Transportation



(1)From Oita Station:
by train to Usuki Station: 35min
(Limited Express on the JR Nippo Line)
(2)From Oita Airport:
by bus to Usuki Bus Stop: 1hr, 30min
by bus to Oita Station: 1hr
(3)From Kokura:
by train to Usuki Station: 2hr, 35min
(Limited Express on the JR Nippo Line)
by car via East Kyushu Highway: 2hrs (As of 2023)
(4)From Tosu Junction of Oita Motorway:
by car: 2hrs
(5)From Tokyo:
by plane to Oita Airport: 1hr, 45min…then please see (2)
by Shinkansen Bullet Train to Kokura: 6hrs…then please see (3)

(6)From Nagoya:
by plane to Oita Airport: 1hr, 5min…then please see (2)
by Shinkansen Bullet Train to Kokura: 4hrs…then please see (3)
(7)From Osaka:
by plane to Oita Airport: 55min…then please see (2)
by Shinkansen Bullet Train to Kokura: 3hrs…then please see (3)
(8)From Hiroshima:
by Shinkansen Bullet Train to Kokura: 1hr…then please see (3)
(9)From Okinawa:
by plane to Oita Airport: 1hr, 45min…then please see (2)
(10)From Yawatahama, Ehime (Shikoku)
by ferry to Usuki Harbor: 2hr, 25min

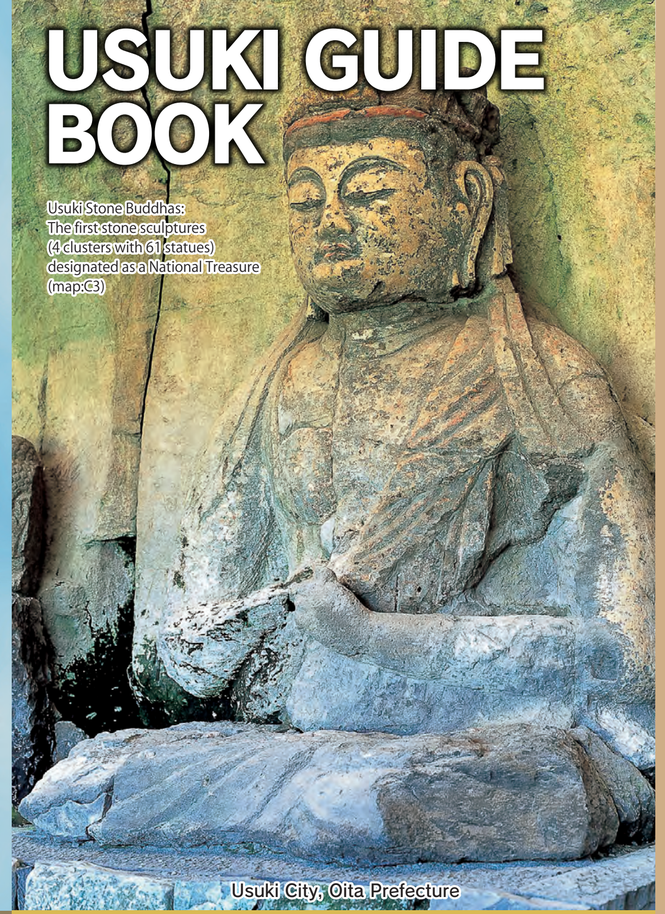
Information

Usuki Tourism and Community Plaza ····· ☎0972-63-1715
Usuki Tourism Association ····· ☎0972-64-7130
Usuki Station information desk ····· ☎0972-63-2366
Usuki Stone Buddhas office ····· ☎0972-65-3300

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USUKI GUIDE BOOK

Usuki Stone Buddhas:
The first stone sculptures
(4 clusters with 61 statues)
designated as a National Treasure
(map:C3)



Usuki City, Oita Prefecture



Sightseeing Places



Rokkasako Mineral Water and Hot Spring
(the reverse side Map:C-1) 11

Legend has it that an injured white heron became healed after it soaked in this hot spring for several days. Rokkasako drinking water and hot spring both have many healing effects. Located near the source of the Kumasaki River, this rustic area has long been famous as a place for rest and relaxation.



Hakuba-kei-Valley
(the reverse side Map:B-2) 12

This area, near the source of the Usuki River, is well known for its scenic beauty. Colorful azaleas in the spring and maple leaves in the fall make this a great place to visit all year round.



