

# Kanazawa Sites Overview

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The name Kanazawa, which literally means marsh of gold, is said to have originated from a legend that the peasant Imohori Togoro washed gold dust in a local marsh. It is also said that the name originated from the fact that the present Kenrokuen Garden area was called Kanazawago and Kanazawanosho in ancient times.

Around the middle of the 16th century, the Buddhist Ikko sect set up a religious government in Kanazawa. In 1583, Maeda Toshiie, the top retainer of Hideyoshi Toyotomi who reigned over the whole country, entered Kanazawa Castle. The Maeda family governed Kaga (presently Ishikawa prefecture) for 300 years over the 14th generation henceforth.

During this period, the Maeda family was treated as the second greatest daimyo (powerful feudal ruler) next to Tokugawa Shogun (the central governor). The family's financial power based on the harvest of rice was invested in the promotion of culture and learning. This led to the development of a number of traditional high cultures and activities including handicrafts (e.g., Kanazawa gold leaf and Kaga Yuzen), subtle and profound activities (e.g., the tea ceremony and Noh theater), and gastronomic cultures (e.g., Kaga cooking and Japanese sweets). These cultures and activities have been handed down to this date.

During the modernization of Japan in the Meiji period (from 1868), Kanazawa was left behind the industrial development of Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. Therefore, Kanazawa changed from a leading big city in Japan to a base city in the Hokuriku district. Kanazawa escaped war devastation in World War II. Therefore, historical streets coexist with a development zone including modernistic buildings in the city area.

The City of Crafts and Folk Art UNESCO appointed Kanazawa to the Creative Cities Network in June 2009. UNESCO launched the Network to promote the international cooperation and exchange of each city in the world that develops creative and cultural industries. The Network has seven categories, i.e., Cities of Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Music, and Media Arts, and Kanazawa was appointed UNESCO City of Crafts and Folk Art.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>From [History of Kanazawa](#)



### 1) Omi-cho Market

Hours: Vary by individual shop; typically, 9:00 to 17:30

Closed: Closing days vary by shop, but many shops are closed on Sundays, national holidays or Wednesdays, as well as during the New Year holidays.

Omicho Market (近江町市場, Ōmichō Ichiba) has been Kanazawa's largest fresh food market since the Edo Period. Today, it is a busy and colorful network of covered streets lined by about 200 shops and stalls. While most shops specialize in the excellent local seafood and produce, you can also find flowers, clothing, kitchen tools and more on sale.

Although the market is most exciting during the morning hours, it also gets quite busy around noon, when tourists and locals arrive to have lunch at restaurants inside the market. It is not unusual for lines to build in front of the popular restaurants, many of which specialize in rice bowls topped with fresh Kanazawa seafood.







## 2) Oyama Shrine

Hours: Always open

Closed: No closing days

Admission: Free

Oyama Shrine (尾山神社, Oyama Jinja) is dedicated to Maeda Toshiie, the first lord of the powerful, local Maeda Clan. The shrine was constructed in 1599 by Toshiie's successor, Maeda Toshinaga on Mount Utatsu. It was later moved to its present location.

Oyama Shrine is known for its unusual gate, which was designed by a Dutch architect, using elements of European and Asian religious themes. While the first story displays a mixture of Japanese and Chinese influence, the upper stories once served as a lighthouse and feature a Dutch style, stained glass window.

The gate originally guarded the entrance to the palace of Kanazawa Castle, and was only later moved to Oyama Shrine. On the shrine grounds stands a statue of Lord Toshiie. There is also a nice strolling garden with ponds and bridges, designed to resemble harps and lutes.



### 3) Nagamachi Samurai District

Nagamachi (長町) was a samurai district located at the foot of the former Kanazawa Castle, where samurai and their families used to reside. The area preserves a historic atmosphere with its remaining samurai residences, earthen walls, private entrance gates, narrow lanes and water canals.

One of the main attractions of the district is the centrally located Nomura-ke, a restored samurai residence displaying the lifestyle and artifacts of the era when samurai were prosperous. In contrast is the Shinise Kinenkan Museum, a restored pharmacy displaying the lives of the merchant class which rose in prosperity as the samurai declined.

