

Samurai & Timber



Live in Harmony with the Forest

Owari Domain and Timber

Owari domain used to occupy what is now the western region of Aichi Prefecture. During the Sengoku period, it produced powerful men such as Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. After Tokugawa Ieyasu won the Battle of Sekigahara and unified Japan, he moved Owari Province from Kiyosu to Nagoya City. There, he appointed his ninth son, Yoshinao, as head of the Owari Tokugawa base. During his ruling, Yoshinao took over the Kiso region known for its high-quality wood.

Kiso's Excellent Timber

The Kiso region's forests were a precious resource during the Edo period. With its superb quality being recognized, the forest was put under strict supervision of the Owari clan. Timber was sent down the Kiso River to Nagoya so that it could be eventually shipped throughout the country. This timber was also used to build Nagoya Castle as well as its surrounding shrines and temples.

Nagoya Castle was built using wood from Kiso. Construction began in 1610 and lasted until 1615. In 1930, the castle and its tower were designated as Japan's first National Treasure. However, during World War II, a bombing caused it to burn down. After this, the castle tower was rebuilt in 1959 while reconstruction of Hommaru Palace began a little later in 2009. In 2018, the palace was completed and became once again open to the public.

Mountain Guardians Prepare for the Next 100 Years

Due to Kiso having such a long-standing history with forests and wood, it's near impossible to separate the two when looking at the region's traditions. A prime example of this are the mountain guardians who maintain and preserve the forest. These guardians bear a very important role. Guardians were first appointed in the early-1700s due to the depletion of resources caused by excessive hunting over the course of 100 years. Now, every 20 years, a ritual is held to pay respect to the forest's gods. The people of Kiso have kept the traditions passed down from their predecessors and are continuously making great efforts to sustain the forest for the next 100 years.



At the Tokugawa Art Museum (Nagoya), many tools passed down from the Owari Tokugawa family are stored. These include the Owari clan's swords and their Owari Koshirae.



Moreover, at the Fukushima Sekisho Museum (Kiso Town), you can find a recreation of the Nakasendo Highway's checkpoint gate.



Tsukamakishi/Iiyama Kensen



In Japanese, the sheath and design of a Japanese sword is called "Koshirae". While each Japanese clan has their own original design, the Owari clan developed the Owari Koshirae.



Nagoya Castle's Hommaru Palace has also been replicated using Kiso's cypress trees and masterful techniques by traditional craftsmen.

Nakasendo Highway: A Promenade Filled with a Woody Aroma

During the Edo period, Japan's politics, economy, and culture were mainly developed in Kyoto and Edo. Both of these cities were connected by two highways known as the Nakasendo and Tokaido. A part of the Kiso region's Nakasendo Highway used to be in what is now the southern region of Nagano Prefecture. Here, many craftsmen and artists lived in the forest-covered mountains. At the time, Japan's Chubu region was vast, covering today's Gifu Prefecture, Aichi Prefecture, and Nagano Prefecture.

The poet, Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), was drawn to "off the beaten" and unexplored paths. By wandering through the primeval forests of central Japan, he was able to make many discoveries that sparked his will to create.

In 1730, Tokugawa Muneharu became the seventh feudal lord of the Owari Clan. While immersing himself in researching Japanese tea ceremonies and flower arrangements, he also promoted industrial development and established new festivals. Moreover, he encouraged the development of traditional Japanese performing arts such as Noh and Kabuki. Due to his efforts, the woodworking industry also flourished, quickly resulting in high demand for good-quality timber. This initiated the Kiso River becoming the main means of transportation for timber and other materials from the mountains to the Owari region.

From the 17th century until today, the Kiso region's cypress trees have been the number-one choice for many Karakuri craftsmen (craftsmen of traditional Japanese mechanized puppets). This is because in addition to cypress trees being extremely sturdy, they are also slow to age. Along with Karakuri puppets having mechanisms that enable them to make complicated movements, one of their major characteristics is that they are beautifully carved.

