



DISCOVER NARA

SPECIAL EXPERIENCE GUIDEBOOK

Discover Unique Experiences in the Birthplace of Japan - Nara



Nara, the birthplace of Japan, is the center of ancient Japanese history, politics, economy, and culture. It is where the first authentic capital of Japan was established, marking the beginning of the nation's foundation. Nara's diverse culture, influenced by cutting-edge ideas and technologies from overseas, is carefully preserved and cherished to this day. We invite you to experience the special charm of Nara, where the history and pristine landscapes of Japan come alive. Come and explore the beautiful origin of Japan!



SPECIAL EXPERIENCE IN NARA #1:

NARA PARK

Nara Park and its surroundings are home to the eight component parts of a World Heritage Site, including Todaiji Temple, Kohfukuji Temple, Kasugataisha Shrine, Mt. Kasuga Primeval Forest, Gangoji Temple, Yakushiji Temple, Toshodaiji Temple, and the Former Site of Heijokyu Imperial Palace. Nara thrived as Japan's capital from 710 to 784, shaping the prototype of Japanese culture.

Todaiji Temple and the Great Buddha

One of the world's largest wooden structures, Todaiji Temple's Daibutsuden, and one of Japan's largest Buddhas at 15 meters in height leave a breathtaking impression. Constructed in the 8th century by Emperor Shomu's wish to bring peace during turbulent times of epidemics, poor harvests, and uprisings, Todaiji Temple has attracted people praying for peace for over 1,250 years.

📍 406-1 Zoshi-cho, Nara City

Kasugataisha Shrine and Mt. Kasuga Primeval Forest

Kasugataisha Shrine is Nara's most famous shrine, known for approximately 2,000 stone lanterns lining the forest paths of Kasugayama. Built in 768, the shrine's sacred deer are considered divine messengers. Behind the shrine lies the ancient Mt. Kasuga Primeval Forest, untouched for over 1,000 years, creating a sacred atmosphere.

📍 160 Kasugano-cho, Nara City

Mt. Kasuga Primeval Forest Trekking

Since 841, Kasugayama has been protected as a sacred mountain, with the Mt. Kasuga Primeval Forest inscribed on the World Heritage List. Enjoy hiking through the forest along the stream.

YOSHINO and MT. OMINE

Spanning Nara, Mie, and Wakayama Prefectures, these mountains are component parts of a World Heritage Site. With elevations ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 meters, the Kii Mountain Range is in a region where nature worship flourished and was worshipped by the people of Nara. These mountains became known for ascetic practices, and ancient pilgrimage routes are still preserved.

Kinpusenji Temple

The mountains from Yoshino to Mt. Omine have been widely recognized as a sacred area since ancient times. Kinpusenji Temple, the symbol of Yoshino, is the fundamental training ground for Shugendo. The temple is famous for the three blue-skinned statues of Kongo Zao Daigongen. Standing 7 meters tall, they are guardian deities representing the past, present, and future, which are the "three lives" of Buddhism.

📍 1075 Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun

Reflecting on Ancient Times in the Birthplace of Buddhism

Explore the history and culture of Japan in Nara. Enjoy temple visits amidst beautiful nature, captivating cityscapes, and national treasures.

IKARUGA

In the Horyuji Temple area, you'll find many of the world's oldest wooden structures, with 48 buildings of Horyuji Temple and Hokiji Temple inscribed as Japan's first World Heritage Site on the World Heritage List. This region houses the heritage that traces the evolution of Japanese Buddhist temple architecture.

Horyuji Temple

Stepping into Horyuji Temple reveals the world's oldest wooden structure, dating back over 1,400 years. The vast 187,000 square meters precinct includes various buildings from different eras, such as the five-story pagoda, main hall, gate, and more. Horyuji Temple also boasts a collection of around 3,000 excellent Buddhist art pieces.

