



Leave the crowded tourist spots behind for the charming seaside locations of Wakasa Town and Obama City in Fukui Prefecture, Japan! With this useful English guide in hand, explore storied shrines and temples, learn about the Mackerel Road stretching toward Kyoto, experience traditional local crafts, immerse yourself in pristine nature, and eat your fill of the freshest fish and other delicious food – all here on the coast of the Sea of Japan!

# JOURNEY TO WAKASA AND OBAMA

Connecting Kyoto to the Sea



**Wakasa Obama Tourism Association**  
**Wakasa Obama Tourist Information Center**

6-1 Ekimae-cho, Obama City, Fukui Prefecture, Japan  
Tel.: 0770-52-3844  
<https://www.sabakaido-traveler.com>



**Wakasa Mikatagoko Tourism Association**  
(in Michi no Eki Mikatagoko Rest Area)

122-31-1 Torihama, Wakasa-cho, Fukui Prefecture, Japan  
Tel.: 0770-45-0113  
<https://www.wakasa-mikatagoko.jp>



Shrines and Temples | Historic Sites | Cultural Heritage | Rites and Festivals

Traditional Crafts | Scenic Spots | Lush Nature | Local Food



# JOURNEY TO WAKASA AND OBAMA

Connecting Kyoto to the Sea

# Wakasa Region Sightseeing Map

-  Shrine
-  Temple
-  Tourist Information, Rest Areas, Food, Shops



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Ocean views, delicious seafood, rich history,  
and a welcoming community eager to share  
their culture and traditions with visitors...  
All this and more awaits you on your journey!



The seaside city of Obama and the neighboring town of Wakasa may not be as well known as tourist hubs like Tokyo and Kyoto, but this historic region has a lot to offer for visitors willing to venture a little way off the beaten track!

Driving what is now known as the Saba Kaido (Mackerel Road) or taking a train along the scenic Lake Biwa and the Sea of Japan will bring you to Obama and Wakasa in Fukui Prefecture. This rural area has a population of approximately 41,000 people, who mostly make a living in the agricultural and commercial fishing industries. Local traditional crafts include lacquerware (especially chopsticks), agate carving, and *washi* papermaking. Popular cuisine features winter crab, *kuzu manju* sweets, pickled sea bream topped with bamboo leaves, Yatabe green onions, fresh eels, *ume* plums, and a dizzying variety of mackerel! Seasonal tourism usually consists of beach lovers, autumn color chasers, and seafood connoisseurs, but Obama and Wakasa are worth visiting for their heritage and art as well.

In earlier periods of history, when Kyoto was still the capital of Japan, mountain routes through Wakasa to Obama were Kyoto's primary mode of access to the Sea of Japan. This went beyond just fishing, as the port in Obama also served as the gateway to the Asian mainland. With foreign goods and travelers arriving from abroad to proceed to Kyoto along with shipments of local staple foods such as fish and salt, Obama and Wakasa inevitably absorbed aspects of their trading partners' refined culture, some of which has survived to this day in the form of culinary traditions, architecture, hospitality customs, and festivals.

Keep reading to discover even more about this charming region by the sea!

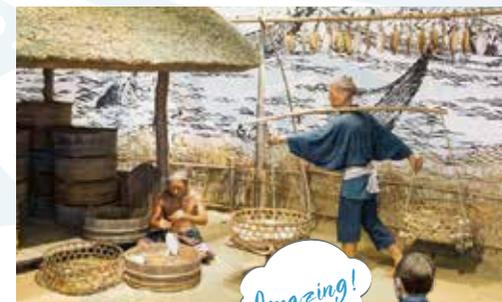
When you think of major port towns in Japan, you might envision somewhere like Yokohama or Kobe, but until a few centuries ago you would have been thinking of Obama! Situated in Wakasa Province, now Fukui Prefecture, Obama was a bustling seaport that welcomed ships from mainland Asia, serving as an important hub on the trade routes that connected the city of Kyoto with the rest of the world. It was from Obama that the old capital received much of its seafood, carried by men traveling on foot over steep mountain roads or through the post town of Kumagawa-juku. The main catch transported inland was *saba* (mackerel), which eventually led to the name Saba Kaido (Mackerel Road).

Wakasa Province was a *miketsukuni*, one of the provinces tasked with providing foodstuffs to the imperial court. But it wasn't only fish being carried along the Saba Kaido! Metalwork, Buddhist statuary, books, emissaries, and even Japan's first elephant also made their way along this network of roads. In turn, Kyoto's distinct culture reached the north, as the routes to the sea were responsible for bringing religious, festive, and culinary traditions from the old capital that can still be observed in Obama and Wakasa.

Special Feature

# Saba Kaido

The Mackerel Road 鯖街道



One of the most lasting testaments of this exchange is the large number of Buddhist temples in Obama. Normally you would not see nearly as many in a rural area, let alone with such an amount of precious, well-preserved statues and other treasures! Another example is the dining and entertainment district of Nishigumi, where *geiko* (as geisha are called in both Kyoto and Obama) performed for guests at luxury establishments serving elegant cuisine not usually seen outside the capital. Even Kyoto's famous Gion Matsuri Festival has been paid homage in the form of Hoze Matsuri, a festival in Obama in which various neighborhoods showcase their floats and performances.

You will not be passing any porters rushing about on foot these days, but you can still explore the Saba Kaido! A plaque on the sidewalk in front of the Obama City Saba Kaido Museum marks the "official" starting point of the old Mackerel Road. After visiting the museum, you can get a handy map of the hiking trails and head out on a tough but rewarding journey through mountain forests and valley villages between Kyoto and Obama. Those less trek-inclined can enjoy parts of the Saba Kaido by car, including some gorgeous views from the mountain peaks, or stroll around Kumagawa-juku post town, taking in the traditional scenery and architecture. Either way, you don't have to carry baskets of mackerel to do it!

Obama City Saba Kaido Museum  
小浜市鯖街道ミュージアム

〒917-0084 福井県小浜市小浜広峰17-1  
17-1 Obama Hiromine, Obama City



## LOCATIONS

Obama and Wakasa have far more temples and shrines than most countryside areas because of their history as a trading hub. Each site has something for visitors to enjoy, be it a lovely garden, ancient statues, or fascinating legends.



## Kumagawa-juku Post Town

熊川宿

Centuries ago, before the invention of the steam engine and the automobile, people used intricately connected trade routes to travel and transport goods across the country. Various post towns (*shukuba*) along these roads offered food and lodging for weary travelers, fresh horses for messengers on the go, and porters for hire to carry merchandise. Although many post towns disappeared with the development of modern highways and transportation methods, Kumagawa-juku in Wakasa is one post town that retains its traditional appearance.

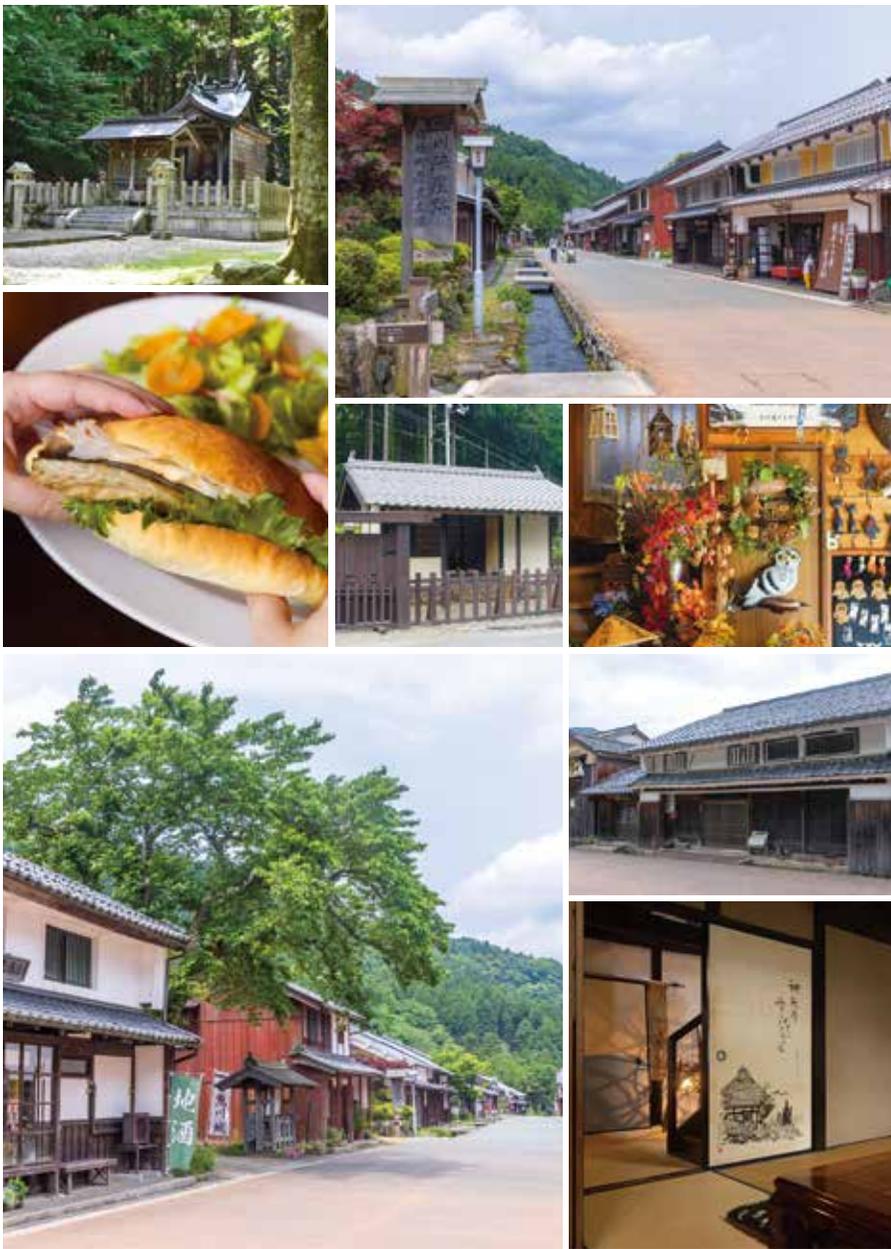
Kumagawa-juku developed along a network of trade routes that once connected the ancient capital of Kyoto to the Sea of Japan. Specifically, it is located on the Wakasa Kaido Road near the border between Shiga and Fukui Prefectures (formerly Omi and Wakasa Provinces). Travelers passing through Kumagawa-juku would head northwest to Obama, southeast to Lake Biwa, or south, all the way to Kyoto. Goods from ships that docked in the port of Obama, tax payments in the form of rice, and various marine products (especially mackerel) were historically transported using these routes. The first elephant to enter Japan from the mainland also traveled this way from Obama to Kyoto!

Even though Kumagawa-juku is no longer used as a transportation hub, it maintains the layout typical for post towns. Its main street is lined with traditional buildings, and an irrigation channel called the Maegawa runs through the entire town. In the past, the channel was used to rinse vegetables, wash hands or faces, do laundry, and provide water for pack animals. Old shipping agencies with characteristic architecture and baggage storehouses can still be seen along the street, while other buildings have been repurposed as residences and businesses.

The best way to enjoy Kumagawa-juku is to stroll down the charming main street, letting yourself veer off and investigate whatever catches your interest. There are Shinto shrines and a Buddhist temple to visit, preserved historic buildings to admire, fresh local treats in restaurants and cafés, and souvenirs to pick for yourself and your loved ones. If you fancy a short hike, you can trek past the faint remains of a medieval castle to a viewing point on the mountainside that offers sights of the former post town and the surrounding landscape.

While in Kumagawa-juku, be sure to check out the following notable sights!





### Kumagawa Guardhouse

The guardhouse was built in the early seventeenth century by Sakai Tadakatsu (1587–1662), the first Sakai lord of the Obama domain, to monitor people passing through Kumagawa-juku. Officials manning the guardhouse inspected travelers, checked travel permits, and levied taxes on transported goods. The Wakasa Kaido was the most heavily traveled road in the Saba Kaido network, so taxes were an important source of income for the domain. Large checkpoints and smaller guardhouses such as this were used across Japan in the Edo period (1603–1867) because the ruling Tokugawa shogunate and its domain lords strictly regulated taxes, shipment of weapons, and women’s travel. Inside the Kumagawa Guardhouse are lifelike mannequins representing the dutiful domain officials who once worked there, as well as various tools and weapons that were used for making arrests when needed. Make sure your papers are in order before passing through!

### Historic Residence of the Ogino Family

This residence is the oldest remaining traditional *machiya* townhouse in Kumagawa-juku and a nationally designated Important Cultural Property. It was built in 1811 by the Ogino family, who operated a prosperous shipping business called Kuramiya for generations. The residence has many features that were favored by shipping agents: rings on the building’s exterior for hitching horses, a baggage storehouse adjacent to the main house, and loft sleeping quarters for employees who were on call to hit the road with contracted goods. The building is not open to the public, but its architecture adds plenty of charm to the townscape.

### Former Residence of Henmi Kanbei

The traditional townhouse, built in 1858, belonged to Henmi Kanbei (1842–1909), the first mayor of Kumagawa. The property once contained a small sake brewery and still has a garden and a rear storehouse that was used for valuables. After the residence was donated to the town by a family descendant, it underwent renovations that demonstrated how traditional homes could be made into comfortable living spaces while preserving the town’s historic atmosphere. At present, the converted townhouse includes lodgings, a café, and a souvenir shop. The café menu offers noodles, sweets made with kudzu starch (a local specialty), and various drinks. Those hoping to explore the former Henmi Kanbei residence can do so for a 100-yen fee during the café’s business hours. Please note that the café is closed between mid-December and early March.

There are so many things to do while exploring Kumagawa-juku! Why not grab a tasty mackerel sandwich at the Saba\*Cafe, climb the stone steps to Matsunoki Shrine, shop for cute figurines at Zakka Kinoshita, or peek inside the former Henmi Kanbei residence?



### Shiraishi Jinja Shrine

It is hard to miss Shiraishi Shrine with its large, light grey *torii* gate along the main street of Kumagawa-juku marking the entrance. It is the guardian shrine of the town, dedicated to Hikohohodemi no Mikoto (a sea deity), Shirahige Myojin (a deity of guidance), various mountain deities, and the spirit of the former domain lord Sakai Tadakatsu. The shrine's annual festival is held on May 3rd and features a large float decorated with a luxurious tapestry. The float is paraded through the town in the style of Kyoto's famous Gion Matsuri Festival, an enduring example of Kumagawa-juku's prosperous history and the way traditions from the ancient capital came to Wakasa through trade and cultural exchange.

