

# Inner Journeys

*March - September 2020*

Nara's Temples and Shrines



INNER  
JOURNEYS

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

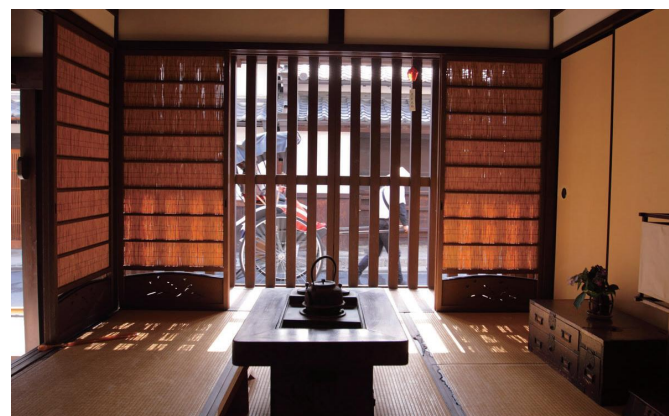
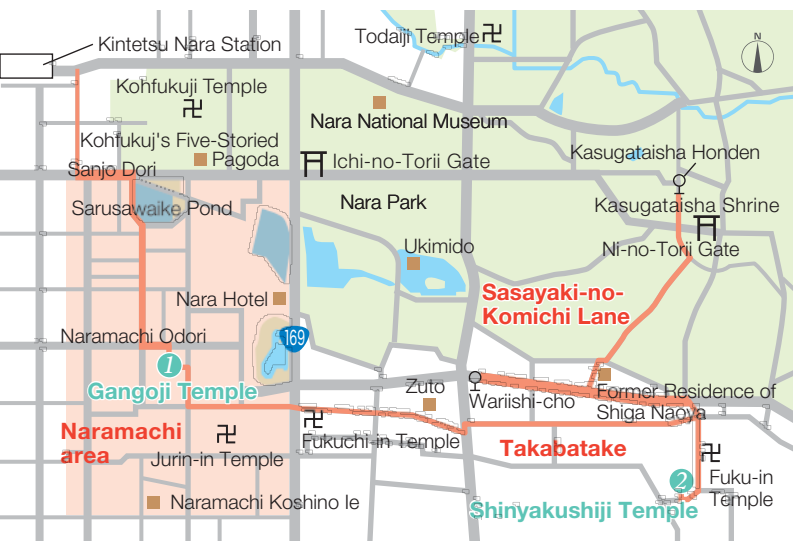
Hidden Treasures & Buddhas **Special Public Openings**



# 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 Sarusawaik 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 on your right.



Naramachi Koshino Ie Photo : Nara City

Gangoji Temple was the first temple in Japan, partly built in Asuka in the 6th century, before being relocated to its current location when Heijokyo became the new capital. At present, only the Gokurakubo, Shotoin 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 Shinto priests of Kasugataisha Shrine resided. At first, you will find modern residences, but as you head east, the old clay 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.



Sasayaki-no-Komichi Lane



Nostalgic scenery with earthen walls in Takabatake

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 Shinto priests who once lived in Takabatake, this path stretches through the beautiful greenery of Nara Park to the Ni-no-Torii Gate at Kasugataisha Shrine, where the Kasugataisha Honden bus stop is within a stone’s throw.



## 1. Gangoji Temple

元興寺

The Gokuraku-do main hall (National Treasure) and Zen room (National Treasure) are the only remains of the former monks’ quarters of Gangoji Temple, with some 1,400 years old tiles still used on the roof. This temple is registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

🕒 9:00-17:00 (last entry 16:30) 📞 0742-23-1377 💰 500 yen  
 📍 ● Approx. 12-min walk from Kintetsu Nara Station. ● Approx. 20-min walk from JR Nara Station.  
 🌐 <https://www.visitnara.jp/venues/A00495/>



Photo : Gangoji Temple

## 2. Shinyakushiji Temple

新薬師寺

Shinyakushiji Temple was founded by Empress Komyo to pray for the recovery of her husband, Emperor Shomu, who is famous as the founder of Todaiji Temple. The main hall (National Treasure) is the building that is still remaining from that time.

