

Cycling and hiking in Kyushu's volcanic mountain "Aso" and valley of myths "Takachiho"



On this tour, discover the spectacular natural scenery of Kyushu through hiking and cycling. Experience the lives of Kyushu's country folk by learning to cook local food and touring a site where shiitake mushrooms are grown.

Your main destination is Mount Aso, one of the world's largest active volcanoes and a dominating peak in central Kyushu. A huge eruption some 300,000 years ago created a caldera 18 kilometers east to west and 25 kilometers north to south. The lava from the eruption reached Takachiho Gorge at the foot of the central Kyushu mountain range, creating a deep valley. As an active volcano, Mount Aso makes us keenly aware of nature's power and presence.

During your time here, contrast the lifestyle of the Mount Aso villagers, who make use of grasslands and satoyama, with that of the Takachiho villagers, who live in harmony with soaring mountains and deep valleys.

Itinerary at a glance

Day 1: Group meets in Kumamoto and transfers to Takachiho (D)

Day 2: Guided walk and outdoor cooking at Takachiho (B, L, D)

Day 3: Guided hike along the Kiritachigoe trail (B, L, D)

Day 4: Minamioguni satoyama journey (B, L, D)

Day 5: Aso adventure cycling (main activity) (B, L, D)

Day 6: Farewell breakfast and transfer to Sapporo (B)

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Highlights:

- Outdoor activities in Takachiho, where you can see how people live in a deep river valley
- Hiking along Kiritachigoe, an ancient trail in the central mountains of Kyushu that served as a lifeline between villages deep in the mountains
- The Minamioguni satoyama(*) journey, in which you see how people's lives are dependent on the mountains
- Mt. Aso adventure cycling, in which you experience the awesome power of an active volcano and see how it benefits the locals

(*) Satoyama is an ecosystem maintained by human agricultural practices in harmony with mountains and woodlands. Satoyama refers to the traditional rural landscape that once typified most of Japan.

Location: The Takachiho region is located at the northernmost tip of Miyazaki Prefecture, almost in the center of Kyushu's mountain range. Gokase River runs through the center of the Takachiho town from the northwest to the southeast and has created the magnificent Takachiho Gorge, which has been designated a national scenic site and monument.

The Aso region is located in the northeastern Kumamoto Prefecture. The peaks of Mount Aso form one of the world's largest calderas, while Aso has expansive grasslands. Aso Valley is relatively flat but is surrounded by the rim of Mount Aso.

Main Activity: Adventure cycling

Difficulty: 3

Contents:

