



Okuizumo Tourist information center
<https://okuizumo.org/en/>



The Official Okuizumo Travel Guide

UNTOUCHED JAPAN OKUIZUMO

JAPAN HERITAGE

Issued in February 2025



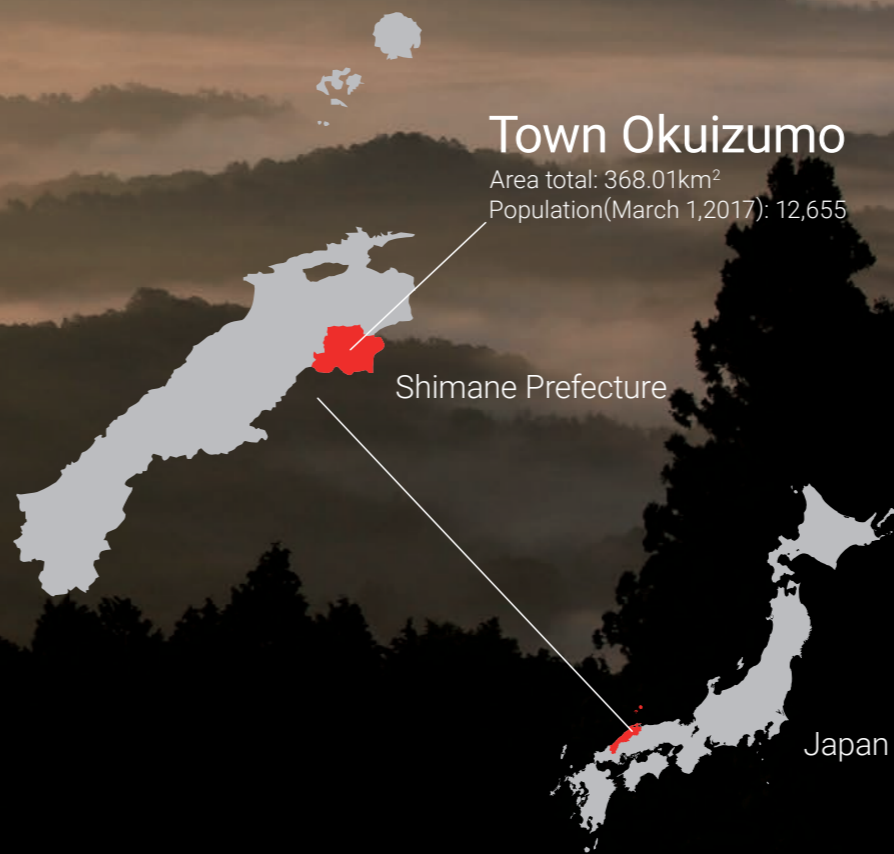
About Okuizumo

Okuizumo is located an hour away from Izumo Grand Shrine and Matsue castle by car. Apart from car, the only way to get access to Okuizumo is by JR, which takes about 2.5 hours from Izumo/ Matsue. It might seem like a time-consuming journey but will be worth your time.

The Cultural Affairs Agency of Japan has recognized Okuizumo as the sole producer of ancient Japanese style iron in the world. This ancient practice of iron smelting is called “tatara”. Tatara was also depicted in the movie “Princess Mononoke” by director Hayao Miyazaki.

The element “Tamahagane”, which is produced by tatara smelting, is an indispensable raw material for crafting Japanese swords.

Learn about Japanese swords, tatara smelting and experience forging swords and knives. For a timeless and undiscovered Japan, you are yet to see, visit Okuizumo.



