



- Explore the regions -



Tastes of JAPAN by ANA has won the award for Tourism Business (Field of Domestic and Inbound Travel) from Tourism EXPO Japan 2016, supported by Japan Tourism Agency and others.



- 1 Plum blossoms and Kobuntei, a villa designed by Mito Clan Lord Tokugawa Nariaki and restored in 1958, are the highlights of Kairakuen in Mito, Ibaraki Pref.
- 2 About 180 cherry trees line the 465-meter path to Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine in Kamakura, Kanagawa Pref.

Blooming Nature in Gardens, Temples, & Shrines

First-time visitors to Japan may be surprised to know February is a time not only for blossoms that signal the end of winter but also for celebrating their arrival, and the Kanto region is no

exception. Now you can experience the fruitful blooming of plum trees in Mito’s Kairakuen and cherry blossoms at Kamakura’s temples and shrines.

Looking Ahead

The next theme will be an Area Guide to the Tohoku region in March, when we introduce six prefectures and their remarkable cherry blossoms, famous trees, and hot spots for viewing them.

Handy URL

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



Save on domestic flights within Japan by booking early and accessing lower fares!



A Japanese white-eye on a plum tree



Mito, Ibaraki Pref. Plums of Kairakuen

One of Kanto's greatest spots for viewing plum blossoms is Kairakuen, the world's second largest park area in a city setting, after New York's Central Park. Named one of three grand Japan gardens, along with Kanazawa's Kenrokuen and Okayama's Korakuen, this idyllic and enchanting wonderland was created in 1842 by Mito clan lord Tokugawa Nariaki as a place of recreation to be enjoyed with locals. Plums were planted in the garden to bloom in early spring to ease the spirit of those who survived winter and to preserve their fruit in times of scarcity. About 3,000 trees in 100 varieties come alive from mid-February through late March for a breathtaking scene. Chosen for matchless blossom shape, fragrance, color, and more, the Six Trees of Mito are particularly noteworthy.

During the Plum Festival, the trees are magnificently lit up with blossoms set against the night sky in glorious illumination. Fun events

during the festival include Kimono Day, when local and overseas visitors happily appreciate the wonderful blossoms wearing rental kimonos, and a tea ceremony in gardens fragrant with the essence of plums. In early summer, workers of the landscape company taking care of the garden will shake plums from tree crowns with handy bamboo rods. Kairakuen sells them by the kilo.

Getting There: ANA daily serves Tokyo (Haneda and Narita) with many direct flights from airports around Japan. Travel from Tokyo Station to Mito Station by limited express train is a little over 1 hour, and then 20 minutes by bus to Kairakuen.

The Great Buddha of Kamakura amid cherry blossoms at Kotoku-in temple
Photo by Gorazd Vilhar



Kamakura, Kanagawa Pref. Blossoming Culture in Sacred Spaces

A nature-rich area between mountains and ocean, Kamakura is an hour south of central Tokyo offering seasonal beauty and clear-weather views of distant Mt. Fuji. A political center in the late 12th century and the first Japan city where warrior culture flourished, it bears evidence of that culture and ancient capital. Such historic appeal plus some 150 temples and shrines make Kamakura a tourist hot spot. Most symbolic of the city is the temple of Kotoku-in, enjoying the protection of a large Buddha statue (11.3 meters high and weighing 121 tons). When pink-and-white cherry blossoms (*sakura*) arrive, they make a splendid contrast with the sacred precinct's guardian, the bronze divinity whose inner life may be literally entered for a nominal fee.

Another place for cherry blossom viewing is Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, with varieties like Yoshino and Kawazu-zakura in late February and Yae-zakura in mid-April. About 180 cherry trees

lining *dankazura*, the 465-meter path from the second to third *torii* gate, are one of Japan's 100 best cherry blossom spots. Also popular are unique temples, one famed for beautiful hydrangeas and another enjoyed for autumn foliage, and yet another beloved for a magnificent bamboo forest. In these ways and more, Kamakura offers an array of culture, history, nature, and seasonal pleasures not to be missed.

Getting There: ANA daily serves Tokyo (Haneda and Narita) with many direct flights from airports around Japan. Train travel from Tokyo Station to Kamakura Station takes about 1 hour. Many Kamakura temple and shrine gates close by 5 PM, so be sure to get an early start.

