

Sado & Niigata



Timeless Beauty, Endless Wonder

佐渡島

新潟県



Sado & Niigata



Timeless Beauty, Endless Wonder



Timeless Beauty, Endless Wonder

Sado Island, the largest island in the Sea of Japan, has been inhabited for over 10,000 years. Designated as a Japanese Geopark for its stunning landscapes, Sado is a unique place where nature, history, and culture meet. Over the centuries, exiled nobles, officials, and skilled workers came to the island, drawn by its mining potential and strategic location. As a key stop for the Kitamaebune trading ships, Sado became a hub of cultural exchange—earning it the nickname “a microcosm of Japan.”

Sado Island has long been a site for the mining of gold, silver, and copper, and by the early 17th century, it is said to have accounted for as much as 10% of the world's gold production. Its innovative techniques and historical importance led to the "Sado Island Gold Mines" being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in July 2024.

Like Sado, Niigata Prefecture offers breathtaking nature and rich traditions. Together, they invite you on a refined journey—one where you can meet the locals, explore deep cultural roots, and experience the enduring beauty of Japan's living heritage.



相川鶴子金銀山

World Heritage Site: "Sado Island Gold Mines"

Sado Island has long been known for its rich deposits of gold, silver, and copper. In the early 17th century, it was home to one of the largest gold mines in the world. In July 2024, the "Sado Island Gold Mines" was officially inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The site preserves the history of large-scale production systems that were developed through constant innovation and improvement. Rather than relying on machinery, traditional manual techniques were used to produce large quantities of high-quality gold. These mines and related historical remains continue to convey the ingenuity and craftsmanship of the era, earning recognition on the global stage.



Aikawa-Tsurushi
Gold and Silver Mine

Nishimikawa Placer
Gold Mine



Traditional Rural Landscape Formed Around the Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine on Sado Island

西三川砂金山

Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine

As the oldest placer gold mine on Sado Island, many remains showcasing Edo-period placer gold mining techniques still exist today. One key method was called Onagashi—a process where gold-rich mountainsides were scraped, and large amounts of water were used to wash away unwanted soil. The remaining sand-like gold was then carefully separated using a wooden sluice board.

Japanese woodblock print depicting placer gold mining: "Sixty-Eight Famous Views of the Provinces – Sado Gold Mine" by Utagawa Hiroshige II
Collection of the Niigata Prefectural Museum of History



Doyu-no-warito Opencut Site

Aikawa-Tsurushi Gold and Silver Mine

From the mid-16th century to the end of the 20th century (1989), Sado was home to Japan's largest gold and silver mine. The Aikawa Gold and Silver Mine alone had a vast network of tunnels stretching over 400 kilometers. Today, visitors can explore part of this at the "Historic Site Sado Gold Mine," where hand-dug tunnels and recreated mining scenes bring the past to life. The Aikawa area remains one of the world's rare examples of a preserved mining town, with historical remains that show the evolution of mining technology alongside former settlements and mining facilities. One of the most iconic sights is Doyu-no-warito Opencut Site, a dramatic V-shaped cut in the mountain left by surface mining. It stands as a powerful symbol of the "Sado Island Gold Mines".



Historic Site Sado Gold Mine
(Doyu-no-warito Opencut Site)
1305 Shimoaikawa, Sado City, Niigata

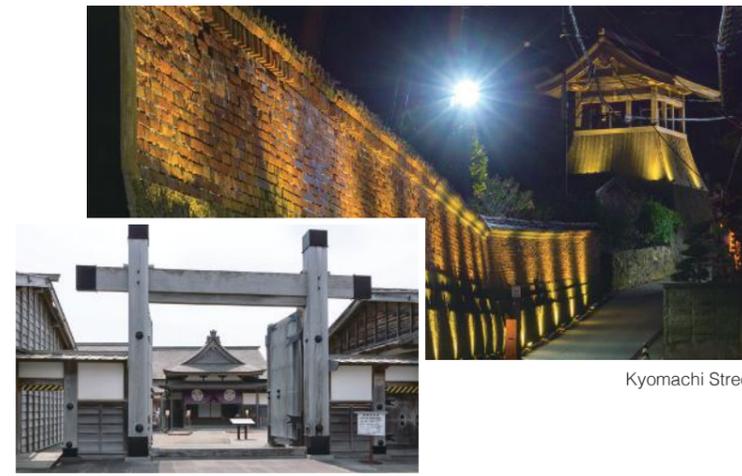
佐渡奉行所と京町通り

Sado Magistrate's Office and Kyomachi Street

The Sado Magistrate's Office also housed gold and silver production facilities and served as the political center responsible for managing gold and silver mines on Sado. Kyomachi Street was the main road connecting the Aikawa Gold and Silver Mine to the magistrate's office. Lined with officials' residences, wholesalers, and shops, it once bustled with people and trade. On this charming street, the 'Yoi no Mai' traditional dance parade is held in June, and the 'Aikawa Festival' takes place in October.



