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Simply

NARA

Vol.3

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2016
WINTER
EDITION



NARA PREFECTURE

奈良県



Japan.
Endless
Discovery.

WINTER JOURNEY IN NARA

While enjoying the amazing snowy scenery and early spring flowers, formed with history and nature in harmony, warm yourself up with hot springs and hot dishes. Hospitality and cordial manners will satisfy the chilly traveler. Why not come to this old Japanese town and enjoy a trip in winter?

Recommended Winter Destinations

Area 1

Tenkawa

Warm yourself up at Dorogawa Onsen and Mt. Omine

Dorogawa Onsen is a famous hot spring located in a remote area known for its remarkable mineral water, and also the birthplace of Shugendo religious training. It is located about 820 meters above sea level on the bank of Sanjo River. Sanjo River is the headstream of Kumano River, and it rises in the Mt. Omine range. Its spring water quality is simple. The water is tasteless and odorless, and very mild so comfortable to soak in. The historic streets, lined with long-established inns, create a nostalgic atmosphere filled with the aura of nature at its freshest. Mt. Omine is a sacred mountain for the practitioners of Shugendo, as Shugendo religious training is said to have been founded here 1300 years ago by Enno Gyoja.

Dorogawa Onsen is a post-station town, and it has flourished as the base for climbers who follow the Mt. Omine faith. The warmth of the people living there has remained unchanged for ages, and their warm welcome has aided the area's popularity. Recently, the number of visitors such as couples, groups of women, and foreign tourists has increased. How about mentally and physically unwinding and relaxing at Dorogawa Onsen?

Welcomed by Locals on the Sacred Mountain

Groups of men requiring vegetarian meals used to be typical visitors to this post-station town that welcomes mountain ascetics. It has been a custom of Dorogawa's facilities to cater for guests night and day. Even though many ordinary tourists also come to visit the town these days, the warm welcome still remains.

What is often said about this amicable town is that you can relax as if you are at home, and easily communicate with the people around. Bathing in a hot spring surrounded by snow and eating wild game, such as wild boar or deer, are recommended in winter. The wild boar meat hot pot, which uses lean Omine Boar, is waiting for you.

Bathing surrounded by snow enjoying the silence and the warmth – What you see from the open-air bath or the semi-open-air bath is a silent snowscape. A luxurious warm moment for you in the light from the snow.

“Smack your Lips” over the boar meat hot pot – As boar meat contains high protein and low fat and low calories, it is the dish women prefer. The boar meat hot pot, which contains plenty of collagen, is highly recommended as it also works well for your skin.

Gorogoro Water, One of Japan's 100 Best Natural Springs – It is the water from one of the three natural springs of Dorogawa River. So tasty, containing plenty of minerals.

Gorogoro Teahouse (Gorogoro water collection facility)

Tel: 0747-64-0188. **Address:** 686-139 Dorogawa, Tenkawamura, Yoshino-gun. **Open:** 9:00-18:00. **Closed:** Dec 31st-Jan 6th
Access: Take bus from Kintetsu Shimoichiguchi Stn. and get off at Dorogawa Onsen bus stop. 30-min. walk from the bus stop.

Tenkawa Daibenzaitensha Shrine

This is a famous old shrine for worshipping the god of art. It is one of Japan's three great shrines honoring Benzaiten, who is also known as the god of music and entertainment. Extensive materials for Noh play are preserved, and Noh plays dedicated to the god Benzaiten are performed there every year.

Enjoy the Beautiful Landscape of Rime Ice

During severe winter on Mt. Kannonmine, you can see a splendid view of the leafless trees completely covered with rime ice. From the observatory, which is located at the height of 1285m above sea level, you can enjoy the dynamic panorama of Mt. Inamuragadake, Mt. Misen, Mt. Hakyogatake. If you are a good walker, you should head off toward the top of the mountain, walking through the rime ice forest with its breathtaking view. Be sure to prepare well for mountain climbing.

Mt. Kannonmine

Tel: 0747-63-0999 (Tenkawamura Information Desk)

Address: Tenkawamura, Yoshino-gun. **Access:** Take bus from Kintetsu Shimoichiguchi Stn. and get off at Kannonmine Tozanguchi bus stop. 2 hours and 30-min. walk to the observatory (in winter).

Enjoy a ski resort with the family – Ski resorts are rarely seen in the Kii Peninsula. This cozy ski slope is a perfect place for the beginners to start skiing, and to enjoy sleigh rides especially for families. It is also popular among advanced skiers for its smooth and dry snow quality at 960-1,040 meters high.

Snow Park Dorogawa

Tel: 0747-64-0082

Address: 678-220 Dorogawa, Tenkawamura, Yoshino-gun
Open in winter: 8:30-16:00. **Admission:** Adult ¥1,000, Children ¥500
Access: Take bus from Kintetsu Shimoichiguchi Stn. and get off at Dorogawa Onsen bus stop. 10-min. taxi ride from the bus stop.
*If the snowfall is not sufficient, the park will be closed. Please check before leaving home.



Gorogoro water in Dorogawa



Rime Ice

Area 2

Yoshinoyama

Spend a Special Relaxing Moment in Winter in Yoshino

Yoshino-cho in Yoshino-gun is a historical mountain village and a special place to visit in quiet winter. This is the place where history has been made since the ancient Asuka and Nara periods. Quiet winter is the best season to visit this romantic place and think back over ancient times. Everything you find here has been refined over a long time; the Onsen, where you can enjoy panoramic views of snow capped mountains; local hot pot dishes, which are arranged in various imaginative ways; and the famous temples with their national treasure buildings, which you can find while walking around. To appreciate the mysterious charms of Yoshino in depth, a trip in winter is the thing to do.

Enjoy an Onsen with a Great View and Local Special Dishes to the Fullest at a Classic Inn on Mt. Yoshino. There is a peaceful hot-spring inn with a great view where you can stay in Yoshino, where history and culture have been cherished for centuries. In the open-air bath, you can look over Mt. Yoshino covered with snow, which makes you think back through the long history. Gradually warming up in a hot onsen, you can spend a luxurious moment with an elegant view in a quiet, comfortable atmosphere. The local food in this mountain village is recommended, such as wild boar, venison, pheasant and the arrowroot starch called Yoshino Kuzu, among many other dishes using local products.

Yumoto Hounoya

Tel: 0746-32-5121. **Address:** Nakasenbon Park, Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun. **Open:** Onsen for day trippers 14:00-19:00 (*Last admission at 18:00). **Admission:** Adults ¥1,500, Elementary school students ¥750. **Access:** Take ropeway from Kintetsu Yoshino Stn. and get off at Yoshinoyama Stn. 15-min. walk from the station.

Kinpusen-ji Temple

Kinpusen-ji Temple, which is a training hall for Shugendo, has a national treasure, Zaodo Hall. That magnificent structure looks most beautiful in quiet white winter. Here, the general public may participate in the morning religious service. How about attending the service in a crisp and solemn atmosphere? On every February 3rd, after the Setsubun ceremony, a unique fire festival is held. Here the participants chant 'In with the demon, in with good luck', in order to receive the ousted demons from the whole country and finally convert them to Buddhism.

Tel: 0746-32-8371. **Address:** 2500 Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun. **Open:** 8:30-16:30 (Last entry at 16:00) **Admission:** ¥500-¥1,000 for special viewing period **Access:** Take the ropeway from Kintetsu Yoshino Station and get off at Yoshinoyama stop, and approx. 20-min. from the ropeway stop.

Temples & Shrines for a Winter Visit

Touch and Experience Nara's Profound Religious Culture

Fresh, crispy winter air in Nara will awaken your senses. Enjoy special winter experiences at historical temples and shrines in the old capital. Listening to priests' stories in a shrine and watching how Buddhist monks work every day will deepen your understanding about the culture of Japan. Many temples and shrines open some of their "secret" doors to the public only during the winter months. Dress up warm and go out for a journey to discover lesser-known "premium" Nara.

Location 1 Todai-ji Temple (UNESCO World Heritage)

Grand Temple which boasts tangible and intangible heritages

Todai-ji Temple was commissioned by Emperor Shomu, who was a devout worshipper of Buddhism, in the Nara period (710-794). The Buddhist sutra, "Kegon-kyo," describes that the size of the universe can be described as Buddha's height times 10. As if representing this description, the large statue of Vairocana (or Daibutsu, Great Buddha) was completed in 752, and a huge celebration ceremony was held.

The original Daibutsu-den Hall was lost in fire in the late Heian period, but was successfully restored in the early Kamakura period, funded by a donation from the Buddhist monk, Chogen. It was also the time when genius Buddhist sculptors led by Unkei and Kaikei flourished, and many of their sculptures still remain today as National Treasures.

