



# KYOTO WAZUKA

*Infused with Tea*

The hills of Wazuka are covered in rows of neatly manicured tea plants — vast green tapestries created by the town's tea-growing industry. The town's traditional tea farms create a distinctive landscape: Tea plants line the natural contours of hills and mountainsides, fans mounted on tall poles throughout the fields circulate air and prevent frost damage, and lengths of dark shade cloth protect the leaves from direct sun. The landscape bustles with activity as the farmers work the fields from season to season, picking, pruning, and tending the plants.

Of the town's many tea plantations, four areas are known for having particularly beautiful landscapes, each with its own charm and scenic allure.

### ***Ishitera Tea Plantation***

Ishitera is the best known of the tea cultivation areas and the first-ever Scenic Asset designated by Kyoto Prefecture. The marked viewing point offers a panoramic view of the carefully cultivated fields, and the Dan Dan Café beside it offers meals and tea-themed sweets to visitors who wish to take in the sights while enjoying a bite to eat.

Each season creates its own distinctive charm in Ishitera. In spring, blooming cherry trees add splashes of pink; in summer, the fields become a patchwork of textures as tea harvesting progresses. In autumn, the evergreen rows of tea glow against bright fall colors, and in winter, snow accumulates on the tea plants in long, rounded mounds that curve through the fields.

#### **Access**

Walk 10–15 minutes from the Wazuka Takahashi bus stop. Parking is available for cars and bicycles.



### ***Shirasu and Erihara Tea Plantations***

The Shirasu and Erihara tea plantations face each other on opposing slopes, and the fields are laid out to make the best use of the sparse soil. The tea fields are surrounded by rice paddies and plants that flower through the seasons, making the fields a popular walking tour stop and hiking trail view.

#### **Access**

Walk approximately 15 minutes down the road from the Ishitera Tea Plantation, or walk approximately 18 minutes from the Shirasuguchi bus stop.



### ***Kamatsuka Tea Plantation***

The rolling hills of the Kamatsuka Tea Plantation unfold in a scenic vista that can be seen easily from the main road that runs east to west through Wazuka. Kamatsuka is clearly visible from the Wazuka Town Tourist Information Center, police box and post office, allowing both residents and visitors to follow the changing seasons and the annual cycle of farm work at a tea plantation.

#### **Access**

Walk approximately 8 minutes from the Nakawazuka bus stop.

# The Landscape of Tea Production

# Wazuka Tea

## The History of Tea Cultivation in Wazuka

Cultivation of tea (*Camellia sinensis*) in Wazuka may have started in the early thirteenth century. According to legend, some of the first tea seeds brought to Kyoto from China by the influential Zen master Eisai (1141–1215) wound up in the hands of Jishin, a priest at Kaijusenji Temple, who cultivated them at Mt. Jubuzan in Wazuka. Historical records from the late sixteenth century can be found that reference the planting of a private tea field in Harayama, at the foot of that mountain. Though cultivation methods used at the time were still quite rudimentary, Wazuka's reputation as a source of tea began to grow.

Wazuka tea was listed in shogunate documents ranking high-quality regional products as early as 1734.

A few years later, a new method for making *sencha* was developed; instead of pan heating and air-drying, the whole leaves were steamed, then dried by kneading and rolling. *Sencha* production became widespread among local farmers, and the tea industry in Wazuka expanded even further. In the nineteenth century, Wazuka tea was being sold domestically as well as shipped abroad via international ports like Yokohama and Kobe.

Tea produced in Wazuka was often labeled as "Uji tea" because of its location near the larger and better-known tea-producing region of Uji. Today, approximately 49 percent of the "Uji tea" grown in Kyoto Prefecture is actually grown in Wazuka.

## Growing Conditions in Wazuka

The geography and environmental conditions in Wazuka make the town ideal for cultivating tea. The flow of the Wazuka River encourages the formation of mist in the valley, which helps shield the tea plants from overexposure to the sun and keeps the leaves tender and flavorful. Naturally poor drainage caused by weathered mudstone in the soil is overcome by cultivating the tea on steep slopes, which promotes good drainage and water retention.

Approximately 412 hectares (1,018 acres) of land in Wazuka is currently being used for tea cultivation. Over 5,600 tons of tea harvested by some 200 farmers is processed in more than 100 facilities to produce 1,100 tons of unrefined tea (*aracha*) per year.

