

Guidebook to TATEYAMA TOWN

An Introduction to Historical & Spiritual Landmarks on Mt. Tateyama

★
Check out
Edo Period paintings
of legends on
Mt. Tateyama!

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10 Recommended Sightseeing Spots
Important to Tateyama Shinko

Tateyama Town
Valley Region



Tateyama Town

Tateyama Town is a mountain town shaped as much by beautiful landscapes as it was by Tateyama Shinko, an ancient mountain religion dedicated to celebrating the holy Mt. Tateyama. This guidebook introduces essential locations in the historical Ashikura-ji Area.

WHAT IS TATEYAMA SHINKO ?

Mt. Tateyama is one of the three holy mountains of Japan and has over 1,300 years of pilgrimage history.

Tateyama Shinko was a religion devoted to the sacred Mt. Tateyama and its gods. Those who climbed to the shrine at Oyama Peak were said to be forgiven of their sins and granted an eternal afterlife in Buddhist Paradise after death.

The Ashikura-ji Area, which lies nestled in the foothills, and the scenic sightseeing spots on Mt. Tateyama remain central to this long-ago mountain religion even today.



Hell on Tateyama

地獄谷



Many years ago, followers of Tateyama Shinko believed that the diverse and hellish landscape of the mountain embodied Buddhist hell, while Paradise resided past the clouds at its scenic peaks. The agonizing climb up Mt. Tateyama was a spiritual journey as much as it was a physical one.

The Pilgrimage

巡礼



The grueling trek past unharvestable rice fields where nothing grows, blood-red ponds and the steaming, foul-smelling Hell's Valley was no small feat. But reaching Oyama Peak where gods were believed to reside meant shedding one's former life and attaining rebirth in Paradise.

Purification Ceremony

布橋



Historically, women were prohibited from climbing Mt. Tateyama. Instead, the Nunobashi Kanjoe Purification Ceremony was held in the Ashikura-ji Area to bring women salvation and rebirth in Paradise after death. The ceremony continues to be held once every three years.

1 Ashikura Oyama Shrine 芦峯寺越山神社



Tateyama Shinko is said to start with Ariyori Saeki, a man who ventured into the mountain and met Amida Buddha. The Buddha stated Mt. Tateyama was a sacred mountain that embodied Buddhist heaven and hell, and directed Ariyori to spread Tateyama Shinko and bring salvation to all. This shrine is one of three Oyama Shrines dedicated to Tateyama Shinko.

*Spiritual center of
Tateyama Shinko*



2 Tateyama Museum 立山博物館



*Come and learn
about the
Other World!*



Dedicated to Tateyama history, culture, and Tateyama Shinko, the Tateyama Museum provides detailed information about the area in several languages. Displayed here are several Tateyama Mandalas, ancient religious scrolls depicting images such as the alleged Other World on Mt. Tateyama, the legend of Ariyori Saeki, and the Nunobashi Kanjoe Purification Ceremony.

3 Kyosanbo, Former Monks' Lodging 教算坊

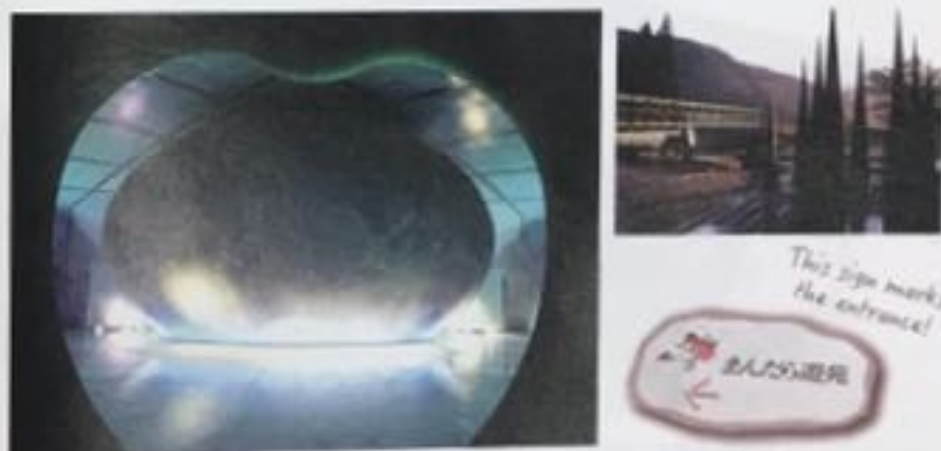


The Ashikura-ji Area was inhabited by 33 monks' lodgings hundreds of years ago, and Kyosanbo is one of two such buildings that remain today. Once a place for lectures and prayers led by monks, today the building hosts seasonal events and the traditional garden remains open to the public.

