

Introduction to "Sanada's Armor Craftsman"



紀州 戦国屋 Kishu Sengokuya



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Located in Kudoyama, 'Kishu Sengokuya' is a speciality shop operated by a craftsman deeply connected to the world of the Sengoku period.

In addition, he also runs the weekend-only 'Kishu Kudoyama Sanada Fort' located in the historic land associated with the Sanada Clan.

The shop offers armour, swords, and various Sengoku-era goods, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of Japan's age of warring states.

Inside the 'Sengoku Historical Materials Room', visitors can also view swords, weapons, and exhibits related to the Sanada family.

Rather than simply 'looking' at history, this is a hands-on experience where visitors can actually touch and even wear armour themselves, making it a truly special place to experience history on a deeper level.

Sanada Yukimura — also known as Sanada Nobushige — is famously associated with Kudoyama, where he spent years after the Battle of Sekigahara.

Far removed from the glory and chaos of the battlefield, Kudoyama became a quiet place where strength and resolve were preserved for the future. That lingering spirit of history can still be felt today at the 'Sanada Fort'. Though modest in appearance, the atmosphere carries a quiet tension that evokes the presence of Samurai from centuries past.

And while you are there, Kishu Sengokuya is the perfect place to continue that experience.

Trying on armour and exploring Sengoku-era items allows visitors to feel history not as something distant, but as something alive and tangible.

History here is not only something to 'see' but something to truly 'experience.' Even now, the spirit of the Sengoku era seems to quietly breathe through the land of Kudoyama.

If you are ever in the area, it is well worth a visit.

How about this Yamatodamashii? We need your opinions and feedbacks more. We are waiting for them!

Please write as 'Sub: reply to the newsletter' and send it to us



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Vol.72
Jun. 2026

The Philosophy of Daimyou Ltd.

The Philosophy of Daimyo Company Limited.
 Under our slogan of 'We deliver the YAMATODAMASHII', the Daimyo Ltd offers information about the Japanese history and antique goods and aims at guiding our customers to the old Japanese world by fulfilling our customers demands to antique gears.

The excursion



Travel Itinerary

First things first — food!

Iwakuni Castle

The museum

Hello, this is Akemi Nakahori and Takako Shimatani!

Last time, we crossed the sea to visit Marugame Castle, but this time we crossed the mountains and went to Iwakuni Castle!! But before climbing up to the castle, we had to fill our stomachs first — after all, you can't fight (or climb) on an empty stomach! The first place we visited was the famous 'Irori Sanzoku' in Yamaguchi!! Founded in 1971 by Taichi Takahashi, the restaurant was created with the idea that 'people should enjoy hearty food deep in the mountains like bandits.' The name 'Sanzoku' (bandit) also reflects the wish that 'customers would have their hearts stolen by the delicious food', just as 'bandits steal valuables'. The moment we arrived, the savoury aroma of the famous Sanzoku-yaki (Mountain Pirate Chicken) filled the air, and our stomachs immediately started growling. When our food arrived, we were shocked by the enormous size of the Sanzoku rice ball!! Packed tightly inside the giant rice ball were three classic fillings: salmon, kelp, and pickled plum. We also enjoyed the boldly grilled Sanzoku-yaki skewers, dipping them generously into the sauce as we ate. The meal completely satisfied both our stomachs and our hearts. It was absolutely delicious!



The president looking absolutely delighted with the face-in-hole board

Ryo-kun, full of energy and bright smiles.



By the way, 'Sanzoku' (bandits) were people who robbed travellers and merchants of their money and goods. During the Muromachi and Sengoku periods, some Samurai who had lost their place due to war fled into the mountains and became bandits, which was sometimes referred to as 'the way of the warrior.' Some of them even took on roles similar to checkpoint guards, protecting travellers in exchange for tolls or security fees.

Let's dig in!



Absolutely delicious!

So huge!



With our stomachs full and our spirits satisfied, we then headed to Kintai Bridge, one of Japan's three most famous bridges.

Next to the centre page!



The beautiful five-arched wooden bridge was far more than just a way to cross the river — it looked like a living painting and felt truly artistic.

The bridge is said to have originally been constructed in 1673 by Kikkawa Hiroyoshi, the third lord of the Iwakuni Domain during the Edo period. Because the Nishiki River was prone to flooding, the bridge was specially designed to withstand strong currents and avoid being washed away. Its five wooden arches are supported by stone piers, and one of its most remarkable features is that it was built using intricate wooden joinery without nails. Thanks to highly sophisticated carpentry techniques, the structure was able to disperse the pressure of driftwood during floods. Although the bridge has been destroyed and rebuilt many times over the centuries, it still stands today as a testament to the wisdom, craftsmanship, and dedication of the people who preserved it. Over the years, the bridge was known by various names such as Iwakuni Ohashi, Ryoun Bridge, Goryu Bridge, Taiun Bridge, and Soroban Bridge. However, the now-familiar name 'Kintai Bridge' became widely used around the An'ei era (1772-1780), and it is said that the name was officially recognised after the Meiji Restoration.



Did you know it was not always called Kintai Bridge?

Hi-chan, the cheerful mood-maker with an adorable smile.

Alright, let's go!!! From Kintai Bridge, we began the roughly one-hour climb toward Iwakuni Castle!!

