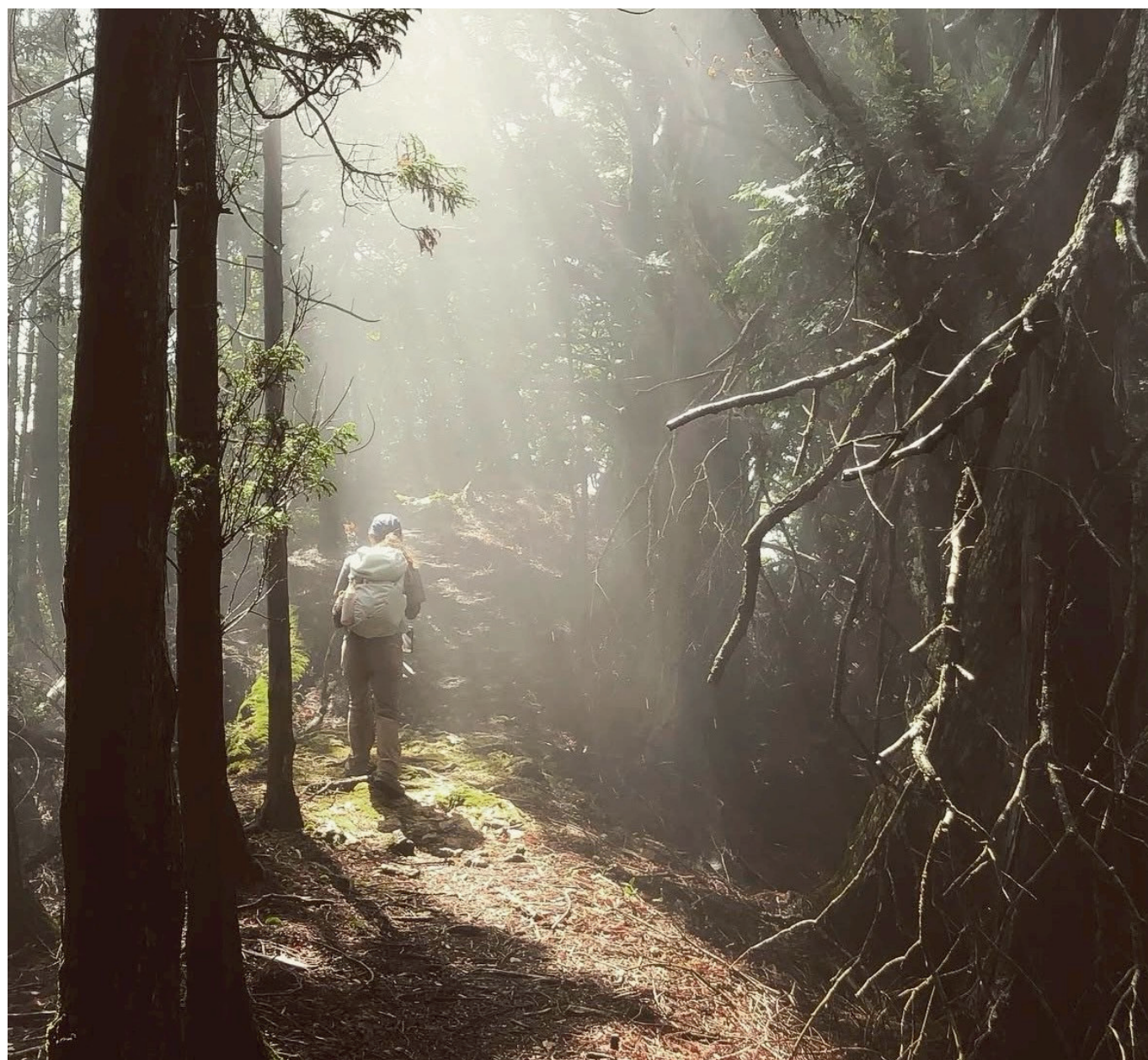


熊野古道 よみがえりリトリート

# KUMANO KODO REBIRTH RETREAT

— A SACRED JOURNEY —

BY  
TOKIMUSUBI





## Kumano Kodo

The Kumano Kodo is an ancient pilgrimage route that has carried the prayers of countless travelers for over a thousand years — a Path of Rebirth.

Through the deep forests and crystal-clear rivers of the Kii Mountains, this sacred trail winds gently among moss-covered stones that seem to breathe with the spirit of nature itself.

For centuries, the path from Kyoto to the Three Grand Shrines of Kumano has been revered as a place of renewal — where people come to reflect, heal, and be reborn. It is a journey that quiets the heart and restores balance, offering moments of peace in harmony with the divine.



## A Path of Rebirth

In 2004, the Kumano Kodo in Japan and Spain's Camino de Santiago were both recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage pilgrimage routes — the only two "paths" in the world ever to receive this honor.