*One of
Tateyama's most
scenic gardens!*



4 Mandala Yuen Open-Air Museum みんなら遊苑



*This sign marks
the entrance!*

This outdoor extension of the Tateyama Museum is full of interactive exhibits that allow visitors to experience Buddhist concepts related to Tateyama Shinko and the Tateyama Mandalas. The outdoor museum manipulates the five senses with lighting, art, and sounds, and makes the legends of hell and heaven on Mt. Tateyama come to life.

ASHIKURA-JI STROLLING MAP

Mt. Tateyama was once a popular destination as one of the three holy mountains for religious pilgrimages. Tateyama Shinko was centralized in the Ashikura-ji Area, for the area was believed to be the dividing line between the human world and the Other World. Both physical and spiritual reminders of this ancient belief remain scattered around the area.

1 Sanzu-no-Kawa, River of Three Crossings

The Buddhist equivalent of the Greek River Styx, this was believed to be the physical form of the river of souls that divided the material world from the Other World and guided fallen spirits to the afterlife.

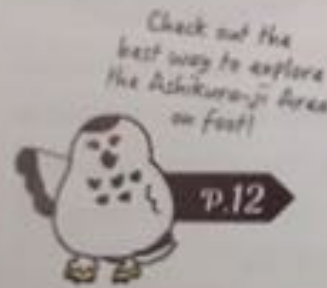


2 Enmado, Hall of the Judge of Death

A hall dedicated to Enma, said to judge those who have died and send them to a fitting afterlife. This site contains several wooden carvings, including one carved with the likeness of Enma himself, as well as several of the revered deity, Uba.

3 Ubado Kidan, The Hall of the Guardian Crone

Ubado was a hall dedicated to a deity who takes the form of an old woman (Uba) and is said to protect women. Here, one could once find 69 statues of the elderly guardian, and this was where participants of the Nunobashi Kanjoe Purification Ceremony prayed for admittance into Buddhist Paradise.



5 Shomyo Falls

称名滝



At 350 meters high, Shomyo Falls is the tallest waterfall in Japan. When Hannoki Falls flows in spring, together they become the tallest twin falls in Asia. Designated Special National Treasure, Shomyo was named after a Buddhist prayer that is said to be heard if one listens carefully to its crashing waters.

See it on the
Tateyama
Mandala!



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6 Bijodaira Forest

美女平



Long ago, it was rumored that women who trespassed into the forests of Mt. Tateyama would transform into trees, trapping them on the mountain. Hence, this area is named, "Forest of Beautiful Women." Some of the trees here are estimated to be over a thousand years old and have trunk circumferences of around 20 meters (65 feet). These giant Tateyama cedars make this a famous spot for forest therapy.

7 Midagahara Highlands

弥陀ヶ原



Stroll through
wide, open plains
under a blue sky



Midagahara Highlands offers green fields dappled with iridescent blue ponds, strolling paths, and a short course that allows explorers to witness a breathtaking view of the Tateyama Caldera. In July 2012, this area was registered with the Ramsar Convention as one of the world's most valuable wetlands. The landscape transforms into fiery colors in autumn.

8 Mikurigaike Pond

みくりが池



Known as "The Gods' Cooking Pot," the water in this crater pond was once used to make offerings of cooked meals for the gods that inhabit the mountain. The picturesque scenery of Mikurigaike Pond served to fuel stories of Tateyama Shinko and the existence of heaven on Mt. Tateyama.

Isn't it lovely?



9

Hell's Valley

地獄谷



*Hellish landscape
with heavenly
surroundings*



The strongest indicator of a physical manifestation of hell existing on Tateyama is the appropriately-named, "Hell's Valley." A source of great volcanic activity, steam continually erupts from the charred land, bringing with it the foul smell of sulfur. The volcanic activity, however, warms the nearby Mikurigaike Onsen, the highest-elevation hot spring in Japan.

Unfortunately, due to toxicity concerns related to volcanic gases, visitors cannot walk within this area. However, Hell's Valley can still be enjoyed from afar.

10

Sunrise on Oyama Peak Shrine

頂上雄山神社



*Last stop of the
holy pilgrimage*



Atop the three peaks of Tateyama, Oyama Shrine stands silhouetted in the morning light of the rising sun. This image is the same that countless journeyers have witnessed at the end of their pilgrimage. It is one of promised salvation and of rebirth in Paradise.

