Walk in the old town toward Shinyakushiji Temple where the Twelve Heavenly Generals glare

Strolling around a retro hot-spring town with the grand view of Mt. Omine, the sacred site for Shugendo

Hidden Treasures & Buddhas Special Public Openings
Walk in the old town toward Shinyakushiji Temple where the Twelve Heavenly Generals glare

Naramachi extends along Nara Park, to the south of Kohfukuji Temple. After leaving Kintetsu Nara Station, head towards Sarusawa Lake Pond where you can glimpse the scenery of Kohfukuji's five-storied pagoda reflected on the water's surface. Then proceed along the narrow path extending southwest from the pond until you reach the intersection of the main road of "Naramachi Odori." Turn left on this road and you will see the entrance to Gangoji Temple Gokurakubo Intersection of the main road of "Naramachi Odori." Take a walk around the compact areas to get a real sense of Japan's yesteryear.

To the south of Nara Park where the deer roam around, there are areas called "Naramachi" and "Takabatake" where old townscape still remains. Take a walk around the compact areas to get a real sense of Japan's yesteryear.

Gangoji Temple

Gangoji Temple was the first temple in Japan, partly built in Asuka in the 8th century, before being relocated to its current location when Heijōkyō became the new capital. At present, only the Gokurakubo, Shōtōin Temple, and the pagoda ruins remain, however the temple was originally a vast complex, comparable to Todaiji and Kohfukuji Temples. The Treasure House (Horinkan) houses various treasures including the small five-storied pagoda (National Treasure) from the 8th century. After your visit, please take a stroll around Naramachi and learn about traditional Japanese living within the area, narrow alleys lined with wooden houses dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries called "Machiya." If you would like to know more about Machiya, we also recommend you to visit "Naramachi Koshino Ie" a residence from that period located about 400m south of Gangoji Temple.

After enjoying the Naramachi stroll, head east across Route 169 to "Takabatake." Takabatake was once the town where the serving Shinzo priests of Kasuga-taisha Shrine resided. At first, you will find modern residences, but as you head east, the old day walls and the remnants of the priest's residences will become more prominent, with an atmosphere that is quite different from the Machiya residences of Naramachi. Shinyakushiji Temple blends into such a cityscape. The temple was built in the mid-8th century. The main hall is dominated by an elegant seated Yakushi Nyorai—the Buddha of healing—protected by the Twelve Heavenly Generals, National Treasures. The Twelve Heavenly Generals are earthen statues that have remained unchanged since the establishment of the temple, and their lively standing poses attract many Buddhist statue enthusiasts.

The easiest way to make your way back would be to take a bus departing from the Wariishi-cho bus stop. If you have time, however, it is also worth walking a little further north through the town and onto Sasayaki-no-Komichi Lane. Formerly a commuting route for the Shinzo priests who once lived in Takabatake, this path stretches through the beautiful greenery of Nara Park to the Ni-no-Torii Gate at Kasuga-taisha Shrine, where the Kasugatasha Honden bus stop is within a stone's throw.

Nostalgic scenery with worn walls in Takabatake
Mt. Omine, towering in the southern part of Nara Prefecture, is a sacred mountain that is worshipped as a sacred place for Shugendo, the ascetic practice, which is a fusion of ancient Japanese mountain faith and Buddhism. Dorogawa Onsen town, that spreads out along the western foot of the mountain, has developed as a mountaineering base for those who practice in the mountains (practitioners of the Shugendo). The atmosphere of a traditional Japanese hot spring town still remains in the town where lanterns are hung along the Japanese Inns that have Engawa, a Japanese verandah-like porch.

Dorogawa Onsen area : https://www.visitnara.jp/destinations/area/dorogawa/

Dorogawa Onsen Town is about 80 minute bus ride from Shimoichiguchi Station, Kintetsu Yosino Line. This town spreads along the Sanjogawa River flowing from Mt. Omine. Located at an altitude of 800m above sea level and cool even in summer, the town is especially popular during the period when the mountain is open (from 3 May to 23 September). The Dorogawa area is a limestone plateau that is easily eroded by rainwater. There are many limestone caves, some of which are maintained for sightseeing. Menfudo Limestone Cave, located in the northeastern area of Dorogawa Onsen bus stop, is one. The temperature of the cave is around 8 ℃ year-round. The cave is lit up by colourful illuminations, making it look like an underground palace. Though located on a steep mountain, this mysterious natural form is easily accessed by an electric monorail running from the hot spring town.

