

Experiencing Japan's Most Ancient Culture through Japanese Cuisine - Enjoying a 'Time Travel Gourmet' Trip in the area around Tokyo

Tobu Railways

Nikko, in Tochigi Prefecture, is a historic town home to the World Heritage site 'The Shrines and Temples of Nikko'. Visitors can reach Tobu Nikko Station in around two hours from Asakusa in Tokyo and enjoy the local hot springs, natural scenery, entertainment options and great dining that have long made Nikko one of the leading tourist resorts in the Kanto Region. Of the various options for enjoying Nikko, a 'Time Travel Gourmet' trip is a great way to experience some of Japan's most ancient culture through local cuisine.

Enjoying Japan's unique *irori-yaki* (hearth-fired) cuisine at Honke Bankyu, an inn founded 350 years ago

In 1185, Taira no Tadazane of the Heike Clan is said to have escaped to Yunishigawa in Tochigi after losing the Battle of Dan-no-Ura, which pitted two powerful clans against each other. Taira no Tadazane discovered Yunishigawa Hot Springs at the current site of the long-standing inn Honke Bankyu, where hot water still flows into the *Fujikura no Yu*, an outdoor bath with a magnificent view.

Honke Bankyu was founded in 1666, and has been open for more than 350 years. 800 years on from the days of Taira no Tadazane, the current owner is the 25th generation of the family to run the inn. Crossing the Kazura Bridge brings visitors to the Heike no Kakurekan, a branch of Honke Bankyu designed in the style of an old guesthouse. Here, guests can enjoy *irori-yaki*, fresh local ingredients from the mountains cooked on a charcoal fire, as well as traditional Japanese kaiseki cuisine including seasonal ingredients. When experiencing Japan's ancient food culture by dining around the traditional hearth, the diner can enjoy the atmosphere, feeling as if they have traveled back in time.

In addition, between Saturday, January 27 and Sunday, March 4, 2018, Yunishigawa Onsen will celebrate the 25th Kamakura (snow house) Festival. Visitors can play in the snow during the day and enjoy the beautiful sights of candle-lit snow huts along the banks of the river after dark. This photogenic event has been officially recognized as one of Japan's best night scenes by the group cataloging and promoting Japan's nighttime tourist assets.

• Honke Bankyu : <https://bankyu.co.jp/english/>

• Kamakura Festival : <http://nikko-travel.jp/english/event/>



Honke Bankyu interior



Fujikura no Yu outdoor bath



Irori-yaki, food smoked in the hearth


 Yunishigawa Onsen
Kamakura (snow house) Festival

Experience making and eating *Yuba*, part of the cuisine brought to Nikko by the spread of Buddhism

Nikko is famous for *yuba*, the skin formed when boiling soybeans to make tofu. *Yuba* was brought to the area in 766 when Buddhist temples were first founded in the Nikko mountains. It is nutritious, and easy to process and carry, which made it an indispensable source of food for monks and acolytes in training. Nikko Hoshinoyado is an inn located near to Nikko's World Heritage 'The Shrines and Temples of Nikko,' but many people visit for lunch to enjoy the *yuba* cuisine, which includes *hikiage-yuba* skimmed straight from the pot. Guests can enjoy both making and eating the *yuba*, an important part of *shojin ryori* or Buddhist vegetarian cuisine.



Yuba meal

• Nikko Hoshinoyado : <http://www.hoshinoyado.com/en/>

• A Day in Nikko by Tobu Railway (YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TqVkn7eDJg>)

The Season has Arrived for Unlimited Pick-your-own Strawberries

Nikko Hanaichimonme is a flower garden with beautiful blooms on view all year round. From mid-December 2017 through to early June 2018, visitors can enjoy 30 minutes of unlimited strawberry picking. Tochigi Prefecture has Japan's largest strawberry harvest. Selective breeding has produced delicious local varieties with a juicy-sweet rather than tangy taste. * Reservations required.



Strawberry picking

• Nikko Hanaichimonme reservations : <http://www.nikko-hanaichimonme.jp/email.htm>

<Recommended sightseeing area information along the TOBU Railways>

The TOBU Railway Group is a major Japanese corporate group consisting of approximately 90 companies. The Tobu Railways cover the longest operating distance in the Kanto area, and lead to many tourist attractions including Asakusa and TOKYO SKYTREE TOWN in Tokyo, Nikko and Kinugawa Onsen, famous as a world heritage and hot spring location, the Tatebayashi and Ashikaga area known for its beautiful blooming flower fields, and Kawagoe, where the atmosphere of the Edo era still live on.

Explore destinations around Tobu Railway Group at TOBU JAPAN TRIP: <http://www.tobujapantrip.com/en/>