

# TSUBAME TRAVEL GUIDE

NIIGATA, JAPAN

Many Things to Experience!  
Many Great Photo Locations!

Tour Guide to the City of Tsubame

つばめぐり

Wander the city,  
and discover its charms.

Natural Beauty,  
and Rich History...

From Tsubame  
to the world!



A tsubame (燕) is a swallow. While the original city name Tsubame (澤波目) had a different orthography and meaning, many centuries ago the name transmogrified into the City of Swallows (燕市)—resonating with the country's deep affection for these lovely birds.





The city's craft history began in the Edo period, as residents took up the production of *wakugi* (Japanese-style construction nails) as a supplement to their farming activities. Today's visitors can encounter a wide variety of world-class craft production, and feel the enthusiasm of artisans carrying forward traditional techniques and production methods.



Cutlery from Tsubame is used at the Nobel Banquet every December, in Stockholm.

## Experience the City's World-Class Traditional Crafts

The city's metalworking industry is said to have started in the early Edo period, when flooding of the Shinano River interfered with farm work and induced residents to turn to the production of *wakugi* (Japanese-style construction nails) as a secondary business. The 1700s saw the introduction and gradual flourishing of numerous other crafts: *tsuikidōki* (hammered copperware), *yasuri* (metal files), *kiseru* (metal-tipped smoking pipes), and more. Crafts industries then began to fall into decline with the advent of the Meiji Restoration in 1868, as repeated wars and the introduction of European culture took their toll. But World War I marked another turnaround, as Japan began producing western tableware to meet foreign demand, and Tsubame's industries received trial production orders from abroad. Backed by long experience and sophisticated metalworking technologies, local artisans proved very successful in mass production of western-style metal tableware, and these industries thrived—bringing much-needed foreign exchange into the area.

The area's metal housewares industry arose after World War II, with the development of stainless steel processes and other technologies. Today the city produces a wide range of metal products, supported by local artisans' continuing pursuit of technical perfection. Visitors are welcome at many production centers throughout the city, where you can speak directly with artisans, and observe sophisticated production methods with traditional roots going back 400 years. Please come and enjoy the Tsubame craft experience.



## Four Hundred Years of Craft Production Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum

A great place to start your tour of the city's crafts. Here you can experience the development of the area's early metalworking industry, which started with the manufacture of *wakugi* (Japanese-style construction nails) back in the early Edo period and then advanced into production of *yasuri* (metal files), *kiseru* (metal-tipped smoking pipes), and *tsuikidōki* (hammered copperware). See re-creations of early factories and production processes, and view the work of currently active local artisans. Read easy-to-understand explanations of how the industry developed and changed, while looking at sample pieces from each period. See how local crafts have developed and changed over hundreds of years. The regular exhibits are supplemented by special monthly exhibitions, ensuring a fascinating experience for all.

Where: 4330-1 Ōmagari, Tsubame City  
Phone: 0256-63-7666  
Hours: 9 AM to 4:30 PM (No entry after 4 PM.)  
Closed: The day after each holiday; every Monday (unless a holiday); New Year Break

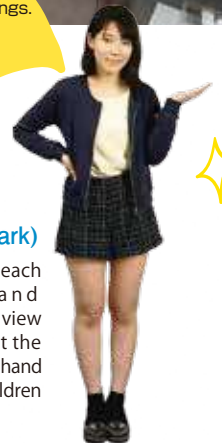


Crafting a Mini-Spoon

## Hands-On Room (Tsubame Crafts Theme Park)

A visit to the hands-on room can teach you much about metals and metalworking. Also please stop to view the easy-to-understand exhibits at the Tsubame Crafts Theme Park. Try your hand at producing a mini-spoon. Your children are welcome to participate with you.

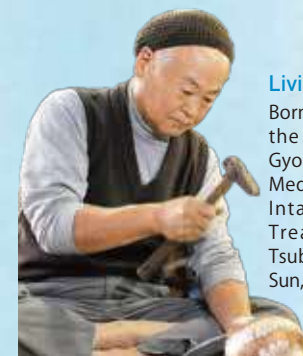
The curator may be available to explain things. Please call ahead for more information.



## Acclaimed Traditional Craftsmanship. An "Intangible Cultural Property." Gyokusendō Inc.

Established in 1816—during the latter part of the Edo period—this company is a longstanding and highly regarded producer and marketer of local *tsuikidōki* (hammered copperware) and other craft goods. Niigata Prefecture has designated the company an "Intangible Cultural Property"; the country's Agency for Cultural Affairs has designated it a "Protectable Intangible Cultural Property"; and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Economy has officially recognized the company for its "traditional craftsmanship." In addition to its products, the company has also trained and developed over 300 *tsuikidōki* craftspersons during its long history. *Tsuikidōki* is produced through a hammering process that wrinkles, rather than stretches, the metal. Each piece is created from a single copper sheet. Beautiful and lustrous, these pieces seem to improve further with continued use.

Where: 2-2-21 Chūō-Dōri, Tsubame City  
Phone: 0256-62-2015  
Hours: 8:30 AM to Noon, 1 PM to 5:30 PM  
Closed: Sundays and Holidays



## Living National Treasure: Norio Tamagawa

Born in 1942 in what was then Shitadamura (today, the city of Sanjō), in Niigata Prefecture. Joined Gyokusendō in 1959. In 2002, won a Purple-Ribbon Medal of Honor. In 2010 designated an Important Intangible Cultural Property (Living National Treasure), and named an honorary citizen of Tsubame. In 2012, received the "Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette" award.



