



NARA CITY

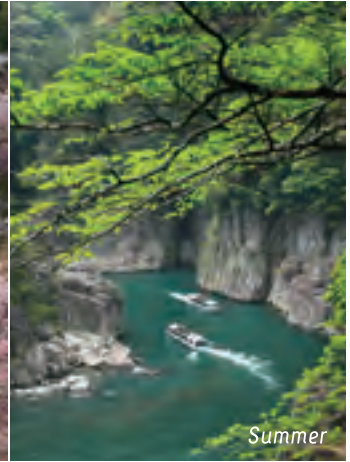
- | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-----|----|--|-----|
| 1 | Nara Park | 10p | 24 | Salon des vins Sève | 40p |
| 2 | Todaiji Temple | 11p | 25 | Lamp Bar | 41p |
| 3 | Kasugataisha Shrine | 12p | 26 | Kidera No Ie | 44p |
| 4 | Kofukuji Temple | 14p | 27 | Nara Hotel | 46p |
| 5 | Nara National Museum | 16p | 28 | Nara Ugaya Guesthouse | 47p |
| 6 | Naramachi Koshi No Ie | 17p | | | |
| 7 | Nara Craft Museum | 18p | 29 | Nara Visitor Center & Inn
3 Ikeno-cho, Nara-shi
T.0742-81-7461
www.sarusawa.nara.jp | |
| 8 | Naraizumi Yusai | 19p | 30 | Nara Prefecture
Tourist Information Center
16 Kasugano-cho, Nara-shi
T.0742-27-2003 | |
| 9 | Isuien Garden | 20p | 31 | JR Nara Station
Tourist Information Center
Sanjohonmachi 1, Nara-shi | |
| 10 | Yu Nakagawa | 24p | 32 | Nara City Tourist
Information Center
23-4 Kamisanjo-cho, Nara-shi
T.0742-22-3900 | |
| 11 | Nippon-Ichi | 25p | 33 | Kintetsu Nara Station
Tourist Information Center
Kintetsu Bldg. 1F, 28 Higashimuki
Nakamachi, Nara-shi
T.0742-24-4858 | |
| 12 | Naranomi | 26p | 34 | Kuroneko Nara Tabi Center
14 Tarui-cho, Nara-shi | |
| 13 | Soramitsu | 27p | | | |
| 14 | Shop Tabi-Ji | 28p | | | |
| 15 | Hiraso | 30p | | | |
| 16 | Awa Naramachi | 31p | | | |
| 17 | Coto Coto | 32p | | | |
| 18 | Sō | 33p | | | |
| 19 | Shika No Fune –Kamado | 34p | | | |
| 20 | Kashiya | 35p | | | |
| 21 | Minamo | 36p | | | |
| 22 | Kojoato | 37p | | | |
| 23 | Kuruminoki | 38p | | | |

NARA

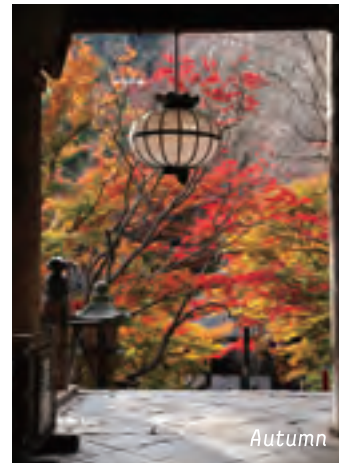
Most visitors to Japan go to Tokyo for a slice of urban contemporary Japanese culture and Kyoto, the old capital, for a taste of Japan's traditional culture and history. This makes visiting Nara the next step if culture and history is your thing. As the first permanent capital of Japan, from AD 710 to 794, Nara offers a very different, more ancient view of Japanese history and culture, and boasts the most UNESCO World Heritage sites in Japan. Yet, Nara's charm is not just about temples and shrines. As well as the lovingly restored old townscapes of downtown Naramachi and Gojo-Shinmachi, the towns of Yoshino, Uda, Totsukawa or Asuka, known as the birthplace of Japan, embody the unique natural beauty of Japan and are also well worth a visit. At any of the numerous cafes and restaurants that use local Nara, yamato-yasai produce, you can savour the delightful freshness of Japanese food like nowhere else. Did you know that sake too originated in Nara? The filtered, clear drink we enjoy today was first made here, and still today there are over 30 active breweries in the prefecture. Nara is a great place to immerse yourself in the splendour of the Japanese countryside, with abundant hiking trails in Sakurai, the mountains of Yoshino, the Kumano-Kodo trail in Totsukawa, and the magnificent Mitarai Valley in Tenkawa. Getting around the prefecture can be a bit of a challenge, due to limited public transport, but that has its upside too – you won't run into hordes of tourists making your experience more personal and relaxed. You should also find the people of Nara to be amongst the most friendly and open in Japan, humble, but at the same time justifiably proud of their culture and history. If you want to experience the "Real Japan," look no further.



Spring



Summer



Autumn



Winter

SPRING

TITLE	DATE	LOCATION
Shuni-e Omizutori, Sacred Water-drawing Ritual	March 1 to 14	Todaiji Temple (p.11)
Machiya Hina-meguri	March 1 to 31	Takatori-cho
Nerikuyo-Eshiki	May 14	Taimadera Temple (p.85)
Uchiwa-maki	May 19	Toshodaiji Temple (p.15)
4 Sakura cherry blossoms	Late March to mid April	Various locations

Shuni-e is an annual event heralding the arrival of spring held at Todaiji Temple in the Nigatsu-do ("February hall"). The most well-known event of the various ceremonies that make up this festival is the otaimatsu, in which pine torches are set alight in the evening around 19:00. Anyone can take part, but this usually attracts throngs of people, so it's best to arrive early. For details, please ask at one of the Nara Tourist Information Centres. **Machiya Hina-meguri** is held in Takatori-cho, once a thriving castle town. While strolling through the old district of Takatoritosa lined with machiya townhouses, you can view beautiful dolls for the Hina-Matsuri girls' festival lovingly displayed by their owners in the entrance ways and porches of their homes. **Nerikuyo-Eshiki** is a special spring festival that has been held at Taima-dera Temple for over

1,000 years. The event is a re-enactment of the legend of Princess Chujo, said to have attained Buddhahood within her own lifetime at Taimadera. **Uchiwa-maki** is a "fan scattering" festival held at Toshodaiji Temple that began in the Kamakura period (1192-1333) with the offering of fans on the death anniversary of a high-ranking Buddhist priest called Kakujo, renowned for his great virtue. Large numbers of fans are thrown towards the assembled visitors. Catching one of the fans is said to bring good fortune, to prevent disease and protect against evil. **Sakura**, cherry blossoms, can be enjoyed in many different parts of Nara Prefecture, including Mt. Yoshino, Nara Park, Nara Palace Site, Koriyama Castle, and the Sahogawa River.

SUMMER

TITLE	DATE	LOCATION
Renge-e & Kaeru-tobi	July 7	Kimpusenji Temple (p.72)
Gyoja Matsuri	August 2 & 3	Dorogawa Onsen (p.88)
Nara Tokae	August 5 to 14	Nara Park (p.10)
Chugen Mantoro	August 14 & 15	Kasugataisha Shrine (p.12)
Ajisai Hydrangeas	Early June to Mid July	Various locations
Hasu Lotus	July to late August	Various locations

Renge-e & Kaeru-tobi. At the Buddhist ceremony of Renge-e, lotus flowers from the Benten-ike Pond in Okuda, Yamato Takada City are offered to Zao Gongen (an incarnation of Buddha). This pond is where according to legend the 7th century mystic En no Gyoja, considered to be the founder of mountain ascetic training, was given his first bath as an infant. The accompanying Kaeru-tobi ritual (literally "frog jumping") is a re-enactment of an ancient legend. A large green frog that was previously a human is paraded around the town on a big float, after which it is transformed back into human form by the power of Buddhist incantations in front of the Zao Hall of the temple. **Gyoja Matsuri.** En no Gyoja was once exiled by the government for treason but later acquitted. On his return he was met with great enthusiasm by the people of the village. The Gyoja Matsuri

commemorates this scene with young men in demon masks dancing through the streets of Dorogawa Onsen. **Nara Tokae.** The ancient city of Nara is lit up nightly for a period of ten days in summer. Candles are lit at eight locations around Nara Park, including Ukigumo-enchi Park, Sarusawa-ike Pond and Todaiji Temple. **Chugen Mantoro** is a Shinto ritual in which some 2,000 stone lanterns and 1,000 hanging lanterns within the Kasugataisha Shrine are all lit. The lanterns are lit around 19:00. **Ajisai** (hydrangeas). Yata-dera Temple and Nanamagari-saka at Mt. Yoshino are some of the best places in Nara to enjoy blossoming hydrangeas. **Hasu** (lotus). The three temples of Kikoji, Toshodaiji and Yakushiji are all famous for their lotus blossoms and the path connecting the three is known as "Lotus Road". Note that the lotus flowers are open only in the morning.

AUTUMN

TITLE	DATE	LOCATION
Uneme Matsuri	Mid-autumn full moon	Sarusawa-ike Pond
Shika no Tsunokiri	Second Saturday, Sunday and Monday of October	Nara Park (p.10)
Kemari Matsuri	November 3 & April 29	Tanzan Jinja Shrine
Koyo Autumn Leaves	Late October to early December	Various locations

Uneme Matsuri. This festival is performed to appease the soul of an uneme (a court lady serving the emperor as a maid-in-waiting) who threw herself into the Sarusawa-ike Pond in grief after falling out of favour with the emperor. At 17:00 there is a procession of hanaogi, large fans decorated with flowers; at 18:00 a Shinto ritual is held at Uneme Jinja Shrine, a shrine dedicated to the uneme, close to the pond; and at 19:00 the hanaogi are loaded onto sacred boats, which are then rowed out around the pond. Finally, the hanaogi are floated on the water of the pond and prayers are recited for the peace of the uneme's soul and the happiness of all people. **Shika no Tsunokiri** (deer antler cutting). In this soul-stirring and colourful autumn event, held in the grounds of Kasugataisha Shrine, wild deer are herded into the cutting area and held still by seko

while a Shinto priest cuts off their antlers. This tradition dates back to the mid 17th century and was started to eliminate the danger to people posed by deer antlers and to protect trees. **Kemari Matsuri.** This festival commemorates the first audience of Fujiwara no Kamatari and Prince Naka no Oe at a kemari meeting, which led to the Taika Reforms of 645, which basically laid the foundations of the Japanese State. Kemari is a kind of ball-kicking game believed to have been introduced to Japan from China around 1,400 years ago. The festival features the figures of aristocrats dressed in beautiful period attire elegantly kicking a ball between themselves. **Koyo**, the spectacle of deeply coloured autumn leaves, can be enjoyed in many parts of Nara, including Nara Park, Yamanohe-no-Michi, Tanzan Jinja Shrine, Mt. Yoshino, and the Mitarai Valley.

WINTER

TITLE	DATE	LOCATION
Kasuga Wakamiya On-Matsuri	December 15 to 18	Kasugataisha Shrine (p.12)
Ominugui	December 29	Yakushiji Temple
Wakakusayama-yaki	Fourth Saturday of January	Nara City
Dadaoshi	February 14	Hasadera Temple (p.52)

Kasuga Wakamiya On-Matsuri. This annual festival has been held every year since 1136 with prayers for a bountiful harvest and the safekeeping and happiness of all people. One highlight of the festival is the procession held at noon on December 17, featuring historical dress and customs from the Heian to Edo periods (8th to 19th centuries). After dusk, a variety of traditional arts are performed for the deities, including kagura (sacred Shinto music and dancing), bugaku (traditional court music and dancing), and sei-no-o dancing. **Ominugui** is an event in which Buddhist priests make mochi steamed rice cakes in the morning, in preparation for the New Year festivities, and then clean Buddhist statues with the water used in making the mochi. The cleaning starts at 13:00. **Wakakusayama-yaki** (Grass-burning Festival on Mt. Wakakusa) is one of Nara's

largest festivals. The grass on Mt. Wakakusa, which overlooks the city, is set on fire. As the mountainside burns people pray for the repose of their ancestors' souls, for the safety of Nara and for world peace. 600 fireworks are set off to start the festival, and 33 hectares of grassland are set alight all at the same time, to mark the coming of early spring. **Dadaoshi.** To the violent sounds of taiko drums and conch shells, red, blue and green demon figures wearing huge masks run amok in the streets, only to be dispelled by the incantations and large flaming torches of Buddhist priests. This is another fire festival that heralds the arrival of spring. It is believed that taking home one of the pine torches ensures good health and safety for the year ahead.