The district has a few other museums and restored structures, as well as a number of shops and restaurants scattered throughout. Below is list of some of the attractions around Nagamachi:

#### Nomura-ke

Centrally located in the Nagamachi District

Hours: 8:30 to 17:30 (until 16:30 from Oct through Mar)

Closed: December 26 and 27, January 1 and 2

Admission: 550 yen

A restored samurai residence with a beautiful, small garden. The Nomura were a high ranked samurai family who, like many other samurai, went broke when Japan's feudal era came to an end with the Meiji Period.

#### Shinise Kinenkan Museum

5-minute walk south of Nomura-ke

Hours: 9:30 to 17:00 (entry until 16:30)

Closed: No closing days

Admission: 100 yen

The Shinise Kinenkan is a restored shop of the Edo Period. Once a prominent pharmacy, it now is a museum that also shows local Kanazawa crafts.

### Maeda Tosanokami-ke Shiryokan

5-minute walk south of Nomura-ke

Hours: 9:30 to 17:00 (entry until 16:30)

Closed: No closing days

Admission: 310 yen

This museum is dedicated to the Maeda family who once ruled over the region around Kanazawa. The museum features samurai armor and other relics of the Maeda Clan. English audio guides are freely available.

### Ashigaru Shiryokan Museum

5-minute walk north of Nomura-ke

Hours: 9:30 to 17:00

Closed: No closing days

Admission: Free

The ashigaru, or footsoldiers, were the lowest ranked soldiers of the samurai class. This small museum consists of two reconstructed homes, which illustrate the relatively austere lifestyle of the ashigaru.

### Kaga Hanshi

2-minute walk north of Nomura-ke

Hours: 9:30 to 17:00

Closed: No closing days

Admission: Free

This preserved building was previously a stable that housed horses. Today it contains a nice strolling garden in the middle of the Nagamachi district.

### Nagamachi Yuzenkan

5-minute walk northwest of Nomura-ke

Hours: 9:30 to 17:00

Closed: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, December to February

Admission: 350 yen

Nagamachi Yuzenkan stands on the site of a former samurai house and is now a silk painting workshop open to the public. Visitors can observe the artists as they mix colors and paint beautiful designs on silk.







#### 4a) Nishi Chaya District

A chaya (茶屋, lit. teahouse) is an exclusive type of restaurant where guests are entertained by geisha who perform song and dance. Kanazawa has three well preserved chaya districts, Higashi Chayagai (Eastern Chaya District), Nishi Chayagai (Western Chaya District) and Kazuemachi. Each of the three districts has its own charms and mix of shops, cafes and chaya restaurants.

The Nishi Chaya District (西茶屋街, Nishi Chayagai), is a compact area just a short walk from the Ninja Temple. It is much smaller and quieter than the Higashi Chayagai and has just one attraction open to the public: a museum, the Nishi Chaya Shiryokan, which displays the history of the district and is a meeting place for free tours of the area (Japanese only).

#### Nishi Chaya Shiryokan

At the southern end of the district

Hours: 9:30 to 17:00

Closed: No closing days

Admission: Free

This converted chaya houses a museum with a model tearoom and an exhibition about the history of the district.





#### 4b) Ninjadera

Hours: Every 60 minutes from 9:00 to 16:00 (weekdays and winter)

Every 30 minutes from 9:00 to 16:30 (weekends and national holidays outside winter)

Closed: January 1 and infrequent irregular closures

Admission: 1000 yen (reservations recommended by phone: 076-241-0888)

Myoryuji Temple (妙立寺, Myōryūji), commonly known as Ninjadera ("Ninja Temple"), was built by the Maeda lords, rulers over the region during the Edo Period. While not actually associated with ninja, the temple earned its nickname because of its many deceptive defences.

Since the shogun imposed strict building restrictions as one way of weakening his regional lords, Myoryuji was designed to circumvent the restrictions and serve as a disguised military outpost. It was built with considerable defences and escape routes, so that its defenders could alert the castle in the event of an attack.

The temple's defences aimed to guard against intruders or attack, and include hidden tunnels, secret rooms, traps, and a labyrinth of corridors and staircases. These can be viewed by guided tour (reservations recommended) held in Japanese, although good English guidebooks are available.

Myoryuji is located in the Teramachi District in the south of the city. Populated by numerous temples, this area was originally located outside of the city limits as were the entertainment districts.



