

Day 4 O-Tsumago → Nagiso → Nojiri → Kiso-Fukushima

Walking course options

"Ohayo Gozaimasu!" Good Morning!

Today, you will be first be walking approximately 6km from Tsumago 妻籠 to Nagiso 南木曾 town, following the old highway through picturesque hamlets and fields. From the afternoon, you may take one of two courses:

Course A – is your big walk, approximately 15km, up and over the Nenoue Pass 根の上峠, through scenic mountain country to Nojiri station 野尻駅, where you will then catch a later train to Kiso-Fukushima 木曾福島 and walk (or taxi) another 2km to your inn.

Total walking distance for Course A: 23km/14.3mi

Course B – is a more relaxed day, taking the train directly from Nagiso 南木曾 to Kiso-Fukushima 木曾福島, where you may then enjoy a buckwheat soba lunch, visit a famous lacquer shop, or see a Buddhist temple housing one of Japan's largest Zen rock gardens. For further summaries, see below.

Total walking distance for Course B: 8-10km/3.7-5mi

Course A Summary

Course A is your big day, walking a total of approximately 24km. First you will walk from O-Tsumago to Nagiso. Along the way, a short excursion (for the very active) takes you to the hilltop site of Tsumago Castle from where there are commanding views of the Kiso Valley and Tsumago. The road gradually descends to Nagiso town. Momotsuke-bashi, an impressive wooden footbridge, is suspended across the Kiso River here. Near Nagiso station, you will have an opportunity to buy food for a later picnic lunch at one of two small supermarkets or a local sandwich shop.

From Nagiso you will be following an alternative route of the Nakasendo, approximately 16km up and over the Nenoue Pass to Nojiri station, where you will then take a train to Kiso-Fukushima town and your inn for the night. This course requires light feet, a clear mind, and plenty of energy, but is worth it (in good weather) for the beautiful mountain scenery. Hidden forest paths, rivers and wildlife are abundant in this section, and leaving the established Nakasendo behind can be quite an adventure.

Course A Summary

O-Tsumago → Nagiso → Nojiri (via Nenoue Pass) → Kiso-Fukushima

This is a tentative schedule based on a mid-level, but steady, pace throughout the day. Be sure to leave earlier or later depending on your confidence in walking a longer, steeper route than what you have done so far.

If you are going to the Wakihonjin Museum today in Tsumago, it opens at 9am. We recommend not spending more than an hour there to stay on schedule.

This route plans on a later lunch, but you may stop somewhere else (more impromptu) along the way.

7:30am	Breakfast at the inn
8:30	Check out/depart
9:00	Arrive Tsumago post town
9:45	Leave Tsumago post town
10:45-11:00	Arrive Nagiso station (BUY PICNIC LUNCH)
11:30-11:45	Leave Nagiso (11:40-11:50 Visit Momosuke Bridge)
12:15-12:30	After passing through Midono post town, start your climb up an alternative Nakasendo route
14:15-14:30	Arrive at your PICNIC lunch spot
14:45-15:00	Leave your PICNIC lunch spot
15:45-16:00	Arrive/Leave the top of Nenoue Pass
17:00	Arrive at Nojiri station (if arriving before 16:45, stop at Donguri Café)
17:27	Train from Nojiri to Kiso-Fukushima station
*If exceptionally fast, or have left early, you may also aim for the train departing Nojiri at 14:52	
18:04	Arrive Kiso-Fukushima station
19:00	Dinner (Iwaya Inn)



ON ARRIVAL IN KISO-FUKUSHIMA, TAKE A TAXI (¥650-800YEN, 3-5MINUTES) OR WALK APPROXIMATELY 15-20MINUTES THROUGH THE OLD POST TOWN TO IWAYA INN いわや旅館.