ACCESS

(1) From Narita International Airport

60 minutes by Airport Express to Tokyo Station then (3)

(2) From Haneda International Airport

25 minutes by train to Tokyo Station then (3)

(3) From Tokyo Station

140 minutes by Shinkansen to Kyoto Station then (4)

(4) From Kyoto

• 45 minutes by JR Rapid Express to JR Nara Station or

• 35 minutes by Kintetsu Limited Express to Kintetsu Nara Station

(5) From Kansai International Airport

85 minutes by Airport Limousine Bus to Kintetsu Nara Station or 90 minutes by train

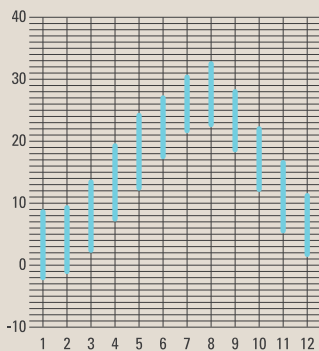
*Both JR Nara and Kintetsu Nara Stations are located in central Nara City.



WEATHER

Nara enjoys a generally mild climate. Particularly in mountainous areas such as Yoshino, there are many days when it rains, so always take a raincoat and umbrella with you when you go out. In July and August it is generally very hot, so it is essential to drink plenty of liquids to prevent dehydration. While most areas of Nara Prefecture get little or no snow in the winter, it can get very cold, so be sure to dress warmly.

Temperature (c)



Rainfall (mm)

1	2	3	4	5	6
49.6	63.3	103.2	97.7	143.5	188.8
7	8	9	10	11	12
165.1	111.8	163.3	111.1	71.4	47.3

NARAMACHI

Despite its compactness, there is a surprising variety of things to see and do in the city of Nara. Right in the centre of the city, there is the enormous Nara Park. Then there's the old town, known as "Naramachi," the old city of Nara, offers an absorbing collection of cafes, restaurants, and traditional arts and crafts stores. In this section, we will introduce you to our favourite museums, shops, and restaurants in and around Nara Park and Naramachi.



奈良公園 NARA PARK

Nara Park, the heart of the ancient capital of Nara, covers a huge area — 4 km east to west by 2 km north to south. The park includes not only the famous heritage sites of Todaiji Temple, Kasugataisha Shrine, and Kofukuji Temple, the extensive grassed areas are also popular as a place to relax or even picnic. What travellers find particularly fun, of course, are the numerous deer that roam free in the park. The deer, which are considered sacred, have coexisted with the people of Nara for more than 1,000 years. While these cute residents of Nara are accustomed to people, they are not domesticated, so please do not feed them

and certainly please do not hurt them. See p.94 for more details about the do's and do not's of interacting with deer in the park.



東大寺 TODAIJI TEMPLE

To many people, Nara is synonymous with the daibutsu [Great Buddha] of Todaiji Temple. The massive bronze Buddha statue is housed in the Great Buddha Hall, the largest wooden structure in the world. The sight of the magnificent seated Buddha illuminated by candles in the dimly lit space of the hall is sublime. There is much to see at Todaiji, which was originally built in the 8th century and is now registered as a World Heritage Site, so after visiting the Great Buddha, take the time to enjoy a stroll around the vast grounds of the temple. The area around the Nigatsu-do is especially recommended. The hall offers

wonderful panoramic views of the city of Nara. If you head northwest from here, you will encounter an elegant laneway that follows an earthen wall — known as the rear approach to the Nigatsu-do. The interior of the Sangatsu-do with its group of Buddhist statues is a must for the Buddha carving enthusiast. To avoid the crowds, it's advisable to come in the early morning or evening.

ADDRESS 奈良市雑司町 406-1 / 406-1 Zoshi-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-22-5511 / **WEB** todaiji.or.jp / **OPEN** 8:00-16:30 (November-February) ; 8:00-17:00 (March) ; 7:30-17:30 (April-September) ; 7:30-17:00 (October) / **ADMISSION** ¥500

春日大社 KASUGATAISHA SHRINE

The vivid vermillion-coloured buildings of this large and ancient shrine contrast beautifully with the lush greenery of the forest in which it stands. The Kasuga Primeval Forest, considered holy ground, makes a delightful spot for a meditative walk. The main shrine buildings are surrounded by long corridors lined with 1,000 hanging lanterns, which is a beautiful sight indeed. When they and the 2,000 stone lanterns in the grounds are all lit up once in February and again in August, the sight is quite breathtaking. This shrine was built in the 8th century, when Nara was Japan's capital, for the protection of the country's prosperity and the happiness of its people. In 1998 the shrine was registered as a World Heritage Site. Perhaps one of the most beautiful times of the year here is late April, when the entire grounds of the shrine are abloom with wild fuji (wisteria). This space is a work of devotional art, in harmony with nature, and well worth taking time to view at a slow pace.

ADDRESS 奈良市春日野町 160 / 160 Kasugano-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-22-7788 / **WEB** kasugataisha.or.jp / **OPEN** 6:00-18:00 (April-September); 6:30-17:00 (October-March) (Check the web site for details) / **ADMISSION** Free, however ¥500 for access to the Inner Shrine.





興福寺 KOFUKUJI TEMPLE

The five-storied pagoda of Kofukuji Temple is perhaps Nara's most distinctive landmark. The temple is also home to the must-see Kofukuji National Treasure Museum. Within the vast collection of outstanding Buddhist works of art here, the temple's Buddhist sculptures stand out; they are acclaimed by art connoisseurs from around the world. Some of the most popular works are the Senju Kannon Buddhist Goddess of Mercy with 1,000 arms, the Ashura statue, and Kongo Rikishi guardian deva statues. Time will pass so quickly as you view the numerous powerful, dignified, or humorous Buddhist sculptures that inspire silence

yet seem to speak to you. During the Nara Tokae Festival each summer, both the perimeter of Sarusawa-ike Pond, with the figure of the five-storied pagoda reflected in its waters, and the sando approach to the temple are lined with candles, and a night visit to Kofukuji Temple is an unforgettable experience.

ADDRESS 奈良市登大路町 48 / 48 Noborioji-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-22-7755 / **WEB** kohfukuji.com / **OPEN** 9:00-17:00 / **ADMISSION** ¥600 (National Treasure Museum), ¥300 (Eastern Golden Hall), ¥800(Both)[Scheduled closing times of National Treasure Museum: July 19-22, 2016, January 1-December 31, 2017]



唐招提寺 TOSHODAIJI TEMPLE

Today, Toshodaiji Temple is just outside Nara City proper, but when Nara was Japan's capital the temple was right in the heart of Nara, and therefore right at the heart of Japan. Toshodaiji was established in 759 by the Chinese monk Ganjin (Jianzhen) as a seminary for Buddhist training. The structure is very much in the style of the Nara period. The large scale of the Kondo (main hall) and other buildings within the grounds and the spacious layout of the compound make it different from most other Japanese temples. The Buddhist statues in the Kondo and the Kodo (lecture hall), as well as the buildings themselves have survived intact

since the 8th century, which is very rare. Take a slow, meditative walk around the whole grounds and don't forget to see the beautiful moss garden at the very back of the temple compound.

ADDRESS 奈良市五条町 13-46 / 13-46 Gojo-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-33-7900 / **WEB** toshodaiji.jp / **OPEN** 8:30-17:00[Entry until 16:30] / **ADMISSION** ¥600



奈良国立博物館 NARA NATIONAL MUSEUM

This is the only museum in Japan specialising in the Buddhist fine arts. Even a fairly brisk tour of the museum requires up to two hours, but if you have to narrow your focus, the Buddhist sculptures are highly recommended. The permanent collection, which includes a huge number of National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties, is also well worth seeing. The autumn annual exhibition of treasures from Todaiji Temple's Shosoin Imperial Treasury (of 8th century works of art) draws huge crowds of enthusiasts from around Japan and overseas. The museum shop offers interesting souvenirs, such as T-shirts

with Buddha image designs and products depicting treasures from the Shosoin, and there is a quiet cafe in the basement for coffee or light meals. Access to the shop and cafe is free of charge.

ADDRESS 奈良市登大路町 50 / 50 Noborioji-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 050-5542-8600 / **WEB** narahaku.go.jp / **OPEN** 9:30-16:30 (Closed Mondays) / **ADMISSION** ¥520



ならまち格子の家 NARAMACHI KOSHI NO IE

The streets of the old town of Naramachi centered around the World Heritage site Gangoji Temple are lined with traditional machiya townhouses. The Naramachi Koshinoie machiya museum is a reproduction of a machiya from the end of the 19th century, and you can experience here how people in Nara lived then. You can see up close some of the features that are typical of machiya; the koshi lattice on the windows specially constructed to make it harder to see in from the outside, the traditional stamped dirt floor, and the layout of the inner courtyard designed to improve air flow and bring in more light. The

museum is a great place to take a break and offers information on local walking tours. Free Admission.

ADDRESS 奈良市元興寺町 44 / 44 Gangoji-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-23-4820 / **OPEN** 9:00-17:00 (Closed Mondays and days after public holidays except on Saturdays and Sundays) / **ADMISSION** Free



なら工藝館 NARA CRAFT MUSEUM

The Nara Craft Museum displays examples of the many local crafts that have been passed down over the generations for more than 1,000 years. The exhibition of traditional works by first-class craftsmen from the prefecture includes Narazarashi textiles, Akahada-yaki pottery, sumi (charcoal) ink, and Nara fude (writing brushes), and is a great opportunity to appreciate the wonderful skill and dedication of the craftsmen. Some of the works are also available for sale at the museum shop. A visit to the museum, during your stroll around Naramachi, is a great to acquaint yourself with the traditional crafts of Nara.

ADDRESS 奈良市阿字万字町 1-1 / 1-1
Azemame-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-27-0033
/ **WEB** azemame.web.fc2.com / **OPEN** 10:00-18:00
(Closed Mondays) / **ADMISSION** Free



なら泉勇齋 NARAIZUMI YUSAI

Nara is the birthplace of Japanese seishu (refined sake). Omiwa-jinja Shrine (p.53) in the city of Sakurai enshrines the Shinto god of Japanese sake, and it is said that it was at a temple in Nara that clear, filtered seishu was first made. Before that sake was cloudy. This store located near the entrance to the old Naramachi district can be reached by passing through the shopping arcade opposite the railway station. Opened in 2012, the store has over 120 varieties of sake made by 29 local breweries, and sake enthusiasts will be happy to know that they can relax at the counter inside the store and sample the different sake's in 50cc glass

from ¥200 with snacks starting at ¥200. Rare local sake produced by the smaller breweries, as well as seasonally limited sake varieties are also on offer.

ADDRESS 奈良市西寺林町 22 / 22
Nishiterabayashi-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-
26-6078 / **WEB** naraizumi.jp / **OPEN** 11:00-20:00
(Closed Thursdays)



依水園 ISUIEN GARDEN

This elegant Japanese garden, extending over an area of 11,000 square metres, is composed of two separate gardens of different eras — the front garden created in the 1670s and the rear garden in the early 20th century. The shakkei “borrowed scenery” of the rear garden is especially delightful. The borrowed scenery incorporates Mt. Wakakusa, Mt. Kasuga and Mt. Mikasa in the far distance and the Nandaimon Gate of Todajji Temple into the landscape of the garden and generates an impressive sense of depth. There are no houses, telephone poles and the like to be seen from the garden, leaving you fully immersed in the natural beauty of a classic Japanese garden. A Japanese-style house overlooking the garden serves tea. For garden lovers, the beautiful Yoshikien Garden is right next door.

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ADDRESS 奈良市水門町 74 / 74 Suimon-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-25-0781 / **WEB** isuien.or.jp
/ **OPEN** April 1 to June 1 : 9:30-17:00 (Last entry 16:30); June 2 to March 31: 9:30 to 16:30 (Last entry 16:00) / (Closed Tuesdays, except in April, May, October and November) / **ADMISSION** ¥900

What to Buy

1. Dried fruits by Horiuchi Fruit Farm - From ¥756 / Where to buy: Nippon-Ichi (p. 25), Naranomi (p. 26) / horiuchi-fruit.jp

2. Socks by 2&9 - From ¥1,296 / Where to buy: Nippon-Ichi (p. 25) / 2to9.jp

3. Jikatabi-style sneakers by TABI-JI - From ¥3,888 / Where to buy: Shop TABI-JI (p. 28) / tabi-ji.jp

4. Japanese granola by Kuruminoki-¥702 / Where to buy: Kuruminoki (p. 38) / kuruminoki.co.jp

5. Nara sake / Where to buy: Naraizumi Yusai (p.19)

6. Takayama chasen - From around ¥2,500 / Where to buy: Kite Mite Nara Shop (in the Nara Prefecture Commerce & Industry Tourist House) / Tel: 0742-26-8828 / nara-shop.jp

7. Kyoshu no kaki by Kaki-no-Senmon Ishii - ¥270 / Where to buy: Kaki-no-Senmon Ishii, Sanjo / Tel: 0742-22-8835 / kakinosenmon.jp

8. Aioi kabuse sencha green leaf tea (by the can) from Tea Farm Inokura - ¥1,296 / Where to buy: Sō (p. 33), Soramitsu (p. 27) / inokura.co.jp



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遊 中川 YU NAKAGAWA

If you're fond of stylish clothes and fabric accessories, you must check out "Yu Nakagawa." This is the flagship store, directly managed by the textile company "Nakagawa Masashichi Shoten," a 300-year old establishment that deals in Narazarashi, a local and traditional bleached linen fabric. With a brand concept of "Japanese fabrics," they utilize high-quality materials, and dyeing and weaving technologies from all over Japan to manufacture elegant clothes in a contemporary style. The store offers a wide selection of items, including dresses, shawls, and other fashionable wear, as

well as interior fabrics such as tapestries, and even raw fabrics. The limited edition designs of the store's popular tea towels featuring deer make a wonderful souvenir of your visit to Nara.

