



Visit Nara



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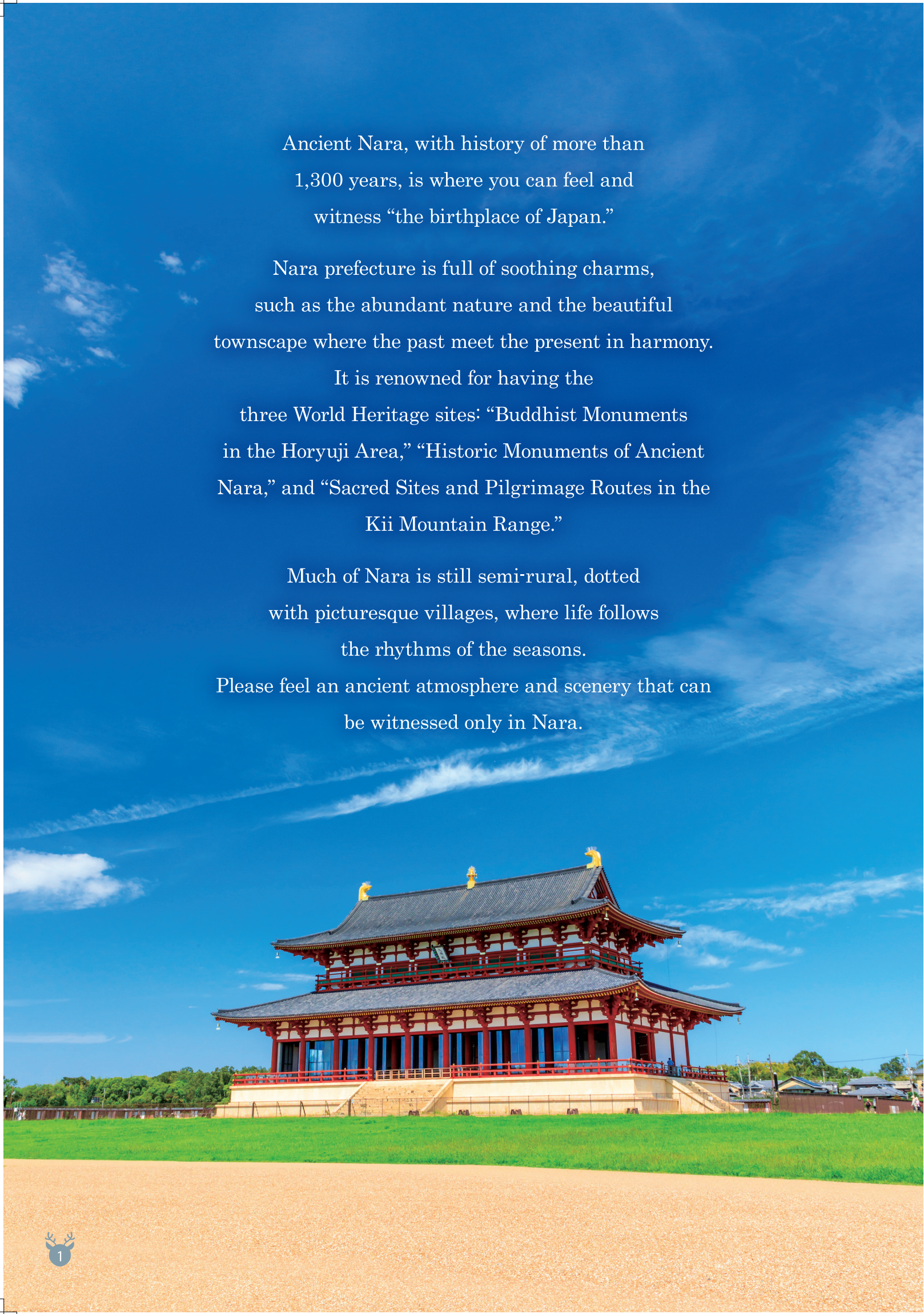
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VISIT NARA

Travel Guide





Ancient Nara, with history of more than 1,300 years, is where you can feel and witness “the birthplace of Japan.”