Magai Cross
(the reverse side Map:B-4) 14

The Magai Cross is a stone engraving of a cross on a cloud-shaped base, enclosed by a circle. Although its age is unknown, it is considered to have been made while Otomo Sorin was governing Usuki. It is also called "the Calvario Cross."



Prefecturally Designated
Natural Monument
Kinmei Moso Bamboo
(the reverse side Map:C-5) 15

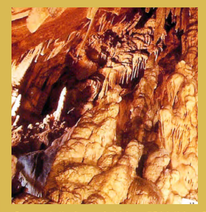
This rare and mysterious type of bamboo has alternating green and yellow segments. Several of these plants were discovered in a private house in Notsu in 1970. Since then, the Kinmei Moso Bamboo has been designated as a protected plant by Oita Prefecture. May is the best time to see these beautiful plants. Some people believe that the Kinmei Moso Bamboo are the "glowing bamboo" from the 10th-century Japanese folktale called "The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter."

Kuju-no-to (Pagoda)
Nationally Designated Important Cultural Property
Nine-story Pagoda
(the reverse side Map:C-5) 16

The Nine-story Pagoda was built in 1267. It is one of the stone construction works of art representing Oita Prefecture. The Nine-story Pagoda is slim but it looks very stable when you take a close look at it. This pagoda has been highly praised for its artistic style.

