

# KANAZAWA / JAPAN

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*The Jewel of Japan*



Photo: Kubo Hideomi



Go deeper into Kanazawa's fascinating past and vibrant present through the city's remarkable artisanal crafts and unparalleled culture. Extraordinary beauty and artistry at every turn.



For further information...  
KANAZAWA Official Travel Guide

[visitkanazawa.jp/en](https://visitkanazawa.jp/en)

Tourism Policy Section, City of Kanazawa  
1-1-1 Hirosaka, Kanazawa, Ishikawa  
920-8577 JAPAN

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## How Kanazawa Became the Seat of Refined Culture in Japan

Learn more



Out of the 440 years of Kanazawa's history, it is the 280 years starting from when Maeda Toshiie took over Kanazawa castle in 1583 that had made Kanazawa the castle town we know and love today. The Maeda clan's power and wealth were second only to the Tokugawa Shogunate itself. The Maeda lords became patrons of academics and culture in order to demonstrate that they were not a political threat to the Shogun. They invited prominent scholars and master artisans from around Japan into their domain and established cultural arts such as tea ceremonies and Noh theater in the area. This cultural abundance exposed not only the upper-class samurai, but also the people of Kanazawa to a level of culture rarely seen in other parts of Japan. The elements of this cultural uplifting are still evident today in the myriad of arts and crafts produced in the city and the general population's love for cultural activities and performing arts.



### Kanazawa Castle Park

Kanazawa Castle was the ruling seat of the Maeda Clan, who controlled the Kaga region including Kanazawa. Large parts of the castle were burnt down over the course of two major fires, but they have since been restored. The castle is now available to the public as a park. Enjoy the unique and artistic landscape of Gyokuseninmaru Garden composed of a beautiful arrangement of ponds and stone walls.



### Kenrokuen Garden

One of the three most beautiful gardens in Japan. Situated next to Kanazawa Castle Park, it is a daimyo garden, or feudal lord garden, founded during the Edo period by the Maeda Clan for their private use. The construction took place over many years. The name Kenrokuen means "arrangement of six facets", referring to the attributes which bring out the garden's stunning beauty: spaciousness, tranquility, artifice, antiquity, abundant water, and magnificent views. Visitors can enjoy the cherry blossoms in the spring, fresh greenery in the summer, colorful foliage in the fall, and a snow-covered wonderland in the winter.

Modern-day Kanazawa is one of the largest castle towns in Japan and retains many streets and cultural elements from the olden days owing to the fact that the city has escaped damage caused by war or major disasters for a period of over 440 years. Kanazawa's unique charms include the tourist spots of Kanazawa Castle, Kenrokuen Garden, the long-established fish market, teahouse districts, the samurai district and tradesmen towns, as well as its traditional culture such as crafts, entertainment, and food.

Along with history and culture, Kanazawa also has modern attractions including the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, which is famous both in Japan and internationally, and districts that house fashionable galleries. Experience Kanazawa, a city where tradition thrives alongside modernity.



Kanazawa Station



21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa



Oyama Jinja Shrine



### Nagamachi Samurai District

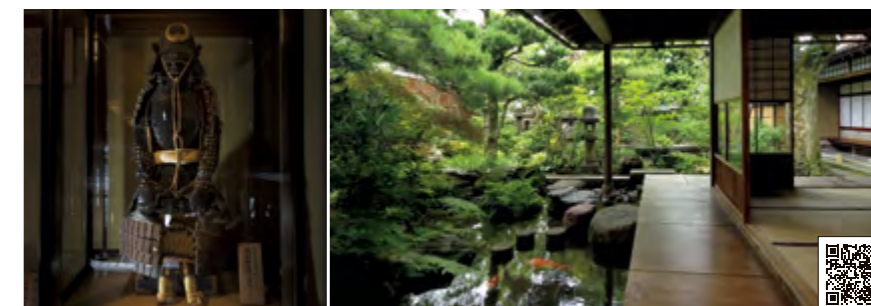
Nagamachi Samurai District, or the Nagamachi Buke Yashiki District, is a historical district where the middle-class samurai families used to live during the Edo period (1603-1868). The restored samurai residences, narrow cobblestone streets, and earthen walls all combine to paint a cohesive picture of life in Edo times.