Nara prefecture is full of soothing charms, such as the abundant nature and the beautiful townscape where the past meet the present in harmony.

It is renowned for having the three World Heritage sites: “Buddhist Monuments in the Horyuji Area,” “Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara,” and “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range.”

Much of Nara is still semi-rural, dotted with picturesque villages, where life follows the rhythms of the seasons. Please feel an ancient atmosphere and scenery that can be witnessed only in Nara.

Major Areas



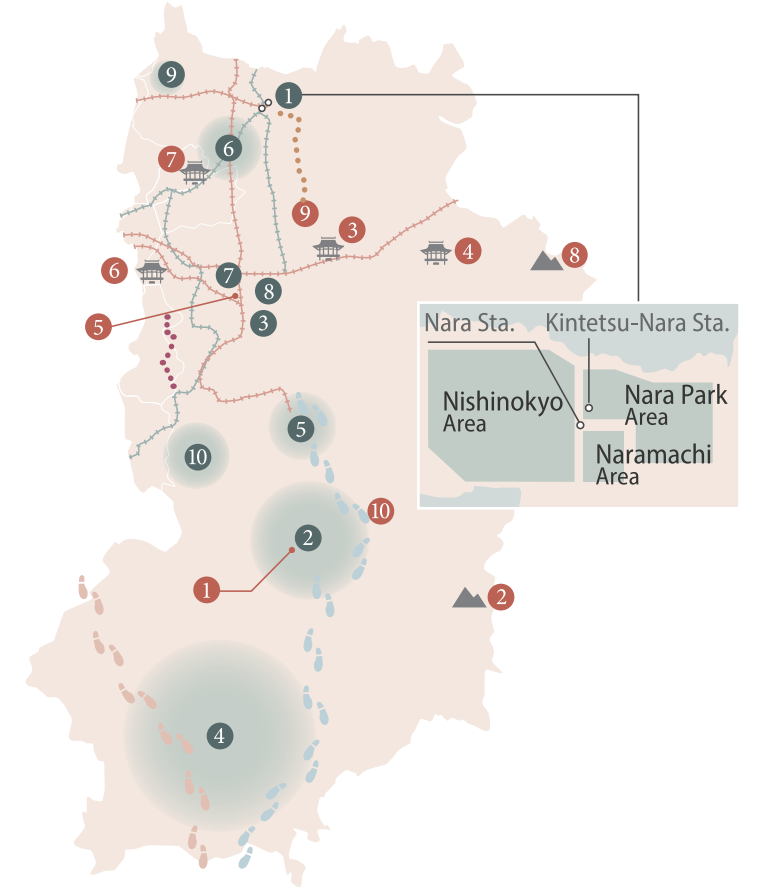
AREAS

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| ① Nara | ⑤ Yoshino |
| • Nara Park | ⑥ Yamato Koriyama |
| • Naramachi | ⑦ Imaicho |
| • Nishinokyo | ⑧ Sakurai |
| ② Dorogawa Onsen | ⑨ Ikoma |
| ③ Asuka | ⑩ Gojo |
| ④ Totsukawa | |

