

# SANTIAGO KUMANO

WORLD HERITAGE  
PILGRIMAGE ROUTES

*This exhibition forms part of a joint promotion program between the cities of Santiago and Tanabe. It is based on a cooperation agreement that began in 2008 to strengthen the favourable bonds between the two Pilgrimage Routes, Kumano and Santiago, which had already twinned in 1998 by means of the Xunta de Galicia and Wakayama Prefecture.*

*Both cities shaped their identity as the destination of two pilgrimage routes declared World Heritage by UNESCO. And both routes originated in the 10th century; millions of pilgrims have walked along them during a thousand years. The date is not the only point of agreement; there are many common elements in their traditions, spirituality, syncretism, scenery and even gastronomy, based on the quality of the ingredients provided by the sea and mountains.*

*At the time when pilgrims began walking along the two routes, Japan was "the land of the rising sun," and Galicia, "the land at the end of the world," where the sun set. And despite being so distant geographically, the two ancient roads shared, unknowingly, a common history of faith.*

*The visit of Japan's Crown Prince, Naruhito, in June 2013, and his pilgrimage along the Way of St. James, served to strengthen all the more so the bonds between the two pilgrimage routes.*

*This initiative is part of the Spain-Japan Dual Year commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Keicho Embassy's visit to Europe.*



## ORIGIN

During more than a thousand years, the Way of St. James has led pilgrims to the sanctuary of one of Christendom's apostles: St. James the Greater. The origin of this worship goes back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century of our era, when the tomb of Jesus' favourite apostle was discovered in a remote part of the kingdom of Asturias. The events are narrated in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Codex Calixtinus, according to which the relics of St. James, who was beheaded in Palestine in the year 44, were brought in a stone boat as far as Iria Flavia, and from there to their burial place in the forest of Libredón. After centuries of oblivion, the tomb was found in the year 813 under a prodigious meteor shower. That natural sacred spot became the site of a church dedicated to the Apostle, around which *Compostella* grew as a priestly city open to Christendom's faithful. In the Middle Ages, the Way became the most consolidated network for transporting persons, goods and ideas, with Santiago de Compostela as its destination, as certified by UNESCO, which declared the city and the route World Heritage.

The Kumano faith is rooted in the worship of its impressive natural surroundings, with large waterfalls and hundred-year-old trees, where the spirits are believed to inhabit. The sacred mountains of Kumano are the mystic dwelling place of the gods. The Kumano region, in the prefecture of Wakayama, is located to the south of Kioto and Osaka on the Kii peninsula and has been a holy place since prehistoric times. When Buddhism reached Kumano in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, it merged with Japan's own religion, Shintoism; the result was the syncretism that has survived until our times. With the arrival of Buddhism, Shinto's natural altars were turned into temples. The circuit joining a triangle of temples known as Kumano Sanza gave rise, starting from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, to the Kumano Road or Kumano Kodo. For more than a thousand years, emperors, aristocrats and peasants have travelled these roads.



## RISING SUN / SETTING SUN

The Way of St. James includes a route that extends it as far as the ancient *Finis terrae*, where, at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Romans saw the sun disappearing into the unknown sea as an omen of the inexorability of death. Moreover, pre-Christian sun-worshipping rites are known to have taken place along this rugged coast, with its inhabitants paying homage to the elements of Nature. In an assimilation of ancient and Christian tradition, today's Jacobean pilgrims can continue their journey from Santiago to the "cape of Land's End" in search of their own personal birth. There they carry out rituals such as bathing in the sea and burning the clothes and boots used in their pilgrimage.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when the pilgrimage along the Kumano Road began, Japan was the easternmost part of the known world, the place of the rising sun, which is what the name Japan means. In the oldest texts of Japanese history, "Kumano" was the "mythical land of dead," *yomi*. Those ancestral spirits rose from the sea, the Pacific Ocean, up to the mountains of the Kii range. The pilgrimage included strict religious rites of worship and purification, and pleasures such as taking a dip in the waters of an Onsen or hot spring.