🕒 9:00-17:00 (last entry 16:30)  
 📞 0742-22-3736  
 💰 600 yen  
 📍 Take the city circular bus from JR/Kintetsu Nara Station, get off at Wariishi-cho Stop, and walk for about 10 minutes.  
 🌐 <https://www.visitnara.jp/venues/A00496/>



Photo : Shinyakushiji Temple





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



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 Photo : MIKI

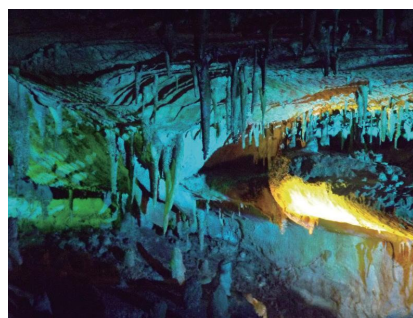
Dorogawa Onsen Town is about 80 minute bus ride from Shimoichiguchi Station, Kintetsu Yoshino Line. This town spreads along the Sanjogawa River flowing from Mt. Omine. Located at an altitude of 800m above sea level and cool even in summer, the town is especially popular during the period when the mountain 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 °C 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 "Yado 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



Menfudo Limestone Cave  
Photo: Tenkawa Village



Menfudo Monorail "Dorokko"  
Photo: Tenkawa Village



Gorogoro-Mizu (spring water)



Daranisukegan



Mt. Omine Dorogawa Onsen Gyoja Festival  
The festival is held every year on the 2nd and 3rd August around the Dorogawa Onsen area.

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 Kawai bus stop. The number of the operating buses are limited, therefore, plan carefully in advance.



Mitarai Valley

## Ryusenji Temple

龍泉寺



One of the Goji-in Temples at the Omnesanji Temple atop Mt. Omine. In the precincts, there is a fountain that also serves as a water line. The main hall that enshrines Miroku Bosatsu (the principal image) statue, along with the En-no-gyoja and Rigen-daishi statues, is guarded by a striking pair of male and female demon figures, Zenki and Goki.

🕒 8:00-17:00  
☎ 0747-64-0001

🆓 Free

🚌 Take a Nara Kotsu bus bound for Dorogawa Onsen from Kintetsu Shimoichiguchi station, then approx. 5-min walk from Dorogawa Onsen bus stop.

🌐 <https://www.visitnara.jp/venues/A00889/>







Hidden Treasures & Buddhas

# Special Public Openings

March to September 2020

● Navigator / Lee Paul Walton

Lee has been living and working in Nara for 17 years. He has been working freelance in the tourism industry as a graphic designer, translator and photographer since 2015.



## Murouji Temple

室生寺

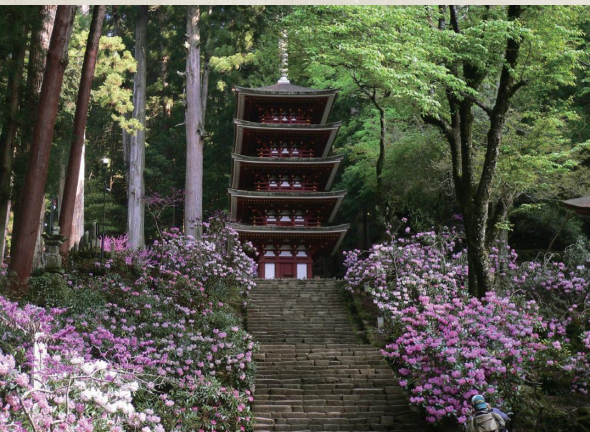


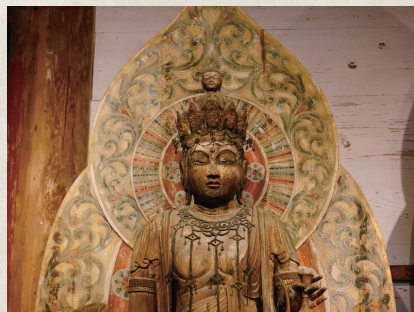
Photo : Murouji Temple

Since ancient times, Mt. Murou has been regarded as a sacred site where a divine dragon resides. On the hillside 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 Temple Treasure Hall has just been completed in front of the Niomon 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 (National Treasure), Jizo Bosatsu (Important Cultural Property) and Twelve Heavenly Generals (Important Cultural Properties).



