Nara & Canada

Canada’s Involvement in Carrying On the Cultural Legacy of the Ancient Capital

Japan’s capital up until the 8th century, Nara is the birthplace of Japanese culture. Visitors are delighted by the historical and cultural legacy as embodied by the shrines, temples, Buddhist statues, treasuries, and other properties that have been lovingly maintained. The tamarisk that Canada proudly calls its own is used in the recovery and reconstruction efforts currently under way on the cultural assets.

Kofukuji Temple

The Soaring Five-Story Pagoda Is a Major Nara Landmark

This temple was moved to its present location and named “Kofukuji Temple” when the capital was moved to Heijo Palace in 794. At its peak, it was a grand temple that had more than 700 halls and pagodas. The pagoda, with a height of 50 m stands as the landmark of Nara, an ancient capital of Japan. The Central Buddha Hall is currently being rebuilt with the aim of reopening in 2016.

Horyuji Temple

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 Shotoku and Emperor Empyo at the beginning of the 8th century. Its Main Hall and Gojoro-ku (Preserved 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 garden contains all over the world as a treasure trove of Buddhist culture.

Susukino and Hakata, Fukuoka

A 5-minute Walk from the Station, You Are Greeted by 1,100 Wild Deer

Nara Park is the very land of the ancient capital. Covering a vast area of 660 hectares, it features architectural structures such as Todaji Temple, Kofukuji Temple, Kasuga Taisha Shrine, Nara National Museum, and Shosoin Repository that bind in well with the historic and rich greenery of the park. The deer that wander around in the hills enliven the park's natural scenery.

Todaji Temple

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

A large temple complex at the behest of the Emperor Shomu in the mid-8th century, the Great Buddha Hall is one of the largest wooden structures in the world. The Yakusho-Kongobuji temple complex housed here is the world’s largest bronze Buddha statue (estimated weight of 500t, height of 13.3m and is commonly known as the “Great Buddha of Nara.”

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 consist of mountains almost 3,000m above sea level. As one of the oldest sacred shrines in Japan, the beauty of nature that has made the island mountainous has inspired one of the Japanese sages: Amida. Believing to be a place where the gods reside, it has given birth to a pilgrimage route where many mountains form the image that feeds the worship of nature with Buddhist and other elements. Annual mountain climbers also flock to the 3,000-year-old area that continues to be a pilgrimage mecca for many who seek ecstatic training.

Nara's Flowers of the Four Seasons

Flowers blossom in the four seasons in Nara, giving the variety of the ancient capital a springy depth. In the spring, pastel pink cherry blossoms envelope all of Nara. In fact, the 30,000 mountain cherry trees make Mt. Yoshino in southern Nara one of Japan’s finest places for cherry blossom viewing. Also beautiful are the premises of Kanzanji Temple and the exterior of Kasuga Taisha Shrine. In the summer, lustrous blossoms of the Women’s Buddhist Temple can be seen at Todaiji Temple and Horyuji Temple. And in the autumn, cosmos flowers and beautiful autumnal leaves like a flower shower can be found at Chuson-ji Temple and Dainichiji Temple. In Nara, you can find beautiful natural settings throughout the four seasons.

Divine Messengers, the Deer of Nara Park

While the tame deer wandering around Nara Park are a great delight to tourists, they are not domesticated and are designated a protected animal. The deer are said to be the messengers of a deity of Kasuga Taisha Shrine. With deer often steering onto traffic lanes, many caution signs are displayed around the park. Have you seen the same kind of signs in Canada?