### Site of Kumagawa Castle

Kumagawa-juku is primarily known as a former post town, but for a short period of time it was guarded by a mountain castle. It is unknown when exactly the castle was constructed on the mountain overlooking Kumagawa-juku, but it was ruled by the Numata family in the sixteenth century. In 1569, Kumagawa Castle was attacked and captured by Matsumiya Kiyonaga, the lord of a neighboring castle. The Numata family is said to have fled to Omi Province (present-day Shiga Prefecture), where lord Numata Mitsukane served as a military commander for the Hosokawa family. His daughter Jako (1544–1618) married lord Hosokawa Fujitaka (also known as Hosokawa Yusai, 1534–1610) and later became a famous historical figure in her own right.

For several years, Kumagawa Castle was occupied by the Matsumiya family, but was abandoned once the powerful warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) conquered the Wakasa region and appointed his subordinate to govern it in 1573. Now only vaguely defined shapes in the earth that remain from defenses such as a moat and trenches show where the castle once stood.

Observation decks along the short mountain trail to the castle site allow visitors to gaze out over Kumagawa-juku and imagine what the view from the castle might have been like. The trail starts from the back of the former location of the Kumagawa-juku magistrate's office and can also be accessed from Shiraishi Shrine.





### Matsunoki Jinja Shrine

The first thing visitors are likely to notice when they approach the *torii* gate of Matsunoki Shrine is the large statue of a man in formal clothing, down on one knee to present an official petition. Who is he and why has he been cast in that pose forever? The statue portrays Matsunoki Shozaemon (1625–1652), a village leader who advocated for farmers suffering under heavy taxation. When Obama Castle was being built, the domain lord significantly raised taxes to cover the costs, and the rates stayed high even after the castle was completed. In those days, taxes were paid in goods such as rice and beans, so farmers were going without in order to meet the unreasonable requirements.



Matsunoki was one of more than 20 leaders from 252 villages in the region who came together to discuss a plan of action and directly petition the domain government to lower the taxes. After over a decade of appeals, the taxes were finally reduced. However, the village leaders had defied the law by directly petitioning the domain lord, putting their lives at risk. Matsunoki Shozaemon was arrested and executed in 1652, when he was only 28 years old. The tale of his heroic sacrifice has been preserved by the villagers for over three hundred years, and Matsunoki Shrine was founded to honor his spirit in 1933.

What sort of day awaits in this charming post town? Maybe you will have a bite to eat at Marushin or Shikisaikan, pass by the Kumagawa Guardhouse, shop for local ceramics at the Jakushu Kiln, or get to watch a craftsman at work!



### Kumagawa-juku | 熊川宿

〒919-1532 福井県三方上中郡若狭町熊川  
Kumagawa, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun  
☎ 0770-62-9111  
<https://kumagawa-juku.com/>



## Nishigumi District 小浜西組



One of Obama's main attractions is the old Nishigumi district and its scenic Sanchomachi Street. When Obama was a bustling port, sailors and passengers would leave their ships behind for the welcoming warmth of the restaurants, inns, teahouses, and other establishments that lined the streets leading into the city. A concerted effort has been made to retain the traditional architecture from that time, and although many of the buildings now serve as private residences, various guesthouses, cafés, and restaurants are ready to treat visitors with the best of country hospitality.

The Nishigumi district is full of local flavor with cafés, historic buildings, restaurants, temples, and much more! Take some time to explore on foot and see what you can discover along the way.

The area is convenient for tourists to stay in, particularly if they are traveling on foot. For a taste of what it is like to live in an old-time neighborhood, a local venture called **OBAMA MACHIYA STAY** has renovated several townhouses to the standards of modern convenience while retaining the overall architectural design of an Obama *machiya*. For example, you can rent out the entire **Sanchomachi Sanoya** property or book a room in the neighboring **Sanchomachi Nagata** property, which also operates a cozy café on the first floor. There will be no delay in starting your day when you step out straight into Sanchomachi Street!

Wandering through the narrow streets, you will notice that many buildings have the same decoration dangling near the door. Obama families follow a folk tradition of hanging *migawarizaru*: simple, stuffed cloth figures that represent monkeys. They are thought to protect the household from misfortune. Why monkeys? In Japanese, monkeys are called "saru," which happens to have the same pronunciation as the verb meaning "to expel evil." There is even a small **Koshindo Temple** filled with handmade *migawarizaru*.

With lots of things to discover in Nishigumi, you won't go hungry either. In front of **Hachiman Jinja Shrine** is a former traditional sweets shop converted into a bakery called **Cocoro**, ready with delicious pastries and savory breads. If you prefer fine dining and entertainment from an Obama *geiko*, the traditional restaurant and teahouse **Ryotei Harima** accepts reservations for meals as well as cultural experiences such as *shamisen* lessons, traditional party games, and rental kimono. **Hotoro**, an old luxury restaurant, no longer serves food, but does open its doors on weekends and holidays to show the traditional architecture and artwork inside and share the site's fascinating history.

Just as they did centuries before, let the Nishigumi district and Sanchomachi Street lead you farther afield into the culture of Obama!

### Sanchomachi Sanoya Sanchomachi Nagata

三丁町のや・三丁町ながた

〒917-0058 福井県小浜市小浜香取13、14  
13 and 14 Obama Katori, Obama City

☎ 0770-56-3366

<https://www.obama-machiya-stay.com/>

### Cocoro Bakery | 石窯パンの郷ころ

〒917-0052 福井県小浜市小浜男山39-2  
39-2 Obama Otokoyama, Obama City

☎ 0770-53-0575

Open: Wednesday–Sunday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

<https://www.ishigamapanccocoro.com/>

### Ryotei Harima | 料亭播磨

〒917-0058 福井県小浜市小浜香取3  
3 Obama Katori, Obama City

☎ 0770-52-0362 (reservation required)

<https://harima-obama.jp/>

### Former Ryotei Hotoro | 蓬嶋楼

〒917-0057 福井県小浜市小浜飛鳥64  
64 Obama Asuka, Obama City

☎ 0770-64-6034 (Obama City Hall)

Open: Saturday, Sunday, public holidays,

10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.



# Myotsuji Temple

明通寺

The most well-known temple in Obama is undoubtedly Myotsuji, a Shingon school temple founded in 806. Situated at the base of a mountain densely covered in *hinoki* cypress trees, Myotsuji still evokes the feeling of temples past, removed from the world and surrounded by nature so that monks could devote themselves solely to practicing Buddhism. Although the once sprawling temple complex has become relatively smaller over time, the unadorned simplicity of the ancient wooden buildings makes for a quiet yet striking scene... And if there is a troupe of wild monkeys making their way through, maybe a little less quiet!

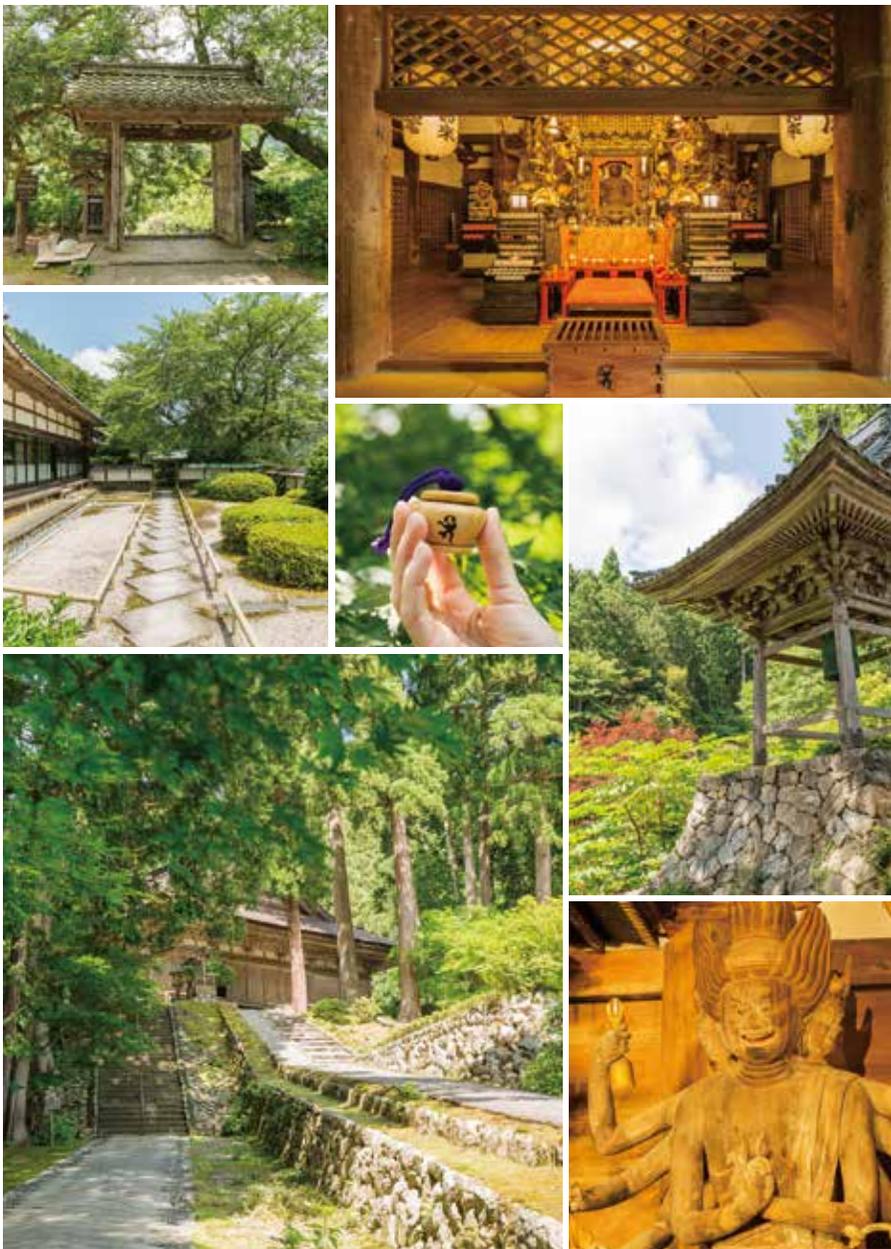


The first site you will encounter as you approach Myotsuji is the *sanmon* gate, a wooden structure from 1772 standing at the top of a flight of mossy stone steps. Although the gate itself dates to an Edo-period (1603–1867) reconstruction, the two guardians that flank the entrance had their wooden forms and furious expressions carved back in 1264. Just past the gate in a small courtyard are the temple's bell tower, a side garden, and a grand weeping cherry tree that brightens up the precincts with soft pinks each April. More color can be found in one of the temple's three small ponds, home to large koi carp who would

definitely enjoy some of the food on sale by the water if you choose to indulge them. And while it might not catch your eye at first, don't miss the broad-leafed and pink-stemmed *yuzuriha* tree marked with a little sign!

*Yuzuriha* is specifically mentioned in Myotsuji records, which indicate that the temple was founded by the great general Sakanoue no Tamuramaro (758–811). According to legend, he received a divine revelation in a dream, leading him to find a large *yuzuriha* tree in the mountains where a mysterious old sage made his home. Following the sage's advice to pray for peace throughout the land, Sakanoue cut down the *yuzuriha* and carved three Buddhist statues to be enshrined in the temple hall he erected. The statues portrayed Yakushi Buddha, the deity of medicine believed to cure all ills; Gozanze Myo-o, a Wisdom King known as the conqueror of greed, hatred, and foolishness; and Jinja Taisho, a guardian said to have aided Xuanzang, the famous Chinese monk immortalized in the tale *Journey to the West*.





Versions of these statues created in the late eleventh and the twelfth centuries are the principal objects of worship in the main hall of Myotsuji, with Yakushi Buddha in the center, Gozanze Myo-o on the left, and Jinja Taisho on the right. Since you are allowed to walk through the inner sanctum, you can even examine the awe-inspiring wooden sculptures up close! These three, as well as the statue of the Immovable Wisdom King Fudo Myo-o kept in a separate building, are nationally designated Important Cultural Properties. If you understand Japanese, you can learn even more about the temple's history, treasures, and grounds directly from a monk while you are admiring the statuary.

All it takes is a look around to discover even more of Myotsuji's priceless treasures! The main hall and the 22-meter-tall three-story pagoda beside it, both erected during a reconstruction in 1258, are designated National Treasures. Even though many people assume that Buddhist temples have always been built in austere, natural-toned woods, back in the day they were often covered in colorful lacquer, painted scenes from various sutras, and symbolic mandalas. The outside of both structures has indeed turned to weathered wood over time, but the paintings and colors inside the pagoda have been preserved remarkably well and can be viewed during special exhibition periods.

Before you leave, why not try a little prediction for your future? You may notice little red mustachioed dolls and small wooden pots scattered around on lanterns and rocks while exploring the grounds. The dolls represent the legendary monk Bodhidharma, and the pots are modeled after traditional medicine jars like the one held by Yakushi Buddha. They are sold for ¥500 and ¥700, respectively, at the main hall or at the ticket counter, and each ornament has an *omikui* fortune (in Japanese) inside. Some people choose to leave the figurines behind to populate the precincts, but you are more than welcome to take them home as little reminders of your trip to the historic Myotsuji Temple!



### Myotsuji Temple | 明通寺

〒917-0237 福井県小浜市門前5-21  
5-21 Monzen, Obama City

☎ 0770-57-1355

Admission: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., ¥500

<https://myotsuji.jimdofree.com/>



## Mantokuji Temple 萬徳寺



A quiet temple with rich history, Mantokuji experiences a surge in popularity in autumn, but is worth visiting year-round. Its architecture, art collection, and magnificent garden make for a very satisfying excursion.

Mantokuji Temple is most lauded for its garden, which is a nationally designated Place of Scenic Beauty. The temple had different names, addresses, and sect affiliations over its 800 years of history. It served as a prayer temple for daimyo lords and was recognized as the main Shingon school temple in Wakasa Province during the Sengoku (Warring States) period (1467–1568). In the mid-sixteenth century, at the time of the daimyo Takeda Nobutoyo (1510?–1580?), it was also a *kakekomi-dera*, a temple where women could seek shelter and eventual divorce from their husbands. Now located in the southeastern foothills of Obama, Mantokuji is an exquisite example of temple architecture. It also has a variety of noteworthy artwork and offers gorgeous views.

The *shoin*, a thatched-roof building located just inside the temple gate, contains several drawing rooms that offer a splendid garden view and an interesting assortment of art. The overhead transoms that divide the main rooms are decorated with seasonally themed Chinese ink paintings drawn about 250 years ago by Sakai Tadatsura (1752–1806), the ninth Sakai lord of the Obama domain. The *tokonoma* alcove displays a collection of scroll paintings, Buddhist mandalas, and porcelain donated to the temple over the centuries, proof of the patronage it received from influential families in the past.

The famous garden next to the *shoin* hall was created in 1677. It utilizes the natural slope of the temple grounds as a base for carefully placed stones and greenery behind a sea of pale gravel. Among the foliage you can find the temple bell tower, a tutelary shrine, and another small hall. Each season brings a different treat, be it the rare five-colored camellia tree in late winter, bright azaleas in spring, or vibrant maples and ginkgo trees in autumn. The garden at Mantokuji is considered one of Japan's top 100 spots for viewing autumn foliage!

