

Fun discoveries await!

L'ala Pado

Tsubame & Yahiko

L'ala Pado

| Take Free |

Five magazine readers take a girls-only trip

Looking ahead to the next hot spots you'll want to visit

A Girls-only Trip to Niigata

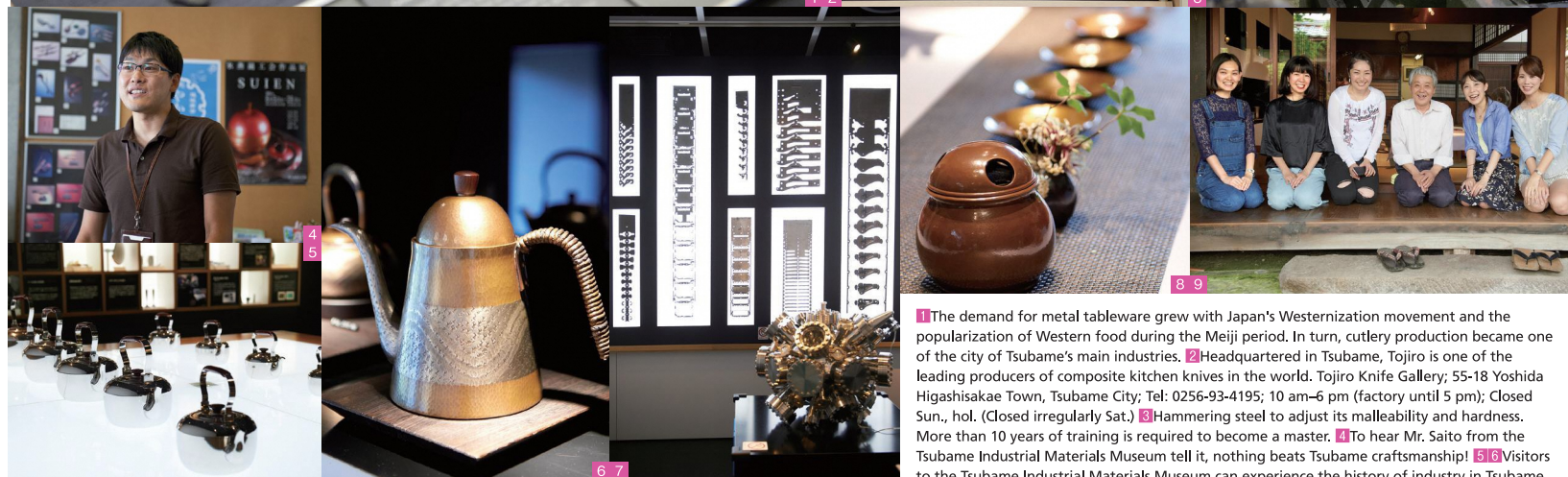
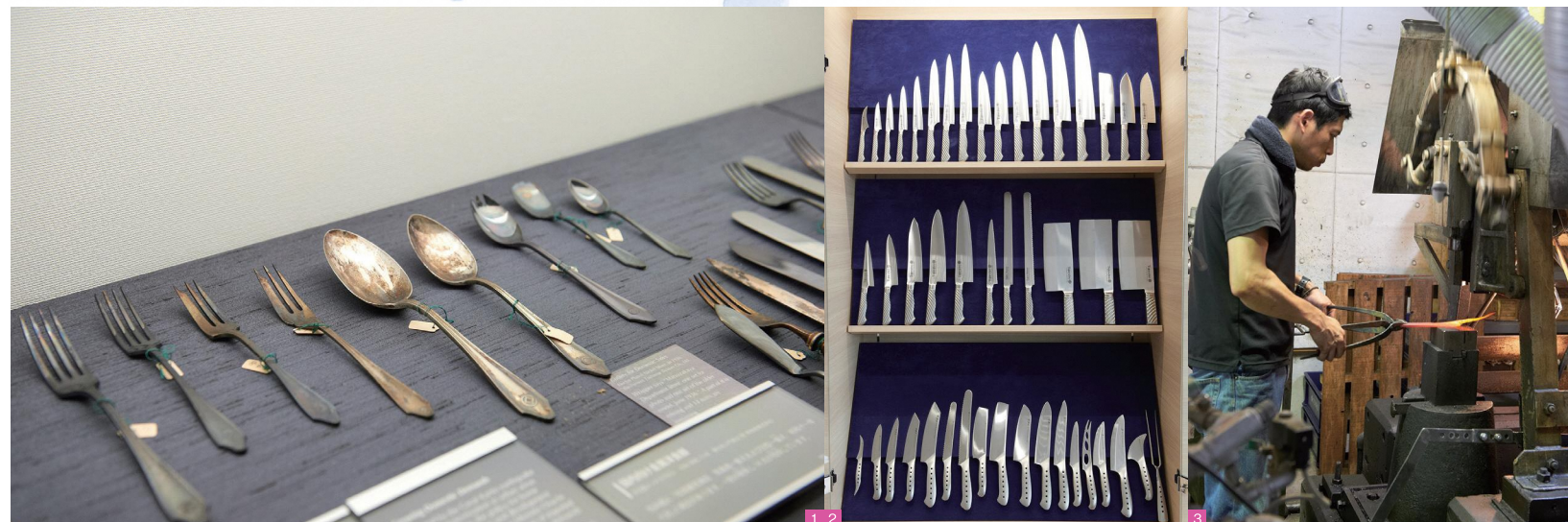
Tsubame & Yahiko