📍 1-1 Horyuji Sannai, Ikaruga-cho, Ikoma-gun

ASUKA and KASHIHARA

The Asuka region prospered as the political center of ancient Japan from the late 6th to early 8th centuries, laying the foundation for Japan's politics and culture. The relocation of the capital to Fujiwarakyo Capital in 694 marked the construction of Japan's first planned city. Numerous archaeological sites, including palaces, ritual spaces, Buddhist temples, and tombs, are preserved in this area.

Asukadera Temple

Completed in 596, Asukadera Temple is the first full-fledged temple in Japan. Visit Asukadera Temple to see the oldest known Japanese Buddha statue, renowned for its Archaic Smile—a facial expression with a restrained portrayal of emotion, featuring a subtle smile on the lips.

📍 Koshi, Asuka-mura, Takaichi-gun

Mt. Omine

Mt. Omine, located in the southern part of Nara Prefecture, stands at an elevation of 1,719 meters. At its summit lies Omimesanji Temple, a place of mountain asceticism with a history spanning over 1,300 years. The Omine Okugake Trail forms part of the pilgrimage route network known as the Kumano Kodo. Even today, many people venture into the mountains for self-reflection.

📍 Tenkawa-mura, Yoshino-gun

Former Site of Fujiwarakyo Capital

This site, established in 694, is the remains of Japan's first planned city. The approximately 1,000 square meters house the Fujiwara Palace, facilities for state rituals and politics, and the residence of the emperor, which influenced architectural structures of later capitals. Every October, cosmos flowers bloom across the Former Site of Fujiwarakyo Capital, creating a breathtaking spectacle against the backdrop of the Yamato Sanzan (Three Mountains of Yamato).

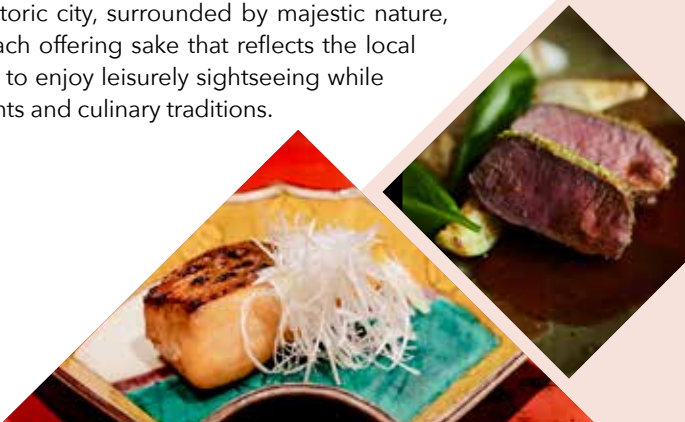
📍 Kashihara City

SPECIAL EXPERIENCE IN **NARA** #2:

Discover Nara's Culinary Delights



In Nara, influenced by various cultures as the eastern end of the Silk Road, a rich food culture has flourished. The historic city, surrounded by majestic nature, is home to many sake breweries, each offering sake that reflects the local climate. When visiting Nara, be sure to enjoy leisurely sightseeing while immersing yourself in local ingredients and culinary traditions.



Kawai Shuzo Brewery

Kawai Shuzo is the only remaining sake brewery in Imaicho, where the Edo period (17th-19th century) townscapes still exist. During the winter months (November, January, February), you can tour the brewery, and throughout the rest of the year, you can enjoy facility tours and sample several types of sake.