ADDRESS 奈良市元林院町 31-1 / 31-1 Ganriin-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-22-1322 / **WEB** yu-nakagawa.co.jp / **OPEN** 10:00-18:30



日本市 NIPPON-ICHI

Nippon-ichi (Lit: Japan Market) offers a wide range of attractively presented and designed local crafts and specialties from all over Japan. The wide selection of goods includes beautifully packaged omiyage (souvenirs), snacks such as senbei (Japanese crackers), decorative items featuring traditional Japanese motifs like Mt. Fuji and daruma dolls, seasonal interior goods, and socks from the Nara-based brand "269." One of the most popular items here is an omikuji (fortune-telling ornament) in the shape of a deer, available only here at the Nara store. The product design quality is high, even on the little accessories priced

below ¥500, and the store is known for its own original products only available here. Nippon-ichi can be reached easily in about 5 minutes from the Kintetsu Nara Station, and is the last stop for many tourists to buy all of their souvenirs before heading off.

ADDRESS 奈良市角振新屋町 1-1 ファインフラッツ奈良町三条 1F / 1F Fine Flats Naramachi Sanjo, 1-1 Tsunofurishinya-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-23-5650 / **WEB** yu-nakagawa.co.jp/p/213 / **OPEN** 10:00-19:00



ならの実 NARANOMI

This little select shop offers a wide range of day-to-day goods, carefully selected by the lady owner, and is known for things that grow on you the more you use them. In addition to stationery, cooking utensils, accessories made from natural materials, clothing, and baby goods, there are products from the Horiuchi Fruit Farm in Nara and many other local specialties. There are plenty of nice items at around ¥1,000, so shopping here is fun, whether you're picking up a souvenir for someone or just looking to get something for yourself. The traditional Japanese craft items in more modern designs are

a favourite with all overseas visitors, while the brass accessories seem to be particularly popular with Asian tourists. If you ask, the staff will even choose a gift set for you. Credit cards are accepted for purchases of over ¥5,000.

ADDRESS 奈良市鶴福院町 13 / 13 Tsurufukuin-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-23-7557 / **WEB** narano-mi.com / **OPEN** 11:00-18:00



空櫛 SORAMITSU

This gallery-like craft shop offers products selected individually by the owner based on the theme of "Beautiful Tools Made in Japan." For first-time visitors, finding the way to the store is something of a challenge, because it is located deep within a quiet residential area. You take a leisurely stroll through the narrow lanes and paths, and just when you think you may be lost you'll see the old Japanese-style house, home to the shop. The simple, understated interior of the store is redolent of the Japanese wabi aesthetic. The range of craft goods on offer includes beautifully designed everyday items like bottle openers

and scissors, which would make a special interesting souvenir. Exhibitions are also held irregularly. See the web site for details before visiting.

ADDRESS 奈良市高畑町 1445-1 / 1445-1 Takabatake-cho, Nara-shi / **WEB** soramitsu.com / **OPEN** 11:00-18:00 (-17:00 from December to March) (Closed Monday to Wednesday)



SHOP TABI-JI

Traditionally worn by carpenters and gardeners, TABI-JI is a modern take on Japan's traditional jika-tabi (split-toed sneakers). Opened in 2007, the Nara-based brand focuses on "tradition, modernity, and health," and has built up a steady following, both locally and internationally, for its chic designs. The classic split-toed form is said to make walking easier and be good for your health. TABI-JI's unisex tabi sneakers (around ¥9,000) give a modern design twist to this classic form. Also check out the tabi socks and slippers, decorated with distinctive Nara patterns.

ADDRESS 奈良市樽井町 2-2F / 2F-2 Tarui-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-26-3588 / **WEB** tabi-ji.jp / **OPEN** 11:00-19:00 (Closed Wednesdays)

Itadakimasu

Let's eat!

Where to eat?

Of course, one of the pleasures of travel is getting to know the local cuisine, by trying the traditional cooking and the fresh produce of a region. There are many great cafes and restaurants in Nara City and in this section we have included a selection of our favourites, particularly those that use the traditional yamato vegetables of Nara — available in no other part of Japan.

Gochisousama

That was delicious



平宗 HIRASO

This shop specialises in persimmon leaf-wrapped sushi (kaki-no-ha zushi): a typical homemade dish from the Yoshino region. Yoshino's location deep in the mountains far from the sea made mackerel (saba) a precious commodity. Salted Mackerel was wrapped in persimmon leaves (kaki-no-ha), for their preservative and antibacterial effect, and this was served as a delicacy to special guests. The kaki-no-ha zushi of Hiraso, founded in Yoshino more than 150 years ago, is as popular with locals as with visitors. Try the assorted (moriawase) kaki-no-ha zushi at ¥1,240 including miso

soup or suimono clear soup. Vegetarians can request sushi made with vegetables instead of fish. Since this type of sushi remains good to eat for up to three days, you can also get takeout for a later lunch or dinner. Do try the unique flavour of this traditional type of sushi.

ADDRESS 奈良市今御門町 30-1 / 30-1 Imamikado-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-22-0866 / **WEB** hiraso.jp / **OPEN** 10:00-20:00 (Closed Mondays)



粟 奈良町店 AWA NARAMACHI

This restaurant is in a beautifully restored traditional machiya townhouse. The menu features a wide range of yamato-yasai, local vegetable varieties that have been cultivated in the Nara region for generations. Each of the courses offered uses between 30 and 50 different kinds of vegetables. When dishes are brought to the table, guests receive a detailed explanation of the vegetables used. This unique aspect of the service reflects Awa's dedication to ensuring that the yamato-yasai of Nara are passed on to future generations. Dishes are superbly arranged, so the meal will be a feast for

your eyes too. Awa Naramachi offers four lunch sets from ¥2,900, and three dinner sets from ¥3,900, some of which include yamato-ushi, the local Nara beef. This is a reservation-only restaurant, so you will need to book early. (A charge applies for same-day cancellations). Although only Japanese is spoken, don't let that stop you from enjoying a marvellous meal at Awa Naramachi.

ADDRESS 奈良市勝南院町 1 / 1 Shonami-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-24-5699 / **WEB** kiyosumi.jp/awa-naramachi / **OPEN** 11:30-15:00 & 17:30-22:00 (Closed Tuesdays)



コトコト COTO COTO

Located between Kofukuji Temple (p.14) which is famed for its five-storied pagoda, and the old district of Naramachi, coto coto is a perfect spot to drop in to when you're strolling around town. In the spacious dining space, you can enjoy traditional vegetables, local brand meat and other produce unique to Nara, lovingly prepared. The healthy and well balanced menu includes dishes of gorgeous, colourful vegetables and seasonal soups in generous quantities. Lunch sets start at ¥1,200, dinner courses at ¥2,400. Local Nara sake and craft beers also served.

ADDRESS 奈良市東寺林町38 ならまちセンター
1階 / 1F Naramachi Center 38
Higashiterabayashi-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE**
0742-22-6922 / **WEB** cotocoto.nara.jp / **OPEN**
11:30-17:00 & 18:00-24:00. Sundays: 11:30-
17:00 (Closed Tuesdays)



ゆづ SŌ

This café specializes in local Nara tea and Japanese wagashi sweets. Proprietor Sosetsu Yamada, a qualified teacher of the tea ceremony in the Omotesenke school and also a former Shinto priest, has lived a life deeply immersed in Japanese culture. He opened the café in 2014, inspired by his love of Nara's delicious tea and a desire to create a place where it can be accessibly experienced. The menu here offers up over 30 varieties of tea produced in Nara, including sencha green leaf tea, macha green powdered tea, bancha coarse tea, and hojicha roasted tea. Choosing what to drink is a

pleasant challenge. If you order a macha the kimono'ed proprietor will prepare the tea for you himself. Just observing the beautiful movements of the preparing of the tea brings tranquillity to the mind; a simple cup of tea can create a soothing spirit of harmony.

ADDRESS 奈良市下御門町 17-1 2F / 2F 17-1
Shimomikado-cho, Nara-shi / **WEB** ameblo.
jp/shimomikado / **OPEN** 14:30-19:00 (Closed
Thursdays)



鹿の舟 竈

SHIKA NO FUNE-KAMADO

Eating breakfast at the Kamado restaurant and grocery is a pleasure, not just for the taste of the food but also for the wonderful interior and ambience. Gazing across the counter you can watch rice cooking over a traditional kamado wood-burning stove. The crackling of the burning wood and the fragrant smell of the cooking rice sooth both body and soul. The recommended breakfast set of freshly cooked rice, accompanied by miso soup and one okazu side dish is only ¥550. In the adjacent grocery corner you can also buy local food products. Next door there is a small tourist office with English-

speaking staff on hand at all times, as well as a Japanese herb garden.

ADDRESS 奈良市井上町 11(鹿の舟) / (Sika no fune) 11 Inoue-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-94-5520 / **WEB** kuruminoki.co.jp/shikanofune / **OPEN** 8:00-18:00 (Closed Wednesdays)



榎舎

KASHIYA

Try the sweets here to experience the skill of a master confectioner. Before opening this shop in 2008, the master specialised in making seasonal wagashi, Japanese-style sweets, to order, for such prestigious clients as the Kasugataisha Shrine, many other Nara shrines and temples, as well as for local tea ceremony masters. The shop, located in an old traditional house, is right next to Awa Naramachi (p.31), a restaurant renowned for its culinary focus on traditional Nara vegetables. Soft jazz background music and antique Japanese furnishings combine to create a lovely ambience. Since there are only about 15 seats, it can get a little

crowded at times, but the staff is polite and pleasant, so do line up. The joyo-manju steamed rice cakes filled with exquisite anko red bean jam (¥350) are highly recommended. Even those overseas visitors that don't normally like anko rave about this place. So give it a try.

ADDRESS 奈良市中院町 22-3 / 22-3 Chuin-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-22-8899 / **WEB** kasiya.jp / **OPEN** 9:00-18:00



珈琲と定食 MINAMO

Open the door of this little coffee shop and you'll feel right at home in this tastefully renovated machiya townhouse. Owner Yoko Fukumoto opened Minamo in December 2014, after having learned the craft for nearly five years at one of Nara's great cafes. Her homely dishes are lovingly prepared using fresh vegetables and loved by both locals and visitors. Teishoku set meals (¥1,000) consist of a main dish, soup, salad and rice, with the menu changing every three days. The popular tomato and chicken curry (¥900) is also a hit among regulars. Her homemade desserts, including classic cheesecake

and rich gâteau au chocolat are perfect matches for the excellent hand drip coffee on offer. A perfect spot for a slow-paced lunch in a relaxing atmosphere right in the middle of Naramachi.

ADDRESS 奈良市東城戸町 28 / 28 Higashijodo-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-27-7166 / **WEB** minamocoffee.tumblr.com / **OPEN** 11:00-18:00 (Closed Tuesdays)



工場跡

KOJOATO

This cafe and gallery near Todaiji Temple (p.11) is open only on weekends. The wooden building built by a temple carpenter around 90 years ago was once a factory making yoghurt beverages, hence the name that literally means "old factory". It is a handsome building which the current owner, Kazuo Kita, wants to preserve in its original state as far as possible. Inside the cafe, which occupies the old office and consignment area, the smell of coffee interplays with the old-world charm of the space to create a warm inviting mood. An early morning stroll around Todaiji Temple, followed

by breakfast and coffee (¥1,200) here would make a wonderful start to your day.

ADDRESS 奈良市芝辻町 543 / 543 Shibatsuji-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-22-2215 / **WEB** kojoato.jp/wp / **OPEN** Friday 11:00-18:00; weekends and public holidays 9:00-18:00 (Closed Monday to Thursday)



くるみの木 KURUMINOKI

Owner Yukiko Ishimura opened this café and general store on the outskirts of the city in 1984. Since then, it has won a devoted clientele of both locals as well as fans from all over Japan, some of whom come to Nara just to visit Kuruminoki. Surrounded by greenery, the interior space is simple, yet warm and inviting, and everything on the menu is delicious. The very popular weekly lunch special (¥1,620), features generous amounts of traditional Nara vegetables and other seasonal produce; it is so popular that even on weekdays you may have to wait in line. The adjacent store offers a great selection of basic ceramics, cooking

utensils, comfortable clothing, food items and a thoughtful selection of souvenirs and gifts.

