

making Kyoto the world's hometown

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The New Kyoto Edit

Discover a Kyoto You've Never Seen





Kyoto Prefecture 101

Tracing the Origins

Kyoto is a city with a rich historical legacy that has shaped much of Japan's cultural identity. Whether it be Kiyomizu-dera Temple, the bamboo groves of Arashiyama or matcha confection makers, the iconic sites and popular food spots are largely concentrated in and around the central city area. But have you ever considered where the objects and materials needed to forge the culture come from? The sacred ropes found at shrines and the bamboo fences and ritual items used at temples? How about the green tea, the fresh fish, and the tasty vegetables?

Many of these articles and products have long been caught, grown and made not in the city, but far away in the vast blue northern sea, the thick inland forests, the bamboo fields of the western district and the tea towns of the south. Known as Kyoto by the Sea, Woodland Kyoto, Otokuni Bamboo Grove and Kyoto Tea Country, these four areas are where you'll find the building blocks of the culture that in turn shaped the culture of a nation.

In this issue of Enjoy Kyoto, we leave the madding crowds of the city behind and turn our attention to a selection of destinations and encounters that speak to the quieter, more mysterious side of Kyoto. We hope our "new Kyoto edit" will give you a whole different perspective from which to explore and experience our magnificent city's cultural roots for yourself.



Photo credit: WILLER TRAINS (Kyoto Tango Railway)

Kyoto by the Sea

Located on the Sea of Japan coast, this area of dynamic natural beauty is home to the famously scenic Amanohashidate sandbar and the quaint boathouses of Ine. The rich nature and varied climate have shaped traditional crafts and industries unique to the character of the region.

pp. 4-5
Kojima-an
(Paper lanterns)



pp. 6-7
kuska fabric
(Luxury ties)



p. 8 **Wakuden no Mori**
(Seiko—Wakuden's signature sweet)

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ENJOY KYOTO
[エンジョイ キョウト]

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Kyoto: a place I'd like to call home. The 'second hometown' project, through the free magazine *Enjoy Kyoto* and its affiliated website, is aimed at showing foreign visitors the deeper charms of this amazing city.

住みたくなる京都～second hometown project～をコンセプトに、海外からのゲストに京都をもっと好きになってもらうためのフリーペーパー＆WEB。



Check our website at :

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(beta version)

✉ info@enjoy-kyoto.net

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of Kyoto Culture



pp. 10-11 **Nipponia**
Miyama Tsurugaoka Yama no Sato
("Dispersed" hotel)

Woodland Kyoto

This mountainous area of largely untouched nature is more than 80% forest. The sleepy rural landscape is dotted with rustic thatched-roof dwellings. A popular destination for farmhouse stays, trekking tours, river treks and riverboat rides.



p. 12 **Azuki no Sato**
(Japanese sweets)

Kyoto Otokuni Bamboo Grove

Just 15 minutes by train from Kyoto Station, this area, also known as the Otokuni area, stretches south of the Nishiyama mountain range in the western part of the Kyoto basin. It was the site of the ancient city of Nagaokakyo that was the capital before Kyoto, and is famous for bamboo forests and crafts, and the delicious springtime delicacy of bamboo shoots.



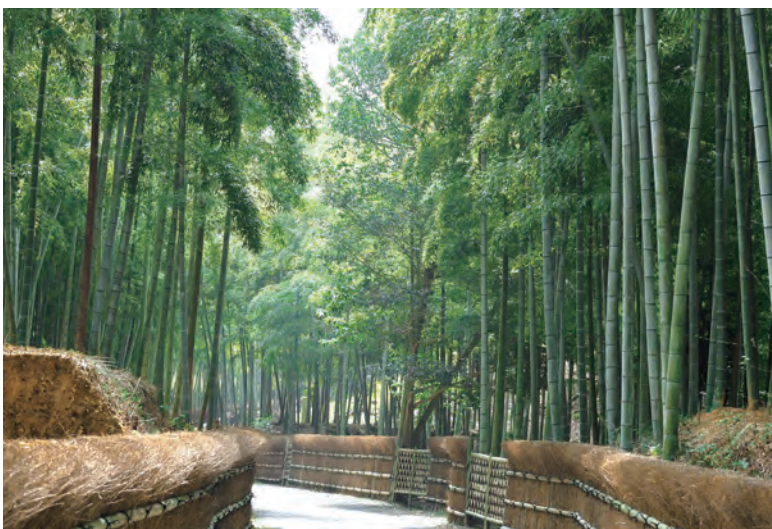
pp. 14-15 **Nagaoka Meichiku**
(Bamboo fences)



pp. 20-21 **Kyoto Obubu Tea Farms**

Kyoto Tea Country

A tea-production area with 800 years of history famous for the prized Uji-cha green tea. Recharge body and soul with a refreshing cup of the local brew as you enjoy the view of the lush, rolling tea fields. The region has also been a major transportation hub since ancient times and has an abundance of interesting historic temples and shrines to explore.



pp. 18 **Take no Michi** (Bamboo path)



pp. 24-25 **Nanjōkōbō** (Orin singing bowl)



pp. 22-23 **Asahiyaki**
(Pottery studio)



Kyoto by the Sea

The Lanterns Illuminating Hearts

Cozy Light and Human Warmth in a Northern Seaside Town

One of the delights of Kyoto by night is the warm glow of *Kyō-chōchin*—Kyoto-style paper lanterns—you see at temples and shrines or outside inns and restaurants. Most of these lanterns are handmade in the city at small, generations-old workshops like Kojima Shōten, which has been in business since the late 18th century. The pair of giant red lanterns hanging in front of the famous Minami-za kabuki theater is an example of the many pieces of this venerable studio's work found around Kyoto.

One of Kojima Shōten's artisans, however, is doing things differently. In 2021, Shun Kojima left the city and the main workshop behind to open an offshoot in the seaside town of Amino in northern Kyoto Prefecture.

What compels an artisan to break with tradition and set up shop in a faraway seaside town? For Shun Kojima, it was the pull of the beautiful Kyōtango ocean and the promise of a simpler, kinder lifestyle.



A Happy Place Called Amino

The Amino district of Kyōtango City is about 120 km from central Kyoto and can be reached in around two and a half hours by car. It's a popular destination for vacationers who come to soak in the hot springs of the Yūhigahara coastline, swim at the pristine beaches, and tread the famous singing sands of Kotobikihama. Kojima's workshop is located near Hatchōhama beach.

Before moving away, Kojima made lanterns at the main studio with younger brother Ryō. The pair is the 10th generation to follow the family trade. Unlike their forebears, however, this generation faces uncertainty as changing lifestyles threaten the festivals, temples and shrines that have traditionally been the industry's main customer base. The brothers looked to distant shores, actively participating in events promoting Kyoto handicrafts overseas and procuring opportunities to collaborate with European brands and designers. Their efforts were rewarded as word of success abroad boosted their reputation at home. Restaurants, fashion

buildings and other businesses around the city began to purchase lanterns from Kojima Shōten, and the mold-breaking young craftsmen even garnered media attention.

That's when the coronavirus pandemic hit. Overseas travel was out of the question, local tourist events were canceled, and the studio's main source of income dried up as demand for festival lanterns suddenly vanished.

For Shun, though, the crisis brought opportunity. His mind conjured pictures of the beautiful beaches of Amino, his mother-in-law's hometown where his family had spent many a summer vacation and even discussed moving eventually. With doubts about bringing up their children among the jostle of the city, the time was right to make the move before the pandemic ended and life got too busy again. Thus, Shun began to light the way for a new chapter in Kojima Shōten's centuries-old history. The family's motto, which they've even printed across the chests of the studio uniform, is "*Suki na basho de honpou ni*"—"Living our way in our happy place."



The Joy of Work and Life

It's now three years since the studio opened its doors. Shun and his wife Hiromi employ a team of twelve, which includes five mothers from the neighborhood. None of them had any prior experience with the craft. Miki was one of the many neighbors who dropped by to welcome the young family to town in true country style with gifts of home-grown vegetables. They hit it off instantly and recruited her on the spot. Miki in turn enlisted her childhood friend Haruna, a new mother who looking for work close to home. Expecting to be helping out with the administrative side of things, the women were surprised when Shun began to teach them how to make lanterns. There's also Nozomi, who joined a little later after moving to the area from Osaka.

Despite their initial inexperience, the women have blossomed into skilled creators of beautiful lanterns. Shun had in fact long seen the power of women as the key to a strong team—the female employees at the city studio were quick, efficient and dexterous. The reality in Japan, especially in rural areas, is that many women are forced to leave their careers and focus on parenting once they have children. The nature of Kojima-an's work enables it to provide a flexible environment and an outlet for the talents of women unable

to commit to full-time employment. The women, meanwhile, provide the labor required to keep on top of the considerable volume of orders the business receives from customers in Kyoto, so it's a winning situation all round. Above all, the women have helped the family to integrate swiftly into the community. Friendships have emerged between team members' husbands and their children drop by the workshop after school to play. In both life and work, the people here are the very embodiment of "living our way in our happy place."

It's easy to image that the women themselves will eventually be in the position of teaching their craft to other new mothers who would otherwise be unable to work. Perhaps more families will come and make Amino their home, or perhaps there's a future lantern-maker among the children who play here. For a city-dweller, the radiant smiles on the faces at Kojima-an are a reminder of a more human existence where family, work and the day-to-day are intertwined as one.



Meet the Team and Make a Mini Lantern

Kojima-an offers lantern-making experiences where you can make your own palm-sized mini LED lantern. You'll select your choice of pattern and washi paper and attach them to a bamboo frame using authentic, traditional methods. The washi paper turns the LED light into a warm fuzzy glow that makes the lanterns a stylishly cozy addition to any interior. They also make a great one-of-a-kind gift.

The experiences are run personally by Shun and the team featured here, so why not come and meet them? The warm memories you create of Amino and its people may just be the best souvenir of all.

- Duration: 60 mins
- Price: 4,400 per person (includes tax and LED light)
- Min. No. of Persons: 1
- Bookings and Inquiries: <https://kojima-an.jp/contact.html>



Official website



小嶋庵
Kojima-an

Address: 京都府京丹後市網野町浅茂川266
Instagram: @kojimaan_official



Kyoto by the Sea

Weaving Through Modernization

Crafted with authenticity in the historical home of Kyoto's kimono fabrics

Although seldomly worn today, kimono is still iconic of Kyoto's fashion culture. If you are about to visit Kyoto, you might be looking forward to an immersive sightseeing experience dressing up in the traditional garment to stroll around the ancient cityscape—and perhaps catch yourself wondering, where is kimono fabric produced in this day and age?