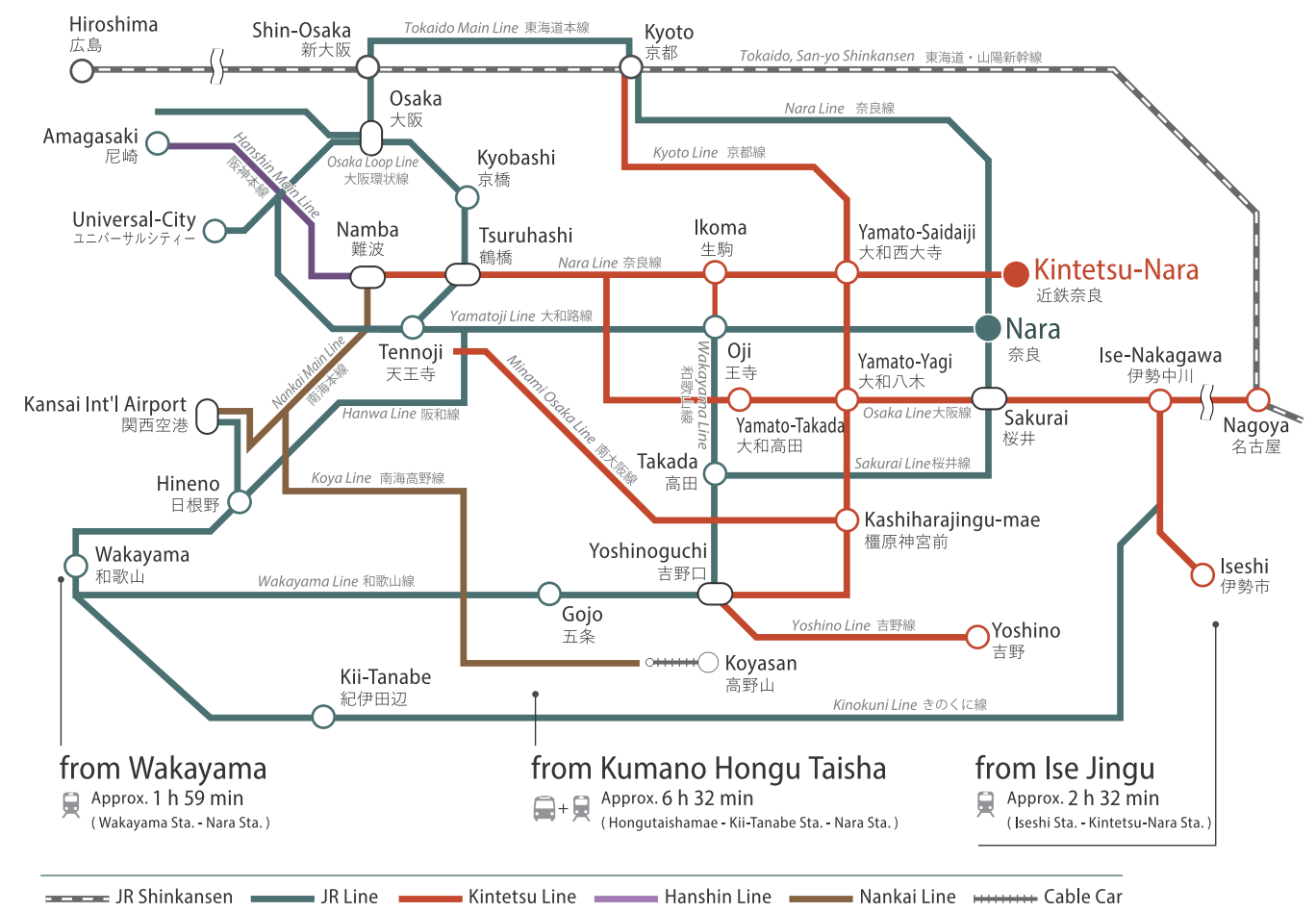
DESTINATIONS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| ① Mitarai Valley | ⑥ Taimadera Temple |
| ② Odaigahara Plateau | ⑦ Horyuji Temple |
| ③ Hasedera Temple | ⑧ Soni Highland |
| ④ Murouji Temple | ⑨ Yamanobe-no-Michi |
| ⑤ Kashihara Jingu Shrine | ⑩ Omine-Okugake Trail |

— Kumano Kodo Kohechi Pilgrimage Route — Omine-Okugake Trail
— Katsuragi Kodo Path — Yamanobe-no-Michi
— JR Line — Kintetsu Line — Temple — Highland Area



Train



NATURE

Visitors to Nara can find untouched primeval forest, rolling hills, and other rich landscapes shaped by the region's long history. The natural scenery in and around Nara provides the perfect opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the changing seasons.



Mitarai Valley

みたらい渓谷

Visitors flock to see the red autumn foliage, contrasting with the emerald green river.