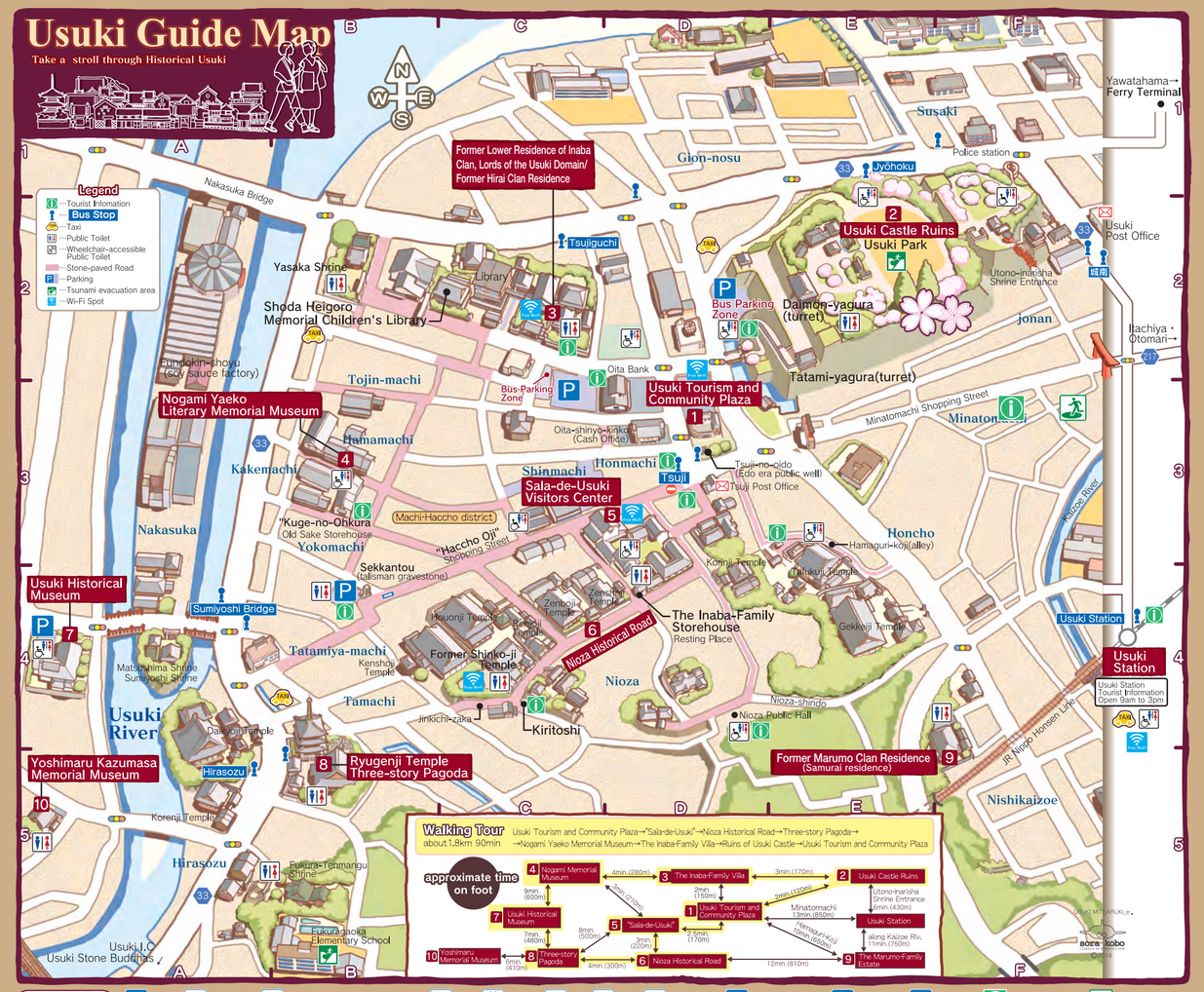


Nationally Designated Natural Monument
Furen Limestone Cave
(the reverse side Map:C-5) 17 P



This 500-meter deep limestone cave is considered one of the most beautiful caves in Japan. It was discovered in 1926 and designated as a natural monument two years later. Before this, it was completely sealed and therefore it has not been weathered much by outside air or the elements. As a result, its pure white luster is untouched and beautiful; also, inside the cave is both cool in summer and warm in winter. The cave's largest stalagmite, "Kyoshuho," is 10 meters high and 16 meters in circumference.

Open daily from 9 AM to 5PM (Mar-Sep)
and 9AM to 4PM (Oct-Feb)
<Admission Fees>
Adults ¥ 1000
Children (15 years and under) ¥ 700
※ Reduced rates for groups of 20 people or more





Usuki Tourism and Community Plaza P
(Map:D-3) 1

This is the best place to visit when you first arrive in Usuki City.
Here you can learn everything about Usuki city's rich
history and culture, sightseeing spots, buildings, and local cuisine. This building is not just a tourist information center.Some meetings, exhibitions and special events are also held here.
Open from 9AM to 5PM.



National Historic Site
Usuki Castle Ruins
2

Usuki Castle was built in 1556 by Otomo Sorin. The site was originally an island, and was likely chosen by Otomo for its defensive advantages.
At the end of the Otomo Era, Fukuhara Naotaka took over as lord, followed by Ota Kazuyoshi. After the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the Inaba family governed Usuki city until the Meiji Restoration in 1869.
Always open.
Admission is free.



Former Lower Residence of Inaba Clan,Lords of the Usuki Domain
(Map:C-2) 3

This estate was once the second home of Usuki's former rulers and its 3,500-square-meter grounds and gardens are now open to the public. The villa also offers us a rare glimpse into an old samurai residence.
Open daily from 9AM to 5PM. (Ticket Last ticket Sale at 4:30PM)
<Admission Fees>
Adults ¥ 330
Children (15 years and under) ¥ 160
Adults ¥ 260/ Children (15 years and under) ¥ 130
※ Reduced rates for groups of 20 to 49 people
Adults ¥ 230/ Children (15 years and under) ¥ 120
※ Reduced rates for groups of 50 people or more



Nogami Yaeko Literary Memorial Museum
(Map:B-3) 4

Yaeko Nogami (1885-1985) was a famous female author from Usuki who continued writing until her death at the age of 99. A part of her childhood home is now open to the public with exhibits to commemorate her long literary career.

Open from 9:30AM to 5PM daily.
<Admission Fees>
Adults ¥ 310
Children (15 years and under) ¥ 150
Group discount over 20 people



Sala-de-Usuki
(Map:D-3) 5

This building is modeled after the "Noviciate," a training institute said to have existed in Usuki. It includes a cafe where visitors can enjoy local Usuki cuisine. Please feel free to stop by for a break.
Open from 9AM to 5PM.



Usuki Historical Museum
(Map:A-4) 7

Newly opened in April 2014, this museum presents a walk through Usuki's rich history. Here you can glimpse the world as seen by 17th-century Japanese cartographers, with their beautiful brush and ink maps of Usuki City, Oita Prefecture, Kyushu and the world. These unique maps were created at a time when world exploration was rare among Japanese and are thus a must-see.
Open from 9:30AM to 5:30PM daily (except Tuesdays and during the New Year holidays).
<Admission Fees>
Adults ¥ 330
Students (18 years and under) ¥ 160
※ Reduced rates for groups of 20 people or more



Ryugenji Temple and sanju-no-to (Pagoda)
(Map:B-5) 8

Ryugen-ji Temple was established in 1600. Its southernmost tower, Sanju-no-to, is an elaborate three-story pagoda that took ten years to consturuct and was completed in 1958. Inside the tower stands a statue of Shotoku Taishi, a prince of the Asuka period(592-710) who helped spread Buddhism throughout Japan. The pagoda is often called "The Prince's Tower", in his honor.
Here you can see four"Jaki"(evil spirits that have turned to good). They are holding up the pagoda from below. Please try to find them!



