

~Japan's Best Hot Spring Town, Kinosaki Onsen~

Two Temples, Two Zen Meditation Experiences



Raindrops pitter-patter onto the carefully placed rock garden as you hear faint laughter from the nursery nearby. Next to you, the sudden ding of the monk's bell snaps you back into reality as you finish your meditation. You bow to the monk who has just led you through this spiritual journey before gazing out at the beautiful temple before you.

Zazen, or seated Zen meditation, is considered the primary practice of Zen Buddhism. More and more visitors to Japan are looking for those authentic, spiritual experiences that one can receive at one of Japan's over 77,000 Buddhist temples—many of which have Zen meditation experiences. Kinosaki Onsen and the nearby town Izushi are no exception. In both Kinosaki Onsen and Izushi, visitors can reserve a seated Zen meditation experience that includes either an English-speaking guide or written English explanation.

These activities offer a look into the daily lives of the local monks at each temple, as well as allow you to further relax your mind and soothe the soul during your peaceful stay in Kinosaki Onsen.

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Kinosaki Onsen's Gokurakuji is a temple in a peaceful, secluded part of town. Through [this activity](#),



experience seated zen meditation in a local temple while gazing outside at the tranquil rock garden. There will be a sheet written in English with instructions on how to properly meditate, and the chief Buddhist monk can show you how. The monk's sermon will also be printed out for you to read after you're done meditating. You can also wear traditional monk's working clothes while you meditate! Afterwards, you will be served matcha and local Japanese sweets. Try communicating with the monk over tea, it will make the experience all the more rewarding.



Izushi's Sukyoji Temple is also in a quiet area surrounded by an expansive garden. In [this activity](#), you get the opportunity to participate in two traditional Buddhist activities. The first is seated Zen meditation, led by a friendly monk and an English-speaking guide. Afterwards, you can choose between doing *shakyo* (sutra-copying) or *shabutsu* (tracing a picture of a Buddhist image)—both of which are very ancient practices that are unknown by many. Then, guests get to casually chat with the monk in his own home! Over a bowl of matcha and scrumptious traditional sweets, you can ask



him any questions that you'd like, such as questions regarding the history of the temple, the monk's own background, and Buddhist teachings. His house that includes a traditional tea room is



located right next to the temple, overlooking the gardens.

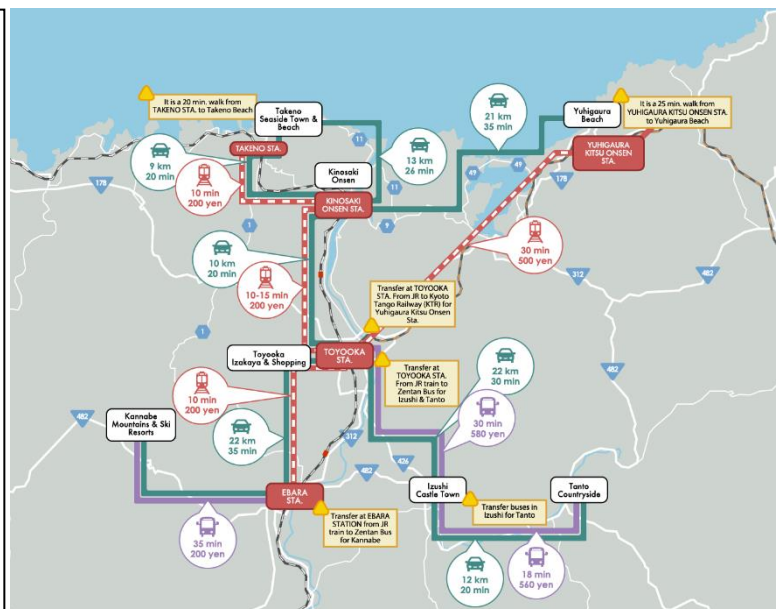
Ideal visit plan: 2-3 days in Kinosaki Onsen and its surrounding areas

Day 1: Leave Kyoto/Osaka by train to

Kinosaki Onsen, explore the town

Day 2: Head to Izushi Castle Town to enjoy attractions and a townscape nostalgic of the Edo era, participate in Zen meditation at Sukyoji Temple

Day 3: Have breakfast in your ryokan and then check out, then try Zen meditation at Gokurakuji Temple
Return to Kyoto/Osaka





[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 about 140 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.