Odaigahara

大台ヶ原

Odaigahara Plateau is one of the 100 mountains in Japan chosen for their beautiful views, and spiritual and historical importance.



Omine-Okugake Trail

大峯奥駈道

The Omine-Okugake Trail is a World Heritage path that runs through Totsukawa and connects Yoshino and Omine with the sacred Kumano Sanzan shrines in Wakayama.

Mt. Kasuga Primeval Forest

春日山原始林

Untouched for thousands of years, Mt. Kasuga Primeval Forest stretches out, behind Kasugataisha Shrine. This is a rare ecosystem with over 175 types of trees, wild animals, rare birds and insects.



Hanayagura Observatory

花矢倉展望台

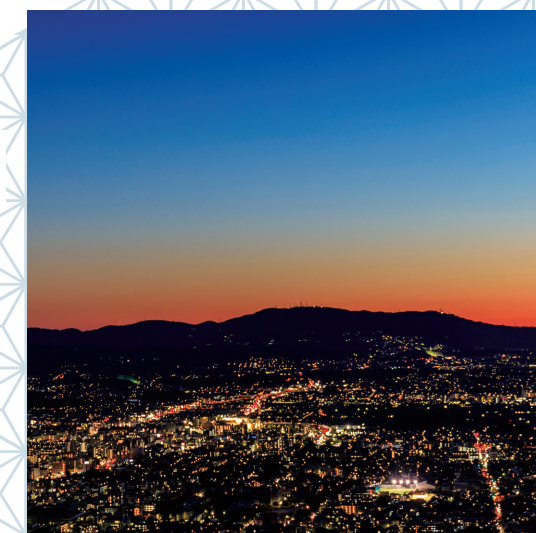
Probably the best lookout point in Yoshino, this observatory has spectacular views over Yoshino-cho town.



Mt. Wakakusa

若草山

With paths starting behind Todaiji Temple, Mt. Wakakusa is easy to climb and rewards hikers with views as far as the Former Site of Heijokyu Imperial Palace.



EXPERIENCE



Nara is not only home to many high-quality traditional crafts that evolved over the centuries, but it also boasts well-preserved examples of period architecture dating back to the city's days as Japan's capital and cultural centre. Please come and experience Nara, a city steeped in history.



Jikoin Temple

慈光院
Jikoin Temple is a special destination: a Buddhist temple dedicated to the art of tea.

Imaicho

今井町
Imaicho is a compact, beautifully preserved Edo period (17th-19th century) merchant town. Strolling its narrow streets is like wandering through an open museum of living history.



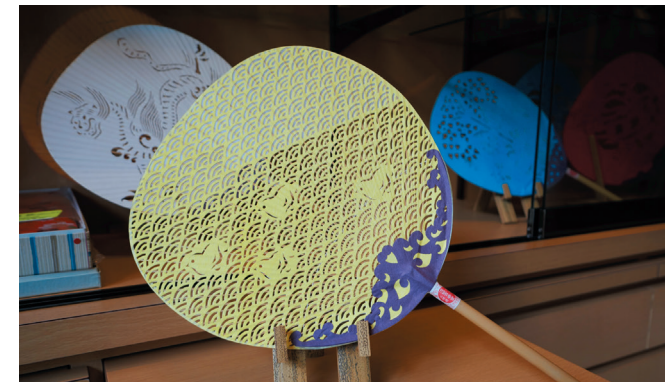
Nara Tokae

なら燈花会
This lantern festival takes place nightly from August 5 to 14 every year.