A Region Well-Known for their Thriving Manufacturing Industry

The Chubu region became a manufacturing hub because it had major highways that made the region easily accessible, a woodworking industry, and many festival cars that sold Karakuri puppets. It's no surprise that present-day companies such as Toyota also originated there.



Matsuo Basho



"Fujimigahara in Owari Province" by a craftsman who carved wood to make a barrel from "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji" by Katsushika Hokusai



An Enku Sculpture of Searching for the Perfect Tree on the Nakasendo Highway



Karakuri puppets

1

Nagoya City

~ A City of Japanese Craftsmanship Passed Onto Today ~
Nagoya City Prospers Through a Castle Constructed by
the Tokugawa Shogun



Osu Shopping District



Townscape of Arimatsu



Arimatsu Narumi Tie-Dyeing



Nagoya Meshi

Nagoya City, located in Japan's center, has a population of over 2.3 million people. Acting as a hub for the Chubu region's politics, economy, and culture—it's also a city that connects the three samurai involved in Japan's reunification. Tokugawa Ieyasu, one of the greatest samurai in Japan, constructed Nagoya Castle and its surrounding castle town. During the building process, high-quality wood from the nearby Kiso Mountains was gathered. The craftsmen who worked with this valuable wood ending up staying in Nagoya, leaving behind techniques that contributed to the region's industrialization. In addition to this, the charm of present-day Nagoya can be attributed to the culture and traditions protected by Ieyasu's descendants and subordinates. Upon building Nagoya Castle's Honmaru Palace, there was a focus on using the most cutting-edge technology available at that time. Initially a residence for Ieyasu's son who was also Nagoya's first feudal lord, the palace soon became lodging quarters for visiting shogun. Since its destruction in World War II, it's been faithfully rebuilt to emulate the glorious structure it once was. Moreover, despite being one of Japan's largest cities, Nagoya still offers townscapes and traditional crafts from the samurai era. This enables you to experience the atmosphere of old Japan. It's also a region known for Nagoya Meshi—dishes using a fermented soy bean paste called miso. This unique cuisine has been cherished as one originating from a city built by samurai.

2

Inuyama City

The City of Inuyama Watches Over
a National Treasure



Kiso River Ukai



Inuyama Festival



Lake Iruka



Inuyama Castle Town

Inuyama City is located in northern region of Aichi Prefecture where the Kiso River flows out to the Nobi Plain. It has long flourished as a hub for transportation, distributing goods, and politics. Although a battleground during the Sengoku period, it transformed into a castle town in the period of Edo. Because of this, it has left behind many trails of historical footprints. Inuyama Castle's main tower is one out of five in the country designated as a National Treasure. Additionally, Inuyama's castle town is called a "sougamae"—the Japanese word to describe when a castle and its town is surrounded by a moat. Since the architectural structure of the town is still intact, you can enjoy dining and shopping while taking in the surrounding landscapes. Furthermore, another National Treasure of Inuyama City is the tea room "Jo-an". It's one of the Three National Treasure Teahouses built by Nobunaga's brother, Oda Nagamasu (Urakasai). Starting with the entrance, every part of this National Treasure Teahouse is decorated in a creative and unique manner. Here you can find old Japanese calendars pasted onto paper sliding doors as well as Uraku windows—a type of window in which the outside is covered with bamboo pipes. With so much to see, there's no doubt you'll enjoy what Inuyama has to offer during all four of its seasons.

3

Gujo City

The City of Gujo is Japan's Number-One City of Dance



Gujo Odori



Gujo Odori



Gujo Hachiman Castle



Sougisui Ritual

Gujo Odori dances have been performed for over 400 years in Gujo Hachiman's castle town. Designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property, it's also taught as one of "Japan's Three Great Bon Dances". Legend has it that, in the Edo period, the lord of the castle encouraged this festive dance to promote harmony among his people. Every year, during the two months of mid-July to early-September, a "bon dance" (a dance to pray for the ancestral spirits) is performed for approximately 30 nights. During the Bon festival, a special ceremony called the "Feast of Lanterns" takes place for four nights from August 13th to the 16th. During this period, an "all-night" dance is performed until the next morning. Moreover, an enjoyable characteristic of Gujo Odori is that, whether you're visiting or a local, everyone forms a circle to dance with each other. Because of this, Gujo Odori is said to be a dance you participate in—not just watch.