1-1 Aikawa Hiromamachi,
Sado City, Niigata



Kyomachi Street

Sado Magistrate's Office

北沢浮遊選鉱場跡

Kitazawa Flotation Plant

Flotation Ore Processing is a method used to extract gold and silver from mined ore. Originally developed for copper processing, it was first adapted for gold and silver recovery at the Sado Mine—making it a world pioneer in this technique. Once known as the "largest flotation plant in the East," the site is illuminated at night from spring through autumn. The glowing ruins set against a starry sky create a magical and unforgettable scene.



3-1 Aikawa Kitazawamachi,
Sado City, Niigata



Experiences in Sado

Kirarium Sado

18-1 Aikawa Sanchome
Hamamachi, Sado City,
Niigata



Historic Site Sado Gold Mine

1305 Shimoaikawa,
Sado City,
Niigata



Kirariumu Sado is a guidance facility introducing the World Heritage Site, Sado Island Gold Mines. Through large-scale video displays, it offers an easy-to-understand overview of the island's mining history and heritage. It's a great place to stop by before exploring the actual sites. The Historic Site Sado Gold Mine preserves over 400 years of mining history. Visitors can enter the tunnels and experience what gold mining was like in the past.

佐渡島 体験

Mumyoi-yaki Pottery Experience



Mumyoi-yaki is a traditional pottery style unique to Sado Island, dating back to 1819. It began when Jinbei Ito, who made clay pipes for furnaces, used the island's distinctive red clay—called mumyoi, found in the gold and silver mines—to create Raku-style pottery by hand. At Gyokudo Kamamoto, you can try making your own pottery, such as cups, using this special clay. (Advance reservation required.)



Gyokudou Kamamoto
122-1 Kubota, Sado City, Niigata

Takigi Noh

Photo: Tenryo Sado Ryotsu Takigi Noh

In the Edo period, Nagayasu Okubo, Sado's first magistrate, is credited with bringing Noh theater to the island. It evolved into Shinji Noh—a sacred form performed at shrines—and became known as "the people's Noh." Many of Sado's Noh stages are located within shrine grounds, where audiences watch from open-air seating. From April to October, performances are held across the island. As twilight falls and the flickering light of torches fills the air, the solemn and enchanting Noh plays begin—offering spectators a timeless and unforgettable experience.



Sado Island: A Melting Pot of Performing Arts

Sado Island has long been a crossroads of cultures, connected by the sea to many regions. Exiled nobles and cultural figures once lived here, and later, the island attracted officials, engineers, workers, and merchants from across Japan due to its mining industry. As a key port for the Kitamaebune trading ships, Sado welcomed a variety of customs and traditions, blending them into a unique and rich cultural heritage all its own.



鬼大鼓

Onidaiko (Demon Drumming)

Photo: Niibo Chuo Youth Association Onidaiko

Onidaiko, or Demon Drumming, is one of Sado Island's most iconic traditional performing arts. A magistrate's diary from the mid-18th century records that miners at the gold and silver mines wore demon masks and played drums—a tradition that lives on today. Each village has passed down its own unique style of Onidaiko, with powerful drumming, dynamic dances, and spirited chants. Over 120 communities across the island preserve their own version, making Onidaiko a deeply diverse and vibrant expression of local culture.



Bunya Puppet Theater

Bunya Ningyo is a traditional puppet theater unique to Sado Island, performed by a single puppeteer who skillfully controls one puppet alone. The movements are set to the emotional melodies of Bunya-bushi, expressing delicate feelings through subtle gestures.

Alongside Sekkyo Ningyo and Noroma Ningyo, other puppet traditions on the island, Bunya Ningyo is designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan. These captivating performances are often featured at festivals and local events across Sado.



The Rice Fields of Sado Island and the Crested Ibis (Toki)

To support its gold mines, many industries flourished on Sado Island—one of them being rice farming. Beautiful terraced rice fields can still be seen in the island's mountainous areas today. Sado practices environmentally friendly farming that supports the habitat of the toki (Japanese crested ibis), which feeds on small creatures found in the paddies. This harmony between agriculture and nature led to Sado being recognized in 2011 as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Blessed with rich natural resources, Sado is also a treasure trove of fresh ingredients—from seafood and vegetables to fruit, meat, and rice. Its food culture is diverse, shaped by the blending of eastern and western traditions.



Experiences in Sado

Sado Island Taiko Center Tatakokan

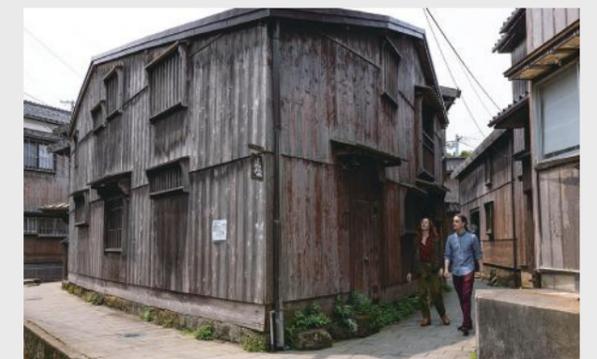


At the Sado Island Taiko Center (Tatakokan), you can enjoy hands-on taiko drumming workshops inspired by the skills and spirit of Kodo, the internationally acclaimed taiko performing arts group based on Sado Island. These workshops are open to everyone, offering a fun and engaging way to experience the power and rhythm of Japanese drums. The building itself is constructed using locally sourced wood from Sado, adding to the charm of the experience.



