

October 18th, 2023

"Exploring NARA, The Heartland of Japanese Food Culture" Project



Press Release

**Six special tours to experience Japanese food culture with roots in Nara.
Promoting the new brand image for tourism in Nara Prefecture centered on food.**

**~ Selected as a project to promote regionally integrated gastronomy tourism by
the Japan Tourism Agency ~**

The "Exploring NARA, The Heartland of Japanese Food Culture" will begin "Six tour trials", "Production of English tools for inbound tourists", "Training for English guides" etc. in preparation for the autumn tourist season. Those will be eventually implemented from October this year until January next year.

These implementations are due to the fact that < **"Exploring NARA, The Heartland of Japanese Food Culture" Project**, which is to establish, disseminate and promote globally of traditional gastronomy tourism in Nara> was selected by the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) as a project to promote community-integrated gastronomy tourism.

In this project selected by the JTA, we will trial six tours targeting inbound tourists, with themes such as Nara's sake and food with Nara roots. These tours are made up of special programs by Nara's tourism-related businesses that have come together for this project.

Each tour has a central theme of food culture that has its roots in Nara, such as sake and matcha, and includes variety of valuable food experiences. We aim to increase awareness of the tours that convey the origins of Japan's food culture and the charm of Nara, where it still lives on, to travelers from all over the world who are interested in Japan and promote their participation. In addition, we will also create tools for each tour in English to improve the satisfaction level of travelers participating in the tours from abroad.



The "Exploring NARA, The Heartland of Japanese Food Culture" Project aims to refine the roots of Japanese food in Nara as an attractive tourist asset, and widely disseminate attractiveness of a journey to trace the roots of Japanese food culture and DNA in Nara to tourism businesses, tourists visiting Japan, foreign residents in Japan, embassies, and tourism-related personnel. This project was launched last year (2022) and is scheduled for five years (2022-2026), with the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Expo in mind. We will continue to contribute to increasing the influx of tourists and improving consumption, with the aim of achieving 51 million tourists visiting Nara Prefecture in 2025.

[6 Trial Tours]

① Nara, the birthplace of Japanese sake

Enjoy story of Sake brewery and specialty of Nara Hotel at Nara, birthplace of Sake

Yasuo Toyosawa, the fifth president of Nara Toyosawa Sake Brewery Co., Ltd., which was founded in 1868, will share valuable stories about the commitment to sake of Nara and the secret behind its delicious taste.

Also, the food specially prepared for the event by the Nara Hotel, which was born as the "guest house of Kansai" and has a 100-year history. Guests can taste the special marriage of Japanese sake and Japanese cuisine, which has its roots in Nara.

Guests can enjoy a special dinner with "NAON", a special sake made by listening to classical music during the fermentation process, and a performance featuring Bassoon and piano by members of the Japan National Orchestra who actually performed at that time.

For details → <https://exploring-nara.jp/en/experience/2023-1/>

Date & Time: October 22nd, 2023 (Sun) 18:00 start

Venue: Nara Hotel

(reference)

- Nara Hotel: <https://www.narahotel.co.jp/eng/>
- Nara Toyosawa Sake Brewery Co., Ltd.: <http://nara-toyosawa.jp>

② Nara, roots of Matcha and the Tea Ceremony

Matcha sweets and Special dinner to experience matcha and making Chasen

Nara is the roots of the tea ceremony, and the Chasen (tea whisk), a tea utensil, was also born in Nara.

Mr. Tango Tanimura, the 20th generation chasen master of Wahokudo, who is the only person in Japan to pass down the skills from generation to generation, will talk about the tea ceremony and utensils, demonstrate making a chasen, which guests can experience. This is an original and limited event to enjoy Nara Hotel's cuisine, Nara sake and matcha sweets so that guests can enjoy sake and matcha to the fullest that cannot be found anywhere else.

For details → <https://exploring-nara.jp/en/experience/2023-2/>

Date & Time: November 5th, 2023 (Sun) 17:00-20:00

(17:00~ Talk & Demonstration of making Chasen, 18:00~ Dinner)

(reference)

- Wahokudo Tango Tanimura official site: <https://www.tango-tanimura.com/en/>
- Yucho Sake Brewery Co., Ltd.: <https://www.yucho-sake.jp/en/>
- BODAIMOTO: <https://bodaimoto.org/language/en/what-is-bodaimoto/>

③ Nara, the roots of Japanese sake and seasonings

Let's all enjoy the power hidden in Japanese mythology, sake, and sacred rice

Sake is made by brewing sacred rice brought from the gods. Sushi is eaten on special occasions

using rice along with delicacies from the sea and the mountains. Japanese people have been able to communicate by sharing the power hidden in sacred rice.

Dishes that make full use of the "UMAMI" that is the basis of Japanese cuisine, which has been designated as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Japanese rich soup stock will be served. The head chef of Hotel Asyl Nara will offer dishes that skillfully utilize "UMAMI", one of the five human tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami) discovered in Japan. In addition, by combining traditional herbal medicine meal developed in Nara (listed in the Todaiji Temple offering book "Shujuyakucho") and fermented dishes (Nara-zuke, etc.), guest can enjoy World of Nara's food culture and traditional techniques passed down with all five senses.

