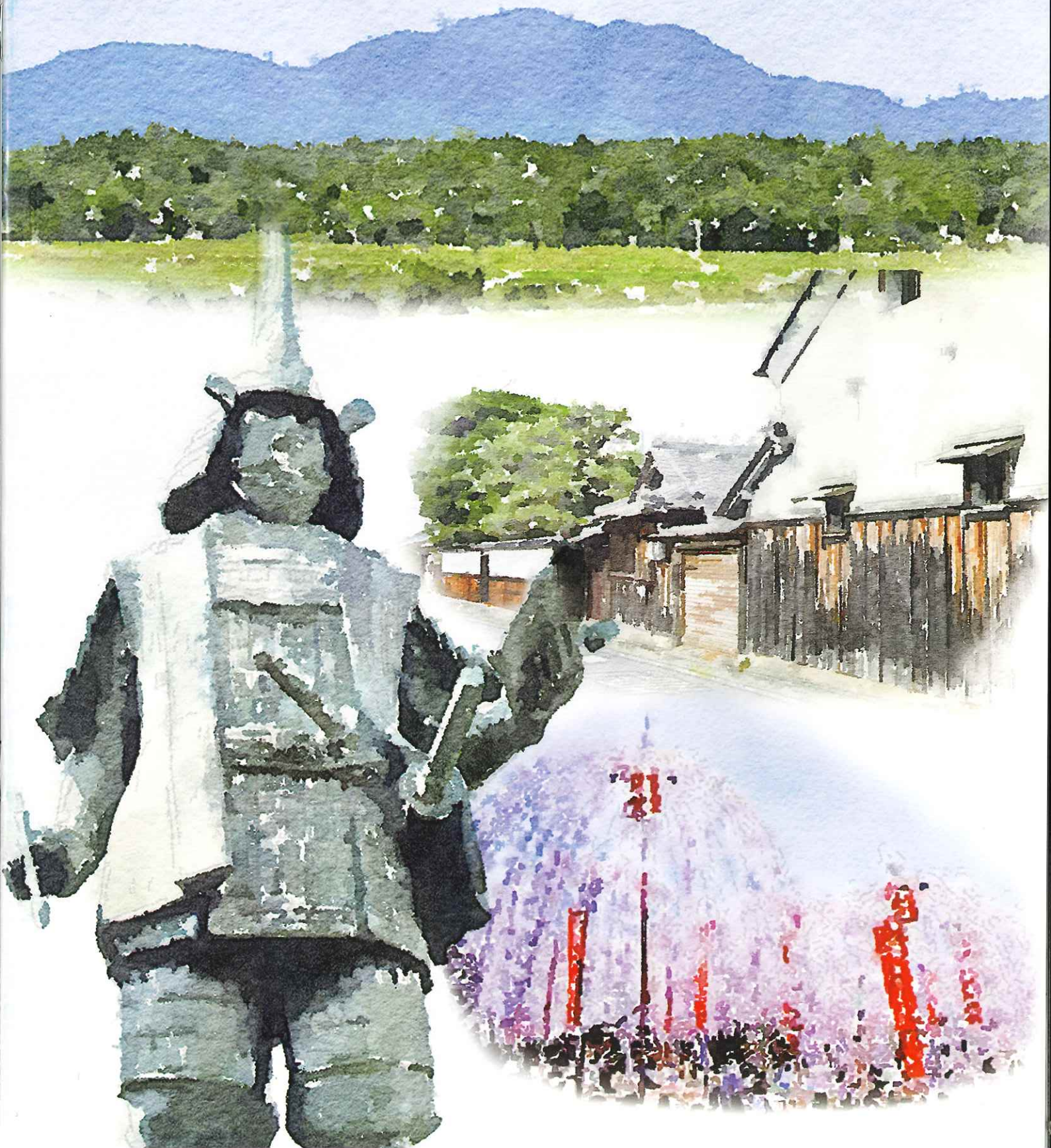


# Life in Omi-Hino

## Where People Resonate with Nature

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Hino Town  
Shiga Prefecture





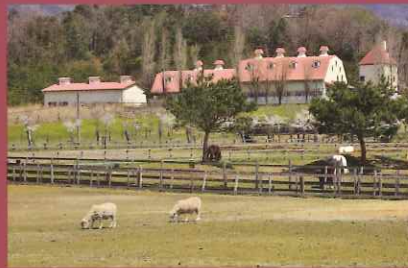
Blumen Hügel



Entrance

A visit to this agricultural park is like traveling through the European countryside. It blends the culture and townscape of Germany's Bavaria into the rich outdoors and rural landscape of Hino.