The Tango region, located over 100 kilometers north of central Kyoto, is where approximately 70% of kimono fabrics are produced. As a major producing region of quality silk for about 300 years, the place is especially known for Tango *chirimen*, or crepe fabric woven with twisted silk thread crafted with a technique unique to this region. Historically, the silk fabric was then transported to Kyoto City by foot couriers, and

delivered to wholesalers and dyers in urban districts like Nishijin and Muromachi. The industry was thriving until the 1970s, during which kimono consumption declined dramatically due to modernizing lifestyles. During its peak, the kimono industry was worth as much as 2 trillion yen, which has now shrunk to a tenth, or 200 billion. The Tango *chirimen* market has also

dwindled since its height in 1974, marking a production quantity of 10 million tan (traditional unit of measurement for cloth; one tan makes one kimono), which is now down to 150,000. However, despite the gloom, a private-owned textile business in Yosano-chō, a small town with a population of 10,000 residents, is rising to the occasion.

Reviving a textile mill to produce luxury ties

The small textile mill was founded in 1936, owned by a couple and run together with one part-time employee, weaving its way with patience and tenacity for over 70 years. The modest firm was no exception to the irreversible plunge of Tango *chirimen* consumption in recent history, on the verge of closing down. One time, the couple's son, Yasuhiko Kusunoki, was back in his hometown to go surfing off the nearby shore. Learning about the difficulty his parents were facing ignited in him a sense of motivation to revive his hometown, Yosano-chō, and the Tango region that helped shape his identity. At first, he did not have a clue about what he could do, but he did not hesitate either. He immediately quit his job in Tokyo in 2010



and changed his course in life to work for his family business. Then, aiming to restore the tradition of manufacturing high-quality Tango *chirimen*, Kusunoki rebranded the enterprise into a manufacturer and retailer of luxury ties, and renamed it as Kuska, taking the first syllable from his family name.





Directly handing end products to clients

To create luxury ties by utilizing the long-established technique of weaving Tango chirimen, Yasuhiko Kusunoki conducted two major business reforms. First, he got rid of every single power loom that was used in the mill. He instead installed handlooms for craftspeople to weave each item by hand, to enhance handmade qualities in the product. The second reform he made was about logistics. Conventionally, kimono fabric produced in Tango is sold to wholesalers in Kyoto City. Kusunoki's family business also used to supply their fabrics to shops related to the traditional garment—but he decided not to rely on them and instead negotiated with modern-day clothing stores, particularly curated boutiques that are popular among young, trend-conscious consumers. When the ties were sold in those stores, brand recognition increased instantly. Another opportunity came when a major retail chain with over 20 shops across Japan was about to revamp its flagship store in Harajuku. The shop was seeking to feature select Japanese items, to which Kuska ties were added with success. Kuska garnered nationwide attention, and its ties were worn by a young, widely known politician, and even made purchasable via inflight retail of



a major Japanese airline. In recent years, Kusunoki also launched “Kuska Fabric” as a multi-purpose fabric brand, providing various fabrics which are used for items such as bags, shoes, and chairs by a variety of global brands.

The up-and-coming enterprise is currently exploring ways to develop a business model for a potential global expansion. Its products, although in small amounts, are already available in five different countries, including the Savile Row Company in London and boutiques in New York. However, Kusunoki stresses the significance of having customers come visit the Tango region and the brand's studio.



Visit the villages of Tango, the birthplace of Kuska

The reason why it's important for Kusunoki that customers visit his company's studio in Tango is because he hopes to share the history of the region, the *chirimen* silk, and Kuska. The studio tours and hand looming workshops are a part of his efforts to realize his ambition. Visitors are welcome to observe the processes of handcrafting the ties on handlooms and have a hands-on experience. Tango is quite far from central Kyoto, but Kusunoki is eager to have people come all the way, so that he can finally show the environment where Kuska was found and engage in conversations in the scenic countryside surrounded by the ocean, mountains, and snow in the wintertime. Customers are also invited to touch the fabric directly and try weaving on a handloom. Because Kuska ties are a product of Tango's history and the everyday lives of local residents, Kusunoki hopes to provide a holistic experience of purchasing a Kuska product by having customers explore all the elements of its origination

and manufacturing processes.

The other reason why Kusunoki invites people to his hometown is to bring some life back to Tango's textile industry. His studio currently employs 16 craftspeople, contributing to local employment. In the aging traditional crafts industry where the average worker is between 65 and 70 years old, the average age at Kuska is 38, including two members of staff in their 20s. And about 80% of the staff are locals. Kusunoki says, “The manufacturing process of producing Tango *chirimen* is divided among several specialized artisans, so it's meaningless if only Kuska succeeds. We need to revive the entire community as well as the industry itself.”

Which is why Kusunoki also runs a travel guide website on Tango and strives to share the region's charm by highlighting the people living there. Before you visit Kuska's studio, check out the website for reference to discover some hidden gems in the Tango region.

THE TANGO <https://thetango.kyoto>



- Duration: 60 mins (studio tour 40 minutes + hand-loomng 20 minutes) *Reservation required
- Price: Free with purchase at factory shop, tour only is 6,000 yen per person, hand-loomng workshop for 20 minutes is 15,000 yen per person
- Min. No. of Persons: 1
- Bookings and Inquiries
<https://kuska.jp/en/contact/> or info@kuska.jp

Official website



kuska fabric

Address: 京都府与謝郡与謝野町岩屋384-1

Instagram: @kuska1936 X: @kuska94

Facebook: @kuska.1936



Kyoto by the Sea

The Bounty of the Forest in the Town by the Sea

A Restaurant That Grew a Forest to Give Back to Its “Hometown”

Fine-dining Japanese restaurant Wakuden near Kōdaiji temple is something of an institution in Kyoto. Its roots, however, lie not in the city, but in the Kyōtango district some 120 km north. Founded by ship broker Wakuya Den’emon in 1870, the establishment began as a *ryōri ryokan* (an inn specializing in quality cuisine) in the town of Kumihama, which was a flourishing trading hub at the time.

A rich source of seafood, the northern part of Kyoto Prefecture has long been connected with Kyoto City through food culture. There’s even a network of routes called Saba Kaidō (“Mackerel Road”) established in the 13th century to transport mackerel and other seafood from the north to the capital, so it’s not surprising that the restaurant hails from Kyōtango. Now the company is giving back to that “hometown,” opening Wakuden no Mori (“The Wakuden Woods”) there in 2017.



The Forest and Its Fruits

While the luxury *ryōtei* restaurant Kodaiji Wakuden was steadily building its status in Kyoto, Murasakino Wakuden was established in 1996 to sell boxed lunches, confections and food gifts. About 10 years later, the company launched a project to establish a factory and make Murasakino Wakuden’s products in Kyōtango, at the same time beginning large-scale tree-planting to grow what was to become Wakuden no Mori. Directed by botanist Akira Miyawaki, the undertaking was designed to create a source of Mother Nature’s blessings in the town of the company’s roots. To date, some 30,000 trees of 56 varieties have been planted, and the forest now produces mulberry, butterbur, shiitake mushroom, Japanese pepper, persimmon, yuzu citrus and more. In an effort to spotlight local industries, the company also grows a variety of rice called Isehikari and has developed sake made from the rice with a local brewery.



Wakuden no Mori



Official website

Address
京都府京丹後市久美浜町谷 764 和久傳ノ森
instagram: @wakuden_mori_official

Food, Art and Nature to Nurture Body and Soul

Mori Factory & Restaurant

The name “Mori” is a play on the Japanese word for “forest” and the Italian word for “mulberries,” the signature plant of Wakuden no Mori. The restaurant is popular with a wide range of clientele, young and old alike. Menu favorites include the Mori Set Meal of pesticide-free rice cooked in earthenware pots and dishes of seasonal ingredients. There is also sushi made with mackerel from Miyazu, and seasonal desserts from the factory next door. On sunny days eat on the terrace and enjoy the forest view.



- Opening Hours: 10:00 am – 6:00 pm (last orders 5:30 pm), table and menu item bookings accepted
- Closed: Tuesday (or Wednesday in the case that Tuesday is a national holiday), New Year period (Dec 29 – Jan 1)

Mitsumasa Anno Museum House in the Forest

This museum in the grounds is dedicated to the works of Mitsumasa Anno, an artist renowned the world over for his soft watercolor paintings and picture books. The building, designed by leading Japanese architect Tadao Ando, features a clean, minimalist design that harmonizes with the natural environment of Kyōtango. Enjoy the quiet, peaceful atmosphere and luxurious aesthetic of this space created by the collaboration between these two master artists.



- Admission Charge: General admission 1,000 yen, junior high and high school students 600 yen, elementary school students 400 yen. Half price admission for patrons with an applicable disability certificate and one accompanying person.
- Opening Hours: 9:30 am – 5:00 pm (last entries 4:30 pm)
- Closed: Tuesday (or Wednesday in the case that Tuesday is a national holiday), New Year period (Dec 29 – Jan 1)

Watch the Classic Flavors of a Kyoto Institution Being Created

Murasakino Wakuden Kumihama Factory

The seasonal sweets and other foods sold by Murasakino Wakuden are made here at the Kumihama factory. Considerable time and effort are put into every kind of food made here, with meticulous attention to all aspects of the process from the intricacies of cooking to weighing and boxing. Visitors to the Kumihama factory can watch the factory operations free of charge from the passage in the courtyard. We recommend visiting in the morning when you can watch the signature Seiko Lotus Root Sweets being individually rolled by hand.



Seiko—Wakuden’s Signature Sweet

A sweet consisting of lotus flour (starch from lotus roots) kneaded together with delicately sweet *wasanbon* sugar and wrapped in two bamboo leaves. One of Murasakino Wakuden’s signature products, Seiko are served to conclude meals at the company’s *ryōtei* restaurants.

- Factory Observation Charge: Free
- Inquiries: artmori@wakuden.jp



MAP — Kyoto by the Sea

Kyoto by the Sea is located in the far north of the prefecture overlooking the Sea of Japan. It offers unforgettable activities with something for everyone from families to friend groups and couples. The sparkling blue waters and white sandy beaches are an idyllic setting for swimming and marine leisure in summer, and surfing, hot springs and fresh crab and seafood make it a year-round destination. There are also famous sightseeing spots such as Amanohashidate and the Ine boat houses to explore.

Enjoy Kyoto's curated itinerary of select destinations includes Kojima-an, Kuska Fabric and Wakuden no Mori featured in this issue. Let MATSUSHIMA Mobility Service and its multilingual team of drivers with Kyoto Tourism Culture Certification level 3 or higher guide your adventure.

