

Mt. Kisokoma gatake

At an altitude of 2,956 m, Mt. Kisokomagatake is the highest peak in the Central Japan Alps Range that extends 90 km to the north and south.

Agematsu town is located right at the entrance to the beautiful Mt. Kisokomagatake and its steep rock face and dramatic profile stand in strong contrast to the surrounding pastoral scenery.

In every direction, mountains are layered upon one another and the deep woodlands between them beautifully illustrate the transience of the seasons making for a deeply moving journey.



Mt. Kazakoshi

Located at the foot of Mt. Kisokomagatake, "Kazakoshi no Seiran" (Wind-waving grass at Kazakoshi) is counted among the 8 scenic spots of Kiso.

The grassy meadows at the foot of the mountain have long been familiar to residents.

The summit is also covered in lush blady grass and the scenery of wind running up the hill on the grass is popular with mountain lovers.



"Eight Scenes of Kiso" ● Kazakoshi no Seiran



The view of Mt. Kisokomagatake from Nojiri village.



Mt. Kisokomagatake & Mt. Nakadake



Mt. Komagatake lit by the evening sun



Late fall in the Central Japan Alps



Mt. Kisokomagatake, Mt. Hokendake, Mt. Utsugidake

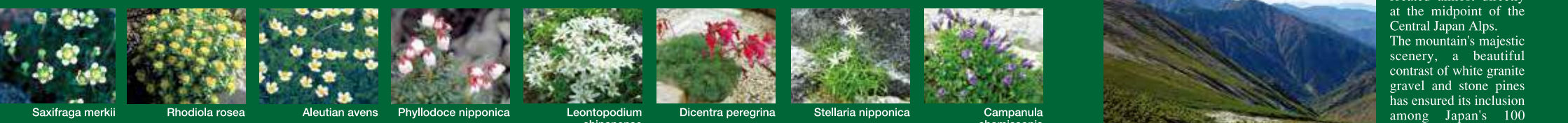
Towering, high altitude peaks, walk the Central Japan Alps

Rugged, solemn mountain scenery, the impressive contrast of green on rock, delicate alpine plants. Natural treasures gifted only to those who stand on the peaks lend prestige to the Kiso valley to this day.



Mt. Utsugidake [E-6] (2,864 m)

The second highest mountain only to Mt. Kisokomagatake is located almost directly at the midpoint of the Central Japan Alps. The mountain's majestic scenery, a beautiful contrast of white granite gravel and stone pines has ensured its inclusion among Japan's 100 famous mountains.



Saxifraga merkiti

Rhodiola rosea

Aleutica avens

Phyllodoce nipponica

Leontopodium shinanense

Dicotyla peregrina

Stellaria nipponica

Campanula chamissonis

Strolling along the Ancient Kiso Road

The "Ancient Kiso Road" is a medieval path passing through Kiso Valley, which had been in use for a few centuries before the Nakasendo Road was developed in the Edo period. Off the busy road by Kiso River, this path used to guide travelers between the communities at the feet of the mountains. It was an agreeable path with nice mountain views and seasonal charms. Now, this path is an enjoyable trail where you can view Mt. Ontake and Mt. Norikura.



①Tono Amidado Temple [D-5]

Located in the center of the Tono community in Agematsu, this temple is said to be the oldest building in Kiso Valley. There are impressive fine works on the ceiling: of over 100 flowers and birds painted by a painter of the time. Worth stopping by on the trail.



②Komagatakejinja Shrine [C-5]

Mt. Kisokomagatake used to be a mountain for worship, and this is the rear shrine (Okunoin) of Komagatakejinja Shrine. There is also the community shrine (satomiya) in Agematsu which is well-known for its worship dance named "Daidai Kagura".



Kiso Kodo (Ancient Kiso Road, aka. Shinanoji Nature Trail) [D-5]

The best trail for visiting Nezamenotoko, Ononotaki Falls, Tono Amidado Temple, and Mt. Kazakoshi. Pleasant strolling with you with the signs "Kiso forest bathing".