## NETWORKS OF ROADS

Since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the ups and downs of history have shaped the seven main routes leading to Santiago. The Original Road reminds us of the route chosen by King Alfonso II from Oviedo. The North Road, along the Cantabrian coast, was a difficult but safe route during the time the Moors ruled over the Iberian Peninsula. But the expansion of the Reconquest enabled the Christian monarchs to make a new itinerary through liberated territory, linking together the capitals of the kingdoms of Navarre, Castile and Leon and from there to Santiago. Thus began the most popular route, the French Road, supported and promoted by the Papacy as early as 1139 with the dissemination of the Codex Calixtinus. Its fifth book may be considered Europe's first travel guide, since it indicates the pilgrim routes through France towards the Apostolic City, describing the resources and impressions awaiting the daring travellers in each region. Also very popular are the Portuguese Road, the English Road (opened up by pilgrims from the North that disembarked in the ports of Ferrol and A Coruña) and the "Via de la Plata," which linked Santiago with the territories of the South liberated by the Reconquest.

The 10<sup>th</sup> century also saw the consolidation of the main places of worship in Kumano Sanzan, a series of three important sanctuaries: Kumano Hongu, Kumano Hayatama and Kumano Nachi. A network of routes, the Kumano Kodo, was developed to aid pilgrims in their arduous journey. Moreover, several roads were established to access the three sanctuaries: the Kii route, from Kioto, passing through Osaka, the one preferred by the emperors. The Ise route, from Kioto, passing by the imperial temple of Ose to the west and from there to Sanzan. The hard Kohechi route, through the mountains, almost restricted to the Yamabushi hermit monks and the alternative Ooechi route from Tanabe to Nachi. Apart from the Kumano Kodo route, there are another two: the Koyasan route, called Choisi, and the Omine Okugakemichi route. The monks of Kumano Bikuni spread the Kumano faith actively throughout Japan from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These ancient routes, which cross peaks and mountain settlements and that have had such a strong influence on Japan's spiritual culture, are still being rediscovered and reinterpreted by today's visitors.



## SYMBOLS

There are several symbols associated with the Way of St. James. Stars, for example, shine down from the Milky Way for travellers and mark the place names of sites along the route. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the direction for pilgrims along the French Road was marked by the well-known yellow arrows, which the priest Elías Valiña painted by hand. Another symbol that stands out is the scallop shell. It is believed that, as an ancient symbol of the initiation journey, the first scallops were gathered in Finisterre, the region where Santiago preached during his lifetime; they therefore represent the culmination of the Way, the encounter with the divinity and salvation. They are also traditionally associated with one of the miracles attributed to St. James: when the stone boat with his relics was sailing along the Portuguese coast, it rescued a knight and his horse from the sea, both of which emerged covered by scallop shells. Natural shells, or made of lead, tin or silver -pilgrims worn the shells after acquiring them from the authorized guild of *concheiros* in Santiago. They also became a symbol providing protection, since it was a punishable crime to attack or rob a pilgrim wearing one. Another symbol of the Way is the Cross of St. James, a sword with three fleurs-de-lis at the hilt and arms.

The main symbol of the pilgrimage to Kumano is the three-footed crow, the Yatagarasu, and its appearance is associated with divine intervention in human affairs. Yatagarasu is a guardian and was sent as a guide for Emperor Jinmu in his trip to the Kumano region. Yatagarasu is traditionally considered an incarnation of Taketsunimi no Mikoto, the founder of the Kamo-Agatanushi clan, who saved his people by turning into a large crow that directed the group to its destination from the sky. It is therefore a deity or *kami* associated with courage. Another outstanding figure is that of the local hero Benkei, a giant warrior monk that killed 999 people on his own. Representations of the monk are frequently seen and he has his own festival in Tanabe. Another important landmark along the Kumano Kodo is the immense Hongu Tori, probably the largest in the world. *Tori* are gates that indicate the sacred nature of places: the one at Hongu marks the entrance to the Kumano River and the sacred forest of the same name, which was the original location of the Hongu Taisha.

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND TANABE  
PRESENT A PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION ABOUT  
THEIR PILGRIMAGE ROUTES  
DECLARED WORLD HERITAGE BY UNESCO,  
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## DRESS

The garments worn by medieval pilgrims originated with the numerous representations of St. James the Greater in places of worship along the Way. The attire consisted of a staff and cape, as well as a hat adorned with a scallop shell. This shell is mentioned in the Codex Calixtinus’ “*Veneranda dies*” sermon as a symbol of the good works that should be carried out throughout the route and one’s life. Hanging from the top of the staff, there was usually a gourd for carrying water and a bag with personal belongings for the trip. The bag is used to carry the pilgrim’s identification card, which the traveller has stamped to certify his or her passage through parishes and hostels. Today’s modern equipment features the quality of mountain boots or a backpack’s carrying capacity, but symbols such as the scallop shell and staff are still used.

