

# THE EXCITING KANSAI

The KANSAI contains the real undiscovered Japan.



The 5 Senses  
Experiences

# THE EXCITING KANSAI



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**KANSAI Tourism Bureau**  
*The Exciting Journey, KANSAI*

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The KANSAI contains the real undiscovered Japan.

## THE EXCITING KANSAI

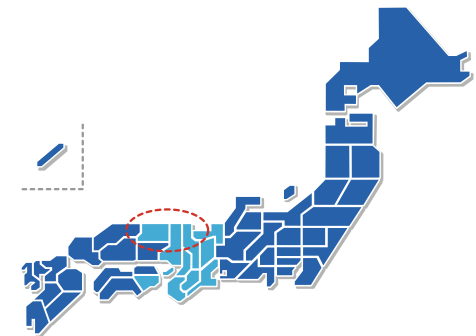




The pine forest of the Amanohashidate Sandbar ("bridge to heaven") that stretches across Miyazu Bay.

# SANIN KAIGAN 山陰海岸

The diverse and beautiful coastal landscapes that make up this area were formed over millions of years as Japan separated from the Asian continent. A unique and somewhat isolated culture developed over time due to that continental drift. Along this coast, you can enjoy delicacies of the sea that can only be found in this area.





## Beauty and Grace Along the Coast of Sanin

Seen across seas, mountains, dunes,  
and forests.



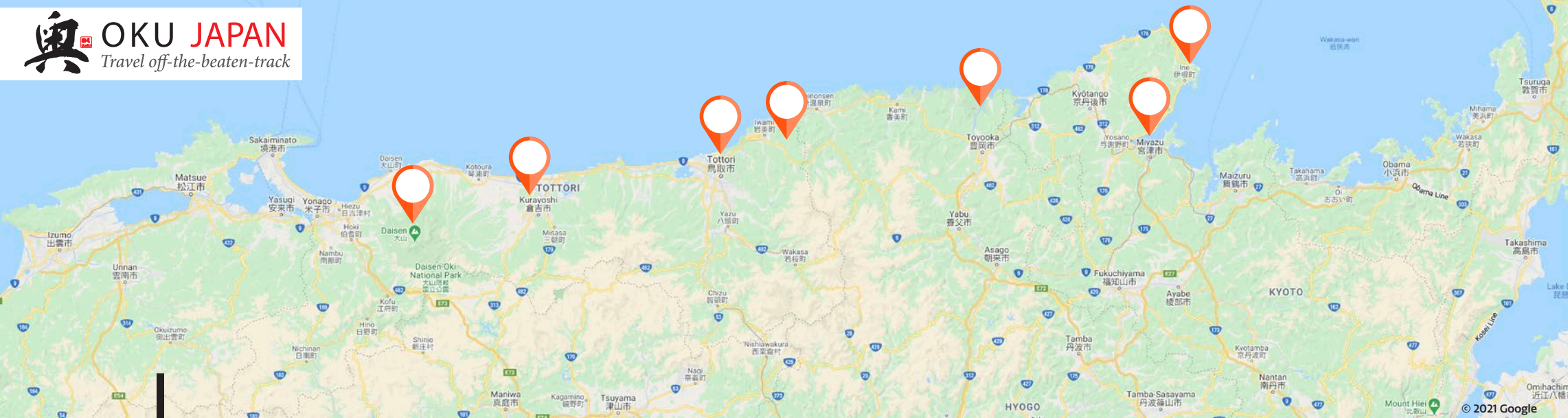
The coast of Sanin stretches along the shores of the Japanese Sea, borders the prefectures of Shimane and Tottori, and reaches as far North as Kyoto. Sanin, the "North face of the mountains," refers to the Chugoku Mountains.

Along the Sea of Japan in the Hyogo Prefecture, Kinosaki Onsen has been blessed in abundance for 1,300 years. There is a charming spa with 7 hot springs on a river lined by willows.

Further east, around the Kyoto Prefecture, lies the fishing village of Ine. Ine is well known for its funaya, a local architectural feature between fishermen's houses and boathouses. The bottom floor opens to the water and is just a storage area. The top floors are the living quarters. Another coastal beauty is the pine forest of the Amanohashidate Sandbar that stretches across Miyazu Bay for about 3 km. Amanohashidate translates to "bridge

to heaven." This forest is part of the Tango-Amanohashidate-eyama Quasi-National Park and connects two mountain ranges. Amanohashidate is considered as one of the most picturesque sights in the country and officially is one of the Three Views of Japan.

In terms of craftsmanship, Tano, in the Kyoto region, has been producing Tango Chirimen, also known as silk crepe, since the Edo period. This flat-woven silk fabric makes up almost 60% of the fabric for kimonos.



## Northern Kyoto and the Sanin Coast: 7 Days Road Trip

Along the Sanin Coast you will see unspoiled natural landscapes from stunning sea to mountain views.

**Spend 7 days driving from central Kyoto or Osaka to Tottori to take the exceptional beauty of the Kyoto Tango Peninsula and the Sanin Kaigan coast line.**

Visit the scenic Amanohashidate Sandbar, Oeyama Mountain Range and the remote Tango Peninsula. Be sure to make stops along the way to visit some of the many unique and historical villages, including the secluded fishing port of Inecho, and the top rated spas in Kinosaki Onsen and Hawaii Onsen at Lake Togo. While sampling local cuisine, learn about each regions' culture. Walk along picturesque forest and coastal paths. Other stops must include visits to ancient temples, the vast sand dunes in the Tottori Prefecture, and Mount Mitoku. Take a truly remarkable hike with panoramic views overlooking the Sea of Japan to the ancient Ogamiyama Shrine on Mount Daisen in Daisen-Oki National Park. A side note about this hiking area is that it has been considered a sacred center of Ascetic Shugendo Training for centuries.

Situated along the Sea of Japan, the Sanin Coastal region stretches from the Tango Peninsula in the Northern Kyoto Prefecture west to the Hyogo and Tottori Prefectures. Today, the old capital of Kyoto city is known for its

rich culinary traditions. However, the culinary treats of the Sanin coastal region are not to be missed. The area has been blessed with rich land and clean waters for centuries making it an ideal place to enjoy fresh seafood and seasonal ingredients.

The vast Sanin Kaigan UNESCO Geopark also offers a variety of stunning ocean and mountain views with gentle coastal walks. The region's numerous geo thermal hot springs means you can experience both luxury from the hot springs and rustic charm from the lodging options.

Such a road trip allows multiple opportunities to explore the villages on foot or by bicycle. This trip is ideal for couples and families.

As an alternative to the morning walk at Mt. Oe on Day 2, it is also possible to join a unique culinary experience with a local expert to learn about the world of Japanese miso cultivation and its distinct health benefits as a fermented superfood.

# Slow Travel SANIN

## BEST OF SANIN

6 NIGHT/7 DAYS/ Self-Drive

### DAY 1 - Explore Amanohashidate

Miyazu boasts excellent views over Wakasa Bay and the Sea of Japan. Walk or cycle leisurely along the pine tree-covered Amanohashidate sandbar, considered one of the three most scenic spots in Japan. Ride the cable car to the top of Kasamatsu Park for spectacular coastal and mountain views. Then visit the nearby Nariai-ji Temple, a scenic spiritual spot that is one of the historic temples numbered among the ancient 'Saigoku Kannon' Pilgrimage route of West Japan.

### DAY 3 - Ine Bay cycling, Tango Peninsula & Kinokuni spa

Explore the village on an electrical bike leisurely cycling 6km around the interior of Ine Bay lined with over 230 Funaya wooden boat houses. The area is also known to be one of Japan's most beautiful villages. After Ine, head further North to enjoy a scenic route and local culture along the Tango Peninsula, including Cape Kyoga. Visit Sodeshi Village where over 400 rice terraces stretch out between the steep mountainside and the ocean.

### DAY 5 - Uradome Coast, Tottori Sand Dunes & Sanbutsuji

Travel to the picturesque Uradome Coast with stunning views of natural sea walls, caves, and jagged rocks that protrude from the emerald colored waters. The pine trees atop the rocks here have become naturally stunted over time. This gives the coastline the appearance of a natural bonsai tree garden. Here, you can enjoy 3km of scenic walks overlooking the coves below along one of the best sections of the Geopark trail.

### DAY 7 - Return to Tottori City

Visit the historic town of Kurayoshi before ending your tour in Tottori City. Kurayoshi retains old-world charm through numerous well-preserved merchant quarters with distinct white-walled storehouses that are reminiscent of past generations.

### DAY 2 - Mt. Oe walking, the Chirimen Kaido

Mt. Oe (Oeyama) is a sub-alpine mountain range spanning across Tango Amanohashidate Oeyama National Park. It is an ideal place for nature walking. Learn about some of the many local legends about Oni (Japanese ogre) as the mountain area here is believed to be their home. You'll also visit the nearby town of Oe, home to three ancient shrines, known as 'Moto-Ise Sansha' (three former Shrines of Ise), and considered to be previous locations of the renowned Ise Grand Shrine now located in the Mie Prefecture.

### DAY 4 - Sanin Kaigan Geopark Trail walking

Visit the nearby Onsenji Temple and hilltop lookout for breathtaking views of the mountains and Kinokuni Bay. The main hall of the temple dates back to 738 and can be accessed by a short 20-minute nature walk up the mountain or via a convenient ropeway. A longer 2-hour hike to the top of Mount Daishi overlooking Kinokuni Onsen is also possible. Later in the morning, travel further up along the coast of the Hyogo Prefecture to explore the Sanin Kaigan UNESCO Global Geopark and two optional coastal foot-paths.

### DAY 6 - Mt. Daisen hike & Kurayoshi town

Visit nearby Daisen-oki National Park with its world-class hiking trails through pristine nature and sacred Mount Daisen at its center. You have the option to explore two different easy nature hikes through an ancient beech forest. Each hike is around 3 to 6 hours. Here, visit the historic Daisenji Temple, which is said to have been founded in 718. Then you'll arrive at the secluded Ogamiyama Shrine with some of Japan's best sandalwood painted murals and sculptures. If you choose the longer path, it extends up to the top of Mt. Daisen. The forest walk features some of Tottori's most pristine nature and fantastic views out over the Sea of Japan. The gentle slopes of Mt. Daisen are reminiscent of Mt. Fuji. Its name "Daisen" means "Great Mountain" in Japanese. For over 1,300 years the area has also been long revered as a place of significance in the world of mountain asceticism. Take time to explore the pristine nature, culture, and views around Mt. Daisen. Exploration of the area can easily fill an entire day.

## Highlights

- Experience the scenic and diverse geographic regions of the Mt. Oe range, Tango Peninsula, Sanin Kaigan UNESCO Global Geopark, Sand Dunes of Tottori and Mount Daisen in Daisen-oki National Park.
- Treat yourself to a variety of high-quality traditional onsen hot spring lodgings offering a premium experience in northern Kyoto, Kinokuni Onsen, and Tottori.
- Experience leisurely cycling on an e-bike around the scenic bay of Ine while taking in the coastal village atmosphere.
- Sample some of Japan's freshest seafood and delicious seasonal cuisine of the Sanin region.
- Visit Mt. Oe with a local walking guide, and stroll along the picturesque Amanohashidate Sandbar known as "the bridge to heaven".
- Enjoy various walking trails along scenic sections of the coastal Sanin Global Geopark and through natural beech tree forests on Mount Daisen at Daisen-oki National Park.



Self Guided Tour by

**奥 OKU JAPAN**  
Travel off-the-beaten-track



## Ine Village

The beautiful boathouses of Ine are a unique sight where the seaside wooden boathouses appear to be floating. The area maintains an overall traditional Japanese fishing town atmosphere.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*This picturesque village is considered one of the most beautiful in Japan. Hear the silence that cradles the fishermen's houses, which are called Funaya. This silence is gently disturbed by the slapping of emerald waters over the stilts. In the essence of slow tourism, you can take the time to move around on foot or by bike to better experience the tranquility of the place. The Michi-no-Eki Funaya no Sato Ine allows you to admire a panorama view over the bay of Ine.*



## Kyotango and the Tango Chirimen

Tango, in the northern part of the Kyoto Prefecture, has long been a home of textiles. The area's silk fabric known as Tango Chirimen has a 300-year history. It's characterized by the presence of fine irregularities called "shibo" on the surface of the fabric.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*The Kyotango region is one of the largest silk fabric producing regions in Japan. It produces Tango Chirimen or silk crepe, a textile used in luxury kimonos. One can appreciate this delicate woven silk fabric with its undulations and roughness that give it its suppleness and depth. Kyotango is also known for its top quality rice. You can taste it in local dishes and find its scent in the sake.*

## Kinosaki Onsen

Located along the Sea of Japan, the Kinosaki Spa is a historic hot spring that has been in use for over 1,300 years. It is one of Japan's most famous Onsen hot springs towns where you can enjoy traditional indoor baths or communal outdoor baths.



## Kaigan Geopark

The World Heritage listed San'in Kaigan Geopark allows you to experience 25 to 70-million year-old geology and topography. See Cape Kyoga with its spectacular 140-meter-high cliffs topped with a white lighthouse and the many oddly-shaped folding screen-like rocks of Tango Matsushima.