Photo Spot  
P13→



Please call listed companies or facilities directly if you would like to arrange a tour of their facilities.



## Metalworking Technologies for the Next Generation

### MGNET Co., Ltd.

### Takeda Kanagata Seisakusho, Co., Ltd.

Established in 1978. Manufactures single and progressive press dies supporting the rapid production of high-quality, easy-to-use precision parts and more. Initiated its own "mgn" brand in 2005, using propriety technologies to produce fashionable lifestyle-themed card cases, iPhone back parts, and other goods. Visitors are warmly welcomed at the company's open Factory Front workshop, where you can enjoy hands-on experience in the production of *tsuikidōki* (hammered copperware) and cutlery.

Where: 14-3 Higashi-Ōta, Tsubame City

Phone: 0256-46-8720

Hours: 10 AM to 6 PM

Closed: Mondays, Holidays

Visitors to the workshop can try their hand at making spoons and copper-plated bookmarks—experiencing the pleasures of creating functional items while learning something about the history and skills underlying this type of work. Same-day reservations may be available for small groups; please call and ask.



## Witness the Cutting Edge!

### Tōjirō Knife Gallery (Tōjirō Co., Ltd.)

One of the few companies in Japan equipped to carry out the entire blade cutlery production processes in-house. The firm specializes in the *nuki-hamono* style of production—one of several traditional Japanese methods—and enjoys a large global share of the composite-blade cutlery market. Gallery visitors can view a broad lineup of products available for purchase, and may also bring in their own cutlery for repair and maintenance attention. Although partially machine-made, Tōjirō knives have their roots in hand-craftsmanship. Feel free to pick them up and handle them...carefully.

Where: 55-18 Yoshida-higashi-sakaechō, Tsubame City

Phone: 0256-93-4195

Hours: 10 AM to 6 PM

Closed: Sundays and Holidays



# T S U B A M E C R A F T S M A N S H I P

## Largest Exhibition Hall in the Prefecture

### Assistive Products Exhibition "Will Assist"

Niigata's largest exhibition of assistive products: tableware, food products, wheelchairs, beds, bathrooms, home repair, and more. Visitors are encouraged to touch and use the exhibits. The new robot display corner is especially popular.



Where: 4852-5 Koike-Kamidōri, Tsubame City Phone: 0256-64-9001  
Hours: 10 AM to 5 PM weekdays; 11 AM to 4 PM weekends and holidays

## Miso Fermenting Buckets Have a History, Too!

### Echigo Miso Jōzō Co., Ltd.

This company started in 1771 (!) as a brewing storehouse, and turned to miso production in 1931. The company has kept its history, crafts, and traditions alive, while continuing to produce and market various types of miso—for general consumption, for cooking, and as *miso-zuke* (pickling in miso). It still ferments its miso in large barrels, now in use for over a century (since the Taisho period), in a storehouse that bespeaks history and that also functions as a type of theme park supporting the perpetuation of this craft. Visitors are welcome to tour the storehouse and try their hand at miso production (reservations required). Artisans will guide you as you prepare the mixture, which you can then take home to ferment.



Where: 5-10 Yoshida-Nakamachi, Tsubame City  
Phone: 0256-93-2002  
Hours: 9 AM to 6 PM  
Closed: Sundays, Holidays, Irregular Off Days

## From Tsubame to the World! Encounter with Northern European Designers.

### Ohizumi Bussan Co., Ltd.

Established in 1943. Holds worldwide rights to the manufacture of the Kay Bojesen cutlery brand and the ICHI cutlery brand—the former created by the famed Danish designer of the same name, and the latter by the equally famous compatriot Ole Palsby, decorated by the Danish royal family. The company also makes various non-cutlery items as well, using state-of-the-art stainless-steel production processes.



Where: 151 Koseki, Tsubame City  
Phone: 0256-63-4551  
Hours: 8:30 AM to Noon, 1 PM to 5:30 PM  
Closed: Weekends, Holidays, and New Year Break  
For information about events, etc., please visit our website: <https://www.ohizumbussan.jp/>

## Support for the Metal Polishing Industry

### Tsubame-Shi Migakiya Ichibankan

Metal grinding and polishing are essential processes for Tsubame's metalworking industries. This facility is dedicated to encouraging and teaching new practitioners, and to supporting the development of new techniques and the startup of new polishing-related businesses. The head teachers here are prefecture-accredited master craftspersons (*Niigata ken'ō meisters*). Factory tours and hands-on experiences are available by reservation. Highly recommended.



Where: 3633-7 Koike, Tsubame City  
Phone: 0256-61-6701  
Hours: 9 AM to Noon, 1 PM to 4 PM  
Fees: Factory tours are free. 800 yen for spoon polishing experience (for kids); 1,500 yen for tumbler polishing experience (for adults)  
Closed: Weekends, Holidays, and New Year Break



Please call listed companies or facilities directly if you would like to arrange a tour of their facilities.



Local Specialty!

# Se-Abura Ramen

## Tsubame soul food. Pleasing generations of craftspeople.

Tsubame's local variant of ramen originated in the 1950s, when a rapid growth in demand for western-style metal tableware drove a huge increase in delivery lunch orders from busy factory workers. The distinctively thick noodles were a modification to maintain firmness for take-out orders. Fish stock and soy sauce were the flavoring for a thick broth that was best suited to the palates of perspiring workers, and pig back fat (*se-abura*) was added for a deeper taste. The fat creates a thin surface cover that helps keep the ramen warm, so that busy workers who can't eat it immediately can still enjoy a bit later. The dish has continued to evolve over the years, and visitors can order and enjoy *se-abura* ramen at many locations throughout the area.