Enjoy Kyoto's Recommended Itinerary

Chibimaru mini lantern-making experience at **Kojima-an**



Factory and art museum tour, lunch of seasonal cuisine at **Wakuden no Mori**



Factory tour, hand-weaving experience and souvenir shopping (ties, etc.) at **Kuska Fabric**



Amanohashidate, Ine Boathouses



AD

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Price

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(Vehicle Type: Toyota Alphard)

Highway tolls, parking fees and additional time are extra. Stops can be made at locations besides those on the recommended itinerary. Please ask your driver.

Bookings and Inquiries

Phone: 075-646-0020

e-mail: contact@matsushima-mservice.jp





Woodland Kyoto

A hometown for everyone

In the unspoiled countryside of Miyama, a trove of true richness

When you visit a Shinto shrine and pass through a vermillion *torii* gate, sometimes you see a length of rope strung between the two pillars. Traditionally known as *shimenawa*, the twisted rope made of rice straw hangs as a spiritual barrier between the present and the divine. It also serves to protect objects that are believed to be dwellings of deities. At Fushimi Inari Taisha, one of the most iconic shrines in Kyoto with its striking tunnel of *torii* gates, you will see that its main sanctuary is also adorned with a giant *shimenawa*. In contrary to the shrine's worldwide reputation, few know where, how, and by whom the magnificent rope is crafted.

Miyama, famously known as Kayabuki no Sato ("thatched roof village"), is where the giant *shimenawa* is created every year as an offering to Fushimi Inari Taisha. The laborious process is open to the public, and workshops are also available to make your own. Unlike the elegant, aristocratic cultures of central Kyoto, traditional ways of living are still practiced among ordinary villagers in Miyama. It is where human life, rural culture and nature have coexisted in harmony since ancient times.



Listen to the birds, smell the grass, enjoy the silence

A quaint countryside village surrounded by unspoiled natural beauty, Miyama-chō is located about 80 minutes away from urban Kyoto by car. The small town literally means "beautiful mountain" in kanji characters, and it is indeed the perfect location to appreciate the wonders of distinct seasonal changes. Come springtime and soft hues of cherry blossoms color the mountains, and in the summer, fireflies twinkle as the stream below gently murmurs. Leaves turn beautiful shades of autumn, casting a warm glow across the forests. Then, everything is blanketed in whiteness, picturesque especially with the snow-covered thatched houses. Listen carefully and you hear the birds singing and insects chirping. Look around and you see how human life blends harmoniously with nature.

Selected as one of Japan's Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings, Miyama is made up of several communities, of which we spotlight Tsurugaoka in the northwestern area. With a population of around 650, Tsurugaoka is a community of warm-hearted residents and living traditions. The locals live by a motto of



"sustaining a livable community" and conduct a variety of activities like hosting rural lifestyle events that highlight the many traditional cultures of Miyama. Perhaps because of its charm, the number of residents who have relocated to Tsurugaoka is gradually growing in recent years.

Unlike landmarks or shopping malls, the simplicity of country life offers a kind of joy that is priceless. Perhaps, true richness lies in the everyday lives of people who value nature and emotional connections with their neighbors. Over recent years, however, Tsurugaoka is also known for an accommodation facility where guests can savor the slowness of time in the rural landscape.



Way of life as a journey at Miyama

NIPPONIA MIYAMA TSURUGAOKA Mountain Village is a “dispersed” hotel, a growing trend in which the accommodation facilities are scattered across a neighborhood. Guests have no choice but to stroll around like a local and immerse themselves in the countryside town, rural but rich with unique cultures that have been passed down through generations.

At NIPPONIA, your stay starts in a grocery store—not at a modern reception desk with ambient lighting and relaxing scents of a hotel lobby, but inside a small local shop called Tanasen. Right from the beginning you are surrounded with seasonal vegetables, local specialties, and household goods, and perhaps meet a few locals as you walk in and find a check-in counter in the corner. “This is where your journey in the Miyama village begins,” says Mari Kogita, the guide at the hotel. Vacation in the Tsurugaoka community begins by blending into local life.

The hotel is comprised of four renovated traditional houses and guests have an entire building to themselves. Inside and out, the facilities are a testimony to the expertise and aesthetics of the people in the past—thatched roofs, spacious tatami-matted rooms, large wooden beams, and Japanese gardens. Since the rooms are built with

natural materials, a sense of warmth and comfort is felt inside. It reminds many Japanese guests of their grandparents’ house, but recent guests from across the world have also commented on how the rooms feel somewhat nostalgic. This is perhaps due to the gentle, welcoming qualities of natural buildings that have been inhabited for a long time. While the houses retain the essence of traditional Japanese living, you can rest assured that the bathroom areas are renovated for comfortable, functional use.

After settling into your rooms, enjoy your meal at a restaurant in the neighborhood. Tsurugaoka boasts four amazing restaurants, where local chefs who have previously trained at Kyoto’s renowned restaurants and French bistros offer stunning multi-course meals prepared with fresh seafood and mountain harvests. You might try striking up a conversation with the owner or maybe the locals at nearby tables and make your dining experience all the more memorable.



Countryside nostalgia awakens soft memories

Staying at NIPPONIA MIYAMA TSURUGAOKA Mountain Village is in itself a hands-on experience on the traditional ways of life in the village. For example, the facility offers site visits and workshops on *shimenawa*, as mentioned earlier. The *shimenawa* at Fushimi Inari Taisha, where you’ll probably visit during your Kyoto trip, has been crafted in the Tsurugaoka community for 40 years. The art of rice straw crafting has been practiced in the community for ages, making use of leftover straw from freshly harvested rice to make sandals, rice barrels, and *shimenawa*.

The sacred rope made for Fushimi Inari Taisha is made annually during a set period of two to three weeks in mid-October. During that time frame, visitors can observe the process of making the giant *shimenawa* which is approximately eight meters long, 20 centimeters in diameter and weighs as much as 60 kilograms. Straw craft workshops are also offered in a garden outside a traditional house, in which anyone is welcome to participate and spend some time with the locals.

There is an exciting variety of workshops at

Tsurugaoka, where guests can try their hand at making *sabazushi* (salted mackerel sushi) or *tochimochi* (rice cake with Japanese horse chestnut) with local ingredients, experience farming, and learn a traditional technique of repairing thatched roofs. From a selection of over 20 workshops and events that vary with each season, guests are free to experience the various ways of local living during their stay. You might find yourself rediscovering the beauty of nature, engaging in heartwarming connections with the people in the community, and realizing a certain richness in the lifestyles of Tsurugaoka.

The warmth of sunlight on the skin, bright stars and clear skies, dragonflies, snow angels. The soothing sounds of rivers and the smell of tatami mats, grass and earth. It’s the simplest things that sometimes awaken old memories. At Tsurugaoka, many guests feel nostalgic maybe because they’re on a journey to the past, getting in touch with their inner child and revisiting tender memories. Staying at Miyama can also be a self-reflective experience that gently reminds you of something precious that you almost forgot.



Shimenawa observation tour

- Duration: 1 hours
- Price: 12,100 yen (includes tax) per group (max. 15 persons)

*Please note that in order to cover the cost of materials, there will be a charge for cancellations at short notice.

- Min. No. of Persons: 5
- Bookings and Inquiries: nipponia@miyama-tsurugaoka.jp



Straw craft workshop

- Duration: 2 hours
- Price: 16,500 yen (includes tax) per group (max. 5 persons)

*Please note that in order to cover the cost of materials, there will be a charge for cancellations at short notice.

- Min. No. of Persons: 5
- Bookings and Inquiries:



*Other workshops include rice planting, mochi pounding, thatching, and thatch harvesting.

*Some workshops may not be available depending on the season or other conditions.

Official website



NIPPONIA MIYAMA TSURUGAOKA Mountain Village

Address: 京都府南丹市美山町鶴ヶ岡新釈迦堂前1番地

Facebook: @nipponia_tsurugaoka.miyama
Instagram: @nipponia_tsurugaoka.miyama



Woodland Kyoto

The Tamba Forest— A Treasure Box of Japanese Sweets

Locally Grown and Locally Made in Kameoka

Sweets are an important part of special occasions and everyday life in Kyoto. Whether it be cakes, cookies, traditional rice and bean paste treats or other goodies, it's customary to give sweet gifts when visiting friends or valued clients and as ceremonial offerings of gratitude to gods and ancestors. *Wagashi* (Japanese-style confections) in particular are often associated with certain seasonal events and enjoyed in accordance with the calendar.

One of the central ingredients of *wagashi* is sweet bean paste made from reddish-brown *azuki* beans. The Tamba area in north-west Kyoto Prefecture is a major *azuki*-growing region, producing beans that are prized for their relatively large size, sweetness and quality. If you've enjoyed some of Kyoto's famous green tea and sweets, then visiting this "hometown" of *wagashi* is a great way to get to know this key part of Japanese culture.



Chestnuts

Azuki Beans

Black Beans

The Water That Fits

The city of Kameoka about 40 km west of Kyoto City is a major producer of the large, high-quality Tamba Dainagon variety of *azuki*. Yukio Fujita is head of Azuki no Sato ("Azuki Bean Village") in Kameoka and founder of wagashi shop Fujikō. Fujita, who has been honored by Kyoto Prefecture as a modern master craftsman, first trained at a famous *wagashi* shop in Kyoto City. Driven to offer authentic *wagashi* made with authentic ingredients, he began using the high-quality *azuki* from his hometown of Kameoka



and chestnuts and black beans from the Tamba area—a trio of ingredients known as the "three treasures of Tamba."

Fujita's concept is "locally grown, locally made." Focusing on products made in Tamba from ingredients farmed in Tamba, it has become something of his identity. In addition, he prides himself on using Kameoka water in the cooking process. Kameoka is known for its water quality, and moreover, it makes sense to cook ingredients in same local water with which they were grown.

"In Japan, when one's personality or beliefs don't gel with one's team or workplace, we say 'the water doesn't fit.' That shows just how important the compatibility of water is," says Fujita. Why would you cook crops nurtured with Kameoka water in water from anywhere else? The master confectioner firmly believes that that very same water they absorb in the fields gives the already delicious beans a more rounded sweetness.

Taste the Goodness of the Forest in the Hometown of Wagashi

Azuki no Sato began offering workshop experiences to share the goodness of the local produce and sweets in their hometown. In recent years, it has been welcoming increasing numbers of international visitors. The experience includes a tour of the factory to learn about the process followed by *wagashi*-making with instruction by Fujikō's confectioners. You can of course take your sweets home with you.

We're told that customers who participate in the experience purchase more Fujikō sweets than other customers. It seems that the interaction with the process and ingredients fosters a respect and affection for these individually handcrafted delicacies and their environment. After all, visiting and experiencing "locally grown, locally made" for yourself speaks more than words on a page ever can. Fujita looks forward to continuing to share this message with visitors from across the world.