CRAFTS

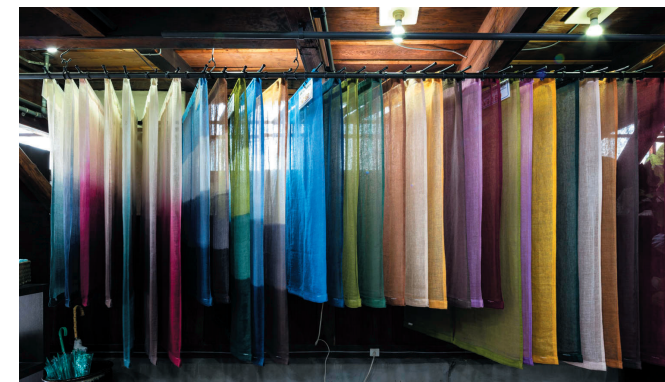
Nara-uchiwa, round fan

奈良団扇



Nara-sarashi, bleached cloth

奈良晒



Chasen, bamboo tea-whisk

高山茶筴



Akahadayaki pottery

赤膚焼



ACCOMMODATION



Nara Hotel 奈良ホテル



JW Marriott Hotel Nara JWマリオット・ホテル奈良



Hanaya Tokubei 宿花屋徳兵衛



Sasayuri Ann ささゆり庵

TASTE



Nara, formerly known as Yamato no Kuni, is the birthplace of traditional Japanese cuisine. Yamato was frequently described as a “mahoroba” an ancient word meaning “idyllic place.” Japanese food and drink with roots in Nara include Japanese tea, udon noodles, sake, manju buns and tofu, making the city the perfect place to sample the delights of Japanese food culture.

Kakinoha-zushi

柿の葉寿司

The origin of Kakinoha-zushi was back in the Edo period (17th-19th century), when a piece of salted mackerel from Kumanonada sea was wrapped in a persimmon leaf with a small portion of rice, and weighted down to be fermented for preservation. The next day of preparation is the best timing to eat it as the taste of fish and sushi rice fit well together with a slight aroma of a persimmon leaf.



Somen

三輪そうめん

Somen noodles were brought from China in the Nara period (8th century). There's a story that the son of a shinto priest from Ohmiwa Jinja Shrine planted wheat seeds in the area about 1,200 years ago, and started making somen. Don't leave Nara without trying this historic dish.



Yamato Yasai

大和野菜

Nara's rich soil, clean air and pure water are ideal for growing the vegetables used in shojin ryori, Buddhist vegetarian food. The area was once known as Yamato, and Yamato Yasai has become a formal brand, indicating high quality, organic produce.

Sake

奈良の酒

Sake wasn't invented in Nara, but the process of refining it was pioneered here. In 689, an official Imperial sake brewery was established, producing high quality sake. With dozens of small breweries across Nara, you have a chance to taste many types.



Yoshino-honkuzu

吉野本葛

Cold weather and good quality water are essential to produce Yoshino-honkuzu, arrowroot starch. Only the root part is used, so that only a small amount of Kuzu powder can be produced making it a little luxury product called “white diamond.” It is often used when cooking Japanese cuisine as a precious supporting actor.



Yamato-cha tea

大和茶

It is said that Kenne (9th century), a pupil of Kobo Daishi, planted tea-seeds at Butsuryuji Temple in Haibara, Uda City, and it was the beginning of Yamato-cha tea. Cold upland is best suited for growing tea thanks to the large temperature differential within a day. The blessed nature makes high quality tea with brighter aroma.



AREA

Nara City



No trip to Nara is complete without visiting the Nara Park, Naramachi and Nishinokyo areas, home to World Heritage registered temples and shrines as well as large oases of greenery in the heart of the city.

Nara Park

奈良公園

Nara Park is what many think of as “Nara.” Stretching over about eight square kilometres, it encompasses major sites like Todaiji Temple, Kohfukuji Temple and Kasugataisha Shrine, along with museums and almost 1,200 deer.



Yakushiji Temple

薬師寺

You will be struck by the scale of this temple complex, built in a Chinese style around 680. One of the most famous temples in Japan, its historical and architectural significance has earned it World Heritage status.



Kasugataisha Shrine

春日大社

The approach to Nara’s most famous and impressive Shinto shrine takes you along an atmospheric forest path, lined with hundreds of stone lanterns.

Todaiji Temple

東大寺

Todaiji is one of the most impressive temples in Japan, and plays a major role in Japanese history through the ages.



