

## The Meitestu Hiromi Line

— Shin Kani Station to Mitake Station —

# Historical Sites of Three Sengoku Warriors

Walking Map



Mori Ranmaru

Akechi Mitsuhide

Kani Saizō

## Akechi Mitsuhide

1528? – 1582

Born in Kani City in 1528, Akechi Mitsuhide is a well-known historical figure from Japan's Sengoku Period, the "Warring States" Period from 1467 to 1600. He was a member of the Toki Clan, which lived for generations in the expanse of land known as Akechi Manor in Kani. In 1556, Saitō Dōsan, the ruler of Mino Province (modern-day Gifu Prefecture) was overthrown by his son Yoshitatsu in the Battle of Nagara-gawa, and since Mitsuhide had been an ally of Dōsan's, he was also attacked and defeated by Yoshitatsu and forced to go into hiding.

After spending time in obscurity, he became a retainer for Oda Nobunaga, and had several military victories in Omi Province (modern-day Shiga Prefecture) and Tanba Province (modern-day Kyoto/Hyogo Prefectures), earning him the trust of his lord. However, in June 1582, Mitsuhide betrayed Oda Nobunaga during the "Honno-ji Incident" in Kyoto, earning him the titles of "traitor" and "treacherous retainer." In recent years though, Mitsuhide's historical image has undergone a revision. He is now seen not only as an officer valued by Nobunaga for his mastery of statecraft and military strength, but also as a man of cultural refinement known for his kindness and consideration toward other political nobility.

## Mori Ranmaru

1565? – 1582

Mori Ranmaru was born in 1565 at Mino Kaneyama Castle in Kani. His father was Mori Yoshinari, a retainer for Oda Nobunaga — the feudal lord who unified most of Japan in the 16th century — and his mother was Myō Kōni, the daughter of a military commander. Ranmaru was the third son born into the Mori family, and his older brother Mori Nagayoshi was a well-known military officer, so ruthless in battle he was called a "devil." Starting from a young age, Ranmaru worked for Oda Nobunaga as a page, performing secretary-like tasks for him. Ranmaru was known for his intelligence and quick wit, and he had an intimate relationship with Oda Nobunaga, which was common for the period.

In April 1582 when Oda Nobunaga reached the height of his power with his defeat of the rival Takeda Clan, he removed Ranmaru's older brother Nagayoshi from his position as lord of Mino Kaneyama Castle and sent him to Kaizu Castle in modern-day Nagano Prefecture, instating Ranmaru the new lord. However, Ranmaru never got to fulfill his new position. Only two months later in June 1582, Oda Nobunaga was betrayed by his general Akechi Mitsuhide at Honno-ji Temple in Kyoto. Surrounded, Oda Nobunaga committed suicide by seppuku, and Ranmaru followed his lord in death, after setting fire to the temple to ensure that Nobunaga's body would not be found and taken by the enemy. Today, the graves for Ranmaru, his father Yoshinari, and his brother Nagayoshi can be found at Kajō-ji Temple in Kaneyama.

## Kani Saizō

1554? – 1613?

Kani Saizō was a military officer born in Mitake. Without a lord to employ him, he changed positions many times, serving under several commanders including Akechi Mitsuhide. His bravery and prowess on the battlefield was legendary, and tales of his feats spread throughout the country. For example, during the decisive Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 that established the Tokugawa Shogunate, Saizō fought with a bundle of bamboo grass on his back, and he would stick them into the ears and nostrils of his fallen opponents after taking their heads, as proof that he had defeated them. After taking down 17 opponents this way in the battle, his strength was recognized by Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the new Shogunate, who gave him the name Sasa Saizō ("Bamboo Grass Saizō").

It is written that Saizō also served under Akechi Mitsuhide during the "Honno-ji Incident" in Kyoto, where Oda Nobunaga was betrayed and killed. There are documents saying that at Honno-ji Temple, Saizō showed soldiers unfamiliar with the process of taking heads how to do it properly. Since there are materials yet to be discovered that would shed more light onto Saizō's character, much of his life is still shrouded in mystery.



## Akechi Mitsuhide Course

Akechi Station — Hana Festa Memorial Park

### Akechi Castle Ruins Gate



The castle that Akechi Mitsuhide lived in for 30 years, from his birth to the downfall of the castle. It was built in 1342 by Toki Yorikane, the military governor of Mino Province at the time. In 1556, when Mitsuhide's uncle Mitsuyasu and Mitsuhiya were the lords of the castle, it was attacked in the Battle of Nagara-gawa by Saitō Yoshitatsu, the rebellious son of the Mino ruler. With the downfall of the castle, Mitsuhide's uncle committed suicide by sword, but he escaped and lived on, entrusted with continuing and reviving the Akechi lineage.

### Tenryū-ji Temple



The temple grounds contain the burial site for several generations of the Akechi family, and inside is home to Japan's biggest spirit tablet — a placard with the name of a deceased ancestor written on it — at 184 centimeters (6 feet) tall. Every year in June, the "Mitsuhide Memorial Festival" is held here.