Former Marumo Clan Residence
(Map:F-5) 9

Along with Former Lower Residence of Inaba Clan, this old samurai residence is open to the public. In the midst of this busy residential area, this spot seems to have been forgotten by time.
Open from 9AM to 5PM daily (except Tuesdays).
Admission is free.



Yoshimaru Kazumasa Memorial Museum
(Map:A-5) 10

Yoshimaru Kazumasa (1873-1916) was a composer from Usuki who wrote numerous songs for elementary school students and chorus contests. He is especially well known for his song called Early Spring Song (So-Shun-Fu). Students continue to sing his songs even today.
9:00-17:00
*Open on weekends and holidays only
<Admission Fees>
Adults ¥ 220
Children (15 years and under) ¥ 110
※ Reduced rates for groups of over 20 people

古園石仏

ホキ石仏

山王山石仏

Ⓐ

Furuzono Stone Buddha Cluster

The Furuzono Stone Buddha cluster is at the heart of the Usuki Stone Buddhas, and its center Dainichi Nyorai is regarded as the finest stone statue of the Buddha in Japan. With its prominent eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, and the faint red outline of its mouth, its dignified face leaves visitors with a vivid impression of the Buddha's warm-heartedness. Its most solemn of smiles suffuses the entire group with a mystical ambience.
The Furuzono Stone Buddhas were once in very poor condition, with the fallen head of the Dainichi Nyorai kept on a pedestal below it. However, they were restored to their original form in 1993.

Ⓑ Standing Statues of Guardian Deva Kings

Ⓒ

Hoki Stone Buddhas-Second Cluster

Comprised of two galleries, the first gallery contains a splendid Amitabha Trinity. The central figure and his two attendants have each been sculpted with their own individual expressions. It is a truly magnificent rock carving. The second gallery contains relatively smaller figures of Amitabha and is called the '9 Amitabhas' (Kubon-no-Amida).

Ⓑ

Sannousan Stone Buddhas

This trinity has a central figure that is approximately 5 meters tall. The face is round, with compact, childlike features and a mouth that looks as if it were about to speak. These pure and innocent faces are truly those of children. They are also known as the 'Hidden Jizo' (kakurejizo).

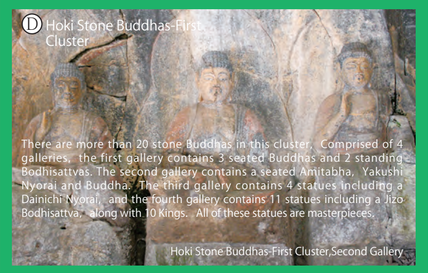
National Treasure Usuki Stone Buddhas

The Usuki Stone Buddhas are believed to have been sculpted between the late Heian period (794-1185) and the Kamakura period (1185-1333). These statues were created on a scale, in both quantity and quality, unrivaled by any other stone statues in Japan. As a result of this, 1995, 59 of the Usuki Stone Buddhas were designated as National Treasures, the first Stone Buddhas to receive this distinction in Japan. Two standing statues of Kongo Rikishi at the Furuzono Stone Buddha Cluster were additionally designated as National Treasures in 2017. This means that all the 4 clusters of 61 stone figures are a National Treasure. These tremendous figures create a stunning yet peaceful presence.

The Stone Buddhas were created using hardened volcanic ash from Mt. Aso. This volcanic rock was highly workable however the statues are especially vulnerable to the elements. From 1980 to 1994, there were repairs to preserve these valuable pieces of cultural heritage.

Mysteries of the Stone Buddhas:

- Why were they made? The statues appear to have had something to do with esoteric Buddhism.
- Who made them? The statues are thought to have been made by, or under the supervision of, a master from the capital. Based on the carving style, the artist was probably an accomplished master of wooden Buddhist statues.



Ⓓ Hoki Stone Buddhas-First Cluster

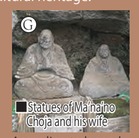
There are more than 20 stone Buddhas in this cluster. Comprised of 4 galleries, the first gallery contains 3 seated Buddhas and 2 standing Bodhisattvas. The second gallery contains a seated Amitabha, Yakushi Nyorai and Buddha. The third gallery contains 4 statues including a Dainichi Nyorai, and the fourth gallery contains 11 statues including a Jizo Bodhisattva, along with 10 Kings. All of these statues are masterpieces.