#### 4c) The D.T. Suzuki Museum

Hours: 9:00 to 17:00 (entry until 16:30)  
 Closed: Mondays (or the following day if Monday is a national holiday)  
 December 29 to January 3  
 Admission: 310 yen (covered by the Cultural Attraction Passport)

The D.T. Suzuki Museum (鈴木大拙館, Suzuki Daisetsu Kan) is a small museum commemorating the life and works of Suzuki Daisetz Teitaro (1870-1966), a prominent Buddhist philosopher. The museum was opened in 2011 in the district of Kanazawa where Suzuki was born, a ten-minute walk from Kenrokuen. On display are exhibitions showcasing the writings of D.T. Suzuki which allow the visitor to learn more about his life and philosophy. In addition, the architecture of the museum serves as an interpretation of D.T. Suzuki's life and religious scholarship; its use of clean, simple lines and open spaces causes visitors to pause and reflect.

D.T. Suzuki was a prolific writer who was instrumental in introducing Japanese Zen philosophy to the west. Having spent much of his early life living and studying at Engakuji Temple in Kamakura, he wrote mainly about Zen Buddhism and its relation to and influence on everyday life. Suzuki was also proficient in English, Chinese and Sanskrit in addition to Japanese, and translated various religious texts and scholarly articles.

#### Inside the Contemplative Space

Designed by architect Taniguchi Yoshio who also designed the Heisei Chishinkan in Kyoto and the Horyuji Homotsukan in Tokyo amongst others, the architecture of the D.T. Suzuki Museum lends a hand in conveying the serenity that comes with Zen philosophy. From the unassuming entrance to the overall architecture and interior, there is a sense of tranquility that can be felt throughout the museum. Despite its small area, the museum has three buildings connected by corridors built around a large flat pond at their center called the Water Mirror Garden. There is also a garden around the grounds which visitors can enter.

Another feature of the museum is the Contemplative Space, consisting of a large room with openings on all four sides, which extends out into the Water Mirror Garden. There are seats in this space where visitors can take time to meditate and think over their thoughts whilst looking out over the water. In addition, a learning space at one end of the museum has English and Japanese books written by Suzuki for visitors to read; iPads for multimedia learning; as well as a large a window that looks out into a garden.



#### 4d) The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art

Hours: Exhibitions open 10:00 to 18:00 (Friday and Saturday until 20:00)

Public spaces open 9:00 to 22:00

Closed: Mondays (or Tuesday if Monday is a national holiday), New Year holidays

Admission: Varies by exhibition, typically 1200 yen

The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art (金沢 21 世紀美術館, Kanazawa Nijūchiseiki Bijutsukan) opened in 2004 in downtown Kanazawa, just a few steps from Kenrokuen. It exhibits works of acclaimed contemporary artists from Japan and all over the world, and is among Japan's most popular art museums.

The architecture of the 21st Century Museum is unique and distinguishes it from other museums and buildings around Kanazawa. The museum is comprised of a circular building, 112.5 meters in diameter, with no facade or main entrance. It was designed without a front or back to discourage its patrons from approaching the museum, and consequently its art, from only one direction.

#### Leandro Erlich's Swimming Pool

The central paid area of the museum hosts temporary exhibits, and usually has one or two concurrently on display. As it is designed to incorporate into the surrounding community, the museum also has several public spaces which include a library, lecture halls and children's workshops.

Interspersed among the spaces of the museum are some permanent installations. These include works such as Leandro Erlich's "Swimming Pool", a pool where people appear to be underwater (entry inside the pool requires paid admission); and James Turrell's "Blue Planet Sky", an exhibit exploring light as a medium which has counterpart exhibits around the world.





### 5) Kenrokuen

Hours: 7:00 to 18:00

Closed: No closing days

Admission: 320 yen

Included in the Kenrokuen Plus One Ticket

Kenrokuen (兼六園) in Kanazawa is justifiably classified as one of Japan's "three most beautiful landscape gardens" alongside Mito's Kairakuen and Okayama's Korakuen. The spacious grounds used to be the outer garden of Kanazawa Castle and were constructed by the ruling Maeda family over a period of nearly two centuries. Opened to the public in 1871, Kenrokuen features a variety of flowering trees which provide the garden with a different look for each season.

The name Kenrokuen literally means "Garden of the Six Sublimities", referring to spaciousness, seclusion, artificiality, antiquity, abundant water and broad views, which according to Chinese landscape theory are the six essential attributes that make up a perfect garden. A stroll around Kenrokuen will help with understanding this landscape theory as the grounds are teeming with water features, bridges, teahouses, trees, flowers, stones, viewpoints and hidden nooks to discover.