Experience day calendar



● Duration: 30 – 60 mins ● Price: 2,200 yen per person (includes tax).

*Please note that in order to cover the cost of ingredients, there will be a charge for cancellations at short notice.

● Min. No. of Persons: 5 ● Bookings and Inquiries: info@azukinosato.com

Official website

**Azuki no Sato**

Address:

京都府亀岡市河原林町河原尻高野垣内47-1



MAP — Woodland Kyoto

Woodland Kyoto in the central part of the prefecture is Kyoto's pantry, its trees, waters and lands supplying fruit and vegetables since ancient times. Here you'll find picturesque fields and orchards, chirping birds, murmuring rivers, and fertile lands that yield rich natural bounty. Hike or trek ancient mountain paths, savor nature's goodness and find peace in the ancient Japanese wilderness.

Enjoy Kyoto's curated itinerary of select destinations includes Nipponia Miyama Tsurugaoka Mountain Village and Azuki no Sato featured in this issue. Let MATSUSHIMA Mobility Service and its multilingual team of drivers with Kyoto Tourism Culture Certification level 3 or higher guide your adventure.

Enjoy Kyoto's Recommended Itinerary

Shimenawa rope-making workshop at
NIPPONIA MIYAMA TSURUGAOKA Mountain Village



Stroll around **Miyama Kayabuki no Sato**



Lunch at **Beans Café** or one of the other restaurants in Kayabuki no Sato



Factory tour, *wagashi* sweet-making experience and souvenir sweet shopping at
Azuki no Sato



AD

MATSUSHIMA
Mobility Service
www.matsushima-mservice.jp

Price

64,900 yen for 8 hours
(Vehicle Type: Toyota Alphard)

Highway tolls, parking fees and additional time are extra. Stops can be made at locations besides those on the recommended itinerary. Please ask your driver.

Bookings and Inquiries

Phone: 075-646-0020

e-mail: contact@matsushima-mservice.jp





Kyoto Otokuni Bamboo Grove



Photo: Miyake Toru

Bamboo

The “Supporting Actor” of Kyoto Culture

Make your own handicraft from the material that underpins traditional architecture and tea ceremonies

Bamboo is an iconic part of the Japanese landscape. It has been indispensable in the fabric of Japanese life since ancient times and instrumental in shaping the culture of Japan. Whether it be the fences like those at the famous Arashiyama bamboo groves, interior features of traditional architecture, chopsticks or umbrella frames, the versatile plant is used for everything from household items to building. While the world is becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of bamboo, however, the industry faces a number of challenges such as fewer groves producing quality plants and the ageing of artisans. Nagaoka Meichiku bamboo studio in the famous bamboo production area of Nagaokakyo and neighboring Oyamazaki and Kameoka is addressing such issues with workshops designed to let more people learn about the beauty of bamboo, and see, feel and work with it themselves. We visited to find out more.



Premium Materials From the Heart of Bamboo Country

Otokuni, an area to the west of Kyoto City consisting of municipalities including Nagaokakyo City, Muko City and Oyamazaki Town, is known for producing high-quality bamboo and delicious bamboo shoots. The area is especially famous for durable, higher quality bamboo called *Kyōmeichiku* which the local artisans produce using a traditional technique known as *aburanuki*, or oil removal. The technique was invented by ancient artisans to prevent the eventual blackening and rotting of bamboo that happens if it is left unprocessed after being cut down. It involves firing the bamboo—traditionally over a charcoal flame but gas is more common today—and wiping off oil that emerges on the surface with a cotton cloth. The bamboo is then left to dry in the sun,

thus lightening the color and producing a stronger, more lustrous and durable material that is said to maintain its quality for as long as a century. Only bamboo that has been processed in this way earns the name *Kyōmeichiku*. There are four types of *Kyōmeichiku*—*Shiratake* (white bamboo), *Gomadake* (sesame bamboo), *Zumenkakuchiku* (patterned square bamboo), and *Kikkōchiku* (tortoise shell bamboo)—each of which has its own uses.





1 Shiratake

The most commonly produced variety of *Kyōmeichiku*, *Shiratake* has a light, lustrous finish that comes from firing cut green bamboo, drying it in natural sunlight, and carefully wiping off excess oil. It has a broad range of uses from fences and construction to tea ceremony implements and craft products.

2 Gomadake

Gomadake is made by the branches to thus preventing photosynthesis and putting the plant into a partially dry state. Fungi that develop during the process create small spots reminiscent of black sesame seeds in distinctive patterns on the surface. Commonly used for tea ceremony implements.

3 Zumenkakuchiku

An unusual square type of bamboo. The shape is formed artificially by placing a frame around the bamboo at the shoot stage. A mixture of nitric acid, sulfuric acid, sand and water is applied to the surface of the bamboo while it is still in the ground, burning the parts of the surface to which it adheres and creating patterns. Used for decorative columns, vases, chairs, benches, and other types of furniture.

4 Kikkōchiku

This rare kind of bamboo has a tortoise-shell-like pattern that is the result of sudden mutation. Its uses include sleeve fences, floor posts and vases. Buffer stops made of Kikkōchiku can be spotted in car parks around town.

Bringing Bamboo Back into Everyday Life and to the World

Nagaoka Meichiku, named after the famous Nagaokakyo *Kyōmeichiku* area, is a bamboo studio founded in 1952. Its work includes fences in the bamboo grove at Take no Michi bamboo path featured on p.18, Katsura Imperial Villa and numerous temples and shrines, as well as *inuyarai*—the low, arched fences that shield the bottom part of the façade of traditional Kyoto-style townhouses—and various other building materials and objects made from *Kyōmeichiku*. If you’ve been to Kyoto, you’ve probably seen something made by Nagaoka Meichiku around the place without realizing it.

In recent years, however, demand for *Kyōmeichiku* has dropped dramatically as lifestyles in Japan become more Westernized and traditional-style architecture less common. Nagaoka Meichiku president Akihiro Mashimo is attempting to remedy this by spreading the word about the joys of bamboo not only within Japan but to a world-wide audience, with a range of initiatives and a motto of “making the world smile with bamboo.” Mashimo has

broadened the company’s traditional focus on fence-making, creating an expanding range of bamboo items such as wine bottle stands, chopsticks and spoons that suit modern lifestyles and making them directly available to the consumer online and through retail outlets. The company also actively participates in events overseas and has begun welcoming members of the public into the studio for bamboo-making experience workshops.



Bamboo light-making experiences are also available at Nagaoka Meichiku.

The Gentle Feel of Bamboo and a One-of-a-Kind Souvenir

The workshops take place at the company’s studio in Kameoka, a short distance from Nagaokakyo where the head office and main studio are located. Participants can experience making a *Kyōmeichiku* handicraft such as chopsticks or a basket, and the finished product makes a great one-of-a-kind souvenir. The chopstick-making option is especially popular because unlike most similar experiences which involve simply painting a ready-make product, you can fashion the chopsticks yourself from pieces of bamboo. There are also experiences where you can make a flower vase, coasters, or a bamboo light. All last for approximately one hour including an explanation and the actual

making of the item. Although not native English speakers, the friendly staff members are enthusiastic and thorough in their instruction and a joy to interact with throughout the experience.

For something that little bit different off the beaten tourist path, and the opportunity to learn about an integral element of Japanese culture from a master artisan, make sure Nagaoka Meichiku is on your itinerary.



Basket-weaving experience

- Duration: approx. 60 – 120 mins
- Price: Plain basket 4,500 yen per person (includes tax), Colored basket 5,500 per person (includes tax)
- No. of Persons Accepted: 2 – 30



Chopstick-making experience

- Duration: approx. 60 mins
- Price: 2,500 per person (includes tax)
- No. of Persons Accepted: 2 – 30



Bookings and Inquiries
info@nagaokameishiku.com / 075-925-5826

Official website



Nagaoka Meichiku

Address
Oyamazaki Studio: 京都府乙訓郡大山崎町円明寺海道19
Kameoka Studio: 京都府亀岡市保津町三ノ坪50
instagram Facebook X @nagaokameichiku



Vase



Bottle stand



Kyoto Otokuni Bamboo Grove

Treasures of the Night Farm

Agriculture Meets Tourism in the Nishiyama District of Kyoto's West

Kyoto's food culture is synonymous with *washoku* (traditional Japanese cuisine) and especially seasonal vegetables. With the city being so far from the sea, vegetables were indispensable in the traditional diet. Farmers over the ages dedicated themselves to cultivating seasonal vegetables, refining horticulture techniques and selectively improving many varieties. This resulted in an array of local heirloom vegetables that are now promoted as *kyōyasai*, or "Kyoto brand" vegetables.

Many *kyōyasai* are grown in the Nishiyama district on the western edge of Kyoto City by producers like BNR Farm. However, as BNR's wacky trademark—a character based on the local specialty *senryo-nasu* eggplant—suggests, this farm is a little different. It's causing a buzz with an exciting new style of tourism where members of the public can participate in vegetable picking experiences. The farm is highly welcoming of visitors from abroad, and what's more, it offers farming experiences at night in fields lit by rows of magical lights. If you're looking for an after-dark sightseeing option, the "Night Farm" is an amazing way to spend an evening.

Duration: Approx. 2 hours.

Experience starts at 6:30 pm in July – November and 5:00 pm in December – January.

Price: Adults (6 years old and older) 13,200 yen (includes tax), children 5 and under are free

Bookings and Inquiries: team@bnr1111.com



BNR Farm

Address

京都府京都市西京区大原野上里南ノ町736

instagram: @bnr1111_kyoto





Revitalizing an Ageing Farming Industry

BNR Farm is located in Nishiyama, about 10 km from central Kyoto on the western edge of the Kyoto basin in an area that boasts a rich natural environment of majestic mountains and vast rural landscapes as far as the eye can see. The district is also home to several historically significant temples and shrines such as Ōharano Shrine and Yanagidani Kannon Yōkoku-ji Temple, but it is perhaps most renowned for its produce.

Like many other agricultural communities, however, Nishiyama is grappling with the issues of an ageing farming population and lack of successors. So it seemed like folly when two young men started a new farming business here five years ago with nothing but the will to succeed. One of the pair, the present representative director, told us that interacting close-up with nature and

food, the most basic of human needs, seemed like the path to finding one’s true self. They figured that with good honest effort, they would find a way to make it work.

The structural challenges for a small-scale farm, however, were considerable and the enterprise struggled to make a profit despite their quality low-chemical products. That’s when they floated the idea of focusing on experiences. With so many varieties of vegetables being grown, it was the ideal place for members of the public to experience farming.