We all love ramen.

### Ramen Pilgrimage Map, Tsubame-Sanjō

Ramen questers may find this map invaluable. Find popular spots for *se-abura* ramen in Tsubame, curry ramen in Sanjō, and more. You can find the map at any of listed spots, or you can download it from here:

<http://www.made-in-tsubame.jp/ra-men/>

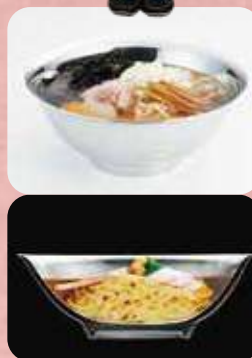


Two-ply design keeps the inside warm, the outside cool. Tsubame ingenuity helps you eat.



### Metal Ramen Bowl

Inspired by a metal beer tumbler, this stainless-steel bowl keeps your ramen warm even as the outside stays cool to the touch. Sturdy and almost impossible to break. Another superlative product crafted entirely by local artisans.



### Ramen Restaurant: Kōshū Hanten

*Se-abura* ramen originated from the Chinese noodle dishes served at this restaurant. This is still a very popular eatery, and there are usually lines waiting to get in. Thick noodles in a broth flavored with fish stock and soy sauce, with a generous helping of back fat—a great dining experience.

Where: 49-4 Nishi-Tsubame, Tsubame City Phone: 0256-64-3770  
Hours: 11 AM to 2:30 PM, 5 PM to 8 PM weekdays; 11 AM to 8 PM weekends and holidays (May close earlier if stock runs out)  
Closed: Mondays (and one Tuesday each month)



Oily? Or Not Too Oily?

When ordering *se-abura* ramen in Tsubame, you can tell them how oily you want it. "Go heavy on the fat today, please" or "It's getting late, so not so oily please." Your servers will welcome your request...so don't forget to say, when ordering.

## Hands-On Craft Experiences

So many opportunities to try your hand at craft work! Participate, and deepen your connection to the city of craftsmanship.

The city of Tsubame has a long history as a thriving center of craftsmanship. And visitors can find many opportunities to visit worksites and try out crafting for themselves. On this page, we introduce a few of the metalworking opportunities that are available. Note that hands-on programs may run on limited days only—so be sure to call ahead. You may also choose to enjoy guided nature walks, eco-trekking, fruit picking, or miso fermenting. Tsubame City Tourist Association can tell you what's scheduled.

Association Website: <https://tsubame-kankou.jp/>  
Phone: 0256-64-7630



I polished these tumblers, and they've been reborn!



### Polish Up Your Own Beer Tumbler

Polish a tumbler under the guidance of local polishing artisans, and take it home. If you bring your kids, they can polish and take home some spoons (appointment required). You can also enjoy an informative tour of the building.

Where: Tsubame-Shi Migakiya Ichibankan (3633-7 Koike, Tsubame City)  
Fee: Adults 1,500 yen (includes tumblers); children 800 yen (includes two spoons)  
Contact: Tsubame-Shi Migakiya Ichibankan Phone: 0256-61-6701

### Hammer a Pattern on a Copper Tumbler or Sake Cup

Create a custom pattern on a pure-copper tumbler or cup. Take your personalized creation home, and use at your table. Enjoy tasting beer or sake!

Where: Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum (4330-1 Ōmagari, Tsubame City)  
Prices: Beer tumblers 2,000 yen; sake cups and shot glasses 1,500 yen each (Does not include museum admission fee).  
Contact: Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum Phone: 0256-63-7666



### Craft a Custom Copperware Dish

Hammer out a small dish from a sheet of copper. Try your hand at a local craft that has been designated an "intangible cultural property of Niigata."

Where: Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum (4330-1 Ōmagari, Tsubame City)  
Fee: 700 yen (in addition to museum admission fee)  
Contact: Tsubame City Tourist Association Phone: 0256-64-7630  
●Available only on certain days. Call for details.

### Carve Out Leaf-Themed Metal Accessory

Carve a leaf-themed key holder, chopstick rest, or bookmark out of a copper plate. Don't worry—a local expert will show you how to do it.

Where: Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum (4330-1 Ōmagari, Tsubame City)  
Fee: 700–1,200 yen (in addition to museum admission fee)  
Contact: Tsubame City Tourist Association (phone 0256-64-7630)  
●Available only on certain days. Call for details.

### Craft Your Own Accessories

Turn a copper sheet into a custom accessory of your own creation. Don't miss this chance to get some basic instruction from an expert craftsman.

Where: Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum (4330-1 Ōmagari, Tsubame City)  
Fee: 2,700 yen (in addition to museum admission fee)  
Contact: Tsubame City Tourist Association Phone: 0256-64-7630  
●Available only on certain days. Call for details.

# Tsubame's Industry



# Bunsui Oiran Dōchū

## Traditional Beautiful Costume Parade Marks Advent of Spring in the Bunsui District

Oiran parades are held several times yearly throughout the country. In Tsubame, the Bunsui Oiran Dōchū—on the third Sunday in April—is timed to welcome the blossoming of the 3,000 cherry trees planted in commemoration of the 1922 completion of the Ōkōzu Diversion Channel (*Bunsui* means “river diversion”; and *oiran* are higher-class courtesans).