Even today, travelers from around the world walk this sacred trail, seeking inner peace and the gentle experience of Rebirth.



## Kumano Hongu Taisha

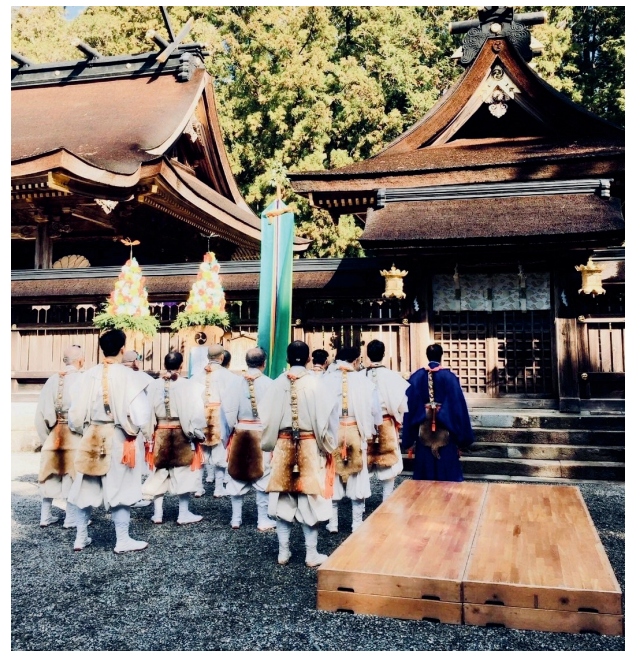
At the heart of the sacred Kumano region stands Kumano Hongu Taisha, the grand shrine that serves as the spiritual center of the Three Kumano Shrines. For over a thousand years, this revered place has been known as the land that embraces all and restores life, drawing countless pilgrims who walk in prayer for the renewal of their souls.

Originally located on the river delta known as Oyunohara, the shrine was relocated to its current site after a great flood in the Meiji era.

Today, Japan's largest Otorii Gate rises majestically at the former shrine grounds, marking the threshold between the human and the divine — a symbol of Rebirth.

Surrounded by towering cedar trees and touched by the pure mountain breeze, Kumano Hongu Taisha emanates a quiet, timeless serenity.

It is a sacred sanctuary of prayer, purification, and spiritual renewal, where every visitor can feel the soul gently returning to its origin.



## Otonashi-cha, “The Tea of Silence.”

In the deep mountains of Kumano,  
there grows a quiet tea

Its name originates from the Otonashi River, which flows through the sacred grounds of Kumano Hongu Taisha, carrying the meaning that “true prayer lives within silence.”

First cultivated over seventy years ago by the grandparents of Natsumi Kuratani (Natsumi Chatsumi), this tea field remains the only surviving tea garden in Hongu.





**“In silence, the voice of the divine can be heard.”  
— Ancient saying from Kumano**

Bathed in mountain mist and nourished by pure spring water, its leaves yield a gentle sweetness and a lingering clarity found nowhere else.

Reverently offered to the deities of Kumano Hongu Taisha, Otonashi-cha is more than tea — it is a vessel of prayer. Each cup embodies the breath of the mountains, the stillness of the sacred forest, and the timeless connection between human spirit and nature.



**“Kumano is not a place to visit,  
it’s a path that traces the memories of the soul.”**  
— Yoshinori Yamada



**Yoshinori Yamada**  
Representative, KUMANO Pilgrim  
Chief Storyteller, Kumano Kodo Nakahechi

Based in Tanabe, Wakayama, Yoshinori Yamada leads the Kataribe no Kai Kumano Kodo Nakahechi, a pioneering storytelling association dedicated to preserving and sharing the spirit of the UNESCO World Heritage Kumano Kodo.

Since becoming an NPO in 2005, the group has guided over 30,000 pilgrims each year, offering deep insight into the faith, nature, and history that flow through this sacred path. A recipient of the prestigious Dual Pilgrim title—awarded to those who have completed both Spain’s Camino de Santiago and Japan’s Kumano Kodo—Yamada is a master of pilgrimage walking.

His stories awaken a quiet remembrance within each traveler: the sense of returning to where the spirit was once born.

**“To brew tea is to listen to  
the silence of the mountains.”**

**— Natsumi Chatsumi**



## **Natsumi Kuratani**

**Founder, Natsumi Chatsumi**

In the sacred mountains overlooking Kumano Hongu Taisha, Natsumi Kuratani revived her grandparents' tea fields —first cultivated seventy years ago —and launched Natsumi Chatsumi in 2018. As the only remaining tea garden in Hongu, she continues to produce Otonashi-cha, a rare and sacred tea dedicated to the shrine.

Her mission is to preserve and share the art of Kumano Kama-iri Cha, passing on the spirit of coexistence with nature and the quiet mindfulness that flows through the act of tea. Each cup embodies the essence of Kumano — a landscape of silence, prayer, and rebirth.





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