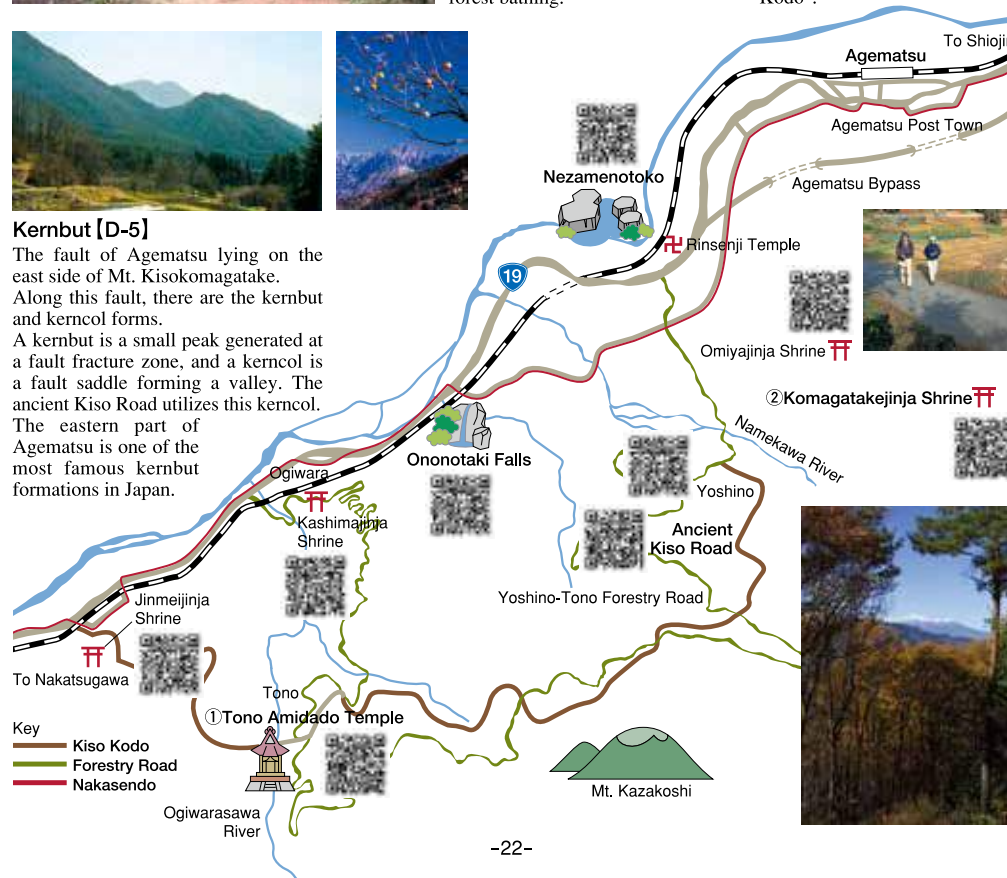
Kiso Kodo (Ancient Kiso Road, aka. Shinanoji Nature Trail) [D-5]

This ancient path served as a traffic bypass before Nakasendo Road was developed. Stretching out from north to south through the communities at the foot of Mt. Kisokomagatake, it guides you with the signs "Kiso Kodo".



Kernbut [D-5]

The fault of Agematsu lying on the east side of Mt. Kisokomagatake. Along this fault, there are the kernbut and kerncol forms. A kernbut is a small peak generated at a fault fracture zone, and a kerncol is a fault saddle forming a valley. The ancient Kiso Road utilizes this kerncol. The eastern part of Agematsu is one of the most famous kernbut formations in Japan.



Spiritual Heritage in Rituals.

The breathtaking mystery, amazing passion. A flash of spectacle becomes a memory to be passed to the future generations.

The dances and motions - each has a meaning cultivated in their history of worship. Each season is celebrated with a charming ritual, reminding people of peace, rich crops, and thanksgiving.