## Characteristics of Wazuka Tea

Wazuka farmers produce a variety of teas, but the town is primarily known for *sencha*, a type of tea cultivated in direct sunlight until shortly before it is harvested early in the spring, when the leaves are tender and rich in nutrients. Wazuka *sencha* is said to possess a fresh fragrance, and the taste balances notes of both sweetness and umami. When the leaves are lightly steamed, the finished brew has a pale golden-green color.

In recent years, Wazuka farmers have begun producing large amounts of *tencha*, the type of tea that becomes matcha powder when ground. *Tencha* is well-suited for use in foods where a green-tea element is desired. The next time you have matcha ice cream, bottled tea, a matcha frappe, or a matcha-flavored sweet, you may be enjoying the high-quality tea produced in the scenic fields of Wazuka.



# Wazuka Tea Processing Facility

After farmers gather the season's tea harvest, they take the freshly picked green leaves to processing facilities where they can be made into the types of tea that consumers around the world are familiar with. The same leaves can be used to make green tea, oolong tea, black tea, and other types, depending on how they are processed. In Wazuka, tea is primarily processed as *sencha*, the most popular type of green tea consumed domestically. Farmers used to process their tea independently on their own property, but various machines were invented to simplify and speed up operations. Eventually, facilities where access to the machinery could be shared were established, greatly streamlining the once labor-intensive method of hand rolling.

Wazuka was one of the first major tea-producing regions to mechanize in the early 1900s. Many of the machines still in use today are decades old and no longer manufactured for sale. This makes them both valuable and difficult to replace, and proper maintenance is crucial to prevent them from breaking down.

The Wazuka Tea Processing Facility is primarily used to process leaves for submission in domestic tea competitions.

## Mushiki

1

### Tea Steamer

A conveyor belt carries freshly picked tea leaves into the steamer to deactivate enzymes and preserve antioxidants. Inside the machine, the leaves are spun and steamed at a high temperature and then promptly cooled by fans. Depending on the desired tenderness and flavor, the leaves can be steamed for varying lengths of time and spun at various speeds.

## Sojuki

2

### Rough Rolling Machine

The steamed leaves are put into this machine and tossed to dry them. The long metal "teeth" help move the tea leaves to avoid clumping.

## Junenki

3

### First Rolling Machine

This machine applies pressure without heat, "crushing" the leaves with a weight while a large brush gathers them in a circular motion. This breaks down the leaves' cellular membrane and evens out their color.

## Chujuki

4

### Second Rolling Machine

This round of rolling uses heat to evenly dry the leaves as they are rolled in a closed metal cylinder.

## Seijuki

5

### Final Rolling Machine

Once the other machines have removed as much moisture as possible, the final rolling machine rolls the tea in one direction over curved bamboo surfaces using large paddles as "hands" to create the characteristic needle-like shape of dried Japanese tea leaves.

## Kansoki

6

### Drying Machine

After the rolling is complete, the tea leaves are promptly dried further to preserve their shape. The leaves are arranged in a thin layer on trays that are inserted into the drying machine, which uses heat and air to finish the process. With this, the moisture content of the freshly picked tea leaves is reduced to less than 5 percent, which will help keep the tea fresh for several months.



# Wazukacha Café and Wazuka no Sato Cultural Exchange Station

## Wazukacha Café

This facility is a combination café and shop that stocks carefully selected teas from over 30 tea producers based in Wazuka. Signs in English and Japanese describe the characteristics and flavors of the teas and how best to brew them, and knowledgeable staff are on hand to assist and give advice. The shop also sells craft items and utensils for tea brewing.

Visitors to the café can enjoy a meal of green-tea soba noodles or try traditional sweets; drinks and ice cream can be ordered to go. Wazukacha Café staff also handle reservations for the nearby Tenku Café hilltop teahouse, rental bicycles, and tea workshops.



## Wazuka no Sato Cultural Exchange Station

Wazuka no Sato is a farmers' market and community gathering place for hosting various seasonal events, supporting local farmers and craftsmen, and introducing visitors to regional foods. Alongside cooking staples and produce, the market sells baked goods, handmade sweets, bottled tea, green-tea-flavored potato chips, and various handicrafts. Indoor and outdoor seating provides visitors space to relax, drink tea, and order food, as well as to browse photo albums featuring Wazuka throughout the seasons. Most of the time, only soft-serve ice cream and simple snacks are available, but more substantial plate lunches are offered on Tuesdays, and a popular snack of rice topped with fresh raw egg can be ordered on weekends.