*Find it on the
Tateyama Mandala!*

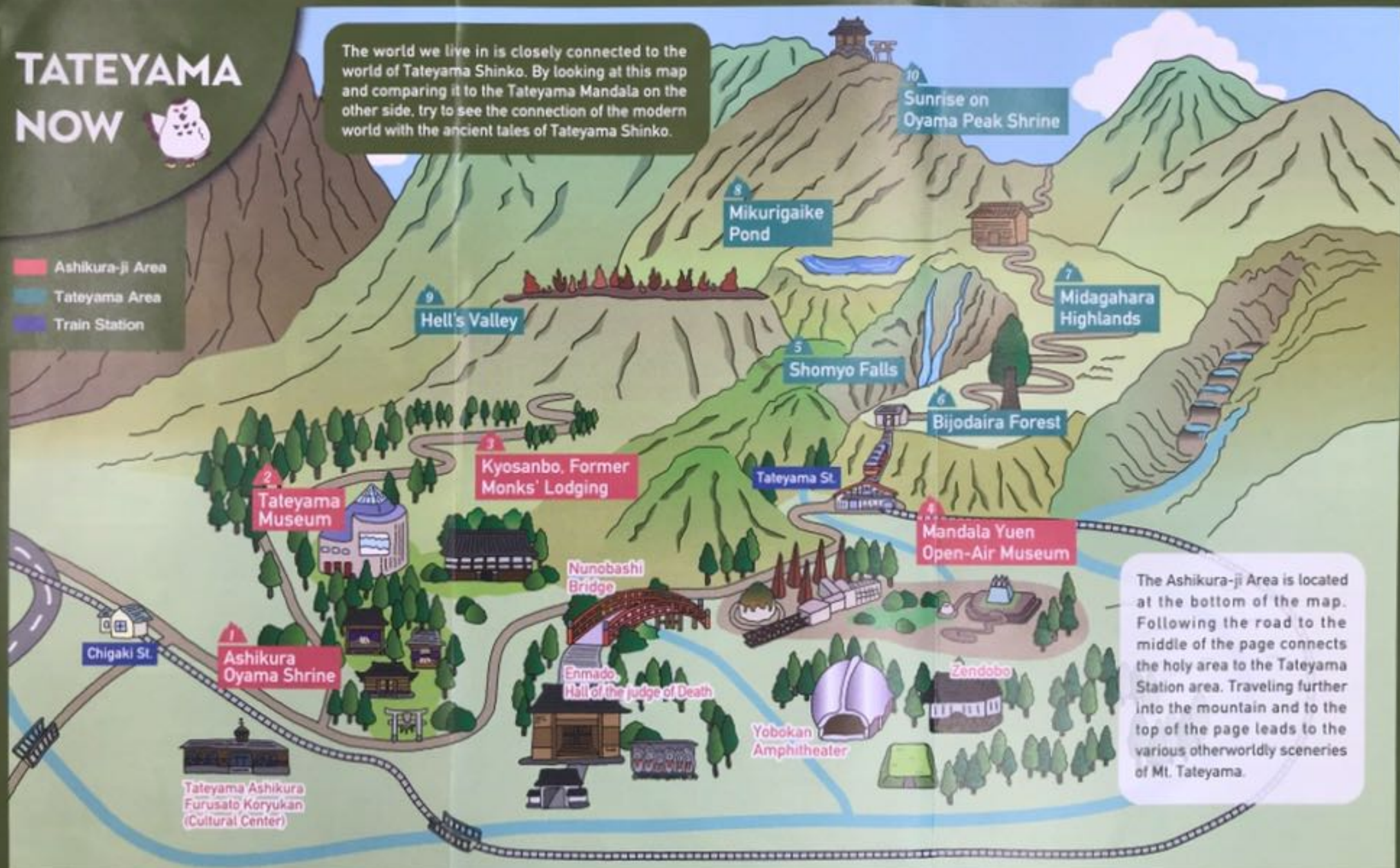


TATEYAMA NOW



The world we live in is closely connected to the world of Tateyama Shinko. By looking at this map and comparing it to the Tateyama Mandala on the other side, try to see the connection of the modern world with the ancient tales of Tateyama Shinko.

- Ashikura-ji Area
- Tateyama Area
- Train Station



The Ashikura-ji Area is located at the bottom of the map. Following the road to the middle of the page connects the holy area to the Tateyama Station area. Traveling further into the mountain and to the top of the page leads to the various otherworldly sceneries of Mt. Tateyama.

TATEYAMA THEN

The Tateyama Mandalas are a series of Buddhist scrolls from hundreds of years ago that show the actual geographical placement of sceneries on Mt. Tateyama and their relation to Tateyama Shinko legends. These images depict the hell and heaven believed to exist on the mountain and were used by monks to lecture about Tateyama Shinko.