Past the garden and up a flight of maple-lined stairs is the temple's main hall, which enshrines a seated statue of Amida, the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life. The ancient sculpture was carved in the late Heian period (794–1185) and is now a nationally designated Important Cultural Property. Other statues in the hall include Dainichi Buddha, the Immovable Wisdom King Fudo Myo-o, and a hidden Horse-Headed Kannon (one of the forms of the bodhisattva of compassion).



### Mantokuji Temple | 萬徳寺

〒917-0242 福井県小浜市金屋74-23

74-23 Kanaya, Obama City

☎ 0770-56-2308

Admission: 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., ¥400

Before you go, make sure to take in the scenic view from the top of the stairs, overlooking the temple grounds as well as the village and the mountains spread out below.



## Wakasahiko Jinja and Wakasahime Jinja Shrines

若狭彦神社・若狭姫神社



These shrines are home to two nationally designated Important Cultural Properties: a Heian-period (794–1185) *tachi* blade said to have been forged by the famous swordsmith Sanjo Munechika and a *norito* prayer scroll from 1303.

The preeminent Shinto shrines in Obama are Wakasahiko Jinja and Wakasahime Jinja, a complex of two shrines founded in the early seventh century in dedication to a divine married couple. According to legend, the deity Hikohohodemi no Mikoto once went fishing with a hook he borrowed from his elder brother... only to end up losing it to a particularly feisty sea creature. When he descended to the Dragon King's palace under the sea to look for the missing hook, he met the beautiful goddess Toyotamahime, the Dragon King's daughter, and soon married her. After the fishing hook was retrieved, the couple returned to live on land. The husband is now worshipped at Wakasahiko Shrine, and his wife is venerated at Wakasahime Shrine. Historically classified as the highest-ranked in Wakasa Province, this pair of shrines remains a focal point of celebration in the modern day, hosting weddings, prayers for newborn babies, and coming of age rituals.

Befitting the enshrined deities, Wakasahiko Shrine is most strongly associated with maritime safety and success in fishing, while Wakasahime Shrine is known as a place to pray for a safe and easy childbirth. Both shrines are built in the classic Shinto architectural style with minimal embellishments, almost blending into the forests that surround them. This impression of oneness with nature is stronger at the slightly more remote Wakasahiko Shrine, but even Wakasahime Shrine, which is closer to the city and is visited more frequently because of the shrine office located there, still feels connected to both forest and ocean. Sacred *sakaki* trees grow throughout the grounds, and residents still come to use the shrine well. The large wooden boat models on display were once offered to the deities by fishermen and merchants in prayer for the safety of their vessels at sea.



### Wakasahiko Jinja Shrine | 若狭彦神社

〒917-0243 福井県小浜市竜前28-7  
28-7 Ryuzen, Obama City  
☎ 0770-56-1116  
Admission: Free



### Wakasahime Jinja Shrine | 若狭姫神社

〒917-0241 福井県小浜市速敷65-41  
65-41 Onyu, Obama City  
☎ 0770-56-1116  
Admission: Free

The most striking natural feature that the two shrines have in common is their impressive trees! The sacred tree of Wakasahime Shrine is a venerable 30-meter-tall cedar that towers over the main sanctuary. Wakasahiko Shrine has a pair of *meoto sugi*, "married cedar trees" that grew so close together that their bases fused as one. Trees such as these are said to bring good luck in love, which is quite fitting when you think of the legend behind the shrine's founding!



## Hagaji Temple 羽賀寺



Kannon is the Buddhist deity of compassion with 33 incarnations to guide and protect humans, and Juichimen Kannon is said to have 11 heads to see in all directions and help everyone who needs salvation.

According to temple records, in 716 a phoenix alighted on a paulownia tree in Obama, leaving behind some feathers. This was regarded as proof of peace reigning throughout the land. To commemorate the auspicious event, Empress Genso (680–748) ordered a Buddhist monk Gyoki (668–749) to found a temple, which was named Hagaji with the kanji characters for “feather” and “congratulations.” Its records, *Hagaji Engi*, penned by Prince Masahito (1552–1586) with a postscript by his son Emperor Go-Yozei (1571–1617), are a nationally designated Important Cultural Property.

A Shingon school temple, Hagaji is renowned for the Buddhist statuary in the main hall, which was rebuilt after a fire in 1447. The most famous is Juichimen Kannon (Eleven-Headed Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion), an Important Cultural Property said to have been carved by Gyoki in the likeness of Empress Genso herself. Since the sculpture was originally kept away from public view, the colorful paint on the wood is remarkably well-preserved. If you lean in, you can still see the delicate patterns on the statue’s clothing! You will also notice that its right arm is disproportionately long, representing Kannon’s ability to reach out and help those in need. The richly decorated altar features carved phoenixes and paulownia crests as another reminder of the temple’s origins.

Statues of Bishamonten, the guardian of the north, a Jizo Bodhisattva said to bless couples with children, a Jizo Bodhisattva believed to bestow a long life, and a thousand-armed Kannon originally venerated at another temple are also on display in the hall. Buddhist sutras describe 33 incarnations of Kannon, and their depictions line the walls in a corridor behind the main altar. In a side chamber, you will find two statues of sixteenth-century lords Ando Chikasue and his son Akita Sanesue, who contributed greatly to the temple’s reconstruction. Newly designed *goshuin*, special seals inscribed with vermilion and gold ink and decorated with charming images of Juichimen Kannon or the deity’s 33 incarnations, are available at the main hall for ¥1,000. Part of the income is used for temple maintenance, and part is directed toward disaster recovery assistance and community development.



### Hagaji Temple | 羽賀寺

〒917-0017 福井県小浜市羽賀82-2

82-2 Haga, Obama City

☎ 0770-52-4502

Admission: 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., ¥400

Hagaji is now nestled in the foothills northeast of the city center, but in the past, it was one of the closest temples to the bustling Obama port, governing 18 subtemples at the height of its power. Although today its appeal lies primarily in historical artifacts, be sure to take in the temple grounds! The precincts are particularly beautiful in summer when colorful hydrangeas bloom along the pathways.



## Jokoji Temple 常高寺



Jokoji Temple is a must-see for fans of Warring States period history. That was a chaotic time between the collapse of one shogunate and the rise of another, producing many fascinating historical figures, including Ohatsu.

Jokoji is a Rinzai Zen temple revitalized through the efforts of Obama citizens, who were driven to preserve its rich history. Originally built in 1630, Jokoji was founded by a widow named Ohatsu (1570–1633) so that she could take the tonsure and pray for the souls of her parents and her husband Kyogoku Takatsugu (1563–1609), the daimyo lord of the Obama domain. Under the name of Jokoin, Ohatsu entered the nunnery with seven loyal handmaidens, and at the end of their lives, they were all buried in the temple cemetery overlooking Obama Bay.

However, Ohatsu did not spend all her widowed life cloistered! Her status as the niece of Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), the famous warlord of the Sengoku (Warring States) period (1467–1568), allowed her to play an important role in national politics far beyond Obama. Her elder sister Yodogimi (1570?–1615) married into the Toyotomi family, and her younger sister Go (1573–1626) into the Tokugawa family. The two powers were competing over rule of the country, and Ohatsu worked tirelessly to try and maintain peace between them. Because of this, her life has been well studied by historians, and efforts have been taken to preserve and display the relics that remained at Jokoji. These include a wall scroll portrait of Ohatsu, gifts from her sisters, letters she wrote, and other documents that help tell her story. Japanese speakers have the chance to listen to the chief abbot explain the significance of each display if he is available when you visit!

The main temple hall was built anew in 2001 and shines with a relatively modern finish, its dramatic skylight letting the sun rays pour into the building. The *shoin* (drawing room) wing, however, is exactly what one might expect from a historic temple, decorated with ink paintings of nature scenes and Chinese sages. Sitting in the tatami-mat rooms in quiet contemplation, you can enjoy a view of the rear garden of Jokoji undisturbed by crowds.

When it comes to seasonal beauty, though, Jokoji is better known for what is out front! Situated beside the temple bell is a pond that is filled with gorgeous irises in spring, bringing a plethora of colors to the precincts. Make sure to admire the old main gate... but be careful passing through! The local train line runs between the gate and the stone steps that lead to it, which can make for quite the dramatic picture of “past meets present.”



### Jokoji Temple | 常高寺

〒917-0055 福井県小浜市小浜浅間1

1 Obama Asama, Obama City

☎ 0770-53-2327

Admission: 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., ¥400

<https://jyoukouin.jimdoofree.com/>



# Happyakubikuni



## The Nun Who Lived 800 Years 八百比丘尼



There is a legend found throughout Japan that tells the tragic tale of a woman who unwittingly became near immortal, doomed to wander the earth while everyone she loved passed into memory. Although many regions have their own accounts of these events, when told in Obama it goes something like this.

Once upon a time in the mid-seventh century, a beautiful daughter was born into the wealthy Takahashi family of Wakasa Province. When she was sixteen, her affluent father received a banquet invitation from a mysterious man in their village. Curious as to what he would encounter, the father visited the man's residence and was surprised to be greeted by a splendid manor full of servants preparing exotic dishes.

Takahashi was shocked, however, to see a mermaid among the fish on the cutting board. Surely they didn't plan on serving such a taboo meal? Despite the host's attempts to cajole him into eating it, claiming that it was a gift from the Palace of the Dragon King beneath the sea, Takahashi managed to avoid tasting the mermaid meat...

but could not rebuff the insistent offers to at least take some home. When he returned from the banquet, his daughter was quite curious about the delicious-looking meat her father brought, and before he could stop her, she ate all the mermaid flesh.

From that day forth, the daughter ceased to age. As her parents passed away, as her husband and children grew old, she alone remained untouched by time due to the mermaid meat's power. Shaving her head and dedicating herself to the life of a nun, the eternally young woman set out on a journey throughout the country, preaching and planting camellias wherever she went.

It is said that after eight hundred years of wandering the country in search of rest, the woman now known as Happyakubikuni ("eight-hundred-year-old nun") returned to Obama. Coming across a coastal cave, she resolved to remain secluded there for the rest of her days until she finally managed to find peace, and no one has seen her since. The cave where Happyakubikuni is said to have disappeared can be found just beside the gate to Kuinji Temple, marked with a signboard that tells her story. A statue of the immortal nun is surrounded by camellias that bloom white and pink in winter. In good weather, visitors are welcome to enter the shallow cave (for a fee) to see the memorial inside.



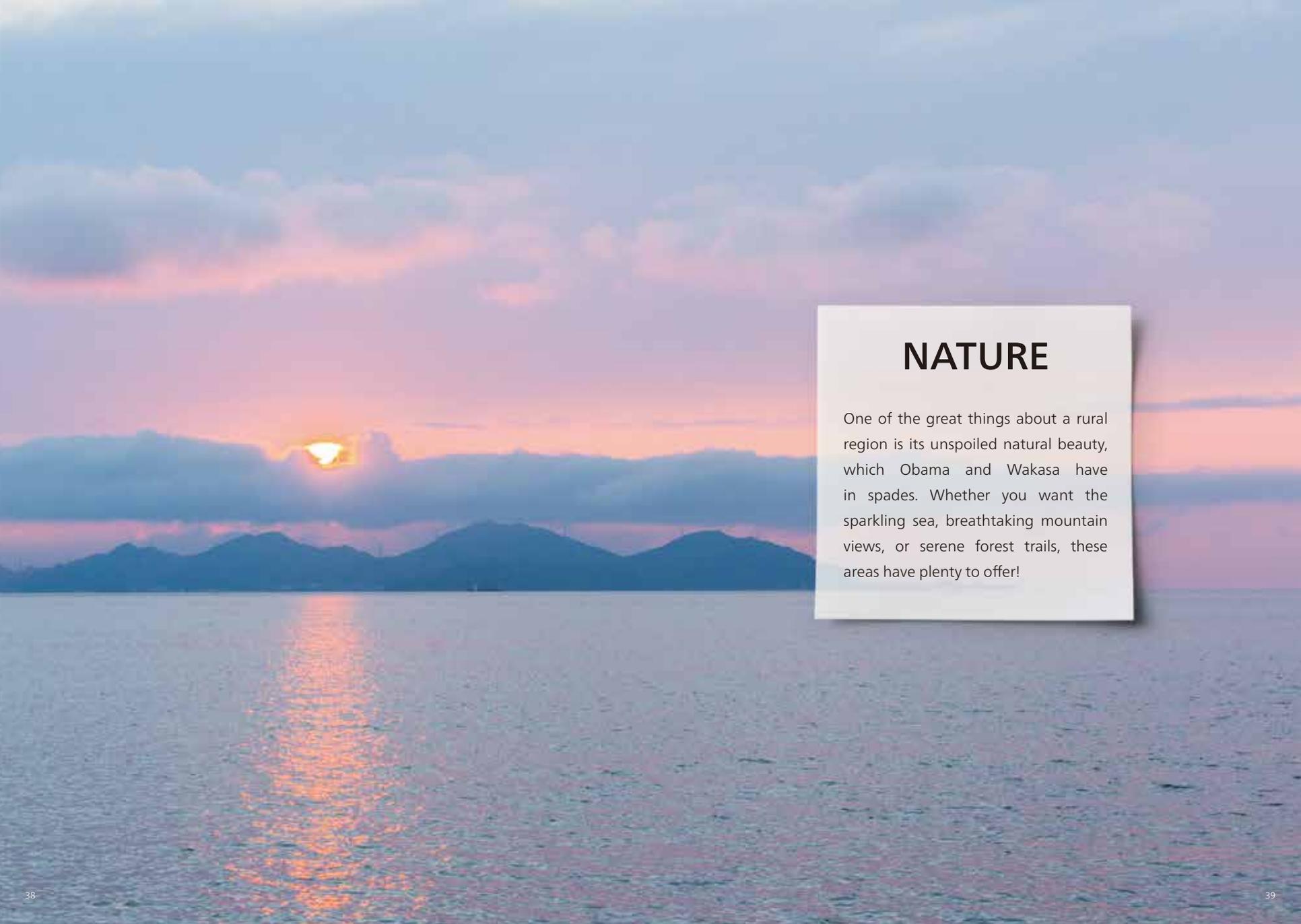
### Kuinji Temple | 空印寺

〒917-0052 福井県小浜市小浜男山2

2 Obama Otokoyama, Obama City

☎ 0770-52-1936

Admission: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., ¥400



## NATURE

One of the great things about a rural region is its unspoiled natural beauty, which Obama and Wakasa have in spades. Whether you want the sparkling sea, breathtaking mountain views, or serene forest trails, these areas have plenty to offer!



## Sotomo Scenic Cruise

蘇洞門めぐり



There is nothing quite like the sea breeze in your hair, but no worries if you prefer a little less wind! The boats used for the Sotomo Scenic Cruise have both indoor and outdoor seating, as well as upper viewing decks.