Course B Summary

Course B, like Course A, starts with a 6km morning walk from O-Tsumago to Nagiso. Along the way, a short excursion (for the very active) takes you to the hilltop site of Tsumago Castle from where there are commanding views of the Kiso Valley and Tsumago. The road gradually descends to Nagiso. Momotsuke-bashi, an impressive wooden footbridge, is suspended across the Kiso River here.

From Nagiso station, you will go straight to Kiso-Fukushima by train, where you may then explore the town and enjoy some of its local perks: famous buckwheat soba noodles, fine sake, and hand-crafted lacquer ware made of Kiso hinoki cypress await you here. The historical “sekisho” barrier station, one of two checkpoints on the Nakasendo, and a surprisingly large, but meditative, Zen Buddhist rock garden and temple are also sites not to be missed. If you do not want to be rushed here, you may also decide to visit the “sekisho” barrier station tomorrow morning. Or, if you would just like to relax today, you may arrive at your inn early and enjoy the in-house “onsen” thermal hot spring baths.

Course B Train Schedule

EARLY BIRD

In order to catch the early train departing Nagiso at 10:19 (JPY590, arriving in Kiso-Fukushima at 11:02), have breakfast at 7:00am, and leave the inn at 8:00am.

*If you are a fast walker, and plan to just pass through Tsumago post town, you may feel confident in leaving the inn later.

*For an additional JPY650 fare (or free if with a JR Rail Pass), you may also reserve seats on the “Wide-view Shinano” limited express train, departing Nagiso at 11:00 and arriving Kiso-Fukushima at 11:25.

RELAXED MORNING

In order to catch the later train departing Nagiso at 12:19 (JPY590, arriving Kiso-Fukushima at 13:02), have breakfast at 7:30 or 8:00am, and leave by 9:00am.

Visiting Tsumago’s Wakihonjin (Secondary Inn) and Museum:

*If you didn’t have a chance to visit the Okuya Wakihonjin & Local History Museum yesterday, have breakfast at 7:30, leaving the inn at 8:30. The building opens at 9:00am.

In this case, we recommend leaving the museum by 10:30am and aiming for the later train, departing Nagiso at 12:19 (arriving Kiso-Fukushima at 13:02).

Course B “Early Bird” Schedule Itinerary Summary

7:00am	Breakfast at the inn
8:00	Check out/ depart
8:20	Arrive Tsumago post town
8:45-9:00	Leave Tsumago post town (*Walk 3.5km to Nagiso station)
10:00-10:15	Arrive Nagiso station
10:19	Train from Nagiso to KISO-FUKUSHIMA station
*JPY590. If you just miss this train, you may also take an 11:00am “Wide-view Shinano” limited express for JPY1250.	
11:09	Arrive Kiso-Fukushima
11:30 LUNCH	Option Kurumaya Soba (buckwheat noodle restaurant)
12:15	Leave lunch /walk back toward town (visit lacquer shops)
12:30	Walk to Iwaya Inn/leave luggage (Kiso-Fukushima optional site visit #1: Kozenji Temple, entry: ¥500)
13:00	Arrive Kozenji, visit the museum and Zen Buddhist rock garden
13:45-14:15	Leave Kozenji Temple (Kiso-Fukushima optional site visit #2: “Sekisho” Barrier Station, entry: ¥300)
14:30	Arrive “Sekisho” Barrier Station
15:15	Depart “Sekisho” Barrier Station and walk back to Iwaya Inn
15:30	Check-in Iwaya Inn (Peruse town, bathe in “onsen” hot springs, and relax before dinner)



**PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO CHOOSE YOUR DINNER TIME UPON CHECK-IN:
18:30 OR 19:00.**

If needed, you may be able to check-in to IWAYA INN earlier in the afternoon and/or drop off any extra baggage. This is also a good chance to obtain an English map of the Kiso town area.

Day 4 Morning Walk Directions

Applicable to both Course A and Course B

O-tsumago → Tsumago Post Town:

LEAVE YOUR MAIN LUGGAGE IN THE INN'S FRONT AREA, AND DON'T FORGET TO PAY FOR ANY DRINKS 飲み物代 YOU MAY HAVE HAD THE NIGHT BEFORE!

