

Saba Kaido

Mackerel Road

Cycling

Map

Kyoto - Wakasa Obama

Historic Trails of Food & Culture from the Sea to the Ancient Capital



Issued by: Japan Heritage Utilization Promotion Council of Obama City and Wakasa Town



Wakasa is in the southwestern part of Fukui Prefecture along a rare riya coastal area on the Sea of Japan. As a gateway to the sea, the unique geography provided a natural harbor that helped it become a prosperous cultural center between the sea and the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto. The area was often called *miketsukumi* (lit. land of delicacies), as it was a big supplier of seafood for the capital. In particular, saba (mackerel) became a part of Kyoto's culinary culture. The network of routes used to transport these products from Wakasa to the capitals came to be known as the Saba Kaido (lit. "Mackerel Road"). These scenic seaside areas, now Obama and Wakasa, have preserved a diversity of culture and traditions rooted in the ancient sea trade and seen in the townscapes, temples and shrines, festivals, and gastronomy.

Cycling Etiquette

Five Rules for Safe Cycling in Japan

- Ride on the left side of road, rarely on sidewalks**
Always yield to pedestrians
Bicycles are allowed on sidewalks only in designated areas with a sign on the right, or for persons under 13, over 70, or individuals with disabilities on bicycles.
- Stop at intersections for safety**
Cyclists, too, must stop at motor vehicle stop signs.
- Use lights when dark**
Make sure others can see you. And keep good visibility by lighting your path. Flashing light prohibited.
- No biking after drinking**
Carrying a passenger and parallel riding are also prohibited.
- Wear helmets**
Adults and children must wear helmets when riding.

*Obtaining bicycle insurance is strongly recommended.

① The Oldest and Shortest Saba Kaido Route Over Harihata Pass

A precipitous yet beautiful trail where food was transported long ago

Zone Distance: 88.6 km Approx. Duration: 8 hr. 25 mins Activity Level: Advanced



This course offers the ride on a newer paved road parallel to the ancient Harihata Pass trail, known as the oldest Saba Kaido going through the very steep Harihata Pass between Onyu and Kutsuki. As the shortest course to Kyoto, there are 3 steep passes along the way, with an elevation gain of nearly 2000 meters. Around the mountainous areas of Harihata Pass, you will enjoy the peaceful natural environment. The spectacular view from Onyu Pass is a worthy reward for completing this challenging course.



Open Hrs. Closed Entry Fee Phone No. Map Coordinates (Blue coordinate code indicates enlarged map of central Obama.)

- Hanase Pass & Onyu Pass (花青峠 & おんゆう峠)**
This course features two 800-meter-class mountain passes. Climb about 500 meters over around 6 km on Hanase Pass, steeper up the second half. Heading up to Onyu Pass, there's a popular viewpoint for a sea of clouds. From the top of the pass, the Sea of Japan can be seen in the distance. **C15, C8**
- Mountain Villages along the Kaido**
Along the Saba Kaido roads, there are many mountain villages that served as ancient transit stops. You'll see the beautiful rural scenery of traditional homes, terraced fields of former farm land, historic shrines, etc.
- Onyu Historic Townscape (おんゆうの町並み)**
The Onyu area served as a junction of Wakasa Kaido and Harihata Pass. Once the location of the provincial government, this was the political and economic center of Wakasa, with a nationally appointed temple and large shrine. Even today, late-Edo and Meiji buildings remain, creating a strong atmosphere of the historic trails. **C3, C5**
- Furusato Chaya Seimon (ふるさと茶屋清右衛門)**
A community center in a renovated 200-year-old house along the route. Guided tours are available for visitors. Local quiet and various events are also held here. **10am - 4pm (Open on Sat, Sun & national holidays. Contact for other days)** **090-3296-2816 (Onyu Tango Kaido Machinami Preservation Promotion Association) C3, C5**
- Wakasa Bay (若狭湾)**
Surrounded by the Tango Peninsula and Cape Echizen, this bay features the only coastal ria on the Sea of Japan coastline. A natural harbor, blessed with abundant marine life. Mackerel has been the dominant catch here for centuries, and as the nearest port to continental Asia from the old capitals, it was the start point of the Saba Kaido.