Located by the Sea of Japan, Obama offers a plethora of gorgeous ocean views. There are several docks, mountain drives, and observation points around the bay, but the best and most satisfying way for a tourist to take in the marine sights is the Sotomo Scenic Cruise. Setting out from the Wakasa Fisherman's Wharf, the boat ride lasts approximately 50 minutes and takes passengers along 6 kilometers of coastline, passing stunning rock formations, mysterious caves, a tall waterfall that empties into the sea, and a multitude of jagged cliffs along the way.

This part of the coast was already known for its scenic beauty in the eighteenth century, even meriting depictions in famous landscape paintings. Over time, rock formations with the most interesting shapes earned names like the Sickie's Crook Rock, the Trading Ship Island, the Net-Strewn Rocks, and the Turtle Couple Rocks. Throughout the cruise, announcements prompt passengers to look at the various sights while explaining the area's history. The explanations are in Japanese, but English pamphlets and maps are available for tourists to follow along.

At the turnaround point of the cruise is the famous landmark, the Sotomo Arches. Carved from granite by the powerful waves, the eroded cave on the tip of the Uchitomi Peninsula greeted ships for centuries, serving as a sign that they were nearing the end of the journey toward Obama. The Sotomo Arches are composed of two formations, Omon (Large Gate) and Komon (Small Gate). It can be difficult to gauge the size from aboard the ship, but the smaller of the two arches is as tall as three men! If you are lucky, on rare occasions the waters will be calm enough for the ship to dock in the small cove behind, allowing passengers to briefly disembark and admire the view from within.

Any good sailor will tell you not to underestimate the sea, so be aware that the Sotomo Scenic Cruise may change its main route or suspend services on days when the weather is poor or the waves are high. Most months, boats are scheduled to leave once an hour, but the winter schedule has more irregularities, so be sure to check before you go!



### Wakasa Fisherman's Wharf 若狭フィッシャーマンズ・ワーフ

〒917-0081 福井県小浜市川崎1-3-2  
1-3-2 Kawasaki, Obama City

☎ 0770-52-3111

Tickets: ¥2,500, children (6–12 years old): ¥1,200  
<https://www.wakasa-fishermans.com/>



## Tagarasu Terraced Rice Fields

田鳥の棚田

A popular photography spot in Obama is Tagarasu no Tanada, terraced rice paddies cultivated on a slope right next to the sea. Blue skies and colorful sunsets reflect gorgeously on the watery fields in mid-summer when the rice plants are young. Twice a year, after planting and harvest, the area is decorated with countless candles for big light-up events.

〒917-0101 福井県小浜市田鳥 Tagarasu, Obama City



## Miyagawa Sunflower Fields

恵のひまわり畑 〈宮川地区〉

Summer in Obama is made even brighter with a visit to the Miyagawa sunflower fields! About half a million sunflower seeds are planted in five valley fields over the course of the season, and the hybrid sunflowers that grow here can reach a massive 30 centimeters in diameter. An annual Sunflower Festival is held in August, featuring many tasty treats, a farmer's market, and various community events.

〒917-0223 福井県小浜市加茂・竹長 Kamo and Takenaga, Obama City



## Bay Views

The sea around Obama is beautiful no matter the time of day, but there is no denying that it is the loveliest during sunrise and sunset, when the rays set the sky and clouds alight with color. Some popular places to view the bay are the Mermaid Terrace, the Hoshi no Hiroba Park observation deck, and the Angel Scenic Drive on Mt. Kusuyagadake.



### Mermaid Terrace | マーメイドテラス

〒917-0068 福井県小浜市小浜日吉  
Obama Hiyoshi, Obama City

### Hoshi no Hiroba Park | 星の広場

〒917-0041 福井県小浜市青井33-1  
33-1 Aoi, Obama City



One of the favorite autumn pastimes in Japan is *momiji gari*, “maple hunting” to take in the warm colors before they disappear and winter sets in. Offering both natural mountain scenery and cultivated gardens, Obama and Wakasa are prime destinations for viewing the autumn leaves without the crowds you might get in more urban areas.

Make the most of those crisp days and visit a temple early to enjoy the colors in the morning light! **Mantokuji Temple** and its gorgeous garden are quite popular in the area. The teahouse at **Wakasa Jinguji Temple** surrounded by maples or the gate and the main hall of **Myorakuji Temple** framed with bright leaves also make for charming autumn scenes. If you prefer a wilder landscape, you can drive up one of the routes of the **Saba Kaido** network of roads or the **Angel Scenic Drive** for some breathtaking views from the mountain peaks.

## Autumn Leaves



Whether in a carefully maintained garden or out in the wilds of the forests and mountains, you will be delighted by the exquisite beauty of autumn leaves!



### Myorakuji Temple | 妙楽寺

〒917-0028 福井県小浜市野代28-13  
28-13 Nodai, Obama City  
☎ 0770-56-0133  
Admission: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., ¥400

### Saba Kaido Scenic Area

鯖街道写真スポット

福井県道35号 久坂中ノ畑小浜線  
上根来 針畑越え  
Fukui Prefectural Road 35,  
Kaminegori, Harihatagoe Pass

### Angel Scenic Drive | エンゼルライン

福井県道107号 泊小浜停車場線 久須夜ヶ岳  
Fukui Prefectural Road 107, Mt. Kusuyagadake



## Five Lakes of Mikata 三方五湖

One of the best places in Wakasa to enjoy a mix of kayaking, cycling, boating, fishing, dining, and scenic views is the area known as the Five Lakes of Mikata (Mikata Goko)! The lakes Mikata, Suigetsu, Suga, Kugushi, and Hiruga are all connected, but differ in depth, salinity, size, color, and ecological environment. Whether you choose to appreciate the Five Lakes of Mikata from the shore, from the water, or from the top of a nearby mountain, the region has plenty to offer!



Each of the Five Lakes of Mikata has something worth exploring. Why not choose a lakeside lodging where you can look out of the window and take in these gorgeous views?

Those interested in spectacular, breathtaking views should take a drive along the Rainbow Line. The 11.24-kilometer toll road ascends Mt. Baijodake to a landing with a cable car that transports visitors to the Mountain Peak Park. The vast park has several terraces and lookout points that provide panoramic views of the lakes, Wakasa Bay, and the surrounding mountains. In addition to typical outdoor seating, clever furniture and design elements help travelers to really kick back and relax! Sprawl out on one of the spacious sofa-bed seats, lounge in the aptly named Hammock Courtyard, or treat your tired feet to a well-deserved soak in the hot footbath on Mihama Terrace. The park also contains a rose garden, a small Shinto shrine, and two cafés.

For visitors who cannot be satisfied with viewing the lakes from afar, why not stroll on walkways through lakeside wetlands or get into a kayak for a paddling trip? If you prefer more laid-back activities, sightseeing boats departing from Umiyama Sanbashi pier offer 40-minute cruises around Lake Suigetsu and Lake Suga. The nearby Fukui Prefectural Varve Museum may sound niche, but it presents quite a fascinating analysis of sediment layers from Lake Suigetsu that date from 70,000 years ago to the present. Birdwatching is another popular pastime in this area, especially in winter.



### Wakasa Lake Cruise

若狭町観光船レイククルーズ

〒919-1461 福井県三方上中郡若狭町海山68-20  
68-20 Umiyama, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun  
☎ 0770-47-1127  
Tickets: ¥1,400, children (3–12 years old): ¥700  
<https://www.wakasa-lakecruise.com/>

### Rainbow Line Mountain Peak Park

レインボーライン山頂公園

〒919-1126 福井県三方郡美浜町日向75-2-6  
75-2-6 Hiruga, Mihama-cho, Mikata-gun  
☎ 0770-45-2678  
Open: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (March–November)  
9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. (December–February)  
Admission: ¥1,000, children (6–12 years old): ¥500  
(additional parking fees apply)  
<http://www.mikatagoko.com/eng/park.php>



## Uriwari Falls 瓜割の滝



It is easy to fit a trip to the Wakasa Uriwari Meisui Park into your schedule! The famous waterfall is only a short trek into the park, but if you have time, you can enjoy the surrounding forest, temple, shrine, statues, flowers, and hiking trails.

One of the most popular natural attractions in the Wakasa area is a waterfall so fresh and cold that its flow can split a melon! At least, that is the story behind the name. Uriwari (“melon-splitting”) Falls are located in the lush forest of the Wakasa Uriwari Meisui Park, near a small temple called Tentokuji. The waterfall is fed by a natural spring that bubbles up from the earth at a temperature of approximately 12 degrees Celsius, providing a source of cool water even in the hottest of summers. The water was considered sacred as early as in the seventh century and was believed to ward off disease and bring plentiful harvests. Because of this, the spring is marked with a *torii* gate and a small altar for praying.

The water of Uriwari Falls cascades over mossy stones and then forms a stream that flows through the surrounding verdant woods, which are called Mizu no Mori (“Forest of Water”). The name of the forest was mentioned in a seventeenth-century history of the Wakasa region, indicating that it was already recognized as a scenic spot by that time. However, more than just travelers or Wakasa residents visited Mizu no Mori. For centuries, practitioners of Shugendo (a syncretic religion centered on mountain worship) have undertaken ascetic training in this area. In a small hall near the falls, you will find a stone statue of Fudo Myo-o, the Immovable Wisdom King, a deity strongly associated with Shugendo. The sculpture is thought to have been carved in the Edo period (1603–1867).

When visiting the falls, why not try the famous spring water? It is said that water from Uriwari Falls is among the most delicious in all of Japan, and in 1985 it was selected as one of the 100 best water sources in the country by the Ministry of the Environment. Faucets near the main parking lot can be used to fill jugs or bottles, so you can enjoy a drink during your trek around the area or take some water to go.

Once you have visited the falls and had a refreshing drink, feel free to stroll through the rest of the Wakasa Uriwari Meisui Park. In addition to gorgeous maple trees, bright green or fiery red depending on the season, the park contains cherry trees, irises, and over 10,000 hydrangea bushes, all of which help showcase the area’s natural beauty throughout the year.



### Wakasa Uriwari Meisui Park 若狭瓜割名水公園

〒919-1543 福井県三方上中郡若狭町天徳寺37-1-3  
37-1-3 Tentokuji, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun

☎ 0770-62-0186

Admission: Free

[https://www.fuku-e.com/spot/detail\\_1511.html](https://www.fuku-e.com/spot/detail_1511.html)

Special Feature

# Kesho Jizo

Painted  
Jizo  
Statues

化粧地藏



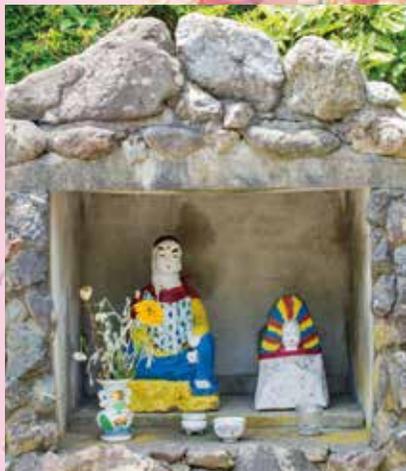
Every year during the Jizo Bon festival on August 23rd, children of the neighborhoods that are home to *kesho jizo* are entrusted with taking the statues to the sea and scrubbing them clean. Then the *jizo* are repainted and put out for display with fresh cloth bibs. How to paint the statues is up to the children, so some end up more realistic while others are more creative, ranging in color from browns and golds to bright rainbow stripes. Some children even use lacquer to decorate their *jizo* instead of paint!



As Jizo Bon is a festival to pray for the health of children, the youngest members of the Obama community take center stage. They parade around their neighborhoods or sit at specially constructed little halls called *jizodo*, banging drums and ringing bells to call people to pray and make offerings. Naturally, these offerings most often come in the form of food, particularly sweets!

Even if you visit Obama outside of this festive season, the painted *jizo* statues will be waiting to greet you as you make your way through the Nishigumi and Nishizu districts. The *kesho jizo* tradition in Obama is more prominent than in most other places, so there are nearly forty altars scattered about just these two neighborhoods! Each little altar has its own legends and tales about the wishes and favors their *jizo* is said to grant.

The dedication of Obama residents to the time-honored tradition of tending to the *jizo* statues can be seen every day, be it a neighbor with a broom, a parent and child giving a little offering, or an elder placing a vase of fresh flowers. As you explore the charming streets of Obama, don't forget to stop by the small roadside altars and peek inside to see which of the painted *jizo* is looking back at you!



Throughout the traditional districts of Obama, you may notice small wooden or stone altars along the roads. While it is not uncommon in Japan to find roadside altars with stone statues of Jizo Bodhisattva, the guardian of travelers and children, the tradition is particularly strong in the city of Obama. Moreover, these *jizo* are not the usual plain sort! A look inside the humble structures will reveal that the statues are painted in colorful, cheerful hues, and thus they are fittingly called *kesho jizo*, "Jizo wearing make-up."





## ACTIVITIES

Why not get up, move around, and experience Wakasa from a whole new perspective? The vast countryside and historical landmarks can be quite exciting when viewed from a bicycle, hiking trail, kayak, or paddleboard!

# Saba Kaido Cycling

## 鯖街道サイクリング

Wherever you go in Obama and Wakasa, you will encounter references to the Saba Kaido (Mackerel Road), a network of trade routes that connected the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara to the Sea of Japan. Instead of just reading about it, why not take to the road and explore the Saba Kaido by bicycle?

There are several designated locations where you can rent a bike and helmet, and the official Saba Kaido Cycling Map is available at tourist information centers, local businesses, and rental service locations. The map details seven different courses, each with its own charms, landmarks, and scenic views. The difficulty ranges from entry-level to advanced, so cyclists can enjoy rides through historic neighborhoods, the lush countryside, or challenging mountain paths!

While extremely determined adventurers can choose to traverse 88.6 kilometers from Obama to Kyoto, taking nearly 9 hours, most travelers will probably prefer shorter courses during their visit. Routes that range from 40 minutes to 4 hours take cyclists to places like the historic Kumagawa-juku post town area, Uriwari Falls, Wakasa Bay, and the surrounding fishing villages, ancient temples like Myotsuji or Wakasa Jinguji, the old port town districts of Obama, or the top of Mt. Kusuyagadake for gorgeous views of Obama Bay and the Sea of Japan.

The handy Saba Kaido Cycling Map also marks locations such as public restrooms, camp sites, rest areas, scenic viewpoints, shops with local produce and crafts, and cycle stations that lend air pumps and bike tools to help tourists have safe and enjoyable cycling experiences.

The scenic routes of the Saba Kaido are waiting! Which will you choose?



# Saba Kaido Trekking

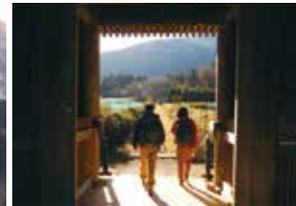
## 鯖街道トレッキング

If you want to break out your boots and hit the trails as part of your trip, look no further than the Saba Kaido (Mackerel Road). This ancient network of trade routes may no longer be used to transport salt and seafood to the old capitals of Nara and Kyoto, but it does make for a vigorous hike for those who want to leave the urban areas behind for mountain passes and forest paths.