📍 1-7-8 Imai-cho, Kashihara City



Kita Shuzo Brewery

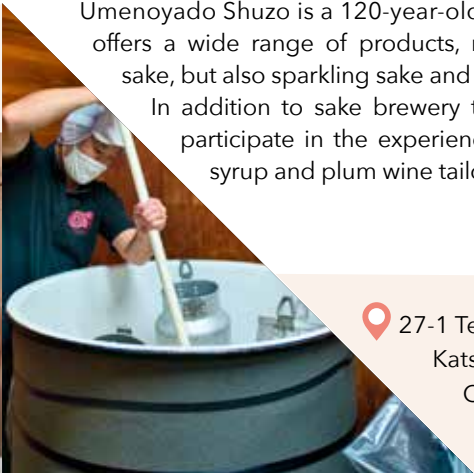
At Kita Shuzo, a sake brewery utilizing a warehouse from the Edo period, you can take a tour of the sake brewing facilities and sample their main brands during the winter months (November, January, February). They also sell popular small bottles of sake, making it a great souvenir.

📍 157 Bodaiyama-cho, Nara City

Umenoyado Shuzo Brewery

Umenoyado Shuzo is a 120-year-old sake brewery that offers a wide range of products, not only traditional sake, but also sparkling sake and liqueurs. In addition to sake brewery tours, you can also participate in the experience of making plum syrup and plum wine tailored to your taste!

📍 27-1 Teraguchi, Katsuragi City



Ohmiwa-jinja Shrine

The Beginning of Sake
At Shoryakuji Temple, located in the mountainous northeastern part of Nara Prefecture, the first refined sake in Japan was crafted. The sake brewing techniques developed here have been carefully passed down and are still used today as the foundation for modern brewing methods. Ohmiwa-jinja Shrine, said to be the oldest shrine in Japan, enshrines the god of sake and bestows the "Sugidama" (cedar ball) as a signal when new sake is ready, a tradition adopted by sake breweries nationwide.

📍 157 Bodaiyama-cho, Nara City



📍 1422 Miwa, Sakurai City

Originated in NARA

Beginning of Sumo

The Nihon Shoki, Japan's oldest official history book, records that sumo wrestling took place more than 2,000 years ago. Throughout the Heian period (9th-12th century), it was continued as a year-round event in the Imperial court, and it was passed down as training for samurai battles. Even today in Nara, sumo culture is cherished. At the Sumo Museum, Kehayaza, you can stand on a dohyo (sumo ring) of the same size as the official ring and immerse yourself in the authentic sumo atmosphere.

Beginning of Medicine

As foreign cultures and medical practices were introduced to Nara, medicinal herbs began to be used. The Motoyakushiji Temple, established in 680, has a medicinal garden, and the Morino Old Medicinal Garden, Japan's oldest medicinal herb garden, continues to exist as a private herbal garden.



SPECIAL EXPERIENCE IN NARA #3:

Calligraphy

Calligraphy, one of Japan's traditional arts, involves using a brush and ink to write characters on paper, conveying one's thoughts through the characters and writing style. It is considered a form of mental training, requiring concentration and the skill to create beautiful characters. Nara has a deep connection with calligraphy, and three essential craft items for calligraphy—ink, brushes, and Japanese paper—are produced in this region.

Kinkoen

Sanjo-cho,
Nara City

Ink

When sutra copying influenced by Chinese Buddhist culture began, the production of ink started in Nara's shrines and temples. The ink produced in Nara is called "Nara Ink," and it constitutes 95% of solid ink in Japan. Nara Ink, crafted by artisans, is known for its jet-black color and superb glossiness.

Gripped Ink Experience:

At Kinkoen, a historic work shop, you can experience the creation of "nigiri sumi" by hand where you form the solid ink by gripping it.

While learning about Nara Ink, feel the aroma, texture, and warmth the moment you grasp the ink.

Brush Making Experience:

At Narafude Tanaka, brushes for calligraphy are made using natural materials. Besides observing the artisan's work, you can also participate in creating your own brush by appropriately sizing the handle and attaching and adjusting the hairs.

Narafude Tanaka

6 Kunodo-cho,
Nara City

Brush

The traditional craft of Nara brushes, unlike regular brushes, involves artisans handling every step from material procurement to finishing. Nara brushes, created with excellent craftsmanship, have sharp tips and an elegant shape, making them popular not only in calligraphy but also in artistic fields such as watercolor and sumi-e painting.