150-3 Ogikanetashinden, Sado City, Niigata

Exploring Shukunegi



Shukunegi is a historic port town where shipowners of the Kitamaebune—trading ships that sailed the Sea of Japan from Osaka to Hokkaido during the mid-Edo to Meiji periods—settled after the prosperity of the Sado gold and silver mines in the 17th century. The town thrived as a center of shipbuilding, and its nostalgic streetscape features over 100 traditional houses built using ship planks and other materials. This charming townscape has been designated a National Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings.



Shukunegi, Sado City, Niigata



Port Town and Salmon Culture

The Kitamaebune were merchant ships that operated from the Edo to Meiji periods, sailing along the Sea of Japan between Osaka and Hokkaido while buying and selling goods at various ports. From Hokkaido, items such as kelp, herring, and other seafood were shipped south, while sake, salt, sugar, paper, and cotton were transported north. More than just cargo carriers, the Kitamaebune also played a vital role in the exchange of local specialties and cultures. Port towns like Sado and Niigata flourished economically through this trade and became rich centers of cultural diversity.



新潟市歴史博物館
みなとぴあ



Minatopia: Niigata City History Museum

2-10 Yanagishimacho, Chuo Ward, Niigata City, Niigata

This museum offers a fun and engaging way to learn about the history and culture of “Port Town Niigata,” centered around the theme of “local waters and the lives of the people.” Niigata was one of the five ports opened to international trade at the end of the Edo period. On the museum grounds, you can see the Former Niigata Customs House, a nationally designated Important Cultural Property preserved in its original form. Restored stone steps used for unloading cargo, historic canals, and rows of willow trees recreate the nostalgic atmosphere of Niigata as a bustling port town from the Meiji to Showa eras.



旧齋藤家別邸

The Niigata Saito Villa

This spacious villa, covering over 4,300 square meters, was built in 1918 by Kijuro Saito, a wealthy merchant counted among the “Three Great Zaibatsu of Niigata.” A highlight of the property is the harmonious blend of architecture and garden design. The strolling-style garden, set on sand dunes, is designated a National Place of Scenic Beauty, while the building itself is considered a masterpiece of modern architecture and is registered as a National Tangible Cultural Property. The garden view from the villa is a highlight you won't want to miss.



576 Nishiohatacho, Chuo Ward, Niigata City, Niigata



北方文化博物館

Northern Culture Museum

This former mansion of the Ito family—one of the wealthiest landowners in the Echigo region—was completed in 1889 after eight years of construction. Today, it is preserved and open to the public as the Northern Culture Museum. Set on an expansive 29,000-square-meter estate, the grounds feature a main residence, grand hall, tea house, storehouses, and a traditional pond-style strolling garden, along with a fine collection of artworks. Visitors can enjoy not only the traditions and artistry of Niigata, but also the beauty of the changing seasons throughout the year.



2-15-25 Soumi, Konan Ward, Niigata City, Niigata

村上祭の屋台行事

Murakami Festival Float Parade

The Float Parade, known as Oshagiri, is the highlight of the annual Murakami Grand Festival held on July 6th and 7th at Senami Haguro Shrine. Designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan, the event features 19 beautifully decorated festival floats, each carefully preserved and passed down by local neighborhoods. These floats parade through the streets of the former castle town of Murakami in a grand and lively procession.



村上の鮭文化

Murakami and Salmon Culture

Murakami, with records showing it presented salmon to the imperial court over 1,000 years ago, is famous as “The Town of Salmon.” Traditional salmon fishing and culinary practices continue to thrive here. In Murakami, salmon is a vital preserved food during winter, and over 100 different salmon dishes are prepared, using every part from head to tail. During the cold season, salted salmon known as shiobiki-zake is hung under eaves to mature in the winter wind, creating a beloved seasonal sight.



1-20 Omachi, Murakami City, Niigata



Experiences in Niigata

Lagoon Boats and Fishing Fukushimagata Traditional Wooden Boat Experience



In the Niigata Plain, numerous lagoons of various sizes once dotted the landscape and were used for inland water transportation. Since the Edo period, many of these lagoons have gradually been reclaimed and transformed into rice paddies. Fukushimagata Lagoon is one such example. To experience the culture that has coexisted with nature at Fukushimagata, many visitors enjoy the popular Katabune boat rides—traditional wooden boats that offer a unique way to connect with the natural beauty of the lagoon.



493 Maeshinden, Kita Ward, Niigata City, Niigata

Furumachi Geigi



During the Edo period, Niigata thrived as a bustling port town and a stopover for the Kitamaebune trading ships. The streets were lined with lively restaurants where visitors were entertained by the graceful performances of Furumachi geigi. Why not experience the traditional dances and hospitality of these historic geigi yourself?