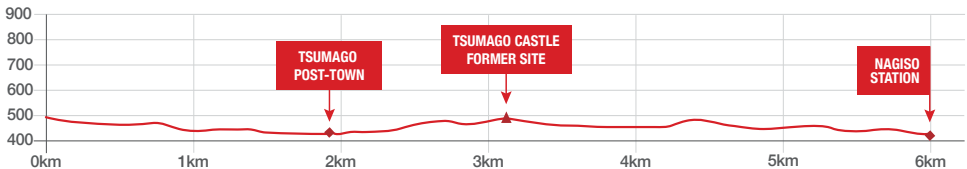
It is 1.7km from O-Tsumago into Tsumago post town. If you made it into town yesterday you will know the way, if not, please see the previous day's walking directions and map of Tsumago post town.



Tsumago-juku 妻籠宿:
The Way into Town



Tsumago post town妻籠宿 → Nagiso Station南木曾駅



Total walking distance: 5.45km / Elevation at departure: 426m /
Elevation at arrival: 404m / Highest point: 486m / Lowest point: 398m /
Cumulative ascent: 80m / Cumulative descent: 81m

•Continue straight through Tsumago Post town. If you have time, and were not able to do so yesterday, you may visit the Okuya Wakihonjin and Local History Museum, which opens at 9:00am. You should aim to leave here and start on your way by around 10am.

- 3a On the northern edge of town, past the museum, reach a fork in the road.

1.9KM

★From here, you will **NOT** follow the curve of the town avenue left. Instead, exit town by continuing STRAIGHT UP the road ahead, passing the *kosatsuba* edict board.



FROM HERE, IT IS APPROXIMATELY 3.5KM TO NAGISO STATION

·Continue on this narrower lane and you will pass the “Koi-ishi,” or “Carp Rock”, a well known landmark in feudal times, though now it seems to have fallen over and lost it’s “koi” demeanor. It may have once looked like the attached drawing.

120m



·Follow the “S”-curves of this lane and continue on. Further on, as the road curves, you will reach a fork.

340m

3b

·Take the high road up here, following signs to the former site of Tsumago Castle. Entering forest, this is a fairly STEEP UP (please take it slowly, especially in the heat).