The golden age of the pilgrimages to Kumano is identified with the Heian period (794-1192), when the Japanese royalty and this dynasty’s nobles visited the sacred places wearing their sumptuous kimonos. Therefore, today, some pilgrims remember this glorious period by dressing like medieval pilgrims. The female kimono stands out, being much looser than the traditional one and crowned by an enormous hat, from which a transparent veil hangs and delicately enshrouds the pilgrim. On November 3, during the Kumano Kodo Parade, which recreates the imperial pilgrimage procession, participants wear the traditional pilgrim kimono.



## SPIRITUALITY

Almost at the same time as the Apostle’s first basilica, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the two foundational Benedictine monasteries were erected, San Paio de Antealtares and San Martiño Pinario, built to look after the sacred tomb and cater to pilgrims. The three buildings, surrounded by a wall, were the origin of the village of *Compostella*. Later on, the mendicant orders were established at the city gates: in 1214 the Convent of San Francisco was founded and in 1220, that of the Dominican Convent of Bonaval. In 1260 the nuns of St. Claire also arrived. The non-cloistered convents and monasteries concentrated on healing and accommodating pilgrims and dwellers. They also took an interest in education from early on: that was how the future University of Santiago got started, with the Benedictine founding of the Old Study in 1495. This spiritual legacy has reached the 21<sup>st</sup> century with its impressive buildings, eternal cloisters and treasures of the faith. But above all, the city has received a thousand-year-old tradition of hospitality, a University heading for its sixth centenary and a revitalized route along which thousands of pilgrims travel.

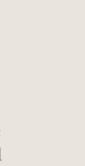
The spirituality of Kumano lies in its impressive setting of mountains and hundred-year-old trees, in which the spirits of the dead, the *yomi*, dwell. Kumano’s natural sites include Koyasan, one of Japan’s most important Buddhist complexes. This setting also features other temples cared for by Buddhist and Shinto priests, and shrines, or secondary sanctuaries, the *oji*, and small figures of gods, *kami*, distributed along the route and that sometimes only measure 20 cm. Many of them represent figures of children, which is why they feature cloth bibs; their objective is to protect and guide pilgrims. The construction of these sanctuaries is attributed to ascetic monks from the mountains, the Yamabushi, who acted like pilgrimage guides. The winding profile of the Yoshino and Omine mountains was seen by the Yamabushi as a sacred ascent, with the objective of obtaining salvation and supernatural powers in benefit of the group. The Kumano River also forms part of the setting and is included in the World Heritage List. It is the only waterway that has been recognised as a pilgrimage route by UNESCO.



## SCENERY

The pilgrim leaves behind the rough, harsh Leon landscape and enters the mystical world of the Galician countryside. He or she will be accompanied by greenery all the way to Santiago. After the first kilometres, difficult and steep, dotted by mountain villages, he or she goes down to the large areas of meadows featuring rooftops (first of all of slates and then of tiles) and extensive oak and chestnut forests. The burbling of water is a constant blessing. The stones (all of Galicia is granitic) appear in large veins, fanciful formations or in small heaps left behind by pilgrims. The cityscape of the old town of Santiago is also made of stone. But once inside, travellers find dozens of city gardens that have made the destination a city internationally renowned for its environmental quality. The convent garden that gave rise to Bonaval Park or the romantic park full of ponds and statues called La Alameda house hundred-year-old oak and cypress trees, as well as colourful camellias, magnolias, hydrangeas and Japanese azaleas. And if the pilgrim heads towards Finisterre, he or she is bid farewell by the old San Lourenzo oak grove and the cheerful bubbling of the Sarela River.

From golden beaches to estuaries where molluscs are cultivated on platforms similar to the ones in Galicia, going up the Kumano River to the top of the highest mountains, Kumano features a great variety of landscapes in only 50 kilometres. Going up the river you can see valleys, rice terraces, cypress forests, but also hydrangeas and camellias that are reminiscent of Spain’s northwest. The tree that best represents this place is the *sakura* or cherry tree, which is honoured during the *Hanami*, festivities that arose among the aristocracy during the Heian period in order to contemplate the flowering. The cherry tree is considered a symbol of life’s transitory nature, as well as representing values such as purity and simplicity. Pine, cherry, bamboo and plum trees have become an emblem of this region. Apart from the Hongu forest, where the main temple was located before being moved to its current location in 1890 due to a large flood, other outstanding features are the large Nachi waterfall, the highest in Japan; the Naginoki, a sacred tree more than 800 years old in Shingu-Hayatama, and the gigantic Gotobiki stone, which is venerated as a spiritual symbol and possible origin of the world.