Tsubame Sanjo: The City of Craftsmanship

During the Edo period, the Tsubame Sanjo region began producing traditional Japanese nails (wakugi) to meet the growing demand for building materials in Edo. Blessed with abundant mountain resources, rivers for transportation, and the resilience to endure harsh winters, the area became a thriving center for blacksmithing. Over time, Tsubame Sanjo developed into a major hub for all kinds of metalworking.

Gyokusendo Tsubame Tsuiki Copperware

2-2-21 Chuo-Dori, Tsubame City, Niigata

燕
起
銅
器

The craft of hand-hammered copperware was introduced to Tsubame from Sendai during the mid-Edo period, beginning with the production of kettles. "Tsuiki", or hand-hammering, refers to the process of shaping copper sheets into three-dimensional forms using hundreds of different hammers and anvils. The surface is finished with chemical coloring, and one of its unique features is the deepening luster that develops with continued use.



Cutlery of the Nobel Prize Banquet

Tsubame Sanjo is a region renowned for its metalworking industry, producing high-quality tools, blades, and Western-style cutlery that are exported around the world. Since 1991, cutlery made in Tsubame Sanjo has been used at the Nobel Prize banquet.



ノ
ー
ベ
ル
賞
の
晩
餐
会
の
カ
ト
ラ
リ
ー

A Rich and Refined Culture Nurtured by Nature and People

Niigata's mountainous regions are among the snowiest in Japan, with snow piling up to three meters in winter. In some areas, the snow lasts for up to six months, but over time, people have developed unique ways to live with it—and even enjoy it. The wisdom of adapting to heavy snow has given rise to distinctive local culture, and residents have long harnessed the power of snow to create various industries.



Brewing Culture Exploring Settaya

4-6-33 Settaya, Nagaoka City, Niigata

撰
田
屋
ま
ち
歩
き

This charming area is home to six long-established breweries producing sake, miso, and soy sauce, filling the air with the distinctive scent of koji (Malted rice). Settaya also features many historical buildings and registered tangible cultural properties, preserving its rich heritage.



錦
鯉

Nishikigoi (Koi)

Nishikigoi, popular both in Japan and internationally, originated in Ojiya City and the Yamakoshi region of Nagaoka City in Niigata Prefecture. Raised in the pristine waters of this snowy region using traditional techniques, these elegant fish are known for their unique coloration and graceful shapes. Often called "swimming jewels," Nishikigoi have grown into a thriving export industry and are designated as Niigata's official ornamental fish.



Nishikigoi no Sato (Nishikigoi Village)

Experiences in Niigata

Open Factory



Tsubame and Sanjo are home to many open factories where visitors can tour active manufacturing sites and observe skilled artisans at work. Some factories also offer direct sales of their products. Each autumn, the region hosts the Koba no Saiten (Factory Festival), during which even normally closed workshops open their doors to the public.

Tsubame Industrial Museum

4330-1 Omagari, Tsubame City, Niigata



This museum showcases the history of metalworking in Tsubame, a city known for craftsmanship. Exhibits trace the development of Tsubame's metal industry over 400 years, dating back to the Edo period. At the hands-on workshop, visitors can try traditional techniques such as hammering decorative patterns (tsuchime ire) or crafting a small sake cup (guinomi).

Experiences in Niigata

Ojiya City General Industrial Hall, Sun Plaza Weaving Experience

1-8-25 Jonai, Ojiya City, Niigata



Ojiya Chijimi and Echigo Jofu — registered as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. In snowy Niigata, the humid climate and abundant water resources have nurtured the development of traditional hemp weaving. At Orinoza in Ojiya Sun Plaza, a hands-on weaving gallery, visitors can create their own original textiles with guidance from skilled artisans.

Bull Fighting



The Ushino-Tsunotsuki (Bull Fighting), held in Ojiya City and the Yamakoshi area of Nagaoka City, is designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan. Unlike bullfighting in other regions, Niigata's Bull Fighting is unique in that matches typically end in a draw, with no winner or loser declared.



A Place Where Traditional and Modern Art Intersect

The Unuma region is a special place where art has thrived continuously from the ancient Jomon period to the present day. Here, timeless “art of the past” passed down through the ages vividly intersects with “contemporary art” created by world-renowned artists who use the land itself as their canvas.

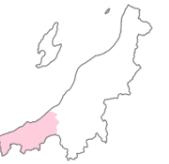


Ishikawa Uncho: The Michelangelo of Japan Saifukuji Kaizando Temple

174 Oura, Unuma City, Niigata

西福寺
開山堂

Ishikawa Uncho was a master woodcarver active in Niigata Prefecture from the late Edo to early Meiji period. He left behind numerous vibrant and dynamic wooden sculptures in temples throughout the region. Known as the “Michelangelo of Japan,” his remarkable skills extended beyond woodcarving to stone sculptures, paintings, and temple design. Today, over 1,000 of his works still remain in Niigata.



Fermentation Culture Cultivated by Snow

The Joetsu region is known as a “fermentation town,” where the snowy climate plays a vital role. Cold, humid winters create ideal conditions for microbial activity, while abundant, pure snowmelt water helps produce sake, miso, and soy sauce. Today, a wide variety of fermented foods—such as miso, kanzuri (a fermented chili paste), and wine—continue to be made using traditional methods passed down through generations. Pioneers like Dr. Kinichiro Sakaguchi, a leading authority in applied microbiology, and Zenbei Kawakami, regarded as the father of Japanese wine grapes, also helped advance this rich fermentation culture.

