



- Explore the regions -



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Kawagoe Ichibangai, the street of warehouse-style (*kurazukuri*) buildings

Where History and Culture Thrive Together

Among the many charms of the Kanto region are its fascinating and highly engaging history as well as its enduring culture. These high points of cultivation are often reflected in architecture,

and you'd be hard pressed to find a place where history and culture are better preserved to retain their vitality through its buildings, activities, and overall ambience than Kawagoe.

Saitama Pref.

“Little Edo” Culture: Alive and Well in Kawagoe

Kawagoe once played a key role as north-side guardian for the former capital of Edo (now Tokyo). Its value was assured by a robust transportation infrastructure, both by river and by Kawagoe Kaido Highway, making the city a vital distribution hub for specialty products and produce from local and neighboring areas to effectively reach Edo. This fluid movement also enabled firsthand access to the capital's latest cultural trends, an influence that led to cultivated life in Kawagoe and inspired its moniker of

Koedo, Japanese for “Little Edo.”

The best time to visit this convenient city at the heart of Saitama—an hour by train from Tokyo—is on the 8th, 18th, or 28th. On these days, you'll get a Kawagoe Kimono Day discount and other services by donning a kimono. Don't worry about bringing your own kimono: heaps of rental shops will meet your needs. Find one you like, wear it, and head out to Kawagoe Ichibangai, the center of Koedo, where traditional Japanese clothing is most fitting.

A fire in 1893 tragically destroyed most of Ichibangai. The Osawa Family Residence, however, survived. It's the city's oldest house built in a warehouse style (*kurazukuri*), preserved in its original 1792 form and

listed as an Important Cultural Property. Recovery from the tragedy inspired merchants who had suffered and survived to rebuild the town in that style, incorporating tiled



Kashiya Yokocho (Penny candy alley)

roofs and black plaster walls for fireproofing and durability. Over 30 buildings stand today since the 1890s and continue to function as shops selling nostalgic toys, cute sundry items, traditional crafts, and sweet potato snacks and other delectable delights prized as Kawagoe specialties. Another survivor of fire is the old 16-meter bell tower, the fourth to be rebuilt and a landmark of Kawagoe at city center, which gently strikes four times a day.

Yet another phoenix reborn from the ashes is a major temple of the Tendai Buddhist sect, Kita-in. Buildings from Edo Castle that



Kita-in, a major temple of the Tendai Buddhist sect



Detail of the Gohyaku Rakan (500 Rakan [arhat] statues) at Kita-in

once served as study, reception area, and more were relocated from their original location in Momijiyama. Relocation took place after Kita-in was destroyed in the Great Fire of Kawagoe in 1638, its reconstruction done under orders of Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. Also rebuilt was adjacent Toshogu Shrine, a brightly painted Shinto building.

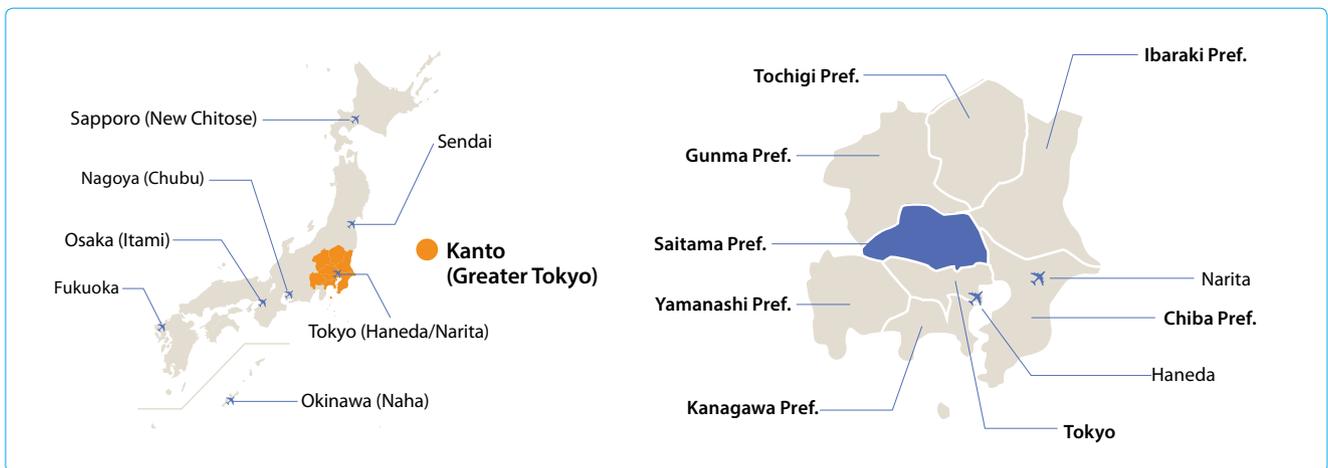
The temple, built more than 1,200 years ago on more spacious property, maintains its thrilling legacy of cultural and sacred assets. Its sculptural collection of 500 arhats—enlightened beings, some who attend Buddha—is considered one of Japan's three great Gohyaku Rakan gatherings,

along with Oita's Rakanji and Kamakura's Kenchoji temples. The finely figured facial expressions, ranging from tears to laughter, may open your eyes and heart to the inner promptings and emotions of those arhats.



Toki no Kane, a time bell tower

Getting There: ANA daily serves Tokyo (Haneda and Narita) with many direct flights from airports around Japan. Trains from Tokyo Station to Kawagoe take about 1 hr.



Looking Ahead

The next theme for Get to Know Kanto (Greater Tokyo) in January 2020 is Experience in Tokyo, when we introduce Mt. Takao and its beloved Buddhist vegetarian cuisine (*shojin ryori*).

Handy URL

Visit the special website of Tastes of JAPAN by ANA Kanto webpage.



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