4

Gero City

Gero Onsen (Beauty Bath) is One of Japan's Three Famous
Hot Springs



Gero Onsen Fireworks



Gero Onsen Nightscape



Gero Onsen Gassho Village



Kinkotsu Footpath

Gero City, also known as the city of hot springs and limpid streams, offers several hot spring facilities with unique characteristics. Some of these include Hida-Osaka Hot Spring Village (Yuya Onsen, Shitajima Onsen, Nigorigo Onsen), Hidagawa Onsen, Minamihida Mazegawa Onsen, and Hida-Kanayama Onsen.

Out of the hot springs available, Gero Onsen is one with a history of about 1,000 years. It's been highly regarded by both the Zen monk, Banri Shuku, in the Muromachi period as well as by the philosopher, Hayashi Razan, in the Edo period. Moreover, Gero Onsen has even been introduced as one of the top three hot springs in Japan—lining up with other facilities such as Arima Onsen and Kusatsu Onsen. Overall, it's said to have acted as a curing hot spring for many samurai and merchants—melting the exhaustion of the day away.

Located in the south of Gero City is what once was the Kanayama region or the Owari clan's northmost property. This region is long known for being a post town. It's said that narrow paths were built between buildings in order to avoid crowds on the main roads of Hida Highway. These retro pathways take you on a tour through the city—enabling you to feel as though you've taken a trip to the past.

5

Nakatsugawa City

A Naturally Abundant City Where
Highway Culture and Forest Culture
Co-exist



Magome-juku



Naegi Castle Ruins



Ochiai Cobblestone Path



Bike-riding



Tsukechi Gorge

Nakatsugawa City is located in the naturally abundant, southeastern end of Gifu Prefecture where the Kiso River flows. During the Edo period, the Nakasendo Highway went through the area—connecting Edo and Kyoto. Due to this, it has prospered as a transportation hub for people, products, and culture.

In this city, a post town that keeps the atmosphere of Edo while maintaining its unique highway culture has been passed down to the people of today. An especially popular hiking trail among visitors from the States is the an eight-kilometer stretch that connects the post station Magome-juku with the neighboring post town of Tsumago-juku. It's also known as the "Samurai Trail" due to how frequently it was used among said samurai.

Furthermore, with about 80% of the Nakatsugawa City being covered in forest, it has long had many flourishing woodworking industries. It's especially known for producing high-quality Kiso-Hinoki trees. This abundant wood resource has supported the Owari clan since the beginning. With many woodland landscapes available, the region has kept its culture of valuing their forests. It's also now a highly recommended spot for cycling.

Besides this, there are many spots to enjoy the great outdoors. This includes the nationally designated historic site of Naegi Castle Ruins—which gives you a sweeping view of both Mount Ena and the Kiso River, as well as Tsukechi and Yumori Gorge—where the water is so clear, you can see all the way down to the river's bottom.

6

Nagiso Town

A Town Fragrant with Hinoki and History



Tsumago-juku, The beams of light of Waki-honjin "Okuya"



Kakizore Ravine, Ushigataki Falls



Momosuke Bridge



Ichikokutochi's
Weeping Cherry Trees



Nakasendo Highway's
Cobblestones

Nagiso Town is located in the southwestern region of Nagano Prefecture and on the southern edge of Kiso Valley. With a total area of 215.93 square kilometers, about 94% of the land is forest. What's more, 70% of these forests are nationally-owned. Along the Kiso River that flows through the town's center and its river terrace are seven villages that total in approximately 3,900 inhabitants. These villages include Yogawa, Hokubu, Midono, Tsumago, Araragi, Hirose, and Tadachi.