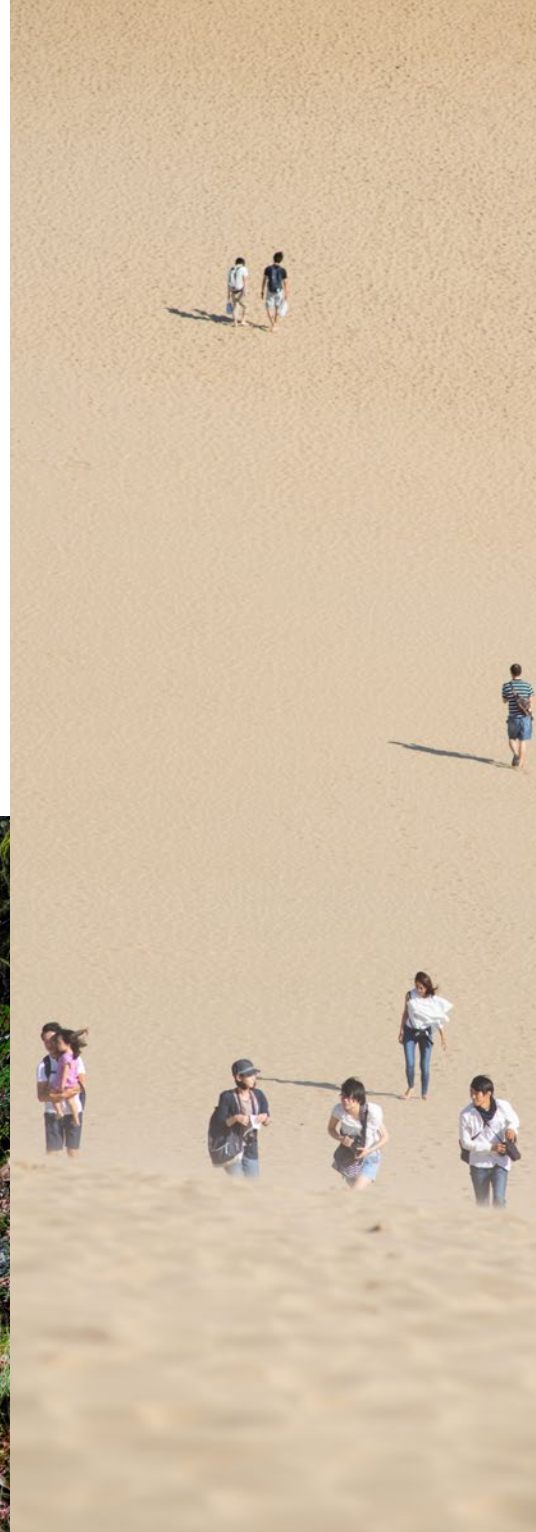
# From the Mountain to the sea, Climbing is the Key!

Sanin Coast is a paradise for nature and hiking lovers. Offering an incredible variety of landscapes

The back country of the Sanin Coast is a region of Verdant Mountains. There you'll see hidden valleys and ancient towns from the Edo period. In the heart of this fabulous hiking area, Moto Ise Naigu Kotai Shrine is one of the most sacred sites.

The Moto Ise Kono Jinja shrine is called Moto Ise, or "Former Ise" because of the legend that the dieties Amaterasu and Toyouke, now enshrined in the Ise Jingu, originally dwelt here. It became Tango Province's first shrine in the Nara period over 1,200 years ago, and remains the regions 'most sacred shrine. The myriad of shrines of Moto Ise Naigu Kotai Shrine are scattered in the heart of the forest, along trails. This mystical setting of shrines scattered along the mountainside has fueled the imagination of many artists.

On the Sanin Coast, the North coast of Chugoku, the Tottori region is famous for the production of Japanese pears (nashi), which look like Granny Smith apples. When the time for autumn comes, the inhabitants of Tottori admire its colors and go looking for pears in the fields and farms.



The Sanin Coast is truly revealed on the sea side. The coast of the Tottori region is a land of moors and dunes.

Known as the Tottori Desert, the majestic Tottori Sand Dunes along the Sea of Japan are one of the largest sand dune ranges in Japan. The reflective, wind rippled sand and azure blue skies contrast with the Sea of Japan. Red evening sunsets lead to mysterious starry nights in this spectacular region.

Arguably one of the most amazing natural formations in the region, these high dunes are made up of sediments from the Chugoku Mountains. They formed clusters of sand, carried over the years by the waves of the Sendai River to the Sea of Japan. Their moving shapes were sculpted by winds and sea currents. Since then, they have not stopped forming. These sand mountains are now nearly 50 meters high, a height fluctuating with the winds. They stretch nearly 2 km wide and 16 km in length and are an integral part of the Sanin Kaigan National GeoPark.

This desert of dunes can be discovered with your feet in the sand. The top of the Tottori Dunes offers a 360-degree panoramic view of the Sea of Japan. A cable car takes you to the top of the dunes.

The play of light and shade redraws this Sahara of the seas as the footsteps sink into the sand. Shrouded in mystery, these hills of sand have fueled the imagination of writers, most notably, Abe Kobo in *La Femme des Sables* (1962). Many Manga authors have also been influenced by this area. More recently, they have also inspired artists who have made sand sculptures in an annual competition. Some of these work can be seen in the Sand Museum of Tottori.

# Amanohashidate “The Bridge to Heaven”

Coastal beauty and grace

In the Northern districts of Kyoto is the stunning sight of the Amanohashidate Sandbar. Seen from the Hiryu-kan on the hills above, it resembles a dragon soaring into the sky. From Kasamatsu Park on the opposite side, it appears as a diagonal line. Its name, Amanohashidate, means “the Bridge to Heaven”.

This natural sandbank spans the bay of Miyazu and stretches on 3.6 km. On a white sand mat, it is covered with a pine forest of nearly 8,000 pines. Amanohashidate is what a tombolo, a barrier formed by the accumulation of sand or sediment, connecting two stretches of land.

Amanohashidate can be discovered along the road that meanders through the pines by foot or bike. The charm of this natural site is also

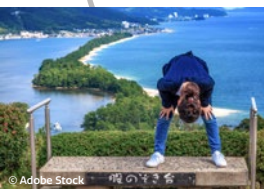
seen along the coast in the small paradise of white sandy beaches. You can also reach this place from the sea side around Miyazu Bay.

The most beautiful observatories of the place are in the heights of the mountains on either side of the natural bridge. A cable car takes you up to the observation point at Amanohashidate View Land. On the other side, from Kasamatsu Park, it has been customary to practice Matanozoki for more than a thousand years. Turning your back to the bay, you can lean down to observe the sandbar between your legs. While the water looks like a blue sky, Amanohashidate seems to float in the sky.



Amanohashidate view  
from Nariaiji Temple

# Amanohashidate



## 1 - Amanohashidate Viewland

This amazing panorama on Amanohashidate, "the bridge in the sky", is one of the most scenic views in Japan. About 3 km long, this pine tree covered sandbar crosses the bay.



## 5 - Nariai-ji Temple

The Nariai-ji Temple, one of the 33 temples of the Kansai Kannon pilgrimage, belongs to the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism. It is located on the slopes of the mountain and offers beautiful views of the bay.



## 2 - Kaisen Bridge

This rotating bridge turns 90 degrees to let the vessels pass through the waterway. It connects Amanohashidate to the land. Built in 1923, it has been operated with electricity since 1960.



## 3 - Forest Trail

Along the length of Amanohashidate, this forest hiking trail takes you on white sands through a pine forest. According to legend, this natural land bridge may have been created by a deity as a path to heaven.



## 4 - Tango Kairiku Kotsu Cable

This cable car line is a route from the shores of the bay to Amanohashidate Kasamatsu Park. It's 130 meters above sea level. ¥680 for a round trip ticket.



Himeji Castle and Sea Road

# HARIMA

## 播磨

**Himeji Castle was developed as a transportation hub with a road map to Kyoto, a sea route, and a port. There is still a conflicting state still lingers around the Samurai culture in the area around Himeji Castle. The medieval warring states' culture started with tara iron manufacturing in ancient times and flourished before the Azuchi period.**

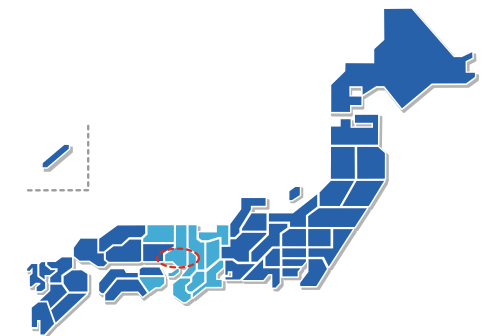
Southwest of the Hyogo Prefecture, the former Harima Province stretches along the seaside of the same name. It forms part of the Seto Inland Sea between Honshu and Shikoku. At the crossroads of trade routes, the region prospered during the Heian era and clans of feudal lords settled there.

Built on a rocky peak, Himeji Castle is the pearl of the Harima Coast. This masterpiece of military architecture is one of the twelve feudal castles of Japan still standing. It's also the most important wooden structure in the country. It is on the list of national treasures and is registered with Unesco. Its silhouette, both majestic and elegant, have earned it the nickname "Castle of the White Heron."

This fabulous dive into the culture of Samurai warriors continues in the factories of Katana, Japanese swords, which are still forged using traditional skills. From Himeji, we gain height at Mount Shos-ha. The Shoshazan Engyo-ji Temple, a thousand-year-old Buddhist complex, is

part of the Kansai Kannon pilgrimage. Hidden in the heart of the forest, it calls for meditation and asceticism.

For those seeking luxury and pleasure, go along the coast from Osaka to Kobe passing through the district of Nada, which is a hot-spot for sake.





## Himeji Castle

Originally built in 1333, Himeji Castle, a National Treasure in the Hyogo Prefecture, was reconstructed in 1609 becoming a masterpiece of castle construction technology. Nicknamed “Shirasagi-jo” or “White Heron Castle” for its graceful white walled appearance is compared to a white heron spreading its wings. Himeji Castle was recognized as Japan’s first World Cultural Heritage Site in 1993.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*All in power and delicacy, the castle plays with straight lines and curves. It has the dramatic force of a movie set. The white walls are pierced with loopholes. They enclose gardens carpeted with lawn with geometric lines while the main look is kept elegantly with curved roofs. You can climb the floors of the donjon to imagine, for a moment, that you are a Samurai. From the top, we gaze at the surrounding wall of the castle and the city.*



## Engyoji

Founded in 966, the mountain top Shoshazan Engyo-ji Temple is, along with the Enryaku-ji and Daisen-ji, one of Japan’s three famous Tendai sect Buddhist temples. Here you can experience traditional health training, one-day asceticism, Zazen meditation, Sutra writing, and other spiritual activities in a majestic temple complex surrounded by rich nature and many other nationally designated historical sites.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*On the edge of Himeji, this Buddhist temple is perched in the forests of Mount Shosha. It is part of the Kansai Kannon pilgrimage, a set of 33 temples across Kansai. In a mystical atmosphere, we listen to the breath of the mountain wind caressing the branches. Along the paths, the forests open up to pavilions. Climbing on stilts, we walk without shoes on their terraces where we can feel the softness of the wood. Several historical films have been shot in these places where time seems to have stood still.*

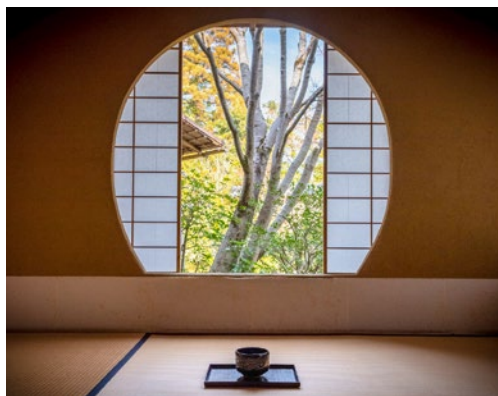
### Soju-an Tea-room

Koko-en Garden (Admission fees ¥300, children ¥150) is a Japanese-style garden built on land where once Samurai homes were located on the west side of Himeji Castle. For ¥500, you can enjoy a seasonal Japanese sweet and matcha in a traditional tea ceremony at Soju-an Tea House in Koko-en Garden.

Open everyday 10:00-16:00

Address: 670-0012 Hyogo, Himeji, Honmachi 68

URL: [www.himeji-machishin.jp/pyokka/koko-en/soujuyan/](http://www.himeji-machishin.jp/pyokka/koko-en/soujuyan/)



### Zen Experience

The Zen Tendai School is characterized by an esoteric teaching and by a relatively strict practice of asceticism. This Buddhist temple gives special importance to the Lotus Sutra. Zen meditation is practiced in the lotus position. Enjoy a Zen meditation experience in this magical place (advance booking required).