ADDRESS 奈良市法蓮町 567-1 / 567-1 Horencho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-23-8286 / **WEB** kuruminoki.co.jp / **OPEN** Monday to Thursday: 11:30-17:30; Friday to Sunday: 11:30-21:00



MIA'S BREAD

This shop is located in the midst of a residential area, close to the Nara Palace Site a bit out the way. You can't miss it, though. Just look for the line of cars and people; that'll be "Mia's Bread." Fans come from all over Japan to buy the additive-free bread and sweets created by proprietor Miwa Morita, who has also published a number of cooking books based on the products in her store. She uses only the finest ingredients, and her store is very popular amongst the health conscious. The sandwiches, made with generous quantities of seasonal vegetables offer a superb balance of taste, texture, and colour are a popular choice, and

there is also a cafe in the bakery where you can enjoy your sandwich with a coffee, for a total price of around ¥1,000. Crowded even on weekdays, reservations are essential if you want to eat in the cafe. Thankfully, a new store is set to open at 48 Tsubai-cho in April 2016 (approximately 5 minutes on foot from Kintetsu Nara Station).

ADDRESS 奈良市佐紀町 2406-1 / 2406-1 Saki-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-36-1298 / **WEB** miasbread.com / **OPEN** 10:30-18:00 (Bread sales); 10:30-16:00 (Café) (Closed Mondays)



セヴ

SALON DES VINS SÈVE

If you are looking for a great place to enjoy glass of good wine, this is the place to head to. Proprietor Ryo Okunishi really knows his wines, having worked as a sommelier in France as well as in a winery. Not surprisingly, he's well known to all the local wine buffs. Salon des vins Sève enjoys many repeat customers, both local and international, who come to enjoy French wines, cheeses and cured hams in an informal, relaxing setting. The daily wine by the glass ranges from ¥1,000 to ¥2,400, and bottles can be had for ¥6,000 or more. Note also that French is spoken.

ADDRESS 奈良市西寺林町 19-1 / 19-1 Nishiterabayashi-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-25-2233 / **WEB** yaplog.jp/closedtart1985 / **OPEN** 18:00 - 24:00 (Closed on Mondays)



ランプバー

LAMP BAR

This is the perfect bar for adding that special touch to your visit to Nara. The "Cocktail Journey" theme of the bar welcomes you to the world of the owner/bartender, Michito Kaneko, who recently won the worldwide "Bartender of the Year" contest. First-time visitors often comment on the interior: the subdued lighting over the Italian leather counter and a secret door concealed behind antique suitcases. The interior and the service will help you to forget time. Expect to pay around ¥4,000 to enjoy two cocktails. The sort of bar you might want to dress up a little to visit and where you

feel completely comfortable even just by yourself.

ADDRESS 奈良市角振町 26 いせやビル 104 号 / Iseya Building 104, 26 Tsunofuri-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-24-2200 / **OPEN** 17:00 - 2:00 (Closed Tuesdays)

Other Restaurants

Fujin (Izakaya)

奈良市東向中町5-1 浅川ハーベストビル2F / Asakawa Harvest Bldg. 2F, 5-1 Higashimuki -Nakamachi, Nara-shi / T.0742-26-1008 / 11:00-15:00 (L.O. 14:30) & 17:00-24:00 (L.O. 23:00) / fujin-nara.com / Credit cards OK. / Lunch: ¥1,000 / Dinner: ¥3,000-¥4,000

Kinatei (Vegan & Vegetarian)

奈良市杉ヶ町25-1 フェリス駅前1F / Ferris-Ekimae 1F, 25-1 Suruga-machi, Nara-shi / T.080-6119-6105, 0742-20-6188, 070-6682-6105 / kinatei.com / Lunch: 11:30-15:00, Dinner: Reservations only / Closed Mondays / Credit cards OK. / Lunch: ¥700-¥2,500 / Dinner: ¥3,000-¥5,000

Kyoya (Japanese)

奈良市南市町27 / 27 Minamiichi-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-23-1520 / 11:30-14:00 & 17:00-23:00 (L.O. 22:00) / Closed Sundays / Credit cards OK. / Lunch: ¥1,000 / Dinner: ¥3,000-¥4,000

Mentouan (Udon Noodles)

奈良市橋本町30-1 / 30-1 Hashimoto-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-25-3581 / 11:00-18:00 or until supplies last / Closed Tuesdays (or the following day if Tuesday is a public holiday) / Cash only / Lunch: ¥1,000 / Dinner: ¥1,000

Ristorante I-lunga (Italian fine dining)

奈良市春日野町16 夢風ひろば / Yume-kaze Plaza, 16 Kasugano-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-93-8300 / 11:30-15:00 & 18:00-22:00 / i-lunga.jp / Credit cards OK. / Lunch: ¥6,000-¥8,000 / Dinner: ¥10,000-¥15,000

Shikiyujin (Izakaya)

奈良市三条町523-1 / 523-1 Sanjo-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-20-2030 / 11:30-15:00 & 17:00-24:00 / shikiyujin.com / Credit cards OK. / Lunch: ¥800-¥1,000 / Dinner: ¥3,000-¥4,000

Trattoria Piano (Casual Italian)

奈良市橋本町15-1 / 15-1 Hashimoto-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-26-1837 / 1F: 11:00-24:00 (L.O. 23:00), 2F: 11:00-15:30 (L.O. 14:30), 17:00-23:00 (L.O. 22:00) / piano.syncronicity.co.jp / Credit cards OK. / Lunch: ¥1,000-¥2,000 / Dinner: ¥3,000-¥4,000

Yuan (Yakitori - Grilled Chicken)

奈良市杉ヶ町14-1 第一西田ビル1F / Daiichi-Nishida Bldg. 1F, 14-1 Suruga-machi, Nara-shi / T.0742-81-7794 / 18:00-24:00 / Closed Mondays / Credit cards OK. / Dinner: ¥3,000-¥4,000

Oyasuminasai

Good Night

Where to stay?

Nara offers visitors many appealing accommodation options.

While it's certainly possible to make a pleasant day trip to Nara from Kyoto or Osaka, staying for at least one night allows you to experience the delight of an early morning walk in Nara Park when few people are around, or the tranquil charm of Naramachi by night. For your stay, you can choose from reasonably priced guest houses, or something more special, like Kidera-no-ie (p.44), which rents out entire machiya townhouses in the old Naramachi district. Another unique option is the venerable Nara Hotel (p.46), which has operated continuously since the Meiji Era (1868-1912). Even if you don't stay the night here, be sure to visit the classic Nara Hotel Bar for a cocktail or two.

Ohayogozaimasu

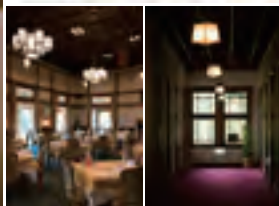
Good Morning

紀寺の家 KIDERA NO IE

If you are looking to see what living in an old Nara machiya townhouse is like, Kidera-No-ie is the place for you. Five machiya townhouses, each around 100 years old, have been tastefully renovated for an experience that's closer to "living in Nara" than just staying overnight at a regular hotel. Guests have their own kitchen, bath, bedroom and living room. Interiors are modern Japanese with western amenities added for comfort, and each of the 5 houses is different: some have beds on a terracotta floor, and others let guests spread futon mattresses on tatami. These one-of-a-kind houses bring the traditional Japanese home into the modern age with innovative renovation ideas and conjure up a simpler style of living. Complementary Japanese style breakfast delivered to your door included. Rates from ¥18,000.



ADDRESS 奈良市紀寺町779 / 779 Kidera-cho, Nara-shi / PHONE 0742-25-5500 / WEB machiyado.com



奈良ホテル NARA HOTEL

This classic hotel, founded in 1909, counts the Japanese royal family, Audrey Hepburn and many other dignitaries and celebrities amongst its guests. The architectural style is a fusion of Western and Japanese styles, with guest rooms divided between the main building and an annex. The interior of the main building is particularly striking, with features such as mantelpieces in the form of torii, the distinctive gateways at the entrance to Shinto shrines. The large windows of the main dining room offers superb views of the five-storied pagoda of Kofukuji Temple, and in fact the restaurant here

is recognized by Nara Prefecture as offering one of the finest scenic dining experiences in Nara. Guests are offered a choice of three types of breakfast — Western, Japanese, and local. Many people come to the hotel just to eat breakfast. Above all, it's the hotel's genuine spirit of hospitality that will make your stay here memorable. Prices start at ¥29,700 for a twin room in the main building.

ADDRESS 奈良市高畑町 1096 / 1096 Takabatake-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-26-3300 / **WEB** narahotel.co.jp



奈良ウガヤゲストハウス NARA UGAYA GUESTHOUSE

This very reasonable, comfortable guest house, with prices starting from just ¥2,500 per night, is just 5 minutes on foot from JR Nara Station. Nestled within a quiet residential area, Ugaya is an impeccably clean, renovated traditional house, which makes guests feel right at home during their stay, and attracts guests from all over the World. The owner, Ippei Seto, plays the biwa, a traditional Japanese lute, and he can be persuaded to play for guests in the lounge. Ugaya is also attentive to the individual time constraints and needs of each guest and has many repeat

lodgers. There is both a mixed male-female dormitory and a female-only dormitory (bunk beds and Japanese rooms).

ADDRESS 奈良市興子守町 4-1 / 4-1 Okukomori-cho, Nara-shi / **PHONE** 0742-95-7739 / **WEB** ugaya.net

Hotels and Ryokans in Nara City

Edosan

奈良市高畑町 1167 / 1167 Takabatake-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-26-2662 / edosan.jp / From ¥20,000

Hotel Asyl Nara

奈良市油阪町 1-58 / 1-58 Aburasaka-cho, Nara-shi / T.0120-200-350 / worldheritage.co.jp/asy/ / From ¥15,000

48 Hotel New Wakasa / Wakasa Bettei

奈良市北半田東町 1 / 1 Kitahandahigashi-machi, Nara-shi / T.0742-23-5858 / n-wakasa.com / From ¥15,500 / From ¥24,840

Hotel Nikko Nara

奈良市三条本町 8-1 / 8-1 Sanjohonmachi, Nara-shi / T.0742-35-8831 / nikkonara.jp / From ¥14,700

Hotobil *

奈良市肘塚町 181-15 / 181-15 Kainoduka-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-37-3278 / hotobil.com / From ¥7,020 (per person with breakfast) * Female-only guesthouse (Men can stay too if accompanying a woman)

* Prices quoted are approximate. Actual prices may vary with season/dates or for other reasons. The quoted prices, unless otherwise noted, are generally for a one-night stay per person (assuming two persons per room) with breakfast and dinner included. All prices include 8% consumption tax.

Koto-no-yado Musashino

奈良市春日野町 90 / 90 Kasugano-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-22-2739 / nara-musashino.com / From ¥33,480

Nara Tsukihitei Ryokan

奈良市春日野町 158 / 158 Kasugano-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-26-2021 / nara-ryoutei.com/tsukihitei / From ¥30,000

Ryokan Matsumae

奈良市東寺林町 28-1 / 28-1 Higashi-terabayashi-cho / T.0742-22-3686 / matsumae.co.jp / From ¥5,400 (per person without meals)

The Deer Park Inn

奈良市春日野町 158-5 / 158-5 Kasugano-cho, Nara-shi / T.0742-81-7222 / From ¥2,780 (per person without meals)

Yu-kei no Yado Heijo

奈良市川上町 728 新若草山ドライブウェイ浴い / 728 Kawakami-cho, Nara-shi (along the New Mt. Wakakusa Driveway) / T. 0742-23-5255 / heijo.co.jp / From ¥16,200

Konnichiwa

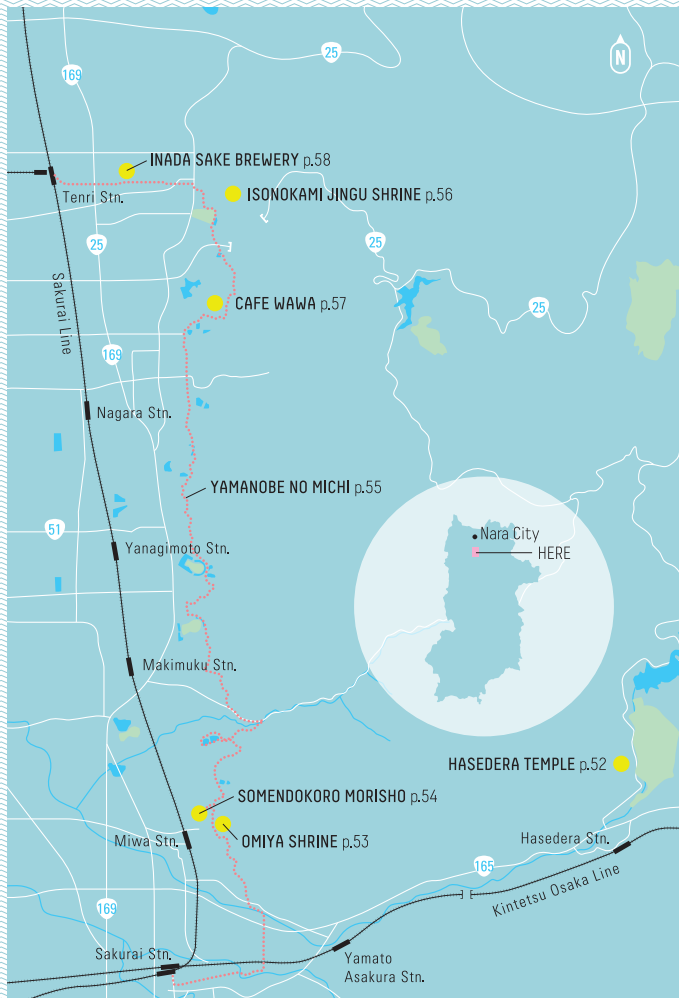
Hello

Out of town

Nara is much more than just downtown Naramachi. Outside of the city there are many places where you can enjoy the beauty of rural Japan, and unique local culture. In this chapter we will suggest trips not only to the three most beautiful areas of Nara Prefecture — Sakurai, Gojo and Yoshino — but also some special, out-of-the-way spots that you won't want to miss. Of course, recommendations for great places to stay and eat are also included.