Flowers -- called blumen in German -- bloom beautifully throughout the year, but there are fun things to do, too, like making sausage and a fun playground. You can also see and feed sheep, rabbits, alpacas and other cute animals. This agricultural park is a perfect place to spend a holiday with family or friends.



Sheep out to pasture

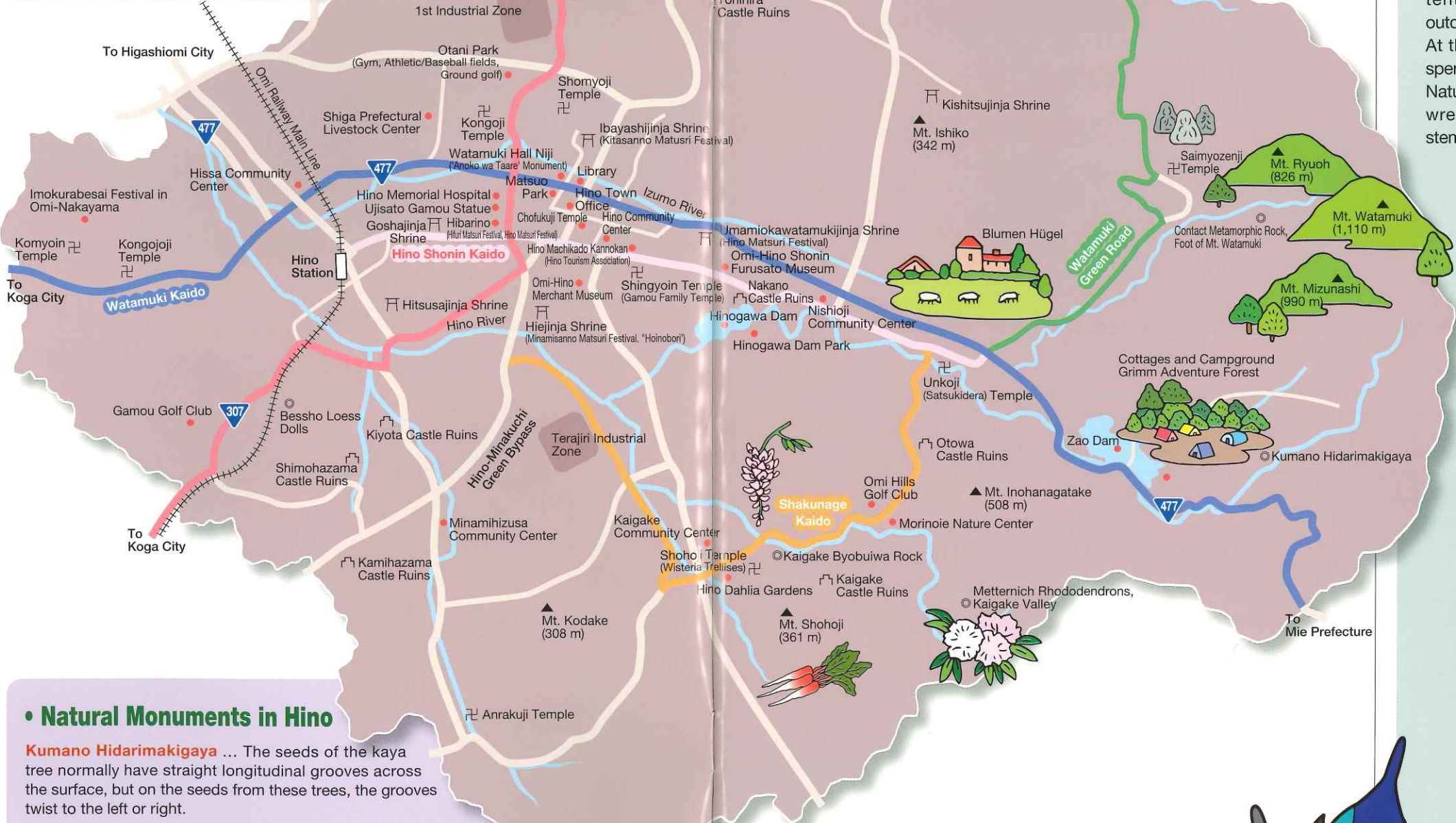


A yellow carpet of blooming rapeseed



Colorful varieties of tulip

Hino Town



Natural Monuments in Hino

**Kumano Hidarimakigaya** ... The seeds of the kaya tree normally have straight longitudinal grooves across the surface, but on the seeds from these trees, the grooves twist to the left or right.

**Metternich Rhododendrons in Kaigake Valley** ... Metternich rhododendrons are commonly known as a highland species, but these communities are a rare case of the flowers at low elevations.