### Hana Festa Memorial Park



The biggest rose garden in the world, with 30,000 roses across 7,000 different varieties. Spring and fall are very popular times of year for many people to visit and see the neophilia (baby blue eyes) in March/April, the sunflowers in July/August, the cosmos in September, and more. There's always something beautiful to see here year round.

Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Closed: Tuesdays, New Year's (open every day during the rose festival)  
Cost: Adults – 530yen (1,050yen during the rose festival), High school students and under – free

### Akechi Mitsuhide Exposition 2020 in Kani City! free

As part of the upcoming NHK historical "Taiga" drama featuring Akechi Mitsuhide, there will be many exhibitions about the historical figures held at the Taiga Drama Pavilion, with events, food, gifts, and more.

Taiga Drama Pavilion  
Open January 11, 2020 – January 11, 2021 (open every day)  
Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (last entry at 4:30 p.m.)  
Cost: Adults – 500yen, High school students and under – 200yen

### Kanitte

A marketplace specializing in fresh produce and local goods from the Kani area, as well as a sit-down cafe where you can enjoy them right there. Also features an open plaza that holds events, bringing people and cultures together.

Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Closed January 1 and 2



## Mori Ranmaru Course

Akechi Station — Kaneyama Area

### Mino Kaneyama Castle Ruins



Originally named Ujōji Castle and built in 1537 by Saitō Masayoshi, an officer of the Sengoku Period, in 1565 Oda Nobunaga gave the castle to his retainer Mori Yoshinari, the father of Mori Ranmaru, and renamed it to Kaneyama Castle. Even though Ranmaru was made lord of the castle in April 1582, only two months later he followed Oda Nobunaga in death at the "Honno-ji Incident" in Kyoto. The castle was destroyed in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1601, and only traces of it remain today. In 2013, Mino Kaneyama Castle received its official designation as a historical site.

### Kajō-ji Temple

Kajō-ji Temple was established in 1570 by Mori Nagayoshi as a place for his mother Myō Kōni to mourn the death of her husband Mori Yoshinari, who was killed in the Battle of Utsunomiya Castle (in modern-day Shiga Prefecture). It went on to become the family temple for the Mori family, home to the actual shin guards worn by Mori Nagayoshi, as well as his grave, his father's grave, Ranmaru's grave, and more, all of which are designated as cultural artifacts of Japan.

### Jōshō-ji Temple

Established by Hayashi Tametada, the chief retainer for the Mori Family, Jōshō-ji Temple contains two scrolls showing images of Myō Kōni, as well as the head of the spear that Mori Ranmaru was said to have used. Myō Kōni is known not only as the wife of Mori Yoshinari and the mother of Mori Ranmaru, but also for her aid during Oda Nobunaga's siege of Ishiyama Hongan-ji Temple (in modern-day Osaka). The scrolls of Myō Kōni, as well as her grave site, are all designated as cultural artifacts of Japan.

### Sengoku Hill-Castle Museum

A museum dedicated to showing the history and information about all of the hill-castles remaining in Kani City, including Mino Kaneyama Castle, and the many shrines and Buddhist temples that were part of the castle town surrounding it. Also contains reproductions of Mori Ranmaru's armor and helmet, and Mori Nagayoshi's last will and testament.

Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (entry until 4:00 p.m.)  
Closed: Mondays (open on Monday holidays) days after holidays, and New Year's

Cost: Adults – 210yen, Discounts for others

### Kani City Visitor's Center

The place to go to find out the sites for castles and other places to visit. The first floor is designed to look like a Sengoku Period military headquarters, with curtains that have emblems on them, as well as armor, helmets, spears, bows, and more. All of the armor on display can be worn by guests (for a fee), and you can also check out pamphlets showing off the locations of 250 castles across all of Japan.

Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. (armor-wearing until 5:00 p.m.)  
Closed: December 28 – January 4

### Ranmaru's Hometown Forest

A lush, natural park that stretches up Kojōzan Mountain. With sakura, hydrangea, tall foliage and more, there's something to enjoy every season.



## Kani Saizō Course

Mitake Station Area

### Gankō-ji Temple



A Tendai Buddhist temple originally built in 815, Gankō-ji Temple has been burned down twice over the course of its long lifetime. Thankfully many sacred images housed inside survived the disasters, including the ones of Yakushi Nyorai, the Japanese name for the Buddha of Medicine, the main deity of the temple. First burnt down in 1108 during a rebellion, and then not fully rebuilt until over 100 years later, it was burned down again in 1572 during a battle between Oda Nobunaga and the rival Takeda Clan. Miraculously, it was rebuilt again in only 10 years by the local residents who loved the temple, calling it "Kani Yakushi" locally, with "Kani" being a play on words that also means "crab." It currently contains 24 images on display in the main hall, which along with its bell tower gate, are all designated as cultural artifacts of Japan. It is believed to be the birthplace of Kani Saizō, the son of a concubine of Asakura Yoshihaga (a rival Sengoku Period feudal lord defeated by Oda Nobunaga) who fled while pregnant from Echizen (modern-day Fukui Prefecture) after his death to safety here. Hall of sacred treasures viewing cost: 500 yen (made in advance)

Starting in 2017, Gankō-ji Temple has been undergoing a ten-year reconstruction, so visitors cannot go inside, but the hall of sacred treasures is still open to viewing.