The trail recommended for hikers was once the shortest route between Obama and Kyoto. It starts near the Obama fish market, proceeds to the Onyu district, and heads south where you can explore beautiful shrines and temples like Wakasahime Jinja Shrine, Wakasahiko Jinja Shrine, and Wakasa Jinguji Temple. The trail passes through the Unose area and then climbs toward Kaminegori, a mountain village once frequented by countless travelers and porters on their way to Kyoto. If you stay overnight in Kaminegori and get up early, you might be lucky enough to witness the breathtaking "sea of clouds" that sometimes blankets the mountainous countryside.

After Kaminegori, the main route continues to the Haccho Grassland, Omi, and Hanase, passing through lush forests and charming settlements watched over by roadside statues of Jizo, the deity who protects travelers. If you decide to take the entire route to Kyoto, you might just understand the life of a porter making the journey down the Saba Kaido! But even if you choose a half-day or one-day course along part of the trail, the hike is bound to be full of adventure.

You can obtain the Saba Kaido Road Guide Map at the Obama Station Tourist Information Center (or at other locations with tourist pamphlets). This invaluable tool includes guest house information, elevation data, photographs to guide trekkers through tricky turns, and suggestions for scenic viewpoints!



# Sanza Kumagawa

山座熊川

Are you ready for some adventure? The lush natural bounty of the Wakasa region is lovely to admire from a distance, but if you wish to explore it, look no further than Sanza Kumagawa Outdoors Base. Founded by a Zen monk with a passion for trekking and mountain climbing, this organization provides opportunities to experience nature that range from leisurely walks to challenging outdoor activities.



One venture available at Sanza Kumagawa Outdoors Base is the Satoyama Trail hike. This 3.5-hour trek takes participants from the former post town of Kumagawa-juku to Mt. Sanjusangen and Mt. Wakasa Komagatake, which has an elevation of 780 meters and straddles the border between Fukui and Shiga Prefectures. The trail meanders through a beech forest, and from the peak you can enjoy sights of both Lake Biwa and Wakasa Bay.

If you prefer a shorter trail, you can partake in the Woods Cafe, a 90-minute hike in an area specially selected for the season. Once you reach the base camp, you will come to appreciate the name of the course! Enjoy some tea and a light meal while you bask in the splendor of the natural surroundings.

Those looking to cool off in the water can take part in the SUP (stand-up paddleboarding) experience tour on Lake Myojin near Kumagawa-juku. Lake Myojin is a calm dam lake with no boats, so it is well suited for beginners. Veterans of the outdoors (or beginners who are up to the challenge) may be interested in the waterfall climbing course. Participants don wetsuits and helmets to swim in the rivers of Wakasa and make use of ropes and rocks to surmount the falls!



# Water-Based Activities

水上アクティビティ

The captivating depths of Wakasa Bay and the stunning Five Lakes of Mikata attract people from near and far who come to swim, sunbathe, fish, cruise, and more! In recent years, water sports such as kayaking and SUP (stand-up paddleboarding) have become increasingly popular in Obama and Wakasa. In addition to being exciting and challenging fitness activities, they are excellent ways to get around and tour the region.



Yashiro, a small village on the coast, is dedicated to marine tourism and is said to have the clearest water in all of Obama. SUP Village Yashiro offers paddleboard rentals and group tour packages. After a thrilling day dedicated to various activities, overnight accommodations in the village allow visitors to relax while enjoying sumptuous seafood meals and gorgeous sunsets over the ocean.

Another alternative for those interested in trying SUP is a tour on Lake Myojin offered by Sanza Kumagawa Outdoors Base. Lake Myojin is a dam lake with calm waters and no waves, making it particularly suited for SUP beginners. The lake is near Kumagawa-juku, a well-preserved former post town with a traditional townscape and rich history.

There are also sea and lake options for kayaking. Near Blue Park Ano, you can sign up for a sea kayaking course in Wakasa Bay with the Ano Paddlers Club. The park offers other marine activities like fishing, cruises, and excursions to learn about fish farming. With the adventure tourism group Asobo-ya, you can pick between kayaking in Wakasa Bay or the Five Lakes of Mikata. Courses change according to the season, giving paddlers opportunities to view fluffy cherry blossoms, fresh greens, or gorgeous fall colors.





In the late sixth century, Wakasa came under the jurisdiction of the Yamato court, which ruled primarily from the ancient capitals in the Nara area. Wakasa was the closest region that had direct access to the Sea of Japan, making it a gateway to mainland Asia and an ideal source of seafood. Several *kofun* in the region are believed to have been built for leaders of the Kashiwade no Omi, a powerful clan whose members were appointed to govern Wakasa and supply food for the emperor and court nobility.

Many burial mounds in the Wakasa region were built on plains in the Kita River basin between the city of Obama and the town of Wakasa. The seven largest *kofun* were keyhole-shaped and measured from 63 to 100 meters in length. Jonozuka Tumulus, the biggest of the keyhole-shaped mounds, dates to the early fifth century. The last large *kofun* built in the area was Maruyamazuka Tumulus, a round mound about 50 meters in diameter that was made in the mid-sixth century. This tumulus no longer exists, but the site is marked by a monument. Most *kofun* in Wakasa were originally two- or three-tiered structures lined by clay objects called *haniwa* and surrounded by moats; the slopes of the mounds were covered with stones.



### Special Feature

# Kofun Burial Mounds

古墳

While exploring the Wakasa region, you may come across seemingly inconspicuous hills that are actually ancient burial mounds called *kofun*. Between the third and the seventh centuries, *kofun* were built on the Japanese archipelago for members of the ruling class, such as emperors and clan leaders. The mounds served both as tombs and as displays of power and political status. Typically, the body of the deceased and a variety of grave goods were placed in a stone burial chamber, and an earth mound was formed over it.



(Photos courtesy of Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum)

Excavations of some of the *kofun* have unearthed a wide range of grave goods, such as bronze crowns, other bronze jewelry and decorations, gold earrings, ornate mirrors, weapons, horse tack, various tools, and pottery. Many of the items were made in China or on the Korean Peninsula. The amount of rare and valuable objects serves as evidence that such *kofun* were likely built for the Kashiwade no Omi, who were involved in foreign negotiations and had connections that extended well beyond their immediate surroundings.



There are signboards in front of many *kofun* in the Wakasa region that provide information about when the mound was built, specifics of its shape and size, whether it was excavated, and, if known, details about the inner burial chamber and discovered items.



## FESTIVALS

The annual event calendar in Obama and Wakasa benefits their rich cultural heritage, with many festivals testament to the age-long connection with Kyoto and Nara. The rites reflect both Shinto and Buddhist beliefs, and visitors are welcome to observe and participate!



## Omizu Okuri Ritual お水送り

A fire and water ritual with a rich and solemn atmosphere, Omizu Okuri is held on March 2nd and is one of the largest annual events in Obama. The ritual's name means "sending of water," and its purpose is to "send" sacred water to the Wakasa Well near the Nigatsudo Hall in Todaiji Temple for Nara's famous Omizutori ceremony on March 12th. According to one of the legends, when the monk Jitchu (b. 726) built Nigatsudo in the eighth century, he called upon all the deities to gather and give blessings in a great rite dedicated to the Eleven-Headed Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion. However, the deity Onyu Myojin from Wakasa was so absorbed in fishing that he arrived late to the service. Moved by the grandeur of the ceremony that he almost missed, Onyu Myojin promised to give an annual offering of the purest water from then on and made a spring appear at the spot. The spring water is said to originate from Unose in Obama.

The main host for the Omizu Okuri ritual is Wakasa Jinguji, a temple with a history of more than 1,300 years. Initially it was part of a temple-shrine complex where Shinto and Buddhism were practiced in a syncretic fusion, adjunct to Wakasahiko Jinja Shrine under the name Jinganji, but now it is a Tendai school temple. Its principal object of worship is Yakushi Buddha, the deity of medicine, believed to be the Buddhist form of Onyu Myojin. The main hall and temple gate are both nationally designated Important Cultural Properties, and on the grounds you will find a lovely teahouse, an impressive sacred tree, and the well that supplies the water used in Omizu Okuri.



Rituals begin early at Shimonegori Hachiman Jinja Shrine and continue at Wakasa Jinguji. The first part that visitors can watch takes place in front of the temple's main hall from 1:00 p.m. During the service, priests symbolically fire arrows in the four cardinal directions to repel vengeful spirits, and then *kyudo* masters demonstrate their archery skills as an offering.

The next ceremony takes place at 6:00 p.m. A group of *yamabushi* (ascetic mountain monks) wearing white clothes and carrying conch shell trumpets, sacred weapons, *gohei* wands, and a container of pure water from the temple well enter the main hall of Wakasa Jinguji, and the doors are closed behind them. The general public is not privy to what happens inside, but can hear the chanting of the chief abbot praying for the cleansing of karmic debt, peace throughout the land, and a bountiful harvest. With this rite, the well water attains holy qualities to become an offering to divine powers.



At the sound of conch trumpets, the light of a giant torch dispels the dark. One of the monks carries out a 7-meter-long torch, taking it to the farthest edges of the temple's gallery to purify the grounds. The priests and monks descend from the main hall and head toward the bonfire prepared in the courtyard. The rite proceeds with purifications by each of the sacred weapon keepers and a sutra chant by the water bearer. When the fire is lit, a tall pillar of smoke rises up, quickly turning into a blaze.

All the participants light their torches from the bonfire, and around 7:30 p.m., a majestic procession departs toward Unose along the Onyu River, its way lit by stationary fires. Those who wish to take an active part instead of just observing can buy a torch for ¥2,500 and write their prayer on it before the ceremony starts. As a result, the procession swells to more than a thousand people in total.

The Unose shoal at that time is a truly mystical sight. Fire braziers are placed on the riverbank, orange flames reflecting in the flowing water. A second bonfire is prepared at this location, and some time past 8:00 p.m. the torch procession files through the *torii* gate on the bank, and everyone takes their spots around the bonfire. After another purification and a chant that calls together all the deities, the flames roar to life.

Around 8:30 p.m., a group of monks crosses to the opposite side of the river. There, the chief abbot of Wakasa Jinguji comes forward to the verge of the low cliff of Unose and offers a prayer accompanied by arcane hand gestures. This is followed by a reading of the water-sending scripture. Taking out a sacred sword, he performs ritual cutting motions to ward off evil spirits and finally pours the holy water into the river below as a culmination of the entire ceremony. In ten days, the water is believed to reach the Wakasa Well in Nara for Omizutori. After another prayer chant backed by the rhythmic ringing of bells, the monks return to the bonfire, where the ritual is concluded with sacred sake.

You can choose to be an observer or an active participant in this dramatic event! For photographers, it may be best to stake out a spot to catch a particular ritual, since both Wakasa Jinguji and Unose sites have a lot to offer. A word of advice: be careful of the flying sparks!



### Wakasa Jinguji Temple | 若狭神宮寺

〒917-0244 福井県小浜市神宮寺30-4

30-4 Jinguji, Obama City

☎ 0770-56-1911

Admission: 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., ¥500  
(main hall closed February 15th–March 5th)

### Unose | 鵜の瀬

〒917-0246 福井県小浜市下根来  
Shimonegari, Obama City



## Hoze Matsuri Festival 放生祭

Hoze Matsuri began more than 300 years ago, originating from a ritual of mercy that involved releasing captured fish and birds back into nature. A colorful parade of floats was introduced due to the influence of Kyoto's famous Gion Matsuri Festival, and after merging with the annual celebration of Hachiman Jinja Shrine, Hoze Matsuri became the largest autumn festival in the old Wakasa region. Richly decorated festival floats, nimble dancers in *shishi* lion costumes, musicians playing *odaiko* drums in energetic rhythms, and sacred *kagura* performers move through Obama, every act serving as dedication to the shrine deity.

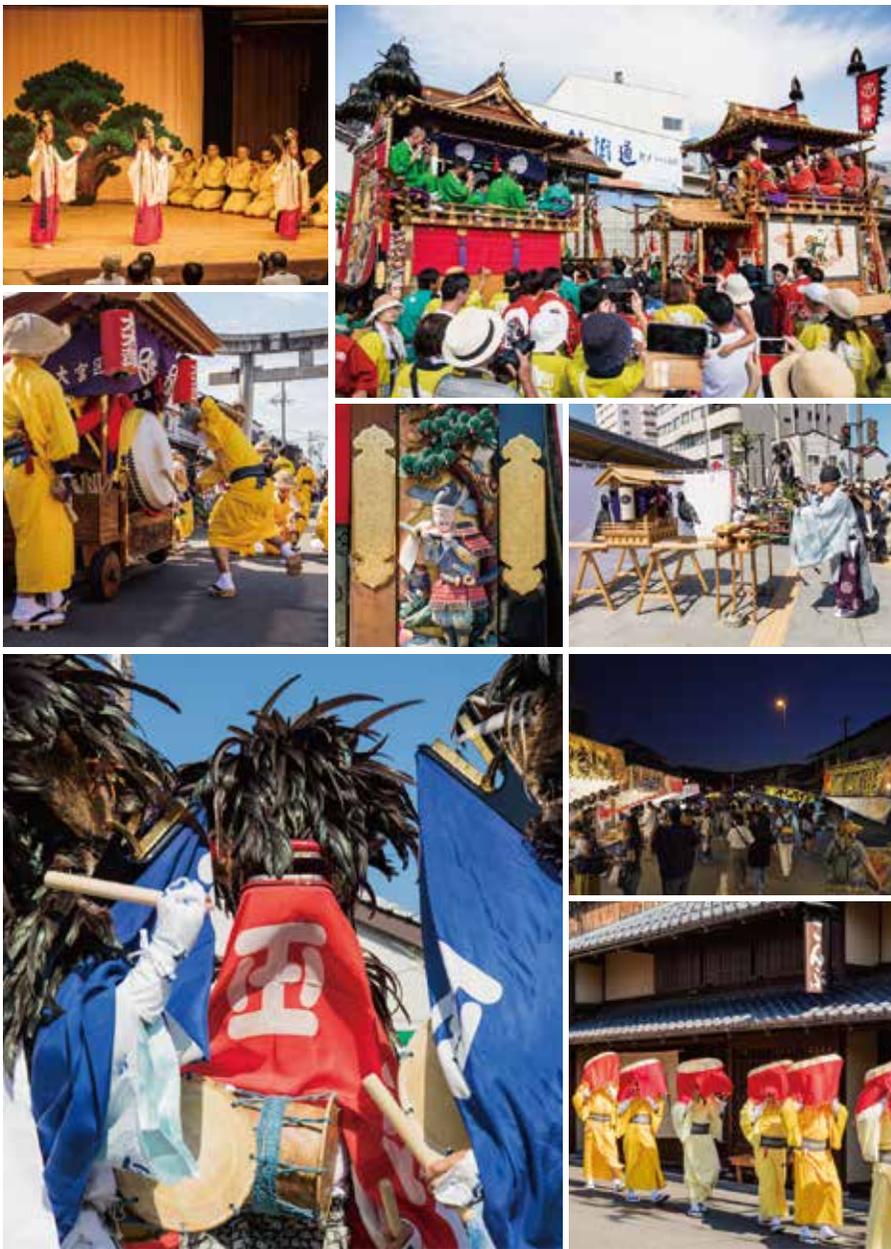
A total of 24 neighborhoods take turns showcasing their floats and productions, with 12 participating each year. A brightly decorated *mikoshi* portable shrine or a smaller version of one is proudly carried from the *otabisho* (temporary resting point) back toward Hachiman Shrine, and all the people involved in the parade visit the shrine to pray and proceed on their way throughout the day. Hoze Matsuri is a great chance to see various traditional performing arts and all the features of a Japanese festival... including the food stalls!