As the result of another fire, the current building is a reconstruction completed in 1709. The most famous rite of Todai-ji Temple is "Shunie" or more familiarly known as "Omizutori" in March. Surprisingly, the Shunie rite has never been missed in over 1250 years from its original start.

Todai-ji Temple

Address: 406-1 Zoshi-cho, Nara

Open: Daibutsu-den Hall, Hokke-do Hall, Kaidan-do Hall: 8:00-16:30 (Nov. to Feb.), 8:00-17:00 (Mar. to Oct.). **Access:** Take the bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara Station and get off at Daibutsuden Kasuga Taisha-mae, and about 5-min. walk

DID YOU KNOW!?

The Miraculous power of Great Buddha's palm

The Great Buddha holds his right hand up and shows the palm to the front, while his left hand is on his left knee palm up. The right hand, called Semui-in, represents the spiritual power to dispel fear and anxiety, while the left hand, called Yogan-in, has the power to make people's wishes come true.



Location 2

Kinpusen-ji Temple

(UNESCO World Heritage)

Sacred Home of Shugendo founded by Enno Gyoja

Kinpusen-ji Temple was established by Enno Gyoja, the founder of Shugendo (the Shugen sect), a religion that fuses the faiths of Shin-toism and Buddhism, and is one of several religions unique to Japan. Magnificent statues of Zao Daigongen, colored in blue, stand here. They are said to have been carved by Enno Gyoja himself out of the wood of cherry trees when he was engaged in spiritual training on the mountain. Cherry trees have been recognized as a sacred symbol of Yoshino for more than 1,300 years, cherished and protected not only for their flowers, but also for their wood, which is deemed sacred. The Zao-do Hall is a massive wooden gate which is designated as a National Treasure.

The most important aspect of Shugendo training is to attempt hard training in the mountain, and to seek the wisdom of Enno Gyoja there. Surrounded by the solemn atmosphere of Yoshino, it will be such an exceptional life experience to try Shugendo training.

Enno Gyoja was the founder of Shugendo who lived in the 5th to 6th century. One of the historical records of Japan describes how Enno Gyoja had a mysterious spiritual power and could control fairies and demons as he wished.

Kinpusen-ji Temple

Address: 2500 Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun, Nara
Open: 8:30-16:30 (last entry: 16:00). **Access:** Take the ropeway from Kintetsu Yoshino Station and get off at Yoshinoyama stop, and approx. 20-min. walk from the ropeway stop.

DID YOU KNOW!?

Unique Setsubun rite welcoming both good demons and bad demons

February 3rd is the Setsubun, or seasonal division from winter to spring. At the massive Zao-do Hall of Kinpusen-ji Temple, a large scale Setsubun Rite is held from the 1st to 3rd of February. What is unique about Setsubun at this temple is that demons are also treated as good luck, while usual Setsubun rites treat them as evil. They welcome to the temple demons ward off from all around Japan, and let them reform their wicked minds with the power of Buddhist sutras.



Location 3

Kasuga Taisha Shrine

(UNESCO World Heritage)

Grand shrine of Nara where a deity descended

Ancient myths tell us that about 1300 years ago when the national capital was relocated in Nara, the Great Deity Takemikazuchi-no-Mikoto came all the way from Kashima Shrine (Ibaraki Prefecture) to Mt. Mikasa in Nara, which is considered a holy mountain, to dwell on its summit for the prosperity of the nation and the happiness of the people. Later on in 768, the shrine halls were established. The shrine halls' bright vermilion columns, white walls, and roofs of hinoki cypress bark contrast beautifully with the green of the surrounding ancient woods.

According to local folklore, deer from this area were considered sacred due to a visit from Takemikazuchi-no-Mikoto, who is said to have appeared on Mt. Mikasa riding a white deer. From that point, the deer were considered divine and sacred. The serene beauty of the buildings has not changed since its inception. This is because of the "Shikinen Zotai" ceremony which takes place every 20 years. In this ceremony, the buildings of the shrine are repaired, the tools and instruments used are renewed, and ceremonial rituals are held strictly according to their traditions.

Onmatsuri is an annual grand festival dedicated to the deity of Waka-miya Shrine, one of the auxiliary shrines of Kasuga Taisha Shrine. In mid-December, a number of rituals, ceremonies and performances of traditional performing arts will be held.

Kasuga Taisha Shrine

Address: 160 Kasugano-cho, Nara City
Open: 6:30-17:00 **Access:** Take a bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara Station and get off at Kasuga Taisha Honden stop

DID YOU KNOW!?

Discovering three stone lanterns inscribed "Kasuga Daimyojin" will bring luck and fortune

On both sides of the long shrine approach, there stands some 2,000 stone lanterns. It is believed that if we can discover three stone lanterns in one day on which is inscribed "Kasuga Daimyojin (春日大明神)" we can receive incredible good luck and fortune!



Photo courtesy of Nara Venture

Location 4 Kohfuku-ji Temple (UNESCO World Heritage)

Massive temple complex flourished with the Fujiwara Clan

The origin of Kohfuku-ji Temple dates back to 669, during the time when Emperor Tenchi ruled Japan. One of the most famous and influential court officers, Kamatari Nakatomi, fell ill and a temple was constructed to pray for his recovery. This temple was moved later when the national capital was relocated in Nara, and was also renamed as Kohfuku-ji Temple.

Kohfuku-ji Temple received considerable support from the imperial court and the powerful Fujiwara clan which extended its prosperity. Its power was so great that Kohfuku-ji Temple ruled almost all of the province at that time. Also, the temple made a large contribution to the development of cultural items such as Buddhist sculptures, noh and kyogen theatre plays, food like tofu, miso and sake, and more.

Kohfuku-ji Temple

Address: 48 Noborioji-cho, Nara City

Open: Tokon-do Hall 9:00-17:00. **Access:** Approx. 5-min. walk from Kintetsu Nara Station or take the bus from JR Nara Station and get off at Kencho-mae Stop



Location 5 Hase-dera Temple

Magnificent Statue of Kannon

It is believed that Hase-dera Temple was founded by the Buddhist priest, Tokudo Shonin, who in it enshrined the Eleven-Faced Kannon (Goddess of Mercy) statue, by order of the Emperor Shomu in the 8th century. Going up the 399 stone staircases will bring you to the main hall where Japan's largest wooden statue of Kannon (over 10 meters tall) is enshrined. From the balcony, a superb view of the city can be enjoyed.

Hase-dera Temple

Address: 731-1 Hase, Sakurai City, Nara. **Open:** 9:00-16:30

Access: Approx. 15-min. walk from Kintetsu Hase Station



Location 6 Muro-ji

Mt. Koya for Women

Muro-ji Temple is built on a steep slope to the north of the Muro River. It is said that it was originally the site where the 8th century Buddhist monk Kenkei had a temple, and that his disciple Shuen designed the alignment of Muro-ji's structures as they still stand today. In contrast to Kongobu-ji Temple (on Mt. Koya in Wakayama, erected by the Buddhist monk Kukai in the early 9th century) which prohibited the entrance of women, Muro-ji Temple, built by the same sect, allowed women to visit and thus was frequented by many female worshippers. It was called "Nyonin-Koya" or Mt. Koya for Women.

Muro-ji Temple

Address: 78 Murou, Uda City, Nara. **Open:** 9:00-16:00.

Access: Take the bus from Kintetsu Murou Ono-guchi Station and get off at Murou-ji Temple. An approx. 5-min. walk from the bus stop.



NARA PARK AREA GUIDE

Kohfuku-ji Temple Area

The Area with Many National Treasure Buildings

① The Nara National Museum

The Nara National Museum is one of the leading facilities for Buddhist art collection, and includes many National Treasures or Important Cultural Properties. The annual exhibition of Shoso-in Repository attracts a large number of visitors every year. The Nara Buddhist Sculpture Hall is a state-ly, western-style structure opened in 1895, and it has been designated as an Important Cultural Property.

② Kohfuku-ji Temple

Kohfuku-ji Temple was once a large temple which used to lead Buddhist society along with Todai-ji Temple. Although most of the halls and pagodas have been lost in fires, a number of important cultural properties remain. The 50-meter five-story pagoda, which is the main feature of the temple, was reconstructed in 1426.

③ Kohfuku-ji National Treasure Hall

The Kohfuku-ji National Treasure Hall houses about 20,000 National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties belonging to Kohfuku-ji Temple, including the famous statue of Ashura and the Buddha head of the former Yamada-dera Temple.

