311 <http://www.nachikan.jp/>
- Taiji Town Tourist Association (Industry and Construction Office, Town of Taiji)  
Phone: 0735-59-2335 <http://www.town.taiji.wakayama.jp/>
- Nanki Kushimoto Tourism Association  
Phone: 0735-62-3171 <http://www.kankou-kushimoto.jp/>

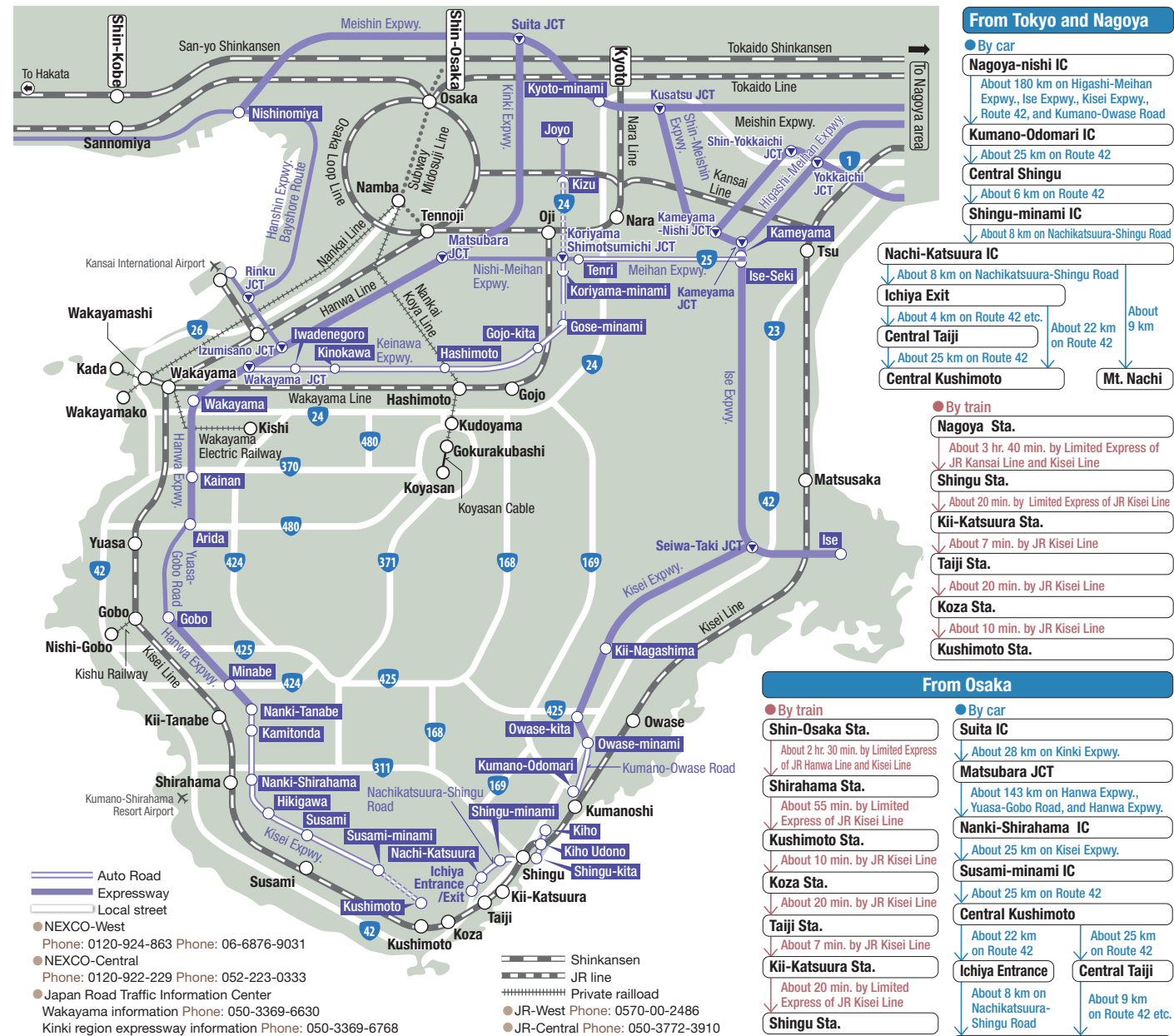


## Japan Heritage “Living with Whales” Area map



## Getting to and around Wakayama Shingu/Nachikatsuura/Taiji/Kushimoto Area

New expressways have been built to Susami-minami IC in the west and to Kumano-Odomari IC in the east (with some segments utilizing regular roads), making it easier to get around the area. If coming by train, utilize Shingu, Kii-Katsuura, Taiji, Koza, and Kushimoto Stations, all of which are served by JR special express trains.



## Famous Kumano delicacies make great souvenirs.

Check out these famous Kumano delicacies and local products, which make great souvenirs that you can take home along with the memories of your trip.

### Shingu Maffably

This shop's products include originally formulated aroma oils extracted from the trees of Kumano. The popular "Kumano-no-Kaori" series of products is available in four variants, and "Shibahara," which is typical of the cedar trees found in the region, offers a refreshing citrus fragrance.

Phone: 0735-22-0662  
Location: 1-21 Goshin, Shingu-shi  
Getting there: Located about 25 minutes on foot from JR Shingu Station.  
Hours: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Closed: Tuesdays and Irregularly as scheduled [MAP] P18C1



"Kumano-no-Kaori," packaged in a wooden box, from ¥3,080

### Nachi Katsuura Yamaguchi Kohodo

This shop specializes in inkstones made of Nachi black stone, one of the Kumano region's famous products. "Mandala no Michi," which is hand-carved from a rare type of Nachi black stone so that it has an outstanding amount of luster, allows you to grind ink surprisingly smoothly.

Phone: 0735-55-0020  
Location: 167-2 Nachisan, Nachikatsuura-cho, Higashimuro-gun  
Getting there: Located about 5 minutes on foot from the Nachisan bus stop.  
Hours: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Closed: Irregularly as scheduled [MAP] P18A1



"Mandala no Michi," a Wakayama Prefecture-designated traditional craft, from ¥13,200.

### Taiji Folk Art Studio Hokoon

This shop sells handmade folk ceramics with a whale motif, including ceramic lucky whale bells for ¥2,200 and a selection of other cute and unique items such as "whale gas" incense holders. With a reservation, you can also take a class and learn to paint your own (from ¥1,200).

Phone: 0735-59-2879  
Location: 2173-1 Taiji, Taiji-cho, Higashimuro-gun  
Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of the Nishihirami bus stop.  
Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Closed: Irregularly as scheduled [MAP] P18C4



Ceramic whale bells in pink, blue, and other colors (foreground), ¥770

### Kushimoto Kashi Shiozaki

Sweets made painstakingly by hand by the proprietor of this shop with carefully selected ingredients are popular among locals and tourists alike. Shiozaki's famous Tateiwamaki delivers a perfect combination of plump, roasted dough and bean jam that melts in your mouth with an elegant sweetness.

Phone: 0735-62-5288  
Location: 40-35 Kushimoto, Kushimoto-cho, Higashimuro-gun  
Getting there: Located in the immediate vicinity of JR Kushimoto Station.  
Hours: 9:00 am to 6:00 pm (Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays, to 5:00 pm) Closed: Tuesdays [MAP] P18A4



Tateiwamaki, which is made in the image of Hashigui-iwa Rock.