Eleven-faced Kannon (National Treasure)  
Photo : Murouji Temple

📍 Walking about 700 meters to the east from Murouji Temple, there is Murou Ryuketsu-jinja Shrine. There is a legend that a divine dragon resides in a cave in the inner part of the precinct.

🕒 8:30-17:00 (Treasure Hall: 9:00-16:00) \*Seasonally changed. ☎ 0745-93-2003 💰 600 yen (additional 400 yen will be charged to enter the Treasure Hall)  
🚌 Take a bus bound for Murouji from Kintetsu Murouguchi Ono Station and get off at the last stop, and then a 5-min. walk to the temple.  
🌐 <https://www.visitnara.jp/venues/A00527/>



## Kairyuouji Temple

海龍王寺



Photo: Nara City Tourism Association (Tatehiko Yano)

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. Walk through the atmospheric approach and there stands a number of massive temple structures such as the Main Hall and Saikondo Hall (Important Cultural Property). Since 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 Yukiyanagi (Thunberg's meadowsweet).

### 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

The principal image, a Statue of the Eleven-faced Kannon Bosatsu (Important Cultural Property) was created around the 13th century. The statue had long been hidden from the public, and its colour remains beautifully vibrant.

📍 The small five-storied pagoda (National Treasure) situated in the Saikondo Hall (Important Cultural Property) is highly valued as its structure has remained unchanged since the temple's foundation in the 8th century.

🕒 9:00-17:00 (last entry 16:50) ☎ 0742-33-5765 💰 600 yen  
🚌 ● Go to Yamato Saidaiji Station from Kintetsu Nara Station, and take a bus bound for Koku Jieitai, or take a bus bound for JR/Kintetsu Nara Station from Kintetsu Yamato Saidaiji Station and get off at Hokkeji, for the short walk to the temple.  
● Approx. 15-min. walk from Kintetsu Shin-Omiya Station. 🌐 <https://www.visitnara.jp/venues/C02226/>



Photo : Askaen Co. Ltd.

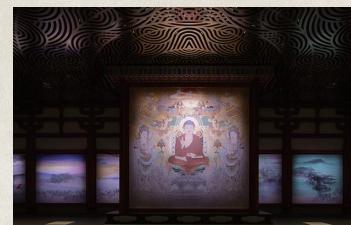
## Yakushiji Temple

薬師寺

Yakushiji Temple is a massive temple complex 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-sanzoin 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 Sanzon (National Treasure) which are claimed to be superb 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-sanzoin Garan

🕒 123 Spring: Sunday 1 March - Tuesday 30 June, Obon: Thursday 13 - Saturday 15 August, Autumn: Wednesday 16 September - Monday 30 November



1 Main image at Jikido Hall: Painting of Amida Sanzon in the Buddhist Pure Land  
Photo: Yakushiji Temple

The statue of Shaka Shiso created by a Japanese sculptor, Shinya Nakamura, will be open to the public in the interior of the first floor of the West Pagoda. Jikido Hall exhibits a massive painting by the Japanese painter, Toshio Tabuchi, with a total width of 50 meters. It mainly depicts Amida Sanzon (the temple's principal image) in the Buddhist Pure Land. The Wall Painting of the Great Tang of the Western Regions by the renowned Japanese painter, Ikuo Hirayama, depicting the great journey made by Genjo Sanzo, a highly respected Chinese monk, will be exhibited at the Genjo-sanzoin Garan.

📍 The East Pagoda (National Treasure) has long been under restoration but it is scheduled to be completed in April, 2020. The celebratory ceremony for the grand completion will be held in May (->P8).