**Contact Metamorphic Rock at the Foot of Mt. Watamuki** ... The bedrock in this area metamorphosed when granite from the early Mesozoic Era intruded on limestone and slate from the Paleozoic Era.

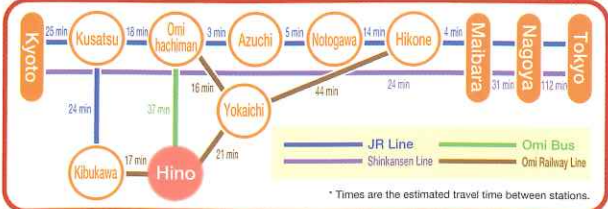
**Kaigake Byobuiwa Rock** ... The surrounding mountains folded and faulted because of the orogenic movements of the Suzuka Mountains, but this sedimentary rock was completely unaffected by any of that.

**Bessho Loess Dolls** ... These tubular shaped ore deposits formed as iron adhered to plant roots and branches underground.

Hino 'Treasure' Map



Public Transportation



"Gamonyan" Official mascot of the Ujisato Gamou Honor Society



The Brothers Grimm, whom everyone knows because of their fables, scoured through the fairytales of Germany to compile their works. Because the landscape and winding paths are remindful of those fables, this park bears this honored name. The campground has cottages, auto campsites and open spaces for pitching tents that put you closer to the great outdoors in any season of the year. At the Grimm Adventure Forest, you can spend your holidays in the bosom of Mother Nature or take part in a woodworking class, wreath-making and other activities that stem from the natural environment.

Indulging in the Great Outdoors



Cottage



Auto campsite



Playground



## Mt. Watamuki Rippling on the Water

When spring comes to Hino, traditional events are staged in various locations, such as the Minamisanno Matsuri Festival where flower-studded 'hoinobori' are raised under blue skies.

Spring also means that, affront the backdrop of Mt. Watamuki, Hino is immersed in blooming flowers while the gentle breezes that blow through town refresh the spirit. Come April crowds flock to the Hinogawa Dam to catch the beauty of the cherry blossoms in full bloom and when they scatter in the wind. From late April to early May, in the southeastern part of the town, some 20,000 naturally growing metternich rhododendrons blanket the slopes in Kaigake Valley at elevations between 300 and 400 m with their blooms. (Because of their rarity, they are designated a Natural Monument.) Then, beginning in mid-May, wisterias adorn the trellises at Shohoji Temple. All of these flowers have a story to tell and make spring an delightful time to visit Hino

There are also trails, exercise parks and, not far away, the ruins of Nakano (Hino) Castle. So, springtime is perfect for getting back to nature and delving into the local history.



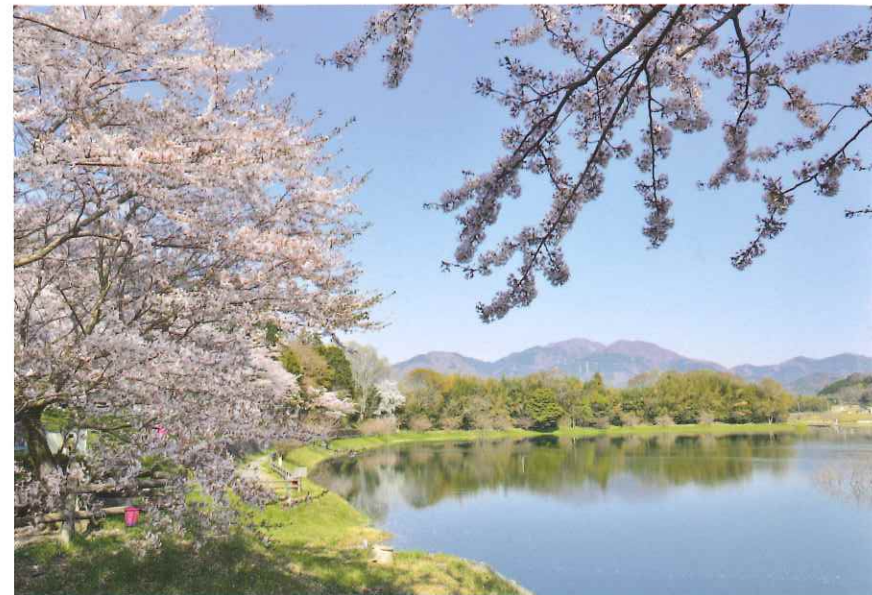
Wisteria trellises of Shohoji Temple



"Hoinobori" at Minamisanno Matsuri Festival



Metternich rhododendrons in Kaigake Valley



The banks along the Hinogawa Dam and Reservoir are lined with cherry trees that make it great place for picnicking under the blossoms.



