

Uji Sites Overview

From long before, Uji was an important location even politically.

It has been told that Ujinowaki Iratsuko, an Imperial prince, killed himself to hand over the Imperial throne to his brother, the Emperor Nintoku, following the demise of the Emperor Oujin in the early 5th century when the foundation of the Yamato Government was almost complete. Ujinowaki Iratsuko's imperial villa is said to have been built around where Ujigami Shrine and Uji Shrine are today.

After the Ujibashi Bridge was built in the mid-7th century, Uji played an important role in history as a point that connects Nara, Kyoto and Shiga through both land and water. Once known as an embodiment of the Buddhist Paradise that presented the splendid dynastic culture and Fujiwara's villa in the Heian Era, the sight of Byodoin Hou-do is well-preserved in today's world.

Uji makes an appearance in many Japanese literature, such as Man'yoshu and the Tale of Heike, and is widely recognized as the setting of "Uji Jujo", the third chapter in the "Tale of Genji".

As the social system shifted from nobles to samurais, the battle between the troops of Minamoto Yoshinaka (also known for his other name, Kiso Yoshinaka) and the troops of Minamoto Yoshitsune occurred, one particular scene of which is known as the "Fight for the vanguard in Ujigawa River" today. Even after that, many battles, such as "Yamashiro-no-kuni-ikki (the riot in Yamashiro Province) that is believed to have implemented the first self-government in Japan and the Battle of the Makishima Castle that led to the end of the Muromachi Shogunate, occurred around Ujigawa River.

In the Kamakura Era, Myoe from Toganoosan Kosanji Temple brought tea to Uji. Uji prospered as a tea-producing district under the protection of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Even after the center of politics moved to Edo, Uji Tea has always been valued highly as high-grade tea.

In the Edo Era, Koshoji Temple and Manpukuji Temple were built, and Uji contributed to the development of symbolic Japanese culture, such as "Sado (the way of tea)" and "Zen".¹

¹ From [History of Uji](#)



1) Uji Bridge

Said to have been built by a monk from Nara around 646, Uji Bridge is the main bridge over the Uji River and considered to be one of the three oldest bridges in all of Japan. It has been destroyed and rebuilt many times throughout the years.

The current structure was built in 1996 in a traditional design and is believed to have elements of the original. It is partially constructed of Japanese cypress trees with bronze detailing.

The bridge has been mentioned in many works of literature and has appeared in various Japanese art forms, from old woodblock prints to recent anime. Most notable is its appearance in *The Tale of Genji*, a novel written by a Japanese noblewoman in the 11th century, often credited as the world's first novel.

In the middle of the bridge is a spot from which the famous warlord Hideyoshi Toyotomi is said to have drawn water for a tea ceremony. In honor of this, water is drawn from here for the annual Uji-cha tea festival every October.



2) Sawarabi Street

The name of this path already existed when the Genji Monogatari was written long, long ago. Sawarabi are the edible shoots of the bracken fern (fiddleheads in English). The flagstone path leads along the river to the base of the hills that border the northern edge of the river. Along the path, the visitor will find Ujigami Shrine (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the Tale of Genji Museum. The air is very fresh here, and all around are large trees, bushes, and flowers. Near Ujigami Shrine is the monument to the Genji Monogatari.



3) Daikichiyama Observation Deck

If you go east on "Sawarabi-no-michi (street)", there will be an entrance from where you can hike up for approximately 20 minutes to go up to the observatory. The hiking course is decorated with Sakura trees, maple trees and other trees. Mt. Daikichiyama observatory is located in the midst of Mt. Buttokusen, and people can enjoy the view of the Ujigawa river, Nakanoshima, Byodoin and the city of Uji. It is a very popular hiking course as well.



4) Ujigami Shrine & Uji Shrine

Ujigami Shrine is a UNESCO World Heritage Site believed to possibly be the oldest extant Shinto shrine in the country. Located just a few minutes' walk away from Byōdō-in over the Uji River and behind the newer Uji Shrine, Ujigami Shrine is an example of the most classic of Shinto architecture tucked into a small, nature-filled alcove against the rolling hills of southern Kyoto. Though the grounds aren't large, they provide an interesting contrast to the shrine architecture visitors may have already grown accustomed to, with the main hall contained in a large wooden "cage" of sorts. If you're in the area it's worth stopping by for the oldest remaining shrine, the lush greenery and water, and the many cute rabbit-shaped charms!

Through the vermilion-colored Torii (gateway to a shrine) located on the base of Asagiri bridge on the upper streams of Uji bridge, Uji-Shrine awaits visitors with many trees surrounding the area. It is said to be Ujinoakeiratsuko's historical site.