🕒 8:30-17:00 (last entry 16:30, no admission during ceremonies) ☎ 0742-33-6001 💰 12 500 yen \*Regular admission fee will be charged additionally.  
3 Regular admission (incl. Hakuho Garan & Genjo-sanzoin) 1,100 yen \* 123 Special combination ticket 1,600 yen 📍 ● A short walk from Kintetsu Nishinokyo Station. ● Take a bus bound for Nara Pref. General Medical Center from either JR or Kintetsu Nara Station and get off at Yakushiji, and then a short walk to the temple.  
🌐 <https://www.visitnara.jp/venues/A00499/>



## Horyuji Temple

法隆寺



Photo: Nara Visitors Bureau

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 Horinji Temple and Hokiji Temple also have beautiful three-storied pagoda which are called "Three Pagodas in Ikaruga" along with the pagoda of Horyuji Temple.

🕒 1 9:00-16:30 (last entry 16:00) 2 8:00-17:00 ☎ 0745-75-2555 💰 1 Admission to Daihozoin (Gallery of Temple Treasures): 500 yen \*Toin Garan and Saiin Garan Combination Ticket is also required. 2 Toin Garan and Saiin Garan Combination Ticket 1500 yen 📍 ● Take a bus bound for Horyuji Sando from JR Horyuji Station and get off at the last stop, and a short walk to the temple. ● Take a bus bound for Oji Station from Kintetsu Tsutsui Station and get off at Horyuji-mae Stop, and a short walk to the temple. 🌐 <https://www.visitnara.jp/venues/A00506/>



2 Yumedono Hall's Kuse Kannon Bosatsu (National Treasures)  
Photo: Askaen Co. Ltd.





# Celebratory Ceremony for the Grand Completion of the East Pagoda (National Treasure) of Yakushiji Temple

Friday 1 – Sunday 10 May



Yakushiji Temple Hakuho Garan Photo : Askaen Co., Ltd.

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 nearby 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 thus 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.)

### From Kansai Int'l Airport

Approx. 1h 30 min  
 (JR Kansai Airport Sta. - JR Nara Sta.)  
 Approx. 1h 35 min  
 (Nankai Kansai-Airport Sta. - Kintetsu-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 Kyoto

Approx. 35 min  
 (Kintetsu Kyoto Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)

### From Chubu Centrair Int'l Airport

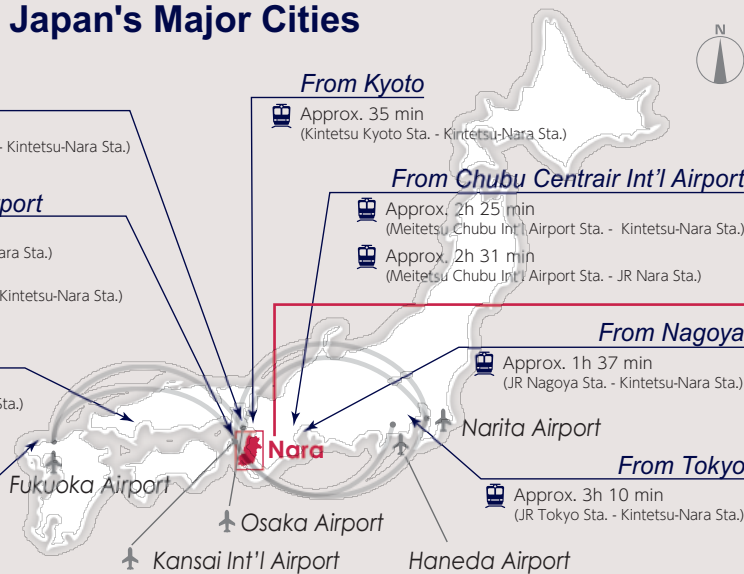
Approx. 2h 25 min  
 (Meitetsu Chubu Int'l Airport Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)  
 Approx. 2h 31 min  
 (Meitetsu Chubu Int'l Airport Sta. - JR Nara Sta.)

### From Nagoya

Approx. 1h 37 min  
 (JR Nagoya Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)

### From Tokyo

Approx. 3h 10 min  
 (JR Tokyo Sta. - Kintetsu-Nara Sta.)



## The NARA Visitor Center & Inn

Address: 3 Ikono-cho, Nara  
 Phone: 0742-81-7461 (8:00-21:00)  
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