Crowds gathered to see the festival floats lit up at night

## The 4 Seasons in Hino



Spring

## When Rice Turns Golden Yellow

As the heat of summer wanes, the air clears and cool breezes blow across Mt. Watamuki that stands tall above the paddies. An autumn mood sets in with the ears of rice turning a golden yellow and bending outward from their stalks. When they begin to sway in the wind, it is time to reap. The leaves will start changing color soon.

Rice farming in Hino dates far back to the middle of Japan's Yayoi Period (300 BC - 300 AD). Today, the farmland cultivated along the Hino and Sakura Rivers grows turnips, tea and other crops besides rice and serves as pastures for Omi cattle. Because of the high quality, much effort is going into branding locally grown rice, turnips and tea, and locally produced beef products as specialties.

This time of year, festivals are staged across the area. One in particular is the Imokurabe Matsuri in Ominakayama, which can be traced back over 800 years to Japan's Heian Period (794 - 1185) and is today designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Property of Japan. Literally meaning a 'potato comparison festival,' this peculiar event pits potatoes from the eastern and western reaches of Nakayama in a battle over which is longer.



Imokurabe Matsuri Festival



A blanket of cosmoses as far as the eye can see



Hino Dahlia Gardens in Kaigake

## The 4 Seasons in Hino



Autumn



View along the way to Blumen Hügel

## The 4 Seasons in Hino



Summer

## Feeling Energized in the Summer Sun

Summertime on Mt. Watamuki finds beeches and other broadleaf trees basking in the sunlight. A virgin beech forest grows in the top one-third of the mountain and is part of a vast canopy of foliage that has covered the highlands of the Suzuka Mountains since before people settled in the Hino area. The beauty and magnanimity



Hifuri Matsuri Festival

of this forest are best understood amidst the cool breeze and sunlight filtering through the trees.

Many people in search of this lush natural environment stop by the Blumen Hügel agricultural park at the base of Mt. Watamuki where, in summer, they are greeted by tall vibrant sunflowers facing the sun.

Then, as summer advances to the Obon season (mid-August), Hino comes alive with the Hifuri Matsuri Festival. The hundreds of torches that light up the town as a part of this traditional event are a spectacle worth seeing, since it is said, the more there are, the better the harvest.



Sunflowers at Blumen Hügel



Common purslane



A trail through the beech forest on Mt. Watamuki

## The 4 Seasons in Hino



Winter

## The Mountainous Landscape Covered in Wintry Beauty

As the symbol of Hino the town, Mt. Watamuki changes its expression with the seasons, giving everyone something different to enjoy all the time.

Before the snow falls, the foot of Mt. Watamuki hosts the annual ekiden relay race that, for more than 40 years, has pitted young athletes in hotly contested competition.

After the first dusting of snow gives the mountainside a wintry look, the summit could not be any more fabulous. The hoarfrost arrives around mid-January and draws hikers from inside and outside of the prefecture to see the beauty of the silvery landscape.

Then, as the town awaits the coming of spring and the blossoms that it will bring, some 200 households and businesses decorate the town with 'hina' dolls from across Japan's history to the pleasure of many visitors who stroll the streets for the Hino Hinamatsuri Kiko.



Hino Hinamatsuri Kiko



Mt. Watamuki covered in hoarfrost



Ekiden relay race organized by the Hino Youth Support Council



## Ujisato Gamou, The Pride of Hino

The Gamou Clan were military commanders who wielded power over the Hino area during Japan's middle ages. In the Onin War, patriarch Chikan-Sadahide Gamou (1534 - 1584) led the eastern camp in cohort with the Ogura Clan of Sakuradani. Later, he and, in turn, his sons Takasato, Sadahide and Katahide served the Rokkaku Family as senior vassals.

It is said that Tsuruchiyo (later known as Ujisato) was born in Nakayama Castle in 1556, as the eldest son to Katahide Gamou. Shortly thereafter, when Nobunaga Oda directed his campaign towards Kyoto, the Gamou Family subjugated to him and Tsuruchiyo was taken to Gifu as a hostage. Some time later when Tsuruchiyo came of age, he changed his name to Chuzaburo Masuhide. The following year, he rendered distinguished service in his first battle, for which, in winter of that same year, he married Oda's daughter Fuyu and returned to his home in Hino. He then fought many battles as a vassal to the Oda Family. During the Honnoji Incident of 1582, Ujisato guarded Oda's wife and children in Hino together with his father who held the outer citadel of Azuchi Castle.

