Nara City Sightseeing Guide

From 710 to 784 the capital of Japan, Heijo-jo, was located in present-day Nara City. As is shown by the number of extant historical Buddhist images and buildings around Nara City, Japanese culture flourished here under the reign of successive emperors and empresses during that era. Several historical sites have been registered on UNESCO’s World Heritage List as “Historical Monuments of Ancient Nara.” Undoubtedly Nara is a treasure house of ancient history and culture set in a beautiful natural environment.

### Sightseeing spots

**Nara Park**
Located in the central part of Nara City, this vast green area, nicknamed Nara Park, encompasses four World Heritage sites of UNESCO. Their origins date back to at least the 8th century, in this park, history and nature blend in harmony. Another charm of this park is deer, approximately 1,200 wild deer roam leisurely and they are so tame that you can make friends with them.

**Why are there so many deer in the park?**
According to legend, when Kasuga Taisha Shrine was founded as a family shrine for the Fujiwara, a dominant aristocratic clan in the 8th century, they introducted a royal gift from Kashima Shrine (in present day Ibaraki Prefecture). The god was said to have come to Nara riding on a white deer. Since then, deer have been respected and protected as divine messengers by local people.

**Feed the deer Shika Senbei (deer crackers)!!**
The deer in Nara Park eat grass, bamboo leaves and buckwheat. Shika Senbei (deer crackers) is their favorite food. You can buy these crackers at several spots in the park. The deer in this park are so polite that they bow to you when they see you for Shika Senbei.

**Nara National Museum**
Opened in 1953, this non-criminal building was constructed as the second national museum in Japan in 1895 in Nara Park. Today this building is open to the public as Nara National Museum. In 1973 a new museum building was constructed, and is used for special exhibitions.

**Isuien Garden**
Located behind Kasuga Taisha Shrine, this garden is full of Japanese artefacts. Strolling stones, two houses, a watermill, seasonal flowers: one of the most impressive scenes is a view of the Nandaimon Gate of Todaiji Temple and Kasugayama Hill from the garden. They are incorporated into the garden as if they were a part of it.

### Souvenirs

#### Souvenirs to suit your budget

- **$1,000**
  - Aktutsu handcrafted souvenirs printed with the Shoin-myo pattern (door ornaments, key holders, paper-lanterns, etc.)
- **$2,000**
  - Purses with silk lining (made in Kamishima); Japanese folding fans, fancy goods with a kimono pattern such as coasters, teapot covers, pin stands, etc.
- **$2,000**
  - Linen goods (table center, curtains etc.), Yoshiko cedar handkerchief (frame kimono etc.), incense and incense burners, Nara sake, Akahata (carbonated drinks), etc.

#### Souvenirs & Gifts

Along the Gampachi, Higashimachi and Mushibudai streets are souvenir shops, secondhand Kimono shops, antique shops, Nara specialty shops, and others. You can enjoy shopping in your taste and on your budget.

The Nara National Museum has a museum shop on its basement floor. Visitors may drop in whether they have an admission ticket or not. Various items including books, picture cards, etc., are sold, and traditional items are also available. At Kita-Mito Nara Shop near the Kita-Mito Station, a wide variety of local specialties of Nara Prefecture are available. Among the local specialties, there are many other shops such as the KURO (black) stores, recycled goods stores and souvenir shops located in Senju Street, Higashimachi, and Mushibudai shopping streets.

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