### Access

From the Wazukayama-no-le bus stop, walk approximately 5 minutes. Parking is available for cars and bicycles.



# Wazuka Town Tourist Information Center and Green Slow Mobility Tour

## Wazuka Town Tourist Information Center

The Wazuka Town Tourist Information Center is a convenient first stop for visitors to obtain maps, tourism pamphlets, rental cycles, advice about local restaurants, and more. Staff are available at the counter to assist visitors in Japanese or other languages via translation app.



### Rental Cycles

Visitors interested in getting a more intimate view of Wazuka's green, tea-covered hills can rent a bicycle at the center. Rental is available between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. and costs ¥2,500 for the day.

## "Guchamo" Green Slow Mobility Tour

The Wazuka Town Tourist Information Center is the starting point for the Green Slow Mobility Tour, which takes visitors to the scenic tea plantations of Ishitera and back in an eco-friendly electric vehicle. The knowledgeable driver will explain the history of Wazuka and the tea cultivation process while giving visitors a close-up view of the plantations.

**Tour availability:** Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays (March through November)

**Times:** 9:40 a.m. to 10:55 a.m., 11:10 a.m. to 12:25 p.m., 1:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m., 3:00 p.m. to 4:10 p.m.

**Group size:** 1–4 people (Saturdays and holidays), 1–7 people (Sundays)

**Cost:** ¥1,000 for adults and ¥500 for children elementary school-aged or younger (or ¥300 yen for adults and ¥150 for children with Nara Kotsu bus boarding certificates)

### Access

Walk approximately 2 minutes from the Nakawazuka or Wazuka Kawahara bus stop toward the green signboard. Parking is available for cars and bicycles.



# Yubune Forest Park

Yubune Forest Park is a popular location for both residents and visitors to enjoy picnicking, mountain biking, autumn mushroom picking, and other outdoor activities. Entry to the park costs ¥500 for adults and ¥200 for small children.

The shallow river running through the park is ideal for cooling off during the summer months and is safe for wading. The aroma of meat and vegetables grilling on sizzling coals fills the designated barbeque area, where families and friends gather to share a meal and socialize. Visitors can reserve barbeque spots and rent grilling equipment at the small office by the parking lot.

Yubune Forest Park includes Yubune MTB Land, which offers a series of mountain biking trails well suited to both beginners and experienced riders. The courses are so well-

regarded that Yubune MTB Land was chosen to host the mountain biking event in the 2027 World Masters Games.

While enjoying Yubune Forest Park, please respect the rules made to keep the park clean and enjoyable for everyone. Do not pitch tents, light unauthorized fires, loiter in the park after 5:00 p.m., or leave any trash behind when you depart. Please note the park is only open on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays. Visiting requires making a reservation, which can be arranged by contacting staff at the Wazuka Town Rural Development Promotion Division.

### Access

Yubune Forest Park is not serviced by bus. The parking lot is open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and costs ¥500.





## Wazukaso Inn お茶を五感で愉しむ宿

The Wazukaso Inn is set amid scenic tea fields and offers comfortable Japanese- and Western-style rooms with a variety of tea-based amenities that engage all of the senses.

The hotel offers guests an experience befitting Wazuka's reputation as a chagenkyo ("ancestral homeland of tea"). The course meals are made with various tea ingredients, the rooms contain tea-leaf incense burners, and the communal baths are infused with aromatic tea scents. The dining room and lounge afford sweeping views of the surrounding tea-covered hills, and staff provide helpful explanations of tea characteristics and brewing techniques. The open landscape and lack of big-city light pollution make it possible to view star-filled skies when the weather is clear.

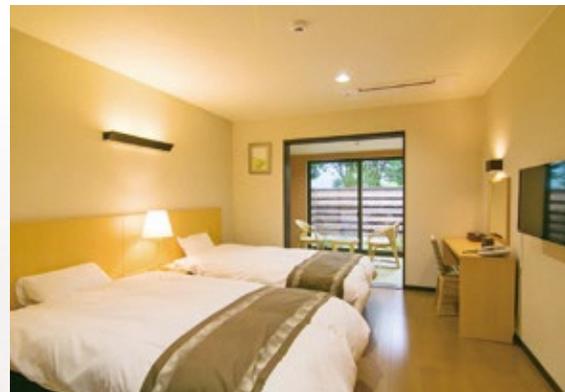
This inn is one of the few overnight accommodations in

Wazuka, allowing guests to explore the town at a leisurely pace without having to return to a distant hotel at the end of the day. The main building has four rooms: two with Japanese-style futons and two with Western-style beds. The annex has three rooms for larger groups. Booking well in advance is recommended to ensure availability on desired dates.