After Oda's death, Ujisato fought admirably under Hideyoshi Hashiba in the Battles of Shizugatake and Komaki - Nagakute, for which he was bestowed with Isematsugashima Castle, which yielded 120,000 koku\* of rice at the time. He also took part in attacks in Kishu and Etchu in 1585 and changed his name from Masuhide to Ujisato. That same year, he was baptized a Christian (baptismal name of Leon) at the encouragement of Ukon Takayama and others. Ujisato was later victorious in his

invasions of Kyushu (1587) and Odawara (1590), as a result of which he was transferred to oversee a total of 420,000 koku of rice produced by the 4 counties of Aizu and 5 (and later 12) counties of Nansendo. When he relocated to Oushu, Ujisato not only ruled over the domain but also acted on the behalf of Hideyoshi Toyotomi and led over 60,000 soldiers in the Siege of Kunohe as Toyotomi's top general. As a reward for victory, Ujisato was given control over Aizu Kurokawa and authority over 734,000 koku of rice in 1591 (919,320 koku after the crop yield assessments of 1594), which made him the third most powerful daimyo in Japan behind Ieyasu Tokugawa and Terumoto Mori.

\* 1 koku = 180 liters



Nakano Castle Ruins



Main Temple, Shingyoin Temple (Cultural Property of Shiga Prefecture)

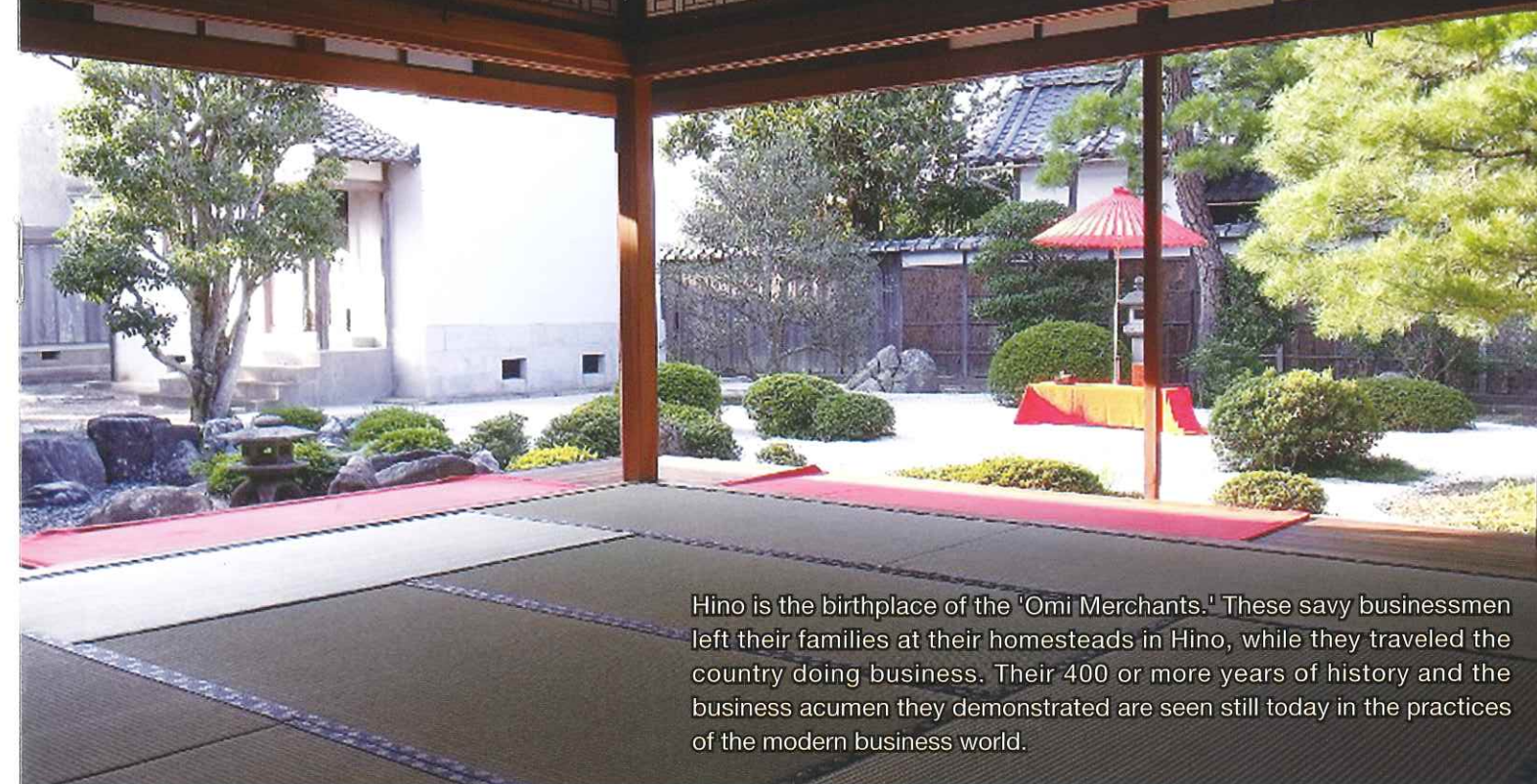


Portrait of Ujisato Gamou (Part of the collection at Kotokuji Temple)