### Mikoshi

Only one *mikoshi*, presented by the Katori neighborhood, takes part in the festival procession. The current version was assembled from parts of two old Hachiman Shrine *mikoshi* and newer, shiny materials acquired with community donations. The *mikoshi* makes several trips between the stone *torii* gate and the wooden *torii* gate of the shrine, finishing with a powerful dash on the last stretch. Some say it is because the deity does not want to leave the fun festival to go back home, but decides to return in the end. On the way around the city, the carriers never simply pass a crossroad; instead, they move the *mikoshi* forward and back, left and right, and make three upward swings at the headquarters of each ward. On the second day of the festival, the head priest of Hachiman Shrine holds a special service at the square in front of the Machi no Eki Asahiza building. In the years when the *mikoshi* is not in action, a smaller portable shrine takes its place.

### Festival Floats

The *dashi* (festival floats) are two-storied and bear an obvious resemblance to those built for Kyoto's Gion Matsuri. Decorated with intricate wooden carvings, golden embellishments, carefully embroidered tapestries, and paper lanterns, each float has two drummers on the small "stage" at the front and flutists playing traditional tunes on the upper level. Everyone practices very hard throughout the summer to be at their best for the festival days! Adult participants in colorful robes pull the floats along the route, fascinating the onlookers with their coordination. Pay special attention to the Asuka float for its captivating children's performance!



### Shishi Dance

Groups of performers in *shishi* lion costumes and masks decorated with the longest and glossiest rooster feathers do a traditional dance accompanied by drums and flutes. Depending on the group, the *shishi* can be young or old, male or female, but they all dance spiritedly to every tune. This fascinating tradition dates to the Meiji period (1868–1912), and festival attendees would be remiss if they didn't find time to admire the skills and passion of the dancers.

### Odaiko Drums

Playing a traditional drum is more than just producing a compelling technical beat! It is also about posture, form and movement, the grip of the drumsticks, and colorful outfits. *Odaiko* drum performances are accompanied by bright umbrellas, swinging poles, and acrobatic tricks that are quite a show by themselves! Drummers switch from the tiniest little girl to the most experienced player, and everyone gets an opportunity to enjoy the rhythm.

### Kagura

At Hoze Matsuri, *kagura* musicians play a variety of songs on drums and flutes, each neighborhood boasting its own traditional tunes and rhythms, plus a special song performed when they enter Hachiman Shrine with their offerings. Most of the *kagura* participants wear bright yellow robes and distinctive wide-brimmed hats draped in red and adorned with an assortment of dangling charms. The small stages for the drummers feature traditional gilded roofs and red paper lanterns. Young girls from the Shirahige neighborhood solemnly perform Miko no Mai, a special shrine maiden dance, on the stage of Hachiman Shrine or Machi no Eki Asahiza, depending on the year.

### Yatai Stalls

A colorful collection of food stalls along the Hamasando and other streets leading to Hachiman Shrine offers a variety of savory and sweet festival treats, as well as chilled fruit, drinks, shaved ice, and innumerable other goodies. Entertaining games are available for children and adults alike, and if you get tired, you can take a breather and recharge around Machi no Eki Asahiza for another turn of the festival fun!

There is so much to see at Hoze Matsuri! Make sure to pick up a festival pamphlet with a map and performance time schedule, so you can make the most of this exciting event!



### Hachiman Jinja Shrine | 八幡神社

〒917-0052 福井県小浜市小浜男山10  
10 Obama Otokoyama, Obama City

☎ 0770-52-1935

Admission: Free

<https://www.wakasa-obama.jp/sightseeing/hatiman-shrine/>  
<https://hoze-matsuri.jp/>



The O no Mai (literally “King’s Dance”) is a ritual that has been performed in the region for centuries. At present, seventeen variations are preserved in the western part of Fukui Prefecture that includes Wakasa, with the form, length of the dance, number of participants, and costumes differing by location. The dances are usually performed at spring festivals and commonly feature a single male dancer wearing a long-nosed mask and wielding a polearm. The red color of many O no Mai costumes is associated with repelling evil, and several shrine legends related to the dance tell of a hero defeating an enemy. Combined with the fearsome mask and weapon, this suggests that the rituals were possibly performed to ward off disasters and misfortune.

Many O no Mai are performed at *chinjusha*, shrines dedicated to the guardian deity of the surrounding land. These shrines are located in former *shoen*, private agriculture estates that were maintained in distant provinces by nobles and influential shrines and temples. The estates were centers of trade and cultural exchange between Wakasa and Kyoto, which may explain how O no Mai dances came to Wakasa sometime between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries. Although such rituals are no longer performed in Kyoto, they have been passed down through generations in Wakasa and can be seen annually in a variety of styles.

When you attend an O no Mai ritual, it is likely to include *shishi* lion dances and folk music performances. These customs remain from the time when residents of Wakasa were inspired to recreate the grand, elaborate traditions of the capital on a smaller scale to enjoy together each year.

## O no Mai Ritual Dances 王の舞

At present, O no Mai dances take place at the following shrines in Wakasa and Obama:

- Tenjinsha Shrine ..... April 2nd
- Kurami Jinja Shrine ..... April 5th
- Hie Jinja Shrine ..... first Sunday in April
- Iwakura Hikohime Jinja Shrine ..... first Sunday in April
- Kunitsu Jinja Shrine ..... first Sunday in April
- Tenmangu Shrine ..... first Sunday in April
- Tenmansha Shrine ..... first Sunday in April
- Uwase Jinja Shrine ..... April 8th
- Noto Jinja Shrine ..... April 15th
- Tayuhi Jinja Shrine ..... April 18th
- Shiimura Jinja Shrine ..... May 5th
- Hiromine Jinja Shrine ..... last Sunday in July



It is fascinating how each O no Mai dance ritual differs from the others. Even though they descended from similar traditions, variations in costume, performance length, and masks have since become distinguishing features for each community. (Photos courtesy of Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum.)



### Uwase Jinja Shrine | 宇波西神社

〒919-1301 福井県三方上中郡若狭町気山129-3  
 129-3 Kiyama, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun  
 ☎ 0770-45-0326  
 Admission: Free



Special Feature

# Obama Food Culture

小浜の食文化

Food plays a big role in the community life of Obama, be it a family gathering around the table for dinner, elderly gentlemen chatting at the local pub, youngsters rounding up their favorite treats from festival stalls, or someone gone fishing off the pier in the early morning to land something fresh for breakfast.

It is no wonder that delicious food is a large part of what makes Obama such an amazing place to visit! The city on the coast of the Sea of Japan is renowned for the freshness of its seafood, and for the many ways of preparing mackerel in particular! In addition, Obama boasts traditional dishes inherited through its connection to Kyoto, as well as tasty local vegetables and delectable sweets.

Obama prides itself on its historic food culture and has the credentials to back it up. In the past, it was part of a *miketsukuni*, a province tasked with sending food all the way to the imperial court. In addition to seafood, it also produced the ever-important preservation tool: salt!



Tourists today can get a crash course in Obama cuisine by visiting the **Miketsukuni Wakasa Obama Food Culture Museum**. It has educational exhibits in both English and Japanese about traditional food, the Saba Kaido (Mackerel Road) that connected Obama and Kyoto, regional variations of some recipes throughout the country, how Obama's famous dishes are made, and more! The first floor contains a kitchen studio for cooking classes that can be booked in advance, and the second floor is a sprawling combination of gift shop and workspace where you can buy souvenirs, participate in workshops to try local handicrafts, or both!



Located just a stone's throw from the Food Culture Museum is the **Wakasa Obama Fish Center**, where residents and restaurateurs alike do their shopping. Boats unload their catches early, and wholesale auctions take place pier-side, with market vendors competing for boxed goods and individual fish. Small trucks zip between the pier and the market, and by eight or nine the vendors have an amazing haul to offer. You might think that buying raw fish is not the best idea when traveling, but never fear! Several stalls offer a local specialty, *hamayaki saba*, an entire grilled mackerel on a bamboo skewer, and there are sushi and sashimi shops operating inside. If you are feeling more hands-on, you can take your purchases across the lot to rent a charcoal brazier and grill whatever strikes your fancy. And after walking through the Fish Center, you are definitely going to feel like eating!



**Miketsukuni Wakasa Obama Food Culture Museum**  
御食国若狭おばま食文化館

〒917-0081 福井県小浜市川崎3-4  
3-4 Kawasaki, Obama City

☎ 0770-53-1000

Open: 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. (March–October)

9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (November–February)

Closed: Wednesday, December 28th–January 5th  
<http://www.1.city.obama.fukui.jp/obm/mermaid/index.php>



**Wakasa Obama Fish Center**  
若狭小浜お魚センター

〒917-0081 福井県小浜市川崎2-5-1  
2-5-1 Kawasaki, Obama City

☎ 0770-53-1530

Open: 7:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., closed Wednesday

<https://osakanacenter.com/>



## FAMOUS LOCAL FOOD

Bountiful catches from the Sea of Japan make Obama and Wakasa a seafood lover's paradise. Although they are best known for mackerel, you can enjoy a wide variety of other fresh fish, crab, and shellfish, as well as local vegetables and mouthwatering sweets.

# Sabazushi

鯖寿司

*Sabazushi* (pressed mackerel sushi) is popular all along the Saba Kaido network of roads, so you should definitely try it at the source! Lightly salted mackerel is filleted and pickled in sushi vinegar before the tougher skin is peeled away and the bones are removed. A wooden mold is then used to press the fish onto sushi rice, with a thin piece of kelp on top or between them for garnish.



# Yopparai Saba

よっぱらいサバ

Fancy your fish served a bit tipsy? Try *yopparai saba*, literally "drunk mackerel"! This special farm-raised brand of mackerel is fed *sake* lees with its food, resulting in fish with more *umami* flavor, much weaker fishy odor, and a less oily texture. The best part is the added touch of *sake* to the taste and smell of the *yopparai saba*, whether served grilled or cut into the freshest of sashimi.



# Kodai no Sasazuke

小鯛ささ漬

Yellowback sea bream, called *kodai* in the Wakasa region, is often consumed in pickled form as *kodai no sasazuke*. This popular product is a result of Wakasa's long history of improving shipping and preservation methods to supply fresh seafood to the landlocked ancient capitals. In the early twentieth century, large *kodai* were sent to areas like Kyoto as a delicacy. A special request from a Kyoto retailer inspired the creation of *kodai no sasazuke*, which cleverly utilizes smaller fish. The *kodai* are filleted into thin slices, pickled with salt and vinegar, layered into wooden casks, and topped with bamboo leaves. This tasty product retains freshness like sashimi but keeps longer, and the bamboo leaves serve as decoration and are said to have antibacterial properties. *Kodai no sasazuke* can be eaten as is or used in other dishes, such as sushi or soup.



# Unagi Eels

うなぎ

While in Wakasa, you should absolutely try *unagi* (freshwater eel), the area's famous, mouthwatering delicacy. The most popular way to prepare *unagi* is to steam or grill fillets coated with a sweet soy sauce marinade that is reminiscent of teriyaki. The tender, glistening cuts are typically served in a lacquered box over rice and seasoned with a sprinkling of tongue-tingling *sansho* pepper, but you can also enjoy *unagi* as sushi or as fillets without rice. Grilled eel liver and calcium-rich deep-fried eel bone "crackers" are tasty snacks that are often paired with *sake* or beer.

The history of *unagi* in Wakasa is almost as rich as its savory flavor. In the Edo period (1603–1867), eels caught in the Five Lakes of Mikata were so popular in Kyoto that innovative delivery methods, such as having tanks with fresh water prepared at post stations along the routes, were invented to meet the demand for live eels. They were widely known as "Jakushu eels," referencing an alternative name for Wakasa.



# Fukui Ume Plums

福井梅

Fukui Prefecture is famous for its delicious *ume* plums (Japanese apricot; *Prunus mume*). The town of Wakasa, particularly the area surrounding the Five Lakes of Mikata, accounts for 80 percent of the prefecture's harvest and is the largest *ume*-producing region on the Sea of Japan coast. Wakasa is better suited to *ume* cultivation than its neighbors because of relatively mild winters, lighter snowfall, and protection from strong winds provided by nearby mountains. The primary cultivar is the ambrosial Benisashi ("red-tinted") *ume*, a variety that develops a rosy color as it ripens. It originated in Wakasa and is grown almost exclusively within Fukui Prefecture. Several restaurants in the region offer *ume*-flavored beverages and sweets, while souvenir shops carry tasty Fukui *ume*-based products like jam, pickled *umeboshi*, baked goods, juice, *umeshu* liqueur, ice cream, tea, and more!





## Kumagawa-juku Kudzu Starch 熊川葛

Kudzu (Japanese arrowroot) is a dense, fast-spreading vine that thrives in fields and mountains by climbing other plants and trees. Starch produced from the kudzu root has been used in food and medicine for centuries and remains a valuable ingredient to this day. In cooking, it is primarily used to make sweets or as a thickening agent. As herbal medicine, it is commonly mixed into drinks to improve blood circulation and alleviate early cold symptoms.



Kudzu starch from Kumagawa-juku has long been renowned for its excellent quality. In 1830, the Confucian scholar Rai San'yo (1780–1832) sent it to his sick mother in Hiroshima. In an accompanying letter, he included instructions for making a starch and ginger mixture to improve her condition and praised the product from Kumagawa-juku as more refined than that from Yoshino (Nara Prefecture), another area famous for high-quality kudzu starch.

The high grade of Kumagawa-juku kudzu starch can be attributed to the months-long traditional production method. After the roots are washed and peeled, thick chunks are crushed and put through a strainer. The mash is repeatedly soaked in fresh, cold water, and impurities are removed using a filtering process until the white substance left behind reaches the desired quality. After settling, the paste-like starch is left to dry, solidifying into a powdery block that can be broken up and sold. Most kudzu starch producers throughout the country now use modern equipment, but the Kumagawa Kudzu Promotion Society is dedicated to preserving and passing on traditional techniques.