### Gukei-ji Temple

A temple for the Rinza School of Zen Buddhism, Gukei-ji Temple was established in 1396 by Giten Genahō, a renowned priest from the Myōshin-ji Temple complex in Kyoto. He first developed the idea of the zen rock garden here, which he would later expand upon at the famous rock garden in Ryōan-ji Temple in Kyoto. The head monk's chambers has a stunning view of Mitake Fuji, able to cleanse any heart with its beauty.

### Nakasendō Mitake Hall

Experience the fossil of Gomphotherium annectens — the species of elephant that lived in Japan before humans 18 million years ago, plus the ancient Tōsandō road, the legend of Heian poet Izumi Shikibu, the flourishing of inns along the Nakasendō, and Christianity's illegal history. The place for being a part of Mitake's history and culture.

Hours: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (weekdays)  
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (weekends, holidays)  
Closed: Mondays (open on Monday holidays) every 3rd Tuesday, every last Friday



Takeya Family Merchant House  
Hours: Same as Nakasendō Mitake Hall  
Mitake Inn Wai-Wai Cafe  
Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (Waiting on customers time 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)  
Closed: Wednesdays, New Year's



Mitake Castle Ruins Park Mitake Feudal Lord Inn





## Akechi Mitsuhide Course

Akechi Sta. - Hana Festa Memorial Park - Gōdo Sta.

Time Required  
**1h30min**

not including browsing time

Walking Course  
Total Length ▶ **6.5km**

- Akechi Station
- 16min (1.3km)
- 1** Akechi Castle Ruins Gate
- 10min (mountain path 0.5km)
- 2** Akechi Castle Central
- 10min (mountain path 0.5km)
- 1** Akechi Castle Ruins Gate
- 3min (0.2km)
- 3** Tenryū-ji Temple
- 14min (1.1km)
- 4** Taiga Drama Pavilion
- 25min (2.0km)
- 5** Hana Festa Memorial Park
- 11min (0.9km)
- 6** Kanitte
- Gōdo Station



## Akechi Mitsuhide Historical Site

# Akechi Manor

There are many theories about the lineage of Akechi Mitsuhide, but it is generally believed that he was a part of the Toki Akechi Clan, a branch of the Toki Clan — the rulers of Mino Province (modern-day Gifu Prefecture). They lived in Akechi Manor in Kani, a large tract of land stretching from northeast Kani City to western Mitake.

There are currently no historical records showing that the Toki Akechi Clan held power over the entire manor by the time Mitsuhide was born, however it was still home to the family starting from its founding by Toki Yorikane in 1342 to its destruction in 1556.



### Gōdo Castle Ruins

Gōdo Castle was constructed at the beginning of the Muromachi Period (1336 to 1573), when the Toki Clan ruled the area, and even though it is called a "castle," it was actually more of a mansion. At 180 meters (590 feet) wide by 150 meters (492 feet) long, its trapezoid shape is quite large for a low-land castle built on the plains area, and its deep moat and tall, earthen walls remain in good shape, making it one of the most valuable castles in the Akechi Manor area. It is said that the lord of the castle, Saitō Myōchin — a monk and feudal lord, was an imposing figure who broke into the world of politics when his older brother died, and that during the Ōnin War in 1467, his actions shook even Kyoto.



## Mori Ranmaru Course

Akechi Station — Kaneyama Area

Time Required  
**1h40min**

not including browsing time

Walking Course  
Total Length ▶ **3.9km**

- Akechi Station
- YAO Bus (pay) 13min
- Moto Kaneyama Yakuba Mae
- 2min (0.1km)
- 1** Kani City Visitor's Center
- 24min (1.5km)
- 2** Sengoku Hill-Castle Museum
- 17min (0.9km)
- 3** Ranmaru's Hometown Forest
- 22min (1.1km)
- 5** Jōshō-ji Temple
- 3min (0.2km)
- 6** Kajō-ji Temple
- 1min (0.1km)
- Kidozaka
- YAO Bus (pay) 13min
- Akechi Station



## Kani Saizō Course

Mitake Station Area

Time Required  
**1h10min**

not including browsing time

Walking Course  
Total Length ▶ **5.3km**

- Mitake Station
- 11min (0.8km)
- 1** Gukei-ji Temple
- 11min (0.8km)
- 2** Gankō-ji Temple
- 1min (0.1km)
- 3** Mitake Inn Wai-Wai Cafe
- 2min (0.2km)
- 4** Nakasendō Mitake Hall
- 1min (0.1km)
- 5** Mitake Feudal Lord Inn
- 1min (0.1km)
- 6** Takeya Family Merchant House
- 25min (1.7km)
- 7** Mitake Castle Ruins Park
- 17min (1.5km)
- Mitake Station