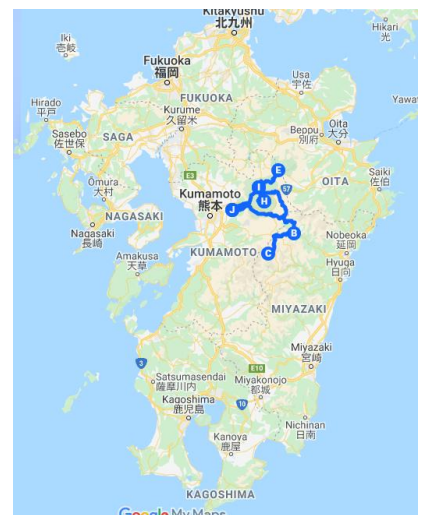
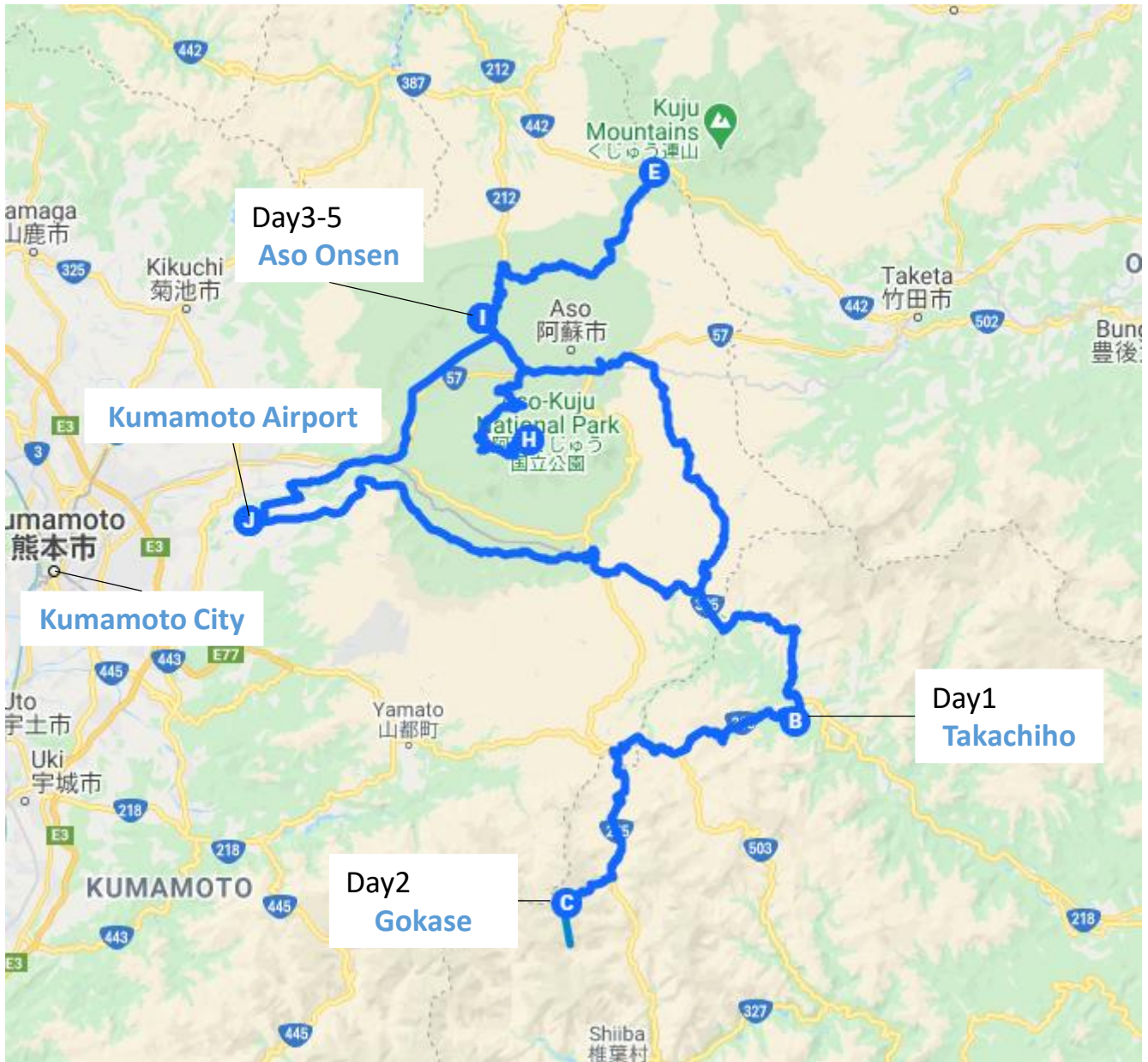
Route map

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Cycling and hiking in Kyushu's volcanic mountain "Aso" and valley of myths "Takachiho"

Route map

Source: Google My Maps



Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1:

Group meets in Kumamoto and transfer to Takachiho - Introduction -

We meet at Kumamoto Airport at around 13:00 and drive 63 kilometers to Takachiho by minibus. The drive takes about 1.5 hours.

During the drive, we provide an overview of the Aso and Takachiho areas and explain the itinerary. Along the way we stop at a spot overlooking Mount Aso to view the majestic natural scenery. If required, you can buy or rent outdoor gear at outdoor goods stores.

As well as the deep gorge created by lava from Mount Aso, Takachiho is famous as a place of myths. It is said to be the place where the ancestors of the Japanese emperor descended from heaven. Takachiho appears in many Japanese myths.

As the hotel check-in is early, you have time to visit the mythological sites if you wish. Dinner is served in the hotel restaurant. We recommend an early night to prepare for the following day's adventure.

Accommodation: Solest Takachiho Hotel | Hotel | Private Western-style room with ensuite

Included meals: Dinner (Hotel)

Day 2:

Guided walking & outdoor cooking at Takachiho

Visit the deep Takachiho Gorge and see how people live here. Accompanied by a local guide, walk about 8 kilometers.

