

Na no Ra

**Hidden charms in Japan's largest village,
Totsukawa village**



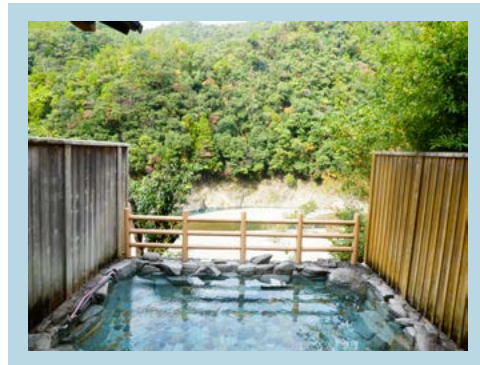
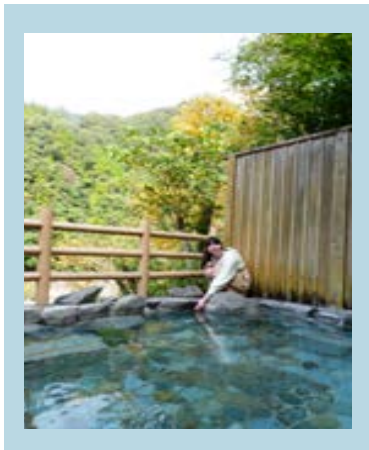
The Totsukawa village of **then** and **now**
Totsukawa village: a village of **hot springs**, **food**
and **history**

Coming into contact with **nature**
From **regular**, popular spots to **secret spots**

The Totsukawa village of **then** and **now**

Totsukawa village: a village of **hot springs**, **food** and **history**

Nestled in the south of Nara prefecture with its many interesting places is Totsukawa village, Japan's largest village. It was autumn when I went to Totsukawa, the leaves had just started to change colour and the contrast between the red and green was really beautiful. In this article I want to showcase Tosenji hot springs, Totsukawa village folk museum and Totsukawago roadside station.



Relaxing in Tosenji hot springs

Did you know that Totsukawa village is famous for its hot springs? There are 18 hot springs in Totsukawa village, with the majority being in the heart of the village. It is said that due to the high amount of sulfur used in the Tosenji hot springs, there are noticeable effects on cuts, burns, muscle pain and other ailments.

While you soak in Tosenji's outside hot spring, you can also enjoy the beautiful nature in front of you. In the changing room you can find an explanation on how to enter the hot springs correctly. Although the explanation is in Japanese, foreign guests should be able to understand from the accompanying illustrations.

As soon as I entered the bathing area the smell of sulphur invaded my nostrils. The interiors of the bathtub, outside bath and the other facilities are spotless all over. I scooped the hot water into my hand and the feeling of the warm water brought a sense of happiness over me. Thanks to the hot springs, nature and the village's quiet atmosphere you can truly relax here. Since I love hot springs, for me this mood is the best.

According to one of the staff members, there are few foreign guests and most guests seem to be locals. The majority often come from Osaka, Kyoto and from the other nearby prefectures. Please spend some time at Tosenji hot springs!

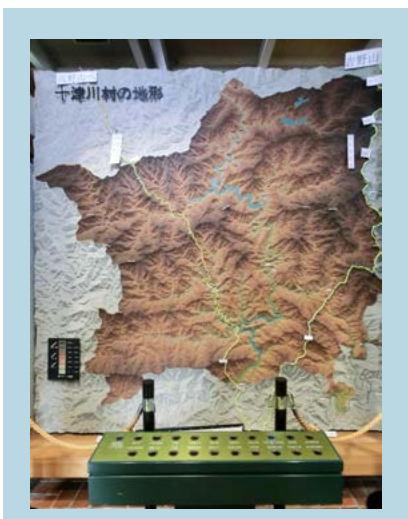


Public bathhouse 'Izumi-yu' Tosenji hot springs

Location: Musashi 23, Totsukawa village, Yoshino-gun, Nara prefecture 637 1332

Business hours: 10:00am-9:00pm

Closed: Tuesdays



Totsukawa village folk museum: Pursuing Totsukawa village's history

I visited Totsukawa village folk museum, because I have an interest in history and in the lives of people who lived long ago. In fact, I've learnt a lot from history.