Gyokuseninmaru Garden



Samurai Residence Kurando Terashima's House



Nomura Samurai Residence



### Three Geisha Districts in Kanazawa

In Japanese culture, geisha houses have been traditional places for feasts and entertainment since the Edo period. Also referred to as chaya, or teahouses, they are places where geishas entertained wealthy nobility and rich merchants. Geishas are female Japanese entertainers who perform dances and play traditional Japanese instruments. The Higashi, Nishi, and Kazue-machi districts are the three chaya districts in Kanazawa. Their streets are lined with traditional geisha houses. With a history of over 200 years, these districts still retain the atmosphere of the Edo period. Although many of these performances are exclusive, visitors can enjoy them during various casual events throughout the year.



Higashi Chaya District



Kazue-machi Chaya District



Nishi Chaya District

## Kanazawa's Patronage of Traditional Japanese Culture

The powerful Maeda clan brought peace and prosperity to the Kaga region, a part of modern-day Ishikawa Prefecture, and they made Kanazawa their seat of power. With peace and prosperity came refined traditions and crafts, which were furthered by the Maeda family's patronage and participation in cultural activities. Their influence is easily seen in Kanazawa today. Every evening, you can hear the delicate sounds of the shamisen, a three-stringed musical instrument, and the singing of Kanazawa geigi, the local name for geisha, in the teahouse districts.

The Maeda's patronage of the tea ceremony, once a favorite pastime of the samurai class, is carried on by local citizens who continue the practice and welcome visitors to join in. You can find a number of facilities in Kanazawa that offers the full tea ceremony experience or prepare tea for visitors.

[Learn more](#)



Noh theater was once a part of samurai culture and was supported by the lords of the Kaga domain. Its popularity spread beyond the samurai class to the merchants and townspeople. There are many events where you can watch Noh plays and facilities where you can try on Noh masks and costumes.

[Learn more](#)



## The Epicenter of Traditional Japanese Crafts

Since the 17th century when the lord of the Maeda clan invited the finest craftsmen from around Japan to his domain, Kanazawa has thrived as the center for traditional Japanese crafts. Kanazawa's dedication towards arts and crafts has been recognized by UNESCO, which designated Kanazawa as a city of Crafts and Folk Art in its Creative Cities Network in 2009.

Kanazawa is now known as the City of Kogei, meaning crafts. Elegant lacquered works with gold leaf, brilliant embroidered and dyed pieces, and masterful pottery are only a few of the traditional crafts that are still created by hand in Kanazawa, just as they have been for centuries.

[Learn more](#)



Stirrups with Japanese Character Motifs in Silver Inlay (Kaga-Honda Museum)

Kaga Zogan (Inlay)



Kaga Yuzen (Silk Dyeing)



Kanazawa Shikki (Lacquerware)



Gold Leaf




Local Toys



Kaga Temari (Cotton Handballs)

## A Castle Town Where Modern and Traditional Art and Architecture Coexist in Harmony

Although many of the historical neighborhoods from the time when the castle was still active remain intact, the city is by no means frozen in time. The ties to tradition are strong, but modern structures have sprung up as Kanazawa developed. The harmony between the contemporary and the traditional can be seen everywhere you look. You'll be greeted at Kanazawa Station by the Tsuzumi-mon Gate, which is simultaneously strikingly modern and representative of traditional Japanese culture. Visit Kanazawa to witness how a modern city can coexist with its past and even repurpose its historical buildings to achieve the perfect blend of past and future.

[Learn more](#) 



©D. T. Suzuki Museum

### D.T. Suzuki Museum

Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, known as D.T. Suzuki, was born in Kanazawa and was instrumental in introducing Zen Buddhism to the western world. The D.T. Suzuki Museum is a place where visitors can learn about his life, and it provides spaces where visitors can engage in their own contemplation. Enter the world of Zen and experience its ideas for yourself.



### 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

The museum was designed to be a green park space in the middle of the city. The glass cylindrical architecture of the building is iconic. Artwork that visitors can see, touch, and interact with are spread out across the museum's grounds.



### National Crafts Museum

The National Crafts Museum is the only national art museum dedicated to kogei, or crafts, and the first national museum to be situated on the coast of the Japan Sea. The museum holds more than 1,900 artifacts primarily originating from the 1900s and after. The artifacts were relocated from Tokyo to be displayed in Kanazawa, the city of Kogei. The museum is housed in two former military buildings dating back to the early 1900s, which were dismantled and reconstructed in Kanazawa. The buildings' facades have been restored to their original vibrancy.