Water is diverted from a distant river by a sophisticated water system constructed in 1632 to feed Kenrokuen's various streams and ponds including the two main ponds in the garden, Kasumigaike and Hisagoike. The over two-meter tall Kotojitoro Lantern, uniquely built with two legs instead of one, stands at the northern bank of Kasumigaike Pond and is an iconic symbol of Kenrokuen. In addition, a fountain below Kasumigaike Pond is one of Japan's oldest, and is powered by the drop in elevation from the pond which causes water to shoot out 3.5 meters high. Meanwhile, nearby Hisagoike Pond features a small waterfall.

Some walking trails in the park lead to higher ground from where visitors can have an overview of the garden. There are also teahouses in the garden where visitors can drink tea and eat traditional Japanese sweets while looking at the scenery. Finally, a pleasant pedestrian way lined with cherry trees, shops and restaurants lies just outside of the garden's paid area, between the Katsurazaka and Renchimon gates. The street is a particularly beautiful rest spot in spring when the cherry blossoms are in bloom.

# Kenrokuen and Seisonsaku Maps





## 6) Seisonkaku Villa

Hours: 9:00 to 17:00 (entry until 16:30)

Closed: Wednesdays (or Thursday if Wednesday is a national holiday)

December 29 to January 2

Admission: 700 yen (1000 yen during special exhibitions)

The Seisonkaku Villa (成巽閣, Seisonkaku) was built in the last years of the Edo Period by a Maeda lord for his mother. It is one of the most elegant, remaining samurai villas in Japan.

Located in the southeast corner of Kenrokuen, Seisonkaku is a large structure with a number of expansive tatami rooms on two floors. One of its interesting features is the roof which covers its garden viewing deck. It was built without supports that would interrupt the view of the garden.

The villa has a direct entrance to Kenrokuen (separate admission fees apply). Signs and information are provided in both Japanese and English.





## 7) Kanazawa Castle

### Castle Grounds

Hours: 7:00 to 18:00

Closed: No closing days

Admission: Free

### Gojukken Nagaya Storehouse and Turrets

Hours: 9:00 to 16:30 (entry until 16:00)

Closed: No closing days

Admission: 320 yen (covered by the Kenrokuen Plus One Ticket)

From 1583 to the end of the Edo Period, Kanazawa Castle (金沢城, Kanazawajō) was the seat of the powerful Maeda Clan, lords of Kaga, a feudal domain ranking second only to the Tokugawa possessions in terms of size and wealth.

The castle burnt down several times over the centuries, and the most recent fires of 1881 were survived only by two storehouses and the Ishikawa-mon Gate. The gate dates from 1788 and faces Kenrokuen. For several decades, Kanazawa University occupied the former castle grounds until the campus was moved to the city's outskirts in the early 1990s. Since then, a project is underway to rebuild the castle's former buildings. In the meantime, most central structures are standing again and make a visit more interesting.