Hoki Stone Buddhas-First Cluster,Second Gallery



Ⓕ ■Niou Zou (Statue)

Despite being buried knee-deep in the earth, they have a powerful presence and a humorous expression on their faces.(In the Mangatsuji Temple grounds)



Ⓖ ■Statues of Ma'na'no Choja and his wife

According to legend, this couple financed the creation of the Stone Buddhas. (Sculpted:Muromachi period,1337-1573)



Ⓗ ■Renjo-hoshi (Statue)

According to legend, this Buddhist Priest named Renjo created the Stone Buddhas.



Ⓘ ■The Well of Beauty (Kesho-no Ido)

According to legend, when Princess Tamatsu(Ma'na'nochoj a's wife) washed her face at this well, an ugly birthmark miraculously disappeared and she thereafter became renowned for her beauty.



Ⓙ ■Hokyointo (Temple)

Located in the northern part of the Mangatsuji Temple grounds, this 4.2-meter tall tower is said to have been built during the late Kamakura era.



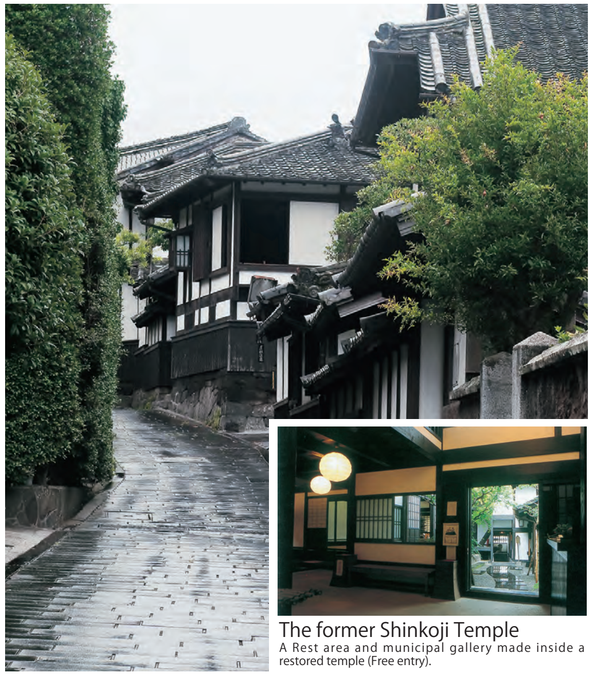
Ⓚ ■Gorinto (Pagoda)

Located on top of the Hoki Stone Buddha First Cluster, this statue is called 'Holy Tower' in the area. This '5-ring tower' is 1.51 meters tall.

Open year round 9:00am-5:00pm
*Last entry is at 4:30pm.
<Admission Fees>
Adults ￥550
Children (15 years and under) ￥270
Group discount for over 30 people



Nioza Historical Road



The former Shinkoji Temple

A Rest area and municipal gallery made inside a restored temple (Free entry).

(Map:D-4) 6

Constructed in 1855, this building originally served as a temple, but is now used mainly as a public gallery space.
Visitors can stop by for a rest and enjoy a picturesque view of old Usuki from the second floor balcony.
The surrounding streets of Nioza are ideal for a quiet stroll.

HISTORY

Japanese people have lived in the Usuki area for thousands of years. However, written records of Usuki's history only began around the 16th century, so any knowledge about this earlier time period is hidden within legends and folklore.

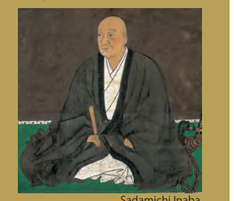
Otomo Sorin, the Christian Samurai (1530-1587)



When Otomo Sorin inherited the headship as 21st master of the Otomo clan, he became blessed with an excellent vassal team and wealth obtained from overseas trade. He then expanded his territory to include almost all of Kyushu Island. In 1556, he moved from his mansion in Funai (current Oita City) to Usuki and built Usuki Castle on what was then an island. He strategically chose this location for its strong defensive value. He then developed the prosperous port town of Usuki at the base of the castle and established it as the capital of his domain.
Otomo Sorin met the Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, in 1551 and he was baptized late in life by the missionary Cabral. From 1578 onward he called himself Don Francisco. His faith in Christianity became stronger, and he led his troops to Mushika in Hyuga (current Nobeoka City, Miyazaki Prefecture) in order to construct a Christians' utopia. After he was defeated by Lord Shimazu at war in Mimigawa (current Hyoga City, Miyazaki Prefecture), he lost his power quickly. He died in Tsukumi (Usuki's neighboring city) on May 23, 1587.