100m

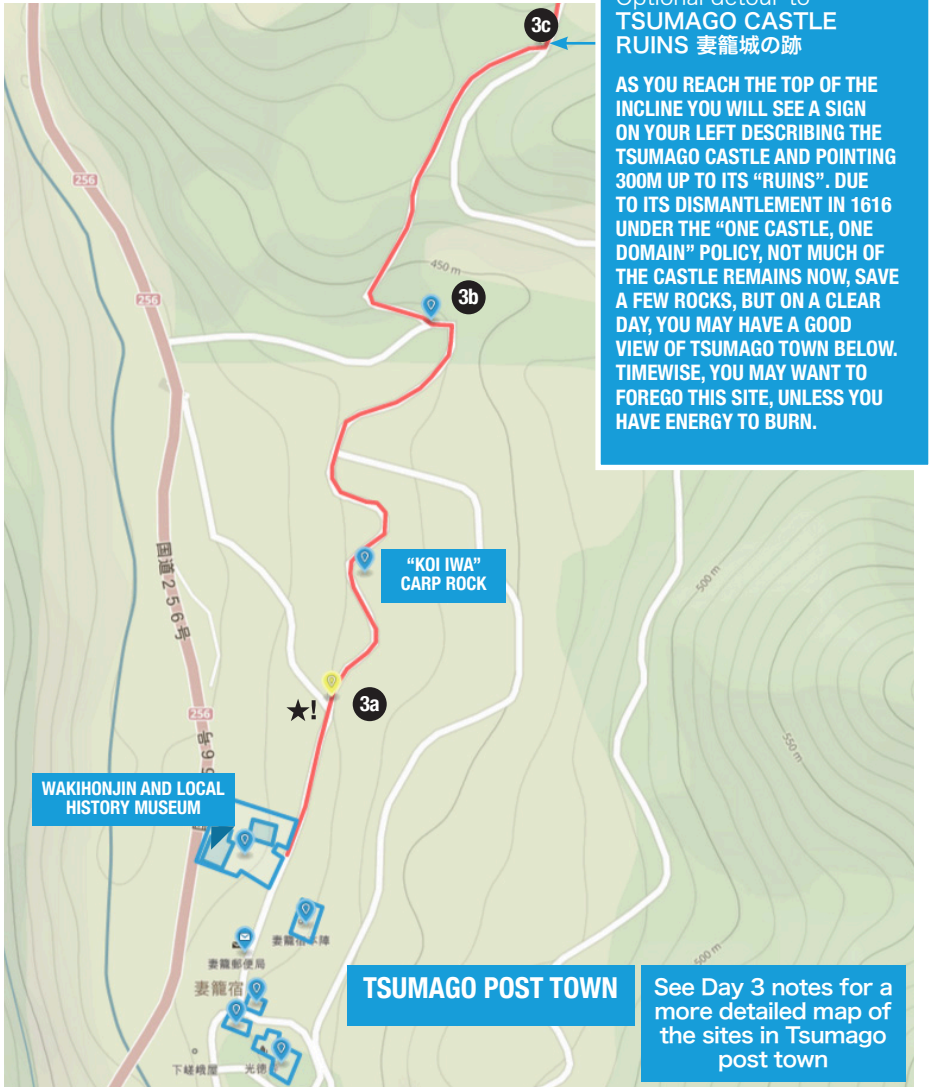


Tsumago Castle (Optional Detour)

In 1584, Tsumago castle was the site of a battle between 300 Kiso soldiers and 7000 of Tokugawa Ieyasu’s forces. The Kiso forces were surrounded at the castle, but were able to fend off their adversaries for long enough that Tokugawa decided it wasn’t worth it for his army to go through the narrow Kiso Valley and took a different route. However, this “defeat” may have influenced the later Tokugawa shogunate’s decision to specifically dismantle this castle.



(Path Entrance Sign to Tsumago Castle and View from Top)



FROM HERE, IT IS ANOTHER 2.7KM TO NAGISO STATION

3c -Continue STRAIGHT on (high or low, either route is fine, but to avoid asphalt, take the low one to the left).



50m

3d ·Stay flat and to the LEFT where the path splits.

100m

·You will soon pass the “Henbi-ishi” 蛇石 or “Snake Rock” (likened to the head of a snake sticking out of the grass) on your right.

180m



Henbi-Ishi - Snake Rock

This marks where the old, medieval Nakasendo used to cut through the hills, following a mountain stream. The highway course was changed in 1703 to follow your current path.



·Continue until you reach another CURVE in the road down LEFT. The asphalt changes color here and points to Nagiso南木曾.

60m

·Continue down and past a home with a nicely manicured garden and koi pond.

350m



FROM HERE, IT IS 1.9KM TO NAGISO STATION

·Just after the home/garden, follow the path STRAIGHT and curving UP to the left (with bamboo forest on your right).

75m

You will be passing the last obvious “ichirizuka”一里塚 marker of the trip, two large mounds on either side of the road.



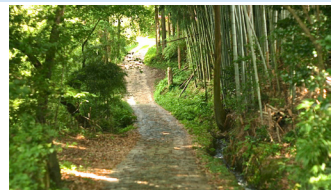
Ichirizuka Marker

Again, these mounds usually had a large cherry or oak tree on top and were roughly placed every 4km on the route. They were used most effectively by Oda Nobunaga as a means to measure how far his armies had travelled, and were later pivotal to the Shogunate’s systemization of the highway as a method of gauging daimyo progress along the route.