**Ujisato Gamou (1556 - 1595) was a skilled warrior and cultured scholar during Japan's years of civil war. He built the framework for the town to prosper and continued to work for Hino's benefit even after his duties kept him away from his hometown. That 'love of country' lives on 400 years later in the people of Hino.**

## Ujisato Gamou's 'Love of Country, Hino'

## 400 Years of History and Business Acumen of the Omi-Hino Merchants



Hino is the birthplace of the 'Omi Merchants.' These savvy businessmen left their families at their homesteads in Hino, while they traveled the country doing business. Their 400 or more years of history and the business acumen they demonstrated are seen still today in the practices of the modern business world.

'Inner most living room' built for spurring the economy with public works projects in times of economic depression (present Omi-Hino Merchant Museum)

## The Emergence of Omi-Hino Merchants, 'Hino Lacquerware' and 'Hino Medicines'



Lacquer bowls from 200 years ago

The history of the Omi-Hino merchants began with 'lacquer bowls.' Some 400 years ago during the early years of Japan's Edo Period, lacquer bowls were registered as a local specialty and put Hino amongst the 8 top lacquerware producing regions of Japan.

These bowls were made for the commoner and sold all across Japan by the Omi-Hino merchants. What made them a big hit was the practice of 'selling on credit' to the farmers in the Kanto Plains. In 1712, there were over 380 businessmen doing that in the district of Okubo alone. As testimony to their business fervor, records can be found of Omi-Hino merchants who peddled lacquer bowls in farming villages in Saitama, Gunma, Tochigi and elsewhere.

Omi-Hino merchants also spread herbal medicines across Japan. The impetus for dealing in medicines came from a former traveling salesman from Hino by the name of Genzo Shono (1659 - 1733) who, after working as a physician in Kyoto, returned to Hino and began concocting solutions in his latter years. Launched 300 years ago, the pharmaceutical business grew as an alternative to lacquerware and led to 'Manbyo Kannogan,' a legendary cure-all elixir that is still produced today.

The pharmaceutical business born in Hino was best known for the business model the merchants used; products were sold by specially contracted dealers across the land, a precursor to the franchise business of today. These pharmacies had a goldleaf sign out front that was made in Hino.

The Omi-Hino merchants became wealthy through the pharmaceutical business, so they financed the building of ornate festival floats for the Hino Matsuri, which numbered 20 in the Edo Period. Because this also benefitted the commoner, the pharmaceutical business is a cultural asset of Hino's.



Sign advertising the legendary cure-all elixir, 'Manbyo Kannogan'





Excitement fills the air as music and chants echo across the shrine.



The procession passes between the floats on its way to the sacred hall.

## Festival Music Across a Spring Evening

For over 800 years, the Hino Matsuri has displayed festival floats at Umamioka Watamukijinja Shrine. Characterized by these colorfully decorated floats, it is the largest springtime festival on the eastern side of Lake Biwa and an Intangible Folk-Cultural Property of Shiga Prefecture. The 16 floats are the most of any festival in the prefecture and the ornate decorations speak to the town's prosperity and cultural heights.

The festivities begin on the vigil with the Nishinomiya Matsuri being staged the afternoon of May 2. Then, at dusk, red lanterns illuminate the town, the floats are rolled out graciously onto the streets, and festive music is played everywhere. The sound of flutes, drums and bells set the tone for moving the floats as they take on a spiritual presence. The music continues late into the night and augments the festive atmosphere.

## Morning Ribbon Cutting

At 3:00 in the morning on the day of the festival, the start of the Hino Matsuri is announced by drumbeats in Kozukeda. Child deities wake to the sound, get dressed and make their way to Goshajinja Shrine together with about 100 hakama-clad guardians. Once they are inside the shrine, teams from each district head towards the shrine with decorative staffs and palanquins on their shoulders.

日野祭

Pageantry and Splendor

Hino Matsuri

## Reliving Hino's Legacy Today

When the departing drums sound, all of the floats break into music. The shrine becomes enveloped in excitement as the spirited calls of men toting the palanquins echo through the air. Then, led by the child deities, the procession of palanquins departs for the sacred hall where the palanquins will be lodged. The child deities and guardians enter the hall and perform a ritual in front of 3 palanquins. Two of the palanquins have been restored by parishioners to their original condition in the mid to late Edo Period, so they are carefully preserved and handed down.