Looking ahead to the next hot spots
you'll want to visit

A Girls-only Trip to Niigata

Close to Tokyo, Niigata is a fantastic place for a quick trip. Tsubame, renowned for its craftsmanship, and Yahiko, filled with places where you can mend your spiritual power, are particularly noteworthy. Invite a few good friends and go on a girls-only trip, right now!



1 The demand for metal tableware grew with Japan's Westernization movement and the popularization of Western food during the Meiji period. In turn, cutlery production became one of the city of Tsubame's main industries. 2 Headquartered in Tsubame, Tojiro is one of the leading producers of composite kitchen knives in the world. Tojiro Knife Gallery; 55-18 Yoshida Higashisakae Town, Tsubame City; Tel: 0256-93-4195; 10 am-6 pm (factory until 5 pm); Closed Sun., hol. (Closed irregularly Sat.) 3 Hammering steel to adjust its malleability and hardness. More than 10 years of training is required to become a master. 4 To hear Mr. Saito from the Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum tell it, nothing beats Tsubame craftsmanship! 5 Visitors to the Tsubame Industrial Materials Museum can experience the history of industry in Tsubame using all five senses. 4330-1 Omagari, Tsubame City; Tel: 0256-63-7666; 9 am-4:30 pm; Closed Mon. (following day if hol.), day after hol., New Year's hol. 7 8 The beautiful pieces created by Gyokusendo are the pinnacle of craftsmanship. 9 The vessel in front was created as an ashtray in the Taisho period. 10 Goro-san gave us a tour of Gyokusendo.

A town of craftsmanship which has been maintained by countless unnamed artisans

Located in almost the exact center of Niigata Prefecture, the city of Tsubame has long flourished as a leading center of craftsmanship and manufacturing. Metalworking got its start in Tsubame with the production of Japanese nails in the early Edo period. In the late Edo period, the technique of hammered copperware production was introduced. With the passage of time, the form of metalworking changed, from metal tobacco pipes to Western tableware, and today Tsubame has attained global recognition as one of Japan's main production centers for metal tableware and housewares.

The ability of Tsubame's craftspeople and factories to meet every need from stunning handmade pieces to mass production is thanks to the efforts that have been made to pass down techniques and skills over the centuries. And it has been Tsubame's countless unnamed artisans who preserved these techniques and skills. Come to Tsubame and explore the craftsmanship they watched over.



Photo: Mizuho Tadokoro



The Tsubame-Sanjo Industry Calendar. Many events in Tsubame are scheduled based on the local industry calendar.

It reminded me how amazing Japanese craftsmanship is!



STOCK BUSTERS

At this factory outlet shop, you can purchase housewares and kitchenware from some 130 companies for cheap. STOCK BUSTERS also carries overstock from local factories and producers as well as "Made in Tsubame" items like kitchen knives and copperware. Come and see what bargains are waiting for you.

2-16 Butsuryu Center, Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-63-2511;
10 am-6 pm;
Never closes



I came for a little treasure hunting and came home with half the store!

