

What's Up Aichi

—Timely Tourist Information On Aichi Prefecture And The Surrounding Central Japan Region—

Extended Special Issue: Traveling the "Shoryudo"

Central Japan on the Shoryudo



The Shoryudo (lit: Stretching Dragon Road) begins in Mie Prefecture then winds through Aichi and Central Japan and ends in the Northern prefecture of Ishikawa. Nagoya City is a natural starting point on the Shoryudo, and there are a large number of Aichi based tour companies serving this area.

This region has its own unique charm and intrigue. There are natural wonders including hot springs, beautiful forest, and the majestic Japan Alps as well as cultural and historical monuments, samurai castles, legendary locations and of course festivals. As you travel along the Shoryudo there will also be plenty of local delicacies to eat!

In this special issue let's take a trip along the dragon, winding our way through the best places in Central Japan.

<http://go-centraljapan.jp/en/special/shoryudo/index.html>

Centrair International Airport

Japan is famous for its quick and convenient high-speed rail system. What many people don't realize is that air travel within Japan can be comparable in comfort and speed. The service you receive at the airport and on flights is top notch and can be an enjoyable experience in itself.

Centrair is the largest international and domestic gateway in Central Japan. This modern airport in Aichi is only 30 minutes from Nagoya Station by train, or 40 minutes by car. It is also possible to take a high-speed boat from Centrair directly to our first destination on the Shoryudo.

<http://www.centrair.jp/en/>

Walking the Kumano Kodo Path

Our first stop is in Mie Prefecture in the tail of the Dragon. Mie is accessible by ferries, buses and trains leaving many times per hour from Aichi Prefecture. The Kumano Kodo Path has been used for over a millennium by everyone from emperors to paupers. Even today walking the ancient path is a fantastic way to experience the unique cultural landscape of Kumano's spiritual countryside.

The Kumano Kodo Pilgrimage was registered as UNESCO World Heritage in July 2004. It forms part of the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range.

<http://www.tb-kumano.jp/en/kumano-kodo/>

Ise Jingu, The Most Sacred Shrine



Remaining in Mie Prefecture, this ancient shrine is sometimes referred to as "Ise Jingu," however its true name is simply Jingu. It is a fitting name because in Japanese the word *jingu* means shrine and Jingu is the single most important shrine in all of Japan.

The main shrine is dedicated to the Shinto god called Amaterasu Omikami, who is the ancestral god of the Imperial Family. The shrine also has a strong connection to the Shinto gods of agriculture, especially the Japanese diet staple of rice. This connect is so important that every October the Emperor makes a pilgrimage to harvest rice and offer his harvest at Jingu.

Although Jingu was founded about 1500 years ago, the main shrine is rebuilt every 20 years. The next rebuild will begin in Autumn 2013 and there will be many ceremonies and festivals accompanying the rebuild.

<http://www.isejingu.or.jp/shosai/english/index.htm>

Nagoya Castle the City Symbol



Traveling up the dragon's body our next stop is of course Aichi Prefecture and its iconic castle. Called the center piece of Nagoya City, Nagoya Castle and its surrounding buildings and gardens are the most popular tourist destination in Central Japan. New exhibits are routinely added to the museum at Nagoya Castle so even if you have visited before there will be something new to see. Inside the castle priceless historical relics and pieces of art are on display. You can also tour the castle gardens. No matter what season the gardens are always blooming. February and March is the flowering season for hundreds of Japanese Plum trees. It is an excellent way to relax and take in the beauty of the castle and surrounding area.