### Kanazawa Station

Chosen as one of the world's 14 most beautiful train stations. Kanazawa sees a lot of rain and snow, so the glass dome called Motenashi Dome was designed to be an umbrella for visitors. The Tsuzumi-mon Gate stands in front of the dome and evokes the image of the tsuzumi drums used in Noh theater, one of Kanazawa's traditional arts.



## Kanazawa Cuisine: A Delight to the Senses

From its lush mountains to its rich coastlines, the region is home to an endless variety of ingredients that are featured in Kanazawa's famous cuisine. Using seasonal local ingredients made to be as beautiful as it is delicious, Kaga cuisine is a feast for the eyes as well as the stomach. Dishes are served in beautiful tableware. Dining spaces are arranged with traditional seasonal decor. Kaga cuisine is truly the full-package. The Sea of Japan is home to the best Japanese seafood, including crab, sweet shrimp, and yellowtail. Sample the variety of fresh seafood in Kanazawa's many sushi and seafood restaurants at the bustling Omicho Market, where locals shop for the freshest ingredients. And no meal is complete without a round of Kanazawa sake made from the region's crystal clear waters and bountiful rice harvest.

[Learn more](#) 



Sushi



Sake



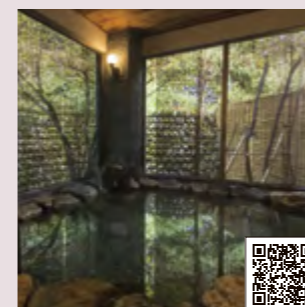
Jibuni (Local Dish)



### Omicho Market

Omicho Market has a long history of over 300 years. It is called the Kanazawa residents' kitchen for how deeply connected it is to everyday life in the city. There are approximately 170 stores in the market that sell fresh seafood and locally grown vegetables and fruits. It is a cornerstone of Kanazawa's food culture.

## Outside the Hustle and Bustle



### Onsen (Hot Springs)

There are three onsen areas near Kanazawa, all of which are only a mere thirty-minute car ride away from Kanazawa station. Surrounded by mountains and nature, they are spaces of peace and tranquility where visitors can relax.



### Port Area

Ono is a port town on the Sea of Japan, where there is a thriving soy sauce and miso industry. You can stroll around the town and drop by different shops to taste the soy sauce and miso.



# SPRING

March – May

There is nowhere better to enjoy the cherry blossoms than the Kanazawa Castle grounds and the adjacent Kenrokuen Garden. There, you can enjoy the beauty of the cherry trees like the Maeda clan lords did centuries ago. In addition, many popular locations are illuminated after sunset, including the romantic views outside the Ishikawa-mon Gate leading to the castle and the riverbank near the Asanogawa Ohashi Bridge.