The folk museum is high up and situated in front of the town hall. As soon as you enter the museum you are greeted by a large elevation map of Totsukawa village. From this map I came to understand that the majority of Totsukawa is not flat and at present the areas surrounding the rivers are the most populated. In addition to this map, I was amazed by all the exhibits on famous people from Totsukawa and by the exhibit of a house from the Showa period, 1926-1989.

1. Mr. Kouji Kinutani, an artist from Nara prefecture (original work)

Due to a horrific and large flood disaster in 1889, during the Meiji period, Totsukawa was left destroyed. This painting entitled, 'The sun rising above Totsukawa' was created in order to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the flooding disaster and to convey the desires and dreams of the Hokkaido emigrants. From looking at this painting you can clearly feel the hope of the villagers for the restoration of their village.

2. Shin-totsukawa towns's beginning

Nara prefecture's Totsukawa village and Hokkaido's Shin-totsukawa town have a deep relationship. As a result of the flood disaster, a huge portion of the residents from Totsukawa had no choice but to move to underdeveloped land in Hokkaido, in order to find accommodation and jobs. The number of villagers who emigrated by boat was 2,667 people and the population in Shin-totsukawa at that time was 12,862 people. With their hometown on their minds, the villagers named their new settlement Shin-totsukawa.



'The sun rising above Totsukawa' by Mr. Kouji Kinutani

Totsukawa Village folk museum

Location: Ohara, Totsukawa village, Yoshino-gun, Nara prefecture, 637-1333

Business hours 9:00am-5:00pm (entry until 4:00pm)

Closed: Tuesdays and Dec.29th –Jan.3rd



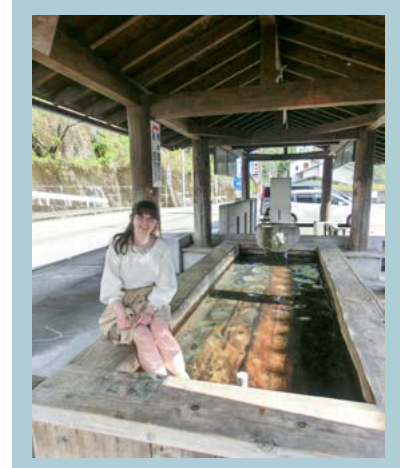
The emigration process was split into four groups, it is noted that the first time, in 1890 was particularly difficult. Hokkaido was very cold and due to the fact that they had the underdeveloped land provided for them they ended up living in shabby huts while tending to the bare land. However, the 50,000 square meters of land that they received, eventually became their own asset, which they actively ploughed. There was a lack of food, which meant that the *soba* noodles and *daikon* radish were quickly harvested and eaten.

3. Ryoma Sakamoto and Shogoro Nakai's relationship

Have you ever heard of Ryoma Sakamoto? He was an important samurai during the end of the Edo period (1800s). In 1867, during what is now a famous event, both Ryoma and his comrade Shintaro Nakaoka were assassinated while in the midst of planning an attack on the *Shogunate* in Omiya, Kyoto.

A rural samurai from Totsukawa by the name of Shogoro Nakai was living in an anti-*shogunate* lodgement facility spearheaded by Shintaro Nakaoka. It was through Nakaoka that Shogoro met Ryoma. In the folk museum there is a letter from Ryoma addressed to Nakai. In the letter it states that Ryoma cared for Nakai and as such gave him a sword, named '*Aoe yoshitsugu*'. Although the actual sword was not found, you can really feel the connection to Ryoma. During those days a sword was a symbol of status, which means Totsukawa's Nakai must have been an important person to Ryoma.

Through seeing the displays and having detailed conversations with the staff at the museum, I was really able to develop a deep understanding of the relationship between Ryoma Sakamoto, Shin-totsukawa and Totsukawa.



