



NARA MAP

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Nara Prefecture

30 Noborioji-cho, Nara City
630-8501, Japan
Tel: +81-742-27-8482

Japanese Sake



123Nara Prefecture has deep historical ties to the birthplace of sake, with sake being brewed at temples and shrines since ancient times. Ohmiwa-jinja Shrine is revered as the god of sake brewing, with cedar balls from the shrine bestowed upon sake breweries all over the country. A festival is held every year on November 14 to pray for the safe brewing of new sake. 45Kasugataisha Shrine is home to Japan's oldest sake brewery building—the Sakadono. For over 1,000 years, sacred sake has been brewed here every year from early February to early March to be offered at the annual Kasuga Festival on March 13. The enshrined deities, Sakamizuo-no-Kami and Sakamizume-no-Kami, are honored as the divine guardians of sake brewing.



6Shoryakui Temple is known as the birthplace of Japanese sake. Until then, sake had been cloudy and white, but at Shoryakui Temple, the revolutionary "Bodaimoto" brewing method was established, leading to the creation of clear sake. In January, the Bodaimoto Sake Festival is held. Shoryakui Temple is also famous as a spot to view autumn leaves. 789Nara Prefecture produces a wide variety of distinctive sake, including those brewed with the Bodaimoto yeast starter from Shoryakui Temple and those crafted using modern brewing techniques. Nara Prefecture is home to over ten sake breweries that offer tours. Be sure to check in advance whether visits are available during your planned time and if reservations are required.

Nature



123In 2004, the Omine-Okugake Trail and Kohechi Pilgrimage Route of the Kumano Kodo were registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as part of the "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range." These two ancient roads run through the villages of Totsukawa and Tenkawa in Nara Prefecture and lead to the Kumano Sanzan shrines, including Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine. The Omine-Okugake Trail is a 98 km mountain trail established by ascetic monks in the early 8th century as a training ground. Passing through steep, traditional mountainous terrain, it is one of the most challenging pilgrimage routes of the Kumano Kodo trails. Tamaki-jinja Shrine is known as the inner sanctum of the Kumano Sanzan, and many giant cedar trees, including Jindai Cedar, grow within its grounds. Kohechi is the shortest route to the Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine, connecting the two sacred sites of Mount Koya and the Kumano Sanzan. The route features three mountain passes over 1,000 meters and many steep slopes, but it is also rich in natural scenery.



4Mount Yoshino is famous as a cherry blossom viewing spot. 5Mitarai Valley offers many stunning sights, including giant rocks, uniquely shaped rock formations, and waterfalls of various sizes. Its scenery transforms beautifully with the seasons. 6Various terraced rice fields in Asuka village, cultivated between the late 8th century and the mid-14th century, still showcase a beautiful landscape with over 300 rice and vegetable fields. 7Soni Highland. In summer, lush greenery stretches out like a carpet, while in autumn, Japanese silver grass (Miscanthus) shimmers across the landscape, glowing in the sunlight. 8Mount Yoshino, famous for its cherry blossoms, is also recommended for its autumn leaves. 9Mount Hakkyogatake, the highest peak in the Kansai region, can be seen shining with frost in winter. 10Mount Shakagatake. At the summit stands a Buddha statue, said to have been carried up single-handedly.

Buddha Statues



Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the mid-6th century, in what is now Sakurai City, Nara Prefecture. Following its official adoption, numerous temples, including Asukadera, and Buddhist statues were built throughout the Asuka region. Even today, many places in Nara Prefecture allow visitors to see precious Buddhist statues in their original locations, just as people did in the past. 1Asukadera Temple, completed in 596 as Japan's first full-scale temple, houses the country's oldest Buddhist statue, created in the early 7th century. 234The Shaka Triad enshrined in the Main Hall of Horyuji Temple, crafted in 623, is renowned for its gentle smile and is considered a masterpiece of Asuka sculpture. 5The Yakushi Triad at Yakushiji Temple is a precious Buddhist statue that has remained nearly perfectly intact since its creation in 680. It is regarded as one of the greatest masterpieces of Buddhist art.



