

Mount Koya:

World Heritage “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range

Koyasan is home to an active monastic center founded twelve centuries ago by the priest Kukai (posthumously known as Kobo Daishi) for the study and practice of Esoteric Buddhism. It is the headquarters of the Koyasan sect of Shingon Buddhism, a faith with a wide following throughout Japan. Situated on a small plain at the top of Mount Koya is the sacred area known as the Danjo Garan, a complex of temples, halls, pagodas and Buddhist statuary that welcome visitors to this serene and hallowed place.

Surrounded by a thick forest of massive cedars, the area known as Okuno-in, or the Inner Sanctuary, is the setting for a vast cemetery that features the mausoleum of numerous famous Japanese, including that of the samurai ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi as well as memorials to the spirits of soldiers killed in the Pacific War.

On July 7, 2004, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) named Koyasan as part of the “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range” to its World Heritage List. Now as in the past, Koyasan continues to attract visitors, including believers and devotees, from around the world. It is also an important destination for pilgrims returning from the “Pilgrimage to the 88 Temples of Shikoku.” Koyasan is a sacred place that always welcomes people with Buddha’s great love.



