

# Nano Ra

GOJO: MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER TOWN



Kaki:  
The Persimmon Story



Gojo City's  
Photography Hotspots

From Gojo to Mt. Kongo

Nostalgic Road

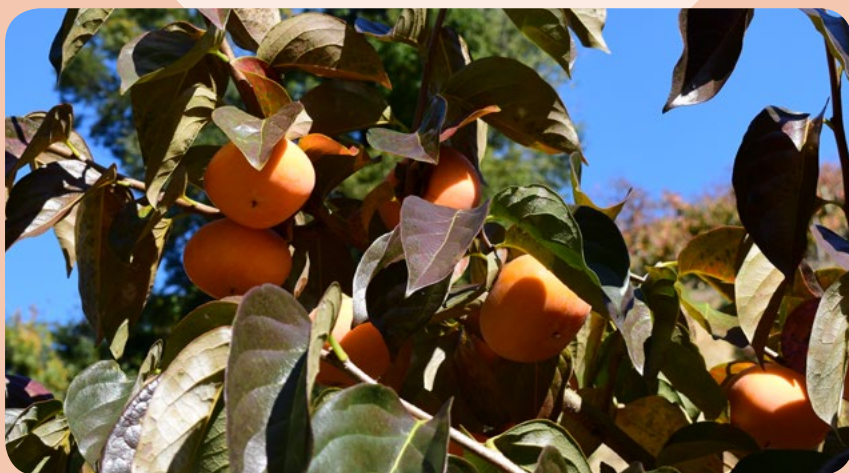
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Issue Nine

# KAKI: THE PERSIMMON STORY

## HAVE YOU HEARD OF “KAKI”?

How much do you really know about the persimmon? In both Japan and Korea persimmons are symbols of autumn. Persimmons don't really have much of a scent and tend to be thought of as a rather plain fruit but persimmons have their own unique charms. Although it is said that there are around 1000 different types of persimmon they are generally sorted into the following two categories sweet or sour. Sweet persimmons are just as the name would infer, the most famous of these is the “fuyu kaki” with its clean sweet flavor. Sour kaki however can be made sweet by removing their astringency.



## THE KAKI OF GOJO

Gojo produces more Kaki than any other location in Japan. Gojo's unique sloping landscape provides clean water and constant sunlight as well as extreme temperature differences between night and day, these are some of the key factors for the growth of sweet high quality persimmons. In autumn the mountains are painted red with the rich colors of persimmons and autumn leaves.

## KAKI MUSEUM

A little bit out of Gojo is a building shaped like a persimmon and inside is a museum for learning all about persimmon. On display are various types of kaki as well as kaki made products. The surrounding grounds also boast 200 different types of Kaki tree with tastings provided in autumn. On the day I visited the museum I tried 4 different types of persimmon and I was able to taste and compare the different levels of sweetness and texture. The museum is also visited by foreign tourists interested in persimmons so feel free to drop by anytime.

**Kaki Museum**  
Nara Prefecture, Gojo City, Yoshino-cho Yushio 1345  
Open hours: 9 am – 4:30 pm  
Closed: Mondays  
(If Monday is a public holiday the following day will be closed)  
Cost: Free





# KAKI SPECIALISTS ISHI - KAKI, MORE THAN JUST A FRUIT

There's still so much more to the persimmon. In Gojo city there are a variety of stores providing products that bring out the absolute best in persimmons. I'd like to introduce the Kaki specialists Ishi (Kaki no senmon ishi) who have some of the more novel ideas when it comes to persimmon products. When asked about why he started his company Directing manager Ishi said "Back when there still weren't many persimmon products, I was asked whether or not I could do something about the 300 ~ 500 tons of persimmon that were unable to go to market due to bruising or surface damage". Persimmons are delicious just the way they are but because they are an autumn fruit they aren't available all year round. Kaki specialists Ishi started their line with the desire to make the flavor of persimmons available any time. They also have two stores in Nara city designed to attract younger customers to the wonders of persimmons.



## KAKI BUTTER

The mild sweetness of persimmons and the scent of butter combine to create this unique product. Toasting it brings out a whole new level of flavor. This product also won the "Furusato Product of the year award" for 2017.