The Hino Matsuri is not known just as a festival of ornately decorated floats but also as a time-honored ritual for relocating the palanquins from the main shrine to their sacred hall via a colorful procession. It radiates with historical importance and pride even today.



An autumnal performance transforms this suite-like window at the Machikado Kannokan into art.

## International Exchange Partners

Driven by advances in information technologies and modes of transportation, globalization is making it necessary today to develop broadminded human resources who understand and welcome differing cultures and values. With this in mind, Hino is involved in cultural and athletic exchange programs with Eunsan-myeon, Korea and Embu das Artes, Brazil.

### Boa tarde (Hello) from Embu, Brazil

Hino began exchange activities with Embu, Brazil in 1980. What triggered the abundance of programs that were to come was a visit to Japan by the Brazil Sumo Federation to partake in the Japan Teachers Sumo Championships. Families hosted the visitors and that kindness spurred the desire for more interaction.

After that, a Friendship Committee was created between the two municipalities to promote exchange activities and eventually led to a sister-city agreement on May 2, 1984. Ever since, exchange has been fomented in various ways: children's art, missions, youth soccer, art exhibits and more. Brazilian cuisine has also been added to school lunch menus to nurture even greater understanding of other cultures.

#### Embu in brief

Embu is a city of 76 km<sup>2</sup> in size located at an elevation 825 m above sea level, just 27 km southwest from San Paolo, the capital of the state of San Paolo. It was designated a municipality in 1959 and is spread across a beautiful and serene landscape of hills, valleys and lush greenery. Embu has a tropical highland climate and is easily accessible because of its proximity to San Paolo.

The population of Embu is approximately 250,000. It is home to some 1,200 persons (about 300 households) of Japanese descent, half of which left the metropolis of San Paolo to grow flowers and vegetables as a business in a calmer setting. This has earned Embu a reputation as a 'city of flowers' and a 'blue collar town.'

Embu is 12 hours behind Japan. The language is Portuguese and the currency the real.



Visit to Japan by Embu delegation

Singing as a means of interaction

### A Win-Win Arrangement for All

## Omi-Hino Rural Life Experiences

### Animating the Town by Sharing Personal Feelings

The Omi-Hino merchants who rose to fame espoused a 'win-win' mindset that guided business in a direction that would benefit the seller, the buyer and the community. That philosophy is alive and well in the people of Hino today and is being taught in the Omi-Hino Farming Study where 'instructors (seller) gain confidence and pride, the students (buyer) are internally moved, and the area (community) comes alive because the local environment, history and culture are all brought into play.'

these study programs do not just offer homestay opportunities in a farming village but also exposes participants to rural culture and living through planting, harvesting, making detchi yokan, and walking tours of the town that educate them about the local history and culture. The program is open to visitors in general and has been included as an activity for school trips and training courses. In each of these cases, participants get to see and experience in person what makes Hino so special.

The participants do not receive guest treatment in the program; no specially prepared meals are served and no souvenirs are distributed. It is designed to allow both the provider and recipient to be themselves and share their feelings with each other by experiencing nature's wonders, personal relationships and the connection between man and the great outdoors. This approach gives true meaning to the concept of 'hospitality.'



University students from Australia interacting with their host family as part of an East Asia youth exchange program



Student-interns from Tsinghua University (China) experiencing rural life with a host family





## Omi-Hino Shonin Furusato Museum

Originally built in the Late Edo Period and remodeled over the transition from the Meiji Period to the Early Showa Period, this building was the residence of Shokichi Nakayama, a relative of Hyouemon Nakayama's who established a separate homestead. The prosperity enjoyed by the Omi-Hino merchants can be deduced from the gallery window that was built into the planked wall for viewing the Hino Matsuri, the beautiful garden with carefully placed stone lanterns and the decorative furniture.



Address: 1246 Oaza-Nishioji, Hino-cho  
Tel: 0748-52-0008  
Closed: Mon & Tues (Next day if Mon or Tues is a holiday), Year-end/New-year break

## Hino Machikado Kannokan (Hino Tourism Association)

This building formerly was a pharmacy that was operated by Genzo Shono (1659 - 1733). It is said that there used to be a herb garden out front where Shono grew herbs for the medicines he concocted. Inside, the packaging factory has been restored as an exhibit on the pharmaceutical business. Sightseeing information and local specialties are available, and the storehouse has been converted into a coffee shop, which makes this a great place for taking a break when walking about town.