Note: the National Treasure Hall will be closed from January 1st to December 31st, 2017 for earthquake resistance renovation. However, a selection of artifacts will be exhibited at the temporary Ko-do Hall.

④ Nan'en-do Hall

The Nan'en-do Hall of Kohfuku-ji Temple is the ninth temple of the 33 Saigoku Sacred Pilgrimage Sites, and it's the only such site in Nara City. The current Hall was constructed in 1741. Nan'en-do Hall houses a seated image of Fukukensaku Kan'non as its principal icon, as well as standing images of Shitenno, the Four Heavenly Kings, all National Treasures.

⑤ Ukimi-do Pavilion

Ukimi-do is a hexagonal pavilion with a unique atmosphere, apparently "floating" over the Sagi Pond in Nara Park. The beautiful reflection on the pond's surface makes it a waterside oasis.

⑥ Marumado-tei House

The Marumado-tei is a wooden warehouse with a thatched roof which was once Kasuga Taisha's sutra repository, and is located within the Kataoka plum forest near Sagi Pond.

Kasugano Area

① Todai-ji Temple

Todai-ji Temple was built as the head temple of all provincial Buddhist temples of Japan during the mid-8th century Tempyo era when Japan's Buddhist culture was flourishing. One of the seven great temples of Nara, Todai-ji Temple has many highlights in its spacious grounds.

② Daibutsu-den Hall

Though the present Daibutsu-den Hall is only two thirds of the size of the original, it still is the largest ancient wooden structure in the world, and the Great Buddha, the principal image of the temple, awes visitors with its imposing appearance.

③ Shoso-in Repository

Shoso-in Repository houses artifacts cherished by Emperor Shomu, ancient documents, Buddhist scriptures, musical instruments and paintings, as well as artifacts from Tang Dynasty, China, India and Persia.

④ Himuro Shrine

Himuro Shrine is a unique shrine dedicated to the god of ice that protects a Himuro (icehouse) which was built with the establishment of Heijo-kyo. The Himuro Shrine is worshipped by ice manufacturers from all over Japan. During the Kempyo-sai Festival, a block of ice which is packed with carp and bream is offered to the god.

⑤ Nigatsu-do Hall

The Nigatsu-do Hall is the site where the Omizu-tori water drawing ceremony is held in March every year. The views from its balcony across Nara are magnificent.

⑥ Yoshikien Garden

The Yoshikien Garden consists of Japanese gardens and a separate tea house. This impressive garden has Mount Kasuga and Mount Mikasa as shakkei (borrowed landscapes.)

⑦ Isuien Garden

The Isuien Garden consists of the front garden and the back garden. The Meiji period back garden is the only strolling-around-the-pond style garden in Nara city.

Tobihino Area Relax and Enjoy the Rich Greenery

① Tobihino Field

The name "Tobihino" is derived from "Tobufu", a signal fire lit by the field guard a long time ago.

② "Rokuen" Deer Protection Center

The Rokuen Deer Protection Center is a veterinary hospital which takes a special care of deer. Almost 1000 deer are living in Nara Park and they are protected by the Foundation for the Protection of Deer in Nara.

Mt. Wakakusa Mt. Kasuga The Rich Beauty of Nature, Watching Over the Ancient Capital

① Mount Wakakusa

Mount Wakakusa is covered with grass, and it will only take you about 20 minutes to reach the peak if you walk very fast. The view from its peak is magnificent, and the evening view is super. Open between the 3rd Saturday in March and the 2nd Sunday in December.

② Kasuga-yama Trail

The Kasuga-yama Trail runs through the Kasuga Primeval Forest and is good for hiking, forest bathing, and bird-watching. The Takisaka-no-Michi was previously the Yagyu Road, a paved path along a stream toward Yagyu, the village of swordsman.

③ Uguisu-zuka Ancient Tomb

The Uguisu-zuka Ancient Tomb is a roughly 100-meter-long key-hole shape burial mound on the peak of Mount Wakakusa. It is believed to have been built in the early 5th century. Since a mountain top tomb is very unusual, Uguisu-zuka Kofun appeared in Makura-no-Soshi (The Pillow Book), an essay written in the Heian period by Sei Shonagon.

④ Man'yo Botanical Garden in Kasuga Taisha Shrine

In Man'yo Botanical Garden, there are over 300 varieties of flora, each of which has its name and the corresponding Man'yo poem written on a signpost.

⑤ Wakamiya Shrine

Wakamiya Shrine is located at the foot of Mount Mikasa, and is famous for its wisteria.

⑥ Kasuga Taisha Shrine

The enshrinement of a god from Kashima Shrine, present day Ibaraki Prefecture, at the peak of Mount Mikasa to protect the Heijo-kyo Capital at the beginning of Nara period, is believed to be the origin of the Kasuga Taisha Shrine, built in 768. The bright vermilion shrine halls and the lanterns hanging from the eaves of the cloister, contrast beautifully with the green of the surrounding cedar woods.

⑦ The World of Dense Kasuga-yama Hill Primeval Forest

Since the Heian Dynasty, for over 1000 years, hunting and logging have been prohibited in Kasuga-yama, a sacred hill of the Kasuga Taisha Shrine. Thanks to this policy, Kasuga-yama Hill Primeval Forest, unlike other primeval forests near the city centers of the world, is a haven for rare animals and plants. 1000-year-old giant cedars, firs and cypresses are all found in the forest. As the sub-tropical and temperate plants coexist in the forest, the number of species reaches 805, including arctic plants and ferns.

⑧ Images of Buddha Carved in Kasuga-yama Stone Caves

The Kasuga-yama Sekkutsu-butsu are about 20 images of Buddha carved inside two rocks excavated from the mountain surface, in the style of Atsuniku-bori (deep-engraving.) They are also known as Anabutsu, literally 'cave Buddha' and the ancient inscription says that the images were carved in the 12th century.

⑨ Images of Buddha Carved in Jigoku-dani Stone Caves

Jigoku-dani Sekkutsu-butsu are carved in the style of Sembori (line engraving.) In the center of the front wall of the cave, there is a 1.4-meter-tall seated statue of Nyorai, which is believed to have been carved in the late Nara period.

⑩ Kubikiri Jizo

Kubikiri Jizo is a stone image of Jizo (bodhisattva) whose head is not connected to its body. A legend says that Mataemon Araki, a swordsman tested the sharpness of his sword here.

⑪ Asahi Kan'non

Asahi Kan'non is the stone Buddha triad carved on the cliff along Takizaka path. The image of Miroku Bosatsu in the center, and Jizo Bosatsu on both sides are all facing the East. They are called Asahi Kan'non because they glow in the morning sunlight.

⑫ Uguisu Waterfall

Uguisu-no-Taki is a 10-meter-tall small waterfall, which is the headwater of Saho River. The area around Uguisu-no-Taki is well-known for autumn colors of Japanese maple trees.

JOURNEY to BEAUTIFUL GARDENS in NARA

Numerous gardens have been created in Nara during its long history since the national capital, Heijō-kyō, was constructed 1,300 years ago. Many beautiful gardens still remain, retaining their original shape and design. Gardens have long been deeply associated with Japanese culture, and Japanese landscape gardening has developed to express many of its spiritual concepts.

Isuien Garden (Nara City)

Isuien is a quiet garden secluded from the surrounding noise of Nara City. It is a strolling-around-the-pond style garden designed to preserve the beautiful landscape of Nara, following the Japanese tradition of valuing seasonal natural beauty. Visitors can appreciate two gardens created from two different periods, the Edo and the Meiji eras. The garden is designated a Place of Scenic Beauty.

Zen-en (Front Garden), one of the gardens, was created in the early Edo period and is a calm and secluded place. Ko-en (Back Garden) was laid out in the Meiji era, skillfully incorporating the surrounding landscape as the backdrop of the garden. Zen-en spreads to the right of the entrance, and was made by a wealthy Nara-zarashi merchant. He transferred the Sanshutei Tea House to this site at the side of the Yoshiki-gawa Stream as his villa in 1670s to enjoy sencha (steeped green tea). He built another tea house called Teishuken and created a garden commanding a view of distant mountains. Stone lanterns are placed at some important spots around the pond, and rocks on the bank are arranged in the distinctive style of the Edo period. Today meals and teas are served at Sanshutei Tea House.

Ko-en is a strolling-around-the-pond style garden with a tsukiyama artificial hill. It was created by a wealthy businessman in the Meiji era. As visitors walk along a narrow path, their vision is abruptly widened, and a magnificent view spreads out in front of them. The garden incorporates the distant landscape of Mt. Wakakusa, Mt. Kasuga, Mt. Mikasa and even the adjacent Nandai-mon of Todai-ji Temple as part of its garden design. This is called shakkei, or "borrowed landscape."