② Wakasa Kaido, Main Route of the Historic Saba Kaido Roads

A flow of culture and cuisine between the sea and the capital

Zone Distance: 77.1 km Approx. Duration: 7 hr. 40 mins Activity Level: Advanced

The Wakasa Kaido was the most heavily trafficked of all the Saba Kaido roads. Mackerel from the Wakasa Bay was transported on this route to the old capital of Kyoto, from Onyu to Kumagawa, Kutsuki over the Hanase Pass, Ohara and finally Kyoto. On this cycling course following the historic route, you'll ride a distance of 77 km from Kyoto to Obama. You'll mainly stay on the national roads, with occasional old paths offering a bit deeper adventure. In particular, from Kumagawa-juku post town onward, you can enjoy the authentic vestiges of the Saba Kaido roads.

This course consists of high traffic roads and a number of tunnels.

- Kumagawa-juku Post Town (熊川宿)**
Kumagawa-juku was once among the largest post towns of the Wakasa Kaido, the busiest the various Saba Kaido trade routes. Just one street off from the national road, you'll enjoy the historic townscape, nationally designated as an important preservation district. There are also cafes and stores occupying renovated traditional buildings. The nearby roadside rest is the entry point to visit this area. **C6**
- Sato-no-Eki Ohara (里の駅大原)**
Farmers' market located in a peaceful farming village. In addition to locally-grown vegetables, there's mochi rice cake served fresh every morning, made from sticky mochi rice. The mochi with Ohara-grown shio (red perilla) is a must-try! **Market 9 am - 4 pm / Restaurant 9 am - 3:30 pm** **Mon 075-744-4321 C16**
- Kutsuki Onsen Tenku (くつき温泉 天く)**
From the open-air bath, Tengu-no-Yu, you can look out at the mountains of Kutsuki. The *tengu* is a creature of ancient lore and there are tengu-related stories in this region. The inspiration for this creature may be a foreigner seen traveling the Saba Kaido on his way to the capital. **10am - 9pm No 0740-38-2770 (Green Park Omoido-no-Mori) C9**

③ Route to Five Lakes of Mikata via Wakasa Seacoast

A quiet lakeside route with plum groves and five lakes of different hues

Zone Distance: 74.1 km Approx. Duration: 6 hr. 50 mins Activity Level: Intermediate

Starting from Kumagawa-juku Post Town, this course heads toward Five Lakes of Mikata, a source of fish for the capital. Eel from this area became a local specialty, valued in Kyoto during the Edo period. The course starts from the rural Toba River area, and then goes through Tagarasu, offering beautiful views of Wakasa Bay. Finally, reach Five Lakes of Mikata via a series of tunnels. Ride promenades around the lakes through peaceful nature, lined with plum groves, offering wonderful fragrance to early spring visitors. Each lake has a unique environment, such as the sea-linked Lake Kugushi and Hiruga, as well as Lake Suigetsu, famous for rare layered varved deposits.

- Fuku Prefectural Varve Museum / (福井県年輪博物館)**
Wakasa Mikata Jonon Museum (若狭三方庵文庫博物館)
Varve is a type of layered sediment deposit found on the bottom of lakes, containing plankton and other ancient organisms. The varve discovered in Lake Suigetsu is marked as the longest in the world at 45 meters in length (70,000 years of accumulation). Learn about this amazing artifact at these adjacent museums. **9 am ~ 5 pm Tue ~ Adult ¥500 0770-45-0456 C F3**
- Five Lakes of Mikata (Mikata Goko) (三方五湖)**
These lakes are known as Five Lakes of Mikata. Their varying salinity levels and unique properties give them different hues, resulting in their name which means "five-colored lakes." During medieval times, fishing and shipping industries prospered here. The area is also known as a major producer of plums. **C F2**
- Unagi (eel)**
The unagi (eels) from Five Lakes of Mikata are tender, rich, and nutritional, as the lakes give them plenty of natural food sources. This unagi has long been a popular favorite in Kyoto, known as *Yakukuchi Unagi* during the Edo period. Try delicious eel dishes served at some of this area's unagi restaurants.