In the famous piece of Shimazaki Toson's literature called "Before the Dawn," the opening line is "The Kiso Road is all in the mountains." This quote is realized with Nakasendo Highway. The roads in Nagiso Town tell stories of an older time and are an important property that must be passed down to the next generation for the future.

Moreover, here you can find many historical and cultural heritage sites while experiencing traditional Japanese landscapes. This can be done through visiting the post town Tsumago-juku—selected as one of the Important Preservation Districts in Japan for Groups of Traditional Buildings, Momosuke Bridge—designated as an Important Cultural Property, and the nationally designated historical road that is Nakasendo Highway.

7

Okuwa Village

A Beautiful Village Abundant with
Nature and Smiles
~ A Bountiful Village for the Future ~



Atera Gorge Inugaeri-no-Fuchi



Joshoji Temple



Hakusan Shrine



Iwade Kannon



Suhara-juku's Stone Lantern

Okuwa Village is located in the southwestern region of Nagano Prefecture—on the southern part of Kiso Road. With 96% of its land being forest, it's recognized as a mountain village. Due to the Kiso River flowing through its center, settlements can be found on its basins, terraces, and in-between the surrounding mountains.

Kiso River's tributary, Atera River, flows a beautiful and limpid emerald green through the incredibly scenic Atera Gorge. Along the banks of the river, forests filled Hinoki and Sawara cypress trees grow abundantly—offering beautiful views during all four seasons. Also, upstream the gorge, is one of Shinshu's famous and secret water spots selected for its beautifying properties. These waters flow deep from inside the forest's rocks.

Joshoji Temple, located inside Suhara-juku post town, has a main gate, main hall, and a monastery kitchen all designated as Important Cultural Properties. It's also the oldest temple out of the Three Temples of Kiso. In addition to the mortuary tablet of Kiso Yoshimasa, a lord during the Sengoku period, you can't miss out on Daruma sitting statue made out of Kiso Hinoki.

Another Important Cultural Property in the area is Hakusan Shrine. Built at the end of the Kamakura period, it's the oldest shrine in Nagano Prefecture that follows Shinto architecture. Moreover, Iwade Kannon, otherwise known as Kiso's Kiyomizudera Temple, is a Buddhist temple that hangs over a cliff. This temple is featured in the painting "Distant View of the Ina River Bridge" (drawn by Keisai Eisen) from the series "Sixty-nine Stations of the Kiso Road".

8

Agematsu Town

A Town of Beautiful and Natural Kiso
Hinoki Trees Where Forest Bathing
Originated



Nezame no Toko (Bed of Awakening)



Akasawa Natural Recreational Forest's
Beautiful and Natural Kiso Hinoki



Akasawa Forest Railway



Central Alps,
Mount Kiso-Komagatake



Visitors Enjoying the Therapeutic
Effects of the Forest

Agematsu Town has long prospered in the timber industry as one of Nakasendo Highway's post towns. Here, Kiso River's scenic spot known as Nezame no Toko (Bed of Awakening) stands valiantly-beckoning travelers and poets to rest. In addition to this, it's an area where you can find some of Nakasendo Highway's rare dangerous sites. These include the remains of the bridge—Kiso no Kakehashi, Ononotaki Falls—which are also depicted in Ukiyo-e works by Hiroshige, Eisen and Hokusai, and Mount Kiso-Komagatake—a mountain located on the eastern end of Japan's Central Alps. Offering beautiful scenery, Agematsu Town enables you to visit five out of the Eight Picturesque Sights of Kiso.