Town Okuizumo

Area total: 368.01km²
Population(March 1,2017): 12,655

Shimane Prefecture

Japan

* See of cloud view from Mt. Jo

About Okuizumo	01
What is tatara smelting?	03
What makes Okuizumo so unique?	04
Discover the roots of Japanese swords in Okuizumo	05
Visit Tesshi Family	07
Activity	09
Sightseeing & Onsen	13
Tourist Map	15
Access	17
Plan your unique journey with us	18

Travel Tips Things to keep in mind while visiting Okuizumo

1 How to find information

Like most of the other rural regions in Japan, it will be difficult to find enough information about Okuizumo in English or any other foreign language. The information provided on the internet too could be misleading or outdated, hence it is best to contact the Okuizumo Tourism Association. We can guide you about tourist spots in Okuizumo and the surrounding towns/cities as well, so please feel free to contact us.

2 Please keep cash handy

There are only a few places which accept credit cards or have e-money services. It is the best to have pre-exchanged currency on hand because there are only a handful of banks which have currency exchanging services. Since Okuizumo is the land of tatara, locally produced knives that are on the pricier side, can also be purchased here. So, please keep exchanged cash handy, for a worry-free shopping experience!

3 Places to stay in Okuizumo

Although there are only a few options when it comes to staying in Okuizumo, we can assure you that the stay will be worth the choice. Western style rooms with beds and attached bathrooms are also available. For those, who are looking for some interaction with the locals, staying at the locally run guest houses, hotels and inns is recommended. The bookings can be made through Airbnb as well.

4 Experience the Slow life

Unlike the big cities, Okuizumo does not have a night life to offer, and most of the restaurants close early. Away from the daily hustle and bustle, Okuizumo is all about unwinding yourself and tuning into the sound of nature, soaking into the cozy hot springs and relaxing with your close friends over a glass of beer and the luscious local cuisine.

5 Plan your trip in advance

Izumo and Matsue are the closest hubs to get access to Okuizumo by train. Train schedules, time required to transit, and the low frequency of the local trains must be considered while planning. The local buses that take you around the town are also not frequent enough. Inquire with the Okuizumo Tourism Association for further details.

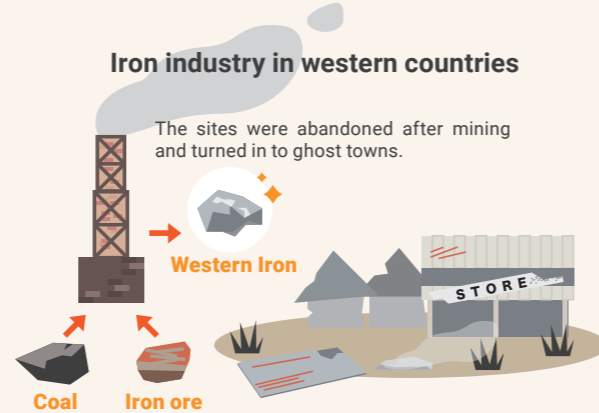
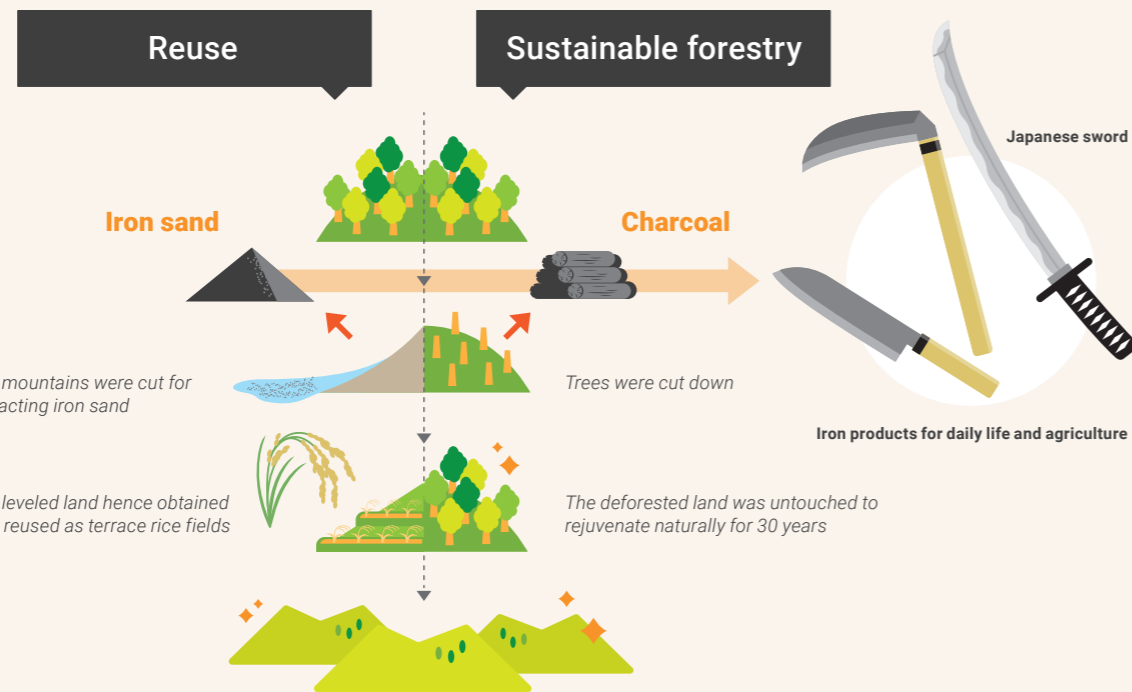
6 People here are shy

