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Japan National Tourist Organization
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Kansai Council
URL: http://www.kansai.gr.jp/index.asp
Welcome to Wakayama

Hot springs steadily pushing forth, and magnificent beautiful Mother Nature: the real Japan.

Wakayama Prefecture is located south of Osaka. It takes about 30 minutes by car to the prefectural capital, Wakayama City, from Kansai International Airport. It also takes about one hour by car from Osaka City and Universal Studios Japan (USJ), which was opened in 2001.

Wakayama is located on the Kii Peninsula, Japan’s largest peninsula, and blessed with beautiful mountains, ocean, and rivers. Wakayama also has some of Japan’s premiere hot spring towns, like Shirahama and Katsurau, as well as numerous famous sightseeing spots. Fruit produced in Wakayama, such as mandarin oranges, persimmons, peaches, and plums, are famous all over Japan. Fishery products like tuna, lobster, and cutlass fish enjoy a superb reputation, while traditional Japanese food products like soy sauce and pickled plums are also highly rated. We introduce just a few of the many sightseeing spots and specialties in Wakayama. We look forward to your visit.
Wakayama City, the prefectural capital, is the most populous and vibrant city in Wakayama Prefecture. With the ancient and majestic Wakayama Castle as its center, Wakayama City has become a regional center of food, culture, and fashion. The artificial island Marina City in Wakayama Bay holds many of Wakayama’s charms, such as the European port-themed amusement park Porto Europe and the Kuroshio Market, where you can explore a wide range of local products and food.

**Getting There**
- From Kansai International Airport: Take an airport bus for JR Wakayama Station. 30 minutes
- From JR Tennoji Station: Take a train on the JR Hanwa Line for JR Wakayama Station. 60 minutes
- From JR Shin-Osaka Station: Take a limited express on the JR Hanwa Line for JR Wakayama Station. 70 minutes
- From Kansai International Airport: Take an airport bus for JR Minabe Station. 40 minutes
- From JR Wakayama Station: Take a train on the JR Kisei Main Line for JR Minabe Station. 40 minutes
- From JR Minabe Station: Take a train on the JR Kisei Main Line for JR Yuasa Station. 40 minutes

**Wakayama Castle**
Constructed in 1585, Wakayama Castle has become the symbol of Wakayama City. During the Edo period, the incredibly wealthy Kishu lords lived in the castle. The castle burnt down once, but was restored to the original state in 1958. If you want to visit Wakayama Castle, we recommend doing so during the spring cherry blossoms or the fall colors. The top floor of the castle tower provides a panoramic view of Wakayama City. Inside the castle, there are exhibitions of samurai armor and a tea-ceremony room where travelers can experience traditional Japanese tea ceremony.

**Wakayama Ramen (Noodles)**
The Japanese media have called Wakayama ramen the best in Japan. People stand in line in front of restaurants with ramen boasting an exquisitely tasting soup made from a mixture of soy sauce and dashi. Once you taste ramen along with mackerel sushi, a local specialty, you’ll be a Wakayama expert.

**Kuroshio Market**
Adjoining Porto Europe is the Kuroshio Market, where you can find a wide range of local products and food. Visitors can grill fresh foods like seafood and corn. The prices are reasonable, too. In the barbecue area, seafood and local products are exhibited and sold.

**The Roots of Japanese Food**
Wakayama produces more fruit than any other prefecture in Japan. Two of its products, Arida mandarin oranges and Minabe plums, are well-known across the country. Minabe pickled plums have the leading share of the Japanese market. Japanese traditions like cormorant fishing in the Arida River and soy sauce making—the Yuasa district is the birthplace of soy sauce—have been preserved.

**Cormorant Fishing on the Arida River**
Known as traditional Japanese night fishing, this method uses a number of cormorants trained by fishing masters. Normally in cormorant fishing, a fishing master controls the bird from the boat. Only in cormorant fishing on the Arida River does the fishing master go into the river when controlling the bird. The splendid scene is worth seeing. In summer, visitors can rent boats from shops beside the Arida River and enjoy the spectacle of cormorant fishing at close range.