The Inaba Clan, Lords of Usuki (1600-1871)

The Inaba clan ruled as lords of Usuki Domain from 1600 to 1871. Sadamichi Inaba, the first master of the Inaba clan, was on Tokugawa Ieyasu's side during the Battle of Sekigahara (October 21, 1600). Ieyasu won the battle to unify Japan and then became shogun (ruler) of all Japan. Ieyasu valued Sadamichi's military glory highly and transferred him from Gujohachiman Castle in Mino County (current Gifu Prefecture) to a higher post in Usuki.
During the rule of the Inaba clan, Usuki's people developed their qualities of frugality and diligence. The Inaba clan continued to rule Usuki until Japan's domain system was replaced by the present prefectural system and Hisamichi Inaba left his post as 15th Lord of Usuki Domain.



Sadamichi Inaba



William Adams, the Western Samurai (1564-1620)

William Adams was the first man from England to come to Japan and possibly the first Western samurai. He arrived in Usuki at Kuroshima Island in April 1600 as pilot of the Dutch boat "the Liefde." He came to be favored by Tokugawa Ieyasu for his extensive knowledge of shipbuilding and navigation. Ieyasu bestowed upon him the rank of samurai and gave him the Japanese name "Miura Anjin."
There is a museum dedicated to Adams and his shipmates on Kuroshima Island in Usuki. Admission is free and ferry tickets to the island for 500yen (round-trip) may be reserved by calling 0972-68-3939 (Japanese only).
Usuki was host of the conference dedicated to William Adams, "Anjin Summit 2016" .

FESTIVALS

Usuki Castle Ruins Cherry Blossom Festival (Map:F-2) (Late March-Early April)

Usuki Park, within Usuki Castle Ruins, is home to around many cherry trees and is one of the most famous locations for viewing cherry blossoms along the JR Nippo line. Every year in spring, cherry blossoms are enjoyed here and throughout Usuki.





Kicchomu-Land

Kicchomu Festival

(the reverse side Map:A-4)
(On one of the Sundays from late March to early April)

This is a unique festival held against a background of cherry trees in full bloom. Come and watch local dances, skits of Kicchomu's stories, Kagura (ancient Shinto dances and singing) and more!

Usuki Gion Festival (Mid-July)

One of the three 'great Gion festivals' of Oita Prefecture, this features a parade with traditional costumes followed by a group of men carrying and pulling traditional "dashi" (floats). This is a truly fitting festival for this old castle town.





Usuki Stone Buddhas Lotus Festival (Early July)

Beautiful lotus flowers bloom in the vicinity of the Usuki Stone Buddhas (National Treasure) . Various events are held during the festival.



Usuki Stone Buddhas Fire Festival

(the reverse side Map:C-3) (Last Saturday in August)

This festival is usually held on the last Saturday of August starting at 7 pm when 1,000 torches are simultaneously lit. It's no exaggeration to say that this is the largest 'fire festival' in western Japan.



Brightly Lit Maple Trees of Fugenji Temple (the reverse side Map:B-4) (Late November)

There are about 200 maple trees around Fugen-ji Temple and their carpet of red and yellow adds color to this historic temple. The maple trees are lit up in November, creating a dream-like atmosphere. This temple has the grave of Kicchomu, who was a local man famous for his wit.



Usuki Takeyoi Festival

(First weekend in November)

In late autumn, about 20,000 bamboo lanterns with hand-carved designs are arranged around the historic streets of Usuki. This is a festival not to be missed! The magical world created when the lanterns are lit is truly unique.

LOCAL CUISINE



The Best-tasting Fugu in Southern Japan

The fugu (blowfish) caught around Usuki is exceptionally delicious and can be enjoyed in many Usuki restaurants. Visitors come from across Japan to taste this delicacy.





Local Specialties

■ Ouhan
This traditional dish features rice is colored with gardenia fruit and served with vegetables, tofu and boiled fish.

■ Kirasu-mameshi
A mixture of fish pickled in soy sauce and okara, this healthy and delicious dish was a staple during the rule of the Inaba clan.



Kabosu

This fragrant citrus fruit is grown in Usuki and is famous throughout Japan.