Totsukawago roadside station: Delicious food and original souvenirs

I would now like to introduce Totsukawago roadside station, where you can find many interesting products. Despite being a compact facility, it is filled with local vegetables, food, disposable chopsticks made from specialised wood and other products. You can feel the warmth from the wood grain used inside the station. You can take your time with your shopping.

The roadside station has four floors, with the main shop being above ground on the ground floor. First let's look at the first floor. There are a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables such as mushrooms, as well as locally sourced honey. You can also buy handmade lunch boxes prepared locally. For me personally, the most touching thing in the roadside station are the products from Shin-totsukawa. The shin-totsukawa '*Toukibi* chocolate' and the '*Melon icebar*' in particular are delicious. You can even feel the connection to Shin-totsukawa here!

Due to the fact that Totsukawa is famous for its wood, they sell wooden fans, key-rings and other miscellaneous products. In addition to this, you can buy exclusive '*Route 168*' goods.

On the second floor there is '*Sobasho gyozen*', cafeteria. It's really spacious. On the menu there are a lot of *udon* and *soba* noodle based dishes, I would recommend the handmade *soba* in particular. In addition to this, there is a platter of dishes like the delicious *Oyako-don*, a dish made from mainly rice, chicken and eggs, which are also great. The combination of the chicken and egg is so delicious it would make you cry with joy and the rice is really fluffy. I was also really satisfied, as they were generous with the amount of food given. While you eat, you can also enjoy a beautiful view through the large window. In front of the roadside station, there is a free footbath, with free flowing water that you can enter. When you enter it, you can't help but feel your tiredness melt away. I think it's best to use it if you have a long trip. I recommend that you start by getting a Shin-totsukawa '*Melon icebar*', then when you've finished eating it, spend some time in the footbath.

In Totsukawa village there are many wonderful places. Please go to visit them for yourself!

Totsukawago roadside station

Location: Oji Ohara, 225-1 Totsukawa village, Yoshino-gun, Nara prefecture 637-1333 (Beside the Totsukawa village town hall)

•Business hours: 8:00am-5:30pm (March-November) 8:30am-5:00pm (December-February)

Katie Clancy

Coming into contact with nature

From regular, popular spots to secret spots

Located in the most southern part of Nara prefecture, is Totsukawa village, Japan's largest village. Despite the fact that there are no trains that go to Totsukawa village directly, which means transport is limited to either cars or scheduled buses, it's a village blessed by an abundance of nature. This time, I would like to introduce 'Tanize suspension bridge' and 'Seino waterfall', both of which offer many scenes of natural beauty. In addition to this, for those that find it difficult to sightsee in a car, I will also illustrate how you can enjoy Totsukawa village by scheduled bus services.

Tanize suspension bridge, a prominent and long suspension bridge in Japan that gets full marks for its thrills



There are many suspension bridges along the valley that cross over the flowing Kumano river in Totsukawa village. Among those bridges is 'Tanize suspension bridge' which unites the Ueno and Tanize areas and boasts one of Japan's most impressive lengths, at a height of 54 meters and a length of 297.7 meters.

Built in 1954, during the Showa period by the villagers in order to make life easier, this suspension bridge still continues to be used even now. Due to its position in the north of the village, it can be seen as the gateway into Totsukawa village. In 2017, 170,000 tourists visited this suspension bridge, making it a popular tourist spot. In the past it was used as a school route. Currently it is not used by school buses that enter the Tanize district, however, it is certain that it has been used since long ago to assist villagers in their daily lives.

Despite it being the early hours of the morning, many tourists brought by tour buses, crossed the suspension bridge. I too, summoned the courage to try to step on the bridge. It was surprisingly sturdy, which allowed me to continue forward step by step, but when I averted my gaze downwards and heard the creaking sound of the wooden planks on the bridge for real, I became a little scared.