Tateyama Cedar Trees

Women who were forbidden from climbing Mt. Tateyama were said to turn into trees if they were to trespass.



Nunobashi Kanjoe Purification Ceremony

Women were allowed entry into Mt. Tateyama once a year, accompanied by monks, for a religious ceremony that granted them salvation.



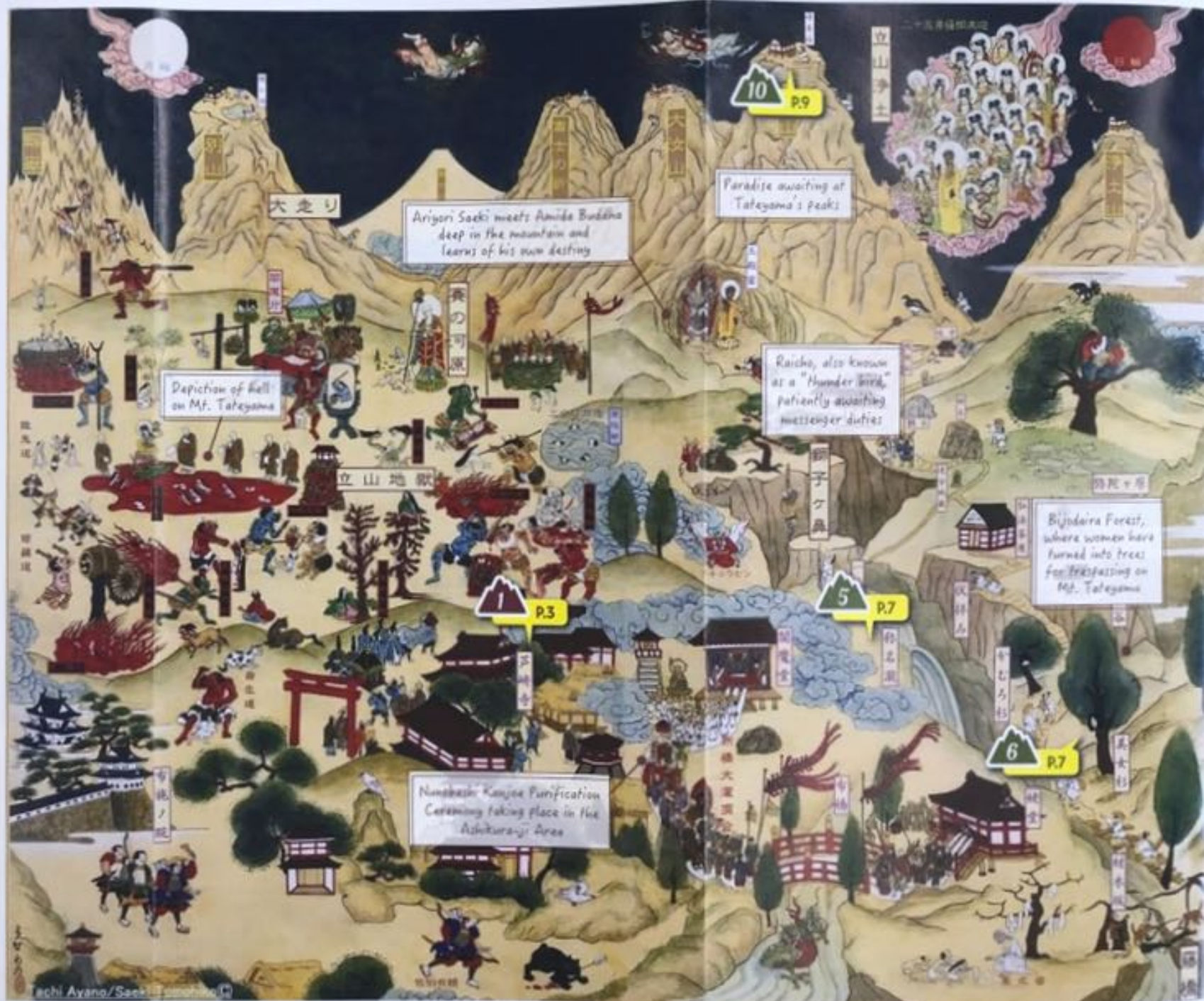
Ariyori Saeki

This man was said to have dedicated his life as a monk for holy Mt. Tateyama by establishing shrines and clearing the path to the top of the mountain.



Raicho (Ptarmigan)

These endangered birds are said to be the messengers of gods due to their activity during storms. There are fewer than 300 ptarmigan left on Mt. Tateyama.