Although most of the locals here are shy and prefer not to interfere, they will surely help you out and take care of you if you are in any sort of trouble. So please feel free to ask for local's help- hand gestures could work too! Do not worry even if you do not speak Japanese! Everyone these days has access to the internet, so just make use of google translate and smartphone applications to communicate.

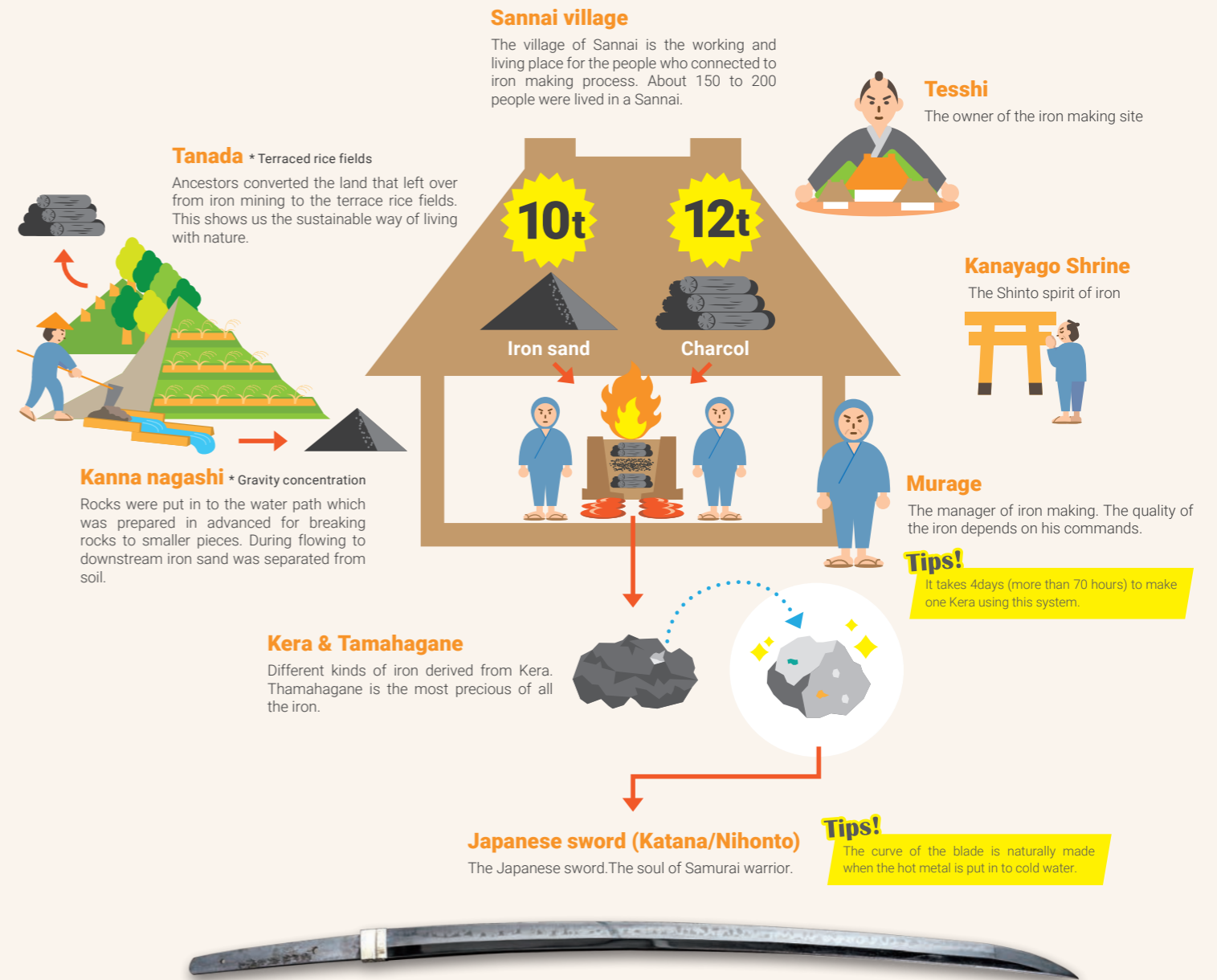
What is tataru smelting?