## KAKI VINEGAR

Vinegar made from persimmons. Mixing this lightly acidic flavor with soda makes for a unique tasting drink that anyone can enjoy.



## KAKI LEAVES

Tea made from the leaves of the persimmon tree. A non-caffeine drink rich with polyphenol, vitamin C and the soft smell of persimmons. It is available in powdered, bottled and drink pack forms.



## NOSTALGIC KAKI

Horenbo persimmon are only found in Nara prefecture, these are taken and dried with chestnut paste added to the inside giving a soft combination of both sweet and sour.

※Photos provided by Kaki specialists Ishi

A particular specialty is the nostalgic kaki made from the Horenbo, a persimmon found only in Nara prefecture. Dried Horenbo persimmon were traditionally used as a decoration on top of mochi rice cakes, however as the amount of families using dried persimmons decreased so did the amount of farmers producing dried Horenbo persimmons. In order to increase the demand for Horenbo persimmons Ishi made the Nostalgic kaki by combining it with chestnut paste. In 2013 the nostalgic kaki reached huge popularity and received the "Souvenir Best Selection Award" from Nara's tourism division.

The Kaki specialists Ishi have done a wonderful job of not only creating new delicacies but also protecting the future of Gojo's persimmons. Please take the time to try Nara's persimmons for yourself.

### Kaki no senmon Ishi Main Branch

458 Nishiyoshino-cho  
Yatsukawa Gojo city  
Open: Weekdays 9:00 - 17:00

### Kaki no senmon JR Nara store

2F Vierra Nara  
1-1 Sanjo hon-machi Nara city  
Open: 10:00 - 21:00 (All year)

### Kaki no senmon Sanjo store

1F Murata Building  
27-1 Sanjo-cho Nara city  
Open: 10:00 - 19:00 (All year)

Ho-seon Lee

# Nostalgic Road

Stretching from Gojo up to Gose is Prefectural Highway 30 also known as “Nostalgia Kaido” (lit. nostalgia road). The name really stuck out to me so I decided to go down and check out just a few of the many stores and locations lining this particular road and interview some of the locals asking them about what makes Gojo special.

For detailed information check: <http://nostalgic-road.info/>



**SITES TO SEE:** (An interview with Head priest Mr. Suzuka)

Takamahiko Shrine, the place where the ancestors of the gods first descended.

## ABOUT TAKAGAMO SHRINE:

At mt. Kongo, found behind this shrine, those known as the Takagamo tribe would collect medical herbs and engage in ascetic training. They came down from the mountain to the land below and prospered. The protecting god of the Takagamo people is enshrined here, and is the origin of the all Kamo style shrines (Shimogamo shrine, Kamigamo shrine etc.). Mr. Suzuki says that the shrine is a place of peace and relaxation, full of power; it has a special air about it, here you can experience a different world, a location with a mysterious atmosphere visited by all kinds of peoples.

Stepping into Takagamo shrine is like entering a whole new world, the crisp fresh air, the shimmering pond, the huge trees stretching up above you; there really is something different about the atmosphere right from the moment you enter. The main Shrine lays right before you with grounds stretching out in various directions with many charming smaller shrines and gates found nestled in among the trees and nature. The shrine is not only beautiful just for its appearance but has a special sort of power that fills you with a sense of peace.

## Takagamo Shrine



**THE STORES THEME:** (Interview with shop owner Ms. Tanaka)

I wanted an atmosphere where people can slowly enjoy tea in the countryside.

## WHAT IS NOSTALGIA TO YOU?

Shinmachi Street, Kongo sanroku, Otomura village

## THE SECRET TO QUALITY PASTRIES?

We use local products (fruits, flour etc.) in the production of all of our sweets.