After considerable trial and error and many a failed idea, a chance event about a year into the “rebranding” changed the fortunes of the operation, inspiring the hit activity Night Farm.



The Night Farm is Born

One hot summer evening, the farm was live streaming a harvest as one of its initiatives to highlight day-to-day activities. Viewers loved how pretty the fields and vegetables looked illuminated by the farmers’ headlamps, and this spurred the idea of offering hands-on harvesting experiences at night under lights. The timing was perfect—the “evening economy” was a hot issue, and with the lack of nighttime activities in Kyoto, bookings started flooding in as soon as the venture was launched. BNR Farm is now synonymous with Night Farm.

The Night Farm experience starts at about 6:30 pm from July to November and at about 5:00 pm in December to January, lasting around two hours. It includes dinner made with the vegetables you picked—either barbecued, on pizza baked in an oven in the field, or, in winter, in a hot-pot dish—and meat from a local butcher’s shop. Tables are set up outside so you can enjoy your vegetables among the fields from which they came.



In addition to the aforementioned *senryo-nasu* eggplant, there are about 15 varieties of seasonal vegetables that can be picked at any one time including *kujo negi* green onions, *kyō-kabu* small turnip, spinach, cabbage, and Chinese cabbage depending on the time of year. Harvesting the vegetables in the evening field feels like a treasure hunt, and children and adults alike love the fun and excitement of interacting with the soil and getting back to nature.

Another thing to note is that there is no limit to how much can be picked during the allotted time, so you can enjoy the experience without the disappointment of having to stop once you’ve reached a certain allowance. Leftover vegetables are donated to a Kodomo Shokudo (“Kid’s Café”) run by BNR Farm and to children’s homes across the country, so there’s no need to worry about picking too much. A future goal of the farm is to set up a system whereby tourists can participate in the delivery of the vegetables and thus contribute to the welfare of children in the Nishiyama community and nationwide.



The Ultimate Experience of Life as a Local

One of best things about BNR Farm is the chance to interact directly with the people of Nishiyama, share their work and experience being part of a local community. While the need for food is a fundamental part of the human experience, the unique regional character that colors it provides a profound cultural experience.

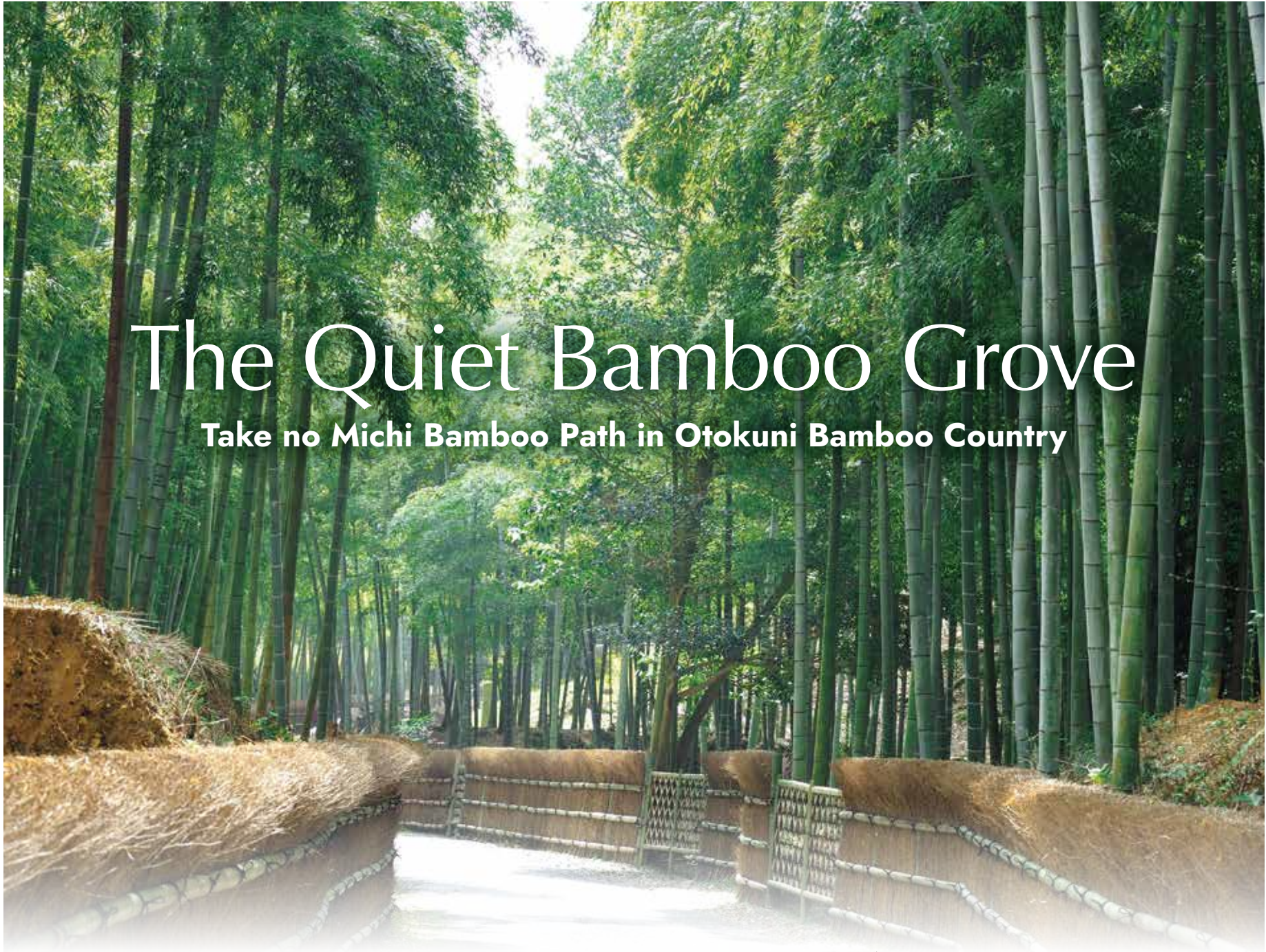
BNR Farm’s future plans include collaborations with local traditional craft workshops, shrines, temples and universities to offer tour packages that allow visitors to spend more time in the district. The ultimate goal is what they call the “Mountain Project.” Details are still being hashed out, but they envision a scheme by which people



from abroad can forge ties with the local community and commit to building and revitalizing it together. Farming, harvesting and enjoying the fruits of one’s labor side by side with the community? Surely that is the ultimate form of tourism.



Kyoto Otokuni Bamboo Grove



The Quiet Bamboo Grove

Take no Michi Bamboo Path in Otokuni Bamboo Country

When it comes to bamboo forests, most people think of Arashiyama. The iconic destination has become one of Kyoto's major attractions and most photographed locations. However, it's often so inundated with tourists that it feels more like a human jungle than a bamboo forest, with little semblance of the serene atmosphere and sound of the rustling leaves that you imagined. The good news is that there is an alternative. Take no Michi is a lesser-known bamboo path where you can enjoy a tranquil, leisurely stroll and a more authentic environment.

An Authentic Experience in the Home of Kyoto Bamboo

Take no Michi is located in Mukō City, one of several municipalities known collectively as the Otokuni district. The area has been a source of high-quality bamboo since ancient times. The path is about 1.8-km-long, stretching from Rakusai Bamboo Park in the north to Dairoku Kōyō Elementary School in the south. Still relatively unknown, Take no Michi promises a soul-soothing promenade through lush, green groves where the sun shines through sky-high bamboo trees and the air is filled with the sound of birds chirping and the fresh scent of bamboo.

One of the features of the path is a series of interesting bamboo fences along the way. Bamboo fences are significant in Japanese culture. They come in a diverse range of styles with different purposes, and

are not only used to create privacy but also for aesthetic effect when entertaining and in Japanese-style landscapes. The fences on the path are made by Nagaoka Meichiku featured on pp.14-15 and Council for Promotion of Bamboo Industry of Muko City, an association of local industry-related businesses including Nagaoka Meichiku. There are eight different kinds, some designed especially for the path, including "Takehogaki," which consists of vertical bundles of bamboo branches, "Kofun-gaki" made in the image of the rounded shape of a burial mound, and "Kaguyagaki," which is inspired by the collar of the mythical Princess Kaguya's twelve-layered robe. Note the exquisite craftsmanship and beautiful design as you walk along the path.



Takehogaki



Kofun-gaki



Kaguyagaki

The Seasonal Faces of Bamboo

The beauty of Take no Michi is that it can be enjoyed in a variety of ways throughout the year, making it a great place to visit again and again. Spring is when Otokuni's famous bamboo shoots are harvested in the bamboo fields surrounding the path (Kyoto is said to be the only place in Japan where bamboo shoot fields exist). A sought-after delicacy and one of the premium varieties of Kyoto vegetables, the type grown in Otokuni is an edible species called mōsō bamboo. It is thought to have been grown here since being brought over from China some 1,200 years ago, and to this day is cultivated using traditional methods unique to this area. In autumn, there is an evening illumination event where the soft orange glow of bamboo tube lights lining the path lights the way. Summer is when the trees seem to be at their most vital in the sunshine, while the snow-capped winter landscape will have you reaching for your camera.

With a less-tamed beauty than many of Kyoto's manicured gardens and free from the bustle of the crowds, Take no Michi is the place to go if you're looking for an authentic experience of a Japanese bamboo grove.

Princess Kaguya Nights Illumination Event

Time and Date: 5:30pm – 8pm, around October 2025

• Price: free

• Further Information and Inquiries:
<https://www.muko-kankou.jp/>



Take no Michi

Address: 京都府向日市寺戸町芝山
物集女町長野他





MAP — Kyoto Otokuni Bamboo Grove

The Otokuni Bamboo Grove area is in the foothills of the Nishiyama mountain range which extends from Arashiyama to Nishiyama in Kyoto's west. It's also where Kyoto's three major rivers, the Uji, Katsura and Kizu Rivers, converge. Bamboo from this area has played a major role in shaping the traditional culture of Kyoto such as in the bamboo fences and pillars in temples and traditional houses. The area is home to Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine, acclaimed for the Hachiman bamboo used by Edison for the filament in his incandescent light bulb, and the world-famous Yamazaki Whiskey Distillery.