Address: 1284 Oaza-Murai, Hino-cho  
Tel: 0748-52-6577 (Hino Town Tourist Association)  
Closed: Mon (Tues if Mon is a holiday), Year-end/New-year break

## Omi-Hino Merchant Museum

Built in 1939, this home was donated to the town by a local businessman by the name of Hyouemon Nakayama in 1980. Architecturally, it expresses the disciplined and prudent nature known to Omi-Hino merchants. Here, besides getting a close-up look at the materials and styling that went into building this residence, you can learn about the history and business of the Omi-Hino merchants from the exhibited products they peddled, household rules, mineral medicines and old wines (replicas).



Address: 1101 Oaza-Okubo, Hino-cho  
Tel: 0748-52-0007  
Closed: Mon & Tues (Next day if Mon or Tues is a holiday), Year-end/New-year break

## Hino Town Map

## Umamioka Watamukijinja Shrine

This is the sister-shrine to Otakajinja Shrine located at the top of Mt. Watamuki that towers over Hino from the east. Having been favored with the support of the Gamou Family and the Omi-Hino merchants, many donated properties are still to be found on the grounds, to note the hall of worship. During the Hino Matsuri, this shrine celebrates its spring festival.



## Kishitsujinja Shrine

This shrine entombs the 7th century emissary and scholar of Paekche (ancient Korea), Jipsa Gwisil. His father, the General Baksin Gwisil, is enshrined at Unzan Besshindo Small Shrine in Eunsan-myeon, Korea. This connection underscores exchange activities between Hino and Eunsan-myeon.



## Shingyoin Temple

This temple was patronized by the Gamou Family that reined over the Hino area during Japan's Kamakura and Azuchi-Momoyama Periods (1185 - 1600). The ceiling in the main temple features an ornate painting of a flying dragon done by local artist Keiho Takada (1674 - 1756).



## Shomyoji Temple

Allegedly built by Prince Shotoku (574 - 622), this temple was burned to the ground during Japan's years of civil war, but was rebuilt at the request of the Emperor Gomizuno (1596 - 1680) in the Edo Period. The main hall was relocated from the Seiryoden living quarters of the Kyoto Imperial Palace and is an Important Cultural Property.



## Kongoji Temple

This old temple belongs to the Tendai Sect of Buddhism and pays homage to an 11-faced kannon that is kept from public view. It is believed to have been built in Japan's Nara Period (710 - 794). The sanctuary once had several buildings, but they were lost to war involving the local Gamou Lords in Japan's Muromachi Period (1336 - 1573). Only one building was rebuilt.



## Saimyozenji Temple

One of the more prestigious temples in Hino, Saimyozenji belongs to the Eigenji School of Rinzai Buddhism. The revered image is an 11-faced kannon that is kept from public view and named an Important Cultural Property of Japan. Also worth seeing are the numerous stone statues of Buddha that were dug up in the area.



## Idyllic Traditional Streetscapes

The ambiance of the medieval fiefdom that grew around the Nakano (Hino) Castle of the Gamou Clan is preserved today in the streetscapes of the central historic district. Just strolling the streets in Okamoto-cho, Shimizu-cho, Shin-machi and Minamiokubo-cho passed the centuries-old homes, the long planked walls, the white plaster storehouses and the gallery windows that were built for watching the Hino Matsuri will conjure images of life back in the day.



Street view in Minamiokubocho



Street view in Shimizucho





### Pickled Turnips

Originating in Hino Town, this particular variety of turnip is loved by locals today as a traditional vegetable.



### Omi-hino Beef

The flavor, marbling and quality of this meat have been enhanced by the climate, water resources and lush natural landscape.



### Detchi Yokan

Once upon a time, young apprentices who came to Hino to learn a trade would wrap sweet jelly made from adzuki beans in bamboo bark as a souvenir when returning to their original place of employment.



### Salad Dressing

The characteristic pink color of this dressing is caused by a reaction between the local variety of turnip and vinegar. The turnip has been grated to preserve the flavor and texture.

## Specialties from Hino



### Iga Manju

This characteristic sweet wraps strained bean paste in dumpling dough, covers it with glutinous rice and then steams it. Because it resembles a chestnut burr, it is named iga (literally 'burr').



### Tea

The rich taste derives from the natural environment and climate of Hino.



### Crackers

These crackers are made with delicious tasting Habutae rice that has been responsibly grown in paddies under optimum weather conditions.



### Canned Venison

Slowly stewed in soy sauce, sugar and ginger, this canned venison has a flavor all its own.



### Sake

Locally grown rice is steamed with crystal clear subterranean water the old way — slowly and passionately — to brew the distinguishing flavor.



### Lacquerware

Known throughout Japan in Japan's Edo Period (1602 - 1868), production of the lacquerware of Hino had been suspended for a long time, but because it is machine-washable, it is making a comeback as everyday tableware. The warm hand-made look sets it apart from other lacquerware.