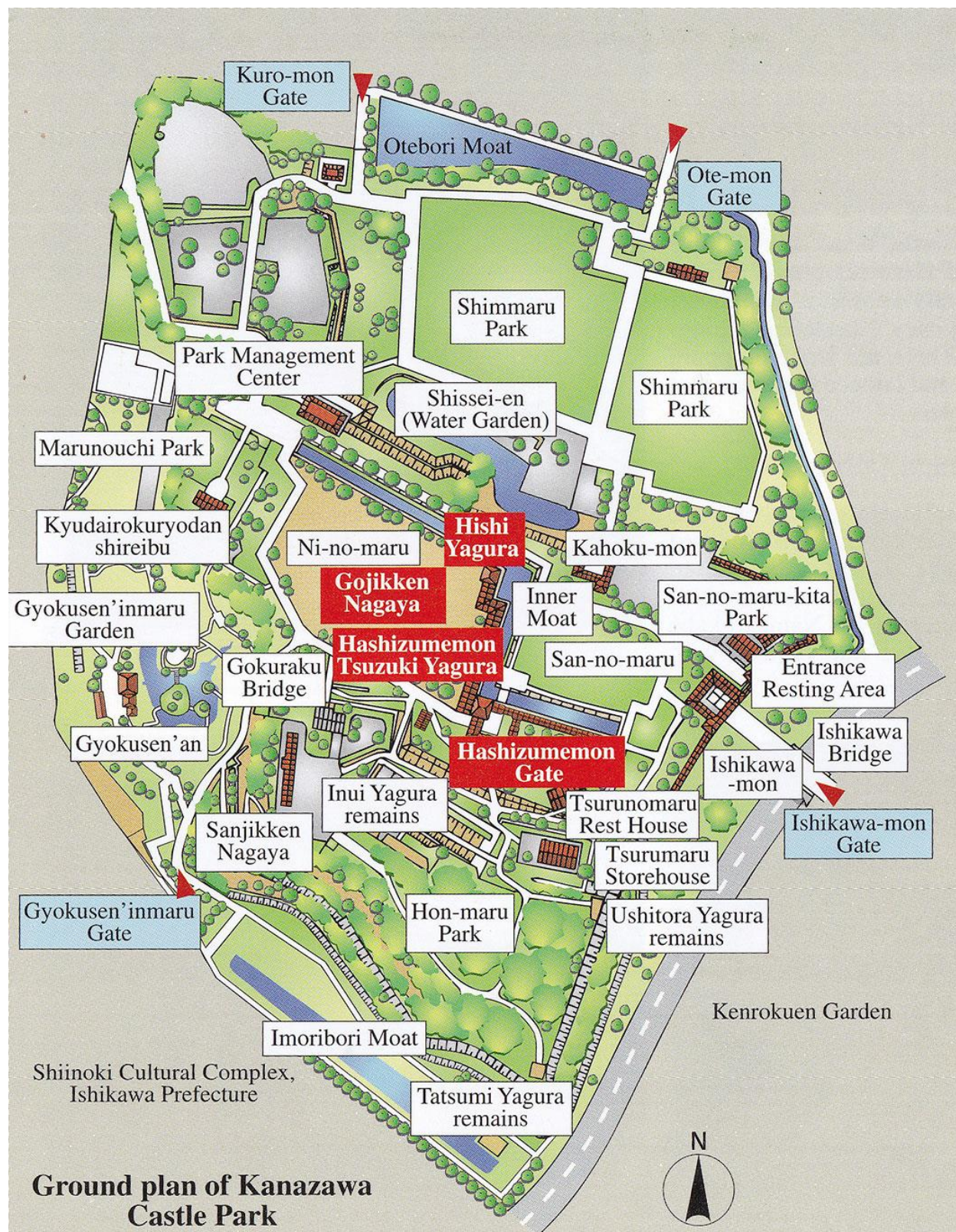
### Gojukken Nagaya Storehouse with turrets

The first buildings to be reconstructed were the two turrets (Hishi and Tsuzuki Yagura) and a long storehouse (Gojukken Nagaya) that connects the two turrets. The buildings were rebuilt to their original 1850s appearance using traditional techniques and materials. They were opened to the public in 2001 and contain excellent displays on traditional carpentry. It is the only part of the castle where an admission fee is charged.

Reconstruction of the castle's former main entrance gate, the Kahoku-mon Gate, was completed in spring 2010. Its upper floor can be entered free of charge and contains some displays about the gate's history and construction. In 2015, the Hashizume-mon Gate and the Gyokusen-inmaru Garden were added. The pretty garden features a central pond and circular walking path.

Kanazawa Castle's main keep was lost in a fire in 1602 and has never been rebuilt ever since.









### 8) Higashi Chaya District

Of the three districts, the Higashi Chaya District (東茶屋街, Higashi Chayagai) is the largest and by far the most interesting. Two chaya, the Shima Teahouse and Kaikaro Teahouse, are open to the public. Other buildings along the central street now house cafes and shops. One of the shops, Hakuza, sells gold leaf products, a specialty of Kanazawa, and displays a tea

ceremony room which is completely covered in gold leaf.

#### Shima Teahouse

30 meters down the north side of the street

Hours: 9:00 to 18:00

Closed: No closing days

Admission: 500 yen

A preserved tea house, which has been converted into a museum. The rooms where geisha would perform and the kitchen are on display along with various instruments and items used by the geisha.

#### Kaikaro Teahouse

100 meters down the south side of the street

Hours: 10:00 to 17:00

Closed: No closing days

Admission: 750 yen

The Kaikaro Chaya is still an operating tea house but opens its doors to the public. Tea service is included with admission.