Long time ago, it was called Rikyu Hachimangu. Ujinoakeiratsuko, the enshrined deity, was very intelligent, pursued in many studies under the direction of tutors and teachers, such as Achiki (an emissary sent from Paekche) and Wang Jin, and is still adored as a god of studies and successful exams. The main shrine is an early Kamakura period style building and designated as an important cultural property. Aside from this, many important cultural artifacts, such as a wooden Komainu (a lion-dog guardian) and Hakukijo (masks), can be seen at Uji-Shrine.



5) Koshoji Temple

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

Admission: 500 yen

Koshoji, a famous temple (Soutoushu), was founded by its founder, Dougen. In 1649, it was reconstructed at its current location, which used to be Asahi Tea Bushes (one of the seven best tea bushes of Uji), by Nagai Naomasa, the head of the Yodo Castle back then. The main temple is said to be the remains of the Fushimi castle, and enshrined in Tenjikudo is the “Tenarai Kannon”, which used to be enshrined at “Tenarai-no-to (the remains of Uji Jucho from the Tale of Genji)”. It is a popular sightseeing spot along with “Kotosaka”.



6) Fukujuen Tea Factory

Located beside the clear stream of the Scenic Uji River, you can enjoy to the full everything about Uji green tea. As well as a workshop, where you can experience making tea and the creating tea utensils, there are also famous tea-ceremony rooms, where you can learn the art of the tea ceremony, and also enjoy tea sweets and tea ceremony cuisine at the old style Japanese restaurant, and a tea shop where you can purchase original Uji green tea and tea utensils.



7) Kyoto Prefectural Uji Park

Uji Park consists of the islands of Tonoshima and Tatibanajima, which lie on the Uji River, and Yorimishi Park, which lies on the west shore of the Uji River. The shores of Uji River, Tonoshima and Tachibanajima are connected through Kisenbashi Bridge, Tachibanabashi Bridge, Asagiribashi Bridge, and Nakajimabashi Bridge. Tourists and residents relax and stroll in this area. Many events are also held here such as the 'Sakura-Matsuri' in the spring, the 'Hanabi-Taikai' in the summer, and the 'Uji Denraku matsuri' and 'Cha matsuri' in the fall.



8) Byodoin Temple

Byodo-in Temple, which conveys the glories of the Fujiwara clan to this day, was a villa on the west bank of the Uji-gawa River. It belonged to Minamoto no Toru but was given to Fujiwara no Michinaga. His son, Yorimichi, converted it

into a temple. The Houodo (Phoenix Hall) (national treasure), which is surrounded by the Aji-ike pond, shows traces of the gardens of the Heian period. It is reminiscent of Heian aristocracy, who dreamt of entering the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. It is depicted on the 10-yen coin and is a familiar sight in Japan.

Meanwhile, the Byodoin Museum Hoshokan exhibits treasures possessed by Byodo-in Temple, such as the national treasures Gilt Bronze Phoenix, Unchu Kuyo Bosatsu (Buddhist saints holding a mass

in the clouds) and Bonshou (temple bell). Reproductions that were made through computer graphics utilizing state-of-the-art digital technology can also be enjoyed.



9) Byodoin Omotesando

Bid goodbye to Byodoin Temple and continue on to Byodoin Omotesando Street. Uji is famous as a center of green tea production, and this quaint street is packed with shops selling tea and tea-related products. Here you can try tea-flavored “dango” dumplings, tea-flavored noodles, tea-flavored ice creams and tea-flavored donuts. Feel free to saunter and explore the souvenir shops and eateries before heading on to our final destination: JR Uji Station.

Nara Sites Overview

Even though the first permanent seat of the Japanese rulers – Fujiwara-kyō (藤原京) in Yamato – was erected a few decades earlier, it is Heijō-kyō (平城京) that is considered a the first historical capital city of Japan. The “peace capital,” because this is what the Japanese name literally means, officially served as the seat of the authorities between 710 and 740 AD and between 745 and 784 AD. Nara was modelled after the Chinese metropolis Chang'an, which was for the people of contemporary Japan what New York is for us today. The city was designed based on a regular network of streets intersecting at a right angle. However, rectangular shape of the Chinese original was abandoned so that an additional, external district of the city could be built. The Chinese influence on the shape of the first Japanese capital was not limited to spatial architecture only. City planning trends reached Japan together with the values and notions characteristic of the Middle Kingdom. Chinese Buddhist monks started to come to Nara to settle down in the area. The emerging increasingly spectacular monastery complexes alarmed Japanese authorities, who decided to move the seat of the empire in 784 AD in fear of the political agendas of the monks. By losing its status of the capital city, Nara was able to avoid military attacks, and thus keep all of its feats of architecture, including the Todaiji Temple with the famous Great Buddha Hall. The atmosphere in the city is special to this day, guarded by the sika deer living in the area – the antlered emissaries of Takemikazuchi, the god of thunders and swords. It is a place for those who seek the ancient spirit of Japan.