·Continue past a local artist’s home and along more bamboo-lined trail, across a small bridge, followed by a home with an oft angry dog. You may also notice a hole in the mountain here that was most likely a WWII-era bomb shelter.

150m



- 3e • Passing a number of homes with neatly manicured gardens, cross another small bridge and reach an intersecting road. Continue STRAIGHT and UP here, following the sign.

300m



- 3f • Reach a small TOILET shack and continue up to the open, flat area here with a Buddhist “Kannon” statue.

100m



This is the **Kabuto Kannon**, or “Helmeted Goddess of Mercy”, and she has quite a story. Take a water break and rest here, briefly, at the benches if needed.



Details about the Kabuto Kannon can be found in the supplementary notes.

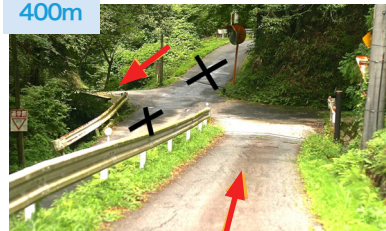
SUPP 015

FROM HERE, IT IS JUST OVER 1KM TO NAGISO STATION

- 3g • From the Kabuto Kannon, go up the stone STAIRS (left of the large log/fountain) and TURN LEFT to continue on the Nakasendo.
- 3h • Continue along, past another fine stretch of homes and meticulously cared-for gardens. At an intersection in the road, continue to the LEFT and DOWN, following the Nakasendo signs toward Nagiso.



400m



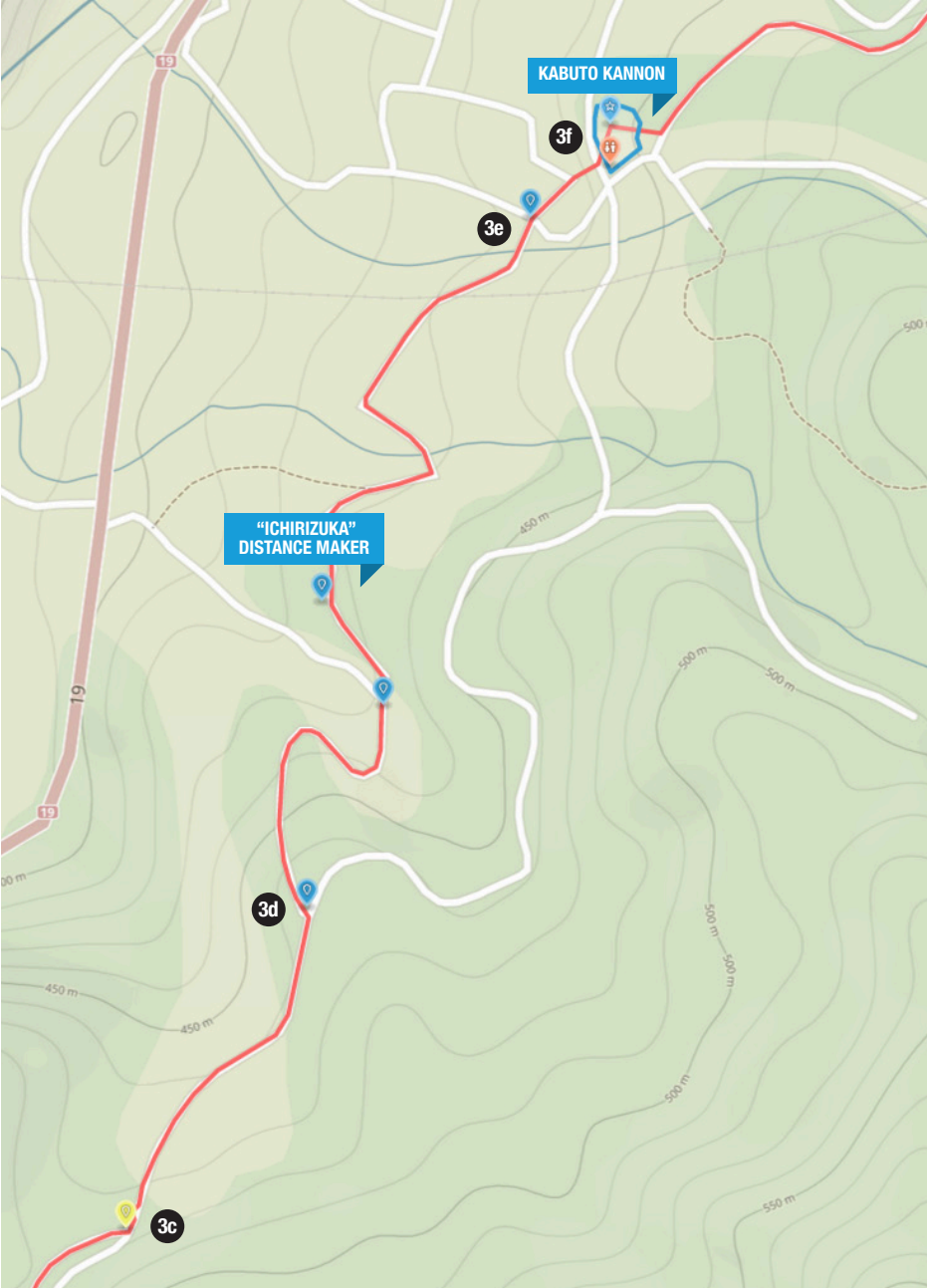
FROM HERE, IT IS JUST OVER 1KM TO NAGISO STATION