**Yuasa Soy Sauce**
The Yuasa district is the birthplace of Japanese soy sauce. At present, Kadocho is the best-known soy sauce business here, run by the same family for six generations going back to its establishment in 1841. Although its production method has been modernized, soy sauce made here still tastes like it did in the Edo period (1603-1867). Of particular note is the nigori (strong) soy sauce, which recreates the taste of the Muromachi period (1333-1573). At a museum adjoining Kadocho Soy Sauce, visitors can see the soy sauce making tools and methods used more than a century ago, and see how they have evolved to the present. Those interested can also purchase traditional-tasting soy sauce and try it at home.

**Plum Trees in Minabe**
At the beginning of February every year, plum blossoms are in full bloom. It’s like a sea of white carpet as far as the eye can see. After being harvested, plums are preserved with salt and dried to make pickled plums, some of which are shipped overseas.
Koyasan is the birthplace of Shingon esoteric Buddhism and has flourished as a religious center for 1,200 years. There are many temples in the mountains, and in the Okuno-in area, tombstones of every era, including those of famous historical figures, give off an aura of mystery. In the mountains, there are 53 temple lodging facilities where visitors can stay and taste special vegetarian dishes and experience the spiritual culture of this area. Koyasan was registered as a World Heritage Site in July 2004.

Ryujin Hot Springs have a 1,300-year history and were named after a legend that says Kobo Daishi (the founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism) received a divine message in a dream from Nanda-ryuo (one of the dragon kings of Buddhism). The hot springs prospered as a special lodging for Kishu lords in the Edo period (1603-1867) and still maintain their traditional flavor. The hot springs are particularly famous for making skin beautiful, and are known as one of the three beauty-enhancing hot springs of Japan.

**Getting There**

**Koyasan**
- From JR Wakayama Station: Take the JR Wakayama Line to Hashimoto Station. 60 minutes. Transfer to the Nankai Koya Line and go to Gokurakubashi Station. 33 minutes. Then transfer to the Koyasan cable car and go to Koyasan Station. 5 minutes

**Ryujin**
- From JR Wakayama Station: Take a limited express on the JR Kisei Main Line to JR Kiitanabe Station. 70 minutes. Transfer to the Ryujin bus and go to the terminus. 90 minutes

**Koya-Ryujin Skyline Road**
This 43-kilometer-long road is built on the peaks of mountains as high as 1,000 meters from Koyasan to Ryujin Hot Springs. The road commands a view of the mountains over a sea of clouds. The seasons bring changing beauty, such as new leaves, fall colors, and ice-glazed trees.

**Sacred Site of Buddhism and Beauty-Enhancing Hot Springs**

**Kompon-daito**

**Kongobuji Temple**

**Vegetarian dishes**

**Approach to Okuno-in**

**Miedo in Winter**

**See Map**
Shirahama

Getting There

From Kansai International Airport: Take a bus for the Shirahama Bus Terminal. 2 hours 20 minutes
From JR Shin-Osaka Station: Take a limited express on the JR Kisei Main Line for JR Shirahama Station. 2 hours 20 minutes
From JR Wakayama Station: Take a limited express on the JR Kisei Main Line for JR Shirahama Station. 75 minutes
From Nanki Shirahama Airport: Take a bus for JR Shirahama Station. 15 minutes

One of the Three Ancient Hot Springs of Japan

Visited by 3.5 million people a year, the hot springs of Shirahama are among the oldest springs of Japan along with Dogo Hot Springs and Arima Hot Springs. With the number of springs totaling more than 120 and the number of hotels with hot spring facilities exceeding 90, it is one of the major hot spring areas of Japan. Also famous for its pure white sandy beach, Shirahama is a mecca of marine sports. There are also splendid landscapes such as Engetsu-to island, Sandan-peki rock cliff, and Senjo-jiki rock plateau, as well as a large amusement park, safari park, and aquarium. The largest sightseeing spot in Wakayama, Shirahama has plenty of things to see and do.

Shirahama Onsen Park

Saki-no-Yu Hot Spring

Saki-no-Yu hot spring has a more than 1,300-year history and is regarded as the leading hot spring in Shirahama. It’s an open-air bath that takes advantage of the seawater rocks overhanging the Pacific Ocean. The men’s and women’s section of the hot spring are divided only by several pieces of boards, giving bathers an open feeling. You can really feel this openness when you soak in the hot water facing the Pacific Ocean.