The origin of the local event was a costume parade held in 1924 by a group of local volunteers wishing to celebrate the start of the flower-viewing season. In 1934, the newly established Bunsui Flower-Viewing Association—dedicated to calling the country’s attention to the scenic beauty and cherry blossoms of the Bunsui area—held the first *oiran*-themed march: a geisha dressed as an *oiran*, marching together with two *oiran* assistants.

The modern parade features three *oiran*—the Sinano *tayū*, the Sakura *tayū*, and the Bunsui *tayū* (*tayū* is yet another word for *oiran*)—marching together with about 60 servants. The magnificently dressed *tayū* walk in a highly stylized manner, balancing on very elevated wooden clogs. The parade unfolds like a lovely flower-themed picture scroll.



# All About the Ōkōzu Bunsui

## A Once in-a-Century-Level River Improvement Project Protects Against Flooding, Turning the Echigo Plain into Japan's Rice Bowl

The Shinano is Japan’s longest river. In earlier days, torrential rain would periodically cause it to overrun its banks, causing terrible damage to the region’s villages and agriculture. This led to the idea for building a diversion channel, as a way to direct the flood water into the nearby Japan Sea. The construction of the Ōkōzu Diversion Channel was a massive undertaking that involved a total of 10 million workers. The diversion channel plays a major role in protecting the Echigo Plain, allowing it to develop into one of the country’s top rice-producing areas.

The diversion channel is almost always well-behaved and serene, and its magnificent flow is mesmerizing to visitors. You can see waterfowl such as swans in large numbers, and there’s also a fish-ladder observatory and a waterway where children can paddle.



apparently, today’s Nakanokuchi was known as the Naoe River.

Of course, there is no possibility that Kanetsugu created the tributary out of nothing. At most, we may conjecture that perhaps he was somehow involved in efforts to alter the flows out of the Shinano. He was in his 20s at the time this supposedly happened, and he was certainly aware of the repeated flood damage to the area. Perhaps he directed his considerable abilities, in one way or another, to helping improve the lives of the people in the region.

## Shinano River Ōkōzu Museum

A visit here will tell you something about the history and uses of the Shinano River and the Ōkōzu Diversion. Opened in 1978 to commemorate a hundred years of flood-control work, and museum was renovated in 2002. An observation deck yields grand view of the river and the diversion, and there’s also a fish-ladder observatory at the Ōkōzu Overfall Weir.



Where: Gosengoku, Tsubame City, Niigata Phone: 0256-97-2195 Hours: 9 AM to 4 PM  
Closed: Mondays (or Tuesday, if Monday is a holiday) and New Year Break



Movable Weir

Ōkōzu Bridge

Ōkōzu Diversion (Ōkōzu Bunsui)

Motokawa Bridge



Wade into the river’s waterway and catch a few fish and crayfish.

## Beloved Zen Monk Ryōkan Taigu

Born in 1758 in Izumozaki in Echigo Province (the old name for Niigata Prefecture), Ryōkan Taigu underwent harsh training at Entsūji Temple (part of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism) in Okayama Prefecture, and chose to devote his life to study in order to become a perfect human being. During his time in Tsubame, he lived alone in the mountains performing zazen (seated Zen meditation). He came into town to beg for food, living a simple life in accordance with Buddhist teachings, and endeavored to interact with as many people as possible, regardless of whether they were rich or poor. Many people empathized with and trusted him on account of his affectionate behavior.

He was also a student and practitioner of Chinese-style poetry (*kanshi*), Japanese poetry (*waka*), and calligraphy. He has left magnificent works in all of these: more than 450 *kanshi*, more than 1,200 *waka*, and lovely calligraphy. He was and remains highly regarded by many Japanese writers and artists, including Natsume Sōseki and Yasunari Kawabata.



What Kind of Man Was He?



## Bunsui Ryōkan Museum

This museum shows creations from, and artifacts relating to, Ryōkan Taigu—the great Buddhist monk in love with nature, people, and art. Here you can see his poems and calligraphy. His calligraphy of his last years—after he had moved further down the mountain into a hut at Otogo Shrine—is especially accomplished. Special exhibitions show designated “important cultural properties,” are of particular note.

Where: 9-9 Kamisuwa, Tsubame City Phone: 0256-97-2428

Hours: 9 AM to 4:30 PM

Closed: Mondays (or Tuesday, if Monday is a holiday) and New Year Break

Admission: Adults 300 yen; 200 yen college, vocational & high school; 100 yen elementary and middle school (group discounts available)

After turning to Buddhism, undergoing strict training, and wandering for years on a pilgrimage, Ryōkan settled into a hermitage on Mt. Kugami. While his lifestyle was austere, he was a magnificent poet and a calligrapher; and his personality endeared him to all. Many stories about him live on, along with his own wonderful creations.

## At the Pine Tree, Viewing the Moon (*Tsukimi-no-Matsu*)

When Confucian scholar Kameda Bōsai was visiting at his hermitage, the sake ran dry and Ryōkan went out to buy more—but he did not return. Bōsai went to fetch him—and found him sitting on the roots of a nearby pine tree, gazing at the moon. Ryōkan had forgotten about the sake, and was lost in Buddhist reverie.



## Bamboo Shoot (*Takenoko*)

Ryōkan was aware of a bamboo shoot growing tall in his outhouse, soon to hit the ceiling. Feeling love for the shoot, Ryōkan lit a candle with the intention of burning a small hole in the thatched roof, to give the shoot room to grow. Instead, he burned the outhouse to the ground. Through this story, we can learn his compassion for all living things.

