



[SEKI]: THE ESSENTIALS 関

<http://sekikanko.jp/> (JPN)

GETTING HERE

JR • Meitetsu Gifu Stations → [Gifu Bus on the Gifu-Seki Line towards "Seki Higashiyama" • 50 min • ¥680] → "Seki city terminal" bus stop

~ Or ~

JR Gifu Station → [JR Takayama Main Line • 35 min] → Mino-Ota Station → [Nagaragawa Railway • 17 min • ¥960 in total] → Hamono Kaikan-mae Station

MAIN FEATURE

Seki, the Sword Capital of Japan

For over 700 years, production of Japanese swords has prospered in Seki, placing the city at the heart of the culture and history of one of the most widely recognized symbols of Japan. The Japanese sword, an object as beautiful as it was deadly, is said to have appeared in Seki with the arrival of Motoshige, a legendary master swordsmith who moved to Seki after deeming it a worthy place to further his work.

Later during the Warring States period (mid-15th century to the beginning of the 17th), the katana ("swords") of Seki were highly praised and favored by many of the military commanders of the time. It was said the swords were "unbreakable, unbendable, and extremely sharp," and it was during this era that the name of "Seki" echoed to all corners of the land. The one credited with devising the technique used to make these highly regarded swords was the legendary swordsmith Kanemoto Magoroku, known far and wide - even to this day - as "Seki no Magoroku" ("Magoroku of Seki"), a name that also identifies the swords that he made. His *shiho-zume* method of forging the blade, adopted by those around him, elevated the swords of Seki to even greater heights. Even after a new era dawned on Japan in which the use of swords was no longer permitted, Seki's focus on blade-making remained.

To this day, swords continue to be forged here by the sweat and hard work of many of Japan's greatest swordsmiths, albeit as works of art and nothing more. Every year, the people of Seki pay tribute to this history of excellence during the Seki Cutlery Festival, held the weekend before the national Health and Sports Day (the second Monday of October). During this event, you can watch sword-forging and blade-polishing demonstrations, marvel at cutting and sheathing performances, and look through Japanese sword exhibits, making it an event worthy of the name "Seki."

For inquiries about the Cutlery Festival:

☎0575-23-7704 (Tourism and Cultural Exchange Section, Seki City)



SPOTLIGHT

The Blades of Seki in Our Everyday Lives

One might think that, even though traditional Japanese swords are still being forged in Seki, the wisdom accumulated over these last 700 years is largely going to waste, as swords are no longer in popular demand. However, this could not be further from the truth! The people of Seki have applied their unrivaled knowledge of making high-quality blades - best embodied by the "Seki no Magoroku" swords - to the production of instruments that meet the demands of the modern-day world. Items such as cutlery, scissors, and razors made with a special Seki flay in the town's factories are shipped to all corners of the world, making "Seki" a name as respected as any other in the industry! You can get your hands on some of these top-quality goods at unbelievable prices at the Cutlery Festival (see above)!



Located at a strategic junction between east and west Japan, Seki City blossomed as many travelers passed through the town, making their way to and from the old capital of Kyoto and Hida Province. It is said that the name "Seki" comes from *sekisho*, the Japanese word for "barrier" or "checkpoint," since one was established in the city along this travel route. Seki has also thrived as Japan's greatest production center of blades since the Kamakura period (1185 ~ 1333), with countless excellent swordsmiths emerging from the area. Along with Germany's Solingen and England's Sheffield, Seki is considered one of the three great blade capitals of the world. Seki City's many other points of interest include its famous *unagi* freshwater eel and Oze *Ukai*, brother to the cormorant fishing tradition that takes place in Gifu City. Finally, an interesting tidbit: Seki is the exact geographic center of Japan and is also the center of the population, which is a theoretical point at which the country is balanced between north and south, east and west (assuming that each person has the same weight)!



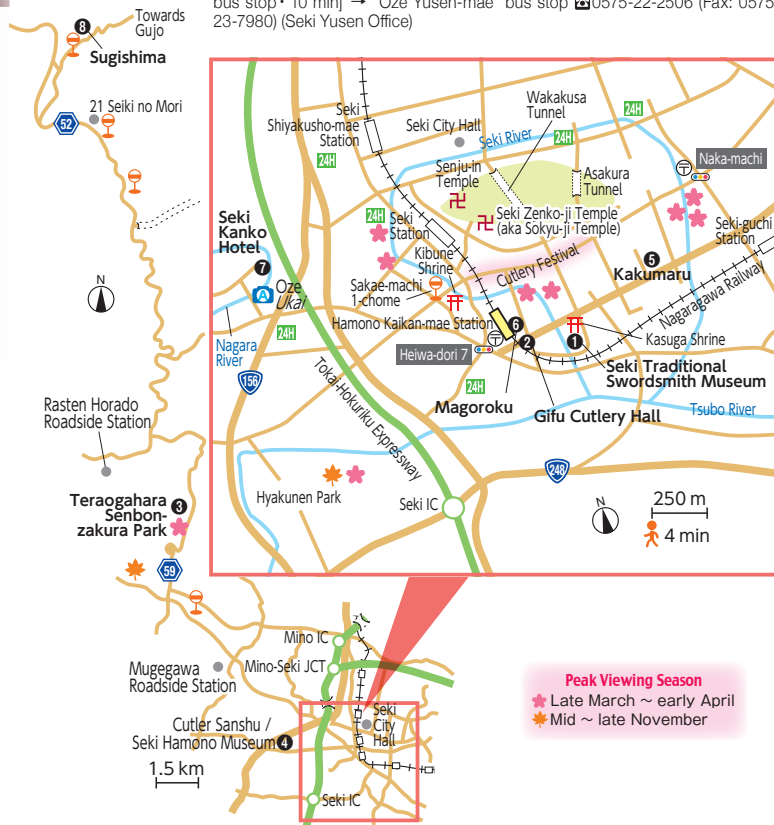
The Traditional Art of Cormorant Fishing: Oze *Ukai* 鵜