Between visits to shrines, temples, and museums, how about stopping for some delectable kudzu-based sweets like *kuzu manju* or *kuzu mochi*? Ordinary *manju* are steamed yeast buns with a red-bean paste filling, but the use of kudzu starch results in a water-like, translucent casing. As for the gelatinous *kuzu mochi*, they are often served warm, with a drizzle of sweet *kuromitsu* syrup and a dusting of tasty *kinako* powder.



If you are adventurous in the kitchen, you might even pick up some Kumagawa-juku kudzu starch to use at home! Create your own kudzu sweets, utilize it as a gluten-free thickening agent for a favorite recipe, or make a soothing concoction to help treat a cold, like the famous scholar once recommended to his ailing mother. Viscous *kuzu-yu* (arrowroot tea made from starch and hot water) is easy to prepare and can be mixed with ginger, sugar, honey, matcha green tea, or other flavors to your liking for a warming winter drink.



### Marushin | まる志ん

〒919-1532 福井県三方上中郡若狭町熊川39-11-1  
39-11-1 Kumagawa, Wakasa-cho, Mikata  
Kaminaka-gun  
☎ 0770-62-0221  
Open: 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., closed Wednesday  
<https://www.eonet.ne.jp/~marushin/>

Humans have struggled to find ways to preserve food well enough to make it through hard times and long winters since civilization began. Salting, curing, burying, pickling, smoking, canning, fermenting... Although some of these methods have faded into obscurity by now, the Wakasa region has a particular recipe of fermenting mackerel that has persevered for centuries, producing a popular dish and souvenir called *heshiko*.

The process of making *heshiko* begins in autumn with a fresh catch of mackerel. It is prepped by being cut open, cleaned of organs and blood, and filled with salt. The fish is then put into barrels and compressed, starting with a 2-kilogram weight on top that is gradually increased as the mackerel is switched to different barrels, pressing out any excess liquids. After a week or so of this treatment, salt is replaced with rice bran, and the mackerel goes back into the barrels with *togarashi* peppers to ward off insects and specially woven straw ropes around the rim to help tightly seal the containers. Left this way for about a year, *heshiko* is ready to eat come next winter!

The name *heshiko* is said to be derived from the verb "heshikomu," meaning "to push into." Back in the day, families stuffed mackerel into barrels to make *heshiko* at home, but now most of the *heshiko* in Wakasa and Obama is produced commercially. However, some people still use the old-fashioned way. For example, Morishita Sasuke, a *heshiko* producer in the Tagarasu district of Obama, is always ready to explain the traditional process and help introduce people to this classic flavor!

There are several popular ways to enjoy *heshiko*. It pairs well with *sake* and is quite tasty grilled, pressed into sushi, or as a topping for *chazuke* (green tea or broth poured over cooked rice). If you want to take things one step further, *heshiko* can be made into a product called *narezushi* by washing out the excess salt, stuffing the fish with rice and *koji* malt, and letting it ferment for an additional few weeks. Like many other fermented foods, *heshiko* has a taste people seem to either love or hate, but it is worth trying, especially since it is considered the primitive origin of the modern-day sushi we all know and love!



Special Feature

# HESHIKO

へしこ



## TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

Since ancient times, artisans in Wakasa and Obama have been able to perfect their crafts by skillfully incorporating techniques brought through foreign trade into their own. Particularly famous for lacquerware and chopsticks, the region also prides itself on agate carving, *washi* papermaking, and traditional clay tile production.



## Wakasa Agate Carving 若狭めのう

According to legend, when Wakasahiko Jinja and Wakasahime Jinja Shrines were built in Obama in the eighth century, a seafaring people who worshipped two jewels of the tide settled in the area and made agate carving their trade. More official records mention the Obama native Takayama Kihei, an optician's apprentice in Naniwa (present-day Osaka), who brought a technique of making round agate beads back home in the early eighteenth century. It was later discovered that heat enhances the stone's color, and by the nineteenth century, a wide range of techniques was developed to produce intricate works that have received recognition both within Japan and abroad. Drawing inspiration from each stone's natural pattern, artisans painstakingly cut and polish every piece, transforming rough stones into lovely animal figurines, Buddhist statues, incense holders, and stunning accessories.



## Wakasa Lacquerware 若狭塗

The lacquerware tradition in Wakasa is said to have begun on the cusp of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, when the craftsman Matsuura Sanjuro produced a design depicting the seabed of Wakasa Bay. The *Wakasa-nuri* style flourished under the rule of the Sakai family, and highly skilled artisans continue the practice to this day. Cloth pasting and several layers of colored lacquer are followed by seashells, mother-of-pearl, eggshells, rice husks, and pine needles to create a pattern, further covered by more coats of lacquer. Polishing with progressively finer whetstones to bring the pattern to the surface is a process unique to Wakasa lacquerware.

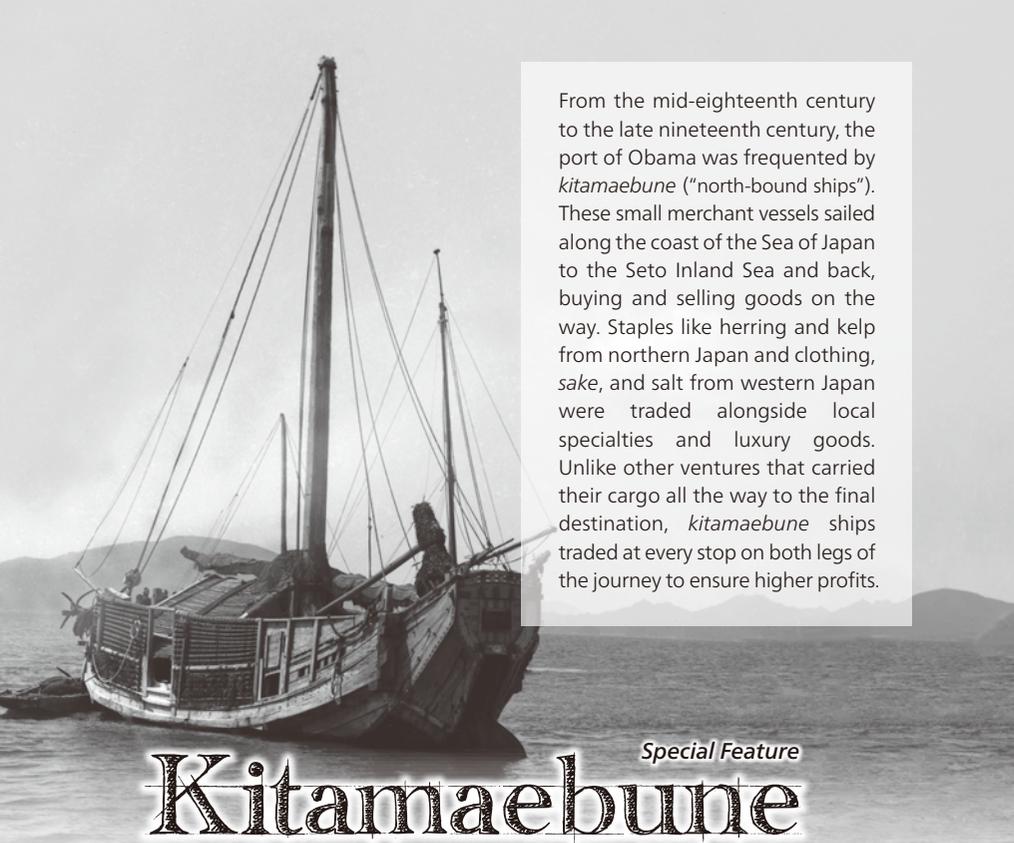
Obama proudly produces at least 80% of Japan's lacquered chopsticks! *Wakasa-nuri* chopsticks showcase a variety of techniques like the classic *raden*, where mother-of-pearl designs are coated with lacquer to be later revealed by polishing, *tsuishu* that brings out the multicolored layers of lacquer, and *kanshitsu* with dry lacquer powder sprinkled underneath for a slightly rough surface. Artisans make chopsticks with rougher ends to prevent food from slipping, an improved grip for a steady hold, and varied lengths for people of all ages. The Wakasa Chopsticks Industry Cooperative holds the Guinness World Record for the largest chopsticks: 8.4 meters long!



Some of the traditional crafts of Obama can be experienced at **Wakasa Kobo** on the second floor of the Miketsukuni Wakasa Obama Food Culture Museum. There you can polish your own chopsticks, try your hand at making traditional *washi* paper, or carve an agate keychain or pendant with guidance from the masters of each craft.

### Wakasa Kobo | 若狭工房

〒917-0081 福井県小浜市川崎3-4  
 御食国若狭おばま食文化館2階  
 Miketsukuni Wakasa Obama Food Culture  
 Museum 2F, 3-4 Kawasaki, Obama City  
 ☎ 0770-53-1034  
 Open: 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. (March–October)  
 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (November–February)  
 Closed: Wednesday, December 28th–January 5th  
<http://wakasa-koubou.com/>



From the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, the port of Obama was frequented by *kitamaebune* ("north-bound ships"). These small merchant vessels sailed along the coast of the Sea of Japan to the Seto Inland Sea and back, buying and selling goods on the way. Staples like herring and kelp from northern Japan and clothing, *sake*, and salt from western Japan were traded alongside local specialties and luxury goods. Unlike other ventures that carried their cargo all the way to the final destination, *kitamaebune* ships traded at every stop on both legs of the journey to ensure higher profits.

# Kitamaebune

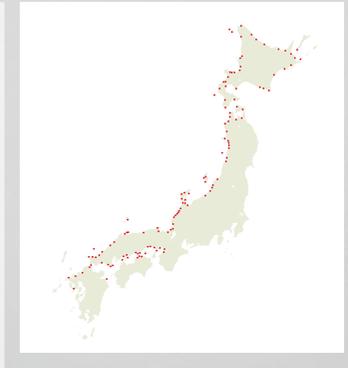
## Merchant Ships 北前船

Special Feature



Obama was at a midway point of the coastal route in the Sea of Japan and was relatively close to Kyoto, the capital at the time, making it an important port of call for *kitamaebune*. This naval traffic helped Obama to prosper as a place of trade and cultural exchange, as well as a stopover for sailors in need of lodging, food, and entertainment. At the height of the trade boom, portside districts contained multiple restaurants, inns, booking agents for geisha (called *geiko* in Kyoto and Obama), and theaters. Wealthy *kitamaebune* owners established residences and merchant houses all over the city.

The prosperity brought by *kitamaebune* trade supported and expanded the culture of Obama in the form of temples and shrines, festivals and arts financed by wealthy sponsors, various goods made available for the local markets, and more. Outside of Obama, maritime trade stimulated the development of other port towns, ensured income for merchants operating shipping businesses, and greatly contributed to cultural exchange around the country.



Several sites related to the history of *kitamaebune* have been preserved throughout Obama. In the Nishigumi district (p. 22) you can tour **Hotoro**, a former luxury restaurant (*ryotei*), or order a catered meal at **Suigetsu**, another former *ryotei* where ship owners and merchants were once served lavish dinners. At the traditional restaurant and teahouse **Ryotei Harima** you can enjoy the talented performances and company of an Obama *geiko*. The **Asahiza Theater**, which used to host a variety of productions, is now part of the Obama Machi no Eki Asahiza rest area complex.

At **Wakasahime Jinja Shrine**, **Hachiman Jinja Shrine**, **Hiramine Jinja Shrine**, **Munakata Jinja Shrine**, **Konpira Jinja Shrine**, or **Kasuga Jinja Shrine** you may see exquisitely crafted votive models of *kitamaebune* ships. They were donated by groups of parishioners or fleet owners to pray for the safe passage of ship and crew. Some of the ships serve as vessels for the worship of the folk deity Funadama ("spirit of the ship"). If you want to see how ship owners lived, head to the **Former Furukawaya Villa and Garden**, which was built in 1815 by the fifth head of the Furukawaya shipping business. The traditional space now includes a souvenir shop and a small coffee stand. As you sit and enjoy the sight of the garden with a warm drink in hand, you might imagine yourself as the lord of the Obama domain visiting to discuss business!

(Photos courtesy of Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum)





## MUSEUMS

Learn all about the regional history and culture of Wakasa and Obama by exploring museums in the area. Whether you are interested in religious statuary, local festivals, medieval trade, cultural influences, or everyday life of the past, the information is at your fingertips!



Make sure to bring your phone when you visit this museum! Reading the QR codes with your phone camera will take you to web pages with detailed English information about the exhibit themes and artifacts on display.

## Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum

福井県立若狭歴史博物館

A fantastic way to immerse yourself in the rich history of the Wakasa region is to visit the Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum in Obama. It was opened in 1982 as a place to collect and preserve documents and artifacts related to history and folk traditions. The facility has five permanent exhibition areas dedicated to Buddhist statues, festivals and performing arts, the origins of the Wakasa region, roads that connected Wakasa to the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto, and important sea routes. Exhibits are bilingual with English explanations accessible via QR codes.

Your educational adventure can begin with the atmospheric Buddhist Statues of the Wakasa Region exhibit on the second floor. The artfully lit hall contains sculptures of many divinities from various historical periods. Descriptions include information about the deities and the qualities attributed to them, as well as details regarding carving techniques and aesthetics that were characteristic of the eras when the statues were made.

Next, proceed to the Wakasa Festivals and Performing Arts section to see a wide array of bright, lively displays that illustrate several celebrations and rituals of the region. Take a close look at colorful examples of festival garb on life-size mannequins, tools and offerings used in time-honored ceremonies, and videos of the many O no Mai ritual dances performed in the area. You will be able to learn about the lifestyle and values of the people who lived centuries ago through their prayers and efforts put into various folk rites and other events.

The Origins of the Wakasa Region exhibit shows what life was like from the Jomon period (13,000–400 BCE) to the Kofun period (ca. 250–552). You can see how people benefitted from nature's bounty in hunter-gatherer societies, which gradually developed into agricultural settlements and villages. The displays in this hall contain examples of ancient stone tools and pottery, as well as a model of a *kofun* burial mound.

Continue to the Road to the Ancient Capitals, an exhibition space that details an essential part of Wakasa history: how the region fulfilled the duties of a *miketsukuni* province that provided salt and seafood to the capitals in Nara and then Kyoto. The important relationship that had developed with the old capitals continued to shape the socioeconomic landscape of the Wakasa region for centuries to come. Displays include information on salt production methods, historical trade roads, and excavated shipping tags.

The final hall, the Sea Routes to Wakasa, focuses on how the port of Obama and the Saba Kaido network of trade routes facilitated the movement of goods, people, and cultural ideas in the time between the tenth and the eighteenth centuries. Among the exhibits are literature and art brought to Wakasa from other countries, artifacts related to the region's rulers, and a display about *kitamaebune* trade ships.