Sayonara

Good Bye



↳ L'AUBERGE DE PLAISANCE SAKURAI p.59

SAKURAI

Sakurai can be reached from Nara City in just 30 minutes or so by train. For a great one-day hike you can set off from JR Miwa Station, taking the Yamanobe-no-Michi trail (p.55) from behind Omiwa Shrine (p.53) and continuing on as far as Tenri Station (16 km, about 5.5 hours). Spring and Autumn are probably the best times to hike through this beautiful, unspoilt area. If you have some spare time before your hike, make sure to visit the Hasedera Temple (p.52).

Access: JR Nara > JR Miwa: 27 minutes.





長谷寺 HASEDERA TEMPLE

Also known since ancient times as hana-no-mitera, “the temple of flowers,” Hasadera Temple has colourful displays of flowers and greenery that change from one season to the next. It is especially known for its sakura (cherry blossoms), ajisai (hydrangeas), shakuyaku (Chinese peonies), and koyo (coloured autumn leaves). One of the most beautiful sights here is the long stairway covered walkway, lined with hanging lanterns. The worship hall in the main temple sanctuary, built at the edge of a steep cliff halfway up the mountain has a “floating platform” that projects outwards from the front of the building and affords

a spectacular view. The main sanctuary is dedicated to an 11-faced Kannon statue that is over 10 meters high, making it one of the largest images of its type in Japan. (Usually only the upper body can be viewed. Full viewings of the statue are possible only during special seasons.) It is well-worth taking some time to explore this temple at your leisure.

ADDRESS 桜井市初瀬 731-1 / 731-1 Hase, Sakurai-shi / **PHONE** 0744-47-7001 / **WEB** hasadera.or.jp / **OPEN** 8:30 - 17:00 (April - September); 9:00 - 17:00 (October, November, March); 9:00 - 16:30 (December - February) / **ADMISSION** ¥500



大神神社 OMIWA SHRINE

The object of worship here is Mt. Miwa, which towers behind the shrine grounds — that is, the beautiful mountain is considered to be a god. This is a Shinto shrine of ancient form, with no inner shrine; only an outer shrine. The devotional spirit of the people of antiquity, who revered nature as a deity can still be felt here. Since Omiwa Shrine is also considered the home of the god of sake, it is a place of pilgrimage for sake brewers from all over Japan. Walk around the shrine grounds from the approach path, lined with huge and vigorous sugi (Japanese cedar) trees, every leaf of which seems charged with holiness. Just being here makes you

feel purified. This very old shrine can give you an insight into ancient Shinto beliefs that have survived to the present day.

ADDRESS 桜井市三輪 1422 / 1422 Miwa, Sakurai-shi / **PHONE** 0744-42-6633 / **WEB** oomiwa.or.jp / **OPEN** Free access to shrine grounds / **ADMISSION** Free



そうめん處 森正 SOMENDOKORO MORISHO

Somen, a kind of thin noodles, is a Nara specialty, and Miwa somen are particularly well-known. Located right next to the torii archway of the Omiwa Shrine (p.53) is Morisho, a casual Miwa noodle eatery that boasts many regular patrons that drop in whenever they visit the shrine. The shop was started by the mother of the current proprietor, a skilled cook, in the front garden of her home, and to this day the noodles are cooked with painstaking care. The locals tend to favour the classic hiyashi somen cold noodles (¥950), the hot nyumen noodles, prepared with miso or soy sauce (¥850), and kaki-no-ha sushi saba,

a traditional Nara specialty of mackerel sushi wrapped in persimmon leaves (¥700 yen for 5 pieces). The garden setting of the shop makes your meal a pleasure for all five senses. On cold days, hot soup noodles will warm you up, while on hot days the cold noodles will cool you down.

ADDRESS 桜井市三輪 535 / 535 Miwa, Sakurai-shi / **PHONE** 0744-43-7411 / **OPEN** 10:00-17:00; Sundays and public holidays 9:30-17:00 (*Subject to change according to season and weather) (Closed Tuesdays and irregularly on Mondays)



山辺の道 YAMANOBE NO MICHİ

One of the most popular hiking courses in Nara is this 16 km hike between Sakurai and Tenri on the Yamanobe-no-Michi route, the oldest recorded road in Japan. The hike takes about 1 day allowing for a few stops along the way. On the walk, along the foothills on the eastern side of the relatively low mountains that surround the Nara basin, you will experience typical Japanese countryside, walking along trails between the rice paddies not wide enough for cars, see bamboo groves and moss-covered stone Buddha statues, and unmanned stands selling local produce outside farm houses. There are also a number of temples

and shrines on the way, including the Omiwa Shrine (p.53) and the Isonokami-jingu Shrine (p.56), as well as a number of burial mounds and other historical sites. No matter the season, you will be able to take in some of Japan's natural beauty at your own pace.



石上神宮 ISONOKAMI JINGU SHRINE

Isonokami-jingu Shrine, considered one of Japan's oldest Shinto shrines, is the final stop on the hike along the Yamanobe-no-Michi trail from Miwa Station to Tenri Station. The chickens with long tails feathers that wander around the shrine and seem like servants of the deities are part of the charm of this sacred green oasis. The shrine can be reached in 30 minutes on foot from Tenri Station.

ADDRESS 天理市布留町 384 / 384 Furu-cho, Tenri-shi / **PHONE** 0743-62-0900 / **WEB** isonokami.jp / **OPEN** Free access to shrine grounds / **ADMISSION** Free



カフェ わわ CAFE WAWA

This cafe, run by a fruit farming family, is located in an idyllic country landscape along the Yamanobe-no-Michi hiking route (p.55). The family opened a small, casual eatery about ten years ago to provide a resting place for hikers. Slowly, by word of mouth, it became quite popular, and four years ago, they renovated and built a mountain lodge-style cafe, complete with wood burning stove. In addition to hikers, the cafe also attracts customers who drop in while out for a drive. The menu, centred around local vegetables and fruit produced by the farm, includes a beef curry, subtly flavoured with persimmon, made using Yamato-ushi, a local

Nara brand of beef (¥1,000), pizza with farm-fresh vegetables baked in a wood-fired oven (¥900), and freshly squeezed juice of mikan (mandarin orange) made from fruit straight from the tree (¥400).

ADDRESS 天理市園原町 183 / 183 Sonoharacho, Tenri-shi / **PHONE** 0743-66-1663 / **WEB** tenri-kankounouen.com/cafe.html / **OPEN** 10:00-16:00 (Closed on Mondays)



稲田酒造 INADA SAKE BREWERY

As you stroll about halfway down the shopping arcade opposite Tenri Station, amidst the local and friendly ambience, "Inada Sake Brewery" appears in the guise of a century-old Japanese-style house. The much loved sake produced by this venerable old brewery under the brand name "Inaten" is an all-round sake with a refreshing taste that goes well with almost any meal. You can sample the sake in the store free of charge. Mitsumori Inada, the 5th generation proprietor says that he is keen to explain the sake brewing process to his overseas guests, and his guided tours of the brewery

(reservation required) are highly regarded by sake fans. As a souvenir or gift idea, check out the Narazuke (Nara pickles) made from the lees of this famous sake. The robust taste and rich fragrance of these pickles make them highly addictive.

ADDRESS 天理市三島町 379 / 379 Mishima-cho, Tenri-shi / **PHONE** 0743-62-0040 / **WEB** inaten.com / **OPEN** 9:00-18:00



オーベルジュ・ド・プレザンス桜井 L'AUBERGE DE PLAISANCE SAKURAI

This nine-room inn was launched in the autumn of 2015 in Sakurai, which is renowned for its wonderful natural environment and a history linked to the ancient gods of Japan. The inn became an instant success for its fine dining using local ingredients, and as an ideal base from which to explore the nearby Yamanobe-no-Michi trail (p.55), Asuka (p.82) and other attractions of the region. It is known for its sophisticated French cuisine prepared with unique Nara produce, such as traditional yamato-yasai vegetables and yamato-ushi beef. The inn offers special course dinners that include

sommelier-recommended wines, procured directly from wineries in France, matched to the food. Another treat here is the magnificent view from the main dining room out over the idyllic rural landscape. A twin room with breakfast and dinner is ¥51,140 per night for two people.

ADDRESS 桜井市高家 2217 / 2217 Taie, Sakurai-shi / **PHONE** 0744-49-0880 / **WEB** hiramatsohotels.com/plaisance-sakurai



GOJO

You can reach Gojo in around one and a half hours from Nara City by train. Gojo Shinmachi, a lovingly preserved townscape dating from the Edo Period (1603-1868), is a must, but there is also plenty for nature lovers to do here, like rafting on the nearby Yoshino River (p.68). Since Mt. Koya is just an hour and 15 minutes away by train, Gojo makes an ideal base for a visit to the sacred mountain. If you are staying overnight, consider staying at the beautifully renovated old machiya townhouse, Yanaseya (p.67).

Access:

From Nara: JR Nara > Uji > Gojo: 1 hour 17 minutes

From Koya: Nankai Koyasan Station > Nankai Gokurakubashi > Nankai Hashimoto > JR Hashimoto > JR Gojo Station: 1 hour 15 minutes

五條新町 GOJO SHINMACHI

In the heart of the old district of the city of Gojo is a street called "Shinmachidori." Elegant traditional old buildings line both sides of this narrow street, just wide enough for a single car to pass. The street is very precious because it is one of the very few remaining well-preserved traditional townscapes in Japan. As you stroll down Shinmachidori, admiring the buildings, you can experience the flow of history in the townscape, visible in the variety of architectural styles of the houses, ranging from traditional Japanese-style wooden buildings of the samurai period to the stately Western-style buildings of the Meiji period (1868-1912). Many of these historical structures are still in use in which has helped them to be preserved. You can experience a "genuine" taste of old urban Japan here in Shinmachi. There are also a few interesting (and free!) museums to visit such as the "Machinami Denshokan" (town heritage museum) and "Machiya-kan" (traditional townhouse museum) which are well worth a visit. There's more than enough here to keep you interested for a whole day.





五條 源兵衛 GOJO GENBEI

Locals proudly recommend this restaurant to anyone looking for an authentic taste of the refined elegance of the historical Gojo townscape. Located in a renovated 250 year-old traditional house within the historic building preservation district, the menu here offers a selection of dishes featuring local ingredients, with lunch sets from ¥2,500 and full-course dinners from ¥5,000. The menus are designed by chef Akihito Nakatani. He personally inspects the fields of the farmers that supply the restaurant so that he is assured of getting the best and freshest vegetables available. Unsurprisingly, many

gourmands are fans of Gojo Genbei's sophisticated cuisine. A sincere devotion to hospitality is one of the charms of the restaurant, reflected in its willingness to arrange special courses on the request of guests. Reservations are required.

ADDRESS 五條市本町 2-5-17 / 2-5-17 Honmachi, Gojo-shi / **PHONE** 0747-23-5566 / **WEB** genbei.info / **OPEN** Lunch: 11:00-12:30 & 12:30-14:00; Dinner: 17:00-20:30

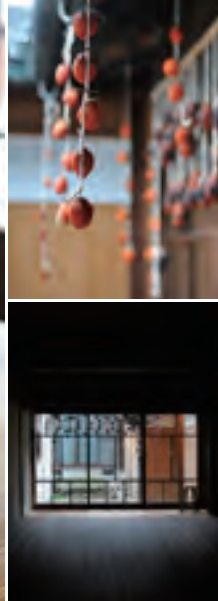


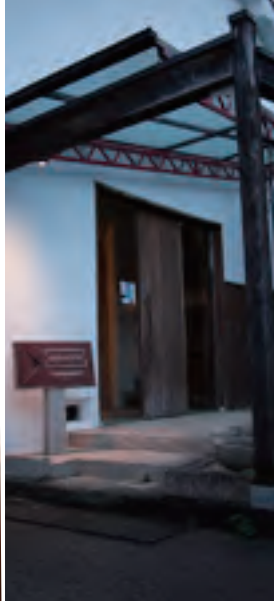
カフェ KAKIHA CAFE KAKIHA

A stop-off at Cafe KAKIHA is a must when you are strolling through Gojo Shinmachi. The cafe, set in a traditional house, specializes in sweets made with persimmon, kaki in Japanese, as the Gojo area is one of Japan's leading centres of persimmon production. The Cafe offers a wide variety of original persimmon-based sweets, featuring fastidiously selected leaves and fruits, presented with contemporary panache. The cafe is especially popular with young women for its persimmon pudding, which is so delicious that it sells out immediately, and refreshing smoothies made with

vitamin C-packed persimmon leaves, which they believe to enhance the beauty of their skin. This is a wonderful place to eat a healthy dessert and relax your travel-weary bones.