Upper right / lower right: The store is filled with things you'll use every day such as cutlery and cups! Left: There's so much stuff you'll have difficulty choosing!



I'd love to live near a café like this!

The café's mascot Kurosuke.

Tsubame Coffee

A stylish café established next to a beauty salon. Tsubame Coffee roasts its high quality beans simply and strives to deliver its coffees as quickly and freshly as possible, creating a delicious brew that will satisfy even the most ardent coffee fan. The relaxing interior is sure to soothe away the fatigue of your trip.

2760-1 Yoshida, Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-77-8781;
11 am-6 pm;
Closed Mon., Tue.



Left: The fashionable café is dominated by large bookshelves. Read a book or enjoy talk with friends - relax the way you want. Right: The adjoining shop carries lifestyle goods as well as exclusive items.

The workshop is filled with the satisfying rhythm of copper being hammered out.



It was so moving seeing craftsmanship that has been handed down for 200 years!



Gyokusendo

Founded 200 years ago, Gyokusendo is a renowned traditional crafts and hammered copperware shop in Tsubame that has been in operation since the Edo period. Gyokusendo's copperware, hammered from single sheets of copper, grow more beautiful with use. Visitors can tour the shop's workshop without reservations, making it easy to see craftsmanship up close and personal.

2-2-21 Chuo-dori, Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-62-2015;
9 am-12 pm, 1 pm-5 pm;
Closed Sun., hol.



Lower right: Only Gyokusendo possesses the skills needed to hammer a kettle out of a single sheet of copper without seams. Left: It's also fun to see Gyokusendo's buildings, which are registered Tangible Cultural Properties.

Girls-only Trip Spots in Tsubame

There were countless discoveries awaiting you in this artisanal town!
Participate in classes and demonstrations that will sharpen your sensitivities and hone all five senses.



The portions were huge, but I ended up eating every bite!

Koushu Hanten

Tsubame is also a mecca for *seabura ramen*. Beginning prior to the first World War, cutlery production flourished in Tsubame, and the simple meal that is *ramen* was a favorite of those who worked in the cutlery factories. Today, *seabura ramen* remains as popular as ever and has become a Tsubame specialty. And Koushu Hanten is one of the most popular *seabura ramen* restaurants in the city. Even if you have to wait in line, you won't regret dining here!

49-4 Tsubame, Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-64-3770;
11 am-2:30 pm, 5 pm-7:50 pm
Note: Closes when supplies run out;
Closed Mon. (following day if hol.;
closed 1 Tue. per month)



Top: The shop's filling gyoza are also a perennial favorite. Gyoza (4 pieces) ¥800. Bottom: *Seabura* pork back fat adds just the right amount of body to the rich soy sauce-based soup. The flavor is surprisingly clean and simple. Chuka Soba ¥800.



Right: At first glance, polishing may look easy, but it requires a lot more effort than expected. Left: Polishing improves the quality of a piece.

Tsubame-shi Migakiya Ichibankan

For a great variety of metal products, it is the final process of polishing that determines its quality and value. Visitors to Tsubame-shi Migakiya Ichibankan can participate in a metal polishing class for beginners. Come in contact with true craftsman skill and experience how amazing Tsubame polishing is.



3633-7 Koike,
Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-61-6701

Yahiko 弥彦

A visit to the “O-Yahiko-sama” shrine, a favorite destination since ancient times, to receive good fortune in matchmaking

Sacred Mt. Yahiko towers in the center of the Echigo Plain. There, our intrepid travelers visited Yahiko Shrine to ask for guidance from the gods. Nicknamed “O-Yahiko-sama” since ancient times, the shrine is a familiar presence to locals. There are many historical anecdotes about the shrine and even today there is an unending stream of visitors to it and the Yahiko Hot Spring in front of it.

Another source of Yahiko Shrine’s popularity is its reputation for bringing good luck in matchmaking. Take the ropeway to the station at the top of the mountain and walk a further ten minutes to reach the sanctuary where the shrine’s god Ame-no-kago-yama-no-mikoto and goddess Umashi-ho-ya-hime-no-mikoto are enshrined, then make a prayer for good fortune in romantic relationships.

The Sea of Japan as seen from the top of the mountain is also a highlight of visiting the shrine. Ignore the passing of time, let yourself relax, and experience the vastness of “O-Yahiko-sama.”