Naramachi

ならまち

Just to the east of Nara Park, the narrow, winding streets of traditional merchant houses now host sweet shops and modern art galleries.

Former Site of Heijokyu Imperial Palace

平城宮跡

It is the site upon which Heijo Palace or Heijokyo once stood. The site now features reconstructions of the Imperial Audience Hall where the Emperor’s throne was located, the Suzaku Gate and the East Palace Garden.



Asuka

Spend a relaxing time walking through the Asuka district, which long ago prospered as a centre of Japanese politics, economics and culture. Travellers can stop by cultural properties including the former site of the Fujiwara Palace, which is registered as an “important scenic landscape.”



Inabuchi Tanada Terraced Rice Fields



稲刈の棚田

Asuka is famous for its terraced rice paddies, which look spectacular at sunset in late spring, when the sun reflects off the water.



Asukadera Temple



飛鳥寺

One of the oldest Buddhist temples in Japan, Asukadera Temple was founded in 596 by the prominent Soga clan shortly after Buddhism was introduced from China and Korea.

Former Site of Fujiwarakyo Capital



藤原京跡

Although there is nothing left of Fujiwara Palace, red columns mark the original foundations, giving you an idea of the scale.



Okadera Temple



岡寺 (龍蓋寺)

Commanding a hill above the Asuka plain, Okadera Temple is famed for both its beautiful gardens and its interesting legends.



Shinrajuku



あすか癒俚の里 森羅塾

This beautiful home was originally a farmhouse, built around 1910 and recently restored.



Ishibutai Tumulus



石舞台古墳

This impressive megalith is believed to be the tomb of Soga no Umako, a powerful figure who worked closely with Prince Shotoku in the Asuka period (6th-8th century) to promote Buddhism.



Ikaruga

Horyuji Temple

法隆寺



This impressive World Heritage temple complex is a must-see, because it is such a beautiful place to visit, not just because it boasts 48 World Heritage monuments. Approaching the outer gate along a wide, pine-lined avenue, you are faced by high walls which conceal the temples within, creating a mini-city of manicured gardens and wide streets.



Shigisan Chogosonshi-ji Temple

信貴山朝護孫子寺



Known as the “tiger temple” for its many legends and tiger figures, Shigisan Chogosonshi-ji Temple is popular with kids. Following a winding path through the forest, you encounter Fukutora, the world’s largest papier-mâché tiger.



Shigisan Gyokuzo-in Temple (Shukubo)

信貴山玉蔵院 (宿坊)



Visitors to Shigisan Chogosonshi-ji Temple can stay overnight in a traditional Buddhist temple lodging, called a shukubo. There are three shukubo here: Jofuku-in, Senju-in and Gyokuzo-in.



Sakurai

Hasedera Temple

長谷寺



The village of Hase in central Nara lies in a deep valley with spectacular scenery. It is especially popular when the mountains blaze red and gold in autumn. The main draw is Hasedera Temple, accessed by an impressive covered stairway, flanked by thousands of peonies in May.



Ohmiwa-jinja Shrine

大神神社



Believed to be Japan’s oldest existing Shinto shrine, Ohmiwa-jinja Shrine is a rare example of the ancient form of a Shinto sacred site. Unlike other shrines, Ohmiwa Jinja Shrine does not have a main hall (Honden) since it worships Mt. Miwa, and it retains the form of primitive Shinto.



Tanzan Jinja Shrine

談山神社



An easy bus ride from Sakurai Station, Tanzan Jinja Shrine is known for its spectacular autumn colours. The main approach to the shrine includes steep stairs, but you can avoid these by cutting through the carpark on the left side of the shrine.



Yamanobe-no-Michi

山の辺の道



The Yamanobe-no-Michi trail passes through some of Nara’s most historic areas. It is a part of Japan’s oldest road, dotted with shrines, temples and ancient tombs. Along the way are many cafes, rest stops and fruit stands in summer.