#### Hakuza Gold Leaf Store

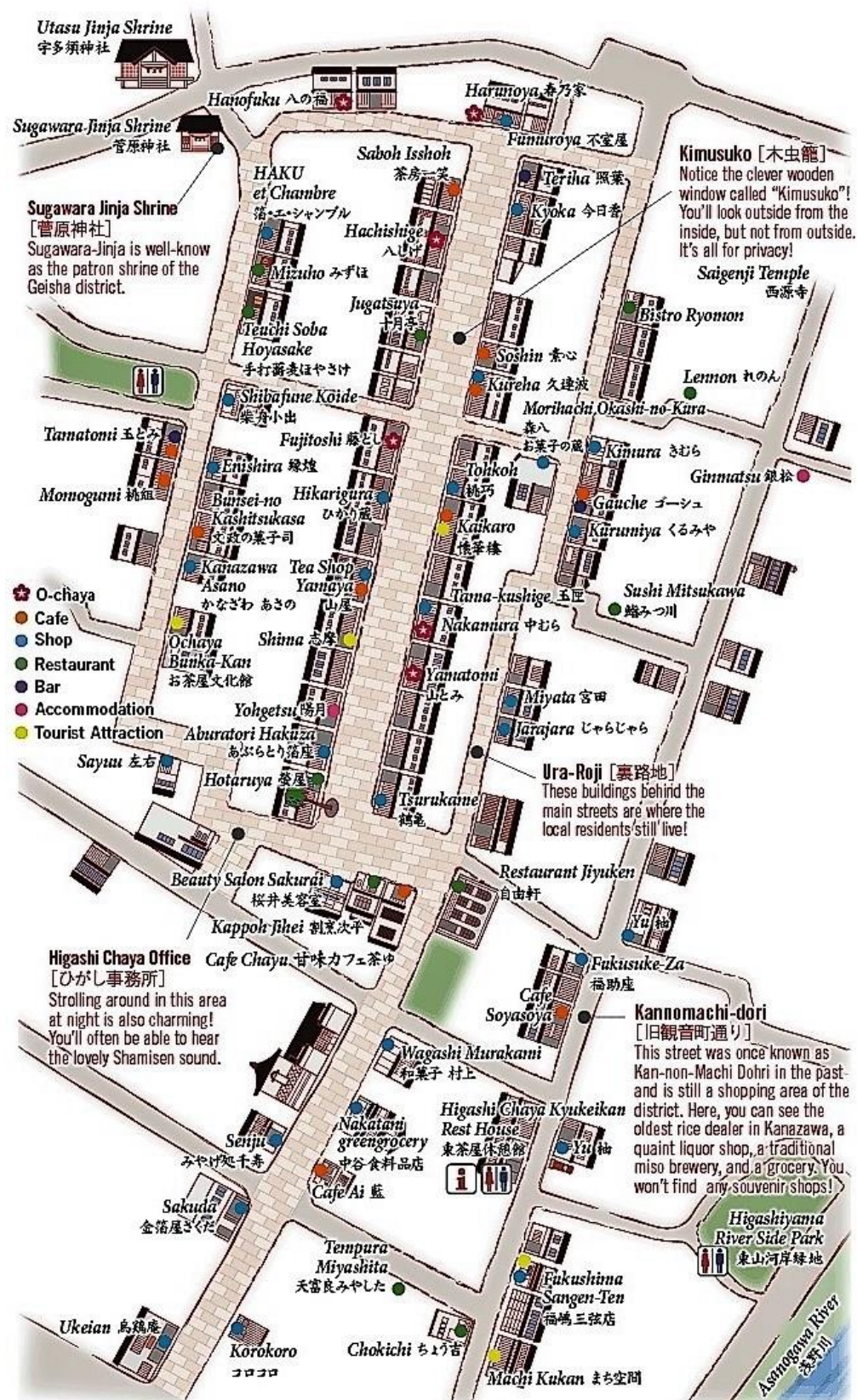
A few steps from Shima Teahouse

Hours: 9:30 to 18:00

Closed: No closing days

A shop selling gold leaf products, a specialty of Kanazawa. Inside the shop is a traditional Japanese warehouse which has been turned into a tearoom and completely covered inside and out with gold leaf.





# Map of Higashi Chaya-Gai District