Neiraku Art Museum built in the garden displays a wide range of works including bronze tools, rubbed copies and old mirrors of ancient China, ceramics of the Goryeo period of Korea, tea utensils and old tiles of Japan.

Isuien Garden

Open: 9:30–16:30. **Closed:** Tuesdays, year-end and New Year
Admission: Adults 900 yen. **Restaurant:** In January and February open only on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays (11:30–15:30).
Closed December 13, 2016 to January 31, 2017. **Access:** 15 min. walk from Kintetsu Nara Station. **Address:** 74 Suimon-cho, Nara City
Tel: 0742-25-0781. www.isuien.or.jp



Isuien Garden

Yoshikien Garden (Nara City)

Yoshikien Garden is on the site of Manishu-in, a residence of high priests of Kohfuku-ji Temple up until the Edo period. In the Meiji era, it became a private possession, and the present buildings and garden were built in 1919. After being used as a corporate guesthouse, it came into the hands of the Nara Prefectural Government toward the end of the Showa period, and has been open to the public since then. Yoshikien consists of three different types of gardens: The pond garden was designed to take advantage of the natural terrain, the moss garden is carpeted with cedar moss and the tea-ceremony flower garden is full of seasonal flowers. The garden incorporates Mt. Kasuga and Mt. Wakakusa as shakkei and offers visitors a peaceful moment.

Yoshikien Garden

Open: 9:00–17:00. April 1–February 14, March 1–March 31 (Closed: February 15–28). **Admission:** Adults 250 yen (free for visitors from abroad). **Access:** 15 min. walk from Kintetsu Nara Station
Address: 60-1, Noborioji-cho, Nara City. **Tel:** 0742-22-5911

Former Daijō-in Temple Garden (Nara City)

Daijō-in Temple Garden was devastated in the peasant uprisings during the Muromachi period, but later restored by the famed garden designer of the day Zenami. Court nobles, including the Shōgun Yoshimasa Ashikaga, often visited, and the garden was praised as the most beautiful garden in Nara. The Heritage Center, built in a corner of the garden, displays related historical materials. Events and gatherings using the tearoom and conference rooms are also held at times.

Former Daijō-in Temple Garden

Open: 9:00–17:00. **Closed:** Mondays. **Admission:** Adults 100 yen
Access: Nara Hotel bus stop. Bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara Station
Address: 1083-1 Takabatake-cho, Nara City
Tel: 0742-24-0808. www.narahotel.co.jp/daijyo_in_toha.html



Yoshikien Garden



Daijō-in Temple Garden

Heijo Palace East Palace Garden (Nara City)

The Heijo Palace was constructed in 710. Once there was a pond measuring 60 meters from east to west and 60 meters from south to north in the southeast corner of the palace. The area around the pond is now called East Palace Garden, To-in Teien.

In 1967 a garden site was discovered at the eastern end of the Heijo Palace Site, and a full-scale excavation was carried out to reveal the total picture of the garden. The garden, measuring 80 meters from east to west and 100 meters from south to north, was named East Palace Garden (To-in Teien). The garden was restored and has been open to the public since 1998. The garden is very elegantly designed with a pond in the center and several buildings around it, invoking the images of emperors and the aristocracy of the Nara period holding ceremonies and parties there.

Heijo Palace East Palace Garden (To-in Teien)

Open: 9:00-16:30. **Closed:** Mondays, year-end and New Year

Access: Bus from Kintetsu Yamato Saidaiji Station to Heijo Kyuseki stop. 10-minute. **Address:** Saki-cho, Nara City

Tel: 0742-30-6752. www.heijo-kyo.com/tointeien.html

Jiko-in Temple (Yamatokoriyama City)

Jiko-in Temple, which belongs to the Daitoku-ji division of the Rinzaï Zen sect, was founded in 1663 by Sadamasa (Sekishu) Katagiri to pray for the happiness of his father's departed soul. Sadamasa Katagiri was a feudal lord of the Yamatokoizumi-han and also the founder of Sekishu school of tea ceremony.

The temple is simple but elegant and has a beautiful dry landscaped garden, praised as one of the three most magnificent gardens in Nara. Visitors are enchanted by the bright contrast between the whiteness of the sand and the greenness of azalea shrubs, and the extraordinary view looking over the whole Yamato plain.

Jiko-in Temple

Open: 9:00-17:00. **Admission:** Adults 1,000 yen (including matcha green tea and sweets). **Access:** 15-minute walk from JR Yamato Koizumi Station or a short walk from Katagiri Nishi Shogakko bus stop. Bus from Kintetsu Koriyama Station

Address: 865 Koizumi-cho, Yamatokoriyama City

Tel: 0743-53-3004. www1.kcn.ne.jp/~jikoin



Heijo Palace East Palace Garden



Photo courtesy of Nara Venture

Jiko-in Temple

Taima-dera Temple Nakanobo (Katsuragi City)

Taima-dera Temple is a large temple founded in the 6th century Asuka Period. Many temple buildings, such as the East and West Pagoda, the Main Hall, the Golden Hall and many auxiliary temples, including Nakanobo, stand in the grounds. Some temple buildings, Koguen Garden and the Reihoden Museum that houses treasures associated with Princess Chujo are open to the public. Tree peonies in spring are especially attractive, and about 1,200 tree peonies in different colors bloom one after another from late April to early May. Apart from tree peonies, visitors can enjoy seasonal flowers such as hydrangeas, cotton roses and Chinese bellflowers.

Among the many cultural assets in Taima-dera Temple, Koguen Garden is a must-see. It was created in the Momoyama Period and is famous as one of the three magnificent gardens in Nara. Centering on a pond in the shape of the Chinese character for water in cursive style of writing, the garden skillfully incorporates the East Pagoda as its shakkei borrowed landscape.

Taima-dera Temple Nakanobo

Open: 9:00-17:00. **Admission:** Adults 500 yen, matcha green tea 400 yen, experience of copying Buddhist images 1,500 yen

Access: 15 min. walk from Kintetsu Taimadera Station

Address: 1263 Taima, Katsuragi City

Tel: 0745-48-2001. www.taimadera.org

Chikurin-in Temple Gunpoen Garden (Yoshino Town)

Yoshino's vast array of cherry blossoms in spring and its colored leaves in autumn are well known for their unparalleled beauty, but spending time there in winter enjoying spectacular views is another profound experience. Chikurin-in Temple is said to have been founded by Prince Shotoku, and is famous as a refined shukubo temple lodging loved by Hideyoshi Toyotomi, Akiko Yosano and many other writers and artists.

Its garden, Gunpoen, another of the three magnificent gardens in Nara, is a stroll-around-the-pond style garden with shakkei borrowed landscape. As wide as 33,000m², it was designed by Sen Rikyu for Hideyoshi Toyotomi. The garden is decorated with a profusion of weeping cherry blossoms blooming in the center of the pond in spring, surrounded by beautiful greenery in summer, adorned with bright colored leaves in autumn, and covered with snow under the quiet, brisk and clear air of winter. These days Gunpoen is popular as a hot spring inn with open-air baths attached to guest rooms and private baths.

Chikurin-in Temple Gunpoen Garden

Open: 8:00-17:00. **Admission:** Adults 300 yen (Gunpoen)

Access: Ropeway from Kintetsu Yoshino Station to Yoshinoyama stop and 25 min. walk from there. **Address:** 2142 Oaza Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun, Nara.

Tel: 0746-32-8081. www.chikurin.co.jp



Taima-dera Temple



Chikurin-in Temple

CONNECT WITH TRADITIONAL EVENTS, ILLUMINATIONS & NATURE



Mt. Wakakusa Grass Burning Festival

Date: January 28th, 2017
18:15- Fireworks / 18:30- Ignition

*January 29th in case of bad weather
(only mountain burning and fireworks, without events and procession).

Wakakusa Yamayaki is one of the major events in Nara that heralds the coming of spring. Held annually on the 4th Saturday in January, 342 meter high Mt. Wakakusa is set alight and burned. It is commonly said that Yamayaki represents the idea that the Shinto and Buddhist deities in Kasuga Taisha Shrine, Todaiji Temple and Kohfukuji Temple syncretize to calm and console the spirits of the dead, and furthermore to pray for the prevention of disaster in Nara and for world peace. However, there are various theories on the origin of the event. Three representative shrines and temples, Kasuga Taisha Shrine, Todai-ji Temple and Kohfuku-ji Temple, claim that Yamayaki originates in the woodcutter's festival to console the dead spirits buried in the keyhole-shaped burial mound on the top of Mt. Wakakusa.