The Wazukaso Inn can be reserved for course lunches and dinners, banquets, events, barbecues, and activities such as sports training and youth camps. Please make reservations at least three business days in advance for dining.

### Access

Walk approximately 10 minutes from the Wazukayama-no-Ie bus stop. Parking is available for cars and bicycles.



## Tea Culture Experiences in Wazuka



Visitors to Wazuka have the opportunity to enjoy tea-related learning experiences guided by knowledgeable members of the community. Tea-farm workers, guides, tea practitioners, and other local residents work together to offer tours, classes, and other experiences that allow participants to immerse themselves in the town's tea culture. Though similar tea experiences may be offered across Japan, tea cultivation has been the lifeblood of Wazuka for centuries, making it a fitting place to learn directly from people involved in planting, harvesting, processing, selling, and working with tea.

The Wazuka Town Activation Center (Wazuka-cho Kasseika Center) offers the following experiences: Tea-Field Walking Tour, Tea Steeping Class, Tea-Leaf-Picking Experience, Tea Tasting, Tea-Tasting Game (Chakabuki), Sado Tea Gathering (also known as Tea Ceremony), Matcha Art Experience, Matcha Whisking Class, Green Tea

Dango-Making Class, and Tea-Soap-Making Class. Some of these classes teach skills that participants can use when preparing tea after returning home, allowing them to enjoy Wazuka tea long after their visit.

The experiences last 40 minutes to an hour, and prices usually begin at a minimum of ¥1,650 per person. Please note that some experiences are only offered in certain seasons. For detailed explanations of the specific experiences, check the official litoko Wazuka Chagenkyo website.

To make a booking, contact the Wazuka Town Activation Center by email at [info@chagenkyo.com](mailto:info@chagenkyo.com). All experiences are conducted in Japanese, so please bring an interpreter if needed. A minimum of 10 people is generally required for a booking, but smaller groups may be accommodated if costs are met. Please inquire about availability at least a month in advance of your planned visit.



Tour Spots in Wazuka: **01**  
**Wazuka  
 Tenmangu  
 Shrine**

和  
 束  
 天  
 満  
 宮

Wazuka Tenmangu is a Shinto shrine dedicated to Tenjin, the deity of scholarship. Tenjin is the deified spirit of Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), an accomplished poet, academic, and statesman who was exiled by his political rivals. A series of disasters after his death led to the belief that Michizane had become a vengeful spirit. Eventually, that spirit was thought to have been pacified by being elevated to the status of a deity, and several thousand shrines dedicated to Tenjin have been founded since.

The history of Wazuka Tenmangu may have begun in the twelfth century, when Wazuka was administered as an agricultural estate of Kitano Tenmangu, the head Tenjin shrine in Kyoto. The current main sanctuary, constructed in 1348, is decorated with statues of oxen, the sacred

messengers of Tenjin. The sanctuary is a nationally designated Important Cultural Property.

Subsidiary shrines on the grounds allow visitors to pray to many commonly revered deities in one place. The main sanctuary is flanked by such shrines on both sides, with Goryo Shrine being the most relevant to Tenjin worship; Watarai no Haruhiko, an elderly priest who remained loyal to Sugawara no Michizane despite his exile, is enshrined within. On the southern and northern sides of the pilgrimage path, there are also small shrines dedicated to gods of prosperity and commerce, sake brewing, and the safety of the nation.

**Access**

Walk 2 minutes from the Higashi Wazuka bus stop. Parking is available for cars and bicycles.



Tour Spots in Wazuka: **02**  
**Tomb of  
 Prince  
 Asaka**

安  
 積  
 親  
 王  
 墓

Prince Asaka (728–744) was the second son of Emperor Shomu, the 45th emperor of Japan. It is said that the prince enjoyed hunting in Wazuka and often visited the region when traveling between the capital and his father's palace. When Prince Asaka passed away suddenly at the age of 17, his burial mound was erected in Wazuka, and a temple was founded to pray for his repose. The prince was memorialized by his retainer, the poet statesman Otomo no Yakamochi (718–785), with several poems expressing his grief. One of these mentions Wazuka by name:

Having not yet imagined my prince ruling in the heavens,  
 I once laid my eyes with such indifference  
 Upon the forested hills of Wazuka

In the late nineteenth century, residents in central Wazuka unearthed flat stones, a stone wall, and fragments of earthenware at a hillside being converted for agricultural use. Though the area has not been fully excavated, it was identified as a burial mound (*kofun*) for a prominent figure. The Imperial Household Agency designated the site the Tomb of Prince Asaka and erected a small stone torii gate, a fence, and a signboard on the hilltop. In Wazuka, the tomb is commonly referred to as Taikoyama (Mt. Taiko).