Yoshino / Tenkawa

Kinpusen-ji Temple 金峯山寺



This temple is famous for the three 1,300 year-old blue skinned Zao Gongen statues. Each fierce figure stands around seven metres tall and represents one of the three facets of the Buddha: past, present and future.



Yoshimizu-jinja Shrine 吉水神社

吉水神社



Just off the main street, this shrine is renowned for its spectacular views in autumn and spring. There is an observatory where you can see the "Senbonzakura," thousand blossoming cherry trees.



Dorogawa Onsen Townscape 洞川温泉

洞川温泉



The high altitude and clear air make you feel close to the sky in this small onsen town. Arriving by bus from Shimoichiguchi Station, Dorogawa Onsen is the last stop, and you only have to cross the red bridge behind the tiny bus station to reach the middle of town.



Ryusen-ji Temple 大峯山龍泉寺

大峯山龍泉寺



At the start of the ascetic path to Mt. Omine, Shugendo practitioners have gathered at this temple for prayer and meditation since its founding around 645.



Totsukawa

Tanize Suspension Bridge 谷瀬の吊り橋

谷瀬の吊り橋



The bus to Totsukawa Onsen breaks for around 20 minutes here, one of the longest suspension bridges in Japan. Enclosed in wire mesh and rising 54 meters over the Totsukawa River, the bridge was built in 1954. Though quite safe, the swaying motion can be disconcerting, or fun, depending on your perspective.

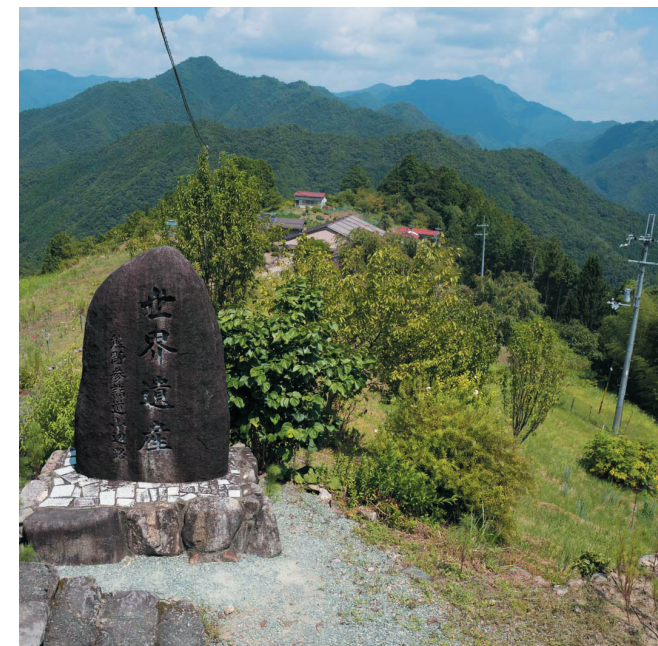


Hatenashi Village 果無集落

果無集落



On a smaller path following the Kumano Kodo from Totsukawa, the village of Hatnashi offers spectacular views, quaint farmhouses and crisp spring water. But it is most famous for its friendly elderly residents who greet passing hikers with a smile.



Dorokyo Gorge 瀬峡

瀬峡



The emerald green water and sheer cliffs of this beautiful gorge make it a popular spot for boat cruises. Celebrated in haiku, it is stunning in autumn when the red leaves contrast with the water. The Doro Hotel is a good vantage point.



