

NanoRA

Tenri City and Sakurai City

Issue 14

- Nara Prefecture Historical and Artistic Culture Complex.....P.g.1
- Tenri University Sankokan Museum.....P.g.2
- Jantako Tenri.....P.g.3
- Omiwa Shrine/Rose no Kabin.....P.g.4



Photograph: Omiwa Shrine

Connecting History to the Future Nara Prefecture Historical and Artistic Culture Complex

Through my volunteer work at the Nara National Museum of Art providing explanations on the pieces, I was able to participate in the “Special exhibition of cultural property preservation and repair shop” event. It gave me the opportunity to see the reconstructed Buddhist sculptures with my own eyes, which left a deep impression on me. When I told my family and friends back in Beijing about this valuable experience, almost all of them reacted by saying, “How wonderful, I want to take part in that too.” Unfortunately it can be difficult for foreign tourists to participate in such temporal events aimed towards specific groups.

Luckily I was finally able to tell my friends and family in Beijing some good news, which ended up being that they were going to be opening the Nara Prefecture Historical and Artistic Culture Complex, hereinafter referred to as the Artistic Culture Complex, in Tenri city, Nara prefecture, a facility which would house a site for a restoration studio for Buddhist sculptures among other works. There are plans to open the Buddhist statue restoration site complete with explanations to the public throughout the year, which would mean that when my friends from abroad come to Nara they could visit and see the sculptures for themselves. In addition to this, in hopes of opening the cultural restoration works in the four areas to the public, the “Restoration studio”, which is scheduled to be set up in the “Artistic Culture Complex”, will not just cater to restoring the “Buddhist Sculptures”, but will also be used for the three remaining areas, Paintings/Writings, Historical Buildings and Archaeological works. For this to become a reality will be a first for Japan, which is quite a remarkable feat.

I think this is truly wonderful. As a foreigner who has lived in Nara for three years, I feel that “history” and “cultural art” are Nara’s strong points. There are currently 1,327 National treasures/ cultural properties in Nara prefecture, the third highest in Japan. Among them are sculptures (most of which are Buddhist sculptures) and the national treasures that are properties, combined together they are the highest in Japan. Notably in Nara starting with the “Shosoin Treasures”, there’s a lot of cultural assets left from the Chinese Tang Dynasty (618-907). In Buddhist statues, buildings, events, among other things we can see the strong influence of the Tang Dynasty.

For this reason, I think for a lot of Chinese people, Nara, the ancient capital holds a special meaning and is a city that we yearn to go to.



Image of the Buddhist statue restoration site Image provided by the Promotion Office for the Nara Prefecture Historical and Artistic Culture Complex

The Artistic Culture Complex, which is scheduled to open in March of 2022 and Nara prefecture have been making progress with a project since 2015. As a result, I was curious to see what changes the opening of the complex would bring to Nara, so I inquired with Mr. Nakanishi, Assistant Director from the Promotion Office for the Nara Prefecture Historical and Artistic Culture Complex. Firstly, Mr. Nakanishi informed me about the aim of setting up the facility. “The Artistic Culture Complex” was established as a centre for Nara Prefecture’s historical, artistic and cultural activities as shown in the accompanying image of the complex, there are various buildings and numerous functions. It’s an integral facility that has several buildings along with functions such as an indoor exhibitions wing, cultural wing and information section. Furthermore, for those who wish to stay for short or semi-long periods of time, you can make use of the 99 rooms available at the neighbouring hotel, the Nara Tenri Fairfield by Marriott Hotel (Scheduled to open in spring of 2022).

Hanshin Koshien Stadium’s surface area is approximately 13,000 m². The site of the “Artistic Culture Complex” however, is approximately 30,000 m². In 2019, Nara prefecture and Tenri University signed a partnership agreement; and preparations are proceeding for interactions with various organisations and groups from within and outside the prefecture in the “The Artistic Culture Complex”. In particular, you can expect special exhibitions in collaboration with cultural institutions such as the Tenri Central Library and the Tenri University Sankokan Museum. As well, in the “Artistic Culture Complex” you can also have fun with hands on style cultural events. Notably as part of the “Habataku Nara” project, which is carried out by Nara prefecture to promote the education of children who have yet to start school. The complex also plans to have a free art programme for young children. It will be a fun place for families and small children can be brought along.

Moreover, along with being able to enjoy shopping for Nara produce and traditional crafts, there’s also a practice room, where cooking classes will be available and a restaurant, which uses locally sourced ingredients and is particular about local production for local consumption. Besides this, there’s also an event hall and seminar room. Thanks to the “Artistic Culture Complex”, the cultural and artistic atmosphere in the surrounding areas will surely be elevated in the times to come, which I’m sure will be linked to the regional vitalisation.