67Kohfukuji Temple flourished as the family temple of the Fujiwara clan, which rose to prominence during the Nara period (710-794). In 2018, the Central Golden Hall, housing the principal image of the temple—a seated Shaka Nyorai statue—was rebuilt for the first time in approximately 300 years. The Ashura statue at Kohfukuji Temple, with its three faces and six arms, is renowned for its melancholic expression. 8910Todayji Temple is renowned for its 15-meter-tall seated statue of Vairocana Buddha. On either side of the 25-meter-high Great South Gate stand giant statues of Kongo Rikishi, which were completed in just 69 days in 1203. 11Kinpusenji Temple in Yoshino was founded by En-no-Gyoja, the founder of Shugendo, a Japanese ascetic tradition. The three statues of Zao Gongen are the principal images of Kinpusenji Temple. The central statue stands approximately 7 meters tall, while the statues on the right and left are about 6 meters tall. These massive statues normally hidden from public viewing, and to raise funds for the repair of the National Treasure Niomon Gate, they are exhibited to the public for a limited period each year.

Japanese Tea



1Yamato tea is cultivated in the naturally rich mountainous areas of Nara City, such as Tsukigase and the Yamato Plateau. Its origins are said to date back over 1,200 years. According to legend, Kobo Daishi and his disciple Kenne brought tea seeds back from the Tang dynasty in China and planted them on the mountain behind Butsumyuj Temple in Uda. Areas like Yamazoe Village, blessed with a cool climate, significant temperature differences between day and night, and frequent fog, have been centers of tea production since ancient times. In Yamazoe Village, visitors can also experience tea picking and tea making. 23Yamato tea, produced in Nara, is characterized by its strong fragrance and a well-balanced taste, encompassing both sweetness and umami flavors. In Nara, it is customary to have tea porridge—a dish made by cooking rice with roasted green tea—for breakfast.



456Takayama tea whisks have been crafted in Takayama, Ikoma City for over 500 years. The town produces over 90% of Japan's domestically produced tea whisks, and Takayama tea whisks are also favored by tea ceremony masters. The craft of making tea whisks is traditionally passed down from father to son, with most processes done by hand. (Tours and hands-on experiences are also available.) 789Jikoin Temple was constructed by the feudal lord who taught tea to the fourth Tokugawa Shogun. In the drawing room, you can partake in a matcha tea experience and enjoy views of a beautiful dry landscape garden, which you can also stroll through. 10Akahadayaki pottery, which has been produced in the hills around Gojoyama in Nara City. It is said that Akahadayaki pottery was established when Hidenaga, the younger brother of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and lord of the Koriyama Domain, commissioned the opening of a kiln. The milky-white, soft-textured vessels are especially popular as tea utensils.

Experiences



Nara, once the capital of Japan, has a unique culture rooted in local cuisine and traditional crafts, offering various experiences to learn about the ingenuity and time-honored techniques of our ancestors. 1At Tanzan-jinja Shrine, which has a history spanning over 1,300 years, you can experience kemari—a ball-kicking game once enjoyed by aristocrats during the Nara period. Dressed in authentic period costumes, you can truly feel like an aristocrat. 2Kakinoha-zushi—a quintessential local dish—is prepared by wrapping mackerel sushi (or other fish) in persimmon leaves, renowned for their antibacterial properties. During the Kakinoha-zushi making experience, you'll create an authentic dish just like those served at local restaurants. 3Kehayaza in Katsuragi City is one of the few museums in Japan dedicated to sumo, highlighting the achievements of sumo's founding figures. It features a full-sized sumo ring that you can actually step into.



4Nara-fude calligraphy brushes are believed to have originated from brush-making techniques introduced by Kobo Daishi from the Tang dynasty in China. This craft involves blending over a dozen types of animal hair to form a single brush. During the brush-making experience, you will participate in tasks such as applying adhesive to secure the brush hairs. 5Similarly, Nara ink is a traditional craft said to have been introduced by Kobo Daishi. At the ink workshop, you can try the "gripped sumi" experience, where you mold raw ink by hand to create your own unique presentations. You can produce a one-of-a-kind ink stick that bears the imprint of your hand and fingerprints. 6Nara is renowned as the birthplace of Japanese swords. At the Futuno-Masataka swordsmith's studio, with prior reservation, you can observe authentic swordsmithing and experience the allure of Japanese swords. 7Yoshino's Dorogawa Onsen is considered a hidden gem among hot springs and has long served as a haven for the mountain ascetics of Shugendo.