During the Edo period, the Owari Clan had direct control of Kiso's forests. By implementing strict forest protection policies such as "one life per one tree" (logging a tree is a felony), it has maintained natural Kiso Hinoki forests—one of the three most beautiful forests in Japan. In the town's western region, you'll find the national forest—Akasawa Natural Recreational Forest. Here you can enjoy forest bathing among beautiful and natural trees that are over 300 years old. What's more, you can even take a train ride on a preserved forest railway—once used when the timber industry was at its peak. Lastly, specialties from this region include wood products, wild game meat, perilla products, and agricultural products. It's also the birthplace of the professional sumo wrestler, Mitakeumi.

9

Otaki Village

A Village that Shines Like a Pearl in the Heart of a Mountain



Lake Shizenko Kayak Tours



A Cutout Picture of Sacred Mount Ontake and Fireweed



A Cutout Picture of the Village' s Soul Food—Hoba-Maki



A Cutout Picture of an Otaki Kabura (turnip) and a Gankoji (pack basket)



A Cutout Picture of a Char from a Clear Stream

Otaki Village is located in the western region of Nagano Prefecture on a mountainous road past the main highway. It' s also important to note that once you arrive at the village, there are no roads leading to other towns. With all the more reason to take advantage of the its location deep in the woods—here you can enjoy various sports throughout the year including mountain biking, running trails, and taking part in the lake' s canoeing tour. Additionally, Japan' s mountain of faith known as Mount Ontake (altitude of 3,067 meters), has a long pilgrimage path called Ontake Kodo, which is great for hiking. In the summertime, worshippers stop mid-way to partake in a waterfall meditation.

Since long ago, the village has made a living off of sending timber to what was previously the center of the Owari domain—now currently the region of the Nagoya. As of today, not only is Otaki Village famous for their timber, but they also use their best Japanese cypress to brew delicious local beer. The villagers are even experimenting with creating essential oils that enable you to enjoy the scent of Japanese cypress. Finally, in the wintertime, there' s Ontake' s ski resort to enjoy. Although Otaki Village only has a small population of 700 people, it shines like a pearl deep in the mountains.

10

Kiso Town

The Town of Kiso is Filled with the Smiles of its People: Abundant Resources to be Used for a Brighter Future