Finally, although I’m still a beginner, I have composed a one line poem for you. “The Artistic Culture Complex spreads its’ new wings over the country of Yamato/Nara”.

I hope that you visit the Artistic Culture Complex.

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Promotion Office for the Nara Prefecture Historical and Artistic Culture Complex

<http://www.pref.nara.jp/46785.htm> (English)

QR code→



Image of the complex (Image provided for by the Promotion Office for the Nara Prefecture Historical and Artistic Culture Complex)

Valuing History: Tenri University Sankokan Museum's Impression

The Tenri University Sankokan Museum (Hereinafter referred to as the Sankokan) situated in Tenri city, Nara prefecture is a museum that collects, researches, displays and houses documents pertaining to lifestyle cultures from areas across the globe and archeological art materials.

2020 is a milestone year for the Sankokan, as it marks the 90th anniversary of its' establishment. As seen in the photograph, this building is very unique. Last year I went to visit the Sankokan with my Japanese friend and was moved by its splendiddness. I really wanted to show it to you all.

This time I talked with Mr. Hayasaka, a curator at the Sankokan. The National Museum of Ethnology (Osaka), a museum famous for collecting, researching and exhibiting ethnology documents, was founded in 1974; meanwhile the Sankokan was established in 1930, making its' history older. As a result of 90 years of accumulation, combining both donations and the Sankokan's own collection, the collection currently stands at 300,000 pieces. There are 3000 pieces in the permanent exhibition, which are divided and displayed into "World Lifestyle Cultures" and "World Archeological Art".

In the "World Lifestyle Cultures" exhibition area, there's a section of exhibits displayed in a corner that reconstructs the time they were made. I think that for visitors this way of exhibiting things will be a wonderful and immersive experience.

For instance on the ground floor in the 3rd exhibition corner under "Fu lu shou" meaning "Happiness, wealth and longevity" in English, there's an original of a sign (*Huang zi* in Mandarin) from a shop that was used from a street in Beijing in the 1930's. According to Mr. Hayasaka he heard that once an elderly visitor from China with a face brimming with emotion said "This takes me back. I never thought I would see something like this in a place this." It seems he's also seen a youth, eagerly taking photographs, who stated "You know it's funny, I live in Beijing, but I've never seen this sign before". I think being able to get a sense of Beijing's streets of that time through a sign from decades ago is truly a wonderful experience.



Beijing street sign



Sancai Rensen Horse 8th century

My favourite exhibition is the "Sancai" (three colours) an original piece on the third floor displayed in the Chinese archeological art corner. Made during the ancient Chinese Tang Dynasty (618-907), the "Sancai" is pottery made from clay with a white base, after being baked, and then glazed to develop colours of green, dark brown, as well as indigo blue and yellow, resulting in the appearance of a unique shade. Various works such as those of "Horses", a "Qulin", a mystical beast and "Divine warriors" are all on display. Presently, the colours have more or less dulled; however, we can imagine just how vivid they were 1,200 years ago.



The front of the Sankokan

These works have probably travelled across far paths to reach the silk road's East end point, the ancient capital, Nara. Being able to see the Sancai with my own eyes in the Tenri Sankokan, Nara prefecture after only ever seeing it in reference books is truly an oddly emotive experience.

Furthermore, at the Sankokan's reception there are free pamphlets translated into seven languages available. Something that is certainly useful for foreign tourists.

According to Ms. Nakamura from the Sankokan's public relation's sector, who I talked to during the same phone call, apart from permanent exhibits the Sankokan also carries out special exhibits/ themed exhibitions, holds lectures, museum concerts, workshops among various other activities. Numerous cooperative activities such as the Agency for Cultural Affairs support project are going strong between Tenri city and the area.

Famous in the field of archeology, the "Museum, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture" and the Tenri City Board of Education also collaborate on joint exhibitions with the Sankokan. They are planning to collaborate on holding a joint exhibition in Japan's leading university in preserving old books, Tenri Central Library.

According to Ms. Nakamura, in 2018 the Deputy Librarian from the Shanghai Museum of Arts and crafts, along with five other Chinese people came to the Sankokan to view the "Chinese style dolls and the modern era dolls made from earth and wood" exhibition. This exhibit was met with praise and comments such as "These wooden dolls no longer exist in China, making this truly worth a look". Ms. Nakamura mentioned to me that "I'm glad that through the comments of real life locals from abroad, I could re-discover the Sankokan's merits".