The two golden *Kinshachi* that sit atop the main keep are also a major part of Nagoya Castle. In Japanese "kin" means Gold and the Shachi is a mythological animal. Traditionally they were a symbol of the feudal lord's authority but after the Reconstruction era they came to symbolize Nagoya's emergence as a major part of the Japanese economy.

http://www.aichi-kanko.jp/j-heartland/etc/kankou_i.html

Tokoname the Pottery City



This city was built on the pottery industry and some parts of it are literally built from pottery. The kilns in this ancient

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town have been turning out ceramics for over 900 years. Today there is still a lively industry where you can visit the numerous workshops in the area. Tokoname City has created a "Pottery Path" take visitors can follow to a number of different pottery shops and museums. If you are interested in making purchases the shops can expertly wrap your pottery as well as ship internationally. The city also English speaking tour guides that help you have a more immersed experience!

http://www.city.tokoname.aichi.jp/fl_html/english/sights_eeing/information.html

Ukai Fishing on the Kiso River

The Inuyama region of Aichi is famous for its majestic mountains and flowing rivers. The Kiso River's headwaters are in the northern mountains and it flows through Inuyama on its way to the sea. Every night in the summer months the centuries old tradition of Ukai, or cormorant fishing, is performed. There are three fishing masters who adeptly use cormorants to bring in small trout called Ayu. Maneuvering their boats as well as wrangling up the birds is an extremely difficult task but these masters make it look effortless. Viewing boats float along with the Ukai boats and spectators can relax with food and drinks while they watch the watch the masters' work.

<http://ml.inuyama.gr.jp/en/must-see-sight-en/2051>

Famous Aichi Blowfish Dinner



Before any traveler leaves Aichi they have to try at least one of the local dishes. There are savory noodles dishes and sweet confectionaries, but if you feel like walking on the wild side you can try the blowfish dinner. It is a feast of all Aichi has to offer with a hint of danger. If you are feeling adventurous try this once in a lifetime meal.

http://www.aichi-kanko.jp/j-heartland/etc/gourme_i.html

Villages of Straw Houses



The best way to access these amazing mountain towns is to start in Aichi. At Nagoya Station take a train to Takayama city, this ride is an especially scenic route through northern Aichi into the heart of Japan.

Shirakawago and Gokayama are secluded mountain villages on the border between Gifu and Toyama Prefectures.

Besides the surrounding beauty they are most famous for maintaining over a hundred traditional straw roofed farmhouses, some of which are more than 250 years old. The importance of the villages was recognized internationally when they were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995.

What makes these farmhouses even more amazing is that some have been converted into Japanese style inns. Spend a night for a truly unique experience.

<http://travel.kankou-gifu.jp/en/see-and-do/2/>

Tateyama Alpine Route

Traveling further north along the dragon, the train line from Nagoya Station to Takayama Station also continues to Toyama City. There are also daily flights between Centrair Airport and Toyama Airport. Then from Toyama locals trains connect to the Tateyama Alpine Route.



This scenic passage over the Japanese Alps is offers some of the most

spectacular mountain vistas in Japan. The route climbs to 10,000 feet, and is commonly referred to as the "roof of Japan." In the winter the areas are closed off by immense snowfall, but usually are remain open from April to November. Perhaps the most spectacular feature of Tateyama Alpine Route is the towering Snow Wall where sometimes snow can reach depths over 50 feet.

Those who love the majesty and grand beauty of nature should include Tateyama in your travel plans.

<http://www.alpen-route.com/english/>

Kenroku-en Garden



Our last stop along the Shoryudo takes us to the Ishikawa Prefecture and the Sea of Japan. Kenroku-en Garden is usually regarded as one of the three most beautiful gardens in Japan, and was designated as a special national scenic spot by the Japanese Government. When visiting Kenroku-en it is easy to understand why it is held in such high esteem. The vast grounds have hundreds of painstakingly manicured trees, serene ponds, tea ceremony houses, and something pleasing to the eye at every turn.

A unique feature of garden is the preparations taken for the winter season. Thousands of ropes are used to support the delicate trees from the heavy snow. This is just another example of the care taken to preserve Kenroku-en Garden.

<http://www.pref.ishikawa.jp/siro-niwa/kenrokuen/e/index.html>

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