



The Maruyama River: an Idyllic Location for Olympic Training Sessions

Toyooka City, located in the northern part of Hyogo Prefecture, is well known for its hot spring quarter, Kinosaki Onsen, and its success at re-introducing the Oriental White Stork to the wild. But few know that Toyooka is also an ideal location to get out and enjoy various outdoor activities, taking full advantage of the area's rich natural environment.



With 68 kilometres in length, the Maruyamagawa is the longest river in the northern part of the prefecture. It runs through Toyooka and empties into the Sea of Japan. In 2012, the Lower Maruyama River and the surrounding rice paddies became registered with the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It serves as an important part of Toyooka's nature, wildlife, and tourism. The river, with its **calm waters and gentle gradient** (a one-metre incline over the course of ten kilometres) is **an ideal training ground for professional rowing teams**.

This summer, in anticipation of the postponed 2020 Summer Olympics, **Toyooka is hosting the German and the Swiss national rowing teams**, who are taking advantage of the idyllic Maruyama River to train twice a day, while also getting used to the hot and humid climate of the Japanese summer. The teams will stay until the middle of July before moving on to the Olympic Village in Tokyo.

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The athletes' reaction to their training venue has been overwhelmingly positive. "Even though the weather is not quite ideal due to the rainy season, the rowing conditions are excellent, and the local crew has really put their all into creating proper training grounds and a training gym", the German team's sports director commented. "Since it is far away from Tokyo and everything is so calm, we can focus on proper preparations" was one athlete's verdict, while another added that "even though we train hard, it is quite a pleasant experience to row on this calm river, surrounded by the verdant green".



Photo Credit: FISA



Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the teams cannot take in the local sights at this moment in time. However, **a number of athletes have expressed their interest in returning to Kinomori in the future**, to tour the local attractions and enjoy the onsen.

For the moment, everyone at the training grounds in Kinomori Onsen is focused on Olympic preparations, while the locals hope that the town's hospitality, and the training time spent on the Maruyama River, will carry the teams towards Olympic victories.



Photo Credit: Detlev Seyb/SWISS ROWING

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To welcome the teams to Kinosaki Onsen, the town has raised banners with German and Swiss flags outside of shops and the train station.



Visitors to Kinosaki Onsen can [rent bicycles and easily bike](#) north along the Maruyama River and reach [Kehi Beach](#) or turn the other direction and visit the [Hachigoro Wetlands](#) or the [Genbudo Caves](#). The Maruyama River also provides a great location for boating, rowing, and watching regattas. The Maruyama River Kinosaki Boat Festival & Regatta is hosted annually in July or August for people to participate in and spectate. At the [Hyogo Prefectural Maruyamagawa Kouen](#), **visitors can enjoy various river and riverside activities**, including canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and ice skating depending on the season. At the ice-skating rink (or pool in the summertime), visitors can take in a beautiful view of the river and mountains.



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[Kinosaki Onsen](#) is a town of time-honored hot springs dating back 1300 years ago. It is home to seven public bathhouses, all located within walking distance of each other and the train station. Guests are encouraged to wear yukata and geta, stroll through the town, and go onsen-hopping.

[Toyooka](#) is a downtown area home to the Oriental White Stork, a bird that was revived from extinction in this very town. The city's efforts restored the Oriental White Stork population, and now over 200 fly the skies of Japan. Toyooka is also known for the Genbudo Caves.



[Izushi](#) is the resident castle town, popular for its nostalgic atmosphere of Edo-era Japan. It is home to many interesting attractions such as castle ruins, a samurai house, a kabuki theater, and a clock tower. The town's specialty is Izushi Sara Soba, buckwheat noodles served in small portions on small plates.

[Kannabe](#) is a mountainous area with fun activities year-round. In the winter, one can go skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and sledding. In the warm months, one can go camping, paragliding, fishing, tree climbing, and more. Kannabe is the perfect destination for adventurers.



[Takeno](#) is a quaint fisherman town that is a hidden gem among the northern coast of Hyogo Prefecture. The beach has clear, blue waters while the mountains surrounding it offer great hiking opportunities. It is encouraged to stroll through the peaceful town, where one can find small shops and traditional landscapes.

[Tanto](#) is a quiet countryside town with magnificent nature—including a giant field of tulips in the spring and brilliant red-leaved trees in the fall.