Moreover, Ms. Nakamura wanted to express to you the readers of "Na no Ra" her warmest sentiments, "Although things are currently rather difficult due to the COVID-19 epidemic, we here at the Sankokan would be more than happy to have visitors from abroad or from within Japan come here. We are eagerly awaiting your arrival".

- Address: Morimedocho 250, Tenri City, Nara Prefecture 632-0035
- Access: 20 minute walk from JR/ Kintetsu Tenri Station
- <https://www.sankokan.jp/>

QR Code→



• These three photographs were all provided for by the Tenri University Sankokan Museum

Chunlan Wu

A Shrine, takoyaki and desserts, spending the day relaxing in the cities of Tenri and Sakurai

This time round I wrote this article with the cities of Tenri and Sakurai as the main focus. We're going to be taking a look at the following, starting with the *takoyaki* establishment, "Jantako Tenri" in Tenri city, Omiwa Shrine in Sakurai and the cake and baked goods patisserie, "Rose no Kabin".

Takoyaki: The Kansai region's representative food

When speaking about food from the Kansai region, it's hard not to think of "*takoyaki*" or octopus balls. In Ireland and the United Kingdom, octopus is not eaten due to octopus's slimy exterior and for some due to religious reasons. Meaning no octopus eating culture exists in these countries. Before coming to Japan, I too had no opportunity to eat Takoyaki. After arriving in Japan I had *takoyaki* for the first time and I can safely say it has become my favourite Japanese food. For this issue I would like to introduce a *takoyaki* establishment in Tenri city.

The traditional Japanese cuisine, "*takoyaki*", are balls made from a flour and broth mixture, with the main ingredient usually being octopus and spring onion, which are then fried, lathered with sauce and then eaten. *Takoyaki*'s origins are said to derive from Osaka. There's a theory that in 1935, during the Showa period, the founder of the restaurant "Aizuya", in the Nishinari district, Osaka, a Mr. Tomekichi Endo invented it. Originally it was eaten with soy sauce, however after World War 2 came the invention of sauces such as *tonkatsu* or pork cutlet sauce and Japanese Worcestershire-style sauce resulting in these being the present sauces of choice.

Having various sauces, such as curry and Hollywood sauce available is a notable aspect of this issue's featured *takoyaki* establishment, "Jantako Tenri".

Jantako Tenri

"Jantako Tenri" first opened in 1986, and is the main branch of the Jantako *takoyaki* establishments, other branches such as the Nara-Ichijo and Imagawa branch, in Osaka also exist. It's a popular establishment, that has been featured numerous times on television programmes.



An interview with "Jantako Tenri"

For this issue I interviewed Mr. Suzuki who works at "Jantako Tenri".

1. Please tell us about what's so charming about "Jantako".

Here at "Jantako" we fry the *takoyaki* after the order has been placed. Although it takes 20 minutes until they are perfectly cooked, you get to eat freshly cooked *takoyaki*. I would also consider the fact that we have a variety of sauces available an attractive aspect.

2. Which flavour of sauce would you say is the most popular?

I would be inclined to say our standard sauce is the most popular. Most of our customers opt for the "Sauce Jantako". I would recommend this sauce and our *dashi-shoyu* sauce, a broth and soy sauce mix.

3. Do you often get customers from abroad?

While we only see a small number of customers from countries in Europe, the USA and Australia, we do have quite a few customers from Asian countries, mainly folks from Taiwan and South Korea, who came to Tenri for training camps and such.

4. Do people from other prefectures often come?

We actually get customers from all over Japan. Most from the Kinki region tend to be mainly from Osaka and there are also quite a lot from Mie.

5. Finally, what would you consider is *takoyaki*'s main selling point?

For people from the Kansai region, *takoyaki* is a food that we are very used to. Everyone here knows it, we've all tasted it before, which has led to this familiarity, which is one of *takoyaki*'s best points in my opinion.

The moment I entered "Jantako Tenri" I was greeted by the smell of *takoyaki* sauce. In "Jantako" aside from the standard sauce there are 16 sauces for you to choose from, including but not limited to *Ponzu* (Vinegar mixed with citrus juice), mustard and mayonnaise. The curry and Hollywood sauces in particular piqued my interest. This time, I went with the most popular sauce, curry sauce and spicy cod roe mayo. The crispy outer layer and the sticky inside make for a truly delicious *takoyaki*. A great point was the particular sauce, which made for quite the ideal *takoyaki*. Being able to taste an array of flavours is certainly an interesting point, which is only enhanced by being able to freely choose your favourite sauce or a sauce that you're curious about from 16 different kinds that are on offer through the set deal. You can have a lot a fun mixing and matching different kinds!