Otateyama Festival

Date: January 25th -29th 2017

Since the Edo period, people in various parts of Nara have passed down the custom of Tateyama, in which Tsukurimono, a fabricated decoration, was used as a "scapegoat" to absorb evil or misfortune that might otherwise befall people. The tradition of Tateyama is continued to this day, and many local communities hold annual celebration to pray for good health. Tateyama Festival in Okakiuch, Koryo-cho, Atago Festival in Yagi-cho, Kashihara City, and Tenma Shrine Tateyama Festival in Higashinagara, Gose City. Based on the original Tateyama, Otateyama Festival was re-established in 2015.



Nara Rurie

Date: February 8th -14th 2017

"Kairo" means a cloister that encircles temple or shrine buildings and courtyards. It is a walkway around the precinct. "Shiawase" is an act of prayer by placing both hands together. Ancient Japanese used to place their hands together toward revered deities. The image of people with their hands together in prayer and gently bowing their heads has been part of the the landscape of Nara from ancient times to the present day. The azure color of lapis lazuli had been regarded as a sacred color. The lapis lazuli was brought to Japan along the Silk Road, as were precious stones that have fascinated Japan since ancient times.



Large Bowl Tea Ceremony Saidai-ji Temple

Date: January 15th 2017

According to the records preserved in Saidai-ji Temple, Ochamori-shiki derives from an event in 1239 when Eison Shonin, a Buddhist priest, treated the common people to powdered tea that was the remains of religious offerings to Yahata-jinja Shrine. Eison Shonin strictly observed Buddhist commandments and shunned drinking alcohol, so he took tea with the people instead. In those days, tea was considered an expensive medicine, but he dared to treat people to tea as a means of relief in a practice of social welfare. This Eison Shonin's virtuous deeds are believed to be the origin of Ochamori-shiki that has been continued for nearly 800 years.



Mt. Miune Rime Ice Festival

Date: Saturday, Sunday and public holidays
from January 7th to February 26th

Mitsue Village is located at the east end of Nara Prefecture bordering Mie Prefecture. Its name derives from the legendary myth that Yamato-hime-no-mikoto, the daughter of Emperor Suinin, left her own cane (tsue) to mark the candidate site for a Shinto Shrine to enshrine Amaterasu-omikami, the sun deity. The village was closely associated with Ise and Iga in Mie Prefecture, and it prospered as a post town in the Edo period because the main Ise road ran through it from east to west..

A TRIP TO ENCOUNTER WINTER WONDERS IN NARA

There are also other theories: It was generally believed that if Mt. Wakakusa was not burned in January, some inauspicious events would happen. Another theory claims that it passes down the ancient custom of Noyaki (field burning) that hastens the early spring shoots.

Although its origin is unclear, Yamayaki is certainly an important traditional event in winter, and it also plays the role of a fire prevention campaign. After a 600-firework display, the whole 33 hectare mountain is burned, and blazing fire colors the winter sky red.

That whole burning mountain rising up into the night sky is a spectacular sight. Recently, the fireworks have become popular because this is the largest display in Nara, and also, fireworks in winter are unusual in Japan. The fireworks are must-see along with the traditional events of Wakakusa Yamayaki.

Venue: Around Mt. Wakakusa in Nara Park

Access: Bus from Kintetsu Nara Station or JR Nara Station to Todai-ji-daibutu-den/Kasuga-taisha-mae bus stop. 15-minute walk to the foot of Mt. Wakakusa.

View Points: Yamayaki can be seen from several places in the Nara Park: IRAKA; the Kasugano-enchi Field; and Tobihino Field.

Four giant Oateyama are constructed on four floats and lights are placed inside each one. These are associated with Four Devas which are guardian deities of Nara. Local people then pull the decorated floats around Dai-goku-den Hall in the Heijo Palace Site at night. Along with other traditional events from various parts of Nara, the festive mood rises to a climax with this winter night festival.

Venue: The Heijo Palace Site

Access: 15-minute walk from Kintetsu Yamato Saidai-ji Station. A free shuttle bus is available from the South Exit of Kintetsu Yamato Saidai-ji Station and JR Nara Station.



www.ooteyama.jp

The time is early spring according to the calendar, but it is still bitterly cold. The event "Shiawase Kairo Nara Rurie" invites visitors into the picturesque world of lapis lazuli along lantern-lit paths that link the three representative shrines and temples, Kasuga Taisha Shrine, Kohfuku-ji Temple and Todai-ji Temple during special night openings.

Enjoy the heart-warming illumination in winter with all of Nara's prayers. Wish for happiness to come by placing hands together in the shrines and temples and accordingly sanctifying the mind. Wish for world peace along with the offering of the prayers of many, and hoping that the beautiful earth in lapis lazuli color will shine forever.



www.rurie.jp/en

In addition, another important key word is Ichimi Wago, which means being comforted by sharing something together in harmony. In the ceremony, we do not drink tea separately; there are no individual bowls for each person. Buddhist priests make tea in a large bowl and the guests help each other to drink tea from the same bowl, which is intended to cultivate a feeling of unity in people's minds.

The Ochamorishiki, founded by Eison Shonin, embodies the ideology of Ichimi Wago, an intrinsic essence of Buddhist doctrine. It goes beyond the superficial meaning of Buddhist commandments that simply prohibits drinking alcohol.

During the present day ceremony, Buddhist priests make tea in a large bowl, about 30 cm in diameter, and serve it to the guests. A guest lifts the large bowl and drinks tea with the assistance of neighbors and then passes the bowl of tea to the next, which produces a friendly atmosphere.

Opening hours: 10:00-15:00

Guest fee: 1,000 yen *No reservation needed

Venue: Komyo-den Hall, Saidai-ji Temple

Address: 1-1-5 Saidaiji Shiba-cho, Nara City

Mt. Miune rises 1,235 meters high at the southeast of Mitsue Village, and it is famous for rime ice in winter, which is rarely seen in the Kinki area. The Muhyo Festival is held in Mitsue Youth Traveler's Village at the foot of the mountain from January to February, which attracts many mountain climbers. (It is a ten-kilometers round trip and takes four hours. Winter mountain-climbing equipment including climbing irons is necessary). The breathtaking view from the mountain top and Hachiman-daira is spectacular. Visitors can enjoy fantastic scenery of rime ice, and many pleasant events and rare treats to warm the heart and body in the Muhyo Festival.

Opening hours: Muhyo Festival 13:00-

Venue: Mt Miune, Mitsue Youth Traveler's Village

Access: Bus "Muhyo-go," from Kintetsu Haibara Station.

*Bus only runs during the Festival period.

Tel: 0745-95-2070

www.mitsue-kanko.jp

SEASONAL FLOWERS IN NARA

Botan / Winter Peony

Sekko-ji Temple

300 winter-flowering peony trees bloom in red, white, purple and pink around the temple grounds.

Best period: Early December to late January. **Address:** 387 Someno, Katsuragi City. **Access:** 13-minute walk from Kintetsu Nijo Jinja-guchi Station. **Tel:** 0745-48-2031

Hase Temple

Known as "a flower temple," many varieties of flowers can be seen here.

Best period: Late December to late January. **Address:** 731-1 Hatsuse, Sakurai City. **Access:** 15-minute walk from Kintetsu Hasedera Station. **Tel:** 0744-47-7001

Ume / Japanese Plum

Hokke-ji Temple

Many varieties of ume tree in red and white.