Whether you visit the museum before or after exploring other locations, the captivating and educational exhibits will definitely help you gain a deeper appreciation for everything you see and learn during your stay in Wakasa and Obama!

(Photos courtesy of Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum)



### Fukui Prefectural Wakasa History Museum

福井県立若狭歴史博物館

〒917-0241 福井県小浜市速敷2丁目104

2-104 Onyu, Obama City

☎ 0770-56-0525

Open: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (last entry 4:30 p.m.)

Admission: ¥310

<https://wakahaku.pref.fukui.lg.jp/>



## Kumagawa-juku Museum (Shukubakan)

若狭鯖街道熊川宿資料館宿場館



You will appreciate the charming atmosphere of Kumagawa-juku just by strolling through, but a visit to Shukubakan will deepen your understanding of the post town's history, traditions, and regional culture!

This museum is situated in the Nakancho district of the post town. The Western-style building was constructed to serve as the Kumagawa Village Office in 1940 and retains much of its original architecture and charm. In 1997, it was converted into a museum dedicated to preserving and sharing the history and culture of Kumagawa-juku and the Saba Kaido (Mackerel Road), a network of trade routes that connected Wakasa with Kyoto. Exhibits include explanatory panels, historical documents, photographs, and items related to everyday life and commercial activities in Kumagawa-juku.

A series of panels on the first floor illustrate the development of Kumagawa-juku, from its humble beginnings as a small village near a trade route to a bustling post town with countless merchants, porters, and domain officials. Maps help visitors understand the many routes of the Saba Kaido, and examples of foods that were often transported along are displayed below. There is even information about Jako (1544–1618), the daughter of the Kumagawa Castle lord Numata Mitsukane. Jako eventually married into the prominent Hosokawa family and took part in a strategic siege, becoming an important historical figure in her own right.

A side room contains explanations of the status of Kumagawa-juku as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings. One rather curious artifact on display is the trunk of a pine tree from the grounds of Tokuhoji Temple. It is said that Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, rested against it during a visit to the temple.

The second floor showcases a wide selection of tools and everyday items that were once part of daily life in Kumagawa-juku. One section of the exhibition displays clothing worn by travelers, such as straw hats, shoes, and raincoats. There are even straw shoes for oxen! In addition to clothes, there is a wooden harness, woven baskets, poles, and a sled used for shipping, the main business in Kumagawa-juku. You will also find wooden signboards, boxes, maps, old photographs, a firefighting banner, *imoarai* waterwheels used for peeling potatoes, and tools for kudzu starch production.

All the labels and panels in the Shukubakan are written in Japanese, but there is plenty of English information available via QR codes!



### Kumagawa-juku Museum (Shukubakan)

若狭鯖街道熊川宿資料館宿場館

〒919-1532 福井県三方上中郡若狭町熊川30-4-2  
30-4-2 Kumagawa, Wakasa-cho, Mikata  
Kaminaka-gun

☎ 0770-62-0330

Open: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., last entry 4:30 p.m.

(April–January), 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

(February–March), closed Monday

Admission: ¥200

<https://www.pref.fukui.lg.jp/muse/Cul-Hist/fmc/detail/syukuba.html>

# WAKASA AND OBAMA EVENT CALENDAR



## Mid-February to March

**Japanese Doll Exhibition**  
 • Obama Townscape Preservation Museum  
 • Kumagawa-juku

## March 2

**Omizu Okuri Ritual**  
 • Wakasa Jinguji Temple,  
 Unose

## Early March

**Ume Plum Festival**  
 • Ume no Sato Kaikan Hall

## Late March to Early April

**Cherry Blossom Festival**  
 • Obama Park

## Early April

**O no Mai** (King's Dance)  
 • Kunitsu Jinja Shrine  
 • Tenmansha Shrine

## April 5

**O no Mai** (King's Dance)  
 • Kurami Jinja Shrine

## April 8

**O no Mai** (King's Dance)  
 • Uwase Jinja Shrine

## Early April

**Five Lakes of Mikata Spring Festival**  
 • Rainbow Line, Mt. Baijodake

## Mid-April (Year of the Rat, Year of the Horse)

**Wakuri Mibu Kyogen**  
 • Saihoji Temple

## April 18

**O no Mai** (King's Dance)  
 • Tayuhi Jinja Shrine

## April 29

**Ceremony to start the climbing season on Mt. Sanjusangen**

## May 2-3

**Unpin Jishi and Oshiro Matsuri**  
 (Lion Dance and Castle Festival)  
 • Obama Jinja Shrine

## May 4-5

**Nishizu Festival**  
 • Tsurihime Jinja Shrine,  
 Tamatsushima Jinja Shrine,  
 Hiyoshi Jinja Shrine

## May 5

**O no Mai** (King's Dance)  
 • Shiimura Jinja Shrine

## May 5

**Morning Market Festival and Children's Festival**  
 • Tsunegami, Miko, Ogawa Fishing Ports

## Third Saturday and Sunday in May

**Wakasa-Mikatagoko Two-Day March**  
 • Kumagawa-juku,  
 Five Lakes of Mikata

## Late May

**Tanokami Matsuri**  
 (Festivals for the Deity of the Rice Fields)  
 • Onyu, Miyagawa, Matsunaga Districts

**Tagarasu Matsuri Festival**  
 • Tenman Jinja Shrine

## Mid-June

**Green Ume Plum Festival**  
 • Ume no Sato Kaikan Hall

## June 30 to July 1

**Suribachi Kuguri**  
 (Earthenware Moxibustion Prayer)  
 • Ho'unji Temple

## Early July

**Public beaches open for swimming**

## Mid-July

**Atago Fire Festival**  
 • Atago Jinja Shrine

**Obama Gion Matsuri Festival**  
 • Hiromine Jinja Shrine

## Late July

**Nagoshi Harae Summer Purification Festival**  
 • Tsushima District,  
 Minatsukiharae Jinja Shrine

## August 1

**Wakasa Marine Pier Fireworks**  
 • Shiratori Beach

## August 4

**Hashi Matsuri** (Chopsticks Festival)  
 • Hashi no Furusato-kan Wakasa

## Early to Mid-August

**Miyagawa Sunflower Fields**  
 • Miyagawa Area (Kamo and Takenaga)

## Mid-August

**Matsugae Fire Festivals**  
 • Nakanata and Kuchinata Districts,  
 Minamigawa Riverbed

## Mid-August

**Rokusai Nenbutsu Rituals**  
 • Miyake, Nago, Uryu Districts

## August 23

**Jizo Bon Festival**  
 • Obama, Nishizu Areas

## Mid-September

**Hoze Matsuri Festival**  
 • Hachiman Jinja Shrine  
**Yosakoi Dance Festival**

## Early October

**Onyu Matsuri Festival**  
 • Wakasahiko Jinja Shrine,  
 Wakasahime Jinja Shrine

## Early October

**Kumagawa Ippuku Jidaimura Festival**  
 • Kumagawa-juku

## October

**Obama Food Festival**

## November

**Autumn Colors**

## ACCOMMODATIONS

### YAO-KUMAGAWA

Tel.: 0770-62-1777 <https://yao-kumagawa.com/>

#### Hotaru ほたる

〒919-1532 福井県三方上中郡若狭町熊川37-16  
37-16 Kumagawa, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun

#### Hibari / Tsugumi ひばり/つぐみ

〒919-1532 福井県三方上中郡若狭町熊川34-28-1  
34-28-1 Kumagawa, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun

#### Yamane やまね

〒919-1532 福井県三方上中郡若狭町熊川30-6-1  
30-6-1 Kumagawa, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun

### MACHIYA TOWNHOUSE ACCOMMODATIONS OBAMA MACHIYA STAY

Tel.: 0770-56-3366 <https://obama-machiya-stay.com/en/>

#### Sanchomachi Sanoya 三丁町さのや

〒917-0058 福井県小浜市小浜香取13  
13 Obama Katori, Obama City

#### Sanchomachi Nagata 三丁町ながた

〒917-0058 福井県小浜市小浜香取14  
14 Obama Katori, Obama City

#### Tango Kaido Taniguchi 丹後街道たにぐち

〒917-0053 福井県小浜市小浜大宮27-2  
27-2 Obama Omiya, Obama City

#### Tango Kaido Tsuda Omoya / Kura

丹後街道つだ主屋・蔵  
〒917-0055 福井県小浜市小浜浅間61-1  
61-1 Obama Asama, Obama City

#### Hachiman Sando Miyake 八幡参道みやけ

〒917-0067 福井県小浜市小浜鹿島11  
11 Obama Kashima, Obama City

#### Nishizu Minato Furukawa 西津湊ふるかわ

〒917-0004 福井県小浜市湊7-8  
7-8 Minato, Obama City

#### Nishizu Minato Kasamatsu 西津湊かさまつ

〒917-0004 福井県小浜市湊7-9  
7-9 Minato, Obama City

### MORE ACCOMMODATIONS IN OBAMA

#### Wakasa Kajitsu 若狭佳日

〒917-0105 福井県小浜市阿納10-4  
10-4 Ano, Obama City  
Tel.: 0770-54-3010 <https://wakasa-kajitsu.com/>

#### Sea-Auberge Shitsumi

〒917-0103 福井県小浜市志穂15-6  
15-6 Shitsumi, Obama City  
Tel.: 0770-54-3431 <https://en.shitsumi.com/>

## TOURIST WEBSITES IN ENGLISH

### ○ Enjoy Fukui | Rediscover Yourself in Fukui

Trip ideas, scenic spots, events, experiences,  
and traditional crafts  
<https://enjoy.pref.fukui.lg.jp/en/>

### ○ Kumagawa-juku

A detailed guide to the traditional post town  
and everything it has to offer  
<https://kumagawa-juku.com/>

### ○ Let's Go to Wakasa!

Introducing the town of Wakasa, Five Lakes of Mikata,  
attractions, experiences, souvenirs, and more  
<https://www.wakasa-mikatagoko.jp/en/>

### ○ Obama 8 Temples Tour

Serene Buddhist temples with storied pasts  
and precious treasures  
<https://obama-8-temples.jp/en/>

### ○ Obama Bayside

A guide to enjoying city beaches, activities, gourmet  
food, and shopping  
<https://obamabayside.jp/en/>

### ○ Saba Kaido

History, routes, and highlights of the historic Saba  
Kaido (Mackerel Road)  
<https://sabakaido.jp/en/>

### ○ Saba Kaido Traveler

Driving, cycling, and hiking along the Saba Kaido  
(Mackerel Road)  
<https://www.sabakaido-traveler.com/>

## ON THE TRIP Travel Guide App

### ○ Kumagawa-juku Walking Tour

<https://on-the-trip.com/guides/548>

### ○ A Stroll Around Nishigumi, Obama

<https://on-the-trip.com/guides/547>

### ○ The Temples of Wakasa Obama

<https://on-the-trip.com/guides/586>

### ○ A Walk Through Nishizu

<https://on-the-trip.com/guides/587>



## USEFUL INFORMATION & CONTACTS

### Wakasa Obama Tourist Information Center

若狭おばま観光案内所

〒917-0077 福井県小浜市駅前町6-1  
6-1 Ekimae-cho, Obama City  
Tel.: 0770-52-3844 Hours: 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.  
<https://www.wakasa-obama.jp/>

### Obama Ekimae Police Box 小浜警察署駅前交番

〒917-0077 福井県小浜市駅前町1-8  
1-8 Ekimae-cho, Obama City  
Tel.: 0770-52-1070 Hours: 24/7

### Obama City Hall 小浜市役所

〒917-8585 福井県小浜市大手町6-3  
6-3 Ote-cho, Obama City  
Tel.: 0770-53-1111 Hours: 8:30 a.m.–5:15 p.m., Monday–Friday  
<http://www1.city.obama.fukui.jp/>

### Obama Ote-cho Post Office 小浜大手町郵便局

〒917-0078 福井県小浜市大手町2-17  
2-17 Ote-cho, Obama City  
Tel.: 0770-52-4032 Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday–Friday

### Wakasa Mikatagoko Tourism Association

若狭三方五湖観光協会

〒919-1331 福井県三方上中郡若狭町鳥浜122-31-1  
122-31-1 Torihama, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun  
Tel.: 0770-45-0113 Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5 p.m.  
Closed: first Tuesday of every month, New Year holidays  
<https://www.wakasa-mikatagoko.jp/>

### Kaminaka Police Box 小浜警察署上中交番

〒919-1527 福井県三方上中郡若狭町上吉田5-31-2  
5-31-2 Kamiyoshida, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun  
Tel.: 0770-62-0019 Hours: 24/7

### Wakasa Town Hall 若狭町役場

〒919-1393 福井県三方上中郡若狭町中央1-1  
1-1 Chuo, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun  
Tel.: 0770-45-1111 Hours: 8:30 a.m.–5:15 p.m., Monday–Friday  
<https://www.town.fukui-wakasa.lg.jp/>

### Kaminaka Post Office 上中郵便局

〒919-1599 福井県三方上中郡若狭町市場19-1-1  
19-1-1 Ichiba, Wakasa-cho, Mikata Kaminaka-gun  
Tel.: 0770-62-0042 Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday–Friday

## ACCESS TO OBAMA

### From Kyoto

🚆 Approximately 2 hours by train  
Kyoto Station → Hokuriku Main Line → Tsuruga  
Station → Obama Line → Obama Station

🚗 Approximately 2 hours by car

### From Kansai Airport

🚆 Approximately 3.5 hours by train  
Kansai Airport Station → Airport Express Haruka  
→ Shin-Osaka Station → Hokuriku Main Line →  
Tsuruga Station → Obama Line → Obama Station

🚗 Approximately 3 hours by car

### From Tokyo

🚆 Approximately 5 hours by train  
Tokyo Station → Tokaido Shinkansen → Maibara  
Station → Hokuriku Main Line → Tsuruga Station  
→ Obama Line → Obama Station

## ACCESS FROM OBAMA TO KUMAGAWA-JUKU

🚆 Approximately 30 minutes by bus

Obama Station → Jakko Line → Wakasa  
Kumagawa Bus Stop

🚗 Approximately 25 minutes by car

## TRANSPORTATION

### Rental Cars

• Toyota Rent-a-Car	0770-53-1100
• J-Net Rent-a-Car	0770-64-5226
• Fujii Jidosha Rent-a-Car	0120-206-022

### Rental Bicycles

• Wakasa Obama Tourist Information Center	0770-52-3844
• Miketsukuni Wakasa Obama Food Culture Museum	0770-53-1000
• Machi no Eki Asahiza	0770-52-2000
• Kumagawa-juku Museum (Shukubakan)	0770-62-0330
• Kaminaka Station	0770-62-0013
• Mikata Station	0770-45-1661
• Michi no Eki Mikatagoko Rest Area	0770-45-0113
• Hotel Kojokan PAMCO	0770-47-1727

### Taxi Service

• Daiwa Kotsu	0770-56-3333
• Mifuku Taxi	0770-52-1414
• Oogi Kanko Taxi	0770-32-6363