Fukushima Sekisho



Fukushima-juku



Mount Ontake



Local Sake



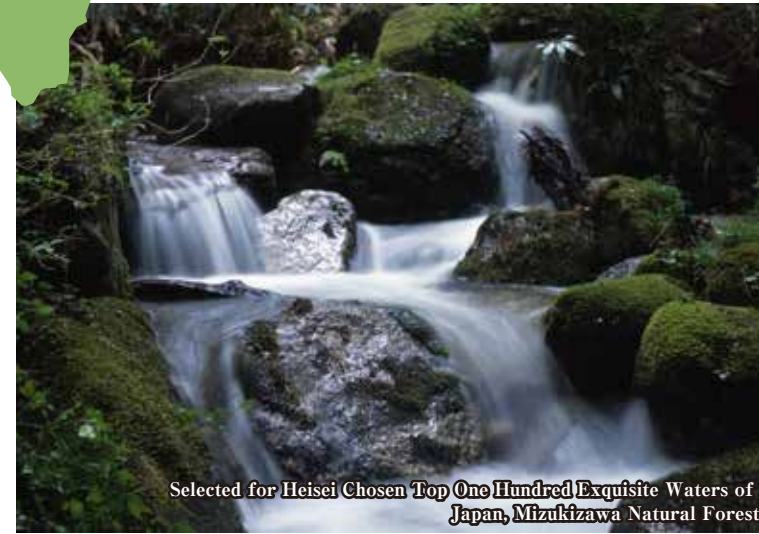
Kiso Horses

Kiso Town is situated in the southwestern region of Nagano Prefecture. Spanning a whopping 476.03 square kilometers, it' s the largest town and village in its prefecture. With 90% of its land being mountains and forests—this town boasts an abundance of verdant greenery. To the west of Kiso Town, you' ll find the representative Mount Ontake, and to the east stands Mount Kiso-Komagatake of the Central Alps. The Kiso Town of today is reminiscent of an old post town. It also used to be home of Fukushima Sekisho, one of the four greatest checking stations in Japan. This checking station turned Kiso Town into a hub for politics, business, and culture. In addition to this, the town of Kiso is filled with natural abundance. Using the limpid waters from the tributaries of Kiso River, sake breweries that have been in business for more than 100 years offer unique flavors. Moreover, the town is also known for its fermented food with one of its most unique dishes being pickled beet leaves fermented in lactic acid bacteria. This is called “Sunki.” Sunki are also unsalted, which very rare for Japanese pickles. Other fermented foods include miso-red bean paste, cheese, and yogurt. Furthermore, Kiso Town is where the Japanese native horse, the Kiso horse, is from. At the Kaida Highlands, you can interact with these horses while fully enjoying seasonal changes in the great outdoors.

11

Kiso Village

Kiso Village is Home to the Headstream of the Kiso River



Selected for Heisei Chosen Top One Hundred Exquisite Waters of Japan, Mizukizawa Natural Forest



Traditional Craft, Oroku Comb



Yabuhara-juku



Cobblestone Steps at Torii Pass



Kiso River Headwaters, Lake Okukiso (Misogawa Dam)

Kiso Village is a naturally abundant and mountainous area. It' s also home to the headstream of Kiso River which stretches a total of 229 kilometers.

Surrounding the village are mountains with an altitude of 2,000 meters. On its eastern end, you' ll find Torii Pass. This pass is the water divide between the Kiso River that pours out into the Pacific Ocean and the Shinano River (tributary) that pours out into the Sea of Japan. The Kiso River runs through the town' s center, and its inhabitants live surrounded in a rural landscape of tree-covered mountains.

At the village, you can enjoy the tastes of vegetables specific to plateaus such as Ontake' s Chinese cabbage and corn. It' s also a region famous for agriculture and forestry as well as woodworking. In addition to producing traditional crafts like the Oroku comb, Kiso Village produces 60% of Japan' s canvases. There' s also an abundance in seasonal tourist attractions such as the Kodamanomori Camping Ground, the Yabuhara Kogen Ski Resort, and the Mizukizawa Natural Forest.

12

Shiojiri City

A City of Wine and Kiso Lacquerware with Beautiful Nature, History, and Culture



Narai-juku



Kiso Lacquerware



Wine



Takabocchi Highlands



Hiraide Ruins

Nagano Prefecture' s Shiojiri City is practically located in the center of Japan. Because of this, it' s long been a key city for transportation. To this day, the post towns near the old Nakasendo Highway, Sanshu Highway, and the Zenkoji Highway remain—enabling you to the enjoy the atmosphere of the past.

With the prior post town of Narai-juku having maintained the townscape of old Edo, you' ll find rows of taverns spanning approximately one kilometer alongside the Nakasendo Highway. Previously referred to as “Narai Senken (Narai of 1,000 buildings)” , it once was the busiest out of the 11 post towns along the Nakasendo Highway in Kiso.

In the fall, the sweet aroma of grapes fills the city. Wine made from such grapes won the Grand Prize at the very prestigious International Wine Competition in 1989. Through winning the competition, Shiojiri' s wine, Kikyogahara, became known worldwide—causing the city to gain attention as a wine region. Currently, there are 16 companies and one high school that act as wineries, working towards producing a wine filled with individuality.

Additionally, there are several other sites where you can truly feel the region' s heart of hospitality. This includes the Hiraide Ruins—where you can experience ancient history, the Takabocchi Highlands—where you get a 360-degree panoramic view of the surrounding landscape, and Kiso lacquerware—which boasts a history of over 400 years.