ADDRESS 五條市新町 2-5-12 / 2-5-12 Shinmachi, Gojo-shi / **PHONE** 0747-34-0518 (Nara Yoshino Ishii) / **WEB** kakiha.jp/cafe / **OPEN** 9:00 - 17:00 (Closed Mondays)





ジロッコ GIROCCO

After sunset, Gojo is very quiet, but if you feel like a drink at a quiet bar, stroll down Shinmachi street to Girocco. You can sit at the bar under the original wooden beams of this renovated interior of an old sakagura (sake brewery), or sit around a piano-shaped table. The standard and original cocktails created by host Kenji Yamada are first-class and start at ¥650. A recommended speciality is the persimmon cocktail made using fresh local Gojo persimmons. If you are hungry, try the pizza, pasta, and other snacks, featuring local ingredients as far as possible. Live music every Saturday from 20:00.

ADDRESS 五條市本町 2-2-2 / 2-2-2 Honmachi, Gojo-shi / **PHONE** 0747-23-2605 / **WEB** girocco.jp / **OPEN** 17:30-24:30 Monday to Thursday; 17:30-2:00 Friday, Saturday, and days preceding public holidays (Closed Sundays and 4th Monday of the month)



旅宿 やなせ屋 TABIYADO YANASEYA

This Japanese inn is a renovated machiya townhouse in the historic district of Gojo-Shinmachi. There are two separate buildings for guests, a hanare and kura, both of which are characteristic features of traditional Japanese house architecture. The inn only accommodates two sets of guests per day. The hanare is a sukiya tea ceremony-style building that offers views of the garden from a Japanese-style room. The bathtub of hinoki cedar exudes a lovely, invigorating scent. The kura, on the other hand, is renovated in the Western style, with a modern interior and comforts. With its three-meter ceiling, the downstairs living

room feels very spacious. Upstairs there is a bedroom for two as well as a bathroom. Dinner is not provided as standard, but guests have the option of choosing a plan with meals from Gojo Genbei (p.64), across the road. Breakfast is available served in your room, for ¥2,000 per person; you can choose Japanese o-kayu rice porridge, or a Western breakfast. Prices start at ¥20,000 per night per person (without meals).

ADDRESS 五條市本町 2丁目 7-3 / 2-7-3 Honmachi, Gojo-shi / **PHONE** 0747-25-5800 / **WEB** yanaseya.info

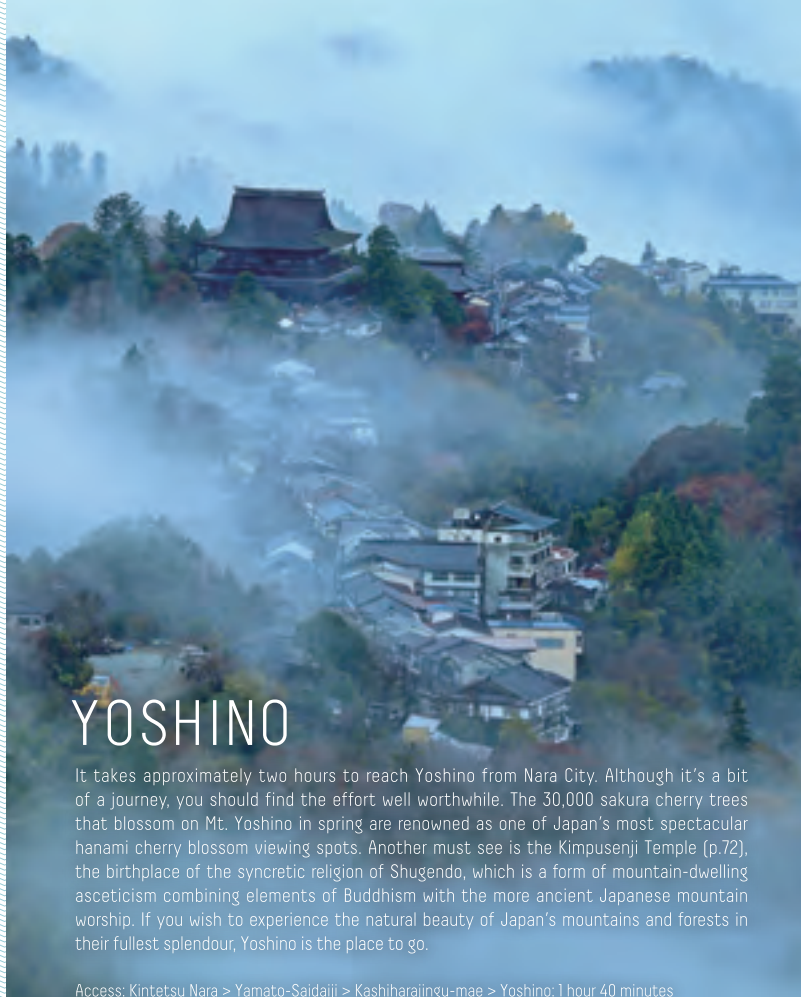
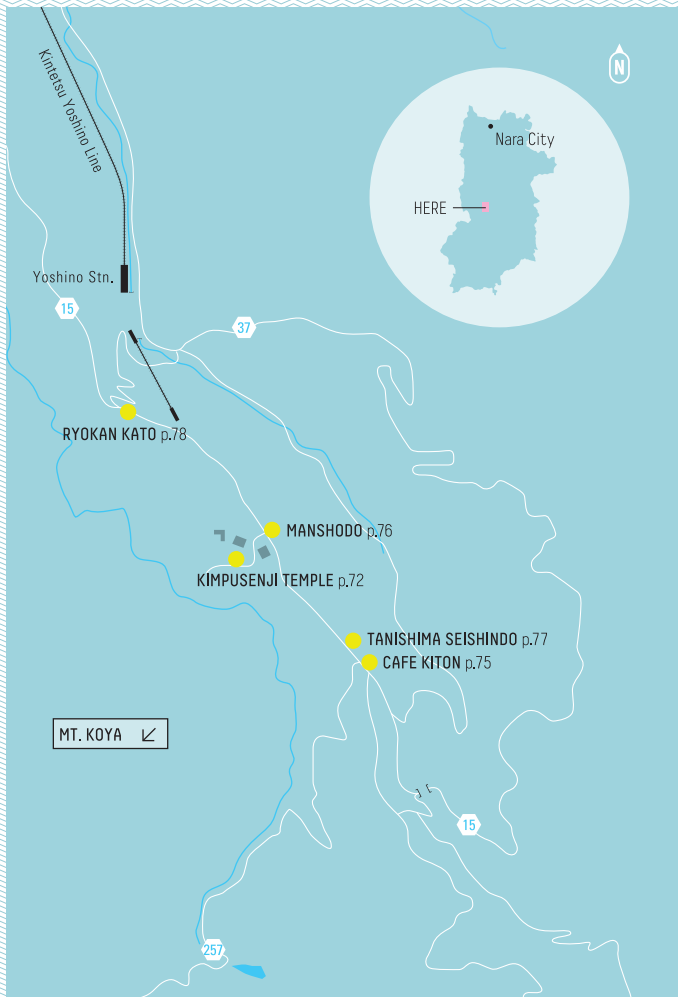


吉野川 ラフティング YOHINO RIVER RAFTING

Rafting is the ultimate way to enjoy the great outdoors, paddling down the rapids in a huge rubber boat. The gentle current of the Yoshino River makes it ideal for beginners who want a less intense introduction to rafting. A professional guide will join you, and rafters as young as the first grade of elementary school (with a guardian adult) are welcome, making this a fun activity for all the family. Midway through your tour, you'll stop at a safe and scenic spot where you can take a dip in the river. Adults will feel like kids again, and the whole family can spend a fun day at one with Nara's natural splendor. Rafters can also request a more thrilling ride down the swift rapids if you dare.

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ADDRESS 五條市小島町 533 (集合場所: モンベル五條店) / 533 Kojima-cho, Gojo-shi (Meeting place: Montbell Gojo Store) / **PHONE** 0120-936-007 or 06-6538-0208 (Montbell Outdoor Challenge) / **WHEN** Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from late April to early July and from September to October, and daily from mid-July to late August / **PRICE** from ¥9,800 (elementary school students from ¥7,800) (Member's discount available; shoe rental fee not included)



YOSHINO

It takes approximately two hours to reach Yoshino from Nara City. Although it's a bit of a journey, you should find the effort well worthwhile. The 30,000 sakura cherry trees that blossom on Mt. Yoshino in spring are renowned as one of Japan's most spectacular hanami cherry blossom viewing spots. Another must see is the Kimpusenji Temple (p.72), the birthplace of the syncretic religion of Shugendo, which is a form of mountain-dwelling asceticism combining elements of Buddhism with the more ancient Japanese mountain worship. If you wish to experience the natural beauty of Japan's mountains and forests in their fullest splendour, Yoshino is the place to go.

Access: Kintetsu Nara > Yamato-Saidaiji > Kashiharajingu-mae > Yoshino: 1 hour 40 minutes

金峯山寺

KIMPUSENJI TEMPLE

In Japan, mountains have long been venerated as being home to sacred spirits. The history of Kimpusenji Temple, on the holy grounds of Mt. Yoshino, begins in the late 7th century, as a place of ascetic practice connected with this religious belief. Over time, the temple came to flourish as a nationwide centre of this syncretic religion of Shugendo. The main hall (a National Treasure) is a huge 34-meter high structure and is the second-largest wooden building in Japan after Todaiji's Great Buddha Hall (p.11). The three Buddhist statues housed in the hall are especially worth seeing. These masterpieces feature stern-looking Buddhist divinities in vivid blue, with ferocious, golden eyes. In the old days, people wanted not only statues of gentle Buddhas, but also fierce Buddhas to dispel demonic forces, and in these figures you get a sense of the power of the old mountain religion that arose from this awesome natural environment. These Buddhist statues are not normally displayed to the public, but for a ten-year period from 2012 the temple is allowing special public viewings for about one month each year. For exact dates please see the temple's web site.

ADDRESS 吉野郡吉野町吉野山 2500 / 2500
Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun /
PHONE 0746-32-8371 / **WEB** kinpusen.or.jp / **OPEN**
8:30-16:30 / **ADMISSION** ¥500 (Special public
viewings: ¥1,000)



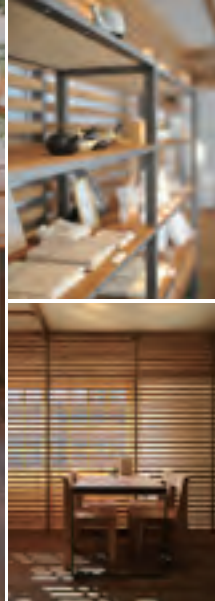


吉野山 YOSHINOYAMA

Yoshinoyama, or Mt. Yoshino, is a mountain ridge that extends for some eight kilometres north-south between the south bank of the Yoshino River and the Omine Mountains. It was registered as part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004. Whether it is the pale pink of sakura cherry blossoms in spring, summer's vivid shades of green, or the deep oranges and reds of autumn, Mount Yoshino is beautiful throughout the year. The mountain is especially famous as a hanami (cherry blossom viewing) spots, with around 30,000 sakura trees of more than 200 varieties growing here. The cable car is a great way to enjoy the amazing scenery.

It has been in operation continuously since 1928 and is Japan's oldest cable car still in active service. A one-way ride from Senbonguchi Station at the gateway to Mt. Yoshino, to Yoshinoyama Station at the entrance to the mountain takes three minutes and costs ¥360.

ADDRESS 吉野郡吉野町吉野山 / Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun / **PHONE** 0746-32-1007 (Yoshinoyama Tourism Association)



CAFE KITON

About ten minutes southeast from Kimpusenji Temple is Yoshinoyama Nakasenbon, where small gift shops and restaurants line the street. On this street you will find the trendy Cafe Kiton that opened in 2013. The owner, Yoshinori Tsujimura, launched his own "Tsujimura" brand of sweets made with kuzu (Japanese arrowroot), a local specialty of Yoshino. He renovated his family home to create this space where locals and travellers could connect. The modern space, featuring latticework of Yoshino sugi cedar on the windows, is tastefully designed and the pleasant warmth of the woodwork is very

relaxing. The menu includes kuzu sweets handmade in the café's basement kitchen. A set of kuzu sweet + Yamato hojicha roasted tea is ¥950.