④ Route to Wakasa Bay from Historic Saba Kaido Post Town

A route exploring the history of Wakasa & its fishing villages

Zone Distance: 46.3 km Approx. Duration: 3 hr. 45 mins Activity Level: Intermediate

On this course, you'll explore the origin point of the Saba Kaido, featuring the popular stretch of the kaido from Kumagawa-juku to Obama, and port towns along the coast. Starting on the old path toward Uriwari Falls, you will see the area's rich marine ecosystem sustained by natural springs that support the local communities. Try the local specialty, *yakisaba* (grilled mackerel) around the fishing port, then head to the tip of the Uchitomi Peninsula. From Ano to Tagarasu, ride through a number of small fishing villages along the ria coast. The best course to immerse yourself in the deep culture of the historic Wakasa port town, which remains today an important fishing center of Japan.

- Uriwari Falls (瓜裂の滝)**
This waterfall rushes from the springs of Tentokuji Temple in Wakasa. The name, Uriwari (lit. "ground cracking"), came from the frigid water known to crack quarts led cooling there. One of the 100 Best Waterfalls in Japan, and a popular spot for drawing water (¥900 fee for water drawing). **0770-62-0186 (Meisu-no-Sato) C E6**
- Wakasa Bay & Fishing Villages (若狭湾と漁村集落)**
Along the outer side of Uchitomi Peninsula, Wakasa Bay is encircled by fishing villages, each located on a small natural cove of the ria coast. The bay is a vital supplier of seafood, especially famous for farming *saba* and *fugu*. Accommodations in these quiet villages offer a scenic and relaxing stay.
- Mackerel Heshiko & Narezushi (鯖のへしこ・なれずし)**
The local delicacy, *narezushi* is made with great care in Tagarasu. First, winter mackerels are pickled for a year in rice bran and salt to make *heshiko*, which is then fermented in *koji* mold and rice to make *narezushi*. *Heshiko* has bold *umami* flavor, but *narezushi* has even stronger cheese-like flavor. Find *heshiko* at shops here.

⑤ Obama Historic Townscape and Ancient Temples and Shrines

Enjoy historic spots in rural landscapes of "the seaside Nara"

Zone Distance: 15.5 km Approx. Duration: 1 hr. 5 mins Activity Level: Entry

Wakasa, the gateway to the Sea of Japan, has been home to a diversity of culture connecting the ancient capitals and continental Asia through the Saba Kaido, giving rise to many valuable shrines and temples. The junction area, Onyu, was also once home to the provincial government, which led to the establishment of the two largest local shrines, Wakasahiko-jinja Shrine and Wakasahime-jinja Shrine. On this 15 km course starting from JR Higashi-Obama Station, you'll enjoy Onyu's historic townscapes, and seasonal attractions at temples and shrines.

- Myotsuji Temple (明通寺)**
Founded in 806 by the shogun, Sakanoue no Tamuramaro. The main hall and three-story pagoda are designated as national treasures, and there is a beautiful garden with seasonal colors. The temple houses many treasures including Buddhist statues selected as important cultural properties. **9 am - 5 pm ¥400 0770-56-2308 0770-57-1355 C4, D6**
- Mantokuji Temple (高徳寺)**
A popular temple with a beautiful landscape garden and autumn foliage. Designated as a national place of scenic beauty, enjoy azaleas from May to June and momiji maple in mid-November at the temple garden. The main hall also offers a spectacular view overlooking the garden. **9 am - 5 pm ¥400 0770-56-2308 C3, C5**
- Jinguji Temple (神宮寺)**
This temple shows a deep link between Wakasa and the ancient capital. The *Omizutori* (water drawing) festival of Nara's Todaiji Temple involves a ceremonial water drawing that is believed to have been sent 10 days earlier by the *Omizu Okuri* (water sending) festival, here at Obama's Jinguji Temple, when water is released into the Onyu River. **9 am - 4 pm ¥500 0770-56-1911 C4, C6**