The Best Way to Explore the Ashikura-ji Area

Dentetsu Toyama Station

- By train: 50 min.
- 1,020 yen

Chigaki Station

- By bus: 5 min.
- 200 yen

Oyama Shrine

Touring on foot



Oyama Shrine



Myonen Hill



Enmado Hall

In front of Enmado Hall

- By bus: 5 min.
- 200 yen

Chigaki Station

- 27 min.
- 410 yen

Tateyama Station

Shuttle bus



Shuttle from Chigaki Station to the Ashikura-ji Area and back! Check the schedule ahead of time to plan your trip!

Find the bus schedule here



Tateyama Museum Main Building

300 yen

Kyosanbo, Former Monks' Lodging

Enmado Hall

Nunobashi Bridge

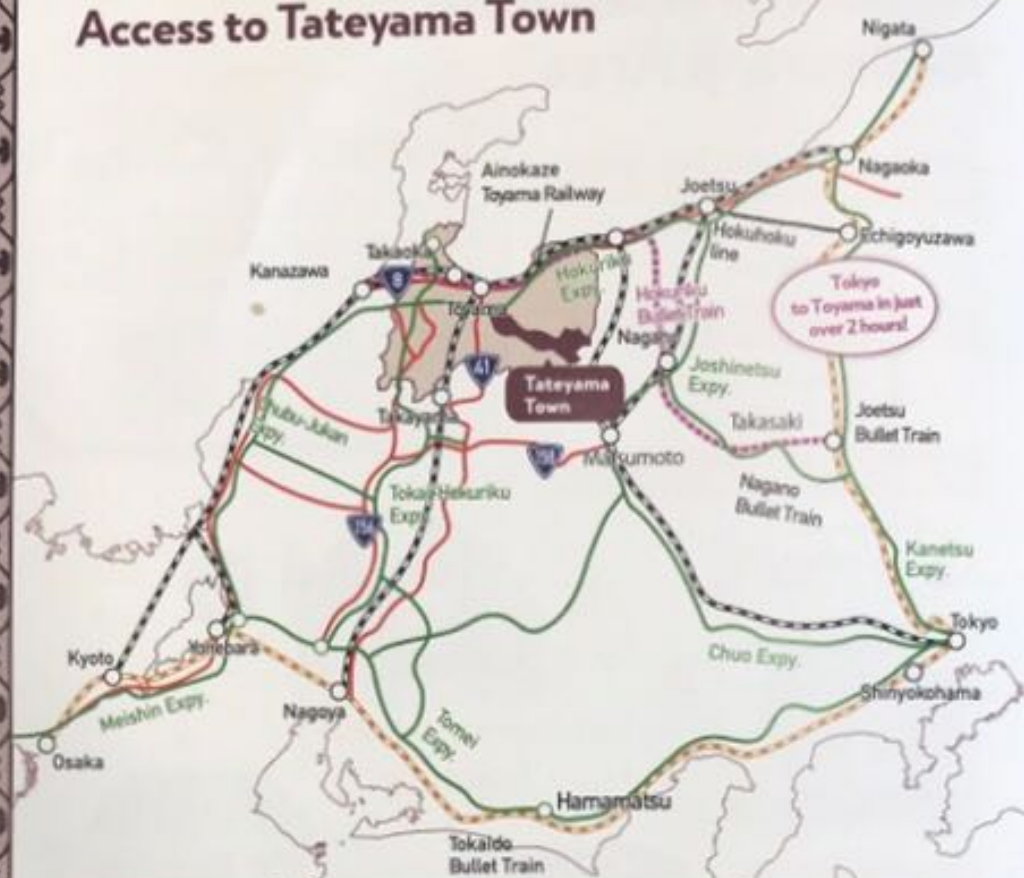
Mandala Yuen Open-Air Museum

400 yen

From Tateyama Station, continue on to the Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route!



Access to Tateyama Town



By Train & Bullet Train



By Plane

Tokyo Haneda Airport to Toyama Airport: approx. 1hr

By Car



Tateyama Town Tourism Bureau

☎ 076-462-1001
 ✉ tateyamakk@hyper.ocn.ne.jp

Tateyama Town Sightseeing Division

☎ 076-462-9971
 ✉ syoukoukankou
 @town.tateyama.toyama.jp

Tateyama Town Hall 2440 Maezawa, Tateyama Town
 Nakanikawa-gun, Toyama Prefecture 930-0292

Tateyama Town Tourism Bureau <http://kanko.town.tateyama.toyama.jp/>



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