ADDRESS 吉野郡吉野町吉野山 950 / 950 Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun / **PHONE** 0746-32-3032 / **WEB** tsujimura-yoshino.com / **OPEN** 9:00-18:00 (Closed Tuesdays)



萬松堂 MANSHODO

This is a long-established wagashi (Japanese-style confectionery) store, opposite the Deva gate of Kimpusenji Temple. Manshodo has been serving tea and mochi (sweets made with pounded steamed glutinous rice) to temple worshippers for close to 100 years. During the cherry blossom season, yokan sweet jelly and sakura-mochi made with cherry-blossom leaves are both popular. The most popular sweet made here though is kusa-mochi, flavoured with yomogi (mugwort), which sells for ¥130 a piece. Yomogi is renowned for its health-giving properties and is richly fragrant of fresh grass. It complements

beautifully the homemade sweet adzuki bean paste filling. The store's Japanese sweets are all made to bring out the taste of the ingredients to the full, and contain no additives. No wonder they are so popular! Seeing the master confectioner and proprietor Hideyuki Hashimoto in the store making his sweets by hand, one by one, only adds to the charm of this old confectionery store.

ADDRESS 吉野郡吉野町吉野山 448 / 448
Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun /
PHONE 0746-32-2834 / **OPEN** 8:30-17:00 (Closed irregularly)



谷嶋誠心堂 TANISHIMA SEISHINDO

Yoshino is the home of Japanese washi paper making, renowned throughout Japan for the excellence of its manufacture and quality. In the midst of the many souvenir shops and hotels that line the Naka-senbon area of Mt. Yoshino, you will find the Tanishima Seishindo paper shop which stocks a range of papers produced by local washi workshops. In recent years plain white paper has been supplemented with more modern washi designs with patterns that make them perfect for a range of paper crafts. The shop owner especially recommends sugikawa washi. It's made with the fibres of the bark of the famous Yoshino

cedar using traditional techniques which give the washi a distinctive warm colour and smooth texture. The large-sized washi, ideal for tapestries, light covers and other interior materials, is particularly popular with overseas visitors.

ADDRESS 吉野郡吉野町吉野山 944 / 944
Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun /
PHONE 0746-32-4008 / **OPEN** 9:00-17:00
(Closed irregularly)



旅館 歌藤 RYOKAN KATO

This ryokan, or Japanese-style inn, was established around 1780. In business for more than 230 years, the number of overseas guests is steadily increasing. The seventh generation young couple that currently own the ryokan, are known for their warm hospitality and service, making you feel right at home. The homely log house-style guest rooms, made by the proprietors themselves out of local Yoshino sugi cedar and hinoki cypress, are very cozy and the warmth of the wood, the fireplace, and the view of lush green vegetation from the large windows combine to relax and relieve the tension and weariness of the traveller. The inn makes an excellent base for exploring Mt. Yoshino. Prices start from ¥7,000 per person without meals, or from ¥16,000 (two persons in one room) with breakfast and dinner included. In addition to Ryokan Kato, another widely recommended ryokan in Yoshino is the Chikurinin Gunpoen, which also has a beautiful garden.

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YOSHINO



ADDRESS 吉野郡吉野町吉野山 3056 / 3056
Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun /
PHONE 0746-32-3177 / **WEB** kato-yoshino.jp

大和郡山 YAMATO KORIYAMA AREA

Ryotei Jyusouya

(Ryokan Japanese-style inn)

生駒郡三郷町信貴山西 3-27 / 3-27
Shigisan-Nishi, Sango-cho, Ikoma-gun /
T.0745-32-2231 / jyusouya.jp / From
¥32,400 per person per night with two
meals

Hakomotokan Konya

(Indigo dyeing experience)

大和郡山市紺屋町 19-1 / 19-1 Konyamachi, Yamatokoriyama-shi / T.0743-58-5531 / hakomoto.com / OPEN 9:00-17:00 [Closed Mondays] [Open if Monday is public holiday and closed the day after] / ADMISSION ¥300

Omiyage-dokoro Kochikuya & Goldfish Scooping

(Gift / Souvenir shop)

大和郡山市紺屋町 23-1 / 23-1 Konyamachi, Yamatokoriyama-shi / T.0743-55-7770 / kotikuya.sakura.ne.jp / OPEN 8:30-18:30

K COFFEE

Excellent home-roasted drip coffee, featuring a telephone booth goldfish tank!

大和郡山市柳 4-46 / 4-46 Yanagi, Yamatokoriyama-shi / T.090-6986-3255 / kcoffee.jp / OPEN 10:00-17:00 [Closed Thursdays]

Access

Kintetsu Nara Stn. >
Yamato-Saidaiji Stn. >
Kintetsu Koriyama Stn.:
16 minutes



Yamatokoriyama, reachable in just 16 minutes or so from Kintetsu Nara Station, is Japan's biggest centre of goldfish production. A visit to the site of the ruins of Koriyama Castle, selected amongst the 100 most beautiful places in Japan for viewing sakura cherry blossoms, is highly recommended in spring. Some points of interest around Kintetsu Koriyama Station are listed below. These can all be enjoyed in about half a day at a leisurely pace on foot.

Koriyama Castle Ruins

大和郡山市城内町 / Jonai-cho, Yamatokoriyama-shi / T.0743-52-2010 / yk-kankou.jp [Yamatokoriyama City Tourist Association] / Free access



Photo: K Coffee



慈光院

JIKO-IN TEMPLE

This temple is also known as the cha-no-yudera, the "tea ceremony temple," because the tea master Sekishu Katagiri designed the whole temple — the approach, the gate, and the garden — as if it were one huge tea room for holding tea ceremonies. The tea house built by the master in one corner of the temple and the other buildings are wonderful examples of Japanese architecture, and are not to be missed. Perhaps a bit unusually for a Zen temple the carefully tended gardens are planted with lots of shrubs, not just gravel and large standing stones. As you walk around the garden, you will be able to imbibe the 300-

year old spirit of the tea ceremony. Matcha green powdered tea is available in the large main room of the temple, to complete the experience.

ADDRESS 大和郡山市小泉町 865 / 865 Koizumi-cho, Yamatokoriyama-shi / **PHONE** 0743-53-3004 / **WEB** www1.kcn.ne.jp/~jikoin / **OPEN** 9:00-17:00 / **ADMISSION** ¥1,000 (including matcha tea)

明日香 ASUKA AREA

Ishibutai Kofun

(Ancient tomb made with massive stones)
高市郡明日香村島庄 / Shimasho,
Asuka-mura, Takaichi-gun / T.0744-
54-4577 (Asuka Village Tourism
Association) / asukadeasobo.jp/
kankou/ishibutai / OPEN 8:30-17:00 /
ADMISSION ¥250

Asuka no Yumeichi

(Store selling local vegetables and
other food products)
高市郡明日香村島庄 154-3 / 154-
3 Shimasho, Asuka-mura, Takaichi-
gun / T.0744-54-9450 / [asukadeasobo.
jp/shop/yumeichi](http://asukadeasobo.jp/shop/yumeichi) / OPEN 10:00-16:00
(until 17:00 on Saturdays, Sundays and
public holidays)

Café Kotodama

高市郡明日香村岡 1223 / 1223 Oka,
Asuka-mura, Takaichi-gun / T.0744-
54-4010 / cafe-kotodama.com / OPEN
10:00-17:00 (until 18:00 Saturdays,
Sundays and public holidays) (Closed
Tuesdays and every third Wednesday)

Asuka Guest House

高市郡明日香村飛鳥 659 / 659 Asuka,
Asuka-mura, Takaichi-gun / T.0744-54-
5659 / asukaguesthouse.com / From
¥2,800 per night (dormitory)

Access

Kintetsu Nara Stn. >
Yamato-Saidaiji Stn. >
Kashiharajingu-mae Stn. >
Asuka Stn. : 1 hour 3 minutes



Asuka can be reached in one hour
from Kintetsu Nara Station. The
best option for getting around and
exploring the area when you get here
is to rent a bicycle near the station.
Asuka is known as the birthplace of
Japan, because before Nara was made
the capital the heart of Japan was
located right here. So there are many
interesting things to see. After cycling
to see and savour the sights you can
stay overnight at a local inn or if you
only have time for a day trip you can
easily head back to Nara.



Photo: Asuka Village



飛鳥寺

ASUKADERA TEMPLE

This was Japan's first fully-fledged Buddhist
temple. Its principal Buddhist statue,
commonly known as the Asuka Daibutsu,
is a seated Shakyamuni Tathagata (the
historical Buddha). Created using 15 tons of
copper and 30 kilos of gold, it is the oldest
Buddha statue in Japan. The face of the
three-meter high image is said to have a
stern expression when viewed from the right
and a gentle expression when viewed from
the left, and the oval-shaped face, almond-
shaped eyes and other features suggest the
influence of continental Chinese culture.
It is possible to view the statue up very
close and photos are allowed. Don't miss

the chance to visit this daibutsu (Great
Buddha), which has been enshrined here for
the past 1,400 years, watching protectively
over the territory of Asuka.

ADDRESS 高市郡明日香村大字飛鳥 682 / 682
Asuka, Asuka-mura, Takaichi-gun / **PHONE** 0744-
54-2126 / **OPEN** 9:00-17:15 (April-September),
9:00-16:45 (October-March) / **ADMISSION** ¥350

葛城

KATSURAGI AREA

Katsuragi Sumo Museum, "Kehaya-za"

葛城市當麻 83-1 / 83-1 Taima, Katsuragi-shi / T.0745-48-4611 / city.katsuragi.nara.jp/index.cfm/14,0,41.html / OPEN 10:00-17:00 (Closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays but open if a public holiday) / ADMISSION ¥300

Chujodo

(Wagashi, Japanese-style sweets)
葛城市當麻 55-1 / 55-1 Taima, Katsuragi-shi / T.0745-48-3211 / chujodo.com / OPEN 9:00-18:00 (Closed July, mid August to August 31 & December 31 to early January)

Kamameshi "Tamaya"

(Restaurant renowned for kamameshi, traditional pot-cooked rice dishes)
葛城市當麻 1242 / 1242 Taima, Katsuragi-shi / T.0745-48-5470 / taima-tamaya.com / OPEN 11:00-17:00 (Closed Mondays and Tuesdays but open if a public holiday)

Access

Kintetsu Nara Stn. >
Yamato-Saidaiji Stn. >
Kashiharajingu-mae Stn. >
Taimadera Stn.: One hour



Katsuragi can be reached in a little over an hour by train from Kintetsu Nara Station, but you can also get there in about an hour from Osaka. Katsuragi is considered to be the home of sumo, and has one of the few museums dedicated to sumo wrestling where you can try entering a full size sumo ring and much more.



Photo: Taimadera Temple



當麻寺

TAIMADERA TEMPLE

The 7th century Taimadera temple is one of many in this large temple complex. There are many places to see, including the Mandala Hall (main temple), which is a National Treasure, and the two pagodas — the toto, East Pagoda, and the saito, West Pagoda. Another must-see is the chisen-kaiyu-style garden (Japanese-style garden with a path around a central pond and spring) in Sainain Temple. Also known as hana-no-tera, meaning "temple of flowers", the garden is resplendent with colour throughout the four seasons: topped by the rhododendrons and peonies in the spring, and the maple leaves in the autumn. The West Pagoda reflected in

the water is beautiful like a painting. In one corner of the garden there is a suikinkutsu, an underground water koto harp. Water drips from the stone basin and as it drains away it falls into a large pottery container buried in the earth. When the water drops hit the base of the container, they create enchanting, dreamlike sounds like the plucking of a Japanese koto harp. For an extra ¥400 you can also enjoy a matcha powdered green tea in the drawing room as you gaze out over the garden.

ADDRESS 葛城市當麻1263 / 1263 Taima, Katsuragi-shi / PHONE 0745-48-2202 / WEB taimadera-sainain.or.jp / OPEN 9:00 - 17:00 / ADMISSION ¥300

宇陀

UDA AREA

Uda-Matsuyama District

(A town with around 200 preserved traditional buildings)

宇陀市大字陀拾生 / Oudahiro, Uda-shi / T.0745-87-2274 (Matsuyama District Town Planning Centre) / aknv.city.uda.nara.jp/matuyama/index.htm

Meika Kimigoromo-honpo Shogetsudo

(Wagashi, Japanese-style sweets)

宇陀市大字陀上 1988 / 1988

Oudakami, Uda-shi / T.0745-83-0114 / OPEN 8:00-18:00 (Closed Wednesdays)

Rice-terrace villa Sasayuri-ann

(Inn with views of a quasi-national park)

宇陀市室生深野 656 / 656

Murofukano, Uda-shi / T.0745-88-9402 / stayjapan.jp / From ¥18,000 per person per night with breakfast (twin share)

Ichinyoan

(Soba Noodles)

宇陀市榛原自明 1362 /

1362 Haibarajimyo, Uda-shi / T. 0745-

82-0053 / 11:00-14:30 & 17:00-20:00

Reservations needed, (Closed on Mondays and Tuesdays)

Access

Kintetsu Nara Stn. >
Yamato-Saidaiji Stn. >
Yamato-Yagi Stn. >
Haibara Stn.:
One hour



A little over an hour by train from Kintetsu Nara Station. Uda developed as one of Nara's main production centres of okigusuri (home-delivered medicines provided on a "pay after you use" basis) herbal medicines and basic drugs. If possible, it is best to rent a car to be able to enjoy driving around this area. There are charming accommodation options available in the area, so why not take it nice and slowly and stay for at least one night?