The road just kept going... and going... seemingly forever...



Nakabori-san~

We're already falling behind!



Beside exhausted staff member Minoru-kun, the president still had a relaxed smile on his face.



And finally... we arrived!!



This feels great~!

As we climbed step by step, completely out of breath, we truly realised firsthand that castles were intentionally built in places that were not easily reached. The magnificent four-tiered, six-story castle tower we finally reached was reconstructed in 1962. Its current location differs slightly from the original site and was chosen for its even better panoramic view. The weather was perfect, allowing us to overlook all of the flowing Nishiki River and the mountains stretching endlessly into the distance. The view from the castle tower was so breathtaking that words could hardly describe it. Standing there, we could almost imagine the castle lord gazing out upon the very same scenery centuries ago.



The place we were at earlier

Kikkawa Hiroie, who ruled Iwakuni after the Battle of Sekigahara, was the one who built the castle.



Kikkawa Hiroie was the grandson of 'Mori Motonari', the powerful warlord who expanded his influence throughout the Chugoku region during the Sengoku period. In 1603, Hiroie personally selected the layout of Iwakuni Castle in the Yokoyama area, taking advantage of transportation along the Nishiki River, and began construction of the castle. Historical records even show that he gave detailed instructions to his retainers, such as ordering that 'the castle tower should be built along the mountain ridge running from north-east to south-west.' This suggests that Hiroie was not only a feudal lord, but perhaps also possessed the mind of an engineer. Completed in 1608 atop Mount Yokoyama, the castle functioned like a fortress, offering excellent visibility over enemy movements while providing strong defensive advantages. However — this magnificent castle was dismantled after only about seven years. The reason was the Tokugawa shogunate's 'One Castle Per Province' policy, which limited each domain to a single castle. Because Iwakuni was considered a subsidiary domain of the Mori Clan, the castle could not be preserved. And yet, parts of the stone walls still remain today. Why? Because although the shogunate ordered even the stone walls to be destroyed, Hiroie intentionally limited the demolition and avoided completely tearing them down. Then, roughly 250 years after the castle's destruction, history once again returned to this mountain. Before one month of the Bakumatsu-era conflict between the Choshu forces and the shogunate — known as the Bakucho War — the domain lord Kikkawa Tsunemasa ordered his retainers to construct a military encampment atop 'Oshiroyama' (Castle Mountain). The military stronghold that Hiroie had quietly preserved, even after the castle's destruction, would finally fulfil its intended purpose centuries later.



Motonari Mouri 1497-1571

On the way back down, we took the rope-way and headed to the Kashiwabara Art Museum.

Photography was prohibited inside the museum, so unfortunately we could not take any pictures, but the collection of swords, armour, and artworks on display was absolutely magnificent!! As we quietly admired the exhibits, there was a strange sense of calm and focus that gradually settled over us, almost as if our minds were being refreshed and centred. We found ourselves stopping in front of the intricately crafted sword fittings... Then, standing before the National Treasure sword forged by Go Yoshihiro, said to have once belonged to Inaba Shigemichi, we were completely captivated by its overwhelming beauty... The Important Cultural Property armour, decorated with colourful lacing, displayed a stunning contrast of colours that reflected the refined aesthetic sense of high-ranking Samurai of the time. Being able to see such rare surviving artifacts from the Muromachi and Azuchi-Momoyama periods truly sharpened our appreciation for Japanese history and craftsmanship. If you ever have the opportunity, this is definitely a museum worth visiting.



Kashiwabara Art Museum

The museum's collection preserves the weapons and armour once worn by Samurai from the Sengoku period through the end of the Edo era as a culture of life and death. Living constantly on the boundary between life and death, the Samurai adorned themselves in ways that were both magnificent and dignified, while also showing deep respect for the lives of others. Within these objects lives a spiritual culture and artistry infused with the soul of their creators. And those arts and cultures are regarded as a treasure entrusted to all humanity. This museum was established by its director, Mr. Kashiwabara, with the heartfelt wish of passing down Japan's culture and spirit to future generations.



And finally, we visited the Iwakuni White Snake Museum.

No one knows exactly when the white snakes first appeared, but it is believed to be connected to the rise of rice cultivation during the Edo period. Lord Kikkawa Hiroie promoted rice farming throughout the Iwakuni area, and it is said that in the rice storehouses, Japanese rat snakes that preyed on mice underwent a genetic mutation, giving birth to the white snake. Because of their mysterious appearance, the snakes came to be cherished and protected by local people as 'guardians that bring good fortune' and 'messengers of the gods.' It is believed that this protection helped increase their population over time. The area around the Nishiki River was designated as a protected natural habitat of white snakes, and in 1972 the 'Iwakuni White Snake' was officially designated as a Natural Monument of Japan. White snakes are regarded as symbols of good fortune and are said to bring prosperity and wealth. As the finale of our journey, it truly felt as though we had been blessed with extraordinary good luck.

We were soothed by our encounter with the adorable white snake, 'Love-chan.'



Bonus...

Right after crossing Kintai Bridge, we stopped by Musashi, famous for having one of the largest selections of soft-serve ice cream flavours in Japan, and tried their unique 'Lotus Root Soft Cream'!



And the taste was surprisingly delicious!