• Following the road down, you should soon have a good view of Nagiso Town, the Kiso River and Momosuke Bridge.

150m



IF WALKING THE LONG COURSE A TO NOJIRI TODAY, YOU WILL BE FOLLOWING AN ANCIENT, ALTERNATIVE ROUTE OF THE NAKASENDO THAT EVADES THE CENTRAL VALLEY AND GOES UP AND OVER THE SECOND MOUNTAIN AHEAD AND TO THE RIGHT.





Fukuzawa Momosuke and Sadayakko



Nagiso Town and Fukuzawa Momosuke

Nagiso南木曾, meaning “South Kiso”, is a comparatively larger town in the Kiso valley and is known as a symbol of its modern development. This is because Fukuzawa Momosuke, a famous entrepreneur in the Meiji era (1868-1912), began his electric empire here. Starting with the privatization of (formerly commonly-

held) mountain resources, his efforts led to the construction of a number of hydroelectric plants lining the Kiso river, and eventually culminated in the founding of the Kansai (Western Japan) Electric Company. The second bridge you can see from the viewpoint coming into town is a testament to his efforts. Built in 1912 and renovated in the 1990s, it is known as the “Momosuke Bridge” and was used as a means of transporting large lorries across the river to aid in further hydro-plant construction efforts. Now it is a footbridge, and if you have time today, you may enjoy walking halfway across it before either catching a train or continuing on your longer hike up the Yogawa Way and Nenoue-toge Pass.

Momosuke was also known for his tryst with Sadayakko, one of the first geisha entertainers to make it big in the United States and Europe, even appearing in Harper’s Magazine at the end of the Meiji era. Sadayakko had met Momosuke as a youth, but went on to marry another man. Later in life, after their significant others had passed on, they would rejoin and live together as “business partners”. Sadayakko was also famous for once trying to sail a boat recklessly (some say, suicidely) into an oncoming storm, as well as buzzing through the mountains of the Kiso valley on a motorcycle. A true free spirit of her day, she too become a symbol of the modernization of Japan and the evolution of women’s social roles.

•Passing the steam engine park, you may also see the six Jizo statues with red-knit caps on your right. From here, it is only another 450m straight along the railway line to Nagiso station.