Best period: January to March
Address: 882 Hokkeji-cho, Nara City. **Access:** Bus from Yamato Saidaiji Staion to Hokkeji. 3-minute walk. **Tel:** 0742-33-2261

Yamato Folk Park

150 white "Shiro-kaga" ume trees blossom in the "Minpaku plum grove". **Best period:** January to March. **Address:** 545 Yata-cho, Yamatokoriyama City, Nara. **Access:** Bus from JR Yamato Koizumi or Kintetsu Koriyama stations to Yata Higashi-yama. 10-minute walk
Tel: 0743-53-3171 (Nara Prefectural Folk Museum)

The Museum Yamato Bunkakan (Bunkaen)

130 trees with 70 varieties of white and red ume bloom in the garden. **Best period:** Late January to mid March. **Address:** 1-11-16 Gakuen-minami, Nara City. **Access:** 7-minute walk from Kintetsu Gakuen-mae Station. **Tel:** 0742-45-0544

Nara Park (Kataoka Plum Grove)

250 ume trees are planted in Kataoka ume grove in Nara Park. **Best period:** Late February to mid March. **Address:** Takabatake-cho, Nara City. **Access:** Bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara stations to Kasuga-taisha Omote-sando. Short walk. **Tel:** 0742-22-0375 (Nara Park Office)

Tsubaki / Camellia

Tamatsura Shrine

500 camellia trees with 200 different varieties are planted here. **Best period:** February to late March. **Address:** 383 Jionji, Sakurai City, Nara. **Access:** 10-minute walk from Kintetsu Yamato Asakura Station
Tel: 0744-42-6633 (Omiwa Shrine)

Tsubaki Juan

With about 1,000 different varieties, 5,000-6,000 camellia trees are open to the public. **Best period:** February to early April
Address: 556 Ikenouchi-cho, Yamatokoriyama City, Nara
Access: Bus from Kintetsu Koriyama Station to Katagiri Ikenouchi. Short walk. **Tel:** 0743-52-6126

Tsubaki-yama, Yamanobe

10,000 camellia trees with about 1,000 varieties, including some original varieties. **Best period:** Mid March to early April. **Address:** 697-1 Jionji, Sakurai City, Nara. **Access:** 15-minute walk from Kintetsu Yamato Asakura Station. **Tel:** 0744-42-2757

Kaizan-do Hall of Todai-ji Temple

(one of the best 3 camellia trees in Nara)

The garden is not open to public, but it is possible to view the "nori-koboshi" ume trees over the hedge. **Best period:** March to April
Address: 406-1 Zoshi-cho, Nara City. **Access:** Bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara Stations to either Todai-ji Daibutsu-den bus stop or Kasuga Taisha-mae. 15-minute walk. **Tel:** 0742-22-5511 (Todai-ji Temple)

Aun-ji Temple

Wild camellia around the remains of the tower.

Best period: Late March to early April. **Address:** 361 Kose, Gose City, Nara. **Access:** 10-minute walk from Yoshino-guchi Station on the Kintetsu Line. **Tel:** 0745-62-3346 (Tourist Association Office of Gose City)

Denko-ji Temple (one of the best 3 camellia trees in Nara)

Unique variety called "Chiri-tsubaki," named for shedding its crimson petals one by one. **Best period:** Late March to early April
Address: 24 Ogawa-cho, Nara City. **Access:** 15-minute walk from either JR or Kintetsu Nara Station. **Tel:** 0742-22-1120

Nara Prefecture Gokoku Shrine

10,000 camellia trees bloom, with about 1,000 different varieties including an early-flowering camellia. Tsubaki-matsuri festival in late March. **Best period:** Late March to mid April. **Address:** 1984 Furui-cho, Nara City. **Access:** Bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara Stations to Gokoku-jinja. 3-minute walk. **Tel:** 0742-61-2468

Kosho-ji Temple

A unique, 6m high ancient camellia variety which blooms in many different colors. **Best period:** Late March to mid April
Address: Kake, Soni Village, Uda-gun, Nara. **Access:** Bus from Kintetsu Habra Station to Kake Nishi-guchi. 5-minute walk
Tel: 0745-94-2106 (Soni Village Tourist Association Office)

Byakugo-ji Temple (one of the best 3 camellia trees in Nara)

"Goshiki tsubaki" or five-colored camellia, named for its flowers in 5 different colors. Designated as a natural monument. **Best period:** Late March to mid April. **Address:** 392 Byakugoji-cho, Nara City. **Access:** 20-minute walk from Takabatake Jutaku bus stop, a bus ride from either JR or Kintetsu Nara Station. **Tel:** 0742-26-3392

WINTER EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Tour of Temple's treasures in Mt. Yoshino

Until March 31

Special collections of Buddhist statues and treasures are on exhibit during this period. "Tour of Temple's treasure in Mt. Yoshino:

Kinpusen-ji, Kizou-in, Chikurin-in, Sakura-moto-bou, Dainichi-ji, Tounan-in, Zenpuku-ji, Kougan-ji and Nyoirin-ji.

Address: Yoshino-yama, Yoshino-cho, Yoshino-gun, Nara

Access: Ropeway from Kintetsu Yoshino Station to Sanjo.

Tel: 0746-32-8371 (Kinpusen-ji Temple)

Winter Exhibition of Temple Treasure in Kinkaku Ukimi-do Reiho-kan at Abe Monju-in Temple

Until February 28, 2017

The four Buddhist statues; Kaiun Benzai-ten, Abe-no-Nakamaro and Abe-no-Seimei, and Guardian Deity Kuyousei, are on display at Kinkaku Ukimi-do Reihokan.

Admission: Main Hall: 700 yen, Ukimi-do: 700 yen, Combination ticket: 1,200 yen. **Address:** 645 Abe, Sakurai City

Access: Bus from JR/Kintetsu Sakurai stations to Abe Monjuin-mae.

1-minute walk. **Tel:** 0744-43-0002. www.abemonjuin.or.jp

Ominugui at Yakushi-ji Temple

December 29 (13:00)

The statues of the Yakushi Nyorai and the Nikko & Gakko Bosatsu are cleaned. **Address:** 457 Nishi-no-kyo machi, Nara City

Access: Short walk from Kintetsu Nishinokyo Station

Tel: 0742-33-6001. www.nara-yakushiji.com

Onmatsuri Festival and Art collection of Kasuga Worship at Nara National Museum

Until January 15

Exhibition of paintings, literature and handcrafts relating to the Onmatsuri Festival. **Address:** 50 Nobori-oji-cho, Nara City

Access: 15-minute walk from the Kintetsu Nara Station

Tel: 050-5542-8600. www.narahaku.go.jp

Ohrae and Joya Matsuri at Omiwa Shrine

December 31 (14:00)

Ritual of purification of people's sins over the last half year. Sins are transferred to paper dolls and given to visitors.

Address: 1422 Miwa, Sakurai City, Nara. **Access:** 5-minute walk from

JR Miwa Station. **Tel:** 0744-42-6633. www.oomiwa.or.jp

Exhibition of Western and Japanese Paintings in Modern Japan at Nakano Art Museum

Until January 29, 2017

Introducing the works of Western & Japanese-Style painters representing Meiji, Taisho & Showa periods.

Admission: 600 yen. **Address:** 9-946-2 Ayame-ike-minami, Nara City

Access: 8-minute walk from Kintetsu Gakuen-mae Station

Tel: 0742-48-1167. www.nakano-museum.jp

Incense & Tea Ceremony Dedicated for Kisshoten at Yakushi-ji Temple

January 15 (9:30-15:30)

Buddhist service and incense lighting ceremony.

Admission: 5,000 yen. **Address:** 457 Nishi-no-kyo machi, Nara City

Access: Short walk from Kintetsu Nishinokyo Station

Tel: 0742-33-6001. www.nara-yakushiji.com

Bamboo Sake Festival at Daian-ji Temple

January 23, (8:30-16:00)

A Buddhist service. It is believed that drinking sasa-zake from green bamboo sake cups is good for preventing cancer.

Admission: 500 yen with a cup of sasa-zake. **Address:** 2-18-1 Daian-ji,

Nara City. **Access:** Bus from JR or Kintetsu Stations to Daian-ji. 8-minute walk. **Tel:** 0742-61-6312. www.nara-daianji.or.jp

Collection of The World of Beauty by Kosho Shimizu, Ikuo Hirayama, Kenkichi Sugimoto at Nara Prefectural Museum of Art

January 14-March 15

Exhibition focused on three artists connected with Nara, presenting paintings on the theme of "Omizutori Festival."

Admission: Free for foreign passport holders. **Address:** 10-6 Nobori-oji-cho, Nara City. **Access:** 5-minute walk from Kintetsu Nara

Station. **Tel:** 0742-23-3968. www.pref.nara.jp/11842.htm

Kagura Hajime-shiki Festival at Kasuga Taisha Shrine

January 3

New Year's Kagura performance of sacred Shinto music and dance

performed by shrine maidens. **Address:** 160 Kasugano-cho, Nara City

Access: Bus from Kintetsu Nara Station to Kasuga-taisha-honden.

Tel: 0742-22-7788. www.kasugataisha.or.jp

New Year's Goma Service at Jurin-in Temple

January 28 (13:00-16:00)

Buddhist rite of burning wooden pieces on the altar for spiritual purification. Amazake (sweet sake) is offered to visitors.