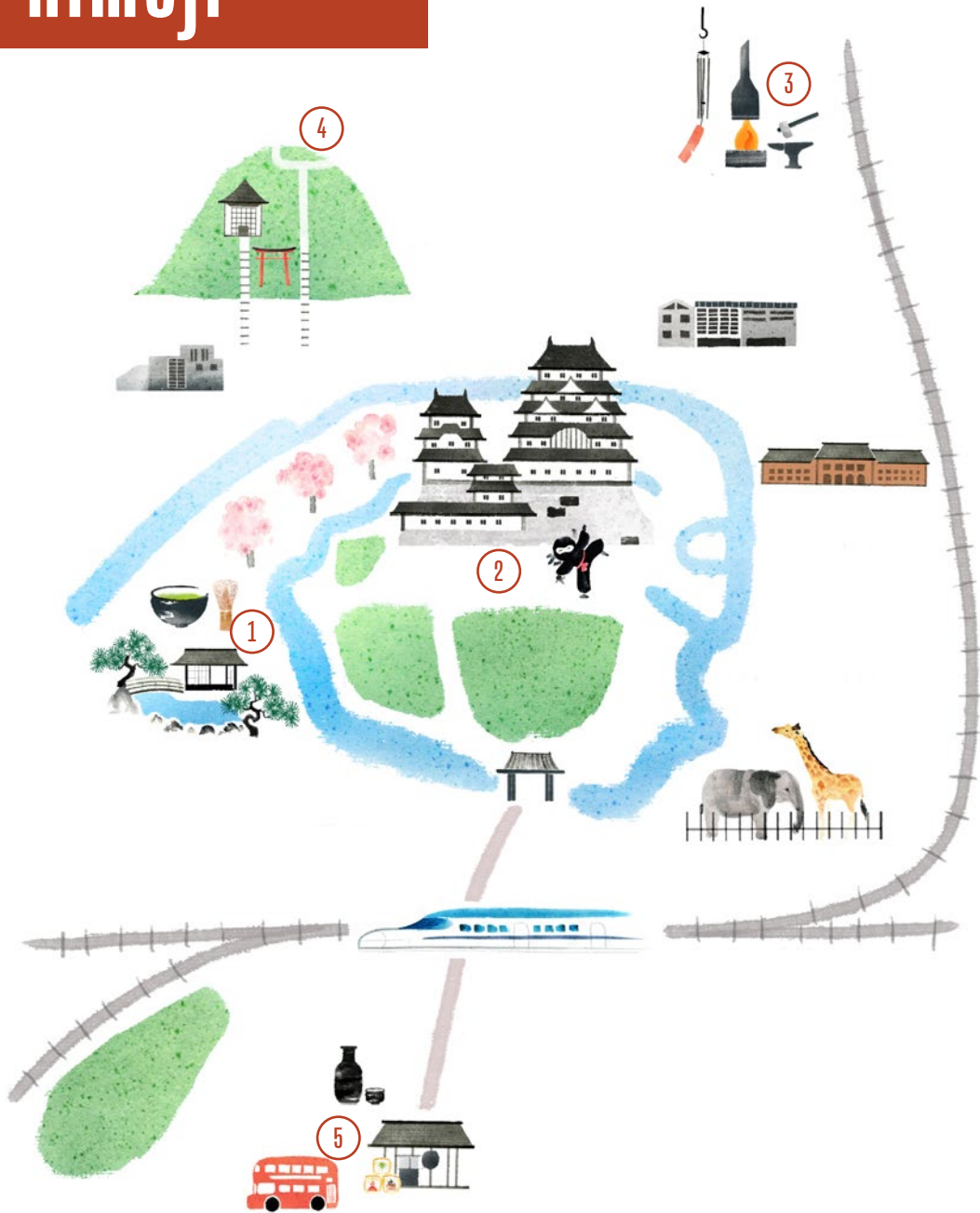
Open everyday 8:30-17:00

Address: 671-2201 Hyogo, Himeji, Shosha 2968

URL: [www.shosha.or.jp](http://www.shosha.or.jp)



# Himeji



## 5 - Nadagiku Sake Brewery

The rice grown in the Harima Plain is renowned for producing some of the best sakes in Japan. The brewery shop sells 4 kinds of sake. There's also a gastronomic culture around sake in the restaurants.



## 3 - Myochin Hibashi Forges

Hibashi, which resemble chopsticks but are used to handle hot coals of charcoal, were necessary everyday tool in Japan. Today, beautiful hibashi hand-forged by the Myochin family are used in wind chimes with this mysterious and healing sound. The iron forging technique, originally used by the Myochin family to make Japanese armor, is still a closely-guarded family secret.



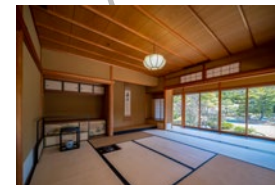
## 2 - Himeji Castle

Himeji Castle is one of the 12 castles considered original construction in Japan. A combination of military architecture and majestic beauty, it's a national treasure in Japan known as the White Heron Castle.



## 1 - Soju-an : Garden's Tea House

This typical tea house is built in a Sukiya-zukuri style. It is a peaceful place to experience a traditional tea ceremony in a flower arrangement setting. Matcha tea is served with seasonal sweets.



## 4 - Otokoyama Haisuiike Park

This park is situated at the top of Mt. Otokoyama. After having climbed a staircase of about 200 stairs, the park allows to admire a view of Himeji Castle. Shrines are scattered throughout the park, too.



## Kikyo Hayamitsu Katana factory

Observe the skills of an authentic Samurai sword smith, certified by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, at the Kikyo Hayamitsu Japanese Sword Factory in Rakan-no Sato. Visitors here can experience making a small Samurai knife. After shaping, it is heated to 800°C and then quenched and polished. This is a unique experience utilizing authentic Japanese sword-making techniques. You can even take your handmade Samurai knife home as checked baggage.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*In the manufacturing workshop, visitors try with their hand at making knives and daggers. In the light of the flames and sparks, the progress of the heating of the metal is measured by its coloring. The knives are then supplied in elegant leather cases.*



## Arima Onsen, foothills of Kobe

Since ancient times, Arima Onsen has been recognized as a famous hot spring resort. It's even mentioned in the ancient book, Nihon Shoki, The Chronicles of Japan, as having been discovered by the Gods Oonamuchi-no Mikoto and Sukunahiko-no Mikoto. There are always clouds of steam rising above the town emanating from the six natural sources of hot spring water.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*In the foothills of Kobe, this mountain village has become one of the oldest spa resorts in Japan. This complex includes several onsens (hot springs). You can relax in healing mineral springs rich in iron, carbonate and radium. There are also foot pools set up outdoors called ashiyu. Along the steep streets, wooden houses from the Edo period open onto ryokan where you will experience the Japanese art of living.*

## Kumotsuki/Rikan Castle Ruins

The ruins of Rikan Castle, also known as Kumotsuki Castle, is a national historic site. On certain days between late September and early December before 8:00am, when the conditions are right, the castle's former tower's stone base appears to float in a sea of clouds. The best view points to see the castle in the sea of clouds is from the Shukuba-machi Hirafuku Roadside Station observatory or the Nishi-Harima Observatory Park.

*This mountainside castle was built in 1349 on Mount Rikan (373 m). This uniquely abandoned fortress is nicknamed Kumotsuki-jo, "the castle that pierces the clouds." At the early risers, while the morning mist still caresses the faces, we can admire these ruins as they pierce the clouds and the mist offering a panorama of the green hills.*

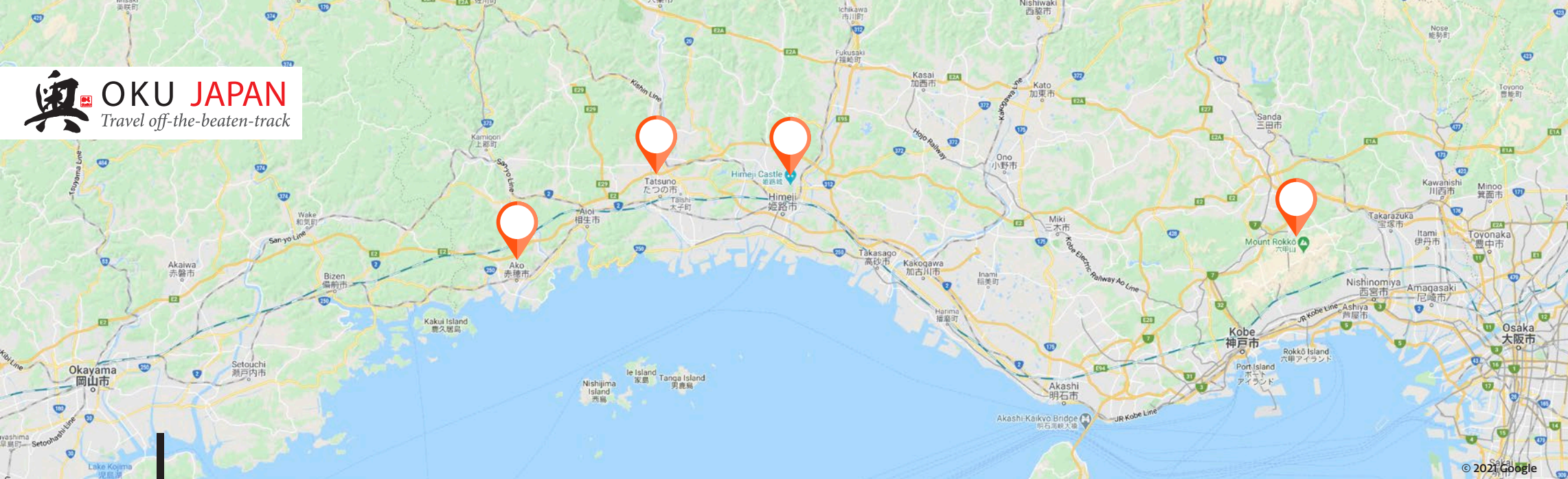


## Nada Gogo, center of Kobe

The Nada Gogo area, in center of Kobe, is one of Japan's largest producers and sellers of sake. It's home to sake brands such as Hakutsuru, Ozeki, Nihonsakari, Kikumasa-mune, Kenbishi, Sawanotsuru, Hakushika, and Hakutaka. The area's locally grown Yamada Nishiki rice and the mineral rich waters from the Rokko mountain range support the production of high quality sake.

*The quality of Nada sake is possible thanks to 3 elements: water, rice and technique. The "miyamizu" water is a hard water with low iron content. The "Yamada Nishiki" rice is ideal for the distillation of sake, and it blends perfectly with "mi-yamizu." Nada brewers are known for their cutting-edge brewing techniques.*





# Harima & Himeji: Self-Guided Walking Experience 4 Days

This region cultivates the historical heritage of the Samurai and its traditional skills. Enter the universe of Japanese culture and aesthetics.

Experience Japan's rich Samurai heritage in a region which continues to preserve its grand history. This can be seen from the architecture, delicious cuisine and excellent onsen hot springs in nature. This premium four-day tour takes in exemplary Japanese inns and provides exclusive access to one of Japan's traditional master swordsmiths. This allows a deeper in-sight into Japanese aesthetic and culture. Located inland from the Pacific coast of the Hyogo Prefecture lies the majestic World Heritage site of Himeji Castle. This is an essential location for many visitors and an excellent starting point to explore the wider adjoining Harima region. Further inland, there are excellent Onsen hot springs, mountainside castle ruins and ancient temples that have been the stages for many key events in Japan's history. Up until Japan's feudal period, the south-western side of Hyogo was known as Harima province (Harima no kuni), with Himeji as its capital. In the later years of the tumultuous 16th century, the lands across Japan were in chaos and civil war where powerful Samurai Daimyo fought for supremacy over the country. This was an age which gave rise to Japan's three great unifiers - Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. This

was also the era of the roaming Samurai, Japan's premier swordsman Miyamoto Musashi who wandered the lands of Harima on lengthy "musha shugyo" (warrior pilgrimages) to further improve their fighting skills. Later during the Edo period (1603-1868), the coastal Domain of Ako came under Harima province and was home to the now famous 47 Ronin of Ako, which is known for their great Samurai valor (bushido). This is also one of Japan's best-known Samurai stories. Further to the east lies the mountain-top temple complex of Engyoji temple with over 1,000 years of history and a treasure trove of authentic traditional Japanese architecture and design. Further east, between Himeji and Kobe, lies Mount Rokko and Arima Onsen - one of Japan's three ancient hot spring towns - nestled in a peaceful valley surrounded by red pine tree covered mountains and numerous hot springs - and once used by traveling monks, aristocrats and feudal Samurai. From this historic period to the present day, the area between Harima and Kobe also went on to play a significant role in domestic and overseas transportation and trade. It also further developed as an attractive area while incorporating a diversity of cultures into the region.



# Discover HARIMA & HIMEJI

## BEST OF HARIMA & HIMEJI

### 3 NIGHT/4 DAYS/ Self-Guided Walking

#### DAY 1 - Tatsuno & Ako Castle Towns

From Kyoto or Osaka, the train journey follows the coast along the Inland Sea to the preserved castle town of Tatsuno, which located at the foot of Mount Keiro along the Ibo River. Situated 15km from Himeji, Tatsuno thrived historically due its proximity to the Ibo River with convenient transportation access. In Tatsuno, explore the preserved castle town setting among old Samurai homes and temples. The famous Samurai swordsman Miyamoto Musashi trained at Enkiji Temple here in Tatsuno, where he also taught his disciples. The local historical museum also houses a wonderful collection of authentic period Samurai arms and armor once owned by the local Samurai Daimyo. In the afternoon, make your way by local train to the coastal town of Ako to learn about the famed 47 Ronin of Ako. Be sure to visit the key locations linked with their epic story, including Kagakuji Temple, Doishi Shrine and museum, and Ako Castle ruins.

#### DAY 3 - Hike to Engyoji Temple & Travel to Arima Onsen

Travel to a nearby rewarding nature hike along the ancient 33-sacred temple Saikoku Kannon pilgrimage route up to Engyoji Temple on Mt. Shosha. Engyoji Temple dates back to 966 and is Temple No. 27 along this pilgrimage route in the Saigoku region, which extends further into the Kansai area. The pilgrimage route is said to date from the 11th Century. However, many of the temples were pilgrimages in their own right beforehand and some even date back as far as the 7th Century. The route is known as a "miracle pilgrimage" with each temple being associated with a miracle related to Kannon (Bodhisattva of Compassion / Goddess of Mercy). Upon entering the temple grounds, you'll pass 33 Kannon statues - each representing one of the Kannon enshrined at each of the 33 temples along the Saikoku Pilgrimage route. Walking the historic temple grounds of Engyoji among ancient forests and an abundance of traditional architectural structures is also a highlight in itself.