## Moving the Heavens for a Child (*Tenjō Ōkaze*)

Having finished his daily mendicant rounds in Tsubame, Ryōkan came to the weir at the Nakanokuchi River, where children were flying kites. A child approached, asking him to write a message on a piece of paper he wanted to use for a kite. Delighted to please a child, Ryōkan wrote—in beautiful calligraphy that survives to this day—four characters requesting strong winds in the heavens: 天上大風 (*tenjō ōkaze*).

## Temari (Japanese Handball)

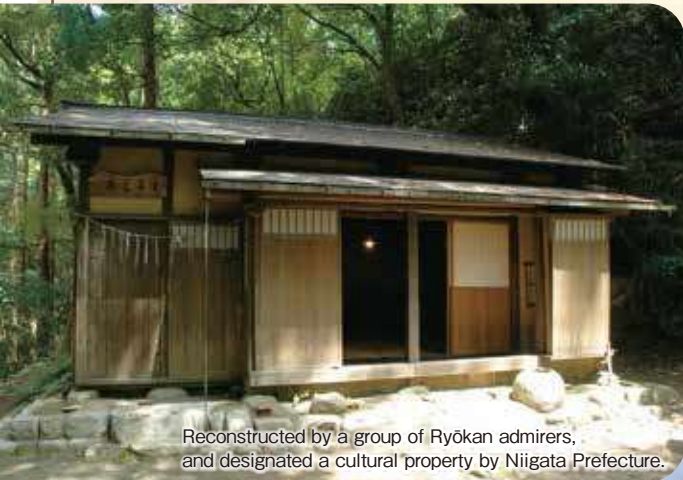
*Temari* is a traditional handball game that Ryōkan enjoyed playing with children, and the “Ryōkan temari” continues to convey his spirit. The centers contain fiddlehead fern cotton or rice husks to make the ball bounce, and intricate patterns are meticulously embroidered on the surface, making them a folk craft that evokes the warmth of handiwork.



Drawing of Ryōkan done presumably in 1810, when he was 56. The artist is Kyūboku Mitsumori; the poem is from Ryōkan’s own hand.



# Walking About Mt. Kugami—A Natural Setting That Ryōkan Loved



Reconstructed by a group of Ryōkan admirers, and designated a cultural property by Niigata Prefecture.

## A Ootogo Jinja Sōan (Shrine Hut)

### Where Ryōkan's Art Reached Its Maturity

In 1816, when he was 59, Ryōkan left his Gogōan Hermitage and moved into a hut at Ootogojinja Shrine, at the foot of the mountain. Here, it is said, he often enjoyed playing *temari* (a traditional Japanese handball game) with the children on the grounds. His ten years here are considered the mature period of his art, and it is also said Ryōkan made poems on his feelings and thoughts about his closing years. *No sticking to ambition / Let nature be my fate*—is the beginning of one well-known poem, inscribed in 1858; this is thought to be the oldest extant inscription of Ryōkan poetry.

## B Sengandō Suspension Bridge

### Wonderful View from 35 Meters (115 ft.) Up

Halfway up Mt. Kugami, this striking, red suspension bridge—124 meters (407 ft.) long and just 1.5 meters (5 ft.) wide—connects the Gogōan Hermitage on one side with the Mt. Asahi observation deck on the other. The observation deck offers a panoramic view of the gorgeous mountainside, with the Japan Sea visible in the distance. The view is relaxing, inspiring, and distinctive in all seasons—the pale leaves of spring, the flaming colors of autumn, the winter snowscapes. Named one of the prefecture's "best 50 bridges" in 1993.

Walk, breathe the wonderful air, and imbibe the fantastic view.



## Chōzenkan Museum

### The Chōzenkan School, active for 80 years, turned out numerous notable graduates

Founded by Buntai Suzuki in 1833 in what was then the village of Aōzu, the school remained in operation until 1912, educating more than 1,000 students. Ryōkan recognized Buntai's gifts when Buntai was just 18, and the two remained close friends. There can be little doubt that the school's mission reflected Ryōkan's strong desire to help reduce the suffering caused by repeated flooding of the *Shinano* River. Noteworthy disciples of the school included Tai Hasegawa—founder of *Saisei Gakusha*, forerunner of today's Nippon Medical school—and Masanao Washio, Takenosuke Takahashi, and Kan'ichi Ōtake, all very active in the construction of the Ōkōzu Diversion. The school's guiding principle of helping those in need seems to have motivated many of its students.

Where: 97 Aōzu, Tsubame City Phone: 0256-93-5400 Hours: 9 AM to 4:30 PM  
Closed: Mondays (or Tuesday, if Monday is a holiday) and New Year Break  
Admission: Primary/middle/high school 50 yen, general 100 yen (20% discount for groups of 20 or more)



## Time and Incense...

The Chōzenkan School used incense sticks to keep time. A single stick took about 20 minutes to burn through. Students enjoyed a 1-stick recess before noon, a 1/2-stick break after lunch, and another 1-stick break later in the afternoon.

## C Gogōan Hermitage

### Intensifying the Five Senses

One of the four *tacchū*\* (subsidiary temples) at the Kokujōji Temple complex, built as a hermitage for Mangan Shōnin, a high priest involved in revitalizing the complex. Ryōkan moved in here in 1797, when he was 40, and stayed about 20 years, wandering out daily to beg for alms. Situated halfway up Mt. Kugami, the retreat is an ideal place to practice Zen meditation. Ryōkan was a well-known and beloved figure, and many significant visitors from far-off places came to visit him here, including the Confucian scholar Kameda Bōsai, and the poet and writer Mitsue Ōmura. Ryōkan studied and practiced calligraphy intently, focusing his attention on works such as Kaisei's *Jijōjō* (dating from the Tang Dynasty) and Ono no Michikaze's *Akihagijō*. His famous four-character piece written for a child's kite—*天上大風* (*tenjō ōkaze*)—was written soon before, or perhaps sometime after, he moved away from this hermitage. The name *Gogōan* is said to derive from the daily rice allowance (for five *gō*, which is approximately 750g, of rice) received from the temple by Mangan Shōnin.