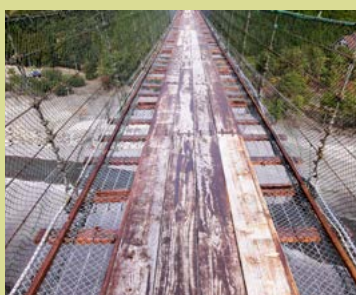
However, when I looked in front of me, the spectacular view of the changing colours of the mountain as well as the aerial view of the valley, the flowing river and so on spread around me. The view of the blue sky and the beginning of the changing of the leaves from mid-air really creates a very refreshing mood. You can spend time in nature, as there is a camp site in the dry river bed visible from the bridge. How about experiencing the thrill of the great outdoors on the 'Tanize suspension bridge' for yourself?

Tips for enjoying Tanize suspension bridge!

① It is prohibited for more than 20 people to cross the bridge at the same time.

Also, please don't run on the bridge as it's dangerous for it to sway against its will!

② You can take tourism pamphlets at your leisure from the tourist information center located in the vicinity of the Tanize suspension bridge car park. Also, if you're feeling peckish or need a break how about dropping by for some food or local specialities? Tea is provided free of charge.



Totsukawa village tourism association



- Location: Tanize, Totsukawa village, Yoshino-gun, Nara prefecture, 637-1106
- Hours: Always open
- Toll: free

Seino waterfall, a nearby waterfall where you can feel its charm

An employee from the town hall's industrial division and Totsukawa village tourism group, informed me all about 'Seino Waterfall' in the car all the way from the town hall to the waterfall itself. If you go by car for 10 minutes along the winding, small road, you will see a sign for 'Seino Waterfall'. Park the car, walk a little through the wood, go down the steps and a spectacle from a different world will lie in front of your very eyes. The wide pool of water and the sheer amount of water will impress you.



You can see the waterfall from this close!

If you try to get close to the waterfall, the blowing wind feels really good. When the water from the waterfall hits your cheek it feels very refreshing, as if it is cleansing your heart. Unlike the scenery seen from far away, the colour of the water is very mystical. This time round, we visited Totsukawa's secret places, however, according to the employee from the town hall, this waterfall is featured in a Totsukawa village promotional poster from 2017 and therefore it may have more visitors from now on.

Tips for enjoying Seino waterfall!

① The drop of the waterfall isn't that high, but it's a waterfall that boasts a wide pool and an abundance of water. Due to the fact that there is no railing, your whole body can feel the charm of the waterfall in one of Totsukawa's hidden spots!

② On the way to Seino waterfall there is a quieter waterfall that falls from a high precipice. There is an observation deck located up there and according to the employee from the town hall, this waterfall is named 'Fudo waterfall'. How about enjoying the charm of the quiet waterfall that is so different to the impressive 'Seino waterfall'?



Location: Totsukawa village, Oji Takataki, Yoshino-gun, Nara prefecture, 637-1442
Viewing time: at your leisure
• Admission fee: free



Totsukawa village tourism association homepage

One more way to visit Totsukawa village!

One more way to visit Totsukawa village!

You don't have to have a car to get to Totsukawa. For those that find it hard to travel and sightsee by car, Japan's largest scheduled bus, 'Yagishingu limited express bus' is a great way to enjoy Totsukawa village.



At a total length of 166.9km, 167 bus stops and boasting Japan's longest mileage on routes that don't use the motorway, it is 'Yagishingu limited express bus'. On the way to the so-called largest village in Japan, there are many hot springs that are known by many, along with the world heritage site 'Kii mountains sacred grounds and pilgrimage route', which you can run away to. How about a slow bus trip where you can hike the world heritage site and then heal your weary body afterwards in a hot spring? An extract from the Nara transportation company's homepage

Tips for enjoying the Yagishingu limited express bus trip!

In September 2018, the Totsukawa hot springs bus stop opened a foot bath in the bus shelter! How about taking some time to soak your feet in a foot bath during your bus journey?
Time: 7:00am-6:30pm (every day)



Please visit this website if you want more information on the Yagishingu limited express bus.



Hyunjung Nam

What is 'Na no Ra'?