Tataru smelting is a method of producing iron, by combusting iron sand and charcoal together in a clay furnace. The iron smelting technique which was first developed in 2000 B.C West Asia, made its way further into Europe and other Asian countries around 1200 B.C, and entered Japan in the Kofun period (300-538 A.D). The smelting technique underwent a transformation as it entered Japan. Before the use of iron sand as a raw material for iron smelting, iron ore was the dominant raw material used in the early phases of iron production. Since Japan was rich in iron sand, a unique form of iron smelting peculiar to Japan, i.e. tataru was developed. However, with the onset of Meiji period (1868-1912), advanced western techniques of iron smelting got introduced to Japan, challenging the very existence of traditional tataru. Western style blast

furnaces proved to be so much more cost efficient that, tataru was sidelined in a matter of time, before getting discontinued in 1923. After a brief discontinuation in the Taisho period, traditional tataru was revived shortly during WW2 for saber production, but again discontinued for a long period after the war ended. However, in order to protect and reproduce the sword making craft, an intangible cultural asset to Japan, tamahagane (a raw material that can only be produced through tataru) was indispensable. Therefore, in 1977, The Society for Preservation of Japanese Art Swords (Nittoho), decided to restore and re-commence tataru practice in Okuizumo under the banner of Nittoho tataru. Subsequently, under the Japanese Law for "Protection of Cultural Property", tataru reserved its place as a "Selected Conservation Technique", and continues to be practiced to this day.



The Roots of Japanese sword * Iron making process



Tataru iron smelting and sustainable living

Before we explain what tataru is, try to recall the movie "PRINCESS MONONOKE" by director Hayao Miyazaki. The movie is based on the conflict that occurs between the nature and the human society, which director Hayao Miyazaki has portrayed in his movie through the image of a tataru workshop. But there is a crucial difference that lies between the movie's projection of tataru and Okuizumo's tataru industry. Okuizumo's tataru can be called one of the oldest models of sustainable development, carried out by the local people of Okuizumo to produce iron in harmony with nature. Most of the mining sites of the world, were abandoned after mass

extractions and ended up as ghost towns. But in the case of Okuizumo, the ancestors refused to desert the old sites of iron extractions and decided to revive them into terrace fields. The lush green and scenic panorama of Okuizumo which you see today, is an outcome of this very wisdom and hard work of our ancestors. In today's world, wherein, "Sustainable society", has become a widespread topic of concern, Okuizumo's history and topography can serve as an ideal example of achievement. For those, interested in the history of Okuizumo's sustainable development, the town offers a great opportunity to learn while travelling.