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Festivals



Komagatakejinja Shrine Festival [C-5]

While Komagatakejinja Shrine's rear shrine is located on the peak of Mt. Kisokomagatake, this festival is held in the satomiya (community shrine) at the foot of the mountain, where the worship dance "Daidai Kagura" is performed. This dance consists of 13 scenes that have been secretly passed down from parents to the children of local families for over 400 years. In particular, the scenes of 3 soldiers with swords and 4 deities with white Tengu masks are so impressive that a lot of spectators and photographers come to watch. <Held on May 3, every year>



Suwajinja Shrine Festival (Agematsu-sai) [C-5]

This is the great festival of the town's Suwajinja Shrine and the Wakamiya Hachimangu Shrine, and features a procession of local kabuki actors and the portable shrine. In the evening in Hachimangu Shrine, local youths perform their local kabuki and Shishi (sacred beast) kyogen plays. The next day, Shishi dancers go around the town to drive away evil spirits. You can also see the energetic spectacle of the portable shrine being carried day and night between the shrines by tireless young men. This is the biggest festival in Agematsu and involves the whole community, filled with traditional music sound and passion. (Early September)



Ogawa Wakamiya Shrine Festival [C-4]

This festival is held in Shima area of Agematsu Town. Some Kyogen (traditional plays) of Shishi (a sacred beast) are held during the 3 days in Spring. The actors are local youths. The play "Kuzu no Ha" is especially famous for the spectacular scene in which the sacred beast mother (wearing a mask) writes a poem with an ink brush in her mouth when she has to leave her son. This play is held in the shrine on the afternoon of the final day. (Late April)



Summer Festival in the Town of Cypress

The town's cheerful summer festival. Timber sledge drag race (from the history of village forestry), fireworks, wooden craft market, Kiso dance, etc. The 300 fireworks set off in the valley have extra sound echoed by surrounded mountains. It is also impressive to see the competitors in distinctive dress during the timber sledge race. (The last Saturday of July)



Traditional Crafts and Specialties

Fine works, smooth touch

Traditional wooden crafts become sentimental as you use them every day.

Fine timbers from the abundant forest have inspired the local residents to develop the excellent crafting skills.

Traditional crafts from Agematsu make for excellent souvenirs.



Wooden Products

Cypress and pine tree products like buckets and barrels are strongly resistant to humidity; they are also the special products of Kiso district.



Wooden Crafts

Wooden crafts, such as bowls and plates, made from fine Kiso timber, are popular for both daily use and as souvenirs.



Furniture

Cypress furniture is admired for its noble impression as well as its fine quality.



Cypress Fragrance

Bath salts and aromatic products made with cypress essence are popular.

Japanese Local Food Experience

Incomparable taste delivered from specific local ingredients.

Kiso cooking has developed with local wisdom, tradition, and cordiality.

It serves an unforgettably unique experience.

The mountainous environment brings seasonal ingredients that deliver an indispensable dishes for daily life.

This local cooking has been loved and passed down over generations.



Hoba Maki

A steamed rice cake with sweet bean paste inside rolled with a fragrant magnolia leaf; the early summer sweet in Kiso.



Gohei Mochi

A skewered rice ball grilled over charcoal fire and served with a walnut or sesame sauce - Kiso's specialty.



Soba Noodles

Kiso district is a major place for soba noodles.

The soba noodles are handmade using local crops giving them a delightfully fresh taste.



Soba Manju

This is a sweet delight made from soba flour and Japanese yam.



History and Legend of Agematsu Town

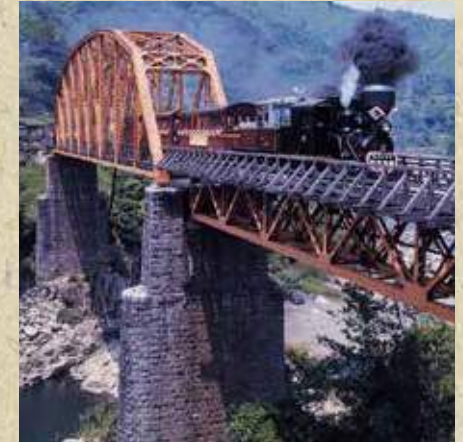
Kiso Forest Train & Onibuchi Railway Bridge

This 93.8-meter-long truss structured bridge was constructed in 1913 for timber transportation.

It was the first Japanese iron bridge in the sense that it was built with domestically refined steel by Japanese engineers.

The bridge had been in use until the last Japanese forest train service in Japan stopped in May 1975.

This railway was also the main transportation for people and commerce. Thereafter, the bridge was used for road traffic for some years.