Yoshino Washi (Japanese Paper)

Surrounded by majestic mountains and rivers in Yoshino-cho, there is a 1,300-year-old traditional craft of Yoshino Washi (Japanese paper). Made from locally grown mulberry trees through 48 processes, this washi has a lifespan of 1,000 years. It is widely used globally, including cultural heritage restoration at institutions like the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the British Museum.

Handmade Washi Experience:

At Fukunishi Washi Honpo in Yoshino-cho, you can participate in a hands-on washi-making experience. After making the washi, you can freely apply patterns using natural dye made from plants. Try creating your own unique and charming postcard.

Fukunishi Washi Honpo

218-1 Kubogaito,
Yoshino-cho,
Yoshino-gun

Experience Nara's Traditional Crafts

Japanese Swords

Japan has a tradition of swordmaking that originated in five major regions, and among them, the Yamato tradition born in Nara is the oldest. Nara is the birthplace of Japan's oldest swords, producing numerous renowned swords ranging from national treasures to important cultural properties. Kasugataisha Shrine houses a valuable collection of swords donated by the Imperial court, powerful families, and samurai, preserving precious swords in their original states.

Gassan Japanese Sword Forging Dojo

Gassan Japanese Sword Forging Dojo is a forge with an 800-year tradition, belonging to the Gassan school of swordsmiths. The attached museum in the forging dojo exhibits Gassan swords from the ancient period to recent creations. Come witness the craftsmanship and traditional beauty of Japanese swords.

Gassan Japanese Sword Forging Dojo

228-8 Chiwara,
Sakurai City

16 Kodanaka-cho,
Tenri City

Futsunomasataka Sword Forging Studio

At Futsunomasataka Sword Forging Studio, you can observe craftsmen working on forging swords in an intense atmosphere. While listening to explanations about the swords, feel the weight, beauty, and allure of Japanese swords up close.

Iaido Experience

A11-14
Saiwai-cho,
Yamatotakada City

Iaido Experience :

At Renshinkan, the main dojo in Yamatotakada, you can learn the art of Iaido, a samurai skill, regardless of gender or age. The dojo starts with practicing etiquette, focusing on calming the mind before moving on to physical techniques. Experience the orthodox martial art of Iaido, distinct from the choreography seen in dramas and movies.

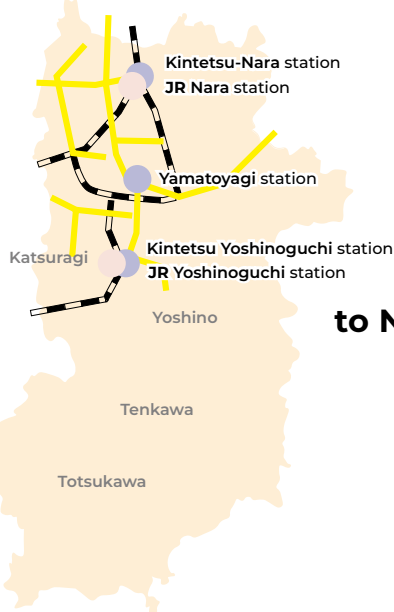
NARA

to Kyoto

to Osaka

to Nagoya

to Wakayama



Access to Nara

from Kyoto

(JR) Kyoto station

about 45 min

Nara station

(Kintetsu) Kyoto station

about 50 min

Kintetsu-Nara station

from Osaka

(JR)

Shin-Osaka station

about 5 min

Osaka station

about 50 min

Nara station

(Kintetsu)

Osaka Namba station

about 40 min

Kintetsu-Nara station

from Kansai International Airport

(JR)

Kansai Int'l Airport station

about 50 min

Tennoji station

about 35 min

Nara station

(Limousine bus)

Kansai Int'l Airport

about 85 min

Kintetsu-Nara station

www.visitnara.jp

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