**Access**

Walk approximately 5 minutes from the Wazukayama-no-le bus stop. Turn right at the large intersection, take the first right, and follow the sign to the stone path through the fields. Parking is available at the Wazukacha Café.



Tour Spots in Wazuka: **03**  
**Miroku  
 Magaibutsu**

弥  
 勒  
 摩  
 崖  
 仏

A majestic 3.3-meter-high depiction of the bodhisattva Miroku (Maitreya) is carved into the granite rock face along the verdant banks of the Wazuka River. Miroku is the Buddha of the Future, prophesized to one day lead humanity into a new age of enlightenment. The low-relief carving was done on a 6.1-meter-tall rock visible from the main road leading in and out of Wazuka, and it represents an ancient tradition of spreading Buddhist imagery beyond temple halls to make it accessible to the common people.

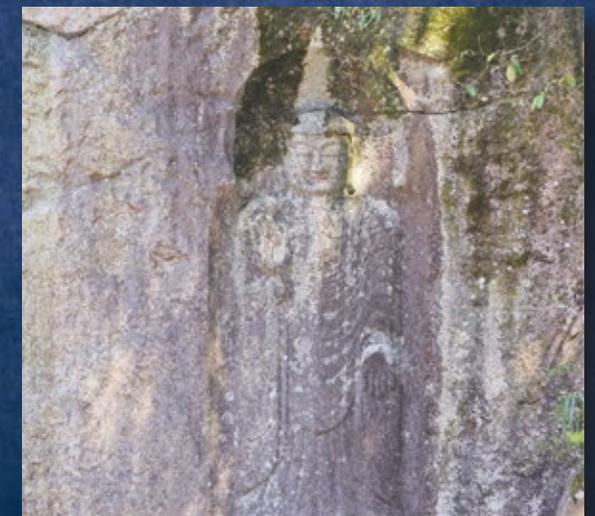
This *magaibutsu*, a Buddhist figure carved into a rock face or cliffside, was created in 1300, according to an inscription etched into the stone to the right of the deity's midsection. The rest of the inscription lists the names of those to whom the image was

dedicated; it also exhibits a rarely used Buddhist dating system that reflects the number of years since the death of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. The Wazuka Miroku Magaibutsu and nearby Koyasu Jizo are among the very few extant examples of this system of dating stone sculptures in Japan.

Despite the age of the carving and exposure to the elements, the depiction of Miroku remains remarkably clear. The deity's hands are carved to form symbolic gestures (*mudra*) meant to dispel fear and offer blessings to those who behold it.

**Access**

From the Wazuka Nagai bus stop, cross the adjacent bridge, turn left, and follow the riverside path for approximately 5 minutes. Please be careful not to enter private fields.



Tour Spots in Wazuka: 04

## Great Cedar Tree of Yasaka Jinja Shrine

八坂神社の大杉

This unusually large cedar tree dominates the shrine grounds at 25 meters in height and 12.8 meters in circumference (as of a 1984 survey). According to legend, the tree is 1,300 years old; scientists, however, estimate its true age at closer to 600 years. The tree's presence is somewhat of a mystery—it is the town's only Kitayama cedar, a regional variety of *Cryptomeria japonica* that grows in northern Kyoto and is difficult to cultivate in relatively warm places like Wazuka. At some point in the past, the main trunk collapsed, but over time, eight large branches fused together to form the current tree. The cedar continues to thrive despite having endured repeated lightning strikes over the years. It is a designated Natural Monument of Kyoto Prefecture.

The tree itself is considered sacred, and two

small Shinto shrines are situated in front of it: a Yasaka Jinja Shrine on the right and a Hachimangu Shrine on the left. The first enshrines Gozu Tenno, a bull-headed guardian deity; the second venerates Hachiman, a deity associated with protection of the country. On July 7, Wazuka residents celebrate the Gion-san festival (officially called Gion Matsuri), in which a ritual is held before the Yasaka Shrine to express gratitude and pay respects to the deity. The custom of the day is to eat sweets called *hanamochi manju*, steamed red-bean sweets topped with rice grains that have been dyed a variety of bright colors.