\*A subsidiary, small temple or retreat built to honor, and benefit from the example of, a deceased beloved high priest.



Rebuilt in 1914.  
A Niigata Prefecture-designated cultural property.

## D Mt. Kugami

### Hiking Through a Protected Beech Forest

Mt. Kugami's summit, at an altitude of 313.2 meters (1,028 ft.), offers a great view of the Bunsui district and the Ōkōzu Diversion, with the grand peak of Mt. Sumon visible in the distance. On a clear day visitors can also make out Sado Island and the Noto Peninsula. The beech forest extending from the rear of Kokujōji Temple, at about 180 meters (591 ft.) above sea level, is one of the very few remaining at such a low altitude, and was therefore designated a protected habitat by the prefecture in 1993. Numerous hiking trails offer great viewing in all seasons—including an intermediate trail that runs from the Visitor Center to the summit, and a history route that takes you to spots of historic interest.



## E Kokujōji Temple

### Echigo's Oldest Major Temple: Over 1300 Years Old

Built in 709, during the reign of Empress Genmei, in accordance with oracular decree made by Yahiko Shrine, the most important shrine of Echigo Province (the old name for Niigata Prefecture). Its 1300th anniversary was in 2009. Famed *daimyō* Uesugi Kenshin (1530–78) is said to have worshipped the temple's 1000-armed Kannon (bodhisattva), and documents relating to the samurai Uesugi Kagekatsu and Naoe Kanetsugu are still here. The grounds hold many stately buildings: the main building, the reception hall, the Rokkakudō (hexagonal building), the Taishidō, and others. The lovely tranquil road leading to the shrine is lined by old *sugi* (Japanese cedar) trees.



Mt. Kugami Volunteer Guides, present weekends and holidays from April through November, will gladly guide you around the Gogōan Hermitage, the Sengandō Suspension Bridge, and other locations. You can find guides at the Tsubame Bunsui Visitor Center, the Gogōan Hermitage, and the Ootogo Shrine Hut. For information, contact Tsubame City Tourist Association (phone 0256-64-7630).



## Hachioji Grand White Wisteria

This enormous white wisteria, thought to be 350 years old, bursts into bloom in early-to-mid May. Its branches, spreading in all directions, emanate a fragrance that fills the grounds. This Niigata-designated natural asset is the largest wisteria in the prefecture. (At Anryō Temple. Address: 962 Hachioji, Tsubame City.)



Recommended Attractions

# Tsubame Awaits You...

There are many other fascinating tourist attractions in our city. All of the spots listed below are well worth a visit.



Tableware made in Tsubame

## Roadside Station Kugami (Michi-no-eki Kugami)

A great visitor spot at the foot of Mt. Kugami. Stop in for a break after enjoying the view of the mountain. The Aji-Dokoro Hana-Temari restaurant here runs a monthly *jūwari* (100%) soba day, serving a special soba made entirely from local buckwheat flour (omitting the usual wheat flour, eggs, and other binders). The restaurant is also popular for its handmade buckwheat-flour ice cream, and its *yōkan* jellied desserts.



## Fureai Park Temari Hot Spring Shuten-Dōji Hot Spring (Footbath)

Stop in for a relaxing hot-spring bath, or take a break in the spacious rest area. Enjoy watching the footbath water spout from the gargoyle face of the famed local demon Shuten-Dōji.

Where: 5866-1 Kugami, Tsubame City Phone: 0256-98-0770  
Hours: 10 AM to 9 PM. No entry after 8:30 PM. (Hours shorter during New Year Break.)  
Closed: Every second and fourth Monday (or Tuesday, if Monday is a holiday)

Feeling a little weary?  
Refresh yourself in a hot spring.



## 1 Tsubame-Sanjō Wing

Tourist information and sales spot. Computer access, free WiFi, and tourist info videos. Also displays and sells local high-quality products, many with "good design" awards. Plenty of space to sit and relax, too.

Where: 502-3 Shimosugoro, Sanjō City (JR Tsubame-Sanjō station, 2F)  
Phone: 0256-34-7310  
Hours: 10 AM to 6:30 PM  
Closed: New Year Break



## 2 Stock Busters Tsubame Sanjō Factory Outlet

Featuring housewares and kitchenware from about 130 manufacturers. Purchase fine, maker-recommended local articles at the lowest prices in town.

Where: 2-16 Butsuryū Center, Tsubame City  
Phone: 0256-63-2511  
Hours: 10 AM to 6 PM  
Closed: New Year (12/30 to 1/2)

# Shopping in Tsubame

Great Products, with Worldwide Appeal!



## 3 Roadside Station Tsubame-Sanjō Regional Industries Promotion Center



Great place to purchase high-quality, wonderfully designed local products, and to obtain both tourist and industrial information. The store offers about 10,000 products: western tableware, knives, pans, and much more. Here you will find traditional craft goods right next to state-of-the-art pieces. You will be impressed by the depth of the area's traditions and craftsmanship.