Discover the roots of Japanese swords in Okuizumo

There are a number of reasons that make people from all over the world to fall in love with Japan. Japanese cars, cuisine, anime or manga are just some common examples. For some, fascination towards Japanese martial arts, samurai and swords, is the factor which draws them to Japan.

If you are one of the Japanese sword fanatics, Okuizumo, the land of Japanese swords, is a “must see” place for you. Are you familiar with the Japanese mythological tale about an evil serpent called Yamata no Orochi, who was executed by the Shinto god Susanoo? Okuizumo’s Torikami district, is said to have staged the final battle between Orochi and Susanoo, where Susanoo puts an end to Orochi and discovers a sword that comes

out of his tail. Hence, leading to a belief that Okuizumo could be the place where Japanese swords originated.

When it comes to crafting Japanese swords, Tamahagane is an indispensable element. Tamahagane is a kind of traditional Japanese steel, which contains about 0.5% of carbon. Producing tamahagane through tatara is such a highly refined technique, that even the advance scientific technology of today, cannot duplicate it. Okuizumo is the sole place in the world, which has been recognized as the authentic producer of tamahagane. Tamahagane produced here, is distributed to swordsmiths throughout Japan, who forge it into alluring Japanese swords.

However, tatara is not limited to Japanese

swords. Hitachi Metals plant in Yasugi, has further developed the technique involved in tatara to produce hoop steel (material for razor blades)-a business they hold a maximum share for in the world. Apart from this, tamahagane is also being recognized as a potential element to make a breakthrough leap into the future.

Those interested in the history of tatara and Japanese swords, must visit the Tatara Sword Museum in Okuizumo. Attached to the museum is a small, modern forge, where the master swordsmith gives a demonstration of sword forging. If lucky enough, katana demonstration, conducted twice a month by swordsman Yoshihara can also be witnessed.



Tamahagane



Itohara Family, Itohara Memorial Museum

The Itohara family of Okuizumo was a family of “Tesshi (masters of tatara plants). The 15th and 16th generation descendants, still reside in the Itohara family residence. The astonishing main building of the residence which is open to the public was constructed in 1924 and has been recognized as a tangible cultural asset by the Japanese Government. There is an Izumo style garden attached to the residence, designed placing two long and narrow strips of steppingstones parallel to each other. The 16th generation successor of the Itohara family attends to the visitors in person, giving them a special opportunity to learn closely about the value that tatara had in people’s lives.



Sakurai Family, Kabeya-Shusei-kan History Museum

The Sakurai family was also a tesshi family which dwelled in Okuizumo. The Sakurai residence which you see today, was built in 1735 and its main building was constructed in 1738. The tea ceremony experience which is conducted in this residence holds a 280-year-old history and is very popular amongst the tourists. Visitors can also enjoy the seasonal spectacle of the residence complex throughout the year. The lush greenery of early summer, transcending into overwhelming hues of red during autumn is an exceptional site. Along with the task of managing the iron industry of their domain, the tesshi were also closely related to the Matsue clan, and showed immense hospitality to the warlord during his visits, in the form of tea ceremonies and local cuisines such as soba, which is believed to have influenced the local culture of this town.





Make your own kitchen knife with a professional blacksmith in Iron town Okuizumo

This is an era where anything can be made easily, using the technologically advanced machines of today. However, on the flipside, machine made objects do not possess a craftsman's soul, which he transfers into his handmade work. Hence, one's sense of appreciation towards their belongings is gradually fading away. The Japanese term "Monodzukuri" is a concept which is extremely hard to translate in English. The concept of monodzukuri is not just about producing high quality products, but it is an attitude of craftsmanship, where the maker strives to improve his skills every

day and puts utmost attention to each and every detail of production, starting right from the quality of the raw materials. The experience of making kitchen knives which we offer to the visitors is not simply about knife crafting, but an opportunity to witness and experience the efforts of the blacksmiths which they put into their handmade knives and learn why Okuizumo consists of the most suitable iron sand needed for knife crafting. This experience is about discovering the art of monodzukuri in one's daily life.