Access

From Outside Nara to Nara Prefecture

From Tokyo/Kyoto

Time required Approx. 180min

Tokyo Sta. ↓ Shinkansen → Kintetsu Kyoto Sta.
JR Kyoto Sta. ↓ JR Line → Kintetsu Nara Sta.
JR Nara Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line

From Kansai International Airport (KIX)

Time required Approx. 90min

Kansai International Airport ↓ Airport limousine bus → JR Nara Sta. /Kintetsu Yamato-Saidaiji Sta.

From Nagoya

Time required Approx. 110min

Kintetsu Nagoya Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Yamato-Yagi Sta. (Central Nara Prefecture)

From Koyasan

Time required Approx. 100min

Koyasan Sta. ↓ Nankai Koya Line → Hashimoto Sta. ↓ JR Line → Yoshinoguchi Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Yoshino Sta.

Nara Park Area→Other Major Areas

To Horyuji Temple

Time required Approx. 10min

JR Nara Sta. ↓ JR Line → Horyuji Sta.

To Sakurai

Time required Approx. 30min

JR Nara Sta. ↓ JR Line → Sakurai Sta.

To Kashihara

Time required Approx. 40min

Kintetsu Nara Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Yamato-Saidaiji Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Kashiharajingu-mae Sta.

To Asuka

Time required Approx. 50min

Kintetsu Nara Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Yamato-Saidaiji Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Kashiharajingu-mae Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Asuka Sta.

To Yoshino

Time required Approx. 100min

Kintetsu Nara Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Yamato-Saidaiji Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Kashiharajingu-mae Sta. ↓ Kintetsu Line → Yoshino Sta.



Map Legend

Expressway

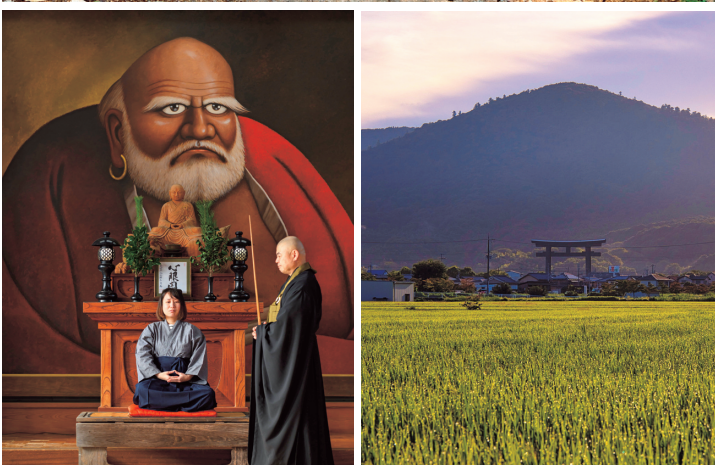
Major national routes

JR Shinkansen

JR Local Line

Kintetsu Line

Nankai Line



Transformative Travel in Nara

Nara was the political and cultural center of ancient Japan, and from the mid-6th century to the 8th century, various forms of knowledge and technology, such as Buddhism, legal systems, cultural practices, cuisine, and performing arts, were transmitted from China and the Korean Peninsula. These influences played a role in shaping the modern-day Japanese nation. By moving away from the political center at an early stage in history, the area has not been involved in any major wars for the past 1,300 years up to the present day. As a result, it has not experienced any cultural discontinuity. Instead, the "spirituality" and "culture" that have been passed down from person to person, such as festivals, folklore, and food, have been preserved without interruption and remain intact.

Nara is a place where the memories of an unbroken lineage of land live on and can be considered the spiritual home and origin of the Japanese people. Many Japanese people who visit Nara feel that "time seems to move at a different pace in Nara." Shrines and temples that have stood for over a thousand years, coupled with timeless scenes of prayer, create a serene atmosphere. The rich nature, admired and revered through prayer, seamlessly integrates into everyday life. In addition to the famous shrines and temples that appear in guidebooks, you can feel the living memories of the people and the land that have been preserved and passed down by local residents throughout Nara. This heritage is evident in the temples and Jizo statues on street corners, shrines standing at the foot of mountains, ancient tombs that suddenly appear on the side of the road, and the old townscapes. Perhaps being immersed in 1,300 years of history makes time feel as though it flows more gently.