Both to those who are hardcore fans of *takoyaki* and to those who have yet to try it, I would strongly recommend you try Jantako's *takoyaki*!



Omiwa Shrine, a mystical experience

Japan has a lot of different cultural aspects, among them there is visiting shrines, which I have a particular interest in. For this issue I decided to pay a visit to Omiwa Shrine in Sakurai city, which is famous for being one of Japan's oldest shrines. Mount Miwa is revered at Omiwa Shrine, along with having the god Omononushi enshrined in it, a unique aspect is Omiwa Shrine's lack of a main building.

For this issue starting with the Worship Building, I was escorted by a Shinto priest at Omiwa Shrine, to Mi no kami sugi, Sai Shrine, Omiwa no Mori Observation Deck and finally Kuehiko Shrine.

Rebuilt by the fourth *Shogun* or military dictator of the Tokugawa dynasty, Ietsuna Tokugawa in 1664, the Worship Building is designated as a national cultural treasure. Being able to visit and pay my respects at such an awe-inspiring Worship Building, I really felt like my heart was at ease.



In the vicinity of the Worship Building paper and felt charms as well as other things can be gotten on the grounds. At the front of the Shrine there is a place where you can get a "Go-shuin" stamp, a handwritten stamp received at temples and shrines. I was able to get the "Omiwa Shrine" "Yamato no Kuni Ichinomiya" Go-shuin stamp in my own Go-shuin-cho stamp book that I had brought along with me. From now on whenever I take a look at my *Goshuin-cho* I'm sure to remember Omiwa Shrine. I also did "O-mikuji", which is a type of divination offered at shrines and temples, I drew "Suekichi" or "Future luck". They only have the Japanese version, but it's really interesting to see all the different things wrote on it.

In front of the Worship Building there's the "Mi no kami sugi" or literally the "Snake God Ceder", which apparently received its name from the belief that the god, Omononushi became incarnate in the form of a white snake and would come in and out of the hollow of this very cedar tree.

This snake was affectionately called "Mi", a nickname taken from the Chinese character meaning "Snake of the Chinese Zodiac" and Mi's favourite food, eggs are left as offerings for Mi.



Leaving the Worship Building, we next went to Sai Shrine, where the soul of the god, Omononushi is said to reside. Although I went during the time of the O-bon festival, there were a lot more worshippers than I expected. To the side of Sai Shrine's main building there's a well that's called the "Medicine well" on account of the sacred water that gushes from it. This sacred water is said to have an effect on many illnesses, and anyone may drink the water. In fact, I too drank some and it was very refreshing and delicious. Since it's raw water it's best to drink it sooner rather than later.



From the Omiwa no Mori observation deck on top of having a great view of the Yamato Sanzan, or the three mountains of Yamato/Nara, Mount Amanokaguya, Mount Unebi and Mount Miminashi, you can take your time and relax among the abundant nature available. During the cherry blossom season in particular you can enjoy a superb view!

Next, I visited Kuehiko Shrine. Kuehiko Shrine is said to enshrine Kuehiko no mikoto, according to the "Kojiki", a sacred text in the Shinto religion, Kuehiko no mikoto is said to possess all the well known knowledge in the world. It's the perfect shrine for those looking to pray for getting into university, passing exams or for finding employment. There's also an *Ema* or a wooden tablet in the shape of an owl for those who wish to write down and vocalise their prayers.

I'm truly so grateful to have been given the opportunity to visit the mystical Omiwa Shrine. Through this spiritual experience I was able to understand *Shintoism* a little bit more, it truly was extremely moving.

Rose no Kabin: Taking it easy while eating cake and drinking tea

Did you know that in Ireland we consume a lot of tea? In the 18th century tea first came to Ireland and from there our tea drinking culture started to develop and nowadays tea is held in higher regard than beer. Besides tea and flavour tea we also eat sweets and cake, in fact there are a lot of people who like to go to the capital, Dublin to have afternoon tea. For this issue we're going to take a look at "Rose no Kabin", a patisserie in Sakurai city.



When I entered the cute pastel pink building of "Rose no Kabin", which is a play on words changing the Chinese character in "vase" to mean "confectionary" or "sweet treats", I was greeted by a display case full of beautifully designed cakes. The seasonal "Peach shortcake", "Fruits basket" and "German style cheese cake" to name but a few all looked so heavenly that I was at a loss for which to choose. Doughnuts and biscuits of varying flavours are also sold here, I think this would be an ideal spot to buy either a souvenir or gift. With flavours from classic Earl Grey to sweet Strawberry, there's plenty of different teas on offer. There's also a menu for coffees and juices.