Open 10:00 - 18:30 Closed: Wed

The first thing you think when you walk in this store is “fancy”. This quaint little patisserie has such a vibrant and lively atmosphere. The colorful decorations blend in with the decorative pastries on display, lights of varying height and shape hang from the ceiling, cute potted plants litter the tables, and soft sunlight streams peacefully in through the open windows in the seating area. As much as I would have loved to stay and eat snacks forever, time was limited so I settled for two pastries, the first was an Elizabeth, a cheese baked tart with a rich creamy texture, full bodied blue berries and light wafted fresh cream on top. The hard base had just enough sweetness to neither be overwhelming or too mild. As nice as it was however I must say that I enjoyed my second pastry even more, the persimmon Tatine with its rich fruitiness and solid pastry base was a true delight, more so as Gojo is famous for its persimmon products, so I was able to have a filling snack with a real rural taste. Client is a store with a wonderful atmosphere, engaging friendly staff and extremely reasonable prices.

## Patisserie Client





**THE STORE'S THEME:** (Interview with Owner Ms. Izumizawa)  
 Recyclable Agriculture, being environmentally friendly  
**THE SECRET TO QUALITY PORK PRODUCTS?**

# Baaku

Local production. From the pig's feed, the wood for smoking, to even the materials for the shop itself, everything includes natural local produce.

**SITES TO SEE:**

Gojo has a long history, Festivals that have continued for generations, Imperials tombs, Shinto and Buddhist shrines. There are also hiking trails to learn about Gojo's history and atmosphere. A friend of mine once said "Even stones sitting on the roadside have a history". After studying its history I really began to understand how special Gojo is, there are many people who come here to experience the calm and tranquility. I think the Nostalgic Road serves as a part of that.

The wooden building of Baaku's restaurant smells like the inside of a meat smoker, the rich scent of pork has seeped into the walls over the years and created a mouth watering aroma, Although if you get to visit in the warmer months I would recommend a seat out on the deck overlooking the beautiful green scenery. If you've never been here before then you must try the "Baaku Lunch". This set is filled with a plethora of different regional specialties to tingle the tastebuds. A starter combining the sweetness of Gojo's persimmons and the salty richness of Baaku's pork, smoked sandwiches, herb rich pork buns, and more. My favourite was the meaty rich flavour of the Pork sausage on the bone.

Open 9:00 - 17:00 Restaurant & Cafe 11:00 - 14:00 Closed: Wed, Sun



**THE STORE'S THEME:** ( Interview with Manager Mr. Maeda)  
 I wanted to make something that everyone here in the place I grew up would want.  
 Something made with effort and care but offered at an affordable price.

# Bakery Yum Yum

**WHAT IS NOSTALGIA TO YOU?**

I grew up around the river areas so the river banks are the most nostalgic for me.

**SITES TO SEE:**

Mt. Kongo

Open 8:00 - 19:00 Closed: Tue, Wed

In Japan I am constantly asked whether I prefer rice or bread, as a lover of things Japanese I used to answer with my love for Japanese foods and rice in general as well as my nostalgia for bread back home. Now my opinion has changed, I love bread. Nothing excites me more than a quality bread store and Yum yum is definitely one of them.

From the outside you may see what is just another quaint little store but once inside you notice that things are much grander than what they first seem, the warm smell of cooked bread, the hard brown crack of freshly baked goods, the glisten of various glazed rolls. Yum yum has an excellent selection of different breads both sweet and savory that use traditional rice flour that really fill you up. The thing I can't believe the most about this store is the price, to provide such a variety of quality bakery goods at such affordability is truly amazing. I wish I lived closer so I could partake of these goodies everyday and at the same time, for the sake of my diet, am glad I do not.

Marius Ormond-Byrne



# FROM GOJO TO MT. KONGO



I love hiking; it gives you an opportunity to get away from your daily life. Walking out in nature feels like you've entered into a whole different world.

Mt. Kongo is one of Japan's most prominent mountains garnering attention from climbers all across the country. It has also been famously known as a place of enlightenment for believers of the Shugendo faith (lit. the path of training and testing") since before the Meiji period (1868 – 1912) and is a famous location for pilgrims comparable to Mt. Kouno in Wakayama or Mt. Omine in Yoshino (see Na no Ra Vol. 7).

We started our hike from Kitauchi station on the JR Wakayama line. Climbing up Owa Street towards the base of the mountain I noticed changes in scenery as the surrounding buildings started to fade away. The entrance to the mountain is found past local pork restaurant "Baaku" (see pg. 4) from which you begin your 4.5 km hike up to a height of 800m.