Sakaguchi Memorial Hall Fermentation Culture

148 Unoki Kubiki Ward, Joetsu City, Niigata

発酵文化

The Joetsu region is known for its thriving production of fermented foods such as miso, soy sauce, sake, and wine. This success is thanks to a climate ideal for fermentation—hot and humid summers, and cold, snowy winters with high humidity. Traditional preservation foods using miso and koji developed as local cuisine to help people endure the long, harsh winters.



Kiyotsu Gorge Tunnel Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale

2162 Koide, Tokamachi City, Niigata

Kiyotsu Gorge, one of Japan’s three great gorges, is known for its dramatic V-shaped valley formed by towering cliffs on both sides of the river. It is designated as both a National Place of Scenic Beauty and a Natural Monument. As part of the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, the Tunnel of Light—an art installation inside the Kiyotsu Gorge Tunnel—blends natural beauty with architectural design and artistic expression. Its stunning, photogenic spaces attract visitors from all over the world.



“Tunnel of Light” by Ma Yansong / MAD Architects (Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale artwork)
Photo: Yamada Tsutomu

Yukimuro | 雪室

A Yukimuro is a natural refrigerator that uses snow for cooling. Compared to regular electric refrigerators, it maintains a more stable temperature and provides low humidity storage throughout the year. Yukimuro are mainly used for storing agricultural products and cooling buildings, and can be found throughout Niigata Prefecture.



Iwanohara Vineyard | 岩の原葡萄園

Iwanohara Vineyard was established in 1890 by Zenbei Kawakami, known as the “Father of Japanese Wine Grapes.” Kawakami recognized the importance of fermentation temperature in winemaking and, inspired by the cold sake brewing process, developed low-temperature fermentation and aging techniques using yukimuro (snow cellars) that take advantage of the snowy climate. This was the first such innovation in Japan, and even today, snow cellars are used to produce wine with reduced environmental impact. The winery offers guided tours and features a wine shop for visitors.



Experiences in Niigata

Snow Country Gastronomy ryugon

Doma Cooking

1-6 Sakado, Minamiunuma City, Niigata



Doma Cooking is a hands-on lunch experience where you cook traditional snow country dishes alongside local grandmothers—true masters of regional cuisine. As you prepare the meal together, you’ll also learn about the local food culture and the wisdom of daily life in Japan’s snowy regions.

Najomon Jomon Experience

835 Shimofunato,
Tsunanmachi,
Nakaunuma-gun,
Niigata



Tokamachi City Museum TOPPAKU Jomon Culture

4-448-9 Nishihoncho,
Tokamachi City,
Niigata



Collection of the
Tokamachi City
Museum

Najomon is a hands-on learning center in Tsunan Town focused on agriculture, Jomon culture, and local folklore. Visitors can enjoy traditional craft experiences such as pottery making, angin weaving, magatama (curved bead) crafting, and straw work. Tokamachi City Museum TOPPAKU features exhibitions based on three themes: “The Jomon Era and Flame-Style Pottery,” “The History of Textiles,” and “Snow and the Shinano River.” The museum houses Niigata’s only National Treasure—the Flame-Style Pottery—as well as displays on weaving history, tools used during heavy snowfall, and the cultural heritage of living in harmony with snow.

Experiences in Niigata

Sasazushi Making Experience



Sasazushi is a traditional Niigata dish made by packing vinegared rice into a bamboo leaf folded into the shape of a mino—a traditional straw basket used in farming. The rice is then topped with locally harvested mountain vegetables and other ingredients. Enjoy sasazushi, a beloved dish often served during Obon festivals, local celebrations, and other gatherings.

Kanzuri Snow Bleaching Experience



Kanzuri is a distinctive spicy seasoning from Myoko made by fermenting salt-pickled chili peppers that have been soaked on the snow to remove bitterness, then mixed with yuzu citrus and koji mold. At the Ikenotaira Onsen Alpen Blick Snow Resort, visitors can watch the snow-soaking process and even try it themselves during January.



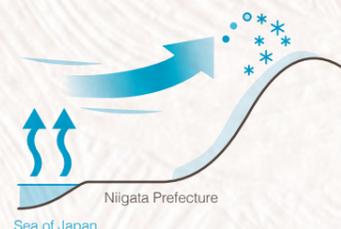
新潟酒物語

Why Does Niigata Boast the Most Sake Breweries?

The Story of Niigata Sake

In 2024, Japan's "Traditional Sake Brewing" was registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. This recognition celebrates Japan's time-honored brewing traditions, where master brewers (toji) and brewery workers (kurabito) use koji mold to craft sake, shochu, and awamori with refined techniques passed down through generations. Each region in Japan has developed its own unique sake, influenced by local climate and culture. Today, sake is enjoyed around the world and pairs well with both Japanese and Western food. Japanese sake is now enjoying a worldwide boom. In fact, Niigata Prefecture has the highest number of sake breweries in all of Japan.