We're the Coordinators for International Relations (CIR) 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 word from our editors

Katie Clancy (pictured left)

As it was both my first time doing an article and my first time in Totsukawa village, I was really amazed and moved by the natural aspects. I went when the leaves were changing colour which meant that the mountains and trees in particular, were very beautiful. I don't think I will forget the combination of green and orange leaves. Also, I was very pleased with the hot springs. Due to the perfect temperature of the water, I ended up really wanting to get into the outside bath. Totsukawa village has many charming tourist spots, so please experience them for yourself!

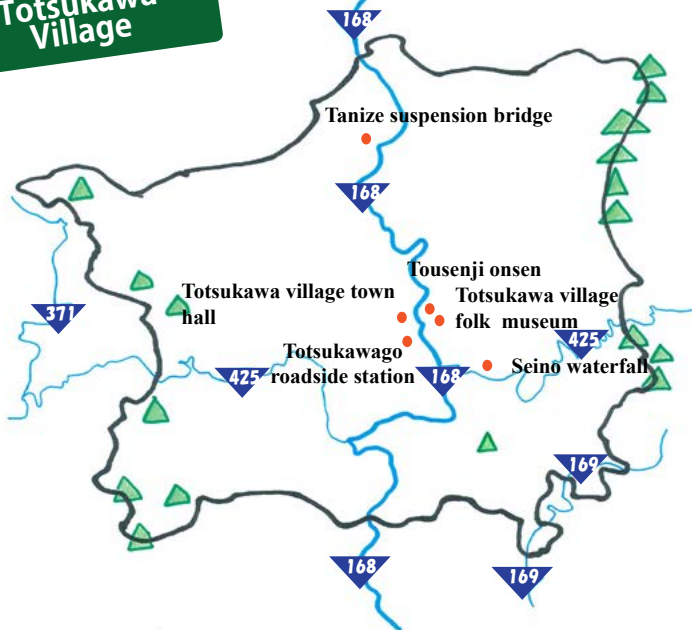
Hyunjung Nam (pictured right)

Even though Nara prefecture boasts beautiful scenes of nature and a long history, it was only after going to Totsukawa village that I realised that the Nara I knew was only a part of Nara. From the main city it is not easy to access Totsukawa, which is precisely the reason as to why I was so moved by the beauty and charm of the village when I visited it. Please experience the charm of Totsukawa village for yourself!



Places mentioned

Totsukawa Village

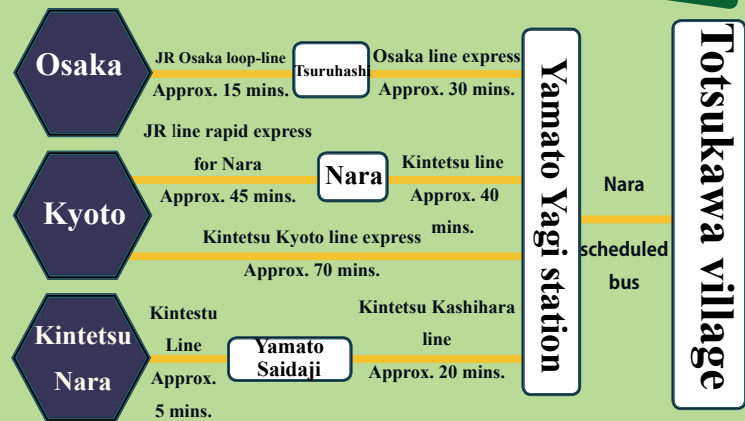


A Note from the Editors

Na no ra would like to sincerely thank the people of Totsukawa village and all those who assisted in the creation of this issue, including Tosenji onsen, Totsukawa village folk museum, Totsukawago roadside station, Totsukawa town hall and the Nara transportation company.

Access

Access by Train



By car

- From Osaka : Approx. 2 hours 20 minutes (using route 168)
- From Kyoto : Approx. 3 hours (using route 168)
- From Nara: Approx. 2 hours 10 minutes (using route 168)

'Na no Ra'

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