We headed towards the Fushimi trail taking a path that leads you through a forest filled with towering cedar trees that stretch up into the endless sky. 20 minutes into our hike the path splits into two, with the left path leading to our goal the Fushimi trail and the right leading off to Amagataki. It took another 2 hours in to reach the end of the trail which was slightly iced over when we climbed in December.

At the end of the trail the mountain plateaus creating space for the ropeway station, a restaurant, viewing platform and camping grounds. When we arrived the whole mountain was blanketed in snow with the lined white fig trees looking like a scene from Christmas. Just climbing the mountain alone introduces you to an environment completely different from that you would see normally.

We took the Kuruno trail and then headed back down on the Chihaya trail which oversees the whole of Gojo city, the valleys between mountains, Yoshino River and houses stretching on towards the horizon. There's just a wonderful feeling enjoying the fresh mountain air as you walk through the white snow on the path. However please be careful not to take the wrong path coming back down! At the second intersection taking either the Kuruno or Diamond trails will lead you back home but the Chihaya ropeway will take you to Osaka instead.

I really enjoyed my time hiking on Mt. Kongo, it was a great day to just experience nature. Arriving at the top of the Fushimi trail there is plenty of space and facilities to rest and have a warm meal. It was a hike with beautiful scenery that really relaxes you right from when you first enter the forest of cedar trees.

Jeanne Austry





# Gojo City's Photography Hotspots

When someone mentions Gojo, generally the first thing to come to mind is persimmons, but Gojo is filled with many other marvelous sites. I would like to take the time to show you just a few spots perfect for taking photos.

## Eizanji Temple,

### National treasures sitting in silence

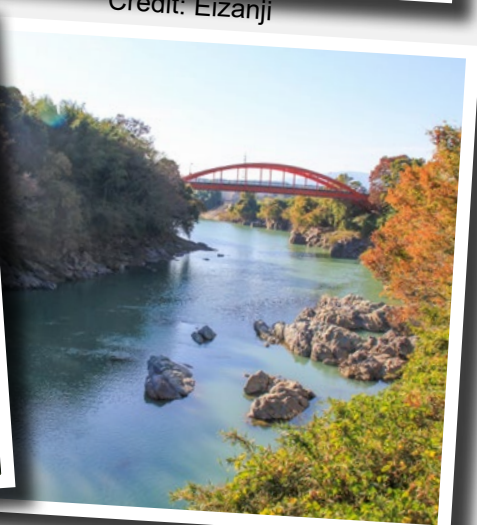
This historical temple was erected in 719. It's Hakkakudo octagonal Hall which resembles the Yumedono hall in Houryuji Temple is a designated national treasure that changes in atmosphere with the seasons. The supervisor of the temple said "Eizanji has two national treasures, the Hakkakudo hall and the Bonshou temple bell, both of which can be enjoyed in tranquil silence. Please come and enjoy these sites at least once". Looking upon the beauty of the temple, why not take a photo to remember your visit while you're here.



Credit: Eizanji

## Otonashi River

100 meters down the way from Eizanji Temple flows the Otonashi (Yoshino) river. The Yoshino river flowing in front of Eizanji is also known as the Otonashi (lit. No sound) river. It is said that master Koubo of Eizanji temple once threw his writing brush into the river causing it to become silent. The best place to view the natural beauty of the river is from "Restaurant Yoshino Kawa" which was selected by Nara Prefecture as a restaurant with an excellent view. You can look out over the river and its adjacent red bridge while enjoying your meal. Looking out at the vivid greens of the valley you can't help but to take a picture.



\*For more about Restaurant Yoshino Kawa:



## The Phantom Railroad

Hanging over the roads lies the remains of the "New Gojo Rail line" which was meant to connect Gojo city to Shingu city in Wakayama. Unfortunately due to the economic state of the time, this rail line was never to be completely realized, although it was later used in several movie productions. The half completed rail line remains as a solemn reminder of hopes and dreams unfulfilled, vanishing like a phantom apparition, but also serves as a reminder of what can be accomplished if you work hard and give your best.