#### DAY 2 - Aioi-shi and Himeji

From the foot of Mt. Kanjo in rural Harima, you can follow a short scenic nature hike up to the mountaintop and Kanjosan Castle ruins at 301 meters altitude. The trail is well marked with excellent valley views along the way. Some popular views include the ancient remains of stone walls with the building and layout that remain relatively distinguishable from medieval mountain castles (Yamajiro) in the Harima region. Kanjosan Castle was once a stronghold during the Kamakura period (1192-1333) of the Akamatsu Samurai clan who once controlled this region. After the hike, stop in at a local sword smith at the foot of the mountain to see first-hand how master craftsmen produce fine-quality Japanese katana swords. In the afternoon, visit the impressive fortress of Himeji Castle and Edo period-style Kokoen Japanese gardens. Himeji Castle is Japan's best preserved castle. It's known as the "White Heron Castle" because its three smaller towers resemble a white heron.

#### DAY 4 - Hike Mt. Rokko, Kobe & head onward

Begin hiking from Arima Onsen with a scenic 3 to 4 hour valley hike (optional) through red pine tree forests and waterfalls up to the top of Mt. Rokko with a breathtaking panorama of the Seto Inland Sea, Kobe, and Osaka in the distance. From there, ride the cable car down to Kobe and explore this compact cosmopolitan port city with a unique history and distinct architecture. Take time to visit the engaging Takenaka Carpentry Tools Museum housed in a beautiful gallery, which showcases the fascinating world of traditional Japanese carpentry and design. The museum displays more than 32,000 items related to traditional architecture and wooden construction unique to Japan, including tools, models, documents, and scale building components. It also enables visitors to gain hands-on knowledge of past building materials and methods, which are featured at historic temples such as Engyoji and the country's numerous hand-built wooden temples, traditional residences, and tearooms. In the afternoon, travel onward to end your tour in Osaka or Kyoto.

### Highlights

- Hike to the spiritual Engyoji Temple on sacred Mount Shosha, a hidden treasure trove of traditional architecture in a peaceful mountain setting.
- Stay in three premium Japanese accommodations featuring unique architectural designs and delicious regional cuisine.
- Follow in the footsteps of renowned Samurais, such as Miyamoto Musashi and the 47 Ronin in the castle towns of Tatsuno and Ako.
- See impressive traditional architectural structures at Himeji Castle and gain deeper insight on craftsmanship and design at the Takenaka Carpentry Tools Museum.
- Meet a master traditional Japanese swordsmith in the countryside of Harima with optional hiking to scenic mountaintop castle ruins nearby.
- Hike up Mount Rokko and see breathtaking views out over of the Inland Sea.



Self Guided Tour by

**奥 OKU JAPAN**  
Travel off-the-beaten-track



Hachiman-Bori canal

Living with a Spring.

03



# BIWAKO HOKURIKU 琵琶湖 ~ 北陸

**The abundant water resources formed a water town and created a unique local culture and landscape. The mountains also became an object of worship and a base for Shugen (mountain asceticism). The water here is used to produce sake and nurture a culture of fermented food. Omi is the "Land of Castles" with more than 1,300 castle ruins.**

Lake Biwa (Biwa-ko), the largest lake in Japan, is a popular vacation spot. Its surface area is 674 km<sup>2</sup> with a depth of nearly 100 meters. At the southwestern end, Otsu is the lake's largest coastal town and the starting point for cruises.

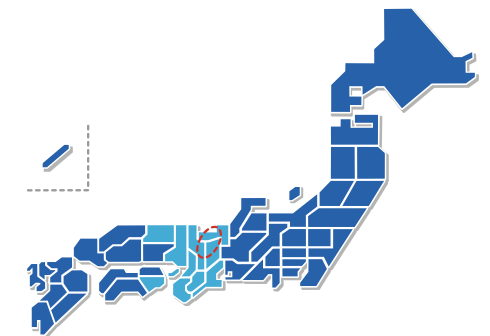
The town of Omi Hachiman is considered the little "Green Venice" of Lake Biwa. This ancient feudal city of merchants was established at the foothills of Mount Hachiman in the 15th century. Like Lake Biwa, the main canal of Omi Hachiman was indeed used for the transport of goods. In the shadow of the castle, Omi Hachiman has retained the charm of its traditional wooden architecture. Between the canals, the districts are full of temples and shrines.

The region of Lake Biwa is also a great land of pilgrimages. Buddhist culture spread there as early as the 8th century shortly after its arrival in Japan. Many temples and shrines were erected on the slopes of the mountains surrounding Lake Biwa. At the gates of Fukui, the

Buddhist monastery of Eiheiji invites you to a Zen meditation. Dotted with hot springs, the region even lends itself to shugen-do, a form of asceticism in communion with nature.

Exploring the shores of Lake Biwa and plunging into the mountains covered with lush vegetation goes back to the roots of Japanese Buddhism. The region also teaches a whole piece of Japanese history through remains from the Jomon period and ruins of castles.

This land of water is finally a blessed land for distilling sake.





## Lake Biwa

Lake Biwa is Japan's largest lake. Since ancient times it has maintained a cultural landscape in which water and human activities are in harmony. Many historic temples and shrines have been built around the lake. The villages and islands in and around the lake have nurtured their own unique food culture and fishing methods. The lakeside mountain top Biwako Valley, around 1,100 meters above sea level, offers a spectacular view of Lake Biwa.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*The Lake Biwa region is a very popular major vacation spot. A large part of the lake shore is highlighted by a pedestrian and bicycle path. We still indulge in the sweetness of moments spent on the lake beaches. On the clear sand and on the edge of pine forests, you can relax to the rhythm of the crashing of the water. The shores of the lake are dotted with shrines and Buddhist temples of the Tendai school. It's all ideal for bike rides. Finally, on the gastronomic side, the region feasts on salmon, carp, and local fish from Lake Biwa.*



## Omi Hachiman Canal

The canal lined township of Omi Hachiman developed economically when Toyotomi Hideyoshi built Hachimanyama Castle. Cargo ships from Lake Biwa were brought into the castle's inner moats leading to the formation of the Omi merchants.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*The charming Omi Hachiman is crossed by the Hachiman-Bori canal. Linking the city to Lake Biwa, it stretches for nearly 5 km. On the banks, we admire the cherry blossoms and soak up their scents. In the fall, we embrace the colors of the foliage. In all seasons, you can feel the breath of water. In March, during the Sagicho fire festival, 13 impressive floats pass through the city.*

## Cruise on the Lake

Scenic cruises can be enjoyed around Lake Biwa. The lake features four islands, Takeshima, Chikubushima, Okishima, and Oki-no-Shiraishi. Three of which can be accessed by boat. From October to March each year, Yurikamome seagulls can be observed from sight-seeing boats on Lake Biwa.

Departing from Otsu (Setagawa River & Lake Biwa River Cruises, Michigan Cruise), Hikone (Takeshima Cruise), or Takashima (Chikubushima Cruise). Costs: ¥2,000 to ¥3,000.



## Takashima City

On the western shore of Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture's Takashima City, Harie area, subterranean water called Shouzu, or "raw water" from the Hira Mountains gushes from the ground. The water is used for drinking, cooking, washing, and other daily needs. These water gushes are called "kabata".





## Attractions

### EIHEIJI

The Eihei-ji is a large Zen Monastery and one of the two head temples of Soto Zen Buddhism in Japan. It was founded in 1244 by Zen master Dogen, who introduced the Soto Zen Buddhism from China to Japan and became a great master of Japanese Zen Buddhism. This monastery consists of more than 70 buildings. From garden to garden, the temples are linked to each other by paths covered with lush vegetation. The foliage protects walkers from the snowfall that hits the region from December to March. From late October to early November, we see the koyo, the fall colors, in all their splendor. The monks have been practicing Soto Zen there for centuries.

The Eihei-ji's Hakujuken lodging house offers authentic Zen experiences. An approved Zen concierge will guide you through various Zen experiences including morning Buddhist services and Dharma talk at Eihei-ji.

address : 910-1228 Fukui, Yoshida-gun, Eihei-ji, Shihi, 5-15  
¥500 per person



### ENRYAKU-JI

Enryaku-ji is the head temple of the Tendai Buddhist school. It was founded over 1,200 years ago by Dengyo Daishi Saicho on Mt. Hiei, the most sacred mountain in Japanese Buddhism. The temple encompasses the whole of Mt. Hiei and offers panoramic views of Kyoto to the west and Lake Biwa to the east. The temple complex covers the Todo and Saito, Yokawa areas and was registered as a World Heritage Site in 1994. It's a place of study and training while many here pray for world peace and tranquility. You can reach here going up by foot or cable car. The temples are connected by paths that cross the undergrowth lining the slopes of Mount Hiei. This Buddhist complex is known to be a great center of learning and provides training in Zazen meditation. Nature shows off the charms of the seasons. Mount Hiei harbors a whole ecosystem. Monkeys, wild boars, and tanuki frolic in the forests. From spring to summer, cherry trees "Sakura" in full bloom and green leaves of maple trees "Ao-momiji" are magnificent.

address 520-0116 Shiga, Otsu, Sakamotohnmachi 4220  
¥1000 per person, plus ¥500 for access to the tresor building

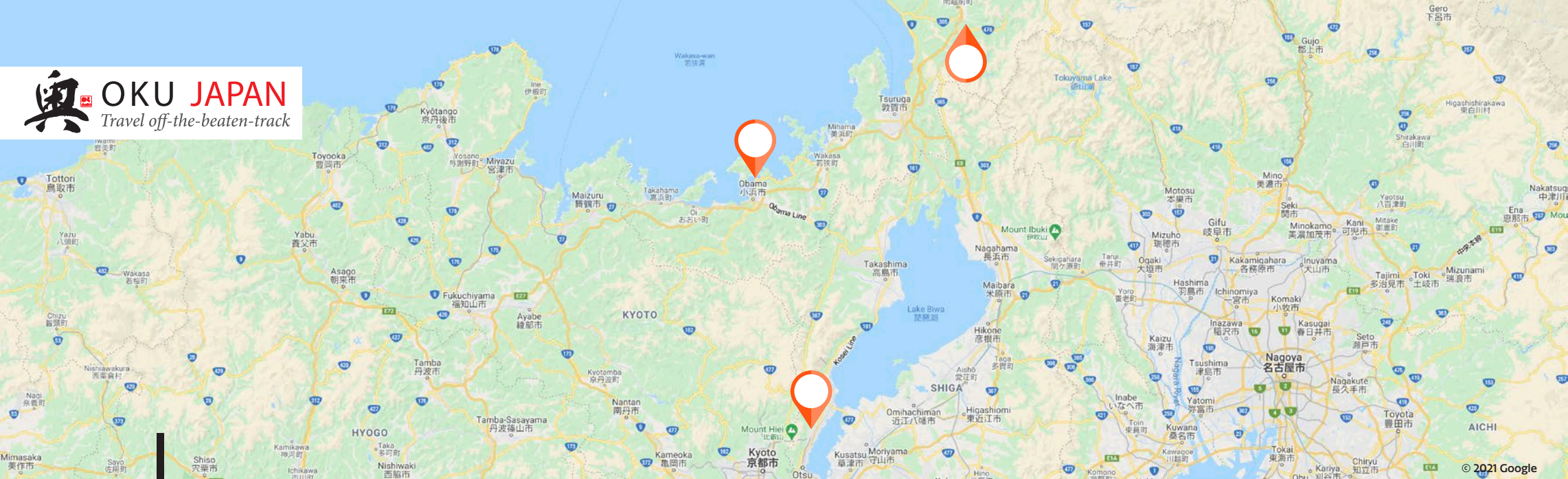


### SABA KAIDO

Since before Japan's Nara period, around 710 to 794, the seafood rich Wakasa Bay area has supported the Kyoto food culture and provided ingredients for the imperial family kitchens. Mackerel and other marine products harvested in Wakasa were sent to the capital via a series of roads called "Saba Kaido," or the Mackerel Highway.

Crossing mountain passes to transport mackerel, this trade route formed its name from the connections between the port of Obama on the Sea of Japan and in Kyoto. In the high-altitude villages, restaurants put mackerel or saba at the heart of the plate. As you can guess, the mackerel holds a special place in the gastronomic history of Japan.

Saba is most often served as Sabazushi (raw mackerel on rice, with a strip of kelp). It is also prepared in Donburi (rice bowls), in Yakisaba (lightly salted, and grilled on a wooden skewer over a wood fire), or as an accompaniment to soba (buckwheat noodles).



# Western Shiga and Fukui: Self-Guided Walking 4 Days

In the North of Lake Biwa, temples settled in mountainous regions that inspired Japanese artists.

Head Northeast from Kyoto along the western side of Shiga. There you will see Mt. Hiei and the Hira Mountains North to Fukui that offer many of the best views of beautiful Lake Biwa. The picturesque scenery here has been the setting for many important pieces of Japanese art and literature over the centuries.

The area is also home to the important mountain-top temple complex of Enryakuji. This temple has been the center of the Tendai school of Buddhism since it was founded by the influential monk Saicho in the 8th century. Since then, many eminent monks have trained at Mt. Hiei, including Zen Master Dogen who went on to find the Soto school of Zen Buddhism several centuries later. This Zen Master situated his head temple at Eiheji in the mountains of Echizen province (present-day Fukui prefecture). Both institutions went on to have a significant influence on wider Japanese history and culture.

The mountainous regions of western Shiga and Fukui also have distinct seasons with massive amounts of snowfall in the winter, which leads to pure spring water collections from the rivers and then flows out into the

Sea of Japan and Lake Biwa. This topography has allowed communities to develop based around pure water creating a culture and landscape unique to the region. Over time, the mountains that nurtured this abundance of water became objects of worship. The mountainous terrain, which is excellent for hiking, also became grounds for ascetic training.

