Toyama, Japan, Tourism News

~ Beautiful Winter in Toyama Prefecture ~

In Toyama, winter is the season when snow flutters around and a shining landscape unfolds, and the season when you can fully enjoy the spirit of Japan at a warm *onsen* (hot spring) resort. Take complete advantage of the many wonders of winter in Toyama!

![Winter in Toyama](image)

○ Must-See Places for the Beautiful Winter of Toyama

The Toyama winter is a beautiful season with glistening snow. You can enjoy the sight of a snow-covered World Heritage Site, a beautiful gorge along a clear stream, and streets that capture the spirit of Japan.

☆ World Heritage Site in Snow: Gokayama Gassho-zukuri Village

Toyama has the Gokayama Gassho-zukuri Village, which was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in December 1995.

Gokayama Gassho-zukuri Village is highly valued as a unique Japanese cultural heritage, with its historically important *gassho-zukuri* building style and its traditional village lifestyle among beautiful natural scenery.

Since long ago, as one of the snowiest places in Japan, Gokayama has constructed *gassho-zukuri* style (*gassho*: hands in prayer) houses with their equilateral triangle-shaped roofs and steep slopes that make it easier for snow to slide off. Today, the *gassho-zukuri* houses are carefully preserved, with the oldest houses dating back about 400
years. In snow-covered February, the entire village is lit up, which brings out a wondrous atmosphere.

Both of the villages in Gokayama, Ainokura Gassho-zukuri Village and Suganuma Gassho-zukuri Village, have museums where you can learn about the area’s folk customs such as the history and tools of washi (traditional Japanese paper), silk farming, and saltpeter-making. Gokayama has restaurants, souvenir shops, and inns, so you can spend an entire day here enjoying Japan’s traditional culture. Come and experience the beautiful winter and cultural value of Gokayama.

☆ A Beautiful Reflection on the Water: Sho-gawa Sightseeing Boat

The Sho-gawa is a large river located in western Toyama Prefecture, and runs through Gokayama (where a World Heritage Site is located) and flows into Toyama Bay. The Sho-gawa sightseeing boat, on which you can look up at the scenery of the gorge from the water, is popular with tourists.

The fresh greenery in the summer and fall colors in autumn are wonderful, but winter brings a picturesque snowy landscape. There is even a secluded onsen (hot spring) that is only accessible by riding the sightseeing boat.

An extravagant spectacle awaits you, where migratory birds fly about the snowy gorge, and kamoshika (serow) might appear among the cliffs that tower over the river. We are certain that it will not disappoint you.

☆ An Elegant Carving Town: Inami

Many sculptors gather in Inami, a temple town famous for woodcarving and the ancient temple Zuisen-ji.

Since long ago, Zuisen-ji has been supported by Buddhist adherents as the center of Buddhism in the Hokuriku
Region. Wood carvings can be found all throughout the temple buildings and temple gates, and signifies about 220 years of Inami woodcarving history.

Inami woodcarving began in the 18th century, when Zuisen-ji was destroyed by a fire and was being rebuilt. Skills were brought from Kyoto, which at the time had the highest woodcarving standards. Passed down from artisans to their descendants, Inami woodcarving has now become an essential part of Japanese building ornamentation.

Along with Zuisen-ji, be sure to visit the traditional neighborhood of Yokamachi Dori, with woodcarving workshops, stone pavement, and lattice doors. Also make a stop at the “Inami Kibori-no-Sato Soyu-kan,” where you can take woodcarving classes, learn folk songs, purchase local goods, and even take a hot bath. Drop by Inami and explore its many attractions!

☆ A City of Traditional Crafts and a National Treasure: Takaoka

Takaoka, in western Toyama Prefecture, is a city of traditional crafts with a copperware industry dating back about 400 years. Even now, Takaoka accounts for over 90 percent of copperware production in Japan.

In Kanayamachi, where many copperware artisans live, lattice houses and copper-embedded stone pavement still remain. Across the river from Kanayamachi, thick mud-walled houses line Yamachō-suji. These streets were once main roads, and you can get a feel for Japanese culture.

Located in central Takaoka, the 15.85-meter (52 ft.) tall Great Buddha of Takaoka was built by copperware artisans over 30 years. It is considered one of Japan’s Three Great Buddhas, after that of Nara and Kamakura.

About 1 kilometer (0.6 mi.) south from the Great Buddha, you will find Zuiryū-ji, a National Treasure temple. This Zen Buddhist temple was completed in 1663, and the National Treasure structures Sanmon (gate), Buddha Hall, and Lecture Hall are placed in a straight line. The grounds are laid with white gravel,
giving off an especially majestic feeling. Come visit Takaoka, a city where you can experience traditional Japanese culture and crafts.

☆ Clearest Water in Japan: Unazuki Onsen

The clarity of the water is said to be the best in Japan, and the abundant water supply is also popular at the most famous onsen (hot spring) resort in the Hokuriku Region, Unazuki Onsen.

Located at the entryway of the Kurobe Gorge, you can view the hills over the gorge from the accommodations along the Kurobe River. Since the Japan Sea is still close by, you can taste fresh seafood as well as mountain vegetables.

This onsen town that has a hot spring fountain as its symbol is just the right size for leisurely walks, and has many places to experience history and culture such as art museums, bronze figures, and footbaths. Unazuki Onsen has alkaline simple spring water that is gentle on the skin. The source water begins very hot at 87.8 degrees Celsius (190 degrees Fahrenheit), and it will warm your body to the bones.

Unazuki Onsen is perfect for the cold season. We hope you visit soon!

☆ Scenery and Food: Himi Onsen Area

The onsen that dot the coast along the northwest area of Toyama Prefecture is the Himi Onsen Area, and is unique for the salty sodium chloride-containing water that makes skin beautiful. This area has outstanding scenery, and on a clear day, you can see from the coast the exceptionally picturesque view of the Japan Alps over the sea. At night, the beauty of the countless lights of the fishing boats delights visitors.
Also, the buri (yellowtail) that is caught here in the winter is delicious as sushi, sashimi, or shabu-shabu. “Himi kan-buri” (winter buri caught in Himi) is famous as a high-grade fish. In addition to buri, many different kinds of fish are caught in Himi.

Every winter, a lot of tourists come looking for relaxing onsen and good seafood.

Why don’t you come visit the Himi Onsen Area too?

Contact Information:
Tourism Division, Toyama Prefectural Government: +81-76-444-8752