Activity

Things to experience in Okuizumo

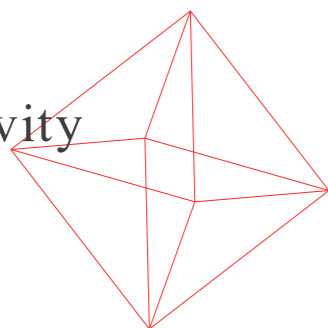
Japanese sword forging demonstration
Okuizumo based blacksmith, Mr. Kobayashi demonstrates the forging technique of Japanese swords. He gives simple explanations and lets the visitors try their own hands at hammering red hot iron slabs while demonstrating how to forge a sword.

Swordplay demonstration

Visitors can see the swordsman demonstrate his skills with a real Japanese sword and learn about swordplay techniques. After the demonstration, visitors can also try holding real swords and pose with it.



Activity



Soba making experience

Okuizumo is a famous “soba destination”, which attracts several soba lovers from inside and outside Shimane prefecture. There are three places which offer soba making experience in Okuizumo.

* The number of participants and charges differ based on the shop. Please inquire in advance.



Maitake Factory Tour

A factory tour to Maitake Okuizumo, which cultivates variety of mushrooms like maitake, eringi and shiitake. Farm fresh mushrooms can be purchased directly from the market, with the option of onsite tasting also available. A fountain of spring water, called “enmeisui” is also present in the factory compound, for passersbys to drink freely.

Toufu making experience

Mr. Ishida Nobuo from Ishida Tofu store, in Okuizumo’s Yokota, offers tofu making experience at his store. The procedure is very simple- adding brine to hot soy milk. However, the correct temperature is the most crucial part of making tofu. So if you are keen to learn the trick behind making delicious tofu, we recommend you this experience.



Soroban (Japanese abacus) making experience

Okuizumo is one of the two major producers of soroban along with Hyogo prefecture’s Ono city. The “Unshuu Soroban”, produced in Okuizumo has been recognized as a National Traditional Handicraft of Japan.

Payment is required to be made upon arrival by cash or credit card

* The payments will be accepted in person.

* The cost is inclusive of taxes

* There are chances of not being able to fix the preferred date of reservation due to the demonstrators’ personal schedules.



Onsen



Okuizumo Beautiful Skin Hot Spring Village

The water of the three major hot spring destinations in Okuizumo, Hinokami Onsen, Sajiro Onsen and Kamedake Onsen, rich in alkaline properties, is believed to be very effective for attaining a beautiful, smooth and white skin. Higher the pH level, slimier the water, which in turn helps you get rid of all the dirt and dead skin cells on the surface of your skin. Long hot baths here will seldom make you dizzy, so we recommend the visitors to try all of them during your stay in Okuizumo.

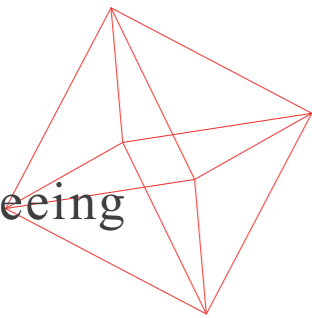


Okuizumo Tataru and Sword Museum

The museum displays everything, starting from the history of tataru iron smelting practice in Okuizumo, detailed exhibits about the procedure, and the art swords which have been crafted out from tamahagane. There is a huge life size model of a clay furnace, which is built to keep the tataru operation stabilized, by controlling the amount of humidity and maintaining the dryness inside the furnace. Different types of bellows, which were used to wind the furnace are also on display. Those interested in the working knowledge of these bellows, can also try and work them. Demonstration on Japanese sword forging is also conducted twice a month.