Our tour also takes in beautiful sections of the northern Japanese coastline in Fukui. Situated between these two regions lie the areas of Wakasa and Obama in southern Fukui along the Sea of Japan. This was once an important hub connecting sea trade to Kyoto and Nara and from China and Korea to the inland trade routes within Japan. The areas still form an important connection with Shiga and Kyoto to the south with Fukui and Kanazawa further North.

This tour offers more advanced hiking. Please ask for information about our tour extensions to the mountain top temple town of Mount Koya. This tour includes three different accommodation options: a traditional monastery lodging, a peaceful and charming hotel in the agricultural community of Asuka, or a unique homestay experience with a local family.

# Enjoy SHIGA & FUKUI

## BEST OF SHIGA & FUKUI

3 NIGHT/4 DAYS/ Walking & Hiking experience

### DAY 1 - Hike from Sakamoto to Mt. Hiei & Enryakuji Temple

Discover the small town of Sakamoto along Lake Biwa, a gateway to the historic Enryakuji Temple complex situated atop Mt. Hiei. The railway line runs close to the lake for part of the journey and offers fine views out over the lake and surrounding mountains. Sakamoto is just 20 minutes from Kyoto where the walk to Mt. Hiei begins. From Sakamoto, the path climbs steadily to the mountaintop temple complex of Enryakuji and takes around two to three hours (about five hours hiking round trip). Enryakuji Temple dates back to 788 and played a significant role in Japan's Buddhist history.

### DAY 3 - Hike to Eihei-ji Temple

Leaving the Wakasa area of Southern Fukui, travel by train and pre-paid taxi to a rewarding hike in northern Fukui in the Oku-Echizen region. Hike through natural forests and beautiful mountain scenery then arriving at Eihei-ji Temple, the birthplace of Soto Zen Buddhism, tucked away deep in the mountains. Follow in the footsteps of Dogen Zenji (1200-1253, Zen Master and founder of Soto Zen Buddhism) as he made his way into this remote region long ago in the 13th century. The impressive temple complex stands in a natural mountainous setting with a history of over 750 years. It is the main training temple of the Soto school of Zen Buddhism and around 200 young monks in training (known as unsui) who devote themselves to uninterrupted Zen practice. Visitors have the opportunity to glimpse the authentic way of life of a Zen practitioner.

### DAY 2 - Hike Mt. Horai; Kumagawa-juku & Obama villages

After breakfast you will travel on a forty-minute rail journey to the foot of Mt. Horai to begin the day's hike up through a peaceful forest. The trail passes several small shrines before reaching the summit of Mt. Horai, which has impressive panoramic views over Lake Biwa - Japan's largest fresh-water lake and one of the world's great ancient lakes - and the rows of mountains around northern Kyoto. The paths are clearly defined with trail markers to make the climbs easier. After the hike, ride Shiga's longest cable car down and travel onward by local train and bus to Kumagawa-juku village in the mountains of the Fukui prefecture. Situated in the Wakasa region of southern Fukui, the former post-town of Kumagawa-juku has a grand history. They especially flourished during the Edo-period (1603-1868) as a key location along the Saba Kaido (Mackerel Highway) trade route between the Sea of Japan and old capital of Kyoto and Nara. Later in the afternoon, travel by bus to arrive in the peaceful seaside town of Obama, a former trading port. There you will have an authentic Japanese accommodation in the historic district and a seasonal Japanese dinner.

### DAY 4 - One final walk before departing from Fukui

In the morning, you can enjoy an optional one hour hike to a hilltop viewpoint overlooking Eihei-ji Temple with excellent views of the whole temple complex before traveling onward to Kanazawa or the Kansai region in the mid afternoon. There may be time to visit nearby Maruoka Castle - one of the oldest remaining original castles in Japan - before traveling onward by train from Fukui.

## Highlights

- Hike to Enryakuji Temple on sacred Mt. Hiei, home of Tendai Buddhism and marathon monks.
- From Mt. Horai see breathtaking views of Lake Biwa, Japan's largest freshwater lake and one of the world's great ancient lakes.
- Stay in three premium Japanese accommodations, each featuring architectural designs unique to their region.
- Sample delicious regional Japanese dishes sourced from Lake Biwa, the Sea of Japan and experience authentic, vegan Shojin Ryori cuisine.
- Hike to Eihei-ji Temple, the birthplace of Soto Zen Buddhism in the secluded Fukui mountains.
- Visit Kumagawa-juku historic village along the old Saba Kaido Road.



Self Guided Tour by

**奥 OKU JAPAN**  
Travel off-the-beaten-track



## SAKAMOTO "The City of Temples"

In the commune of Otsu, the district of Sakamoto prospered because of its pleasant location on the southwestern shore of Lake Biwa and its immediate proximity to the mountains. Sakamoto stretches across the slopes of Mount Hiei.

Known as the City of Temples, it first flourished around the Hieizan Enryaku-ji Temple. It also contains several Buddhist and Shinto religious buildings, such as the Hieizan Enryaku-ji Buddhist temple, and the Hiyoshi Taisha Shinto shrine. The latter, one of the most important Shinto shrines in the city of Otsu, is known as the Monkey Sanctuary. The great respect of the mountain Gods goes through a syncretism, a fusion of Shintoism with Tendai Buddhism and is particularly marked in Hiyoshi Taisha.

In total, nearly 50 religious buildings are located in Sakamoto. They are abundant with treasures and important cultural goods. Sakamoto is also located near many other shrines and temples that line Lake Biwa.

The monks came to spend their retreat in Sakamoto, which is called Satobo in historic residences. These charming residences open onto gardens lined with moss and dotted with azaleas. Among the finest retirement homes, the old Chikurin temple is well known for the magnificence of its interior garden. Most of these gardens are open to the public on public holidays in early May, during Golden Week. The streets are bordered by pretty stone walls formed by successive stacks mostly dating back to the 16th century. They close the enclosure of satobo, sanctuaries, and private houses. Local architectural specificity, the particular masonry of these stone walls, is called Anoshuzumi. Their resistance to time proves their solidity while respecting the natural materials of the region. The walls are often covered with moss. This local know-how combining resistance and natural elegance has been exported throughout Japan. It was used in particular for the construction of castles and their walls.

For having preserved all the historical charm of these places of residence and rest of the monks, the urban landscape of Sakamoto is recognized as a site of preservation of groups of traditional buildings. Another local charm is the Sakamoto Cable Cars, the longest cable car in Japan. In 11 minutes, it connects the 2 kilometers that separate the station with the retro charm of Sakamoto at the foot of the mountain and the Enryaku-ji perched at an altitude of almost 300 meters. As the cabin rises up the mountain towards the temple, passengers have plenty of time to admire the view of Lake Biwa. Sakamoto has been named as one of the 100 most beautiful resorts in Kinki.



Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine

# Sakamoto



## 5 - Enryakuji Temple

At 381 meters high, this historic complex is situated on Mt. Hachioji in the Hiei mountains among the most sacred mountains in Japan. It hosts the headquarters of the Tendai Buddhist sect.



## 4 - Hiyoshi Toshogu Shrine

This temple was built to declare the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu as a manifestation of the Buddha. This sub-shrine of Hiyoshi Taisha covered with colored lacquer is a national-designated Important Cultural Property.

## 3 - Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine

Hiyoshi Taisha is famous for the monkey sanctuary. It is the head shrine of Sanno shrines in Japan with about 3,800 branch shrines across the country. The temple grounds have nearly 40 shrines.



## 2 - Former Chikurin Temple

This former monks' residence is especially known for its Japanese garden, known as a nationally-designed site of scenic beauty. The thatched and gabled roofs of the tea pavilions are architectural oddities.



## 1 - Yakujuin Sakura

A Yakujuin Cherry Trees garden is visible from the road. Their branches bend elegantly. In springtime, during the blooming of the flowers, it looks as if the trees are weeping confettis of sakura or cherry blossoms.





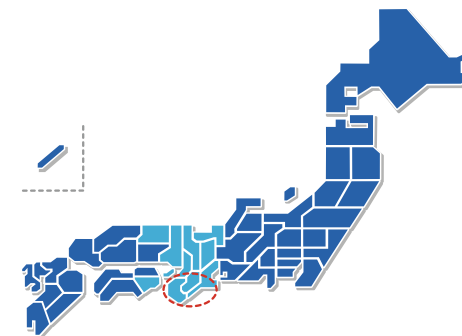


04

# KII PENINSULA

## 紀伊半島

Kumano Kodo, Pilgrimage  
to Japan's Spiritual Origins.



Two travelers on the  
Daimonzaka Path



Kii is one of Japan's largest power spot peninsulas. Power spots are related to spiritual places where one can feel in-tune to nature. It is said that there are these powerful and mysterious sources of power called "Oku" all across Kii.

The Kii Peninsula is the largest in Japan. The Kumano region stretches out behind a coast line of coves and small harbors. As the coast line opens up to the Pacific, the inland takes you along the paths of Japanese spirituality.

For more than a thousand years, the Kumano kodo ("old Kumano path") has been a famous pilgrimage route. Also called "Kumano Sanzan," it connects three Great Sanctuaries. The Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines that line Kumano Kodo illustrate the strength of religious syncretism in Japan. These religious sites are hidden in mysterious forests and down the slopes of the Kii mountains.

The cobbled paths wind through the heart of centuries-old cedar forests and cut through bamboo groves. They lead to sights shrouded in mystery, such as the Hana-no-kutsu cellar, or the Daimonzaka stone staircase, which ascends to Kumano Nachi Taisha. The Kumano Hongu Taisha Shrine can be reached by another stone staircase. The Kii peninsula can also be discovered by mountain roads around the Matsumoto-toge and Magose passes.

Visitors follow the footsteps of pilgrims who once walked the trails of Kumano Kodo. Along the way, they observe purification rituals in hot springs and steam baths. These "oku" sources still continue to purify virtues and exercise mystical forces.



## Attractions

### KUMANO HONGU TAISHA

The main deity of Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine is Susanoo-no-Mikoto. Originally, the Gods of Kumano were rooted in nature worship. They gradually became the sacred sites of Buddhism, esoteric Buddhism, and Shugendo practices.

The Kumano Hongu Taisha is one of the three great shrines in Kumano Sanzan. To reach this sacred place, you follow a monumental staircase climbing across a ridge line. There, in the shade of cypresses and Japanese cedars sprinkled with thorns, bark and thatch stands the Kumano Hongu Taisha. The architecture of the wooden pavilions respects the natural environment. Very few nails were used by inter-locking pieces of wood. Here, the people honor Amaterasu, the Shinto Goddess of the Sun, and her brother Susanoo (or Ketsumiko), God or Kami of Storms.

Address: 647-1731 Wakayama, Tanabe, Hongucho Hongu 1110  
URL: [www.hongutaisha.jp](http://www.hongutaisha.jp)



### KUMANO NACHI TAISHA

Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine is one of the Kumano Sanzan's three great shrines and is at the top of Japan's approximately 4,000 Kumano shrines. This shrine celebrates the nature of Kumano, including the Nachi Waterfall.

This Shinto Shrine is on the side of the Nachi Mountain with small pavilions scattered among the greenery of the mountain. In the heart of a forest of black cedars, the red color of the torii and the pavilions contrasts with the shades of green in the vegetation. This palette of colors gives a highly photogenic vision.

From the shrine, we can see the sacred waterfall of Nachi (Nachi no taki, 133 m). Considered sacred and naturally enchanting, it descends from the densely covered mountain.

Address: 649-5301 Wakayama, Higashimuro, Nachikatsuura, Nachisan 1  
Free access, except for the viewpoint on the falls (¥300), and for the Homotsuden Treasure Hall (¥300).  
URL: [kumanonachitaisha.or.jp](http://kumanonachitaisha.or.jp)



### KUMANO HAYATAMA TAISHA

Kumano Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine is one of the Kumano Sanzan's three great shrines created around 2,000 years ago. It is considered at the top among thousands of Kumano shrines across Japan. Faith followers from across Japan seeking salvation for the past, present, and afterlife make pilgrimages to the three sacred Kumano Shrines.

The Kumano Hayatama Taisha is located at the mouth of the Kumano River where the waters of the sacred Kii Mountains flow into the Pacific. The vibrant red building is the result of a 1952 reconstruction. The shimenawa (sacred rope made of twists of rice straw) is particularly impressive in thickness. Nature itself is the sect here. Nature, like the Nagi-no-Ki tree (Podocarpus nagi), has been an integral part of rituals for the last 1000 years.

Address: 647-0081 Wakayama, Shingu 1  
URL: [kumanohayatama.jp](http://kumanohayatama.jp)



© Kumano Hayatama Taisha



## KUMANO KODO PATH

The Kii peninsula is full of ancient pilgrimage routes, including the Kumano Kodo, which is a Unesco World Heritage Site and a Mecca of Japanese spirituality. While the shores of the Pacific are jagged into coves, inland the Kii Mountains are covered with dense forests of Japanese pines and cedars. Ancient paved roads lead to a multitude of sacred sites. This mystical setting is linked to the founding myths of Japan.

For over a thousand years, pilgrims have trod these paths. Kodo also means "old roads." Already in Heian times, these paths were frequented by a wide variety of pilgrims. The Kumano was known to be open to everyone, regardless of social class. The pilgrimage was made on foot along an arduous route through mountains and forests. Admiring the beauty of the natural elements and taming their hostility was part of the spiritual experience. The Kumano Kodo remains a fabulous hiking ground today. Sheltered by shady forests and bathed in mystery, the Kumano Kodo mainly links the three Great Shinto Shrines of the Kumano Sanzan (Three Mountains) together: the Kumano Hongu Taisha, the Kumano Hayatama Taisha, and the Kuma-no Nashi Taisha. Four main paths and two secondary routes lead to this sacred area. By virtue of their importance and richness, these historic sanctuaries put Kumano Kodo at the heart of Japanese spirituality.