¹ From [OYAKATA MASTER'S BOOK](#)



1) Kasuga Taisha

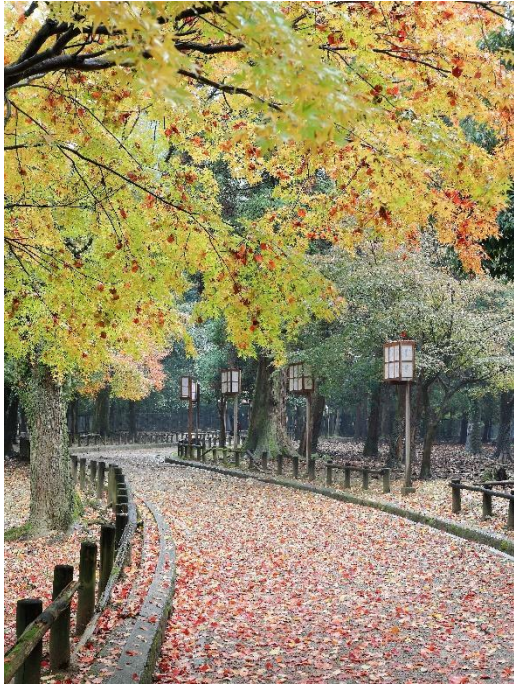
Kasuga Taisha (Kasuga Grand Shrine) is the most important Shinto shrine in Nara.

Located west of Nara Park and Kofukuji and close to Todaiji Temple and Wakakusayama, Kasuga Taisha along with nearby Kasugayama Primeval Forest are designated as a joint UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Founded in 768, Kasuga Taisha served as the tutelary shrine of the powerful Fujiwara family, who were Japan's most powerful clan during the Nara and Heian periods, providing many regents to young emperors and marrying their daughters in to the imperial line.

As with the Ise Grand Shrine in Mie, Kasuga Shrine was rebuilt every 20 years, though this practice was finally discontinued at the end of the Edo Period.

The four shrine buildings of the inner sanctum of Kasuga Taisha enshrine the kami Futsunushi-no-mikoto and Takemikazuchi-no-mikoto as well as Amenokoyane-no-mikoto, a mythical ancestor of the Fujiwara and his consort Hime-Okama.



2) Nara Park

Nara Park is a massive park at the foot of Mt. Wakakusa full of very playful and friendly deer. The natural setting includes temples set in unspoiled woods and a lake full of turtles and carp. The temples and shrines of Nara are much older than the oft-rebuilt buildings in Kyoto, and much more unique.





3) Todaiji Temple

Todaiji Temple, situated a short walk from the center of Nara, in Nara Park, is Nara's most popular tourist attraction and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Todaiji, along with Kofukuji and Horyuji, make up the "Big Three" must-see temples of Nara.

Todaiji Temple is a complex of buildings that includes the world's largest wooden structure, the 48m (157 foot)-high Daibutsu-den, built in 743 which houses the 15m (49 foot) gilt bronze Daibutsu (Great Buddha), cast in 749: also the largest of its kind in the world.

Founded in 745 by the Emperor Shomu, the vast temple at Todaiji was constructed as a symbol of imperial power and took over 15 years to complete at great expense.

The main hall, which houses the colossal bronze Buddha statue within, remains the world's largest wooden building, though the present structure - rebuilt in 1709 - is only two thirds the size of the original.

The designer of the original Buddha was a Korean artist from the Paikche Kingdom, Kuminaka-no-Kimimaro.

Todaiji is the headquarters of the Kegon sect of Japanese Buddhism and Vairocana Buddha is considered by followers of the sect to be the spiritual body of the historical Buddha - Gautama Buddha or Sakyamuni in Japanese terminology.

After achieving enlightenment in what is now the small town of Bodh Gaya in Bihar, northern India, the Buddha sat for a week in deep meditation and it is this pose that is represented in the giant statue.