1380-1, Yokota, Okuizumo

Sightseeing



Tane Nature Museum

This museum takes you to an educational tour about the history of universe and the evolution of living beings. Structures of rare dinosaurs, ancient fossils, precious mineral stones etc. are exhibited in this museum. Computerized display boards have been installed to provide the visitors with interactive knowledge. The museum also comes with lodging facilities, with its popular night time museum, opened exclusively for the guests.

236-1, Sajiro, Okuizumo



Miinohara Ski Resort

This ski resort is recommended for ski beginners and families. There is a public ski school as well.

Miinohara, Yakawa, Okuizumo



Okuizumo Orochi Loop

Free

The Orochi loop is a 2 layered loop, designed with the image of Yamata no Orochi, the giant coiled serpent in mind. The loop stretches from Sakane, National Highway-314 to Miinohara, passing from 3 mountain tunnels and 11 bridges. The Miinohara Ohashi Bridge symbolized the serpent Yamata no Orochi spewing red hot fire.

2500-294, Okuizumo, Yakawa
Accessible all year round



Oni no Shitaburui

Free

Oni no Shitaburui is a 2km long V shaped ravine, formed after years of continuous corrosion of the biotite granite zone by swift currents of Omaki River, a tributary that flows out of the Hii River. The place derives its name from the legend of "Shitai-yama" mentioned in Izumo Fudoki. The legend revolves around a shark, who falls in love with a beautiful goddess. Blessed with abundant greenery and autumn foliage, Oni no Shitaburui has been listed as one of the National Natural Monuments in Japan. Over the years, the barrier free promenade connected to Oni no Shitaburui rope bridge, symbolizing "love", has become a sacred place among couples.

1417-6, Minari, Okuizumo

It is recommended to visit the place during the daytime (no night lights installed)

Accessible all year round, except winters due to heavy snow.

Okuizumo Town Tourist Map



From Okuizumo tourist information center (Izumo Minari Sta.)

	15 min	Kamedake Onsen
	10 min	Sajiro Onsen
	25 min	Hinokami Onsen



Okuizumo tane nature museum



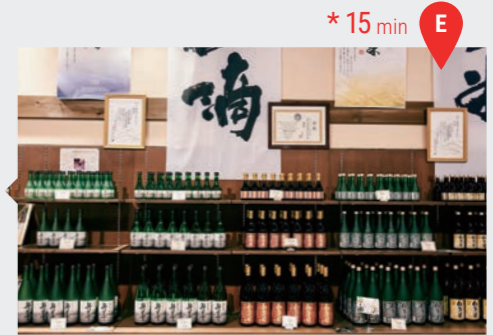
Itohara memorial museum, Itohara family



Oninoshitaburui



Kabeya shusei-kan history museum, Sakurai family



Roadside Station Sakagura Okuizumo-kouryukan (Japanese Sake and souvenirs)