Apart from Kumano Sanzan, the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage is full of sacred sites, Shinto shrines, and Buddhist temples. The edges of the paths alone have about 3,000 secondary sanctuaries (oji). In the middle of the forest, the paths are lined with stone statues representing Kannon. The ancient path between Odomari and Ki-moto in Kumano City is paved with stone and bamboo. At the end, stands a Jizo statue, which is said to have been shot by a gun. The plum grove along the way offers a panoramic view of Shichiri-Mihama. The Magose Toge Pass is a beautiful ancient stone-lined path along the World Heritage Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route. Walk through beautiful atmospheric cypress forests to Mt. Tengura. It's an experience that will bring you closer to the ancient pilgrims. Daimonzaka slope, part of one of Japan's three ancient roads, the Kumano Kodo, is a picturesque sight with mossy paving stones surrounded by giant cedar trees. The stone torii gate and the bright red lacquered Furikase Bridge at nearby Nachi are said to be the point of separation between the

sacred and secular worlds. The proximity of temples and shrines speaks volumes about religious syncretism in Japan. All along the paths of Kumano Kodo, Buddhism and Shintoism intermingle and nourish each other. Indeed, when Buddhism was imported to Japan from the 5th and 6th centuries, mergers took place. There were the incarnations of the Buddha and the Buddhist deities on the one hand, and the Kamis, spirit deities of Shintoism, on the other. The pilgrimage routes lead from sacred sites to steam baths intended for the purification of the spirit are operated by thermal spas today. Saki no yu Onsen in Shirahama is considered one of the oldest onsen (hot spring) in Japan. It takes the form of rotenburo, an open-air baths, to the Pacific Ocean. Crossing the Kumano Kodo is to discover a religious heritage in harmony with nature. It is also to recognize the force of religious syncretism at work in Japan. Finally, it means living a mystical experience in the heart of a natural environment where the elements, earth and water, nourish one's spirituality.



**Shishi-iwa (The Lion Rock)**  
The Hana no Iwaya Shrine is one of Japan's oldest shrines. A 45 meter-high rock, mentioned in the ancient Chronicles of Japan, is said to be the grave of Izanami-no-Mikoto, the mother of the gods in Japanese mythology.



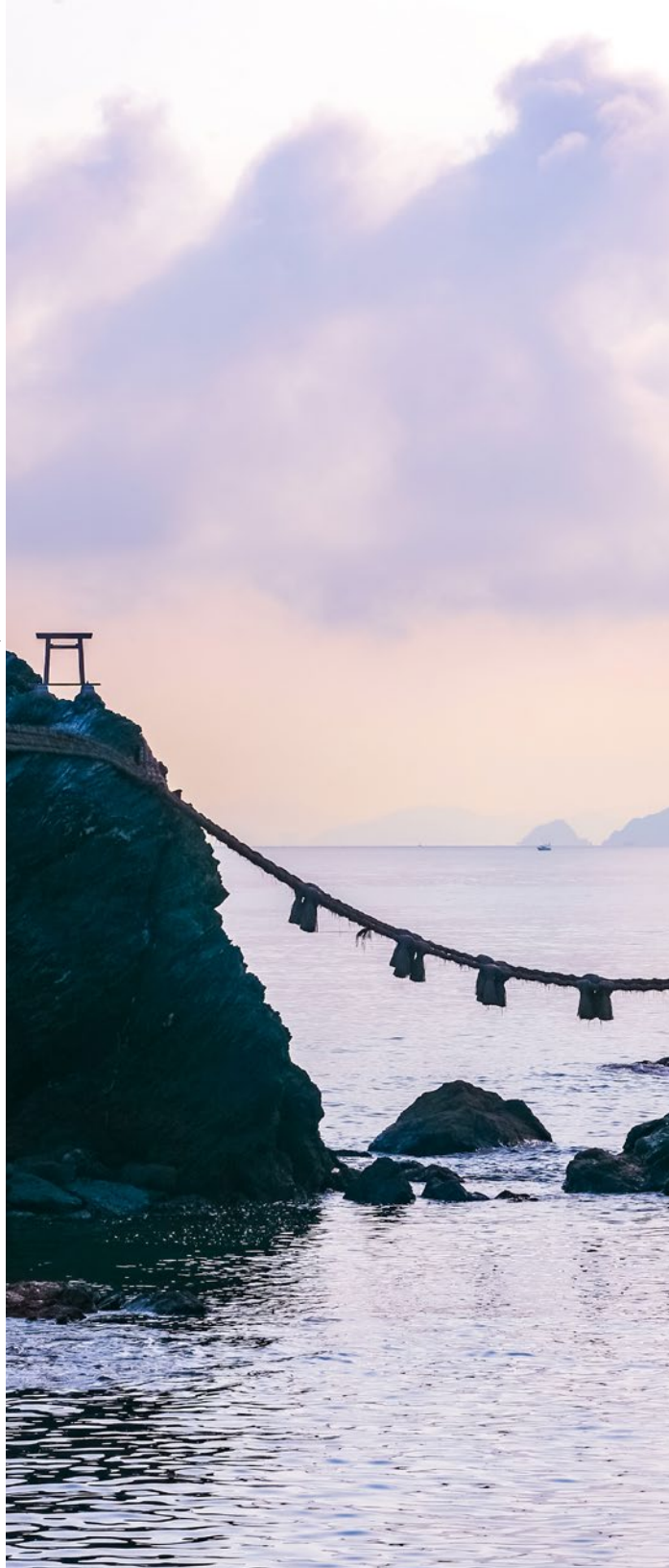
# ISE NARA 伊勢～奈良

Ancient paths from mythology.

**The place of origin for Japan since mythical times. Ise Jingu, the pinnacle of Japanese Shintoism, Sumo, Sake, Shugendo, giant ancient tombs, etc. This is the path where you can feel the origin of today's politics and culture. Experience the "ancient Japan".**

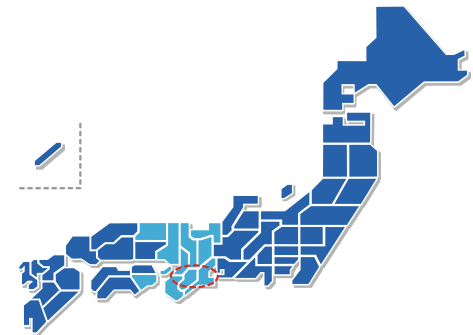
The region of Ise and Nara follows paths of spirituality to the origins of Japanese mysticism. In the heart of Kansai, Nara is world famous for its Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, some of the oldest in Japan. They are set on lush meadows in the heart of a wooded park populated by Shika deer. The ancient capital of the 8th century was the political and religious center of Japan. Nara's inestimable artistic wealth still makes her a great center of spirituality. Nearby, the 5-story pagoda of Horyu-ji Buddhist temple is considered the oldest wooden building in the world .

The sacred lands extend to the Kii Peninsula, which has a large amount of sacred mountains. There, in deep forests of hundred-year-old cedars, the Kami have been admired for nearly two thousand years. Ise-jingu (Ise Shrine) is one of the holiest and most respected sites in Japan. The Japanese consider it to be a "cradle of the Japanese soul."



In addition to the spirituality and ascetic practice of shugen-do around the temples, the region of Ise and Nara prepares ancient traditions. The foremost among them is sumo and the distillation of sake. On the sea side, the coasts of the Kii peninsula have seen the rise of the culture of the ama. The ama are women who snorkel in search of pearls, shellfish, fish, and crustaceans. The peninsula and its coasts are cradled by the oldest traditions of Japan, and the most striking for the collective imagination.

If Ise and Nara are renowned for being the sources of Japanese spirituality, the region also made an important contribution to Japanese gastronomy. The Kii Peninsula and the Nara region are rightfully famous for their fish and seafood, said to be among the best in the entire Archipelago. They are fished in bays dotted with islands and islets in the shelter of secret coves even in the Pacific Ocean. Ago Bay, south of Ise, is one of Japan's major pearl oyster production centers. The region is famous throughout Japan for its Akoya pearls, premium sea pearls. Ise is also known for its lobsters. The fish are prepared there in Tekone-zushi (a marinade of raw fish fillets arranged on a bed of vinegar rice). Finally, we savor Ise's udon noodles and Ise tea. Another component of the local gastronomic tradition, the shinsen. It's a sacred meal given as an offer to the Kamis (Shinto Deities). It's considered to be the origin of Washoku, the Japanese culinary tradition inscribed on the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The spirit of Shinsen is based on a principle of self-sufficiency, both in terms of ingredients and dishes. The fruits and vegetables come from local agriculture, which limits the use of pesticides. The dishes are served in handmade pottery.



**Meoto Iwa**  
(夫婦岩, the Wedded Rocks)



## Mt. Yoshino

Symbolic of Mt. Yoshino, Kinpusen-ji is the head temple of Shugendo. Shugendo was developed by En no Gyoja in the late 7th century. It originated as a unique religion combining Shintoism, Buddhism, and Taoism with ancient Japanese mountain worship. The main Zao-do Hall is Japan's second largest wooden building after the Great Buddha Hall of Todai-ji Temple.

### The 5 Senses Experience

*On the pilgrimage routes of the Kii mountains, this sacred site is an invitation to experience asceticism and mysticism. In spring, admire the blossoming of hydrangeas and some 30,000 cherry blossoms in silence as they elegantly decorate the sanctuaries. In the fall, witness the seasonal foliage of the mountains as they change to flashy red of koyo (the "red leaves").*

### Omiwa Jinja

Omiwa Shrine is said to be Japan's oldest shrine. The deity is Mt. Miwa itself, a sacred mountain. Legend has it that the spirit of Omononushi no Okami, the God of nation-building, lives here. To enter the mountain, one must be dressed in white or wear a white sash. Drinking, except for rehydration, eating, and taking pictures inside is prohibited inside. It's even frowned upon to speak of one's experience inside the mountain after leaving the shrine.



## Asuka-dera Temple

Also known as Hoko-ji, the temple was founded at the end of the 6th century, during the Asuka period, it is considered one of Japan's oldest Buddhist temples. It houses Japan's oldest Great Buddha. Most of the original buildings were lost in two fires, but the Great Buddha has remained sitting in the same spot for 1400 years. The present buildings date back to the Edo period.

Open everyday 9:00-17:15 (9:00-16:45 from October to March)  
Address: 634-0103 Nara, Takaichi, Asuka 682

### The 5 Senses Experience

*The place sounds like a return to the sources of Japanese Buddhism. The Asuka Great Buddha, the oldest known Japanese statue of Buddha in existence, is still worshiped. This sculpture masterpiece reflects influences from the Asian mainland. You can admire the calm of the face and the delicacy of the gestures of the hands. This Great Buddha offers a look into the genesis of Japanese sculpture.*

### Hasedera Temple

Asuka culture is a fusion of Japanese and Chinese Buddhist culture brought together around 1,400 years ago in the Nara region. Many great temples were built in the area, including Hasedera Temple. The Yamanobe Road from Miwa to Nara is said to be Japan's oldest ancient road.

Open everyday 9:00-16:30  
Address: 633-0112 Nara, Sakurai, Hase 731-1  
URL: [www.hasedera.or.jp](http://www.hasedera.or.jp)





## Attractions

### AMA CULTURE

“Ama” refers to traditional female skin divers who catch abalone, turban shells, seaweed, and other sea foods for a living. Ama fishing equipment has been found in Jomon period ruins from about 5,000 years ago. In the Heian period over 830 years ago, the Shima area was famed for providing the Heian period Imperial Family and Imperial Court with marine products such as puffer fish, abalone, and turban shells.

Japanese freedivers generally work inside secret coves dressed in white suits. If they are associated with pearl fishing, they also bring back seaweed and seafood. However, due to global warming, the water temperature is rising causing a scarcity of shellfish. This, combined with the rural exodus and modern pearl farming techniques, puts this tradition in decline. The millennial know-how of the “sirens of Japan” are threatened to end.

The Ama dive from March to November.

> We can meet them, and taste seafood around an irori (traditional hearth) in Ama huts: about ¥ 3,000 the experience.

URL: [www.iseshima-kanko.jp/en/see-and-do/1417](http://www.iseshima-kanko.jp/en/see-and-do/1417)

> See demonstrations at Mikimoto Pearl Museum

URL: [www.mikimoto-pearl-museum.co.jp](http://www.mikimoto-pearl-museum.co.jp)



### ISE JINGU

Amaterasu, ancestor of the Imperial Family and respected by the Japanese as their all-powerful deity, was enshrined in the Ise Jingu's Koutai Jingu, also known as the Naiku, beside the Isuzu River around 2,000 years ago during the reign of Emperor Suinin. Toyouke Daijingu, also known as the Geku, is the shrine where Amaterasu's meals are prepared, and is revered as the guardian deity of food, clothing, shelter, and industry. Passing through the Torii gate and walking the gravel path along the green approach, you will notice a certain difference in the atmosphere.

Japan's most sacred shrine is nestled in the shade of a sacred forest of cypress and cedar trees. Codified rituals take place in a ceremonial atmosphere. Following a Shinto tradition, the 2 main buildings are ritually rebuilt every 20 years. The current construction dating from 2013 is the 62nd since the year 690.

2 shrines : inside (Naiku) and outside (Geku).

516-0023 Mie, Ise, Ujitachicho 1

URL: [www.isejingu.or.jp](http://www.isejingu.or.jp)



Aoi Matsuri held in Kyoto

### SAIO PRINCESS

The Saio were unmarried royal princesses or queens dispatched to Ise's Saiku Shrine as a representative priestess to Amaterasu each time an Emperor ascended the throne. The practice lasted for around 660 years. Sixty-four Saio were appointed. Each accompanied by around 500 attendants. There were five lodgings options called Tongu in the cities of Seta, Koka, Tarumi, Suzuka, and Ichishi to accommodate them.