Where: 1-17 Sugoro, Sanjō City  
Phone: 0256-32-2311  
Hours: 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM  
Closed: First Wednesday of month; New Year Break



## 3 Messepia Restaurant

Eat wonderful locally-sourced dishes, using beautiful locally-produced cutlery that you choose for yourself. Select from a wide range of cutlery: from the oldest designs in Japan to ones used at the Nobel Banquet.

Hungry yet?

Tsubame Gourmet

## Local Favorite: Fried Chicken with Lemon

Fried chicken with sweet-sour lemony sauce: a standard hot-lunch item served at area schools, and well-known to most locals. You can find this dish at eateries throughout the Yoshida region—the map will show you where.





# Walking Around...

Here are just a few of the many great spots for taking pictures. History, tradition, culture, scenic beauty, and much more. Focus your camera, and then share and remember.

Point, shoot, and share.

Photo Spots



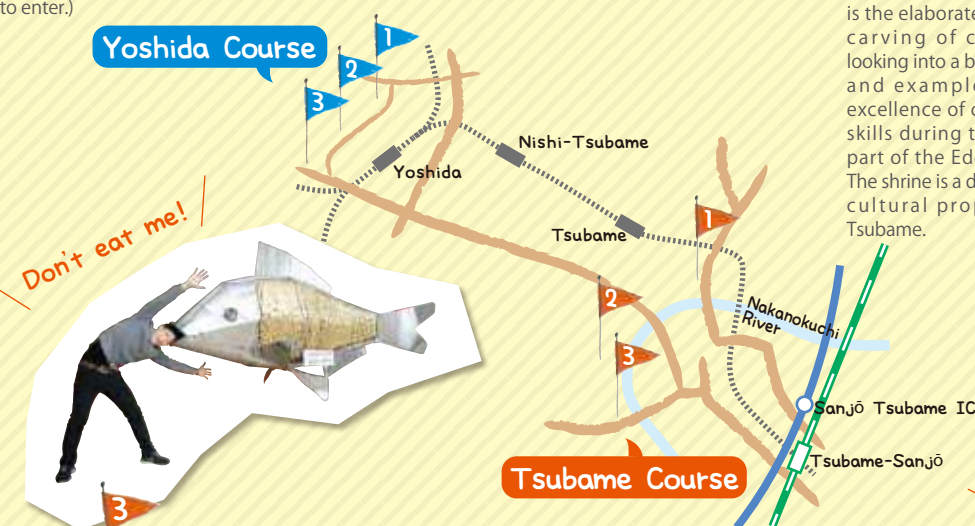
Imai Bank Logo

## Kōrindō Red Brick House

This old graceful western-style home, part of a four-building complex, belonged to the Imai family, a prominent landowning family of the Yoshida district. After the WWII the family started several businesses, including a home remedy business named *Kōrindō*—the name written on the wall. The outstanding brickwork is apparently from the Meiji period. All four buildings federally-recognized "registered tangible cultural properties." (Note that this is still a private home. Please do not disturb, or try to enter.)



Yoshida Course



## Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum

Here you are welcomed by a monumental carp, with scales made of spoons. And inside the museum, see giant silverware, a celebrity-autographed bench, and much more. Many great spots for photos, too. (Please inform reception before taking photos.)

## Water Tower

Standing 31 meters (102 ft.) high, with a diameter of 10 meters (33 ft.). This old structure was built for water distribution at a time when a purification facility existed nearby. Today it remains an upstanding symbol of the city itself. Protected by the government as a "registered tangible cultural property."



Pretty Door!!

## Gyokusendō

Famous producer and seller of *tsuikidōki* (hammered copperware). Even the buildings themselves are protected as a "registered tangible cultural property." The beautifully crafted name sign should not be missed.



## Echigo Miso

Sitting in a miso fermenting bucket, usually used for other purposes. This bucket is outside, and a nice place for a cute photo or two. Get the true miso experience. You can also arrange to go indoors and tour the facility and even try your hand at real miso making. Check first for the latest information.

President of Echigo Miso Jōzō



## Yoshidasuwa Shrine

From long ago—its origins are unclear—this shrine has been the home of the deities guarding the Yoshida area. The main attraction is the elaborate wooden carving of children looking into a birdcage—and example of the excellence of carpentry skills during the latter part of the Edo period. The shrine is a designated cultural property of Tsubame.



Feb.



## Echigo Tsubame's Tenjinkō Festival

This annual festival, on February 25, commemorates the death anniversary of Sugawara no Michizane, once a living Heian-period scholar and later worshipped as Tenman-Tenjin, Shintō god of learning. The main feature is the presentation of colorful candies, said to improve the studying capabilities of all who consume them.

May



## Togakushi Shrine Spring Festival

Lantern activities at Kibakōji and at Yokochō, and folk dancing performance (Ise Ondo) by "Otama-chan" girls, are well worth seeing. Street vendors and stalls along Miyachō Sunroad become active on the evening preceding the festival.

May



## Yoshida Tenmangū Festival

Yoshida Tenmangū represents a Tenjin deity (the spirit of Sugawara no Michizane, and is the Shintō god of scholarship) promising a successful career path. It is said that if you buy a sapling at the festival, your prayers will be answered when it becomes a mature tree, so the Tenmangū Festival held on May 24 and 25 each year draws numerous plant vendors.