After enjoying the beauty of the limestone cave, it’s time to take a stroll in the hot spring town itself. Dorogawa Onsen has two main streets, prefectural road No. 48 on the right bank of the Sanjogawa River and No. 21 on the left bank. Note that the prefectural road No. 21 has many traditional wooden inns and souvenir shops that create the magical ambience of traditional hot spring resorts. Along the road, there is “Tado Hanaya Tokubei,” the oldest inn at Dorogawa Onsen founded about 500 years ago. If you go further east from Hanaya Tokubei, there is a "Gorogoro Chaya" where you can sample "Gorogoro-Mizu” (spring water) from a natural spring. You will notice the signs of “Daranisukegan” around the street, which is a panacea made around the 7th century by En-no-gyoja, who is the founder of Shugendo ascetic practices and is still used today as stomach medicine.

After enjoying the street atmosphere, head to Ryusenji Temple along prefectural road No. 48. It is said that the temple was founded in the 7th century by En-no-gyoja, who found natural spring water welling up from rocks. En-no-gyoja enshrined Hachidai-Ryuo in the temple. Even now, there is plenty of water and it is customary for Shugendo practitioners to purify themselves with this natural spring water before entering Mt. Omine.

If you stay in Dorogawa, enjoy the atmosphere of the hot spring town at night when the lanterns are lit. Relax in the hot springs that make your skin smooth, and enjoy the local cuisine using natural produce from the mountain village. The next day, a visit is recommended to Mitarai Valley to the south of the hot spring town where you’ll find large and small waterfalls, big rocks and beautiful emerald green streams of clear water. The valley is about 45 minutes on foot from the Kawui bus stop. The number of the operating buses are limited, therefore, plan carefully in advance.

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Murouji Temple
Since ancient times, Mt. Murou has been regarded as a sacred site where a divine dragon resides. On the hillock of Mt. Murou stands Murouji Temple which was founded at the end of the 8th century. Particularly noteworthy is the temple’s five-storied pagoda which is praised for its perfectly balanced figure. The pagoda is the smallest in Japan of this kind constructed outside and the second oldest. The temple is a popular site for seasonal scenery such as cherry blossoms in spring and coloured leaves in autumn. However, the best highlight of the temple is its splendid rhododendrons in early May. A number of people visit the temple and appreciate the beauty of rhododendrons.

Treasure Hall
The Treasure Hall will be opened from Tuesday 17 March. The new Treasure Hall Treasure has just been completed in front of the Nifomon Gate this spring. Some of the priceless Buddhist statues were moved from the Kondo Hall to the new Treasure Hall which includes an Eleven-faced Kannon Bosatsu (Important Cultural Property), Jizo Bosatsu (Important Cultural Property) and Twelve Heavenly Generals (National Treasures). Walking about 700 meters to the east from Murouji Temple, there is Murou Ryouketsu-jinja Shrine.

Kairyuouji Temple
The founder of Kairyuouji Temple was a Buddhist monk named Genbo who travelled and studied during the Tang Dynasty (China) in the 8th century as a Japanese envoy. He returned to Japan and established Kairyuouji Temple in the 8th century. The temple was originally founded for the purpose of praying for the envoy’s safe voyage, many people visit the temple to pray for their safety before setting off for travel or studying abroad. The temple grounds are also a popular site for enjoying Yukinezami (Thuinberg’s meadow-sweet).