4) Kofukuji Temple

Kofukuji Temple, situated a short walk from the center of Nara, in Nara Park, is one of the city's most beautiful and historic temples and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Kofukuji Temple was founded in 669 by the powerful Fujiwara family of court nobles in Heian Period Japan. At its peak the complex comprised around 175 buildings, only a precious few still remain.

Kofukuji Temple was moved from Yamashina, now a suburb in the east of Kyoto to its present location in 710, when Nara became the new capital of the Yamato state. Along with Horyuji and Todaiji, Kofukuji Temple is important in the establishment and acceptance of Buddhism in Japan at this time. Kofukuji was known as one of the four great temples of the Nara Period and one of the seven great temples of the Heian Period in Nara: Daianji, Gangoji, Horyuji, Kofukuji, Saidaiji, Todaiji and Yakushiji.

However, none of the buildings date from the Nara Period (710-794), with most of the structures having been built between the 12th-18th centuries. Tokugawa Ieyasu provided a grant to the temple in the early 17th century to allow many of the buildings in the complex to be restored.



5) Higashimuki Shopping District

"The name "Higashimuki" means "east-facing". During the Nara period (8th century Japan), a big temple named Kofukuji was built. Kofukuji was constructed at the time, the Fujiwara family. It was the custom in those days that the buildings in the area faced east towards Kofukuji Temple, and so the temple was constructed to the west of the town houses and stores. People who live in the Higashimuki area continue to use this custom even now.

Kintetsu-Nara
Station



Lawson

YAMATO-AN

Kakinoha Sushi Honpo Tanaka



[Junbo Karaoke Hiroba](#)

[Yokota Bussan Honten](#)

[Fukusen-Do](#)

[Ichoya](#)

[Manshodo \(Japanese Confectionery\)](#)

[Washokuya Happoh](#)

[Saint Marc Cafe](#)

[Kurokawa](#)

[Tonkatsu Ganko](#)

[Mister Donut](#)

[TENDON MAKINO](#)

[The Daiso](#)

[Okamoto Rakugan-Do](#)

[Mafu Okai](#)

[Sanraku-Do](#)



[Shunsai Ochazuke Fujin](#)

[Kaiten Sushi Totogin](#)

[Tsukihitei](#)

[Udonte](#)

[Seijo-Ishii](#)

[Yakitori to Onabe Naramachi](#)
[Kaminarimon](#)

[SUNDRUG](#)

[Japanese Food Haginoya](#)

[Daikoku Drug](#)

[Cfarm](#)

[cafe FLUKE](#)

[Nara Kojika](#)

[Angelica](#)

[Happiness](#)

[Nail Kirara](#)

[Udon Noodle Mugi-no-Kura](#)

[Chakamaro Soft](#)

[UMASSHU](#)

[Nakagaki Kudamono-Ten \(Fruit shop\)](#)

[Tanaka Hoteiya](#)

[Refurekan +](#)

[Higashimuki Shopping Mall](#)
[Office](#)

← To Konishi Sakuradori Street

To Kofukuji Temple, Five-story Pagoda →

[Benten](#)
[Shanhairo \(Chinese restaurant\)](#)
[Bunraku](#)
[Vietnam Restaurant Com Ngon](#)
[Izakaya Tsunofuri](#)
[Fukunohako](#)
[McDonald](#)
[Nara Kanko-Kaikan](#)
[Sumaino Yutaka](#)

[Chiyonoya Takemura](#)
[Marushige](#)
[Naranoya](#)
[Coto Mall](#)
[DRUG SEIMS](#)
[China Dining Hiten](#)
[Tsukemen Ramen Genkishin](#)
[Yoneya Optical](#)
[Oshaberina Kame](#)
[Kikuichimonju Shiro Kanenaga](#)

[TEN](#)
[Nanto Bank](#)



[Kojitani Portrait Studio](#)
[Japanese restaurant Shikisaisai Ichijo](#)
[Salon do Tea HOTEIYA](#)
[the STAND](#)
[Refurekan Ticket Center](#)
[KAMAIKI honten](#)
[YU/RU/RI](#)
[Okonomiyaki, Akashiyaki Okaru](#)
[Morino Cafe Higashimuki Gardens](#)

[Shin-ai Kindergarten](#)
[KIZUNA Cafe](#)
[Nara Prefectural Women's Center](#)
[Vesel](#)
[LBK CRAFT](#)
[Nara T-Store](#)
[Yamazakiya Honten](#)
[Ajitei Yamazakiya](#)
[Naramachi Nagaya](#)
[HEX HIVE](#)
[Complex Shops Place Building](#)

[Hirooka Building](#)
[TRATTORIA piano](#)



Names in **Red** serve meals .