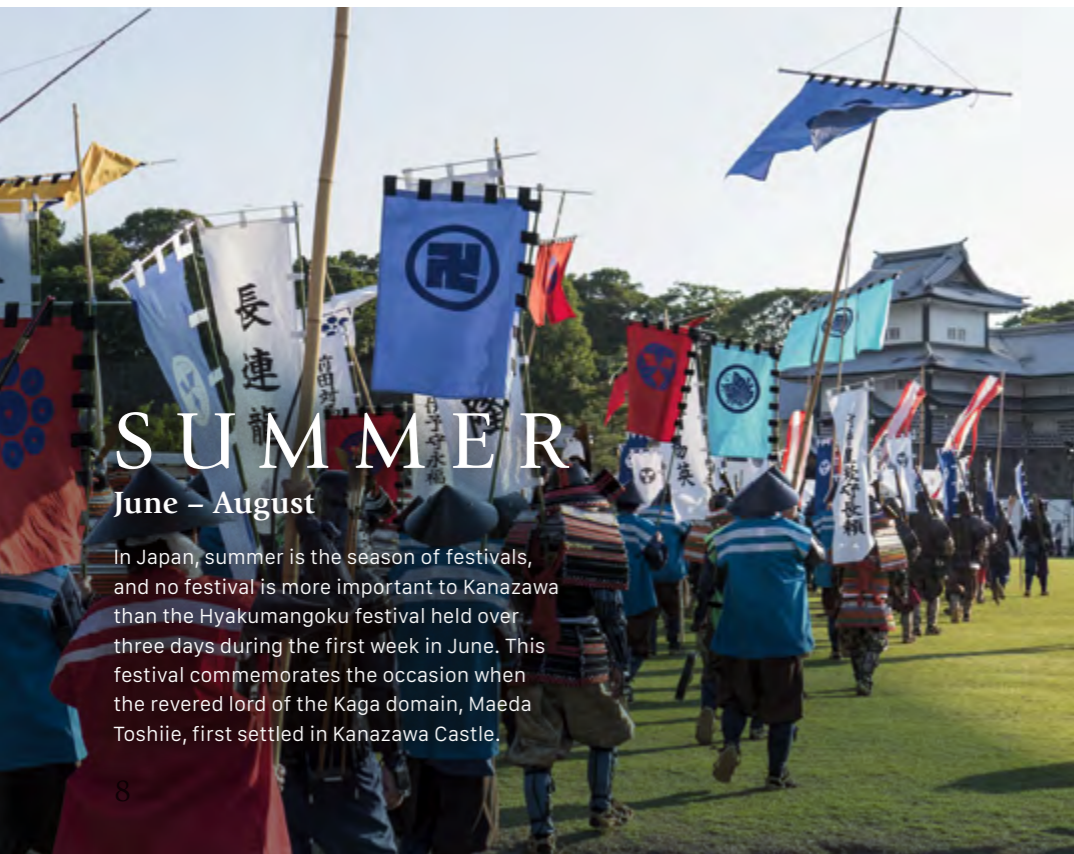
# AUTUMN

September – November

The turning of leaves begins in late October. The best time to see it is usually from mid to late November. Kenrokuen Garden, one of the best spots to enjoy the fall colors, is lit up after nightfall starting from early November to the end of the month. Apart from the famous garden, Mt. Utatsu, Daijōji Temple, and the samurai residence Kurando Terashima's House also feature stunning views of the annual fall foliage.

## Kanazawa: A Different Beauty in Every Season

Kanazawa, whose original city structure with Kanazawa Castle at its heart has been preserved to this day, presents distinctly different faces in each of the four seasons. Every new season ushers in uniquely beautiful scenery, events, and seasonal foods to experience. Since it's impossible to choose the best one, why not visit Kanazawa in every one of its beautiful seasons?



# SUMMER

June – August

In Japan, summer is the season of festivals, and no festival is more important to Kanazawa than the Hyakumangoku festival held over three days during the first week in June. This festival commemorates the occasion when the revered lord of the Kaga domain, Maeda Toshiie, first settled in Kanazawa Castle.