The day begins with a view of the volcanic basalt columns that line the gorge. Stop for a light breakfast before continuing along a trail through the valley.

Your do-it-yourself lunch is chicken cooked in green bamboo, a Takachiho specialty. It is prepared outdoors by filling a stick of bamboo with chicken and vegetables and then placing it over a fire. The flavor of the bamboo enhances the taste. Sake can be added to the ingredients.

After lunch, continue the walk through terraced rice paddies and tea fields cut into narrow valleys and land alongside shrines. These are the heart and soul of local communities.

After the walk, return to the hotel by private vehicle. It takes about 45 minutes. Dinner is Japanese-style rustic cuisine around an open hearth. During dinner, enjoy a performance of yokagura, a traditional dance that has been passed down from generation to generation.



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Activity: Walking | Distance – 8 km/4.9 miles | Time - 7 hours | Elevation – 154 m/505 ft
Accommodation: Hotel Forestpia | Hotel
Included meals: Breakfast (Outside), Lunch (Outside), Dinner (Hotel)

Activity 1: Walking
Difficulty: 2

Day 3: Guided hiking along the Kiritachigoe trail

Hike an ancient path that once was the lifeline for villages deep in the mountains. With a legendary local guide, walk about 16 kilometers over eight hours along mountain paths.

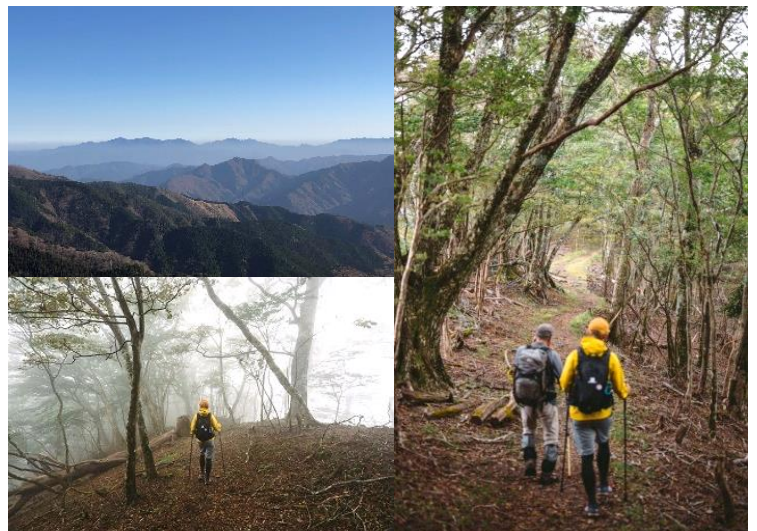
Leave the hotel before dawn and, on the way to the starting point, visit the headwaters of the river that carved Takachiho Gorge.

On a clear day, the high peaks of Kyushu are visible in the distance. Kiritachigoe is an ancient trail that follows the ridges of four mountains in the central Kyushu mountain range. As you pass forests thick with enormous beech trees and rare plants particular to this limestone area, your guide shares stories about the path, which was once used to transport goods by packhorse. One highlight near the end of the hike is the view of Mount Ogi rising to a height of 1,661 meters.

After descending the mountain and leaving Takachiho, head for the Mount Aso caldera. The 97-kilometer drive takes about three hours. On your arrival, soak in a hot spring and relax. This is your first of three nights stay here.

Activity: Hiking | Distance – 16 km/9.9 miles | Time - 8 hours | Elevation – 331 m/1,085 ft
Accommodation: Aso Plaza Hotel | Ryokan | Private Western-style room with ensuite | Onsen Spa |
Included meals: Breakfast (Outside), Lunch (Outside), Dinner (Hotel)

Activity 1: Hiking
Difficulty: 3



Day 4:

Minamioguni Satoyama Journey

Cycle downhill and observe how people live around Mount Aso's caldera.

Our starting point is a plateau at a height of 900 meters. It is atop the outer rim of Mount Aso overlooking the mountain. Mount Aso is known as the Sleeping Buddha, and from here you can see why.

Watch the cows grazing in grasslands as you cycle downhill through the back hills of Mount Aso. It takes about an hour to reach the first activity site.