Just as in Gifu City, the old fishing method of *ukai* continues to this day in Oze, Seki City. Though it has not been performed for quite as long as it has in Gifu City, cormorant fishing still boasts a history of over a millennium on the Nagara River in Seki. The outfits of the *usho* fishing masters are unchanged since times of old, as are many of the elements that make up Oze *Ukai*, which is designated a prefectural Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property. The three *usho* bear the designation "Cormorant Fishing Master of the Board of Ceremonies of the Imperial Household Agency," and watching them showcase their skill at handling the reins of the cormorants up close and personal from a houseboat is truly a pleasure and an honor.

While it will definitively lose out to Gifu City's *ukai* when it comes to fame, Oze *Ukai* is the more intimate of the two. With fewer crowds and boats, cormorant fishing here in Seki will give you a better chance to get close to the action for longer. It is also thought to preserve more of *ukai*'s original form than its brother in Gifu City; an example illustrating this is that neither the fishing boats nor the viewing boats are propelled by motors, offering an authentically old-fashioned experience that is sure to leave its mark. Seki's Oze *Ukai* is held over a five-month period, from May 11th to October 15th (prior reservations are strongly recommended).

☑Boarding time: May ~ June: 6:50 pm, July ~ August: 7 pm, September ~ October: 6:40 pm

¥¥3,600 (Children: ¥2,500), May, June, and October: ¥3,400 (Children: ¥2,400) 📍"Seki city terminal" bus stop → [Gifu Bus on the Seki Itadori Line towards "Horado Kiwi Plaza" bus stop • 10 min] → "Oze Yusen-mae" bus stop ☎0575-22-2506 (Fax: 0575-23-7980) (Seki Yusen Office)



Peak Viewing Season

★ Late March ~ early April
★ Mid ~ late November



1 Seki Traditional Swordsmith Museum 関鍛冶伝承館



This museum showcases the distinguished history of blade-forging as well as the many painstaking steps of the production process. The wealth of blade-related materials here ranges from a collection of important documents to exhibitions of traditional Japanese swords as well as modern blades. In addition to the *uchizome-shiki*, the ceremonial first forging of the year on January 2nd, you can watch the *tosho* master swordsmiths demonstrate the forging of a blade - pounding the raw steel and sending out flurries of sparks - on the 1st Sunday of every month (excluding January and October), and during the Seki Cutlery Festival.

📍9-1 Minami Kasuga-cho, Seki City 🕒9 am ~ 4:30 pm 🎫

¥300 (High school students: ¥200, Middle and elementary school students: ¥100) 🗓Tuesday . Day after national holiday 🚶 Hamono Kaikan-mae Station → [5-minute walk] ☎0575-23-3825 🌐https://www.city.seki.lg.jp/kanko/0000001558.html

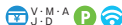


2 Gifu Cutlery Hall 岐阜県刃物会館



With a whopping 2,500 blade-related items used in everyday life, from knives to nail clippers, this shop offers the highest quality products at 10% ~ 20% off the market price. There is also an exhibit of the assorted edged products made in Seki City, and you can even try your hand at sharpening a kitchen knife the old-fashioned way, at no cost! 📍4-6 Heiwa-dori, Seki City 🕒9 am ~ 5 pm 🗓December 28 ~ January 1 🚶 Hamono Kaikan-mae Station → [1-minute walk] ☎0575-22-4941 🌐http://www.seki-japan.com (JPN)

🎁 Small gift (Valid until March 31, 2021)



3 Teraogahara Senbon-zakura Park 寺尾ヶ原千本桜公園



Stretching for two kilometers from the Terao Pass is a long, graceful row of 2,000 sakura cherry trees that turn the area into a springtime paradise from early to mid-April. The view of the cherry blossoms, which you can enjoy from the comfort of a number of tea houses located along the road, is truly a sight to behold. 📍Taniguchi Azaterao, Mugegawa-cho, Seki City 🚶 "Sakae-machi 1-chome" bus stop → [Gifu Bus on the Seki Itadori Line towards "Horado Kiwi Plaza" bus stop • 25 min] → "Mugegawa Onsen" bus stop → [Taxi • 10 min] ☎0575-46-2311 (Mugegawa Branch Office in Seki) 🌐http://seki-kanko.jp/modules/content/index.php?id=112 (JPN)



4 Cutler Sanshu / Seki Hamono Museum 刃物屋三秀 / 関刃物ミュージアム



The Seki Hamono Museum at Cutler Sanshu is a museum that introduces the manufacturing process of Japanese swords, kitchen knives, and nail clippers that are made in Seki. The facility is equipped with a forge for crafting Japanese swords where one can view - or even experience hands on - traditional Japanese swordsmithing for an added cost (reservation required). In the store you can find our in-house "Seki Yoshihide" brand kitchen knives and scissors, as well as cutlery from a wide range of local manufacturers, available for direct purchase.