Wakamiyajinja Shrine & Seimei Abeno

Seimei Abeno (921-1005) was an Imperial fortune-teller with a command of esoteric astrology based on the Chinese Yin-Yang theory.

Legend says he was born and ended his life here; some local customs relate to astrology and the new year decoration is specific, too.

Omiyajinja Shrine

One weekend in mid-July, a festival is held involving the families in the area. The young men visit each family to drive away evil spirits and perform Shishi kagura dances at the shrine.



Goshajinja Shrine

Known as "Gosha sama (five deities)", this shrine was built to wish for the safety of forestry workers in and protection from natural disasters.

The five deities refer to Kiso Ontake, Atsuta in Nagoya, Amaterasu in Ise, Mishima in Izu, and the Water deity.



Six stone guardian deities at Shinden Cemetery

These are the oldest statues in Agematsu, carved in 1678. The sculptor's name is carved on the back.

Hachimangu Shrine

This is the oldest shrine in Agematsu, built in the 18th century. Young men perform Shishi kyogen plays from the 19th century here early every September.



Legend of Kakuredaki Falls

Once upon a time, a princess showed up in front of a villager of Ogihara asking for help with escaping from pursuers, but being scared of trouble he denied her. Then, the princess showed him a gold coin, but the villager took it without helping her. The princess ran away through the mountain and hid herself by a waterfall, but was found by her pursuers. She finally threw herself from the waterfall. Thereafter, this waterfall is called "Kakuredaki (hiding waterfall)", and a tiny shrine to the princess sits there.

Gojin'ya of Agematsu

Gojin'ya was an office for timber management, fortified with timber-reinforced mounds and armed with canons. This office was built for the national authorities to suppress the local officers and residents of Kiso Valley. It is said that there used to be a pine tree on the mound at the entrance.

The Four Gates of Ontake

To climb a mountain for worship and training in Shugendo, there are some rules to keep about time, order, method, and field. The four gates are also related to Shugendo.

The four gates refer to the four spiritual steps: initiation (east), practice (south), enlightenment (west), and Nirvana (north).

On Mt. Ontake, these four gates (spots) are placed as follows: Torii Pass (north), Godo in Kiso Fukushima (east), Nagamine Pass (west), and Mt. Haiden near Mt. Miura (south).

Each spot is a location where you view Mt. Ontake for the first time as you enter the Kiso Valley, which was important for the disciplinants.

In Agematsu, there was a path for Mt. Ontake worship that was older than Nakasendo Road.

Legend of the Himebuchi Tragedy

After a civil war in the 12th century, a 15-year-old princess Himemiya ran away from the capital to see her father hiding in Kiso Valley.

She managed to escape from her pursuers for a while, helped or abandoned by the villagers, but was finally found in Ogawa village, because of her bag of fragrance. She ran and found herself facing a deep pool with no way out. She remembered the picturesque rice fields on the way like her home, her beloved family, and started to sing a rice planting song with gestures.

Then, she threw herself into the pool. It was dusk in Spring with azalea flowers fully blooming.



Legend of Urashima

Taro Urashima came back his home village with the Benzaiten statue, a document to reenter the Dragon's Palace under the sea, and a treasure box.

However, he was surprised to find that he didn't know anyone there.

He went traveling around the country with the help of the document teaching people how to fly, or how to make medicine for long life.

Finally he decided to settle at Nezamenotoko where he was satisfied.

Then, he remembered about the treasure box and opened it, only to find himself becoming an old man of 300 years.

Thereafter, Taro gave medicines to people and left for somewhere else, only the Benzaiten statue remained.



Harahata Canal

In the 17th century, Agematsu village planned to drain water from Namekawa River for rice field development.

Local opposition meant that it took 6 years to build 3 km of canal.

The canal was used for drinking and emergency water until the modern water service was introduced in 1958, and it has remained and used for various purposes.

Mysterious Floating Rock

Once upon a time, there was a strange rock which moved around between Kiso no Kakehashi and Nezamenotoko.

Whenever this rock moved, something bad happened. A monk heard about it and soothed it with a poem.

Thereafter, this rock ceased move, and no bad events occurred in the village. It is said that the rock is still there, upstream of Onibuchi.