In a field carved out of the mountainside by the farmer himself, pick fresh vegetables alongside the villagers and help prepare lunch on a traditional kitchen stove.

After lunch, continue your cycle ride into a quiet town, where you leave your bike to visit a farmer cultivating shiitake on logs. This young and enthusiastic entrepreneur provides a fascinating explanation of this traditional method and shows you how to pick the mushrooms.

Dinner is local cuisine at a Japanese pub in town.



Activity : Cycling | Distance – 16 km/9.9 miles | Time - 6 hours |
Elevation - ▼450 m/1,476 ft

Accommodation: Aso Plaza Hotel | Ryokan | Private Western-style room with ensuite | Onsen Spa |

Included meals: Breakfast (Hotel), Lunch (Local restaurant), Dinner (Local restaurant)

Activity : Cycling (Downhill)

Difficulty: 2

Day 5:

Aso adventure cycling (Main Activity)

Experience the awesome power of active volcano Mount Aso.

Before the tour begins, enjoy a special breakfast on the summit of a small mountain near the hotel. From there, you can see the route for the day's adventure.

The tour starts at Aso Station, which is at height of 523 meters and is the gateway to Mount Aso. Ride your e-bike all the way up to Nakadake Crater at a height of 1,258 meters. Cycling the grassland trail is a special treat as the area is normally closed. Still spewing smoke, Nakadake Crater is a sight to behold.

The bike ride continues after a stop for lunch. Near Komekura, a small volcanic cone, explore the tunnels that were naturally formed by lava flows.

The tour ends on a high with a ride of 32 kilometers in seven hours, reaching a height of 780 meters before returning to your goal at the hotel.

The final night's dinner is a barbecue in the hotel garden, a place of spiritual energy.

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Activity : Cycling | Distance – 32 km/19.9 miles | Time - 7 hours |
Elevation – 780 m/2,559 ft

Accommodation: Aso Plaza Hotel | Ryokan | Private Western-style room with ensuite | Onsen Spa |

Included meals: Breakfast (Outside), Lunch (Outside), Dinner (Hotel garden)

Activity : Cycling (Uphill)

Difficulty: 3

Day 6:

Farewell Breakfast & Transfer to Sapporo

Your farewell breakfast takes place at a small country train station that is currently out of service due to the effects of a major earthquake in 2016. A special outdoor breakfast area has been arranged on the station platform. The food served is made with locally grown ingredients. The main dish of okayu is made from rice harvested from the fields in front of the station. After breakfast, travel to Kumamoto Airport by private vehicle. From Kumamoto Airport, fly to New Chitose Airport via Tokyo's Haneda Airport. From New Chitose Airport, take the JR Rapid Airport Express to Sapporo. Your estimated time of arrival in Sapporo is 18:00.

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Accommodations :

Day	Hotel	Location	Type	Room	Spa
Day1	Solest Takachiho Hotel	Takachiho	Hotel	Private Western-style room with ensuite	N/A
Day2	Hotel Forestpia	Takachiho	Hotel	TBA	N/A
Day3	Aso Plaza Hotel	Aso	Ryokan	Private Western-style room with ensuite	Onsen spa
Day4	Aso Plaza Hotel	Aso	Ryokan	Private Western-style room with ensuite	Onsen spa
Day5	Aso Plaza Hotel	Aso	Ryokan	Private Western-style room with ensuite	Onsen spa



Hotel

Rare price

Solest Takachiho Hotel

Kodono, Mitai, Takachiho-cho, Nishiusuki-gun, Takachiho, Takachiho, Japan, 882-1101 - [VIEW MAP](#)



Hotel

Hotel Forestpia

Takachiho, Takachiho, Japan, 882-1201 - [VIEW MAP](#)

4615 Kuraoka, Gokase-cho, Nishiusuki-gun, Japan, 882-1201



Ryokan

Aso Plaza Hotel

1287 Uchinomaki, Aso-shi, Aso, Aso, Japan, 869-2301 - [VIEW MAP](#)

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Foods :