Map

Aichi Prefecture

① Nagoya City P.3

② Inuyama City P.3

Gifu Prefecture

③ Gujo City P.4

④ Gero City P.4

⑤ Nakatsugawa City P.5

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⑥ Nagiso Town P.5

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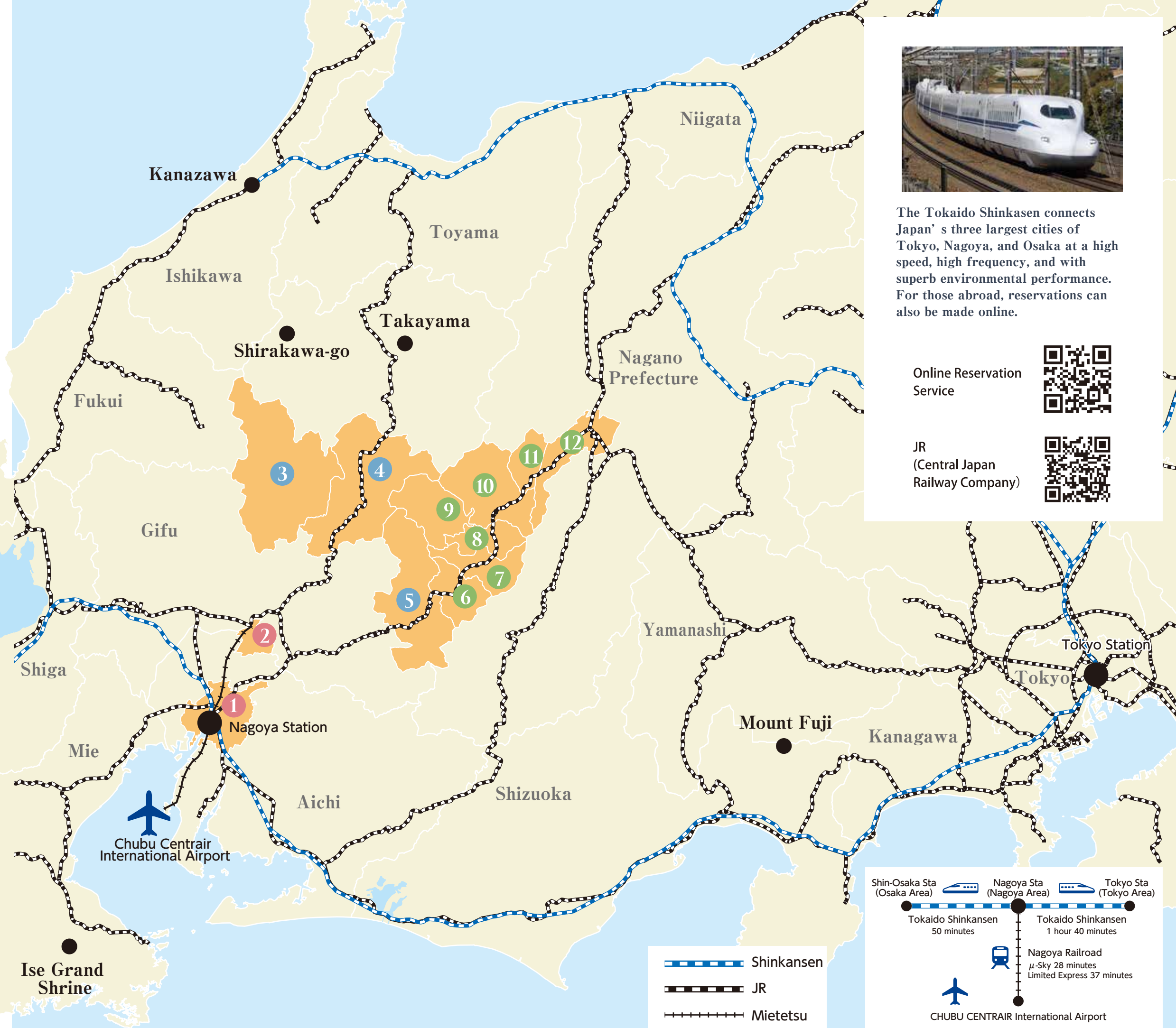
⑧ Agematsu Town P.6

⑨ Otaki Village P.7

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Online Reservation Service



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(Central Japan Railway Company)