Saio Matsuri is held on the first weekend of June in Meiwa, a former Imperial residence. The event reenacts the Saio's march to the Ise shrine in the presence of a hundred extras dressed in Heian Era costumes.

> Saio Matsuri in Meiwa, the first weekend in June.

URL: [saioh.sub.jp](http://saioh.sub.jp)

> Aoi Matsuri in Kyoto, every year on May 15th.

URL: [www.kyototourism.org/en/sightseeing-info/51.html](http://www.kyototourism.org/en/sightseeing-info/51.html)



06

# AWAJI TOKUSHIMA 淡路島～徳島

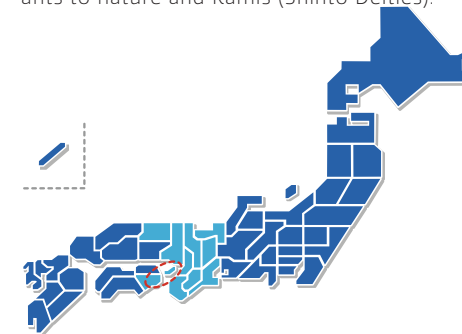
A myth of the birth of Japan and  
bridge to the sea.

The area has a unique panoramic ocean feel with its inland sea islands opposite shores of the city center. The sun rises and sets on the sea along the steep straits. This is the landscape of the sea where the myth of the birth of the nation was born and gave birth to the unique worldview of the Japanese people. Here, enjoy the luxury of simply gazing at the sea.

The Akashi Strait Suspension Bridge (Akashi kaikyo Ohashi) connects Kobe from Honsho to Shikoku via Awaji Island. The longest suspension bridge in the world leads to lands steeped in myth and spirituality.

Awaji Island closes Osaka Bay and opens up to the Inland Sea. It is linked to the myth of the founding of Japan. The Izanagi-jingu Shrine is dedicated to the divine couple Izanagi and Izanami, mythological creators of Japan. As early as the 7th century, Buddhist monks took up residence on the Tomogashima Islands, west of Awaji. They practiced shugendo, a form of asceticism related to the mountains. While the nation's primary lands around Awa-ji and at the gates of Shikoku nourished the monks in meditation, they were also lush in several

ways. The richness of the soils and the abundance of rivers predisposed the region of Shikoku to engage in indigo dyeing. However, this prolific story did not end there. A guild of merchants rich from indigo were able to support the performing arts, especially the creation of the folk art of Awaji Ningyo, traditional puppets. The tradition continues with the Awa-odori ("Awa's dance") festival, which is celebrated in Tokushima at O-bon time in August. These festivities at the crossroads of popular culture and religion show the importance of traditions on these islands. It also highlights the strength of the bond that unites inhabitants to nature and Kamis (Shinto Deities).





## Awa Odori 阿波おどり

For over 400 years, the Awa Odori has been one of Japan's three major Bon Odori dances with around 100,000 energetic dancers performing to musical instruments. It is staged at various locations in the Tokushima Prefecture every year on August 9. Then, the main event takes place over the next four days from August 12th to 15th in Tokushima City.





## Attractions

### ONOKORO ISLAND

According to mythology, Onokoro Island was the first Japanese island created by the Gods Izanagi and Izanami. Onokoro Island is also the place where they are said to have created Ebisu, Kami (Japanese deity) of fishermen, merchants, and prosperity. The legend brings forth several possible original sites: Nushima with its giant towering Kamitategami rock, Eshima's Iwakusu Shrine, Awaji Island's Onokorojima Shrine, and To-mogashima. Tomogashima is said to be the site of Katsuragi Shugen, the first ascetic practice of En no Gyoja, founder of the spiritual tradition of Shugendo. The coast of Nushima island is lined with many jagged rocks, like Kamitategami-Iwa, a towering giant rock. Nushima Hachiman Shrine stretches out in a protected forest among trees several hundred years old.

- Kamitategami-Iwa, Nushima Island, southeast coast.  
 - Hachiman Shrine, Nushima Island.  
 Address: 656-0961 Hyogo, Minamiawaji, Nushima 2521  
 URL: [hyogo-jinjacho.com/data/6329136.html](http://hyogo-jinjacho.com/data/6329136.html)



### IZANAGI JINGU SHRINE

Izanagi Jingu Shrine in the center of Awaji Island is dedicated to the Kamis (Shinto "Gods") Izanagi and Izanami, creators of Japan. According to the Records of Ancient Matters (Kojiki) and the Chronicles of Japan (Nihonshoki), after completing the great task of creating the nation and its Kamis, Izanagi spent the rest of his life in the land of Taga on Awaji Island. This Shinto shrine is the most important on the island and is considered one of Japan's oldest shrines. It commemorates the Kamis Izanagi and Izanami. According to the mythology, Kamis Izanagi and Izanami created the first of Japan's islands. Most of the buildings in the complex date back to the Meiji Era. The sanctuary has been designated as a Prefectural Cultural Property. Nine statues of Kamis were discovered there. They would represent Izanami-no-mikoto and date from the Heian to Kamakura periods. There are some remarkable trees there, including an 800-year-old sacred tree (a camphor).

#### Free Access

Address: 656-1521 Hyogo, Awaji, Taga 740

URL: [izanagi-jingu.jp](http://izanagi-jingu.jp)

Within walking distance, on a hill above the Izanagi sanctuary, the Kaorino Park is home to flowering plants: plum trees, cherry trees.



© Izanagi Jingu Shrine



© Awaji Puppet Theater

### AWAJI NINGYO

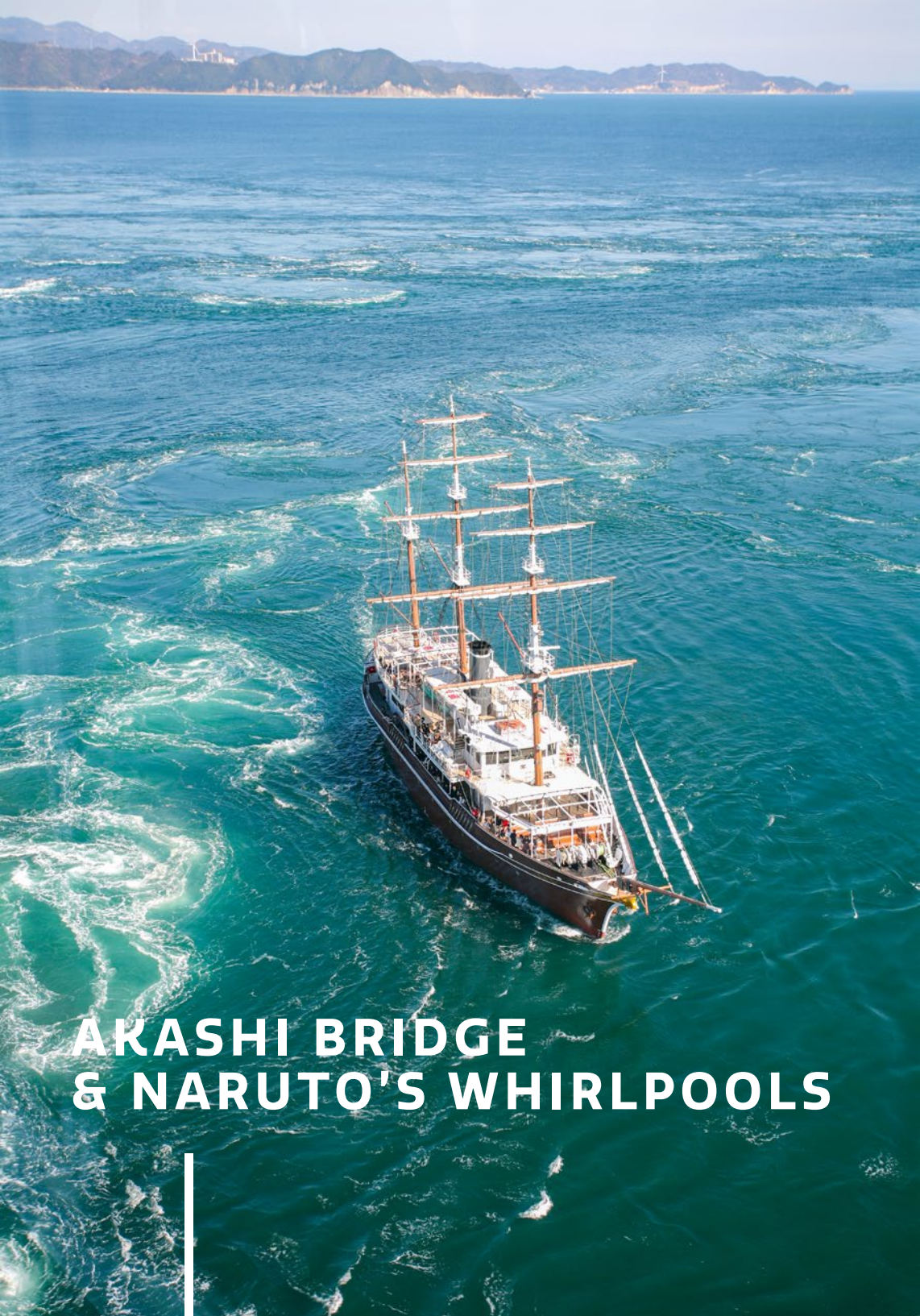
The Awaji Ningyo Joruri is a form of traditional puppet theater. The tradition dates back almost 5 centuries. You are likely to see some of its origins in religious rituals, too. It was well established as a sacred seasonal event celebrating the blessings of the sea and the safety of fishing. Awaji Ningyo Joruri is now designated a "National Intangible Folk Cultural Asset".

The puppets, valuable works of art, perform traditional folk dramas, stories of joy, anger, sorrow and humor with emotional narration. Each puppet is moved by three puppeteers. The performances are accompanied by a shamisen, a Japanese three-stringed lute. The Awaji Ningyo is said to be the origin of the Ebisu-mai, a fishing themed puppet dance.

#### Awaji Puppet Theater

Address: 656-0501 Hyogo, Minamiawaji, Fukura Ko-1528-1

URL: [awajiningyoza.com](http://awajiningyoza.com)



# AKASHI BRIDGE & NARUTO'S WHIRLPOOLS

The Akashi Strait Bridge (Akashi Kaikyo Ohashi) connects Kobe in Hyogo Prefecture on Honshu to Awaji Island, an obligatory crossing point to Shikoku Island. The longest suspension bridge in the world spans almost 4 km. As for the Naruto whirlpools, at the other end of Awaji Island, they make an amazing interaction of the tides.

The Akashi Strait Bridge spans across the Akashi Strait, which connects Osaka Bay with the Seto Inland Sea. This road axis replaced the ferry line that previously linked Kobe to Awaji Island. While the boats were regularly caught in sometimes stormy and dangerous winds, the bridge was built to improve the safety of crossings and to strengthen the network of land links between the main islands of the Archipelago. This bridge is thus the final element of a network connecting the four main islands of Japan. This is an essential link of the Kobe-Awa-ji-Naruto highway.

Inaugurated in 1998 after nearly a decade of construction work, it is breaking records. In addition to being the longest suspension bridge in the world, its central span of 1,991 meters is the longest in the world. The bridge opens onto a 360° panorama of the Akashi Strait and Osaka Bay. It was built to withstand winds of 80 km per second, and of course earthquakes. During the 1995 earthquake, the two main pylons were already in place, and the main cable was under construction. While the epicenter was between the two piers of the bridge, no major structural damage was noted.

On the Kobe side, the Akashi Kaikyo Bridge Exhibition Center is a kind of science museum. It takes stock of the different construction technologies. The bridge can be discovered during a 1.5 hour guided tour from Kobe (reservation required). The visit allows you to see the bridge from the inside and access places normally closed to the public. The elevator climbs to the top of a pile culminating at nearly 300 meters above sea level. An observation lounge allows you to appreciate a view at an altitude of almost 50 meters. Inside the bridge, the Mai-ko-Kaijō aerial promenade is swept by sea winds. From the promenade, you can admire the panorama of the Seto Inland Sea. The gaze extends to Osaka's Abeno Harukas, Kansai Airport, and Shodo Island.

At night, nearly 1,800 multicolored lights are needed to light up the bridge.

On the other side of Awaji Island, the O-Naruto Bridge connects the island to Naruto City on Shikoku Island in Tokushima Prefecture. The whirlpools of Naruto are one of the world's three largest whirlpools. This natural phenomenon is caused by the violent tidal currents of the Seto Inland Sea and Kii Channel. The whirlpools, which can reach 20 meters in diameter, are at their peak during the high tides of spring and autumn.



**Under the Akashi Bridge  
Between Kobe and Awajishima**



# TAMBA (KYOTO-HYOGO) 丹波 (京都・兵庫)

The Land of Harvest



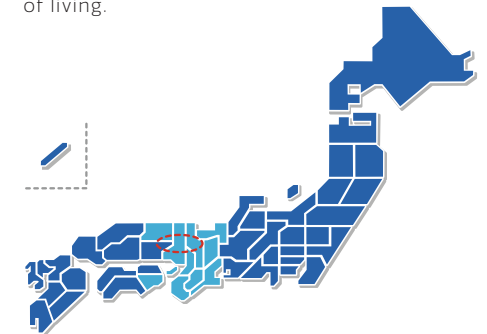
07

Satoyama is one of the original landscapes of Japan. Among them is the Tamba area, a remarkable place where unique crops and harvests remain alive even today. Tamba Sasayama used to be a major transportation hub. The city later developed into a center of trade. The castle town, nature, and the hometown of pottery offer a glimpse of what Japan looked like 400 years ago.