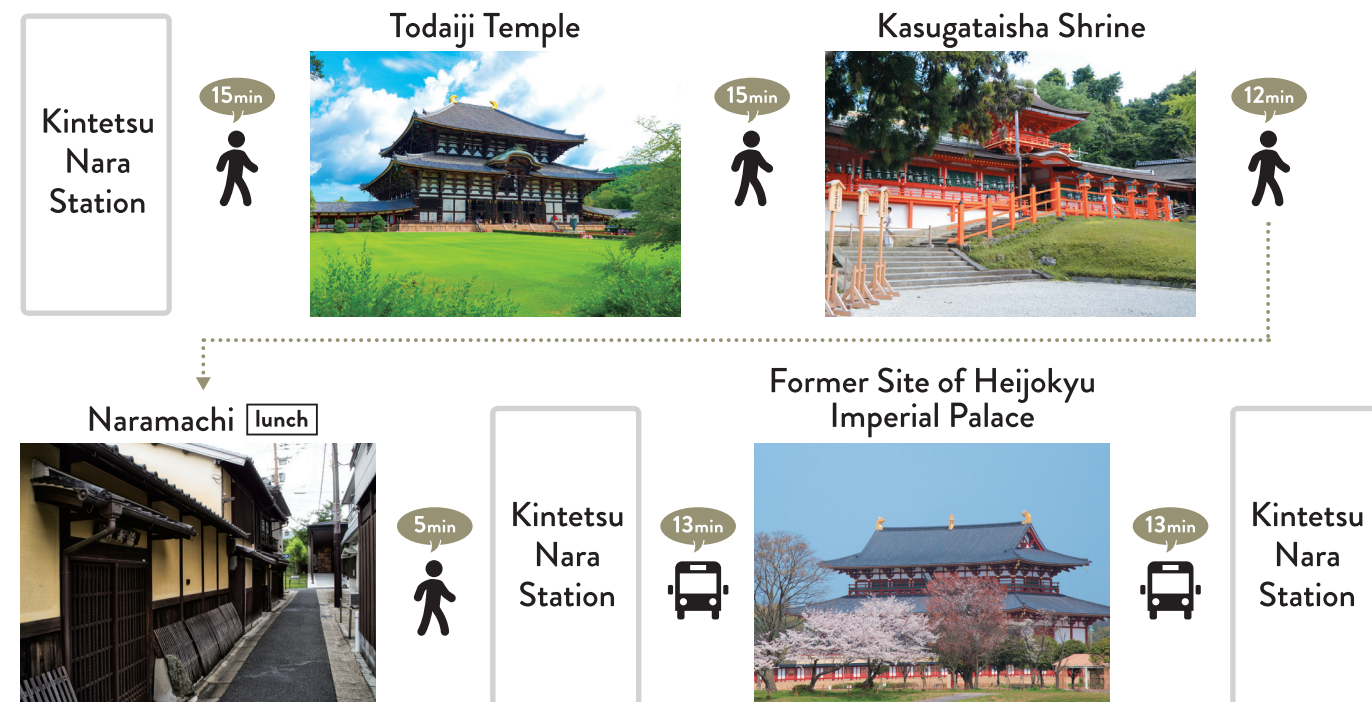
ITINERARY

Please use the suggested itineraries below to plan a smooth trip that covers Nara's many memorable tourist sites.

on foot bus car

1 day in Nara

See all of Nara's major tourist sites on a single day trip.



2 days in Nara

The village of Totsukawa covers a wider area than any other village in Japan. There's plenty to do for visitors of all ages. This 2-day itinerary gives the whole family the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful countryside around Nara.



INFORMATION



Downloadable Brochures

Travel Smart

Money & Shopping

Nara's Weather

Travelling with Kids

Free Wi-Fi

Information Directory

Tourist Information Centres

Nara Visitor Center & Inn

Nara Visitor Center & Inn is Nara's leading tourist information and visitor centre. The comprehensive facility is equipped with information counters manned by multi-lingual staff, a travellers' lounge with free Wi-Fi, ATM and money exchange services and a gallery showcasing Nara crafts and products.

With a wide array of services offered, you can book accommodation, sightseeing tours, make transportation arrangements and purchase a range of tickets and passes. A selection of cultural experience workshops, either free or for a small fee, are also offered on a regular basis.



Nara City

Nara Visitor Center & Inn 0742-81-7461

Nara City Information Center 0742-22-3900

Kintetsu Nara Sta. Tourist Information Center 0742-24-4858

Nara City Tourist Information Center 0742-27-2223

Nara Tourist Information Center 0742-25-0411

Yoshino

Tourist Information Center SEIMEIKAN 0746-39-0010

Access from Japan's Major Cities

