Nara & Australia
Nara, the Birthplace of Japanese Culture and Home to Japan-Australia Friendly Ties

Since the capital was moved to Heian-kyo in 710, Nara has fostered an internationally rich culture as the eastern terminus of the Sibi Road. Furthermore, as Japan’s first city to have a sister-city in Australia, this area is the very cradle of the current ties between Japan and Australia.

Enjoy your tour and experience the diversity that Nara has to offer.

Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range

An Untamed Pilgrimage Mecca
Carved Out Harshly by Mother Nature

The Kii mountain range, located in southern Nara consists of mountains in almost 2,000m above sea level. As one of the oldest sacred lands in Japan, the beauty of nature that has made for such mountains has inspired awe in the Japanese since antiquity. Believed to be a place where gods reside, it has been given spiritual mountains since antiquity. To Japan, it holds the worship of Shintoism and other spiritualism. At total rainfall of over 1,400mm makes for two seasons and for 1,200 years the area has continued to be a pilgrimage source for those who seek to avert misfortune.

Hasedera Temple
A Beautiful Gorge, Heartwarming Old Roads, and a Hot Springs Village

With World Heritage mountain paths running through it, Hasedera Village is a place of peace by virtue of its rich and historic shrines. To Japan, it holds the longest Shinto shrine spanning below the town, which they are known as “the village in the sky,” and hot springs are present among the pleasures that are available all the fresh air.

Kasuga Taisha Shrine
A Beautiful Mountain Temple Accented by Flowers of the Four Seasons

This majestic temple built on the mountaintop of Mt. Kasuga offers a spectacular view from the Bell Hall that overlooks the 1,000 steps. Long known as the temple of flowers, it delights visitors with pleasant glimpses of the four seasons in flowers such as cherry, plum, and hydrangea, as well as ensured heat and snowy weather scenery.

Todaiji Temple
The World’s Largest Bronze Buddha Statue: the “Great Buddha of Nara”

A large temple constructed at the beholde of Emperor Shomu in the mid-8th century, the Great Buddha Hall is one of the largest wooden structures in the world. The iconic Buddha statue enshrined here in the world’s largest bronze statue (estimated weight of 500, height of 15m) and is commonly known as the “Great Buddha of Nara.” There are other noteworthy sights such as the Great South Gate, Nigatsu-Do Hall, and Hokkai-Do Hall.

Jörg Schmeisser, one of the most accomplished Australian photographers, captures many of Japan’s iconic landmarks including Todaiji Temple in a new photo series, a special edition of which is distributed at the special exhibition commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Great Buddha in Japan.

A Place to Pray for World Peace and Universal Happiness

The World’s Oldest Wooden Structures and over 2,300 National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties

This temple was built at the behest of Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu at the beginning of the 8th century. Kasuga (Main Hall) and Gomonzaka (Gate-Roofed Pagoda) are the oldest wooden structures in the world. Furthermore, Horyuji Temple was the first location in Japan to be designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO. The temple contains a total of 1,000 wooden structures in the world.

Horyuji Temple

A Tale of Two Sister Cities

A Tale from the Australian Ambassador to Japan

"Nara Prefecture, home to Japan’s ancient capital and many remarkable historical sites, including those on the UNESCO World Heritage List, is one of the birthplaces of Japan’s rich culture. Visitors to Nara will be impressed by all it has to offer, such as Todaiji Temple, with the world’s largest bronze statue of Buddha - and Nara Park, where more than 1,000 tame deer roam free. The prefecture was awarded three stars by the Michelin Green Guide, which has more than 200 central prefectures in the world. Furthermore, Australia and Nara Prefecture share a number of significant links. Yamato-Takata City and Lismore in NSW formed the first sister-city relationship between our two countries in 1963, and Nara City has been a sister city of Canberra since 1993. I hope you enjoy your visit to Nara and discover the beauty and traditional culture that this magnificent ancient capital has to offer."

Message from the Australian Ambassador to Japan

Mr Bruce Miller
Australian Ambassador to Japan

Nara Prefecture, home to Japan’s ancient capital and many remarkable historical sites, including those on the UNESCO World Heritage List, is one of the birthplaces of Japan’s rich culture. Visitors to Nara will be impressed by all it has to offer, such as Todaiji Temple, with the world’s largest bronze statue of Buddha - and Nara Park, where more than 1,000 tame deer roam free. The prefecture was awarded three stars by the Michelin Green Guide, which has more than 200 central prefectures in the world. Furthermore, Australia and Nara Prefecture share a number of significant links. Yamato-Takata City and Lismore in NSW formed the first sister-city relationship between our two countries in 1963, and Nara City has been a sister city of Canberra since 1993. I hope you enjoy your visit to Nara and discover the beauty and traditional culture that this magnificent ancient capital has to offer.