## Tsubame Event Calendar

February | Echigo Tsubame's Tenjinkō Festival

April | Tsubame Cherry Blossoms Festival and Bunsui Oiran Dōchū  
Mt. Kugami Opening

May | Hachiōji Grand White Wisteria  
Togakushi Shrine Spring Festival  
Yoshida Tenmangū Festival

July | Hien Summer Festival

Bunsui Festival

Yoshida Festival

Tsubame Fireworks Display

September | Echigo Mt. Kugami Shuten-Dōji Parade

October | Tsubame Aozora Sokubaikai (Display/Sales Event)

Tsubame Sanjō Open-Factory Festival



## Tsubame Summer Festival

At the Hien summer festival, the parade carries *mikoshi* (portable shrine) honoring craftsmanship. The *Bunsui festival* features raucous drumming reflecting the power of famous demon Shuten-Dōji. The *Yoshida festival* features magnificent lamps and many floats.



## Echigo Mt. Kugami Shuten-Dōji Parade

Echigo Shuten-Dōji is reputedly the most powerful of all of Japan's mythical *oni* (demons), able to grant wishes to those who beseech him. Every year, at the foot of Mt. Kugami, *oni* assemble to grant people's wishes. It is said that your wish will come true if you join this parade of 500 demons. Just meeting these various demons may bring you happiness...



## Tsubame Aozora Sokubaikai (Display/Sales Event)

Annual event—held the first Sunday in October—highlighting new products from the city's peerless metalworking industry. Western-style metal tableware; pots and pans, knives, and other kitchenware; and *tsuikidōki* (hammered copperware) goods. Available for purchase at special prices.

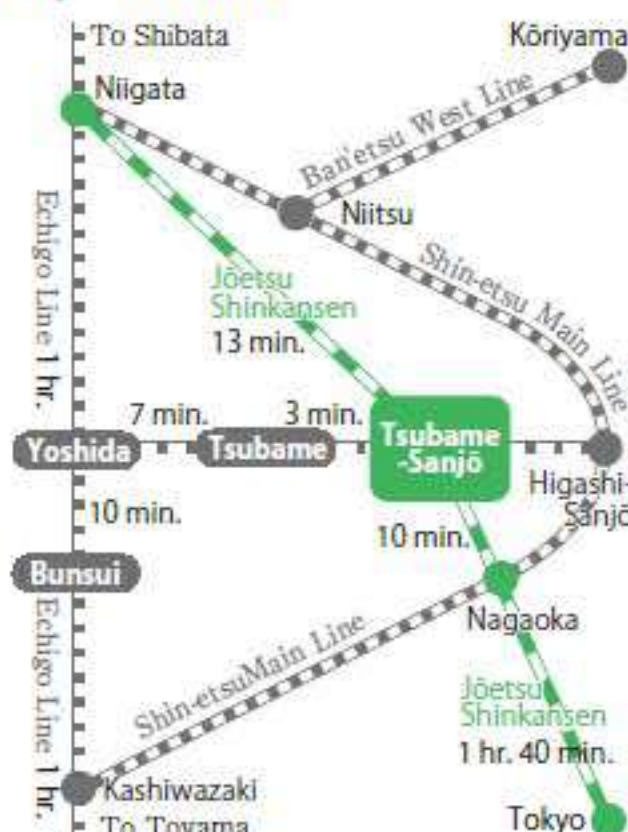




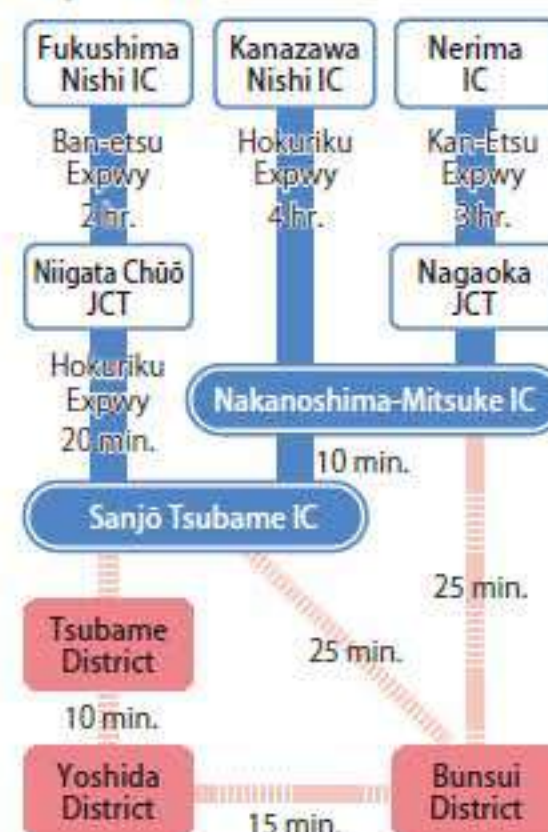
## Access



## By Train



## By Car



**Tourism Promotion Office,  
Commerce Promotion Division, Tsubame City Hall**  
1934 Yoshidanishiōta, Tsubame City, Niigata 959-0295  
Phone: 0256-92-1111 Fax: 0256-77-8306  
Email: [kanko@city.tsubame.lg.jp](mailto:kanko@city.tsubame.lg.jp)

**Tsubame City Tourist Association**  
4336 Ōmagari, Tsubame City, Niigata 959-1263  
Phone: 0256-64-7630 Fax: 0256-64-7638  
Email: [Tsubame-kankou@za.wakwak.com](mailto:Tsubame-kankou@za.wakwak.com)



## The Club's Mission

The club is one of the projects run by the Tsubame Youth Assembly. Members joyfully plan and carry out activities to support their city.

Tsubame Youth Assembly Website:  
<http://tsubame-wakamono.com/>