Statue of Eleven-faced Kannon Bosatsu, Temple Treasure Exhibition (Including Important Cultural Properties)
Monday 23 March - Tuesday 7 April, Friday 1 May - Saturday 9 May

Yakushi Temple
Yakushi Temple is a complex temple located adjacent to Kintetsu Nishinokyo Station. The vast temple precinct consists of two parts: the Hakuho Garan with Kondo Hall, East and West Pagodas; and the Genjo-sanzoan Garan with the Wall Painting of the Great Tang of the Western Regions. Most of the structures were rebuilt after 1968 and the vermilion paint remains vivid. The East Pagoda (National Treasure) is a three-storied pagoda which has stood here since the temple’s foundation over 1300 years ago. Although it appears to be six-stories with six roofs, three of the roofs are decorative, thus, the interior is a three-storied structure with perfect balance. The principal images are three statues of Yakushi Sanzo (National Treasure) which are claimed to be superlative masterpieces of ancient Buddhist statues made of gold and bronze.

1 Special opening of the Jikido Hall
2 Special opening of the interior of the first floor of the West Pagoda and the statue of Shaka Shiso (including Important Cultural Properties)
3 Special exhibition of the Wall Painting of the Great Tang of the Western Regions in the Genjo-sanzoan Garan

Horyuji Temple
Horyuji Temple was established by Prince Shotoku, in the early 7th century. The temple was burnt down in a fire in 670 but was restored shortly thereafter. The Kondo Hall (National Treasure), the five-storied pagoda (National Treasure) and some other structures which remain unchanged since the time of the restoration are regarded as the world’s oldest wooden architecture. The temple possesses countless numbers of important temple treasures including approximately 3000 National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties. Horyuji Temple is Japan's first Buddhist temple which was designated as the UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993.

1 Horyuji Temple Treasure Exhibition (Including Important Cultural Properties)
2 Yumedono Hall’s Kuse Kannon Bosatsu (National Treasure)
3 Friday/national holiday 20 March - Sunday 31 May

The exhibition showcases an array of valuable cultural assets from the early 7th century up to the present day including some of the temple treasures which are not generally open to the public. The statue of Kuse Kannon (National Treasure) which is said to be the life-size statue of Prince Shotoku, will also be on display.

Horyuji Temple is nestled in an area known as Ikaruga. This idyllic town with its pleasant view of the surrounding fields is a good choice for strolling or cycling around. Nearby Honji Temple and Wokki Temple also have beautiful three-storied pagodas which are called “Three Pagodas in Ikaruga” along with the pagoda of Horyuji Temple.
Yakushiji Temple was founded in the late 7th century in the Asuka region of central Nara Prefecture. Later in the early 8th century, the whole temple compound was moved to its present location near Nishinokyo Station. The East Pagoda (National Treasure) is a rare architectural example which has existed from the very beginning of the temple's history. Its dignified beauty is often acclaimed as like “Frozen Music.” Restoration work started in 2009 and this exquisite pagoda has long been hidden from the public eye. However, the restoration is scheduled for completion in April, 2020 and the East Pagoda will reveal its splendid figure once again after being covered for over a decade. From 1 to 10 May, the Celebratory Ceremony for the Grand Completion of the East Pagoda will take place and the general public is invited to join.

Celebrating the Grand Completion of the East Pagoda (National Treasure): Special Opening of the Interior of the East Pagoda
Friday 1 May, 2020 – Sunday 17 January, 2021

Access from Japan's Major Cities

**From Osaka**
- Approx. 35 min (Kintetsu Osaka-Namba Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)
- Approx. 1h 30 min (JR Kansai Airport Sta. - JR Nara Sta.)
- Approx. 1h 35 min (Nanka Kansai Airport Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)

**From Kansai Int’l Airport**
- Approx. 2h 40 min (JR Kansai Airport Sta. - JR Nara Sta.)

**From Hiroshima**
- Approx. 2h 40 min (JR Hiroshima Sta. - JR Nara Sta.)

**From Fukuoka**
- Approx. 3h 50 min (JR Hakata Sta. - JR Nara Sta.)

**From Chubu Centrair Int’l Airport**
- Approx. 2h 25 min (Meitetsu Chubu Int’l Airport Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)
- Approx. 2h 31 min (Meitetsu Chubu Int’l Airport Sta. - JR Nara Sta.)

**From Nagoya**
- Approx. 2h 37 min (JR Nagoya Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)

**From Tokyo**
- Approx. 3h 10 min (JR Tokyo Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)
- Approx. 3h 15 min (JR Kansai Airport Sta. - JR Nara Sta.)
- Approx. 1h 35 min (Nankai Kansai-Airport Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)