Engetsu-to Island

Engetsu-to is a famous island that symbolizes Shirahama. Measuring 130 meters north-south, 35 meters east-west, and 25 meters in height, the island, whose name means “round,” was named after the opening created in its center by the erosion of waves over many years. It is especially beautiful at sunset when you can see the sun through the opening.

Sandan-peki Rock Cliff

Rising to a height of 50 meters along a 2-kilometer stretch of the Pacific Ocean, Sandan-peki has been created by the erosion of waves and offers spectacular views. You can take an elevator down to a cave located 36 meters below. When you stand at the edge of the cliff, you can hear the ocean roar.

Senjo-jiki Rock Plateau

Facing the Pacific Ocean, Senjo-jiki is a plateau of huge rocks created by the erosion of waves. The name comes from the fact that it looks like several thousand tatami mats joined together. Standing on top of the plateau near the ocean, visitors can enjoy the thrill of watching surging waves crashing against the rocks.

Adventure World

Adventure World is one of the major large amusement parks in Japan. The park provides thrilling attractions, a safari park, and an aquarium. Adventure World has over 200 species of animals such as giant pandas, white tigers, giant tortoises, and hippopotamuses. Popular among visitors is the exhilarating car-around Safari World to observe animals in their natural habitat. You can also spend the day at Marine World, watching the dolphin show, observing polar bears and penguins, and interacting with tame animals.
Southernmost Tip of Honshu

Located on the southernmost tip of Wakayama Prefecture, Kushimoto faces the vast Pacific Ocean and is known for dramatic seashore landscapes and marine views. The main attractions are the oddly shaped Hashikui-iwa rocks, Kushimoto Marine Park, where visitors can learn about the ecology of marine life, and popular scuba-diving areas.

Hashikui-iwa Rocks

The Hashikui-iwa rocks are oddly shaped rock outcroppings that stretch for about 850 meters along the ocean. The more than 40 oddly shaped rocks rise up in a row like piles of a bridge. The rocks offer a unique spectacle unlike any other.

Kushimoto Marine Park

Kushimoto Marine Park has a 24-meter-long underwater tunnel and numerous underwater exhibition rooms where visitors can get a close-up look at the ecology of marine life such as sharks and angels. From the underwater observation tower 140 meters off the coast, visitors can watch beautiful migratory fish and coral reefs at the bottom of the sea 8.2 meters below the surface at close range. Visitors can also take a sightseeing boat with a transparent bottom to see what lies beneath the ocean.

Scuba Diving

The sea along the coast of Kushimoto, which became a designated site under the Ramsar Convention in 2005, is one of the most famous diving spots in Japan. The water is extremely clear and divers can see about 80 species of coral and 300 species of fish. Under the guidance of qualified instructors, even beginners can enjoy the wonders of diving.

Whaling Village and Swimming with Dolphins

Because Taiji has a warm ocean current, whales appear frequently in the ocean nearby. Locals have been whaling for about 700 years, and there are still many whale-related facilities today. Inside Kujirahama Park, the cute, clever whales perform shows. Also, visitors can purchase accessories made from whale teeth and fill up on whale cuisine. In addition, Taiji is famous for dolphin training. Visitors can watch exciting dolphin shows and enjoy the unique experience of swimming with dolphins, too.

Swimming with Dolphins

The town of Taiji is famous for dolphin training and visitors can play and swim with dolphins. You don’t even have to be good at swimming. Under the guidance of a qualified instructor, you enter the water with a wet suit, fins, goggles, and an oxygen tank. You can enjoy communication with dolphins by whistling and feeding them, having them kiss you, and hitching a ride on their back. It’s a unique experience for everyone.

Umikongo

Located at 135.46° longitude east and 33.26° latitude north, Shionomisaki is the southernmost tip of Honshu, Japan’s main island. With over 100 years of history, the Shionomisaki Lighthouse stands 19 meters high, a popular site that is still in use today. Also, visitors can climb up the ocean-stormed Shionomisaki observation tower built on the lawn near the lighthouse to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Pacific Ocean. Visitors can also receive a certificate showing they have been to Honshu’s southernmost tip.