Every day at 7 am offerings such as rice, sake, and salt are made to the gods (Onikkusai). Attendees are given lucky rice.

■ Panorama Tower

A viewing platform and elevator that rotates 360 degrees as it ascends. Sit down and relax as you slowly spin and rise some 100 meters into the air. Enjoy your time in the sky as the view of the Sea of Japan and the Echigo Plain grows ever more expansive.

2898 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-4141;
9 am–5 pm; Adults (12 and over) ¥650

It feels like you’re floating on the clouds!

Right: The top of Mt. Yahiko is about the same elevation as Tokyo Skytree – 634 meters – and the tower rises above that! Left: The view from above is sure to have all sorts of unexpected surprises!

Girls-only Trip Spots in Yahiko

Visit the power spots of Yahiko for good luck and prepare both body and mind for finding love!

Talking with the shop clerk was so much fun!



The liquor shop is a 200 year-old private home that was moved and rebuilt here. German architect and Niigata resident Karl Bengs designed the rebuilt structure.



1239-4 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-5841;
8:30 am–6:30 pm;
Closed irregularly

■ Sakaya Yayoi

This Japanese-style liquor shop is located on the road leading to Yahiko Shrine. Local Niigata sake is sold on the first floor; art exhibitions are held on the second floor gallery. The building is an old Japanese-style home which was moved to the location; make a few memories for your trip in the comfortable interior.

■ Café Gallery Yoin

The old architecture is the former residence of a priest named Suzuki Gon and was originally constructed in 1802. Minister of the Right Tomomi Iwakura also stayed here when Emperor Meiji toured the Hokuiku region. The restored structure is now used as a gallery space and café. Yoin is filled with things to look at, including its elegant ceiling, sliding screen paintings, and historical artworks.

1190 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 090-7275-9207 (Nabeshima);
Only open Sat., Sun., and hol.; 11 am–4 pm;
Closed Dec.-Mar.



The place is filled with rare treasures!

■ Yahiko Shrine

The deity enshrined here is Ame-no-kago-yama-no-mikoto, great-grandson of the goddess Amaterasu-omikami. Ame-no-kago-yama became Emperor Jimmu and founded the land of Echigo. Accordingly, since ancient times the shrine has been given the reverent nickname “O-Yahiko-sama.” It is said just visiting the shrine eases the tension of the mind and soul. The shrine stands at the foot of the sacred Mt. Yahiko – please be respectful when in its solemn atmosphere.

2887-2 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-2001

Right: This household shrine is 211 years old and has even been used by Yahiko Shrine priests. Left: A sliding screen covered with gold leaf painted by the famed artist Maruyama Okyo.



■ Mt. Yahiko Ropeway Viewing Platform Restaurant

This restaurant is located on the viewing platform at the ninth station on Mt. Yahiko. Just the view from its tables is a treat. Also be sure to try a few of the restaurant’s numerous unique mountain cuisine dishes!

2829 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-4141;
9 am–5 pm;
Closed Dec.-Mar.

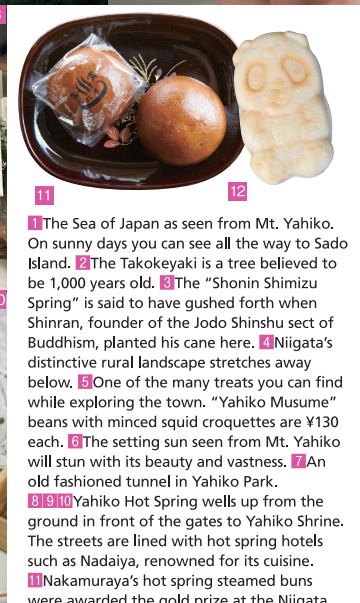
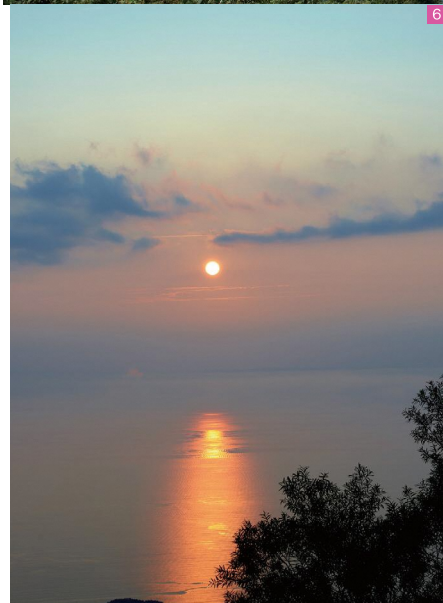
Right: It’s 45 centimeters tall! The flavor is somehow nostalgic. Tree parfait ¥650. Left: The Yahiko Shrine rabbit motif egg is so cute! Sun Setting on the Sea of Japan Ramen ¥890.



