

Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP AWARD

TANABE CITY KUMANO TOURISM BUREAU – JAPAN
FINALIST



The Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau (TCKTB) works to develop and promote Japan's spiritual heartland – the ancient region of Kumano. Registered by UNESCO as part of the “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes of the Kii Mountain Range”, Kumano has been welcoming Japanese pilgrims for centuries to this natural and cultural heritage destination. The TCKTB focuses on expanding its outreach to international visitors through a strategy of developing high-quality, low-impact tourism based on the preservation of cultural and spiritual heritage through partnerships with multiple stakeholders, from the active religious shrines that anchor the pilgrimage route to the area's famous hot-springs to the small inns and restaurants that have traditionally welcomed pilgrims.

Through capacity-building, training, and the introduction of local level-up workshops, they are enabling local villagers to interact effectively and comfortably with international visitors while safeguarding their traditional heritage. Initiatives include the Kumano Travel Community Reservation System, a multi-lingual website connecting visitors and local tourism enterprises, a successful marketing partnership with the only other UNESCO World Heritage Site pilgrimage route, Spain's “Santiago de Compostela,” and transportation services that allow visitors to easily use local public transportation in the area to reduce environmental impacts from travel. The Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau is an outstanding example of building innovative sustainable tourism to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of an ancient destination.