## Kongoji Temple

### Chrysanthemums in Autumn, Peonies in Spring

Established in 1173 Kongoji temple holds a massive Peony festival from the the end of April till the beginning of May which has led to the temple nickname the Peony temple. When I visited the temple it was in autumn and the chrysanthemums were in full bloom, their shadows dancing in the setting sunlight across the temple grounds was truly a peaceful moment worthy of a photo.



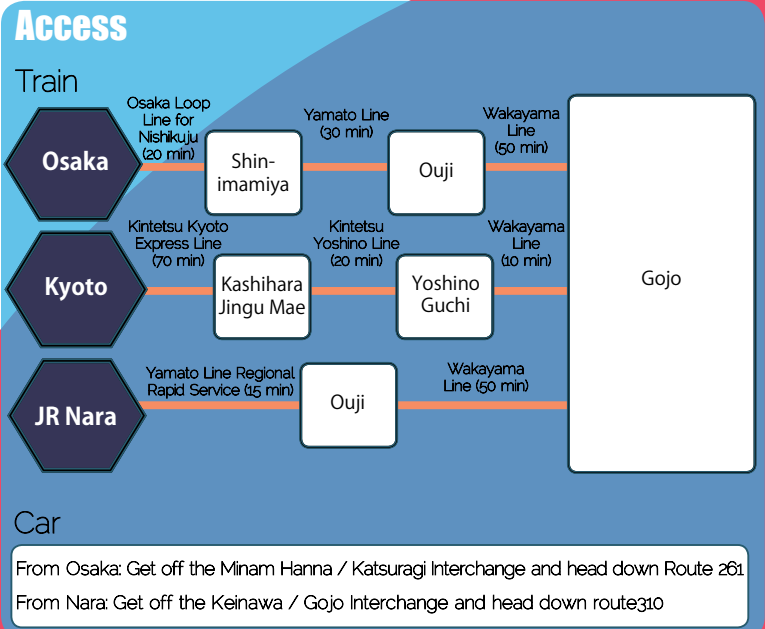
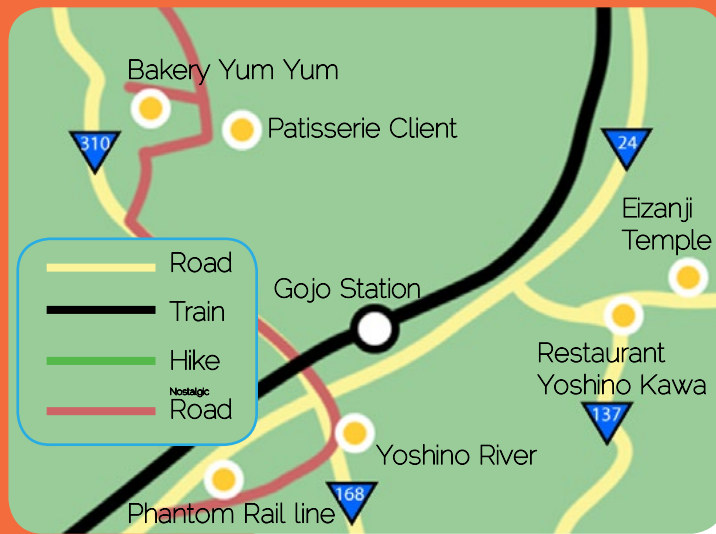
Credit: Kongoji



# What is 'Na no Ra'?

We're the Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) for Nara Prefecture. We work at the International Affairs Division of the Prefectural Government. Our aim is to deepen international exchange between Nara and other countries and help to build bridges between them.

'Na no Ra' is made up of articles about places in the prefecture that we, as foreign residents ourselves, visited and thought would be of interest to both visitors from overseas and the local Nara community. We hope it will be of some interest and will serve to help everyone discover the charm that Nara holds!



## A Note from the Editors

'Na no Ra' would like to sincerely thank the people of Gojo city and all those who assisted in the creation of this issue, including the Kaki Museum Kaki no senmon ishi, Takagamo shrine, Patisserie client, Baaku, Bakery yum yum, Eizanji temple, Restaurant yoshino kawa, and Kongoji temple.

### 'Na no Ra'

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