The fatigue of your trip will be blown away!



There’s still so much to see and do in Tsubame and Yahiko!



1 The Sea of Japan as seen from Mt. Yahiko. On sunny days you can see all the way to Sado Island. 2 The Takokeyaki is a tree believed to be 1,000 years old. 3 The “Shonin Shimizu Spring” is said to have gushed forth when Shinran, founder of the Jodo Shinshu sect of Buddhism, planted his cane here. 4 Niigata’s distinctive rural landscape stretches away below. 5 One of the many treats you can find while exploring the town. “Yahiko Musume” beans with minced squid croquettes are ¥130 each. 6 The setting sun seen from Mt. Yahiko will stun with its beauty and vastness. 7 An old fashioned tunnel in Yahiko Park. 8 9 10 Yahiko Hot Spring wells up from the ground in front of the gates to Yahiko Shrine. The streets are lined with hot spring hotels such as Nadaiya, renowned for its cuisine. 11 Nakamura’s hot spring steamed buns were awarded the gold prize at the Niigata Exhibition. ¥70 each. 12 Bunsuido’s soft panda-yaki buns. Sweet bean paste or edamame (Yahiko musume) ¥150.

燕 Tsubame 弥彦 Yahiko So much to see and do! Walking Spots

mgnet

As you might expect, this card case specialty shop carries a massive variety of card cases – in addition to standard metal ones, you can find popular leather card cases and even wood cases, a rarity in Japan! The shop also offers a selection of choice Tsubame-Sanjo items. Selling nothing but the most shining examples of design and quality, mgnet is the perfect place to find a gift.

14-3 Higashiota, Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-46-8720;
9 am–7 pm;
Closed Mon., hol.

Get your hands on “Made in Tsubame” card cases made with a variety of metals including magnesium, titanium, and brass.



Michi-no-Eki Kugami

This roadside station is located at the foot of Mt. Kugami, a location connected with the history of the famous Zen monk Ryokan, and makes the perfect base for sightseeing in Tsubame. The station contains various shops selling fresh local produce and souvenirs. Once a month a “Kugami soba day” is held during which visitors can buy soba made with local buckwheat flour. The station's onigiri rice balls, made with 100% Koshihikari rice, are also popular and a frequent purchase for locals as well.

5866-1 Kugami, Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-98-0770;
9 am–6 pm; Closed Mon, (Varies by facility)

The roadside station's Temari-no-yu hot spring and Shuten-doji-no-yu free hot spring footbath – one of the largest in the prefecture – are also popular attractions! Kugami is the perfect place to take a break during a trip.



Baelz

This local bakery stands in a residential area of Tsubame. The main focus of Baelz is its hard breads. The shop also offers an abundant selection of sweet breads and sandwiches made with its signature hard breads, which has made Baelz a true local favorite. Famed for the firm and satisfying texture of its breads, the shop has innumerable regulars.

217-3 Yoshida Shimonakano, Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-77-5460;
Weekdays 9 am–6 pm;
Sat., Sun., hol, 8 am–5 pm;
Closed Tue., Wed.

Baelz' hard breads are baked with a homemade natural yeast. Crusty on the outside and moist on the inside, their flavor grows richer and more satisfying with every bite.



Table & Kitchenware Center Kitaro

This table and kitchenware center is the factory-direct shop for a Tsubame spoon manufacturer. Carrying Sanjo-Tsubame (Tsubame-Sanjo) kitchen goods such as kitchen knives and cutlery in addition to spoons and other Western tableware, Kitaro sells locally produced metal ware at local production prices. The shop is also a popular tourist site for its demonstrations showing how spoons are made.

5-30 Idomaki, Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-63-2417;
9 am–5 pm; Never closes

Kitaro holds spoon-making demonstrations for free that show what work was like in Tsubame's small side street workshops back when the city was first entering the global economy. You can sense the history of the charming old machines used.