Address: 27 Jurinin-cho, Nara City **Access:** 20-minute walk from Kintetsu Nara Station. **Tel:** 0742-26-6635. www.jurin-in.or.jp

Setsubun-e Saito Ogoma-ku at Gango-ji Temple

February 3 (12:00-15:00)

Buddhist ceremony of replacing two statues of Fudo-myoh in the Main

Hall. A fire walking ceremony is held in the grounds. Finally, the Fuku

Mame Maki soybean-throwing ceremony takes place, with people

yelling "Fuku-wa-uchi, Oni-wa-uchi" Votive wooden tablets are given

to people joining the ceremony. **Address:** 11 Chuin-cho, Nara City

Access: 15-minute walk from Kintetsu Nara Station.

Tel: 0742-23-1377. www.gangoji.or.jp

Dwarf Plum Tree Exhibition at Sugawara

Tenman-gu Shrine February 11-March 11

130 different varieties of bonsai plum trees in around

200 pots, including original varieties from the

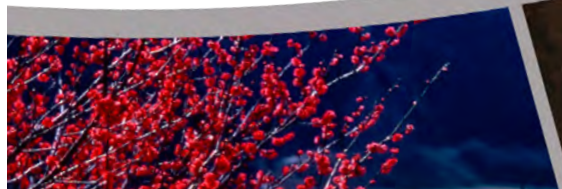
Sugawara Shrine. **Admission:** 500 yen

Address: 518 Sugawara-cho, Nara City

Access: 10-minute walk from Kintetsu

Amagatuji Station **Tel:** 0742-45-3576

www.sugawaratenmangu.com



WINTER PRAYERS



PRACTICES of BUDDHISM

Year-begin Rituals and Ceremonies Welcoming New Year with hope

Ichigan-foju Ema-yaki Otondo

Abe Monju-in Temple. **January 1, 12:00 midnight**

Votive wooden tablets of the previous year are burned in the New Year's bonfire. **Address:** 645 Abe, Sakurai City, Nara

Access: Bus to Abe-Monjuin from JR/Kintetsu Sakurai Station

*On New Year's Eve, buses run from the North Exit. **Tel:** 0744-43-0002

Sagicho Otondo

Kisshoso-ji Temple. **January 14, from 19:40**

Largest scale tondo bon fire ceremony in Nara (prefecture's intangible cultural property). Kisshoso-ji Temple is the birthplace of Enno-gyoja, the founder of Shugendo religion. **Address:** 279 Chihara, Gose City, Nara. **Access:** 5 minute walk from JR Tamade Station.

Tel: 0745-62-3472

Otondo

Omiwa Shrine. **January 15, 8:00-16:30**

Eating rice cakes baked in the sacred fire is believed to bring good health. **Address:** 1422 Miwa, Sakurai City, Nara. **Access:** 5-minute walk from JR Miwa Station. **Tel:** 0744-42-6633

Kasuga Otondo

Tobihino Field (Kasuga Taisha Shrine precincts.) **January 28, 13:00**

Otondo is a traditional ritual for New Year's Day of the lunar calendar, where a bonfire is lit in Tobihino Field, in the precincts of Kasuga Grand Shrine. **Address:** 160 Kasugano-cho, Nara City
Access: Take a bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara station, get off at Kasuga Taisha Omote-Sando Stop. **Tel:** 0742-22-7788 (Kasuga Taisha Shrine)

Shuni-e (Omizu-tori)

Nigatsu-do Hall in the precincts of Todai-ji Temple. **March 1 - 14**
(March 1-11, 13, 7:00 p.m./March 12, 7:30 p.m./March 14, 6:30 p.m.)

When the Shuni-e Omizu-tori water-drawing ceremony begins at Todai-ji Temple's Nigatsu-do Hall, spring is just around the corner. **Address:** 406-1 Zoshi-cho, Nara City. **Access:** Take a bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara station, get off the bus at Todai-ji Daibutsu-den/Kasuga Taisha-mae stop, and walk for 15 minutes. **Tel:** 0742-22-5511

Shuni-e/Hanae-shiki

Yakushi-ji Temple, Kondo (The main hall) **March 25-31**

(Onioi Ceremony: March 31, 20:30)

The Shuni-e ceremony at Yakushi-ji Temple is also known as "Hanae-shiki" flower offering ceremony when artificial flowers offered to the principal image of the temple. **Address:** 457 Nishinokyo-cho, Nara City. **Access:** Walk from the Kintetsu Nishinokyo Station or take a bus from JR Nara Station and get off at Yakushi-ji Stop
Tel: 0742-33-6001

Setsubun Rituals in Nara

February 3

Although Setsubun is originally the days before the beginning of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, it usually refers to the spring Setsubun, because February 3, the lunar New Year's Eve is the day when the cold winter ends and the New Year begins the next day. Setsubun reminds people of bean scattering, but in fact, it is derived from the manners and customs of China.

Setsubun is a ritual to ward off evil, and events such as Oni-oi and Oni-yarai in which ogres are driven away can be seen in different places. Many of them are quite unusual, and experiencing the history through these rituals is fun and unique in Nara where old shrines and temples abound.

Setsubun Hoshi Matsuri (Star Festival) at Obitoke Temple

Prayers for good health are offered during religious service for each person's star of the year, and Fuku-mame (lucky beans) are given to visitors. **Address:** 734 Imaichi-cho, Nara City. **Access:** Walk for 5 minutes from JR Obitoke Station or take a bus from Kintetsu Nara Station, get off at Shimoyama Stop, and walk for 10 minutes. **Tel:** 0742-61-3861

Setsubun Mantoro (Lantern Festival) at Kasuga Taisha Shrine

Candle fire lights up 2000 stone lanterns and 1000 hanging lanterns in the shrine precincts. **Address:** 160 Kasugano-cho, Nara City
Access: Take a bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara station, get off at Kasuga Taisha Omote-sando Stop. **Tel:** 0742-22-7788

Setsubun-e Saito Ogomaku at Gango-ji Temple

Prayers for warding off evil, the safety of family and fulfilment of wishes are offered. **Address:** 11 Chuin-cho, Nara City.
Access: 15-minute walk from Kintetsu Nara Station or 20 minutes from JR Nara Station. **Tel:** 0742-23-1377

Setsubun-e Daihoyo Onioi Ceremony at Shigisan Chogosonshi-ji Temple

Chased by monks, red and blue ogres run around the main hall. **Address:** 2280-1 Shigi-san Heguri-cho, Ikoma-gun, Nara
Access: Take a bus from JR Oji Station (North Exit) or Kintetsu Shigisan-shita Station, get off at Shigi Ohashi Stop, and walk for 5 minutes.

Setsubun and Hoshi Matsuri Ceremony at Todai-ji Temple

Old talismans are burned and the stone lanterns around Nigatsu-do Hall are lit at night. **Address:** 406-1 Zoshi-cho, Nara City
Access: Bus from JR or Kintetsu Nara Station to Todai-ji Daibutsu-den/

MEET THE TRANSLATORS

Yasuko Otani

When I retired from my job three years ago, I had a dream of becoming a translator of English. At that time, I did not know what to do or how to develop my abilities enough, I was only certain that I loved reading English novels and journals, so I determined to spend my remaining days studying English. Until my retirement, I had worked as an office worker for seven years in charge of English related tasks in the cultural heritage protection cooperation office. This fostered a gradual attraction towards English translation.

English and Japanese are totally different in their history, grammar, and historical way of thinking, which makes translations more difficult. The sentence structure and rhythm are also different. I found a special delight when I was able to translate properly. I think all languages tend to have some similarities; Japanese ancient ideas, believed to be indigenous, can be found in the West. I believe that translation builds bridges between languages. Everything depends on the translators' skills, experience, and creativity. I will keep striving towards my dream job.

Chikako Sakamoto

I was born in a mountain village in the middle of Nara where the population is small, and there are only mountains and rice fields. Once, an ancient dynasty was located in Nara, and this region is known for its many ancient tumuli and stonework remains. Takamatstzuka Tumulus, with its beautiful mural paintings, is near my home-town. My family got moved around a lot for work, so I left Nara at early age, and spent my childhood in several prefectures in western Japan. I came back to Nara in my mid-teens, and I have lived here ever since. Since I got married, I've lived in Ikaruga, where World Heritage Horyuji Temple, the world's oldest wooden building, is situated.

I like reading books, especially translated fiction and I like studying language, so I always thought I wanted to do a translating job someday. I relearned English and translation all over again in adulthood and I'm very happy to have this opportunity to introduce Nara to foreign tourists. I hope that many people will know about the attractions of Nara and our seasonal delicacies. It is difficult to try everything during your short stay. Please make repeat visits to taste seasonal delicacies; you are guaranteed a more interesting and fulfilling trip.