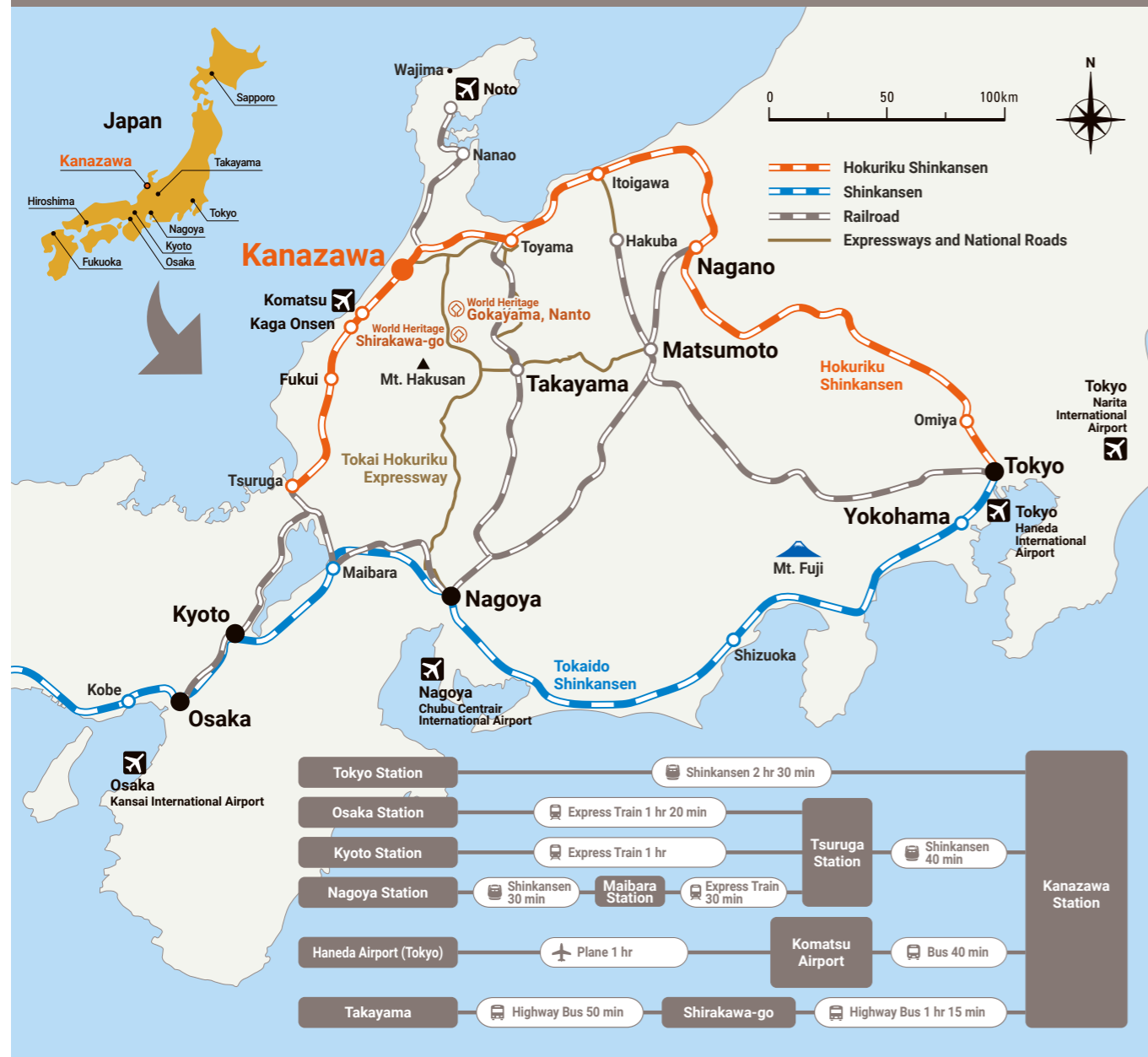


# WINTER

December – February

You can witness the skillful setting up of yukitsuri, an ancient method of protecting the city's beautiful, manicured trees from winter's heavy snowfall. The graceful yukitsuri ropes are beautiful to behold and are a symbol of the approaching winter. Another traditional defense against the snowy winter is the straw mats lining the mud walls of the Nagamachi Samurai District. The mats along with the snow-covered roofs and stone pavement create a scene from the Edo period.

## Getting to KANAZAWA



## Getting around KANAZAWA



### BUS

Kanazawa is a compact city. The primary sightseeing locations are all located within two kilometers of Kanazawa Castle Park. They are easily accessible by foot or by the Loop Buses. The Loop Buses tour Kanazawa's highlights, so it is a convenient way to travel around Kanazawa without any concern of getting lost.

Also available is the ONE DAY PASS, a pass which allows holders to travel by bus within a designated area freely for the day. The pass is also purchasable through your mobile device.



### BICYCLE

Machi-Nori is a bike-share service in Kanazawa. Their electric bikes can be borrowed and returned at around a hundred docking stations. (as of March, 2026)

## Short Trips out of KANAZAWA



### GOKAYAMA, NANTO

Gokayama is a village where people live in gassho-style thatched-roof houses. It is a Living World Heritage, where the traditional Japanese paper industry and folk songs thrive.



### SHIRAKAWA-GO

Here you will find the unspoiled landscape of a Japanese village. People still live in Shirakawago to this day. The beautiful mountain village has retained its traditional lifestyle.



### TAKAYAMA

Cultures from the east, west, north, and south have been meeting and blending since ancient times. The townscape and culture have been preserved, and tradition is still alive today.



### MATSUMOTO

Centered around the national treasure Matsumoto Castle, the city area retains the atmosphere of a castle town. It is also surrounded by the Japanese Alps and has a mountain resort aspect.

## Tourist Information



### Kanazawa Station Tourist Information Center

Located within Kanazawa Station, the center offers tourism information in English on Kanazawa's attractions, accommodations, restaurants, and public transport. Visitors can also arrange for the delivery of their luggage to their hotel at the center.



### Kanazawa Central Tourist Information Center

Located near one of Kanazawa's central districts, Nagamachi Samurai District, the center offers tourism information in English on Kanazawa's attractions, accommodations, and restaurants. The center also offers luggage storage and holds various cultural activities.