150m

The Six Jizo

These six Jizo, protectors of children and travellers, are said to appear in people's dreams and grant wishes. A folktale tells of an old farmer and craftsman who couldn't sell his knit caps in town and, seeing the Jizo looking cold in the winter snow, decided to give each one a cap as a gift. The next night he saw these Jizo in his dreams, singing and dancing in the distance. When he called out, they disappeared, but upon awaking, he found his "okaeshi" (return present): a chest full of gold coins.

Looking down the small path next to the six Jizo, you will find a small shrine of Buddhist wooden statues. Supposedly, the artist is aiming to carve one thousand of them, and it looks like he is almost there.



- 3i · Turn LEFT and down into the parking lot before Nagiso station. A TOILET break here is recommended before you either start your long walk today over the Nenoue-toge Pass (Course A) or take the train on to Kiso-Fukushima (Course B).

450m

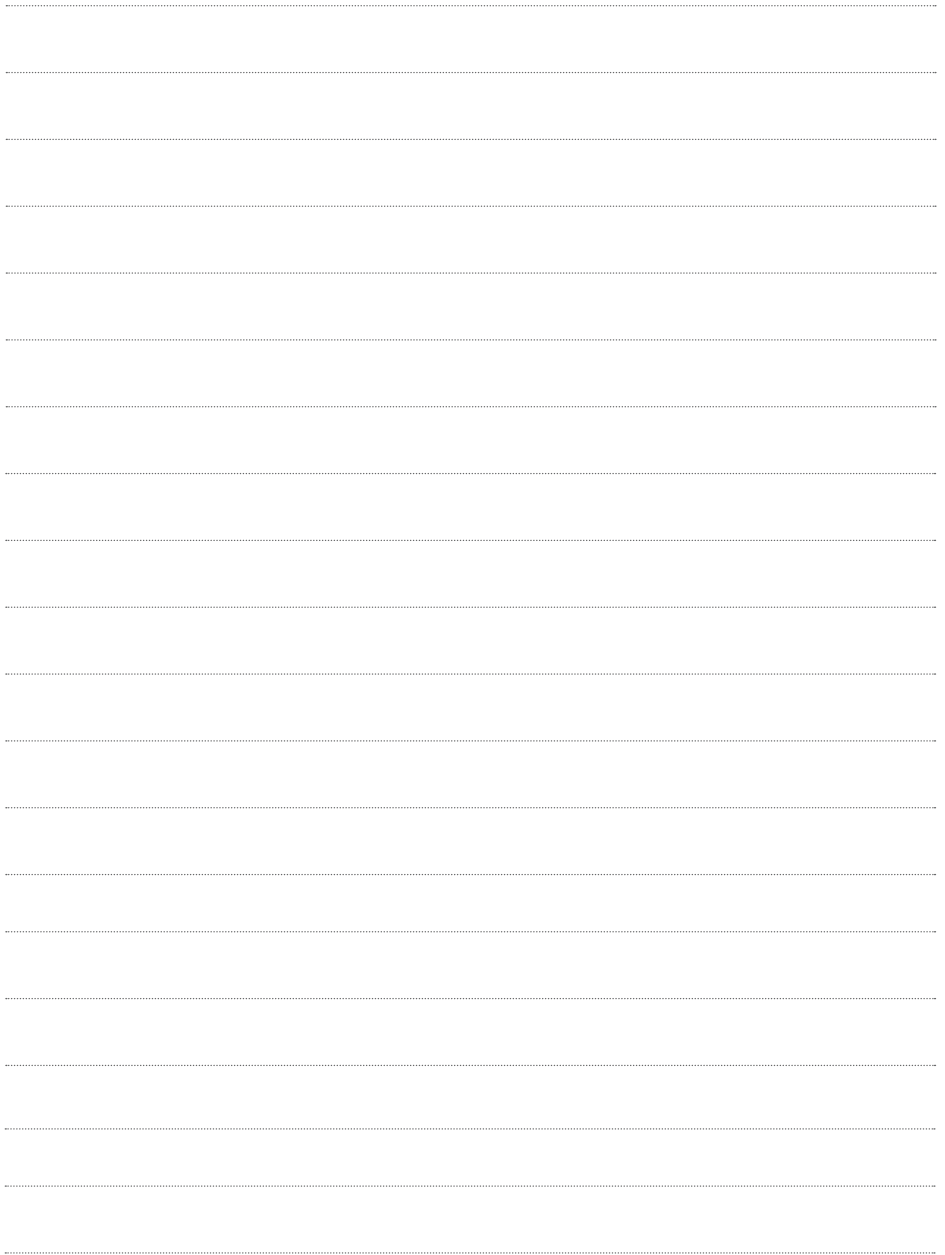


Please see more on your afternoon in Kiso-Fukushima following Course A notes



NAGISO STATION





Kabuto Kannon “The Helmeted Goddess of Mercy” SUPP 015

Many of us have heard of the Tale of Genji, written at the start of the 11th Century by the Heian-era courtesan, Murasaki Shikibu. This was one of the first historical examples of a “novel”, i.e. a story that is unified by one character over multiple chapters. Fewer of us have probably heard of the Tale of Heike, a vast saga written in the mid-13th Century, that recounts the bitter rivalry between two courtly families, the Heike (or Taira) and the Genji (or Minamoto).

Though there are many chapters following the Taira’s tragic loss of power and the prominent rise of the Minamoto clan (later to become the first Kamakura Shogunate at the end of the 12th Century), our point of interest here is a character named Minamoto Yoshinaka. He was also known as Kiso no Yoshinaka because of the area he controlled: the Kiso Valley. As the Taira lost control of the capital of Heian-kyo (present-day Kyoto), Kiso no Yoshinaka saw a chance at regaining some of his family name’s former glory. He rounded up a force of frighteningly uncouth mountain men from the surrounding area and, going around the top of Lake Biwa, stormed the capital from the North. Heian-kyo was not ready for such a barbarous group of men and quickly gave in to Kiso no Yoshinaka’s demand for control of the city.