Enjoy Kyoto's curated itinerary of select destinations includes Nagaoka Meichiku, BNR Farm and Take no Michi Bamboo path featured in this issue. Let MATSUSHIMA Mobility Service and its multilingual team of drivers with Kyoto Tourism Culture Certification level 3 or higher guide your adventure

Enjoy Kyoto's Recommended Itinerary

Stroll and take photos at **Take no Michi Bamboo path**



Bamboo shoot lunch at **Uosu restaurant**



Bamboo craft experience at **Nagaoka Meichiku**



Night Farm experience at **BNR Farm**



AD

MATSUSHIMA
Mobility Service
www.matsushima-mservice.jp

Price

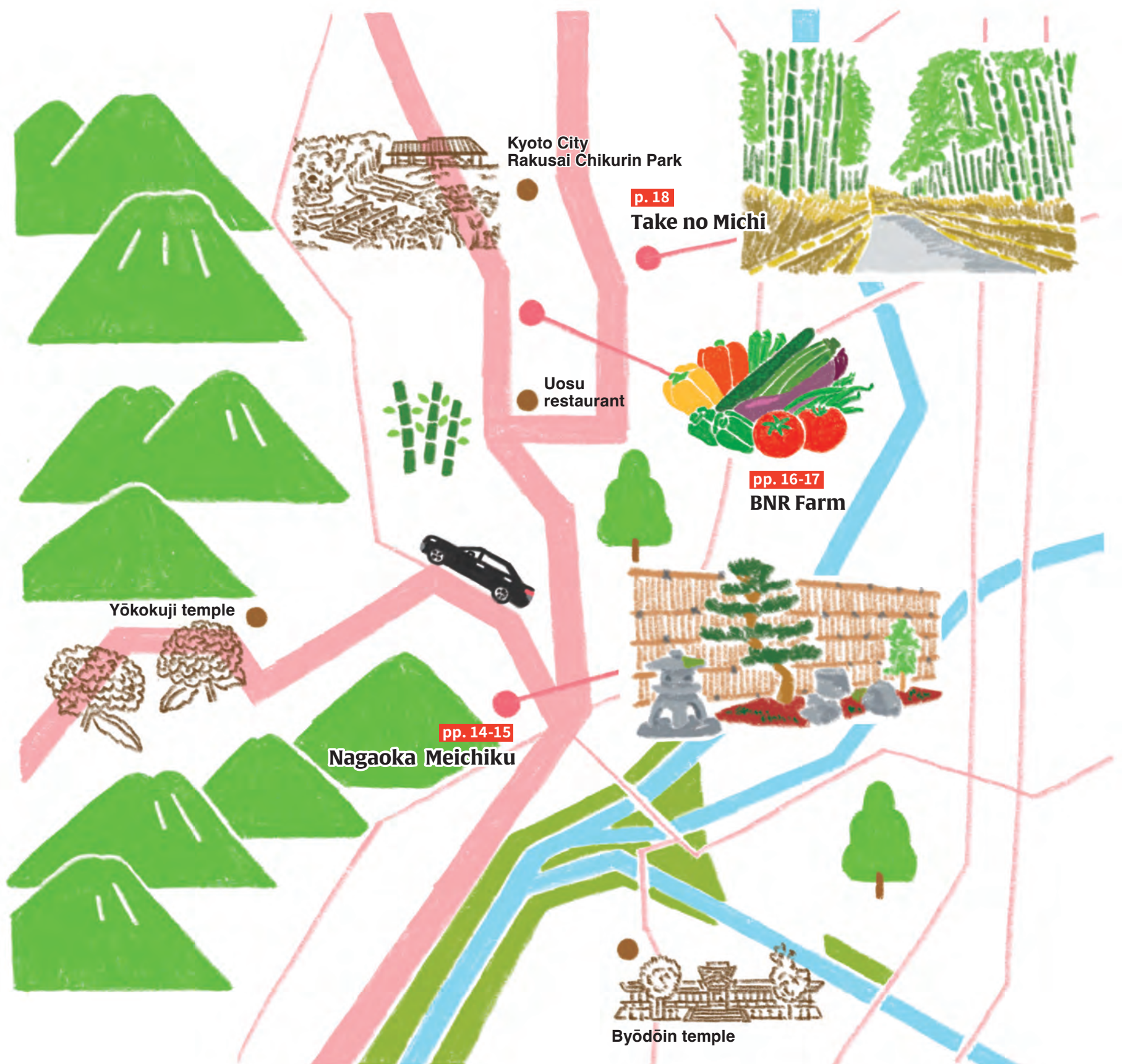
59,000 yen for 8 hours
(Vehicle Type: Toyota Alphard)

Highway tolls, parking fees and additional time are extra. Stops can be made at locations besides those on the recommended itinerary. Please ask your driver.

Bookings and Inquiries

Phone: 075-646-0020

e-mail: contact@matsushima-mservice.jp



Kyoto Tea Country

WAZUKA

The Town Where the Tea Breeze Sings

A New Generation of Farmers Delivering Green Tea to the World

Most visitors to Kyoto will encounter matcha, the green tea that has taken the world by storm, whether it be as a beverage or in desserts and sweets. But how many know where and how that tea is made?

The city of Uji is famously associated with matcha and Japanese tea in general, but more recently a town called Wazuka has taken its place as the biggest producer of tea in Kyoto.

Nicknamed Chagenkyo (“The Home of Tea”), Wazuka is located deep in the mountains of southern Kyoto Prefecture

about 90 minutes’ drive from Kyoto City. Tea is thought to have been grown here for some 800 years. Amid surging global demand for matcha in last 20 years, Wazuka has the most thriving *tencha* (the tea that is ground to make matcha) industry in Japan. It also known for *sencha* (tea grown uncovered) and consistently produces high quality, premium leaves of this variety.

Wazuka is a popular destination for overseas visitors who come for the day tours of one of the local plantations, Obubu Tea Farms, so why not pop down and steep yourself in all things green tea?

Cultivating the Future of Centuries-Old Tea Fields

The plantations of Wazuka are famous for more than just fabulous tea; they’re also breathtakingly scenic. The tea fields, hand-cleared on the mountainside in a pre-industrial age,

unfold in a beautiful patchwork of green on the steep slopes. This uniquely pretty scenery is increasingly attracting international tourists who come to the town just to see it for themselves.

Obubu Tea Farms—“*obubu*” means “tea” in old Kyoto dialect—was founded in 1997 by present co-presidents Akihiro Kita and Hirokazu Matsumoto, then university students who gave up their studies and started a farming cooperative. In 2004, farmer Yasuharu Matsumoto set up the online retail arm, obubu.com, evolving the business into its present form. The farm’s tea can now be purchased online from 218 countries across the world.

Green Tea Before It Was Fashionable

Obubu Tea Farms was championing the Japanese national drink to a world-wide audience long before the matcha boom. In 2012 the farm launched its three-month Japanese Tea Internship pro-



gram, which offers participants the opportunity to gain experience in the industry and a broad and deep understanding of tea. In addition to experiencing actual tea production such as harvesting and processing in the fields, interns actively participate in Obubu’s unique tea tours and learn about tourism and hospitality. They also take the lead in advertising and publicity, operating the farm’s social media and website. Graduates of the program can become Obubu ambassadors to promote Japanese tea abroad.

The farm’s “tea field owner system,” which began in 2008, has steadily expanded to boast a total of 583 owners in 21 countries, 335 of those in Japan and 248 overseas. Overseas tea enthusiasts



can register to become a co-owner of Obubu's tea plantation for 3,000 yen a month, just 100 yen a day. Owners receive carefully selected freshly harvested tea and special tea not available on the website four times a year, as well as priority participating in seasonal events at the farm the opportunity to join in farming experiences and tea-making. The system allows you to enjoy the luxury of being an owner of a farm that produces Uji tea, while at the same time contributing to society by supporting the local industry. If it sounds like your cup of tea, visit Obubu Tea Farms' website to register as an owner or to apply for the internship program.

There's Nothing Like a Hometown Brew in the Fresh Air

Obubu Tea Farms continues to introduce new initiatives. This spring it began operating a direct shuttle bus between Kyoto Station and the farm to make it easier for overseas visitors to participate in the farm's popular tea tours. As Wazuka can be somewhat difficult to



access, it's a welcome service for if you're coming from central Kyoto.

Some 20,000 people have taken an Obubu Farms tour to date, but what exactly can you expect? The answer is everything from the field to the cup. You'll taste a total of nine types of tea, and in the tasting session experience how the flavor of the tea changes depending on the temperature of the water, as well as make tea for yourself. You'll visit tea gardens deep in the mountains usually only accessible by farmers and enjoy a truly memorable taste of tea consumed amid the beautiful fields and wide-open sky, enveloped by the light scent of tea in the air. After that you'll visit the processing factory, see the machines close up and hear about how tea is actually made, then enjoy another brew at the upstairs café while looking out over the beautiful Wazuka tea fields. After the tour, the shuttle bus will drop you back at Kyoto Station.

If you're a fan of matcha and Japanese tea, don't miss the chance to experience the beautiful scenery of the Wazuka village and the warm hospitality of the people of Obubu Tea Garden.



About the Tour

11:00	Gather at Obubu Farms office
11:00-11:45	Learn about Wazuka-cho and Obubu Tea Farms, tasting of two types of tea
11:45-12:45	Tour the tea fields and drink tea while taking in the spectacular scenery
12:45-1:00	Tea factory tour, drink a cup of tea processed at the factory
1:00-1:45	Lunch (Obubu special chazuke lunch; vegetarian and vegan options available)
1:45-3:00	Taste five types of tea and learn how to brew tea

Shuttle Bus Timetable

Kyoto Station → Obubu Tea Farms

① 8:30 AM → 9:50 AM ② 5:40 PM → 7:00 PM

Obubu Tea Farms → Kyoto Station

① 7:00 AM → 8:20 AM ② 4:10 PM → 5:30 PM

A shuttle bus also operates between JR Kizu Station and Obubu Tea Farms. This is a convenient option if you are coming from Osaka. See the farm website for details. Buses carry a maximum of 26 people. For larger groups, please inquire in advance to confirm availability.

Scan for bus reservations



Official website



Kyoto Obubu Tea Farms

Address: 京都府相楽郡和束町園大塚2

- Facebook: ObubuTea
- instagram: @obubuteafarms



Kyoto Tea Country

The Hardware to Uji's Tea Culture

Tea bowls created with the same water and soil as the tealeaves

Renowned for producing some of the finest green tea, Uji is one of the best hotspots among visitors in search of finely ground *matcha* tea, *sencha* (standard green tea leaves grown in the sun), or *gyokuro* (grown in the shade). If you are curious to try some Uji tea, we highly suggest that you savor those sips with tea bowls that are crafted with the same water and soil as the tealeaves. If the uniqueness of a culture is cultivated by its environment, then it's only natural that an agricultural crop pairs best with a ceramic bowl produced in the same region. In Uji, the cultures of tea ceremony and tea ware developed as a set.