Some parts of Niigata get up to 3 meters of snow in winter, with snow covering the ground for about 4 months. This heavy snowfall creates a cold and humid environment—perfect for sake brewing. The steady low temperatures and moisture help important microorganisms like koji and yeast do their job. Snow also keeps the air clean, acting like a natural filter. This is why Niigata is known for its special winter brewing style called "kanzukuri" (cold-weather brewing)—a tradition born from its snowy climate.



The taste of sake is shaped by three key elements: water, rice, and the craftsmanship of its makers. It is said that sake brewing requires 30 to 40 times more water than the amount used just for the brewing itself. In Niigata, heavy snowfall melts in spring and becomes fresh underground water, known as fukuryusui. This water is soft and smooth, perfect for brewing sake. Brewing with soft water is said to be difficult, but the skilled Echigo Toji (master brewers of Niigata) and their dedication have made it possible to produce some of the finest sake in Japan.

Niigata is Japan's top rice-growing region, with the largest rice planting area in the country. Thanks to fresh snowmelt water and big temperature changes between day and night, Niigata produces famous rice varieties like Koshihikari. It's also a leader in sake rice, growing top-quality types like Gohyakumangoku, Ipponjime, and Koshitanrei through selective breeding. With the perfect mix of nature, climate, and people, it's no surprise that Niigata has more sake breweries than anywhere else in Japan. When you visit, be sure to enjoy the local jizake—sake born from Niigata's land and traditions.



Facilities for Experiencing Japanese Sake

Sado City

Obata Sake Brewery — Gakkogura (School Brewery)



1871 Nishimikawa, Sado City, Niigata



Obata Brewery is one of five sake breweries on Sado Island. The "Gakkogura" (School Brewery) is located in a renovated former school building, where visitors can enjoy sake tasting and shopping. They also offer a "School Brewery Sake Brewing Experience Program" for those who want to learn about sake brewing. This program requires advance registration and a fee.

Niigata City

Imayo Tsukasa Sake Brewery



1-1 Kagamigaoka, Chuo Ward, Niigata City, Niigata



Established in 1767, Imayo Tsukasa Sake Brewery offers visitors a glimpse into centuries-old brewing traditions. Guided tours (reservation required) take you through the charming historic brewery, where knowledgeable staff share not only the sake-making process but also stories of Niigata's local culture and history. Guests can also dress in a traditional happi coat for a memorable photo opportunity. Conveniently located, the brewery is just a 15-minute walk from Niigata Station.

Minamiuonuma City

Hakkaisan Brewery - Uonuma no Sato



426-1 Nagamori, Minamiuonuma City, Niigata



Uonuma no Sato is a unique destination nestled in a spacious natural setting, where you'll find a sake brewery, craft beer distillery, restaurants, and specialty shops scattered throughout the grounds. A highlight of the area is the Hakkaisan Yukimuro, a snow-cooled storage facility that uses the natural power of snow to age and preserve sake in a traditional method known as yukimuro. Visitors can tour the facility, enjoy sake tastings, and browse a wide selection of sake cups and original souvenirs.