## GASTRONOMY

Pilgrims of all times have been rewarded for their efforts with the delicious cuisine to be found in Santiago. In the Middle Ages, pilgrims could feed themselves from convent to convent: in San Francisco they were given hot drinking chocolate, in San Martiño Pinario lunch and in San Domingos de Bonaval dinner. In Rúa do Franco (so called due to the “francos” or free men that came via the Way) innkeepers offered them wine and sardines. Today, O Franco is still Santiago’s gastronomic street par excellence, in which restaurants advertise their fare with still lifes featuring Atlantic seafood and fish. There the cuisine can be seen, smelled and tasted, the same as in the “Mercado de Abastos” (food market), whose products range from live crustaceans to recently harvested fruit. Moreover, the former Royal Hospital, now a hotel called the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, continues to display hospitality by means of a curious custom: serving breakfast, lunch and dinner free of charge for the first pilgrims arriving each day with the “Compostela” certificate. And in any of the Holy City’s thousand restaurants –traditional or contemporary- visitors can enjoy seafood dishes, extraordinary grilled fish, beef casseroles, ham foreleg, stews, chorizo, pies or soft cheeses, washed down with wines such as Albariño and finished off with the sweetness of Santiago’s typical almond cake, featuring the symbol of the Apostle’s cross on its icing.

The Kumano Road offers the delicious traditional cuisine of the Japanese countryside, from both the coast and the mountains. The rich oceanic currents of the Kuroshio along the entire southern edge of the Kii peninsula are accompanied by a great quantity of fresh fish and seafood. In Tanabe pilgrims can enjoy *shirasu*, or whitebait; *meharizushi*, a dish featuring rice and mustard leaves designed for taking a rest along the way, or *umebashi* made with pickled plums. The region surrounding the mountain has a long culinary history with wild plants and animals. Its dishes range from simple *agaradon*, a bowl of rice combined with greens and chicken, to sophisticated tasting menus consisting of eight dishes, which are offered to guests of the *ryokan* or traditional hotels in Kumano, preceded by a relaxing, restorative bath at 40°C in their springs. Even the simplest boarding houses or *minshiku* are surprising due to their sophisticated dinners, served with the greatest care by the lady of the house, wearing a traditional kimono.



## rites

Among the rituals carried out in the Cathedral of Santiago, the most popular one is that of the Botafumeiro, a giant censer whose origin dates from the Middle Ages, when numerous pilgrims filled the naves and incense was used to purify the air. The strength of eight men or *tiraboleiros* is required to get it moving in its amazing trajectory facing the high altar. In 17 cycles of to and fro, in only a minute and a half, it attains a speed of 68 kilometres per hour and rises up to almost touch the transept vault, astonishing spectators. Another deep-rooted custom among pilgrims is that of celebrating their encounter with St. James by embracing his figure on the high altar, and then going under the altar to visit his relics.

In the tradition of Kumano Kodo, rituals in the river were very frequent. These involved so-called *misogi*, symbolic, purifying baths for the soul’s wellbeing. The Onsen culture is very popular throughout Japan, but in Kumano these thermal baths attain a superior category. For example, Yunomine Onsen is considered the oldest thermal spring in Japan; there pilgrims undergo purification rituals in hot water. There is also the tiny Yunomine Onsen. Another pilgrim ritual is taking flowers to the Gaki-mi or Hidarū-skin spirits, which are found in the Shoichi temples, those of the highest sacred status, since they house the spirits of the greatest divinities of Japanese syncretism, such as Buddha and the gods of nature, in addition to deified emperors and nobles.



## PILGRIMS

With the establishment of the Holy Year in 1122 and the plenary indulgence in 1179, hundreds of thousands of faithful of all origins set off on a months-long journey moved by faith and seeking Salvation by means of penitence. Monarchs and nobles travelled with carriages and servants; some prisoners did so to serve a judicial punishment and “professionals” to earn a living by making a pilgrimage on behalf of some powerful figure. Many servants ventured off into the unknown to obtain the letters of freedom and royal privileges with which monarchs rewarded those settling new towns. After the decline of the pilgrimages due to the plagues of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and religious wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Way of St. James has again become an experience arousing great universal interest. The 2010 Holy Year brought more than 272,000 pilgrims to Compostela. The reasons behind the pilgrimage are still numerous: faith, spirituality, personal growth, training, enjoying the scenery and monuments... Those managing to reach Santiago in their own strength receive the “Compostela,” a diploma that the Pilgrim Office awards to those travelling the last 100 kilometres on foot or horseback, or the last 200 km by bike.