⑥ Historic Port Town of Obama as Entry to Saba Kaido

Explore the history of a major port town, connecting the sea to the capital

Zone Distance: 9.6 km Approx. Duration: 40 mins Activity Level: Entry

On this course, get a look into local history and community life. As the start of the Saba Kaido, as well as a stop on the Tango Kaido from Echizen to Tango, the part of this area called Nishigumi District thrived with districts for merchants, teahouses, temples, and many traditional townhouses that preserved this town. Explore the deep local connections with Kyoto in the quiet port town of Obama that developed with a great diversity of culture.

- Sancho-machi Street (三町町)**
This district thrived with popular tea houses since ancient times. Even today, there are old traditional tea house style *ryotei* restaurants still operating. Discover the influence of Kyoto in the historic townscape, such as traditional townhouses with rust-colored *benagara* latticework and other unique Kyoto features. **C2, A5**
- GOSHON**
This was originally a villa of the Furukawa merchants, who made their fortune in transport on the major medieval *Kitanabe* shipping route. The building was renovated and opened as a community center, GOSHON, which houses a stylish cafe and shared working space. **10 am - 5 pm We / Th 071, B4**
- Kesho Jizo (Painted Jizo Buddhist Statues) (化粧地蔵)**
Unique "makeup" Jizo Buddhist statues in Obama's Nishizu area. Local children put makeup on 123 statues located on every local street each year in August for the Jizo Bon Festival, a regional festival that made its way here from Kyoto. **B1, B4**

⑦ Scenic Hill Climb Course Overlooking Saba Kaido Entry Port

Head up the Angel Line Drive for the best view in all of Obama!

Zone Distance: 15.2 km Approx. Duration: 40 mins Activity Level: Advanced

After about 7 km from Obama Station, you'll see Uchitomi Peninsula with the mountain ridge of Kusuyagadake on your left. Follow the Angel Line Drive from here, a 10 km scenic road with 600-meter elevation. This route has a series of very steep slopes with inclines of 6 degrees and more, but the higher you climb, the more amazing glimpses you'll catch of the fantastic scenery ahead. At your goal, the panoramic view from the observation deck is truly the best in Obama. Look out across the sea and you may detect traces of the ancient trade route.

- Hashi no Furusato Kan WAKASA (橋のふるさと館 WAKASA)**
The Wakasa Obama area is a major producer of lacquered chopsticks with an 80% domestic market share. Chopsticks here are made with traditional lacquer techniques, including abalone shells and eggshells for an elegant touch. 3,000 designs of such pieces are displayed and sold at the showroom here. **9 am - 5 pm Holiday - 4 pm Th 0770-52-1733 C B4**
- Angel Line Summit Parking Lot (エンゼルライン山頂駐車場)**
From the parking lot at the top of mountain, you can see panoramic view of both Obama Bay and the Sea of Japan. On a clear day, you can see further to Cape Echizen and Tango Peninsula. The unique bay landscape and blue sea create a spectacular view. Catch a breath-taking sunset over Obama Bay if you can. **7 am - 7 pm (Apr - Nov) A3**
- Sotomo Arch Scenic Coastline (蘇峰湾)**
A scenic 6 km landscape of strange rocks and caves created by wave erosion along Uchitomi Peninsula's northern coast. Take a cruise boat from the fisherman's wharf for the best view of this beautiful landscape. (Sotomo Arch Scenic Coastline Cruise) **9:30 am - 3:30 pm Dec - Feb ¥Adult ¥2,200 / Child ¥1,100 0770-52-3111 (Wakasa Fisherman's Wharf) A2**