Yuriko Yano

I was born and raised in Nara. I am an illustrator, and I am also doing some jobs related to English. Since I was a child, I have loved drawing and painting. I feel happy when I am drawing, and I feel even happier when I can make other people happy. After graduating from university, I worked for a financial company. However, I could not give up my dreams of studying English and painting more, so I decided to study in London for nine months.

After I came back to Japan, I got a job drawing illustrations for a coloring book at an illustration agency where I used to work as an intern. The book, "Manga Doodles", is a half illustrated book, so the readers have to finish the rest of the illustrations using their own imaginations. As Manga was also becoming very popular in Europe at that time, I was asked to draw in Manga style. It was a moment when I felt lucky to be born Japanese. My love for English and Japan led me to get an official Guide-Interpreter licence. In the future, I would like to share many fascinating aspects of Nara and Japan with people from all over the world. I really hope that they will enjoy Japan!

Masako Tsuji

It has only been 3 years since I moved to Nara. I think Nara is a place where it is as if time has stopped since ancient times, with not many things having changed. Nara still shows the landscape as it used to be in the past, not being covered by the layers of different cultures throughout its history. Therefore, if you are familiar with the history and literature of Nara, it can help you to go back a thousand years in your mind and enjoy being a part of the original story. However, for the majority of tourists, even for Japanese, just a little more information and guidance will make the visit more dramatic.

I have started working in Naramachi (traditional town) recently, and meet many foreign people who have visited Nara because they are interested in Japanese culture. When I started my career as an architect, the trend was the opposite, and everybody wanted something different from others. But now, when I see Naramachi, I have to agree with the successful result of the design based on the habits or customs derived from our traditions. With a little more information, this feeling can be shared with people from every part of the world!

Mari Kitaoka

For the last three years, my sister-in-law, her former co-worker and I have been touring historical places, mainly around Kyoto, Nara and Shiga. More than 30 years have passed since I got married and came to Nara, and my impression of Nara today is that it is brighter and more vigorous than before. Nara City's World Heritage Sites are rich in green as is Nara Park, where people enjoy feeding friendly deer that bow for deer crackers. The whole of the Prefecture is associated with ancient records and literature that are rich in history, culture and nature, and they all evoke romanticism for the ancient days in visitors' minds.

"Omotenashi" (hospitality) is not merely showing tourists what Japanese people think is "typically Japanese." Improving transportation links and increasing the amount of accommodation are also necessary. If translating some articles from "Simply Nara", offering information of various dimensions could help tourists find more options and stay for a night or two in Nara, I would be happy.

Kazuko Yoshikawa

I have lived in Nara for more than 30 years and I am a great fan of Nara now, but it was not very long ago that I was charmed by Nara. I moved to Nara after marriage for family reasons, but I was still not really interested in Nara. The turning point arrived after more than 20 years. One spring I went to see a famous ceremony at Todai-ji Temple called "Omizutori". Though I had lived in Nara for so many years, I didn't know the way to Nigatsu-do Hall where the ceremony was held. My friend led me to the site. How ashamed I was! I decided to learn about Nara and become well-informed about it.

I was especially interested in the ancient history of Nara. Nara was where the first Japanese central administration was established in the 3rd century and was the political and cultural center throughout the ancient period. I feel Nara is the birthplace of our nation. Studying the ancient history of Nara means, in a sense, seeking the roots of Japanese culture. I have been working as a volunteer English guide since then for more than 10 years. Nara has become my second, but number 1, home-town now. I would like to continue learning about Nara and conveying its charm to domestic and foreign visitors.

EXPLORE THE WORLD OF KIKI MAN'YO

VOL
THREE

Kojiki and Nihonshoki

Kojiki is the oldest chronicle in Japan, written on the orders of Emperor Tenmu, and compiled by Empress Genmei. It is composed of three volumes: first, middle, and lower. The first volume contains collected myths about Japanese deities. The middle and lower describe achievements of previous Emperors, from legendary first Emperor Jinmu (712-586 B.C.) to 31st Empress Suiko (554-628), over 1300 years.

The Nihon Shoki chronicles were created by order of Emperor Tenmu in 720. It is a long history book composed of 30 volumes and 1 imperial family tree. It begins from myths describing the birth of Japan, as does the Kojiki, and covers up to the era of Empress Jito.

The compilation of the Kojiki and Nihonshoki started in Nara, a place in Japan like no other, with its rich history, literature and regional traditions passed down since the Nara era. Today, you can still see the landscapes of those days of Kiki Man'yo and stand on spots associated with the myths and traditions of 1300 years past.



"Ichigon-san" the Great Deity Hitokoto-nushi of Katsuragi and Emperor Yuryaku

The Kojiki tells that when 21st Emperor Yuryaku was hunting on Mt. Katsuragi, he encountered a procession exactly like his own. He said, "I am the only emperor of Yamato. Whose procession is that?" The other side said the same thing. Angered, the imperial attendants aimed their arrows at the rivals, who also took aim at them. So the Emperor proposed they introduce themselves to each other.

The rival announced, "I am the Great Deity Hitokoto-nushi of Katsuragi who gives an oracle in a single word whether the fortune is good or bad, and presides over the magical power of language." In awe, the Emperor lay down his weapons and ordered his attendants to take off their clothes, and present them to the deity. This pleased Hitokoto-nushi greatly.

Katsuragi Hitokotonushi Shrine is dedicated to this Great Deity. On the evening of the annual winter solstice, the "Ichiyoraifukusai" festival takes place. People present votive lights before the deity and pray for good luck. This festival can be traced back to a secret night time ceremony from the Muromachi era.

Katsuragi Hitokotonushi Shrine

Address: 432 Oaza Moriwaki, Gose City, Nara. Access: Bus from Kintetsu Gose Station to the Miyado-bashi Stop, and approx. 30-minute walk. Tel: 0745-66-0178

STORY ONE

STORY TWO

Moto Ise Old Shrine to Worship Amaterasu, the Supreme Sun Deity

During the Eastern Expedition of Emperor Jinmu as described in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, Emperor Jinmu enshrined the Supreme Sun Deity Amaterasu in Akino before marching to the conquest of Yamato. The Supreme Sun Deity Amaterasu is the main deity enshrined in Aki Shrine. The foundation story of this shrine says that Akihime-no-kami, a descendant of Susanoo-no-Mikoto, enshrined Amaterasu there. This is one of the places called Moto Ise, where Amaterasu was once enshrined before Ise Jingu Shrine was built.

A Noh stage constructed in the Edo era still exists in the shrine precincts. It is said that Nagayori Oda, a descendant of Nobunaga Oda donated it. In June every year, the nationally renowned "Akino Hotaru Noh" is held there.

Aki Shrine

Address: 252 Ouda Hasama, Uda City, Nara. Access: Bus from Kintetsu Haibara Station to Ouda High School Stop and an approx. 5-minute walk. Tel: 0745-82-2457 (Uda City Tourism Division)



Deity of Sweets, Tajimamori with Noble Pure Heart

Legend says Tajimamori was ordered by 11th Emperor Suinin to leave Japan and bring back the elixir of eternal youth and longevity. After searching for 10 years, he found a fruit called "Tokijiku-no Kaku-no-Mi", regarded as a secret medicine. He brought it back to Japan, only to find that Emperor had already died. He made an offering of the fruit at the Emperor's mausoleum, crying so sorrowfully that he finally died. A small island in the moat is said to be the tomb of Tajimamori.

After planting the seeds of the fruit, tachibana citrus sprouted. Since then, that place came to be called "Tachibana." Tachibana Temple is said to stand on the birth place of Prince Shotoku, and is one of seven temples erected by him. A statue of Tajimamori is enshrined in the main hall. He also brought back brown sugar, so is considered the patron ancestor of sweets.

Tachibana-dera Temple Address: 532 Tachibana, Asuka-mura, Takaichi-gun, Nara.

Access: Bus from Kintetsu Kashihara Jingu-mae Station or Kintetsu Asuka Station to Kawahara or Oka Hashimoto Stop, and approx. 3-minute walk. Tel: 0744-54-2026

STORY THREE

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「Simply Nara」ー シンプルでありながら、深く奈良の魅力を紹介する冊子

奈良県では翻訳者として活躍を目指す女性を対象に、起業・就労などの支援を行っています。
「Simply NARA」は、「奈良県の女性翻訳者」のアイデアで奈良の魅力を語る、外国人向け観光情報誌です。奈良のシンプルで奥深い情報をお届けします。

写真協力: 奈良県ビジターズビューロー、奈良市観光協会

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NARA PREFECTURE

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