Day		Place	Menu
Day1	Dinner	Hotel restaurant	A sumptuous set meal
Day2	Breakfast	Outside	Home-baked bread and coffee
	Lunch	Outside	"Chicken cooked in green bamboo" A local dish. Bamboo is filled with chicken and vegetables and then placed over a fire.
	Dinner	Hotel banquet room	A sumptuous set meal of fresh mountain fish and locally grown vegetables
Day3	Breakfast	Outside	A bag lunch such as a sandwich
	Lunch	Outside	A boxed lunch with rice balls
	Dinner	Hotel banquet room	A sumptuous set meal
Day4	Breakfast	Hotel restaurant	Buffet
	Lunch	Local restaurant	Homemade country cuisine
	Dinner	Local restaurant	Japanese pub fare
Day5	Breakfast	Outside	A boxed lunch with rice balls
	Lunch	Outside	Rare steak strips and a poached egg over rice
	Dinner	Hotel garden	Barbecue
Day6	Breakfast	Outside	Special dishes such as rice porridge



Lunch on DAY 2



Dinner on DAY 2



Lunch on DAY 4



Breakfast on DAY 5



Breakfast on DAY 6

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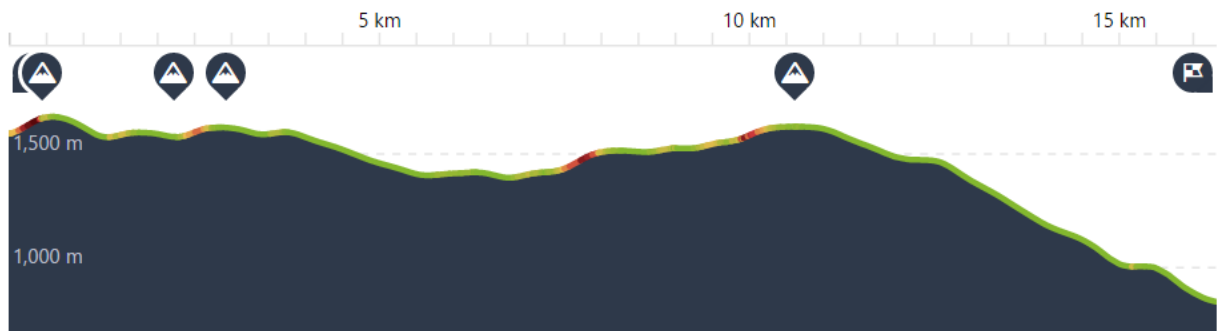
Elevation Profile :

Source: Komoot

Day 3

Guided hiking along the Kiritachigoe long trail

Distance – 16 km/9.9 miles | Time - 8 hours | Elevation – 331 m/1,085 ft



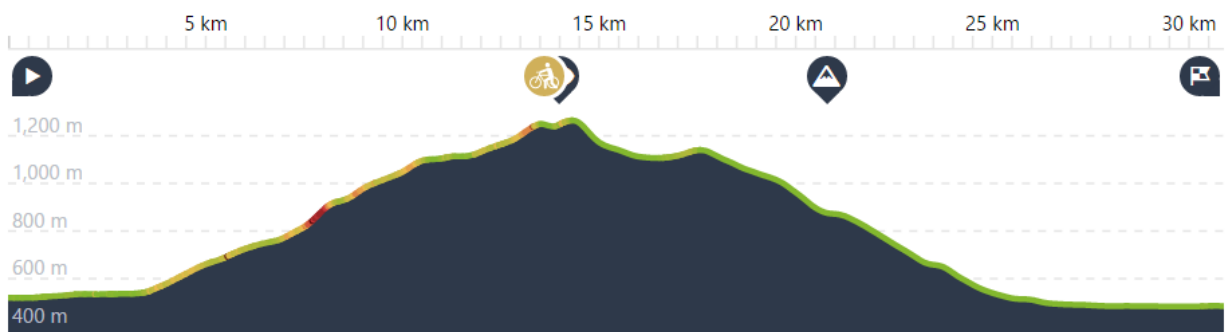
△ Highest Point 1,660 m

▽ Lowest Point 850 m

Day 5

Aso adventure cycling (Main Activity)

Distance – 32 km/19.9 miles | Time - 7 hours | Elevation – 780 m/2,559 ft



△ Highest Point 1,260 m

▽ Lowest Point 480 m