Myoko City

Kiminoi Sake Brewery



3-11 Shimomachi, Myoko City, Niigata

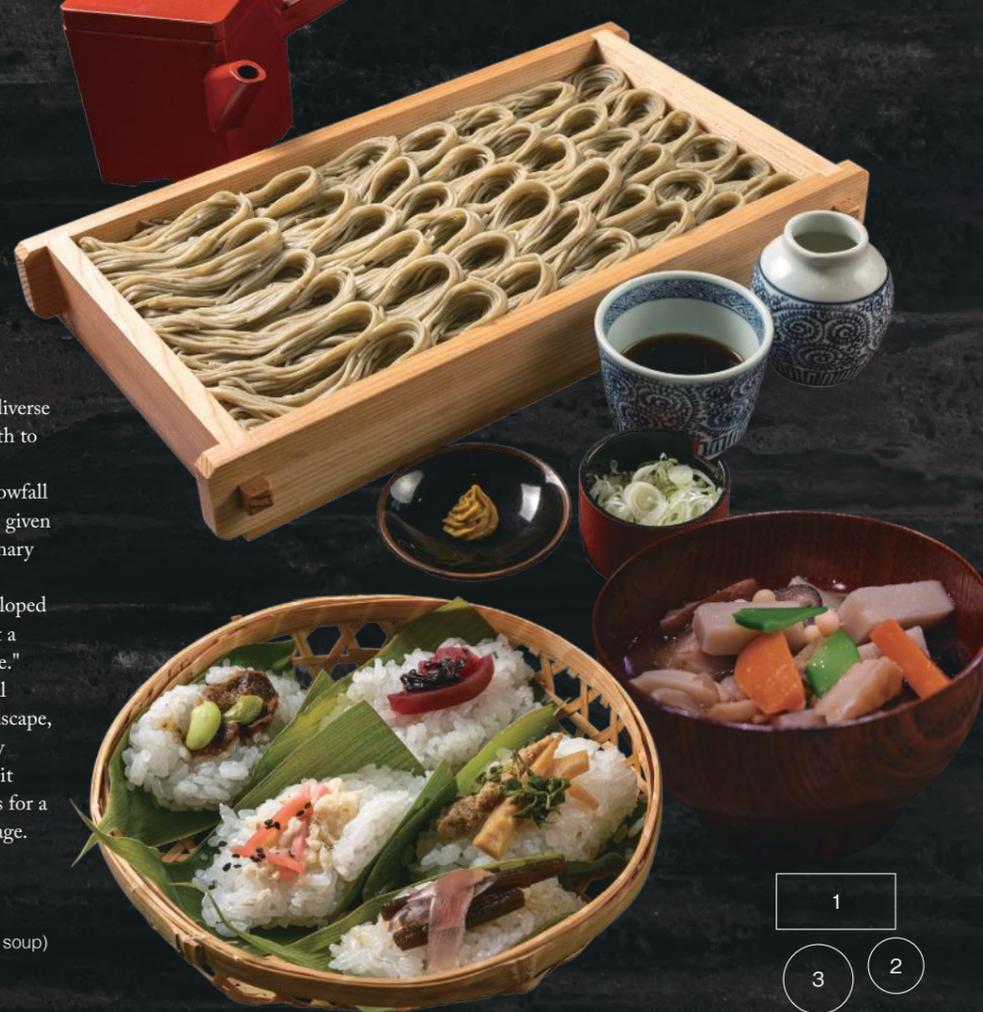


Founded in 1842, this sake brewery preserves a rich tradition of craftsmanship, where time-honored techniques like the Yamahai brewing method continue to thrive. The brewery features a main building over 100 years old, with architectural elements designed to withstand heavy snowfall, as well as original brewing equipment such as the traditional kama (kiln) and koshiki (steaming vat) still in use today. Visitors can also enjoy complimentary tastings of seasonal recommended sake and purchase products on site.

Local Cuisine of Niigata

Niigata Prefecture is a region blessed with diverse geography and climate, stretching from north to south and nestled between the sea and mountains. It is also known for its heavy snowfall in winter. This rich natural environment has given rise to a wide variety of local foods and culinary traditions. As a cultural crossroads between eastern and western Japan, Niigata has developed a unique and diverse food culture, earning it a reputation as a true "treasure trove of cuisine." Among its many culinary offerings, the local dishes—shaped by the region's climate, landscape, and long-standing traditions—are especially symbolic of Niigata's food culture. If you visit Niigata, be sure to try its regional specialties for a genuine taste of the local lifestyle and heritage.

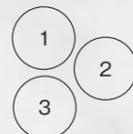
1. Hegi soba (Buckwheat noodles)
2. Noppe (Simmered vegetables in a lightly seasoned soup)
3. Sasazushi (Bamboo leaf-wrapped sushi)



Niigata Gastronomy Awards

The Niigata Gastronomy Awards recognize outstanding restaurants, accommodations, local beverages, and specialty products across Niigata Prefecture that embody the philosophy of local gastronomy. Rather than focusing solely on taste or service quality, the awards take a comprehensive approach—evaluating factors such as regional identity, collaboration with related local industries, sustainability, and underlying philosophy. The selected establishments and chefs are introduced as exemplars of Niigata's culinary excellence. We warmly invite you to visit and experience how each dish reflects the culture and landscapes of Niigata.

1. Restaurant L'armoise
2. KOKAJIYA
3. Satoyama Jujo



Festivals & Events Calendar

One of the best ways to immerse yourself in a region's culture is by witnessing its traditional festivals and time-honored events that have been passed down for generations. Join friendly locals, learn about ancient customs, and—if you're lucky—take part in the celebration yourself. Whether it's dancing in the streets, watching centuries-old rituals, or simply enjoying the festive atmosphere, these experiences offer unforgettable memories. Come and discover the heart of Niigata's culture through its vibrant festivals and warm community spirit.

Spring

|
Mar.
Apr.
May

[March 1st - April 3rd]



Murakami City
Doll Festival in the Castle Town of Murakami

[Early to mid-April]



Joetsu City
Takada Castle Site Park Cherry Blossom Festival

[April]



Niigata City
ART MIX JAPAN

Summer

|
Jun.
Jul.
Aug.

[Throughout June]



Sado City
Noh Month

[Late July]



Yahiko Village
Lantern Procession and Traditional Folk Dance (Bugaku) at Yahiko Shrine

[August 1st - 3rd]



Nagaoka City
Nagaoka Festival

Autumn

|
Sep.
Oct.
Nov.

[The second Saturday of September and the preceding Friday]



Ojiya City
Kataikai Festival

[October 19th]



Sado City
Utou Shrine Festival Events

[From late October to late November]



Kashiwazaki City
Shounsanso Autumn Foliage Light-Up

Winter

|
Dec.
Jan.
Feb.