This is a special dinner where you can enjoy sake, Traditional herbal medicine meal, fermented dishes, and cuisine with full of UMAMI with roots in Nara while also savoring Japanese mythology and the Japanese spirituality that has been nurtured over 1,300 years.

Guests can experience branding on a Masu, a square wooden cup, made of Yoshino cedar.

Nara's sake, often brewed with barrel made of Yoshino cedar, will be served with Masu made of Yoshino cedar, which guests can bring home as a souvenir.

For details → <https://exploring-nara.jp/en/experience/2023-3/>

Date and time: Monday, November 20, 2023, starting at 17:00

Location: Hotel Asyl Nara

(reference)

- Inada Shuzo & Co., Ltd.: <https://inaten.com>
- Hotel Asyl Nara: <https://www.worldheritage.co.jp/asyl/en/index.html>

④ Kaki (Japanese Persimmon) of Nara

Enjoy Kaki at Gojo, the city of Japan's largest Kaki production. Experience Kaki Festival, harvesting and tasting.

Gojo City has the largest production of Japanese persimmons in Japan.

This is a special event full of Japanese persimmons that can only be experienced locally.

After visiting the popular local festival "Kaki no Sato Festival", guests will experience harvesting Japanese persimmons in a farmer's field, and then have lunch prepared by local mothers using seasonal vegetables and simple recipes handed down in the area at a farm restaurant located in an old private house of over 150 years old.

For details → <https://exploring-nara.jp/en/experience/2023-4/>

Date and time: November 23rd (Thursday/Holiday)

Venue: Gojo city, Nara prefecture

(reference)

- Noyusha Oindo: <https://www.noyusha1338.com/>
- Restaurant: <https://www.noyusha1338.com/restaurant>
- Genbei: <https://genbei.info/english/>
- Kakino Senmon: <https://a-kaki.com>
- Gojoshuzo Co., Ltd.: https://sake-goshin.com/pages/en_top

⑤ Nara, roots of Japanese sake

Traditional gastronomy lunch with Japanese sake brewed from "Bodaimoto", the oldest sake mash at its birthplace, Shoryakuji, the birthplace

Shoryakuji Temple, known as the birthplace of Japanese sake is also known for its spectacular autumn leaves. This is the special experience program that guest can enjoy sake brewed from Bodaimoto, Japan's oldest sake mash, listening to talks on its restoration by Koshin Ohara, the chief priest of this temple, and Dai Komai, chairman of "Sake Research Group focused on Bodaimoto", take a stroll through the grounds of Shoryakuji Temple, which is known for its spectacular autumn leaves, enjoy temple's traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine in a private space and tea and chestnut sweets served by the chief priest.

For details → <https://exploring-nara.jp/en/experience/2023-5/>

Date and time: November 30, 2023 (Thursday)

Location: Shoryakuji Temple (Nara City, Nara Prefecture)

(reference)

- Shoryakuji: <http://shoryakuji.jp/>
- Movie of Autumn leaves at Shoryakuji(Koichi Hozan):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_caOs9Y7Hk

⑥ An overnight model tour

Exploring NARA, The Heartland of Japanese Food Culture

Nara is the origin of gourmet cuisine in Japan which can be seen from the Manyoshu, which is the oldest anthology of poems, and wooden strips excavated around Heijokyo, where the capital used to be. Guests can find that Nara is the roots of Japanese cuisine at places like The History of the Nara Palace Site Museum, where many wooden strips are stored.

In addition, We are also planning a special overnight tour where you can enjoy tours and fully enjoy Nara, the heartland of Japanese cuisine which includes a wellness program to help guests to relax both mind and body in Nara, the birthplace of traditional medicine and herbal medicine that Japan is proud of, a special up-close tour of the preparation process for Bodhimoto, a sake mash, at Shoryakuji Temple in Nara, the birthplace of sake, and a sake brewery.

Date: January 23 (Tue) ~ 24 (Wed), 2024

Location: Shoryakuji Temple, Nara city center etc.

Contents: Detailed information will be disclosed on the project website by the end of October, and recruitment will start in November.

For details → official site: <https://exploring-nara.jp/en/>

●Creation of the English tools for inbound and training the guides

We will begin producing English flyers explaining such as sake, Kaki, Japanese persimmons, the roots of food for foreign tourists visiting Japan who participate in each tour.

As the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan increases across the country, a lack of information and explanations in English has been pointed out both domestically and internationally. In this project, we will promote activities with the goal of making Nara Prefecture the region with the best response to inbound tourism in Japan.

【Contact for inquiries from embassies and coverage of tours from the press】

"Exploring NARA, The Heartland of Japanese Food Culture" Project

E-mail: Press_PublicRelations@outlook.jp

【Contact for this project/tours from businesses and general consumers】

"Exploring NARA, The Heartland of Japanese Food Culture" Project

<https://exploring-nara.jp/en/contact/>

Official Website : <https://exploring-nara.jp/en/> (English)

<https://exploring-nara.jp> (Japanese)