To build a richer life, we need to reflect on our ancestors, family, and loved ones who have shaped us, look inward to understand ourselves, and contemplate the values that truly matter. To do so, it's important to step away from everyday pressures and immerse ourselves in a relaxed atmosphere. Nara provides the perfect setting for self-reflection and transformation before moving on to the next stage of life, offering a unique opportunity to rediscover oneself within the context of 1,300 years of history. Please take your time to explore Nara at your own pace.

Nara Sky

To protect the historic landscape, building height restrictions are in place, giving Nara its distinctive wide-open sky. The expansive fields of the Nara Palace Site and the panoramic views from Mt. Wakakusa and Nigatsudo Hall at Todaiji Temple, overlooking the Nara Basin, are truly breathtaking. The scenery is especially stunning in the early morning and evening; take a moment to simply gaze at the sky.

Copying Sutras and Buddha Images

Among the many temples in Nara, some offer the opportunity to experience sutra copying and Buddha image copying. At Tachibanadera Temple, you can experience sutra copying in Ojoin, a space renowned for its beautiful ceiling paintings.

Morning Services

Visiting temples early in the morning is one way to experience Nara. At Hasedera Temple, you can spend a special time participating in the morning religious services performed by the monks every day.

Hiking

Hiking spots in Nara include the Kasugayama Primeval Forest, designated as a national natural monument with walking trails, and the Yamanobe-no-michi, said to be Japan's oldest road, which winds from south to north along the foothills of the Nara Basin. Forest bathing and hiking are also popular ways to immerse yourself in Nara's natural beauty.

Zen Meditation

Sanshoji Temple, a temple of the Soto sect of Zen Buddhism, has a training hall where you can practice Zen meditation while listening to the sounds of nature. Spend some precious time in self-reflection.

Climbing Mt. Miwa

Mt. Miwa, the sacred mountain revered as the object of worship at Ohmiwa-jinja Shrine, was once strictly off-limits. Today, however, visitors may climb it for prayer—provided they adhere to all the prescribed precautions. Please check the official website in advance for important information.

Not to be Missed

Historic Sites

- 1 Kasugataisha Shrine
- 2 Todaiji Temple
- 3 Kohfukuji Temple
- 4 Nara Palace Site
- 5 Yakushiji Temple
- 6 Shoryakuji Temple
- 7 Murouji Temple
- 8 Horyuji Temple
- 9 Ohmiwa-jinja Shrine
- 10 Hasedera Temple
- 11 Tanzan-jinja Shrine
- 12 Fujiwara Palace Site
- 13 Imaicho
- 14 Kashiwara Jingu Shrine

- 15 Taimadera Temple
- 16 Ishibutai Tumulus
- 17 Asukadera Temple
- 18 Okadera Temple
- 19 Kinpusenji Temple
- 20 Tamaki-jinja Shrine

Nature

- 1 Nara Park
- 2 Kasugayama Primeval Forest
- 3 Mt. Wakakusa
- 4 Soni Highland
- 5 Yamanobe-no-michi trail
- 6 Katsuragi Kodo Path

- 7 Asuka Village Terraced Rice Fields
- 8 Mt. Yoshino
- 9 Omine-Okugake Trail
- 10 Mitarai Valley
- 11 Kohechi Pilgrimage Route
- 12 Odaigahara Plateau

Experiences

- 1 Ikoma Sanjo Amusement Park
- 2 Futuno-Masataka swordsmith's studio
- 3 Nara Prefecture Historical and Artistic Culture Complex

World Heritage

- 2 Nara Buddhist Sculpture Hall
- 3 Nara Prefectural Museum of Art
- 4 Neiraku Museum of Art
- 5 Nara Crafts Museum
- 6 Shohaku Art Museum
- 7 Nara Prefecture Complex of Many Culture