[January 15th]



Tokamachi City
Mukonage (Son-in-Law Throwing) and Sumi Nuri (Ash Smearing) Ceremony

[Mid-February]



Tokamachi City
Tokamachi Snow Festival

[The first Saturday of March]



Minamiuonuma City
Echigo Urusa Bishamondou Hadaka Oshiai Taisai (Echigo Urusa Bishamondou Naked Man Pushing Festival)

Niigata Prefecture Cultural and Tourism Map

- 01 Aikawa-Tsurushi Gold and Silver Mine
- 02 Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine
- 03 Sado Magistrate's Office and Kyomachi Street
- 04 Kitazawa Flotation Plant
- 05 Kirarium Sado
- 06 Historic Site Sado Gold Mine
- 07 Mumyoi-yaki Pottery Experience (Gyokudou Kamamoto)
- 08 Takigi Noh (Held at various locations throughout Sado Island)
- 09 Tatakokan (Sado Island Taiko Center)
- 10 Shukunegi
- 11 Minatopia: Niigata City History Museum
- 12 The Niigata Saito Villa
- 13 Northern Culture Museum
- 14 Salmon Culture (Sennensake Kikkawa)
- 15 Fukushimaagata
- 16 Tsubame Tsuiki Copperware (Gyokusendo)
- 17 Tsubame Industrial Museum
- 18 Brewing Culture (Settaya)
- 19 Nishikigoi (Koi)
- 20 Weaving Experience (Ojiya City General Industrial Hall, Sun Plaza)
- 21 Bull Fighting (Ojiya Bullfighting Arena / Yamakoshi Bullfighting Arena)
- 22 Saifukuji Kaizando Temple
- 23 Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (Kiyotsu Gorge Tunnel)
- 24 Snow Country Gastronomy "Doma Cooking" (ryugon)
- 25 Jomon Culture (Tokamachi City Museum TOPPAKU)
- 26 Najomon
- 27 Fermentation Culture (Sakaguchi Memorial Hall)
- 28 Iwanohara Vineyard
- 29 Kanzuri Snow Bleaching Experience
- 30 Obata Sake Brewery — Gakkogura (School Brewery)
- 31 Imayo Tsukasa Sake Brewery
- 32 Hakkaisan Brewery - Uonuma no Sato
- 33 Kiminoi Sake Brewery

Recommended Tour Course

A Journey to Experience the World Heritage Site the "Sado Island Gold Mines" and the Kitamaebune Culture in Sado Island and Niigata City

- Day 1** Niigata Port → (by ferry) → Ryotsu Port → Sado Island sightseeing (Kirarium Sado, Historic Site Sado Gold Mine, Kyomachi Street, Sado Magistrate's Office, Kitazawa Flotation Plant, Mumyoi-yaki Pottery Experience) → Overnight stay in Sawata area
- Day 2** Sado sightseeing (Obata Sake Brewery, Tatakokan, Explore Shukunegi, Watch a Tenryo Sado Ryotsu Takigi Noh Performance) → Overnight stay at Shiizaki Onsen
- Day 3** Ryotsu Port → (Ferry) → Niigata Port → Niigata City sightseeing (Minatopia: Niigata City History Museum, The Niigata Saito Villa, Fukushimaagata Lagoon)

A Journey Across Niigata Prefecture Exploring Its History, Culture, and Industries

- Day 1** Murakami sightseeing (Sennensake Kikkawa, Iyoboya Kaikan) → Niigata City sightseeing (Imayo Tsukasa Sake Brewery, Northern Culture Museum) → Overnight stay at Yahiko Onsen
- Day 2** Yahiko Shrine → Tsubame Sanjo sightseeing (Tsubame Industrial Museum, Open Factory tour) → Ojiya (Nishikigoi Village) → Urasa (Saifukuji Kaizando Temple)

A Journey into the Culture and Cuisine of Japan's Snow Country

- Day 1** Minamiuonuma sightseeing (Snow Country cuisine experience at ryugon, visit the snow storage facility at Uonuma no Sato) → Tokamachi (Tokamachi City Museum TOPPAKU) → Overnight stay at Matsunoyama Onsen
- Day 2** Joetsu sightseeing (Sakaguchi Memorial Hall, Iwanohara Vineyard) → Myoko (Kiminoi Sake Brewery)





- JR Shinkansen
- JR Line
- Ship / Ferry / Boat
- Airplane



▼ Access to Niigata

[Shinkansen]

- From Tokyo
 - └ Niigata Station 120 minutes
 - └ Echigo-Yuzawa Station ... 80 minutes
 - └ Joetsumyoko Station 120 minutes

[Airplane]

- From Osaka (Itami Airport)
 - └ Niigata Airport 70 minutes
- From Aichi (Chubu Centrair International Airport)
 - └ Niigata Airport 80 minutes

▼ Access to Sado Island

[Jetfoil / Car Ferry]

- From Niigata to Ryotsu
 - └ Jetfoil 67 minutes
 - └ Car ferry 150 minutes
- From Naoetsu to Ogi (Service suspended in winter)
 - └ Car ferry 160 minutes



Sado Island Gold Mine
<https://www.sado-goldmine.jp/en/>



Niigata Tourism Information
<https://www.facebook.com/enjoyniigata>



Niigata Prefecture Culture Division

4-1 Shinkocho, Chuo Ward, Niigata City, Niigata TEL.025-280-5619
 ngt150030@pref.niigata.jp <https://www.pref.niigata.lg.jp/site/bunka/>