Going up to the first floor reveals an eloquent setting, therefore you aren't just limited to take out, but can also eat in. For this visit I ordered the "Caramel poire" and an Earl grey, which just like I had imagined were both very delicious. The sweetness of the caramel matched with the faintest hint of citrus in the Earl grey and the tea flavour made for a perfect combination. For those who wish to spend some time relaxing and for those who love all things sweet, why not pop into "Rose no Kabin"?



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

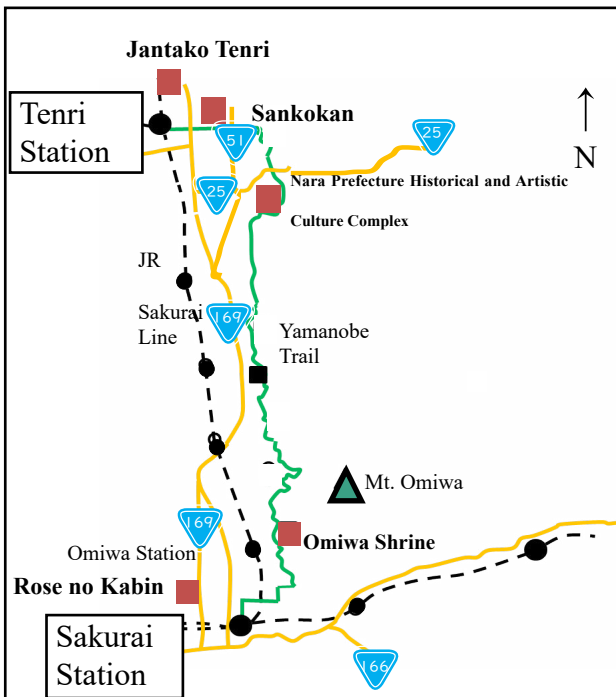
Chunlan Wu (Pictured on the left)

In places like Osaka there are a lot of young people who have moved from Nara to live there, however among those around me there are some elderly Japanese people, who have moved from the Kanto region to live in Nara. With that in mind, I think there may be those who would say that Nara is a place that those that know end up falling in love with, but those that don’t know about it, end up staying ignorant about it. For me, I am able to experience living in Nara and even in the world, the ancient capital; Nara is often understood as an “Unrivaled” existence. I really want those that don’t know about Nara to learn more about it.

Katie Clancy (Pictured on the right)

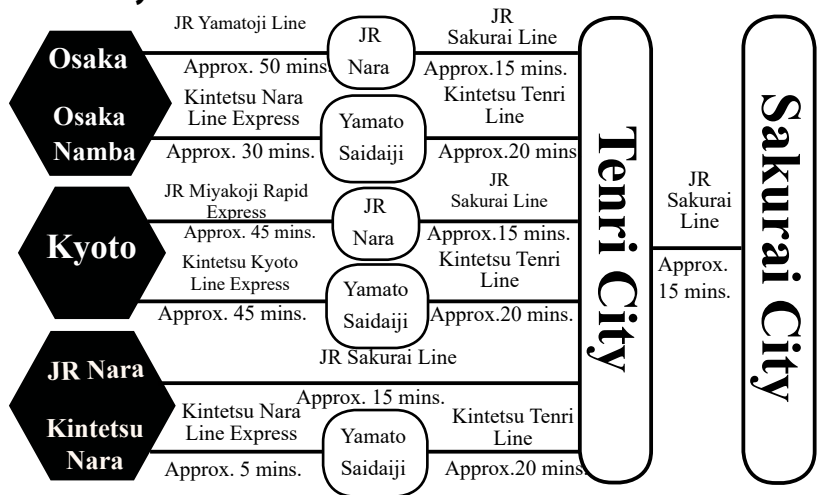
I was so happy to have the opportunity to do this article about the fun Tenri city and Sakurai city, a place I had been eager to go to. Being shown around Omiwa Shrine and being able to have such a wonderful experience, was truly moving and put me at ease. As someone who is very passionate about *takoyaki*, the *takoyaki* from “Jantako” was just so good, that it’s difficult to express it in words. Finally, for those like me, who while eating something delicious in a pretty place, also like taking it easy and relaxing, I think “Rose no Kabin” is the place for you.

Tenri City and Sakurai City

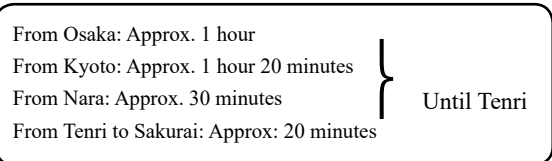


Access

By train



By car



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