Yoshidaya

A Japanese restaurant renowned for its special “Wappa Meshizen,” a Niigata specialty. The lavish amounts of salted salmon and salmon roe brought in from the nearby fishing harbor on top of steaming hot rice makes Yoshidaya's “Wappa Meshizen” a visual as well as culinary delight.

941-2 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-2020;
10 am–3 pm, 5 pm–8 pm;
Closed irregularly

Yoshidaya also offers innumerable other fresh treats such as seasonal sashimi and wild rock oysters. The restaurant carries a diverse selection of local sake, including Koshi no Kanbai and Secchubai.



Sakura no Yu

Fed with the waters of the Yahiko Sakuraigo Hot Spring welling up at the foot of sacred Mt. Yahiko, Sakura no Yu is the perfect place to stop by and soak up Japanese hot spring culture. Sakura no Yu has a full range of facilities, including a free flowing large outdoor bath fed directly from the spring, stone sauna, and massages. The on-site restaurant offers delicious cuisine made with local ingredients.

1970 Oaza Fumoto, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-1126;
10 am–10 pm; Closed irregularly

You can bathe in the sun on the footbath terrace and relax while gazing out at the garden. The stones in the bath stimulate the pressure points on the soles of your feet.



Yahiko Velodrome

The only public cycle racing track in Japan operated by a village. The races conducted on the four corner, 400 meter long are thrilling! Admission is free, making it easy for beginners to enjoy keirin cycle racing.

2621 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-2066;
Business days vary by races;
Closed irregularly

The all glass SpiroSta studio broadcasts the track's races live over CS and the Internet.



Yu Shrine

Located among the mountains in Yahiko Park, Yu Shrine is a subordinate shrine to Yahiko Shrine and is dedicated to Onamujino-mikoto and Sukunahiko-nano-mikoto. Known to many as Ishiyakushi-daimyoin, a shrine which aids in the healing of illness, Yu Shrine is also famous as the source of the Yahiko Hot Springs.

Yahiko, Yahiko Village (inside Yahiko Park);
Tel: 0256-94-3154 (Yahiko Tourist Association);
Open all day;
Entry free

Shrouded by trees, Yu Shrine is one of Yahiko's famous power spots. The shrine is said to bring about good fortune in business, success in school, recovery from illness, and peace and prosperity in the home.

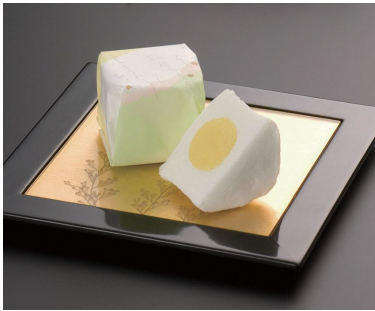


Yonouduya

This sweet shop sells seasonal traditional Japanese confections which have won numerous awards in National Confectionary Exposition, such as the “Kumogakure (Hidden in Clouds).” A café corner is located in the shop where visitors can enjoy a relaxing café break enjoying the Yonouzuya's elegant garden.

2935-5 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-1823;
8:30 am–5 pm;
Closed irregularly

There are two shops in Tsubame – the main shop and shop on the national route – as well as two shops in Yahiko. Yonouduya is famous for the flavors of its confections, crafted by artisans who take the greatest care making them one by one.

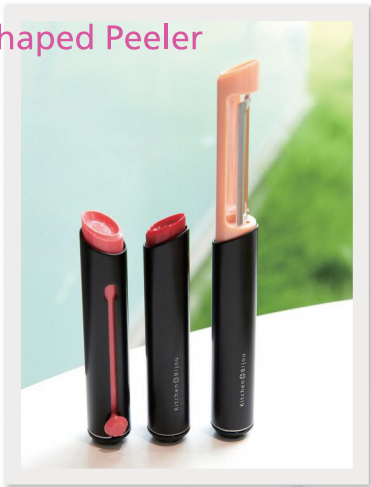


Kitchen Bijou's Lipstick Shaped Peeler

Vegetable peelers tend to be cold and merely functional, but not this cute lipstick-shaped version. Not only does it look fun, it's also designed to be easy to use even with long nails. This one's a given if you're getting a souvenir for any women in your life.