Tamba is between the prefectures of Kyoto and Hyogo. It was an important center of trade and exchange along the Kyoto route. You can still find preserved ancient Samurai houses from the Edo Period and a castle to give you a peak into life four centuries ago. A city of history, crafts and folk art, Tamba is also an ideal local destination for going green.

The agricultural tradition remains very present there. Tamba's black beans and mushrooms are famous throughout Japan. The region of Tamba, and Tamba Sasayama in particular, began to develop a tradition of pottery and ceramics in the 12th century, the Tamba-yaki. Tamba ceramics are one of the oldest in Japan. Nearly 60 pottery workshops contin-

ue their activities at the foot of the mountain in a potters' village. In the potters' village of Tachikui soot no sato, Tamba Sasayama is also the birthplace of the Dekansho Bushi dance. It gave rise to a festival of folk songs whose fame has toured Japan ever since the Edo Period. The villagers meet at night to dance in circles. The Tamba and Hohmei breweries distill sake according to ancestral traditions, whether it is the use of traditional equipment or the choice to work to the rhythms of classical music. Through its multiple traditions, Tamba Sasayama bears witness to a whole art of living.



## BEST SPOTS IN TAMBA

### NIPPONIA Hotel



Tamba Sasayama is surrounded by nature and has a rich food culture. In conjunction with NIPPONIA, a company dedicated to preserving Japanese landscapes, the town is developing old warehouses and mansions into hotels where visitors can experience the life and culture of the area.

#### Informations

5 traditional Japanese style villas dispersed throughout the town  
Address: 669-2342 Hyogo, Tamba-Sasayama, Nishimachi, ONAE 25  
URL: [sasayamastay.jp](http://sasayamastay.jp)

### Miyama-cho Village



The ancient village of Miyama-cho in Kyoto is home to 39 traditional thatched roofed houses offering a picturesque image of a traditional Japanese landscape. The Kamakura Shrine, located on a hill above the village, offers a spectacular view of these old homes.

#### Informations

Open 24h/24  
Address: 601-0712 Kyoto, Miyamachokita, Nantan  
URL: [www.kayabukinosato.com](http://www.kayabukinosato.com)

### Tambayaki Pottery



For around 850 years, the clay rich Tachikui area of Kyoto's Tamba region has produced high quality pottery. The unique Tachikui clay throwing technique uses a foot propelled counter-clockwise spinning throwing wheel called a keri-rokuro. This technique has been handed down from generation to generation.

#### Informations

Open everyday 9:00-18:00  
Address: 669-2141 Hyogo, Tamba-Sasayama, Kondacho Shimotachikui, 8 So-Yo-Gama  
URL: [sho-yo-gama.com](http://sho-yo-gama.com)

### Houmei Sake Brewery



Founded in 1797, Houmei Brewery believes that "Sake is culture", and creates a strong, robust, and authentic range of sake. During a tour, visitors can see the various sake making production processes and tools in this over 200 year old brewery. And of course, you get to taste the sake, too!

#### Informations

Open everyday 8:30-17:30, close saturday & sunday  
Address: 669-2322 Hyogo, Tamba-Sasayama, Gofukumachi 73  
URL: [houmei.wixsite.com/houmeisuzou](http://houmei.wixsite.com/houmeisuzou)

### Tamba Sasayama Castle



Tamba Sasayama Castle was built in 1609 and is ranked one of Japan's Top 100 Castles. The castle town is famous for its rows of historically valuable Samurai residences that have been turned into stores and cafes along the cobblestone pavements. It is also one of Japan's best 100 cherry blossom viewing spots.

#### Informations

Open everyday 9:00-17:00, close monday  
Address: 669-2332 Hyogo, Tamba-Sasayama, Kitashinmachi 2-3  
URL: [www.withsasayama.jp/REKIBUN/osyojin\\_top.htm](http://www.withsasayama.jp/REKIBUN/osyojin_top.htm)

### Dekansho Museum



The Dekansho Matsuri is Tamba Sasayama's lively summer Bon Festival dance. The lyrics of Dekansho Bushi describe the history and culture, regional climate, famous places, and specialties of Sasayama. It listed as a Japanese Heritage site in 2015.

#### Informations

Open everyday 9:00-16:30  
Address: 669-2332 Hyogo, Tamba-Sasayama, Kitashinmachi 48-29  
URL: [www.withsasayama.jp/REKIBUN/aoyama\\_top.htm](http://www.withsasayama.jp/REKIBUN/aoyama_top.htm)

### Tamba Wine



Since 1979, Tamba Wine has been promoted as Kyoto's first local wine actually compatible with delicate Japanese cuisine. In 1984, Tamba's Toriino white wine was awarded the Gold Medal at the Monde Selection, the Challenge International de Vin and the Japan Wine Challenge amongst others.

#### Informations

Open everyday 10:00-17:00, close thursday  
Address: 622-0231 Kyoto, Funai, Kyotamba, Toyota Toriino 96  
URL: [www.tambawine.co.jp](http://www.tambawine.co.jp)

### Choro Shuzo Brewery



Choro Shuzo Brewery has been brewing sake since ancient times at the foot of Mt. Chorogatake in the Niwa District of Kyoto. Its product is a mellow, slightly dry, and full-bodied sake made with clear, clean water and good quality rice.

#### Informations

Open everyday 8:00-20:00, close sunday  
Address: 629-1121 Kyoto, Kyotamba, Funai, Honjo Note-5  
URL: [www.chourou.jp](http://www.chourou.jp)

# FUKUI~East Shore Lake Biwa~MIE 福井~琵琶湖 東岸~三重

Regions of Japanese Traditional Craftsmanship

**This is an area where many remains and cultures related to the Warring States period remain, including those of Samurai and Ninjas. The area has a long history of exchange with the capital. Many traditional crafts have been handed down from generation to generation.**

In the heart of the Archipelago and at the crossroads of the good ol' days, the Lake Biwa region is full of castles. Hikone is one of the best preserved in Japan. There's also Echizen-Ono and Nagahama. The culture and moral code of ninjas, Samurai, and bushido continue here. While the Samurai were fighters respecting the bushido, a code of honor in the service of a lord, the ninjas were more like mercenaries engaged in spy operations. The ninja villages of Koga and Iga pay homage to ninja culture through museums, traditional

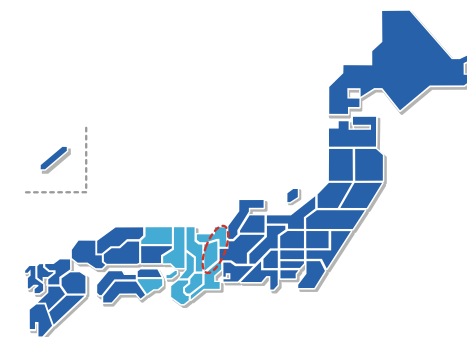
houses and performances. In the 15th century, the warriors of the Koga region defended the local lord (Samurai Daimyo) against the forces of the Shogun. They used taijutsu, a Japanese martial art technique of combat using bodily movements and involving an unarmed combat. The ninjas of the region became famous mercenaries and spies working for lords. They earned their reputation in popular culture with their black outfits and their headbands.

**The region is harboured by hot springs, overflowing with waterfalls, and crossed by rivers. The rivers promote the flourishing of traditional crafts as you go toward Lake Biwa.**

In these lands of warriors and traditions where water is ever so present, artisanal knowledge is remembered and passed along: armor



08

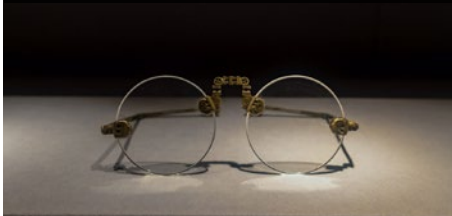


making, pottery, Shigaraki ceramics (a kind of stoneware pottery), washi paper, cutlery and Echizen lacquers, Sabae eyewear, and etc. Folk arts are also celebrated at the astonishing Hikiyama Festival of Nagahama. Floats parade displaying kabuki pieces of art.

The lush nature is suitable for meditation. The temple of Eihei-ji, "temple of eternal peace", is one of the two great temples of Soto Zen Buddhism. The monastery is made up of nearly 70 structures scattered throughout the mountains protected by cedar forests.

## BEST SPOTS IN FUKUI

### Megane Museum



For over 100 years Sabae City in Fukui Prefecture has been one of the world's leading eyeglass production centers passing down traditional manufacturing methods to future generations. Over 200 processes are carried out by artisans and specialized factories to produce high-quality eyeglasses with high precision and long-lasting use.

#### Informations

Open everyday 10:00-19:00  
Address: 916-0042 Fukui, Sabae, Shinyokoe, 2 Chome-3-4  
URL: [www.megane.gr.jp/museum/](http://www.megane.gr.jp/museum/)

### Echizen Lacquerware Center



The traditional craft of Echizen lacquerware originated in Fukui about 1,500 years ago. Created with unique lacquering techniques, Echizen lacquerware is used to produce tableware, accessories, and other everyday items. At the Urushi-no-Sato Kaikan, you can try your hand at lacquering, chinkin gold carving inlay, and wiping lacquer techniques.

#### Informations

Open everyday 9:00-17:00, close monday  
Address: 916-0273 Fukui, Nyu, Echizen, Ozowara 7-8  
URL: [www.echizen-kk.jp/bunka.html](http://www.echizen-kk.jp/bunka.html)

### Hikone Castle



Hikone Castle was built over 400 years ago and has been a National Treasure for years. General Ii Naomasa, the first lord of Hikone domain, was considered the "right arm" of the Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu. The castle tower features a tsuke-yagura, an extended turret, and the roofing gables are rich in diversity. As one of the traditional Eight Views of Lake Biwa, the beauty of Hikone Castle in the moonlight is a must-see.

#### Informations

Open everyday 8:30-17:00  
Address: 522-0061 Shiga, Hikone, Konkicho 1-1  
URL: [hikone-castle-museum.jp/en/](http://hikone-castle-museum.jp/en/)  
Price: ¥500 per adult / ¥250 per children

### Hikiyama Museum



Hikone City was famed for the production of red armor worn by the ruling Ii clan, Lords of Hikone domain. Traditional techniques such as lacquering, wood carving, gold leaf and metal work were perfected here. As times changed, the demand for armor decreased, and so the advanced armory techniques were applied to the production of Buddhist altars. Many stores selling family altars now line the streets.

#### Informations

Address: 14-8 Motohamacho, Nagahama, Shiga 526-0059  
Open hours: everyday 9:00-17:00  
Website: <http://www.nagahama-hikiyama.or.jp/>  
Price: ¥600 per adult / ¥300 per children

### Tonda Ningyo Museum



Tonda Ningyo is a traditional form of Ningyo Joruri Puppet Theater in Ki-ta-Tonda, Nagahama City in the Shiga Prefecture. At the Tonda Ningyo Kaikan, you can see a Ningyo Joruri puppet theater stage, various puppets, and theatrical tools.

#### Informations

Open on demand  
Address: 526-0131 Shiga, Nagahama, Tondacho 758

### Echizen Washi No Sato



Fukui Prefecture's Echizen region is home to a number of traditional crafts that have evolved over 1,500 years of history. These include Echizen lacquerware, Echizen washi paper, Wakasa agate crafts and Echizen cutlery.

#### Informations

Open everyday 9:30-17:00, close tuesday  
Address: 915-0232 Fukui, Echizen, Shinzaikecho 8-44  
URL: [www.echizenwashi.jp/english/](http://www.echizenwashi.jp/english/)  
Price: ¥200 per adult / free for children

### Shigaraki Tanuki Village

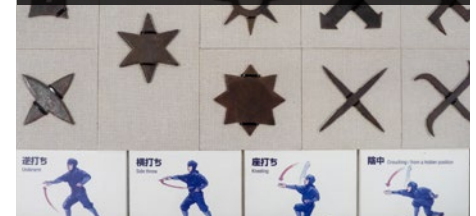


In the 8th century, Emperor Shomu sent roof tiles here to build the Shigaraki Palace. This production area is counted as one of the six oldest kilns in Japan. A wide variety of household utensils were made, including water jars, tea utensils, and tea pots. Today, products such as tableware, flower vases, and ornaments are produced making full use of the characteristic clay.

#### Informations

Open everyday 10:00-17:00  
Address: 529-1803 Shiga, Koka, Shigarakichomaki 1293-2  
URL: [www.tanukimura.com](http://www.tanukimura.com)

### Iga Ninja Museum



The Iga region of Mie Prefecture and Shiga Prefectures' Koka region are the birthplaces of the ninja. The mountains surrounding Iga and Koka are sacred places of mountain Buddhism. The chanting of sutras by mountain priests can still be heard today. In the Satoyama region are the ruins of castles where remains of the ninja still rest.

#### Informations

Open everyday 10:00-16:00  
Address: 518-0873 Mie, Iga, Uenomaruouchi 117  
URL: [www.iganinja.jp](http://www.iganinja.jp)

# The Exciting Kansai

## Produced by

XPJP & KANSAI Tourism Bureau



**KANSAI Tourism Bureau**  
*The Exciting Journey, KANSAI*

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A main goal of travel is to discover one's true meaning of life.  
Exploring Kansai is an opportunity to reconnect with yourself,  
nature, and the human way of life. We're certain your life will be  
enriched by experiencing the origins of Japanese culture that are  
rooted across the Kansai region.

**THE EXCITING KANSAI**   
The KANSAI contains the real undiscovered Japan.