With over 400 years of history, Asahiyaki is an established pottery studio in Uji and located at the foot of Mt. Arashiyama. The works carry an aesthetic called *kirei-sabi* which is a lighter and more elegant version of the earthy *wabi-sabi* taste of tea bowls used in mainstream ways of tea. We visit Yūsuke and Toshiyuki Matsubayashi, brothers who are propelling the Asahiyaki legacy they inherited into the future.

Toshiyuki Matsubayashi

Brand manager of Asahiyaki

Yūsuke Matsubayashi

Asahiyaki Hosai 16th generation

Brothers take over family-owned pottery studio of 400 years

Older brother Yūsuke Matsubayashi succeeded to the title of 16th generation Hōsai Matsubayashi in 2016. To sustain the qualities that define Asahiyaki or Asahi ware, he works with local sources of water and clay and fires the pottery with firewood harvested from the mountains. Clay soils in Uji are ancient soils that naturally drifted down the Uji River all the way from Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture. The clay is sandy and pale colored. Its texture is smooth and sticky, well-suited for throwing thin-walled pottery. In fact, the clay that Yūsuke currently works with was dug more than 50 years ago—

which means that the clay he extracts from the earth today will be used for throwing in 50 years' time. Constantly working within a vast timespan of a 100 years, Yūsuke continues to search for the true meaning of crafting his pottery locally.

The younger brother, Toshiyuki, is in charge of public relations and operates their shop and gallery. While Yūsuke is responsible for keeping the four centuries of tradition alive through the pieces he creates, Toshiyuki is his number one supporter and has the role of promoting their art to the public. Since his succession, Yūsuke has been producing pottery that

represent the Asahiyaki aesthetic of *kirei-sabi* through classic tea utensils such as tea bowls, tea canisters, water jars, and vases. As the 16th generation Hōsai, he has also created his own series of work using his signature technique of *geppakuyū nagashi* ("moon-white glaze wash") in a style that is contemporary and subtly expressionist. Meanwhile, Toshiyuki opened a shop and gallery to sell and showcase Asahiyaki's ceramic works. He also hosts casual tea ceremonies to practice their concept of "an inviting teahouse," holds pottery workshops, and attends various events around the world.

The universal language of tea

As the brothers continued their work, they began to realize that their roles are not isolated but correlated. Yūsuke joined an artisan collective of Kyoto's traditional crafts under his pseudonym, GOON, travelling to exhibitions in Italy, France, and Bahrain with his new products that transcended the realm of traditional crafts. Sometimes, Toshiyuki would take what he gathered from international guests at his workshops and events, filter them with Asahiyaki's philosophy, and share them with Yūsuke, who in turn might be inspired and comes up with new ideas. The other artisans and retail staff at Asahiyaki also go through trials and errors, between traditional practices and innovative attempts,



which overall adds to the creative but well-balanced environment at Asahiyaki.

As the brothers continue to work internationally, they realize that crafts are perhaps more universal in nature compared to fine arts, and less about religion or politics. Because rarely does sipping on tea out of a lovely tea bowl involve confrontations or emotional barriers that stem from differences in background. Enjoying a shared moment of peace over tea and chatting about tea culture or favorite tea bowls—experiences like these are more familiar to a lot of people and lead to a sense of mutual appreciation.

Over recent years, the brothers also witnessed how customers from foreign countries are very passionate about tea and enthusiastic in their search for tips on how to savor tea to the fullest. A formal tea ceremony is meditative, captivating, and highly recommended, but it requires some knowledge of certain manners, practice, and your own collection of tea utensils. “We hope that more people will drink matcha casually, because if people realize how enjoyable it is, then we know that young people would naturally be interested in tea culture,” said the two brothers in agreement.

The one-and-only experience of working with local soil

The more Japanese tea culture rises in worldwide popularity, the more it is significant for Asahiyaki to make pottery with Uji's water and soil. When the pandemic ended and international travel resumed, tourists became more appreciative of experiences that are site-specific. This is one of the major transformations in demand among tourists compared to pre-pandemic times, perhaps due to the realization that freedom to travel overseas is not to be taken for granted. Because of those several years of seclusion, many people have come to understand the true value of regional and cultural uniqueness. In this way, enjoying a cup of Uji-harvested tea in an Asahiyaki tea bowl crafted from locally sourced materials becomes a one-and-only cultural experience. It's worth noting that Yūsuke and Toshiyuki already had that in mind when they first opened their Asahiyaki shop and gallery. They talked about wanting to make it a place where people visit in search of Asahi ware instead of ordinary souvenirs. The pottery workshops are held as



a part of their efforts to put their philosophy into practice.

The workshops are comprised of several levels. There are single-day workshops for tourists to casually try their hand on a wheel, a full-on ceramics course where students attend every week for three months, and an intermediate option where members can attend five classes during that period of three months when they prefer. They recall one of their past students, who stayed for two months as a tourist and attended every class very seriously, successfully creating a beautiful teapot in the end that wowed the studio's professional artisans. Often, the participants who attend the workshops exchange words with one another and become friends. Both Yūsuke and Toshiyuki speak of how proud they are to be providing a place of social interaction like a tea party, instead of it being a classroom where students come solely to learn. Which is why they also hope to see some young residents of Uji join the workshops as well.



Pottery wheel throwing workshop

- Duration: 60 minutes to 90 minutes
- Price: 5,500 yen (Includes tax) per person
- Min. No. of Persons: 1

Flexible schedule class

- Duration: 2 hours and 30 minutes x 5 classes
- Price: 16,500 yen (Includes tax) per person
- Min. No. of Persons: 1
- Period: 3 months

Weekly ceramics class

- Duration: 2 hours and 30 minutes x 11 classes
- Price: 38,500 yen (Includes tax) per person
- Min. No. of Persons: 1
- Period: 3 months

More workshops are available. For more information, please visit the website.

<https://asahiyaki.com/sakuto.php>

- Booking and Inquiries
info@asahiyaki.co.jp



Asahiyaki

Official website



Address
京都府宇治市宇治又振67

Instagram: @asahiyaki
Facebook: @asahiyaki
X: @asahiyaki



Because the true purpose of cross-cultural interaction, including tourism, is not only to share a common value, but to also acknowledge each other's uniqueness and differences. Making tea bowls together and engaging in conversations over tea in this city famed for its Japanese tea—perhaps in the future, we'll see Asahiyaki evolve into a meeting place for green tea enthusiasts from across the world.



Kyoto Tea Country

Chimes of Peace

The Prayer Bells Ringing Out From a Little Corner of Uji

Anyone who has been to a temple in Kyoto will have seen and heard the pleasing ring of an *orin*, a metal bowl-shaped object that monks strike to accompany Buddhist scripture readings. They're also a traditional fixture in Japanese homes where they are used when praying to ancestors at the home altar. Each *orin* has its own individual sound and reverberation qualities that are determined by size, design, the ratio of metals and how the metal is cast, but most people are completely unaware of these subtle differences. As Japanese lifestyles become more Westernized and fewer households own Buddhist altars, however, the demand for *orin* has shrunk dramatically. Kazuya Nanjō, an artisan at 200-year-old *orin* maker Nanjō Kōbō in Uji, feared for the future of the craft.



Invention and Reinvention

Nanjō Kōbō is located in Makishima, Uji, not far from the famous Uji Bridge in a mixed residential and industrial neighborhood that's unlikely to feature on the itinerary of the average sightseer. The company has been manufacturing gongs used in Kyoto's famous Gion Festival and *narimono* Buddhist musical instruments for over two centuries since it was founded around the year 1800. The instruments are made from *sahari*, an alloy of copper and tin which has been believed since ancient times to have the power to purify and exorcise evil spirits. Nanjō Kōbō uses its own unique ratio of metals formulated by Kazuya's grandfather-in-law Kanzaburō, casting the alloy according to a traditional *yakigata* method that involves a wood-burning kiln. This creates a distinctly clear, resonate sound unique to Nanjō's products.

The secret to the sound quality lies in the rigidity of the metal. *Orin* made from softer materials inevitably deteriorate with age and produce an inconsistent sound due to minute distortions in the shape caused by vibrations when the *orin* is struck. Kanzaburō experimented extensively to find just the right rigidity to deliver the best sound.

In 2019, a different kind of innovation was to bring Nanjō Kōbō attention from a new audience not previously interested in Buddhist ritual objects. Kazuya launched a line of reinvented, secular *orin* called "LinNe." The name alludes to *rin* meaning "bell" in Japanese and *ne* meaning "sound," which together make *rinne*, the Buddhist term for "reincarnation." A fitting name if there ever was one!



Resonating With Modern Lifestyles

Because it was designed to give *orin* a place in everyday life, the LinNe line was intended to be sold at gift shops and the like rather than specialist Buddhist item outlets. This, however, presented an issue. The purchaser of an *orin* will usually also buy the stick used to strike it, called a *rinbō*, at the Buddhist item store at the same time. Nanjō Kōbō don't make sticks and giftshops don't stock them, so interested customers would potentially be deterred from purchasing an *orin*. Thus “Chibi,” a chime-type *orin* that didn't require a *rinbō*, was born.

Chibi was an instant hit. It was picked up by a number of major retailers, used in events including a workshop at the Apple Store in Kyoto and an exhibition at the Kyoto Museum of Traditional Industries, and featured in collaborations with modern musicians. Its popularity continued when the pandemic hit a year after the launch as people sought ways to cope with being at home—Chibi was just what they needed—and it suddenly gained attention abroad for use in yoga and meditation. The musician Ryūichi Sakamoto who passed away in 2022 is said to have owned one and listened to it in the hospital room where he spent his last days. What had until then been a small, unassuming Buddhist altar accessory was now reverberating throughout the world, loud and clear like the ring of *sahari*.



Reverberating With Hearts and Minds

The success of Chibi has brought a new clientele to LinNe. Nanbō continues to add new products to the line including “Ren” that is designed to be hung at the front door and chime in the wind, and “Myo,” a wooden stand and *rinbō* set. He also co-developed *orin*-based musical instruments with a sound artist—namely an *orin* playing device called “Synclee” and a “One Octave *Orin* Bowl” that consists of 13 *orin* tuned to orchestra pitch arranged on a wooden panel. In 2021, Kazuya was recognized for his efforts, being awarded a Craft Leader Prize in the Japan Craft 21 – Japanese Mastercraft Revitalization Contest. His work will be displayed at Expo 25 in Osaka in May.