Shionomisaki

Taiji Kujirahama Park

A large treasure house of marine life, Taiji Kujirahama Park has a whale museum, whale watching boat museum, Marinarium (marine aquarium), sea otter museum, and more. In the world’s largest whale museum, a real 15-meter skeleton of a whale and a model of a whale are exhibited, and about 1,000 rare items related to whales are also displayed. Visitors can also enjoy exciting whale and dolphin shows at the Marinarium.

Whale cuisine

Kushimoto

Kushimoto

Taiji

Taiji

Whale cuisine
Nachikatsuura is one of the main fishing ports in Japan. The town boasts one of the largest catches of tuna in Japan and offers a variety of seafood for hungry visitors. Nachi Waterfall, the highest in Japan, and the Kino-Matsushima islands are the most famous sightseeing spots. Along with Shirahama, the town is one of the most famous hot spring areas in Japan. There are hot springs lining the entire bay.

**Getting There**

- **From JR Shin-Osaka Station:** Take a limited express on the JR Kisei Main Line for JR Kii-Katsuura Station. 
  3 hours 30 minutes
- **From JR Nagoya Station:** Take a limited express on the JR Kisei Main Line, and transfer at JR Shingu Station to go to JR Kii-Katsuura Station. 
  3 hours 30 minutes
- **From JR Wakayama Station:** Take a limited express on the JR Kisei Main Line for JR Kii-Katsuura Station. 
  2 hours 30 minutes

**Hot Spring Heaven**

Nachikatsuura contains one of the largest catches of fresh tuna in Japan. From early in the morning, large tuna are spread out on the floor of the fish market and fish dealers hold their auctions, an exciting sight well worth seeing.

**Nachi Waterfall**

Known as the highest waterfall in Japan, the magnificent Nachi Waterfall is 133 meters high, 13 meters wide, and has a water flow of 2 tons per second. There are two places for the best view of the waterfall. One is Hiro Shrine, which sits near the bottom of the waterfall and affords a magnificent view of the falls and is close enough that you can hear the roaring sounds of the falling water. The other is in front of the three-storied tower of Seigantoji temple on the side of Nachi-san mountain, from where you can see water falling straight down. This is also the perfect spot to photograph with the three-storied tower in the background.

**Kumano Nachi Grand Shrine**

Along with Kumano Hayatama Grand Shrine and Kumano Hongu Grand Shrine, this is one of the sacred sites of Kumano-san-zan. The main shrine pavilion was built in an original architectural style called Kumano-zukuri. Nationally important cultural properties, such as Kumano Nachi Grand Shrine documents and ancient pictures called Mandala, are stored here.

**Kino-Matsushima**

Kino-Matsushima is the general name for the approximately 130 small islands scattered around a 17-kilometer area in Katsuura Bay. The name is derived from the fact that Kino-Matsushima is a part of Matsushima Bay, one of the three most scenic spots in Japan. Among the small islands in Kino-Matsushima, lion-shaped and camel-shaped islands from the Katsuura sightseeing pier to the Pacific Ocean. This open view allows you to enjoy magnificent scenery while soaking in the hot spring. The name Boki-do, which means "forget-to-return cave," originated when Kishu lord Tokugawa Yorimichi visited this hot spring and was so fascinated with the scenery that he almost forgot to go back home.

**Kumano Ancient Road**

In ancient times, this was a pilgrimage route from Kyoto to Kumano-san-zan (Kumano Hayatama Grand Shrine, Kumano Hengo Grand Shrine, Kumano Nachi Grand Shrine). The route retains its traditional appearance and with today it is filled with endless lines of worshipers. Of particular interest is the moss-covered stone pavement, which remains as it was centuries ago and instills a sacred atmosphere.
Hidden Treasures and Serenity

This area is located in the southeast of Wakayama Prefecture. Shingu is the center of this area, with the Chinese-style Jofuku Park being the most prominent place. The whole area of Hongo is rich in natural beauty, and ancient trees along the Kumano Ancient Road appear to grow to the sky. Kawayu hot spring is a large open-air bath dug in the center of the river where men and women can bath together. The grand Doro-kyo gorge resembles the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River in China. On the Kitayama River, visitors can enjoy a thrilling raft ride down the rapids.