Tojiro Knife Gallery
55-18 Yoshida Higashisakae Town Tsubame City;
Tel: 0256-93-4195;
10 am–6 pm;
Closed Sun., hol. (Closed irregularly Sat.)

You'll feel more trendy just putting it in your kitchen! ¥1,500 each.



Sasa dango from Kameya



Niigata is famous for its *sasa dango*, a traditional Japanese sweet. And Kameya is famous for its *sasa dango*, so much that people ask for them by name in Yahiko. Still made one at a time, enjoy their simple, unchanged flavor.

Kameya 2918 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-5471;
9:30 am–5 pm;
Closed irregularly

Filled with ever-so-slightly-sweet bean paste, the chewy rice cake is flavored with Japanese mugwort. ¥700 for 5 (1 bag).

Narisawa Shoten's Curry Beans



Perfect for a 3 o'clock snack or with a glass of beer! Narisawa Shoten deep fries broad beans in oil and covers them with a savory, sweet, and spicy flavoring – once you start, you won't be able to stop!

Narisawa Shoten
1298 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-2025;
8 am–7 pm;
Never closes

This popular treat from a favorite local confectioner is now a Yahiko specialty! ¥400 for one 350 g bag.

Tsubame & Yahiko

Souvenirs

After you've enjoyed a fun-filled trip, be sure to share a few mementos with family and friends



Iyahiko Tama-Usagi – An offering worthy of Yahiko Shrine



The origin of these traditional sweets lies in the tale of the lucky rice cakes (Usa mochi) which were presented to the gods of Yahiko in ancient times. *Rakugan* sweets made with rice flour are the standard variety, but one can find endless variations, such as colored cakes and cakes filled with sweet bean paste.

Sasaya
1239 Oaza Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun;
Tel: 0256-94-2067;
8:30 am–5 pm (changes by season);
Closed Wed. (the following day if hol.)

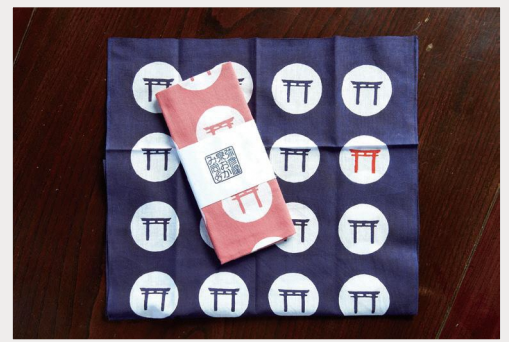
Iyahiko Tama-Usagi are made with *wasanbon* Japanese refined sugar and *mijinko* rice flour. Elegant and just slightly sweet, they melt in the mouth. ¥450 (plus tax) for 25.