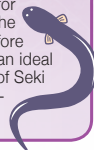
📍950-1 Oze, Seki City 🕒8:30 am ~ 5 pm 🎫Admission charge free 🗓None 🚶 Seki city terminal → [Taxi • 10 min] ☎0575-28-5147 🌐http://www.hamonoyasan.com/

🎁 Small gift (No expiration date)



Seki City and Its Mouth-Watering Unagi

Seki is renowned across Japan for its freshwater eel, and it is no coincidence that both sword production and eel consumption have been part of the town's history and culture for ages. Indeed, the two are closely tied, originally stemming from the needs of the swordsmith masters. It need not be said that swordmaking is a difficult undertaking; forging a blade necessitates sitting beside a blazing furnace for long periods of time as well as hammering away with heavy tools in order to mold the steel. Thus, as sword craftsmen started to migrate to Seki in the Kamakura period, they needed a reliable, local source of stamina to replenish their energy reserves! Rich in vitamins, *unagi* has been consumed for its nutritional value throughout Japanese history, and to this day it is considered the best food to eat during Japan's hot, draining summer months. *Unagi* was therefore the food of choice for Seki's swordsmiths, and what's more, they also saw it as an ideal dish to serve to customers and potential buyers! With this long history, the chefs of Seki have perfected *unagi* cuisine, and they continue to use the secret grilling techniques and sauce recipes that have been handed down here for generations!



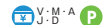
5 Kakumaru 角丸



The eel grilled over a strong fire and glazed with a secret sauce at this restaurant will have your taste buds screaming for more! Elegant in its delicious simplicity, the standard order of *unagi-don* - grilled eel placed on top of a bowl of rice - is the way to go.

📍21 Higashi Monzen-cho, Seki City 🕒11 am ~ 2 pm, 5 pm ~ 8:30 pm 🗓Wednesday 🚶 Hamono Kaikan-mae Station → [Nagaragawa Railway towards Mino-Ota Station] → Seki-guchi Station → [15-minute walk] ☎0575-22-0415 🌐http://userweb.mmtr.or.jp/kakumaru/ (JPN)

🎁 ¥100 off the bill (Valid until March 31, 2021)



6 Magoroku 孫六



An *unagi* specialty restaurant, Magoroku only uses the best eel in its dishes: large, thick specimens with plenty of meat! This shop, located right across from the Cutlery Hall, takes great pride in the chewy texture of its grilled eel. 📍4-5-1 Heiwa-dori, Seki City 🕒11 am ~ 2 pm, 4:30 pm ~ 8 pm 🗓Wednesday evening, Thursday 🚶 Nearby Hamono Kaikan-mae Station ☎0575-22-0639 🌐http://www.magoroku.net/ (JPN)

🎁 ¥100 off an order of regular *unagi-don* eel over rice (Valid until March 31, 2021)



7 Seki Kanko Hotel 関観光ホテル



This hotel boasts guest rooms and large communal baths from which you can gaze out over the pristine Nagara River. It also places an emphasis on *ayu* cuisine during the summer cormorant fishing season. 📍91-2 Ikejiri, Seki City 🕒1 night + 2 meals: from ¥12,960 🚶 Hamono Kaikan-mae Station → [Nagaragawa Railway towards Mino-shi, Mino Shiroto, or Hokuno Station • 3 min] → Seki Station → [Taxi • 10 min] ☎0120-753-277 🌐http://www.sekikankohotel.jp (JPN)

🎁 Two bottles of "Koka no Shinsui" mineral water per room (No expiration date)



8 Sugishima すぎ嶋



With a total of six hot spring baths - including open-air and private ones - and exceptional meals featuring river fish and edible wild vegetation eaten around an *irori* hearth, this Japanese-style inn promises a wonderful lodging experience. 📍4838 Itadori, Seki City 🕒1 night + 2 meals: from ¥18,576 🚶 "Sakae-machi 1-chome" bus stop → [Gifu Bus on the Seki Itadori Line towards "Horado Kiwi Plaza" bus stop • 1 hr] → "Horado Kiwi Plaza" bus stop → [Itadori Fureai Bus • 45 min] → "Itadori Suisu Mura" bus stop ☎0581-57-2532 🌐http://www.sugishima.com (JPN)

🎁 "Koka no Shinsui" mineral water (Valid until March 31, 2021)