Getting There

Shingu

- From JR Shin-Osaka Station: Take a limited express on the JR Hanwa Line and JR Kisei Main Line for JR Shingu Station. 4 hours
- From JR Wakayama Station: Take a limited express on the JR Kisei Main Line for JR Shingu station. 3 hours

Hongu

- From JR Shingu Station: Take a bus to Kumano Hongu-Totsugawa and get off at Hongu-taisha-mae stop. 60 minutes

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Getting There

Shingu

- From JR Shin-Osaka Station: Take a limited express on the JR Hanwa Line and JR Kisei Main Line for JR Shingu Station. 4 hours
- From JR Wakayama Station: Take a limited express on the JR Kisei Main Line for JR Shingu station. 3 hours

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- From JR Shingu Station: Take a bus to Kumano Hongu-Totsugawa and get off at Hongu-taisha-mae stop. 60 minutes

Kawau Hot Spring Sennin Buro

Kawayu hot spring is a famous hot spring in the Hongo area, and the temperature of the source of the spring in the Oto River reaches 72°C. In winter, when the water level of the Oto River falls, cold water on the riverside mixes with the hot spring to produce a suitable temperature for visitors to enjoy an open-air bath. Because this open-air spring is so large that about 1,000 people can bathe at the same time, it is also called “Sennin (1,000 person) Buro.” Sennin Buro is free from November to February. Visitors wear swimsuits since both men and women go in at the same time.

Hongu

Kumano Hongu Grand Shrine

As one of shrines of Kumano-san-zan, along with Kumano Hayatama Grand Shrine and Kumano Nachi Grand Shrine, this serves as the central shrine of more than 3,000 Kumano shrines all over Japan. Climbing up the stone-step approach shrouded in the grove of cedars, you can see the main shrine pavilion, which is designated as a nationally important cultural property.

<World Heritage>

Tsubo-yu, Yunomine Hot Springs

This hot spring was created by hollowing out a natural rock and is only big enough for two or three people at a time. It is said that a couple soaking in this hot spring will have a healthy baby. It changes its color seven times a day, ranging in tones from blue to milky white to transparent.

<World Heritage>

Doro-kyo Gorge

This ravine in the tributary of the Kumano River offers a variety of natural landscapes, such as dense virgin forests, cliffs, and oddly shaped rocks of various sizes. The landscapes are particularly splendid in summer when flowers bloom on the rock face, and in late autumn when colored leaves cover the mountains.

Jofuku Park

Shingu City is said to be the place where Jofuku, who was visiting Japan to search for the elixir of immortality with some 3,000 little boys and girls on orders from the first Qin Emperor, made a landing 2,200 years ago. After finding the Tendai-uyaku (a kind of camphor tree) to be effective, however, Jofuku settled and spent the rest of his life here. In memory of him, local people constructed this Chinese-style park. When you enter the park by passing through the majestic gate, you can see the statue and tombstone of Jofuku, the “Pond of Immortality,” and the Tendai-uyaku, the true known as the elixir of immortality.

Kitayama River Rafting

The village of Kitayama is the only place in Japan that offers white-water river rafting. From the raft center of the Kitayama River, the main river in this area, visitors can go down the rapids on a raft. The excursion consists of two stages of river rafting, with each stage taking 70 minutes. The first stage is from the raft center to Komatsu, and the second stage is from Komatsu to Doro-haccho. Participation in the white-water river rafting requires stamina and courage because you have to remain standing throughout the entire trip, firmly holding on to the handrails on both sides while being tossed about by the rapids. The scenery along the way is picturesque and river rafting is something you should not miss.

Kawai Hot Spring Sennin Buro

Kawayu hot spring is a famous hot spring in the Hongo area, and the temperature of the source of the spring in the Oto River reaches 72°C. In winter, when the water level of the Oto River falls, cold water on the riverside mixes with the hot spring to produce a suitable temperature for visitors to enjoy an open-air bath. Because this open-air spring is so large that about 1,000 people can bathe at the same time, it is also called “Sennin (1,000 person) Buro.” Sennin Buro is free from November to February. Visitors wear swimsuits since both men and women go in at the same time.

Hot Spring Cuisine

Made using hot spring water, this cuisine is soft and pleasant to the taste, and enjoys a superb reputation.

Mehari-zushi, Sanma-zushi

Mehari-zushi is rice wrapped in the leaves of mustard greens. Sanma-zushi is made of vinegar-soaked saury on rice. Both of these sushi are said to be the origin of Japanese food.

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