The growing reputation of the business fostered a desire in the Nanjō family to interact directly with customers, to convey the appeal of their products in their own words and hand them to the customer with their own hands. Opening a new studio and store in 2023, they began offering foundry tours and *orin* sound workshops. Visitors can observe the entire production process from start to finish and then try *orin* for themselves and compare the respective sounds. There's also a sound-proof acoustic room in the store for a more authentic aural experience. In fact, people of a broad range of ages, occupations and religious affiliations have become fans of the *orin* after experiencing it here. The ear is often described as the most primitive sensory system, so perhaps there is something about *orin* that acts directly on this most fundamental of the human senses regardless of who we are.

An interesting phenomenon has arisen at the studio and store. Visitors who are drawn there by LinNe end up falling in love with the sound of the genuine Buddhist *orin* and purchase one of those as well. One can't help pondering the “circle of life” going on



here—LinNe was created for broad, secular use, and yet it is effectively steering people who come here toward the sacred *orin* because of the soothing feeling the sound instills in them. One can imagine this may in turn lead to rediscovery of *orin* and their original role in prayer. In other words, by making his craft relevant to the modern lifestyle, Nanjō has forged a path for the tradition of the *orin* to live on in the future. We suspect there's inspiration in his story for threatened traditional crafts the world over.



LinNe Studio

The store is free to visit, but usually requires visitors to pre-book. There are some days where bookings are not required.

Factory Tour

- Duration: approx. 60 mins, advance booking required
- Price: 3,000 yen per person (includes tax)
- Min. No. of Persons: 1
- Inquiries: info@linne-orin.com or DM on instagram

For information and bookings to visit the store and factory see:
<https://airrsv.net/linne-orin/calendar>

Nanjō Kōbō LinNe STUDIO

Official website



Address

京都府宇治市模島町千足42-2

Instagram/Facebook

@ linne_orin



MAP — Kyoto Tea Country

The famous Kyoto Tea Country in the southern part of Kyoto boasts a tea-growing history of more than eight centuries. With spectacular scenery of rolling tea fields among steep mountain slopes, Tsūen tea shop—said to be the oldest in Japan—and countless cafés serving delicious matcha treats, this is true tea country like no other. The area was also the stage for The *Tale of Genji*, one of history's first novels, and is the location of lauded temples and shrines such as World Heritage Site Byōdō-in Phoenix Hall and Manpuku-ji Temple.

Enjoy Kyoto's curated itinerary of select destinations includes Obubu Tea Farms, Asahiyaki and Nanjō Kōbō featured in this issue. Let MATSUSHIMA Mobility Service and its multilingual team of drivers with Kyoto Tourism Culture Certification level 3 or higher guide your adventure.

Enjoy Kyoto's Recommended Itinerary

Farm tour and lunch at **Obubu Tea Farms**



Ceramics class at **Asahiyaki**



Teatime at **Tsūen** tea shop



Factory tour at **Nanjō Kōbō**



Stroll and souvenir shopping at **Ujibashi-dōri Shopping Street**



AD

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Price

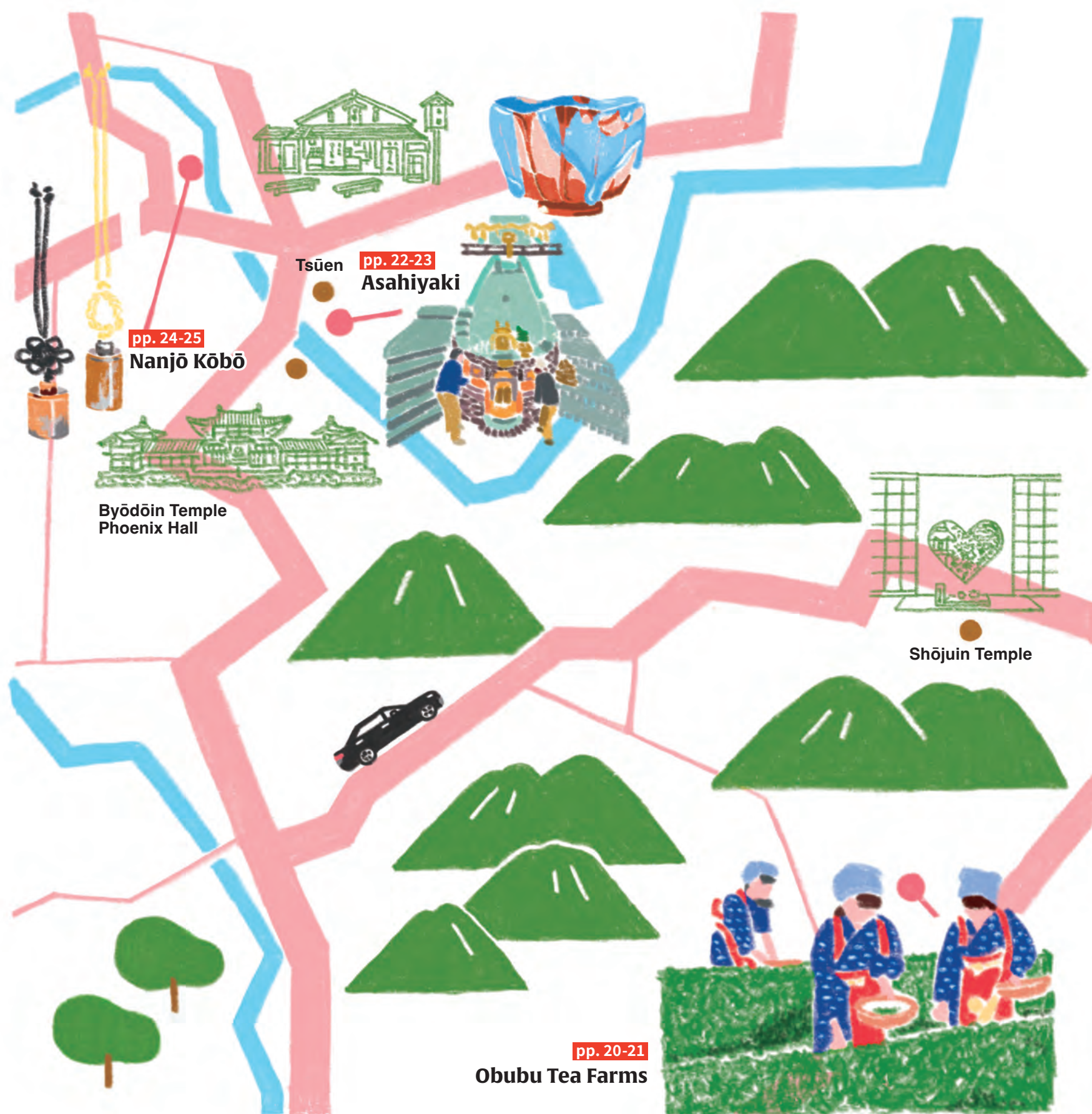
59,000 yen for 8 hours
(Vehicle Type: Toyota Alphard)

Highway tolls, parking fees and additional time are extra. Stops can be made at locations besides those on the recommended itinerary. Please ask your driver.

Bookings and Inquiries

Phone: 075-646-0020

e-mail: contact@matsushima-mservice.jp





“Tradition and Innovation.”

Based on traditional Edomae sushi The location and materials of Kyoto,

A chef's choice course that combines modern and seasonal flavors.

Enjoy carefully selected sushi and a la carte dishes in a modern space. Please enjoy it.

Sushi Azabu, with its flagship store in Azabudai, has been awarded a Michelin star in New York, Miami, and Hanoi.

Opening at THE SODOH HIGASHIYAMA KYOTO on September 21, 2024.

Sushi Azabu Higashiyama's Commitment

1. Regional characteristics

Kyoto is a place that is visited by many people, not only from within Japan but from all over the world.

We deliver ingredients, alcohol, and dining experiences unique to Kyoto to guests from all over Japan and the world.

2. Seasonal Feeling

In Japan, where the four seasons can be felt, we value seasonal ingredients that are at their most delicious during each season, and by using tableware and furnishings that match the season, you can enjoy the changing seasons and the beauty of nature not only with your taste, but also with your eyes.

3. Texture

We will never forget our love for the ingredients and our gratitude to the producers, and we will continue to work hard every day to create simple, flavorful dishes that cherish the individuality of the ingredients and allow you to enjoy them to their full potential.

HISTORY of SODOH HIGASHIYAMA KYOTO

Takeuchi Seiho's former private residence next to Yasaka Pagoda

Built in 1929, this is the former private residence of the great Japanese painter, Takeuchi Seiho. It was named "Higashiyama Sodoh."

Known as "Taikan in the East, Seiho in the West," he was inaugurated in 1973 together with Yokoyama Taikan.

Japanese painter Takeuchi Seiho, recipient of the first Order of Culture

Located on a site of 1,700 tsubo

A 100-year-old Japanese house filled with the artist's passion.

In 2003, we tried to keep the design as close as possible to the original.

It was born as "The Sodoh Higashiyama Kyoto."

LOCATION

Discover the scenery that represents Kyoto

Located in Higashiyama, Kyoto

"The Sodoh Higashiyama Kyoto"

Located to the east of the five-story pagoda of Hokanji Temple, also known as Yasaka Pagoda.

Nearby are the Nene no Michi, Kodaiji, Chion-in, and Kiyomizu-dera temples.

A place dotted with world heritage sites representing Kyoto.



SUSHI AZABU HIGASHIYAMA

Address 366, Yasaka Kami-machi, Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto-city

Open Lunch / 11:30-14:00 • Dinner / 17:30-22:00

Phone 075-541-3331

<https://www.thesodoh.com/en/sushi/>



Instagram @sushiazabu_higashiyama



Instagram @kyoto_thesodoh



Silence wraps the mountains at dawn. As the sun slowly rises, a castle appears as if it floats among a sea of clouds. Like a scene out of a film, the scenery feels too picturesque to be real.

This is Ōno City, Fukui Prefecture. The Echizen Ōno Castle stands majestically at the heart of the city, and below, the castle town is laid out in a grid pattern. Still a hidden gem of Japan, the location is only a short trip away from Kyoto. Come stroll around the streets of this city and enjoy its slow passage of time.

Introduction on
Tourism
in Ōno City



Instagram



#OnoCity #HiddenJapan

<https://www.ono-kankou.jp/multilingual/english.php>



Access



BY TRAIN

Approx.
2 Hour 30 minute



BY CAR

Approx.
2 Hour 40 minute

KYOTO
CITY

55 min.

Limited Express
Thunder Bird

Tsuruga

20 min.

Hokuriku Shinkansen

Fukui

55 min.

JR Etsumihoku Line

Fukui
Prefecture
ŌNO
CITY

More
Traffic
Information



Kyoto
Higashi
IC

50 min.

Meishin Expwy

Maibara
JCT

1 Hour 10 minute

Hokuriku Expwy

Fukui
IC

30 min.

Route 158