### Access

Walk approximately 12 minutes from the Wazuka Chugakko bus stop, following the path across the Iwaibashi Bridge and up the slope.



Tour Spots in Wazuka: 05

## Shohoji Temple

正法寺

Shohoji, a Zen Buddhist temple at the base of Mt. Buppoji, is a popular autumn foliage viewing spot. In November, maple trees on the grounds turn vivid shades of orange and red, particularly around the entrance. At various times of year, azalea, iris, sal trees (*Shorea robusta*), and other plants add color to the tree-covered hill.

According to legend, Shohoji was founded in 744 and dedicated to the repose of Prince Asaka (728–744) after he was buried nearby. The current temple was built in the mid-seventeenth century by the Tamura family, who were the lords of Bukkoji Castle, and supported by the empress Tokugawa Masako (Tofukumon'in, 1607–1678), who was granted Wazuka estate lands upon her marriage to Emperor Go-Mizuno'o.

The temple grounds contain two Tangible Cultural

Properties designated by Kyoto Prefecture: the main gate, which was relocated from the Kyoto Sento Imperial Palace, and the Buddha Hall, which enshrines a statue of Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light. There are also small halls for worshipping a Koshin folk deity and the bodhisattva Jizo, a guardian of travelers and children. Between them are twelve round-faced Jizo statues, each posed with a Chinese zodiac animal.

The main hall houses a statue of Sei Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, donated by Tokugawa Masako. Visitors who wish to enter the main hall and venerate the statue should inquire with temple staff.

### Access

From the Wazukayama-no-le bus stop, turn left at the large intersection and walk approximately 8 minutes.



Tour Spots in Wazuka: 06

## Koyasu Jizo

子安地藏

The Jizo statue behind the hillside tea field in the Erihara Pass has long been venerated in Wazuka for bestowing blessings of safe travels and easy childbirth. Jizo (Ksitigarbha) is a bodhisattva associated with the protection of travelers and children, and Koyasu Jizo is a form of the deity thought to watch over women in childbirth. An inscription on the lower right and left sides of the halo names the priest Jikkei and dates the statue to 1267, "more than 2,000 years after the passing of the Buddha." Another example of this rare practice of dating statuary by counting years from the death of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, can be found on the Miroku Magaibutsu carving nearby. The stone altar around the Koyasu Jizo was installed at a later date; many smaller Jizo statues are lined

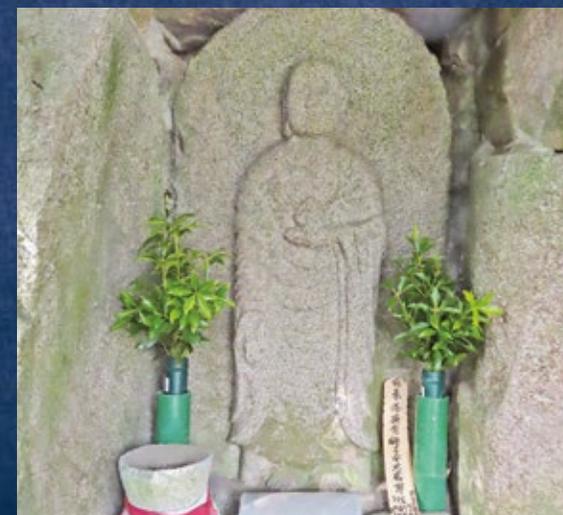
up beside it.

The road in front of the Koyasu Jizo was once part of a route that connected Yamashiro and Omi Provinces (modern-day Kyoto and Shiga Prefectures), and many travelers likely prayed to the statue on their journey. People from the surrounding area made pilgrimages to worship here as well, having heard tales of the efficacy of praying to Koyasu Jizo.

During the Jizo-bon Memorial Service on August 24, a small ritual is performed in front of the statue.

### Access

Walk approximately 20 minutes from the Wazukanagai bus stop. Look for a water tank surrounded by a green fence and a silver signpost in Japanese to know where to turn.



# Wazuka Town



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## Directions to Wazuka

Car: 1h15m from Kyoto / 1h30m from Osaka



Public Transportation: 1h from JR Kyoto St. / 1h30m from JR Osaka St.



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