The Kumano pilgrimage route, like that of Santiago, was promoted by the emperors’ first visits. According to ancient documents, Uda was the first emperor that made a pilgrimage to Kumano in the year 907. Accompanied by an entourage of around 200 followers, he left Kyoto for a month to visit the sanctuaries of Kumano Sanza. Kumano’s mountainous roads helped pilgrims to contact their forefathers and the supernatural beings inhabiting nature, as well as the spirits of previous emperors. Between Hongu and Hayatama, the emperors and nobles travelled along the Kumano River in comfortable canoes accompanied by musicians, with their servants following them along the roads. This route can still be followed today by hiring a canoe with a guide, who accompanies pilgrims while playing the flute. The Kumano Road fell into disuse for a time, just like the Way of St. James, but in the 17<sup>th</sup> century it revived to spread the gods’ message that, after this life, those completing the pilgrimage will have better fortune in the next one.



## FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS

The festival of the Apostle James, the patron saint of Galicia and of all Spain, is held in Compostela during the second fortnight in July. During the evening of July 24, the Cathedral is the centre of an impressive ceremony featuring fireworks and multimedia projections, which attract a multitude in Plaza del Obradoiro. In the solemn mass held in the Cathedral on July 25, the Royal Household carries out the traditional offering to the Apostle. The city streets are full of concerts and shows, many related to Galicia’s traditional music, dance and costume. The annual festival is all the more spectacular in Holy Years, which take place when St. James’ Day, July 25, falls on a Sunday. This is the case every six, five, six and eleven years: after 2010, the next one will be in 2021. Thanks to the papal privileges granted to the Cathedral in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Holy Year marks the beginning of a period of grace in which pilgrims have all of their sins forgiven. On the eve of the Jubilee Year, the Cathedral holds the ritual of the opening of the Holy Door, which dates from 1611.

Also in Kumano, a traditional festival is held each month: from the New Year Festivities in the sanctuaries to the famous Ume Hanami festival, which can be translated as “contemplation of the flowering of the plum trees,” from mid-February to early March. Another important event is the Spring Festival in April. In it, the fathers of male children wear traditional dress to lead the gods in a portable sanctuary called *mikoshi* as far as Oyunohara, originally the place where they came down to Earth. Also outstanding are the Fire Festivals, held throughout the year in different temples, such as the Yata-no-Hi Matsuri in the temple of Kumano Hongu, or the Nachi-no-Hi Matsuri, at the bottom of the waterfall of the same name. As in Compostela, the municipality of Tanabe holds its festivities on July 24 and 25. During those days, the *kasahoko*, eight large elegantly decorated carriages, visit the sacred places and sanctuaries to pay homage to the gods.



## DESTINATION

On the French Road, the Spanish cathedrals of Pamplona, Logroño, Burgos and León are the prelude to the solemnity and beauty that the traveller will find on reaching his or her destination, the Cathedral of Santiago. Today’s building is the fourth church built on the site of the Roman tomb of the Apostle. Erected from 1075 onwards, this large pilgrimage cathedral brought together the best builders of the Romanesque era up to the arrival of Maestro Mateo, who made the “Pórtico de la Gloria,” a sculptural ensemble unmatched in Europe. In time, Gothic and Renaissance elements were added to the Cathedral. The greatest aesthetic revolution would arrive in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the Baroque style, which, after flowering in the magnificent Obradoiro façade, jumped from the church to the squares, to the monasteries and the stately homes, turning Santiago into “Spain’s baroque city par excellence.” After more than a thousand years of history as a spiritual centre, the Cathedral reveals itself to be an ensemble capable of honouring in stone the extraordinary history of Santiago de Compostela and its pilgrimages.

The temples of the Kumano Sanzan triangle, formed by Kumano Hayatama Taisha in Shingu, Kumano Nachi Taisha and Kumano Hongu Taisha, this route’s destination, started from a natural element that turned them into places of veneration. These are the origin of the syncretistic faith of Kumano and their presence determines the existence of the sanctuaries’ pavilions, which act as mere accessories before the power of nature. The main buildings were configured in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; the spaces occupied by the pavilions were also identified at that time. The sanctuary of Kumano Hongu Taisha is the most important of the three. It is dominated by the large Tori. The sanctuary of Kumano Hayatama rises up alongside a giant rock, at the foot of which the Fire Festival is held. Kumano Nachi Taisha is Kumano’s other important Shinto sanctuary whose origin is the worship of nature, alongside its famous waterfall.