Signature *tenugui* hand towels from the Okamikai Yahiko Hot Spring Association

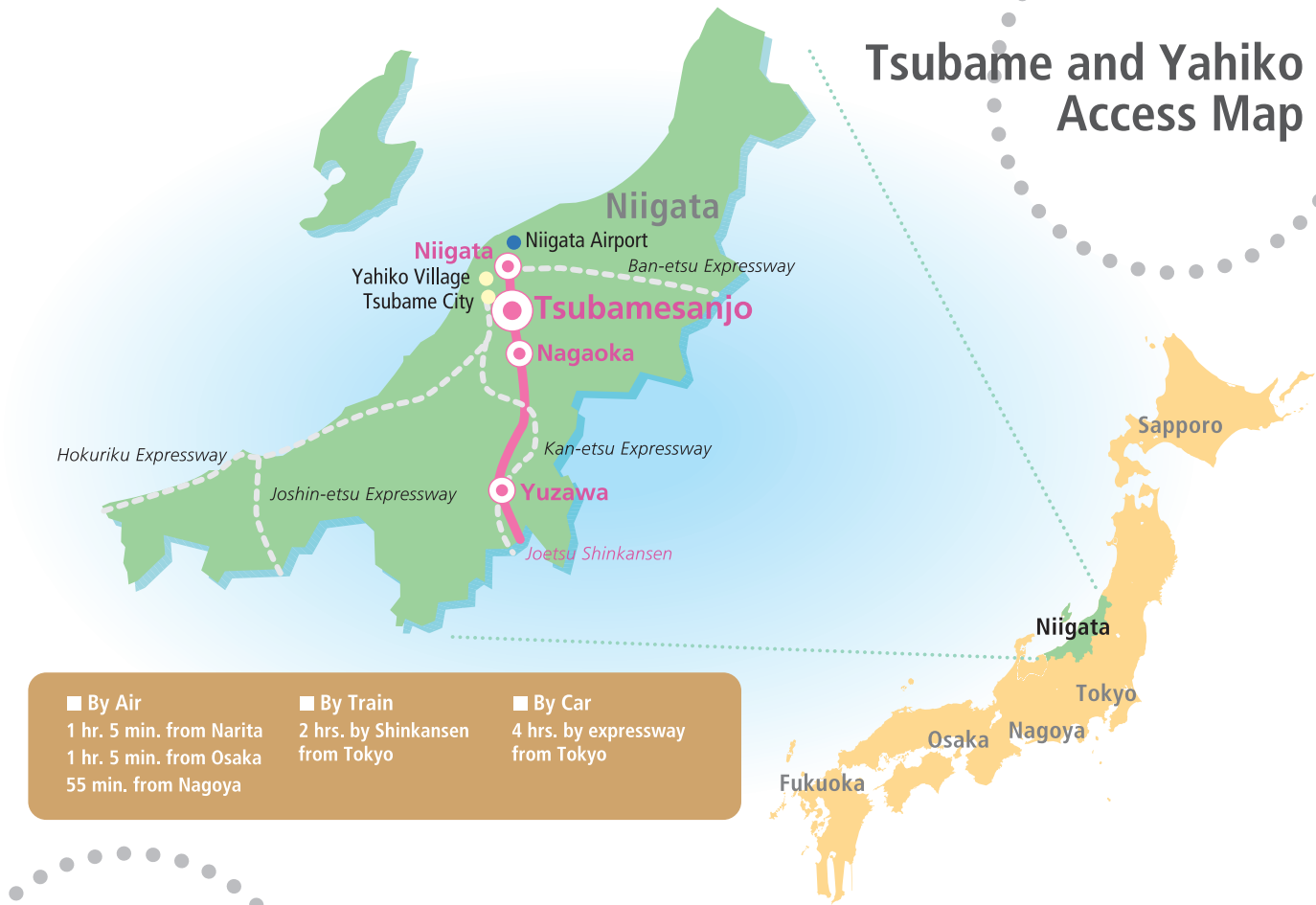
The design for these traditional *tenugui* hand towels was chosen via a contest run by the Okamikai Yahiko Hot Spring Association and bear a motif based on the *torii* gate at the Yahiko Shrine. Carry the good fortune of Yahiko Shrine with you wherever you go.

Available at Yahiko Hot Spring inns, hotels, and souvenir shops.

Made by Fujioka Somekojo (Echigo Kamekon-ya). Note the red torii. Comes in two colors – navy and pink. ¥1,050 each



Tsubame and Yahiko Access Map



Tsubame and Yahiko Event Information

Bunsui Oiran Dochu



The origin is said to be a fancy-dress parade put together by the locals during the 1920's. The extravagant parade, held along a route with many cherry blossom trees, is overwhelming.

Date: 3rd Sunday in April

Location: Jizodo Honcho-dori Avenue and Ookoze Bunsui Sakuranamiki (row of cherry blossom trees), Tsubame City

Yahiko Lantern Festival



This solemn and mystical festival is designated a national Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property.

Date: July 24-26

Location: Yahiko Shrine, Yahiko Village; other locations

Yahiko Chrysanthemum Festival



Held on the grounds of Yahiko Shrine, the event is one of the largest chrysanthemum exhibitions in the country.

Date: November 1-24

Location: Yahiko Shrine, Yahiko Village

Tsubame City Tourist Association

4336 Omagari, Tsubame City, Niigata Prefecture Tel:0256-64-7630

Yahiko Tourist Association

971-4 Yahiko, Yahiko Village, Nishikanbara-gun, Niigata Prefecture Tel: 0256-94-3154

Executive Office, Tsubame-Yahiko Area Tourism Coordination Association (in the Commerce and Industry Promotion Section, Tsubame City Office)

1934 Yoshida Nishiota, Tsubame City, Niigata Prefecture Tel: 0256-92-1111

Inquiries