However, there was another member of the Minamoto clan, Yoshinaka’s cousin, Yoritomo, who also claimed the right to control the capital. (Truthfully, he most likely had that right... or at least a greater army.) As friction developed between the graceful demeanor of the Heian aristocracy and the gruff manners of the Kiso mountain men (who, in the end, did not really have the numbers to control the capital), the emperor gave a hint to Minamoto no Yoritomo that his cousin should really be removed from office. Yoritomo came to Heian-kyo to claim his right, and in so doing, ordered two other cousins to bring him Kiso no Yoshinaka’s head. The story goes that they chased Yoshinaka to the shores of Lake Biwa, where his horse became stuck in a rice paddy. Kiso no Yoshinaka then told his concubine, Tomoe Gozen (one of the few legendary samurai women in Japanese history), to leave him and flee. She begrudgingly did so. Kiso no Yoshinaka was then shot with an arrow, through the helmet, before having his head chopped off in the rice field.

A tragic tale. And it all started at this spot where you are standing, the Kabuto Kannon. This is where Kiso no Yoshinaka came and first lay down his helmet (on the stone surrounded by chain-link behind you), before praying to “Kannon”, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, for victory and the right to control Japan. She granted it to him, if for a short time, and so holds his helmet in her hand.

This spot is also where Yoshinaka wanted to practice his archery and so asked Tomoe Gozen to cut down a large tree that was in his way. She supposedly did so in one swoop with her “naginata” lance, and a commemorative tree lies down beside the helmet stone (its stump is also just up the road). The log has a spring feeding into it and it is divided into three sections, one traditionally for human use (...though please don’t fill your water here), another for washing, and the bottom section a trough for beasts of burden. What is also interesting about this site is how newly the Kannon statue has been erected. Even now, over 800 years later, the people of Kiso revere Yoshinaka’s valiant efforts to gain control of the capital, and they still treat him as a local hero.

Kabuto Kannon かぶと観音 “The Helmeted Goddess of Mercy”



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