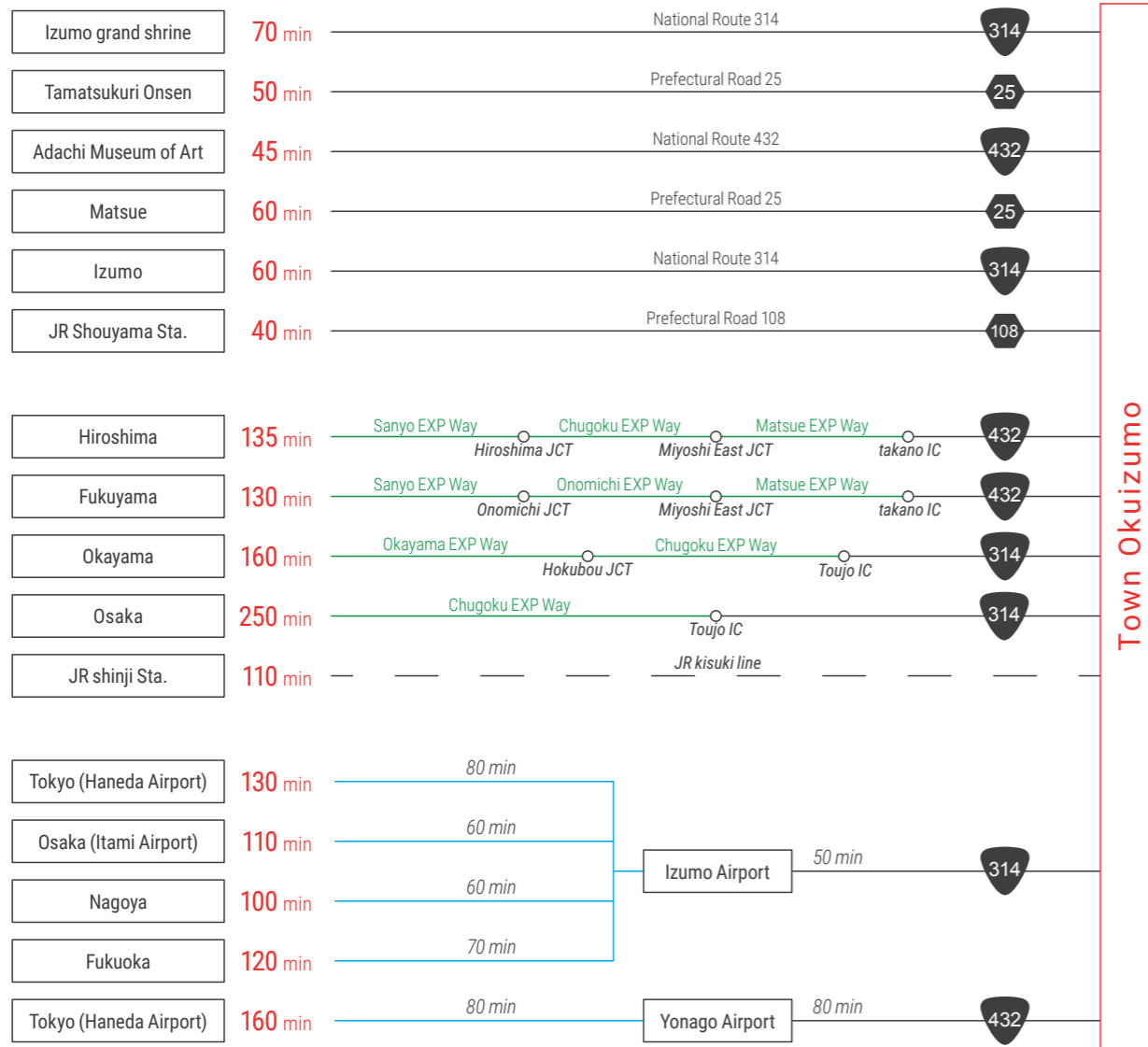
Okuizumo Tatarakakuro tradition museum



Okuizumo Orochi loop, Roadside Station Okuizumo Orochi loop

* From Okuizumo tourist information center (Izumo Minari Sta.)

Access to Town Okuizumo



TAXI service



Hikami Taxi



Tatara Taxi



Ai Taxi

*You can call Okuizumo tourism Association for reservations.

Okuizumo Tourism Association



Plan your unique journey with us

If you have already travelled the golden route of Japan and now find yourself in a “been there, done that” situation, and want to see a Japan, which is far away from modern commercialization and tourist hype, Okuizumo is the place to add to your next itinerary list. We welcome you to a Japan, which has paused in time. So just unwind yourself in the serene tranquility and seep into an untouched Japan. Visit Okuizumo. Let us know your specific preferences, and we will plan you a journey which is uniquely yours. You can plan your activities and book a guide in advance. Or if you are looking forward to a whole different experience such as farm stay, long stay or working holidays, we will try our best to cater to such special requirements as well. Planning you a journey, truly yours, is our aspiration.



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