Photo: Muro-ji Temple



室生寺

MURO-JI TEMPLE

This beautiful old temple is hidden away in the Muro River valley, near Nara's border with Mie Prefecture. Muro-ji is highly recommended for lovers of Buddhist statues, because of its treasure trove of wooden Buddhist sculptures from the early Heian period (794-1185). Other noteworthy attractions are the stairway built from layered natural stones, a small (approximately 16 meters high) but elegant five-storied pagoda, which is a National Treasure. It is known for the poetry of its scenery that varies dramatically through the four seasons: cherry blossoms and rhododendrons in spring, coloured leaves in

autumn, and snow in winter. To reach the inner miedomae image hall, you need to climb some 400 stone steps through a forest of massive sugi cedar trees, but the silence at the top of the mountain is well worth it. Muro-ji Temple has always been a popular place of pilgrimage for women, who have always been welcomed at Muro-ji Temple, unlike the temples of Mt. Koya, which once prohibited them. For this reason, it is also known as the "Mt. Koya for Women".

ADDRESS 宇陀市室生 78 / 78 Muro, Uda-shi / **PHONE** 0745-93-2003 / **WEB** murouji.or.jp / **OPEN** 8:30-17:00 (April-November); 9:00-16:00 (December-March) / **ADMISSION** ¥600

天川 TENKAWA AREA

Dorogawa Onsen Hot Spring Resort

(An onsen village with an old-world ambience)
吉野郡天川村洞川温泉 / Dorogawa-Onsen, Tenkawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T. 0747-64-0333 (Dorogawa Spa Tourism Bureau) / www.dorogawaonsen.jp

Hanaya Tokubei (Inn)

吉野郡天川村洞川温泉 217 / 217
Dorogawa-Onsen, Tenkawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T. 0747-64-0878 / tokubei.jp / From ¥13,600 per person per night with two meals

Kadojin (Inn)

吉野郡天川村洞川 240 / 240 Dorogawa, Tenkawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T. 0747-64-0336 / kadojin.com / From ¥14,600 per person per night with two meals

Koryokuen Nishisei (Inn)

吉野郡天川村洞川 257 / 257 Dorogawa, Tenkawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T. 0747-64-0306 / kohryokuen.com / From ¥16,200 per person per night with two meals

Goro Goro Water

(Famed mineral water gushing from caverns)
天川村洞川 686-139 / 686-139
Dorogawa, Tenkawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T.0747-64-0188 (Goro Goro Chaya) /
OPEN 9:00-18:00 (July 20-August 31 from 8:00) / ADMISSION (including car parking): ¥500

Access

Kintetsu Nara Stn. >
Yamato-Saidaiji Stn. >
Kashiharajingu-mae Stn. >
Shimoichiguchi Stn.
(One hour 15 minutes) >
Nara-Kotsu Bus (for Dorogawa Onsen)
Get off at "Dorogawa Onsen"
(70 minutes)



Tenkawa in the Yoshino region, once a flourishing centre of Shugendo, a form of mountain asceticism, is now known for its onsen hot springs. When you get there, try the famous Goro Goro Water spring water; soft and refreshing. There are also plenty of great trails for mountain hiking. After seeing the Mitarai Valley what could be better than a relaxing soak at Dorogawa Onsen or spending the night at one of the many inns? Tenkawa is about two and a half hours by train and bus from Nara City.



Photo: Dorogawa Onsen



みたらい溪谷 MITARAI VALLEY

For nature lovers, a trekking trip off the beaten track to the Mitarai Valley near the village of Tenkawa is highly recommended. The route is a well-prepared trail of approximately 7 km along a clear running stream. Against a background of primordial forest teeming with wildlife, you can enjoy superb views from suspension bridges, waterfalls, the murmuring sound of water flowing around huge rocks, and birdsong aplenty. Each season offers its own particular charms — the fresh green colours of spring and the invigorating sight of the water's edge in summer — but the scenic beauty of coloured leaves in autumn is said

to stop many hikers in their tracks. Finally, if you make it to the excellent hot baths at Dorogawa Onsen (p.88), which is accessible via the trail, all the fatigue of your walking will instantly melt away.

ADDRESS 天川村北角 / Kitozumi, Tenkawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / PHONE 0747-63-0999 (Tenkawa Village Office of Tourism)

十津川 TOTSUKAWA AREA

Tanize Suspension Bridge

(One of Japan's most outstanding suspension bridges, floating 54 meters over the surface of the Totsukawa River)

吉野郡十津川村谷瀬 / Tanize,

Totsukawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T. 0746-63-0200 (Totsukawa-mura Tourism Association) / totsukawa.info

Totsukawa Onsen Hot Spring Resort

(Onsen hot springs in a remote part of the Kii Mountains)

吉野郡十津川村 / Totsukawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T.0746-63-0200 (Totsukawa-mura Tourism Association) / totsukawa.info

Hotel Subaru (Inn)

吉野郡十津川村平谷 909-4 / 909-4 Hiranani, Totsukawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T. 0746-64-1111 / hotel-subaru.jp / From ¥15,000 per person per night with two meals (twin share)

Sansui (Inn)

吉野郡十津川村平谷 946-1 / 946-1 Hiranani, Totsukawa-mura, Yoshino-gun / T. 0746-64-0402 / onsen-sansui.com / From ¥12,000 per person per night with two meals (twin share)

Access (From Nara City)

Kintetsu Nara Stn. >
Yamato-Saidaiji Stn. >
Yamato-Yagi Stn. >
Nara-Kotsu Bus
(Tokkyu Express) for Shingu Station and get off after Totsukawa Onsen.

Access (From Mt. Koya)

Nara-Kotsu Bus (Tokkyu Express) from Kumano Hongu bus stop for Yagi after 56 minutes at Totsukawa Onsen.

Totsukawa, close to the border with Wakayama Prefecture, is a mountainous region renowned for its beautiful unspoiled natural beauty. It is great for hiking and onsen hot springs. It boasts Japan's longest regular bus route (166.9 km). Since this part of the prefecture is so far from Nara City, it is perhaps best explored by car. Consider spending the night at one of the inns in the Totsukawa Onsen village.

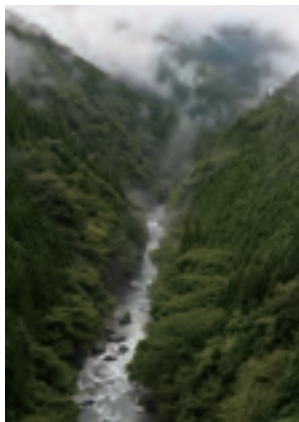


Photo: Totsukawa Village



熊野参詣道小辺路

KUMANO SANKEIMICHI KOHECHI

The World Heritage site Kumano Kodo is made up of a number of sacred sites and pilgrimage routes in the Kii Mountain Range. The Kohechi pilgrimage route from Mt. Koya to the Kumano Hongu Taisha Shrine is about 70 km long and passes through the mountain village of Totsukawa in Nara Prefecture. The route across the Hatanashi Pass, at an altitude of over 1,000 m, is a challenging one, but as you walk it you will become immersed in a different world as you look out over the mist-enveloped mountains and are comforted by the sight of beautiful stone Buddha images. Along the trail you will also pass through the small

village of Hatanashi where life seems to go on much as it did in days long gone. It takes around three nights and four days to hike this pilgrimage route, so time and some planning are needed, but it is sure to be worth the effort for the special memories that will remain with you forever.

INQUIRIES Totsukawa Village Office of Tourism T. 0746-62-0004

Good to Know

Here is some basic information to help you make the most of your visit to Nara.

Nara Visitor Center & Inn

This tourist information centre set up by Nara Prefecture in 2015 next to the Sarusawa Pond, close to Kofukuji Temple, should be your first stop when you visit Nara. Very welcoming staff who can speak English and Chinese, are on hand at all times to assist you with your travel plans in Nara, or any other parts of Japan. The Nara Visitor Center & Inn is not merely a tourist information centre; it also offers you the opportunity to directly experience the culture of Nara and Japan through various events. Soon it will also provide accommodation for tourists (as of March 2016). For all the latest information please visit the web site. Available services: Tourist Information / Nara and Japanese Culture Experience / Free Wi-Fi / Free PC Use / Free Resting Space / Currency Exchange (only foreign currency to yen) / Luggage Storage / Rent-a-cycle / ATM with Foreign Bank Card Support / Tourist Brochures / Convenience Store
ADDRESS 奈良市池之町 3 /3 Ikeno-cho, Nara-shi / TEL 0472-81-7461
WEB sarusawa.nara.jp / OPEN 8:00-21:00
* For other Tourist Information points, please see the Nara City Guide Map.

ATM & Currency Exchange

Although the number of shops accepting credit cards has increased in recent years, there are still many shops that only accept cash. The ATMs in 7-Eleven convenience stores and post offices are

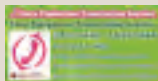
handy for withdrawing cash. Most of the major banks provide currency exchange.

Wi-Fi

While many hotels, cafes, and other businesses also offer free Wi-Fi, a free Wi-Fi service is available all the way along the main walking routes between JR Nara Station and Kintetsu Nara Station and Nara Park, as well as at all Tourist Information points and major tourist spots in Nara Prefecture. To access the Wi-Fi service, just launch a web browser and enter the requested user ID information. The Wi-Fi network name is "Nara_Free_Wi-Fi."

Multilingual Call Center

A free telephone translation service is available at all facilities displaying the sticker shown below. The service is available 24 hours a day for English, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Portuguese, and between 12:00-18:00 for French. So if you need translation to overcome serious communication difficulties, just inform a staff member that you would like to use the service.



Getting Around

One of the charms of Nara City is that it is compact and features a large number of

tourist spots within easy walking distance of each other. However, if you find walking difficult or prefer not to walk, Nara City's rent-a-cycle service and the City Bus service are convenient alternatives. If you wish to use the City Bus service, it is advisable to buy a Nara Bus Pass from Nara-Kotsu Bus Lines. There are three types of pass, valid for different periods of time and areas. Each pass also comes with a special map that entitles you to various discounts and other privileges. The Nara Kotsu web site (narakotsu.co.jp) provides information about the different passes and explains how to catch the bus, so make sure to check it out before arriving in Nara. Bicycles can be rented from the Nara City Rent-a-cycle service at the Nara Visitor Center & Inn, outside railways stations, and at selected hotels, inns, and guest houses. You can inquire about the most convenient rental location at the Nara Visitor Center & Inn or at any other Tourist Information point.

Public Transport

There are two railway companies in Nara prefecture, JR and Kintetsu. Both offer a variety of passes with different validity periods and area coverage. It is advisable to check on what's available before coming to Nara. West Japan Railway Company: westjr.co.jp/global; Kintetsu Corporation: kintetsu.co.jp It's important to note that some areas are serviced only by Kintetsu and some only by JR. Note

also that on some routes there may be trains without a conductor on-board or unmanned stations. It may take some courage to board certain trains, but then again you are sure to have experiences unlike any you could have in the big cities.

Don't Forget Your Passport

The listed seven facilities offer free admission to overseas tourists on presentation of their passport, so don't forget to carry your passport with you at all times: Heijokyo History Museum / Nara Prefectural Museum of Art / Nara Prefectural Museum of Folklore / Nara Prefecture Complex of Manyo Culture / The Museum, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture / Yoshiki-en Garden / Katsuragi Sumo Museum

Do Not's

- Please refrain from smoking except in designated smoking areas.
- Taking photos or video is prohibited at some shrines and temples. Please always check this beforehand.
- Please refrain from speaking loudly at shrines and temples.
- Please note that eating or drinking is prohibited in some areas within shrines and temples.
- Please avoid touching old buildings and artefacts.

Nara Deer

Within Nara many deer can be seen wandering around the paths and areas of the park. In light of the fact that the “Deer of Nara” have been designated a Natural Monument, all visitors to Nara are asked to observe the following rules:

- Please do not hit, chase, or play with the deer in any way.

94 • To avoid harming the health of the deer, do not feed them with anything other than the deer crackers sold at kiosks within Nara Park.

- Although the “Deer of Nara” are accustomed to the presence of people, they are very much wild animals. At times deer may become aggressive, so always be cautious with them. (Take particular care with young children.)

* Female deer may be particularly irritable around May and June if they are giving birth, while male deer tend to be most sensitive during the mating season between July and November, so please do not approach deer during these periods.

* Please avoid touching fawns (young deer), otherwise the mother may become aggressive.

* If you buy deer crackers please feed them to the deer immediately. If you tease a deer with food it may become aggressive. Once the crackers are finished, hold out your hand at the level of the deer’s eyes to indicate that you have nothing more to give.

- The paper tape used to bundle the deer crackers is made of 100% pulp and printed with soy ink, so it is not harmful to the deer. For this reason, it can be fed to the deer together with the crackers.

- There has never been a single recorded case of rabies or other infectious disease resulting from a bite or scratch from a deer. In fact, there has not been a single case of rabies in Japan for more than 50 years.

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