- Hashi no Furusato Kan WAKASA**
- GOSHON**
- Obama City**
- Furusato Chaya Seimon**
- Shin-Hirano**
- Uriwari Falls**
- Kumagawa-juku Post Town**
- START GOAL**

- Obama Historic Townscape and Ancient Temples and Shrines**
- START / GOAL**
- Obama City**
- Myotsuji Temple**
- Mantokuji Temple**
- Jinguji Temple**
- START GOAL**

- Obama Fishing Port**
- Obama Castle Ruins**
- Obama City**
- Obama Station**
- START/GOAL**

- Angel Line Summit Parking Lot**
- Kesho Jizo**
- GOSHON**
- Hashi no Furusato Kan WAKASA**
- Obama City**
- START/GOAL**

Accommodation in Cultural Assets

- Yao-Kumagawa Stay & Explore (八百川川)**
A four-building accommodation in renovated traditional houses in Kumagawa-juku. Each inn has a different theme of Kumagawa life. Various accommodation plans for stay-like-living visits of the area, for example, a self-cooking plan using local ingredients. **C6**
- Obama Machiya Stay (小浜町家ステイ)**
Accommodations in seven renovated traditional buildings around the area's traditional building preservation district. Bicycle rentals and hands-on experiences are available, allowing guests to truly enjoy Obama life. **C2**
- Matsunaga Rokkan (松永六蔵)**
A mindfulness retreat center located in Matsunaga Village near Myotsuji Temple. Offers various activities fulfilling your five senses, such as meditation and sutra copying at the temple. At Fuji, the area's only accommodation facility, you'll be immersed in tranquil nature. **C4**



Museums

- Wakasa History Museum (福井県立若狭歴史博物館)**
Located in the Onyu area of Obama City, adjacent to Wakasa-no-Sato Park. Exhibitions about the origins of Wakasa, its festivals, and more. Serves as a local center of history and culture. **C2, C5**
- Kumagawa-juku Shukubakan (若狭熊川宿熊川宿資料館)**
Located in Kumagawa-juku post town, this Western-style building was once the Kumagawa Village Office. Learn the deep history of the area and traditional lifestyle. **C6**
- Sabakaido Road Museum (Wakasa Town) (鯖街道ミュージアム)**
Museum attached to Michi-no-Eki Wakasa Kumagawa-juku. In cooperation with Kyoto Seika University displays easy-to-understand manga exhibitions of Saba Kaido history. **C6**
- Sabakaido Road Museum (Obama City) (鯖街道ミュージアム)**
Located 10 minutes on foot from JR Obama Station, the museum for the Saba Kaido as National Heritage. Discover the city's culture and traditional performing arts. **C3, B5**
- Miketsukumi Wakasa Obama Food Culture Museum (御食国若狭おそば美食文化館)**
Museum focused on Japanese food culture, such as sushi. Features a kitchen and other traditional craft facilities for hands-on workshops. The venue also has a public bath. **A1, B4**

Surrounding Area Information

- SABAKAIDO**
Info for Saba Kaido Harihata Pass & Hiking Routes
Operated by: Wakasa-Obama Tourist Association
- Keinawa Cycling Road Course Map Kizu River Zone Yamashiro Area**
Issued by: Kyoto Prefecture
- BIWAICHI Cycling Map of Lake Biwa**
Cycling courses around Lake Biwa & the surrounding area.
Issued by: Shiga Prefecture

Saba Kaido: Obama City and Wakasa Town Traffic Map



Saba Kaido Cycling Map

Issued by: Japan Heritage Utilization Promotion Council of Obama City and Wakasa Town
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Obama City Cultural Exchange Division
TEL: 0770-53-1111
Date of Issue: January 2023
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