

Nishi-Awa region in Tokushima Prefecture

Experience *satoyama* food culture fostered through agriculture on steep mountain slopes

GIAHS / J-NIAHS  
“Nishi-Awa Steep Slope Land Agriculture System”

Nishi-Awa is a mountainous area in Tokushima Prefecture where about 85% of the land is covered by forest. People have long built houses on the mountain slopes, and in some places, slopes as steep as 40 degrees are used to cultivate crops. Farmers are able to produce about 140 crops, including grains, vegetables, fruits, tea, and wild vegetables, through environmental adaptations such as drying *kaya* (silvergrass and other grasses) for fertilizer, developing unique farming tools, and planting different crops according to the sun exposure, elevation, and topography. This has resulted in a rich food culture that utilizes a variety of grains unique to the area.



1 A farmer performing *tsuchiage* to restore eroded soil. 2 The Nishi-Iya Jindai Odori (“rain dance”) is a folk dance that is said to have originated in the early Heian period (794–1185). 3 Buckwheat porridge, a local staple. 4 *Koeuro*, cone-shaped piles of *kaya*. They are meticulously broken up and spread in the fields to fertilize the soil and prevent erosion.

Day 1

JR Tokushima Sta.

▼ Approx. 50-min. drive



Wakimachi Udatsum Townscape

A merchant town that prospered in the Edo period as a distribution center for Awa indigo. Take a guided tour to better understand the characteristics and history of the buildings from each period.



Address: Wakimachi, Mima City, Tokushima  
Tel: 0883-53-8599 (Mima Tourism Bureau)

▼ Brief walk



Udatsum Kobo, Awa Tennen Aizome Yamauchi

A natural indigo dyeing studio in the town of Udatsum where you can participate in an indigo dyeing workshop and dye a handkerchief, scarf, tote bag, or other item with dyes made using traditional methods.



Address: 45-1 Tsukinukecho, Wakimachi, Mima City, Tokushima  
Tel: 0883-52-5168

▼ Approx. 40-min. drive



SARUKAI Tourist Farm: Where Buckwheat Flowers Bloom

This is a great place to experience a field with a 40-degree slope. The farm is open to the public only from late September to mid-October when the buckwheat flowers are in bloom.



Address: Sarukai, Sadamitsu, Tsurugi Town, Mima District, Tokushima  
Tel: 0883-62-3111 (Industry and Economy Division, Tsurugi Town Hall)

▼ Approx. 2-hr. drive



Oku-Iya Menme Workshop, Experience Atelier Tsuzuki

Learn how to make lya soba, a local buckwheat noodle dish from the Higashi-Iya region. The process starts with making buckwheat flour, and you can listen to local folk songs while you work.



Address: 84-1 Wakabayashi, Higashiya, Miyoshi City, Tokushima  
Tel: 0883-88-5625

▼ Approx. 20-min. drive



Stay Guest House Tougenkyo-Iya

Ochiai is a village dotted with traditional Japanese houses on the slope of a mountain with an elevation difference of about 390 meters. Eight of these houses are rented out in their entirety to visitors and are becoming increasingly popular for the village life experience they offer. Guests can cook for themselves or request catering featuring local dishes.



Address: 403 Ochiai, Higashiya, Miyoshi City, Tokushima  
Tel: 0883-88-2540

Day 2

Guest House Tougenkyo-Iya

▼ Approx. 35-min. drive



Iya Kazurabashi Bridge

This suspension bridge is made from woven kiwiberry vines. It is 45 meters long, weighs approximately 5 metric tons, and is re-woven every three years. Crossing the bridge is a thrilling experience—it sways as you walk across it, and you can see the bottom of the valley through the gaps in the bridge floor! The clear waters of the Iya River and the Biwa Waterfall are not to be missed.



Address: 162-2 Zentoku, Nishiyayama-son, Miyoshi City, Tokushima  
Tel: 0883-76-0877 (Miyoshi City Tourist Information Center)

▼ Approx. 25-min. drive



Oboke Gorge Sightseeing Boat

The Oboke and Koboke gorges are recognized as both Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments of Japan. Oboke Gorge occupies the upper four kilometers of the two. You can take a round-trip sightseeing cruise on the crystal-clear Yoshino River and enjoy the beauty of the majestic rock walls carved by nature over the course of 200 million years.



Address: 1520 Nishiu, Yamashiro-cho, Miyoshi City, Tokushima  
Tel: 0883-84-1211

▼ Approx. 45-min. drive



Minshuku Uribo

Enjoy a lunch of wild game and a farm experience at a guesthouse run by hunter Masao Kinoshita. The lunch is hearty and includes plenty of venison and wild boar meat. The farm experience changes with the seasons, including activities such as vegetable harvesting and *konnyaku* (konjac) making.



Address: 29 Uchino, Higashiya, Higashimiyoshi Town, Miyoshi District, Tokushima  
Tel: 0883-87-8988 (Sora no Sato)

▼ Approx. 1-hr.-20-min. drive

JR Tokushima Sta.

Getting there from Osaka

By train and bus

JR Osaka Sta. JR Sannomiya Sta. (Walk) Hanshin Kobe-Sannomiya Bus Stop JR Tokushima Sta.

Ride for approx. 30 min. on the JR Kobe Line, get off at JR Sannomiya Sta., walk for approx. 3 min., then ride for approx. 2 hr. on the Tokushima Bus bound for JR Tokushima Sta. from the Hanshin Kobe-Sannomiya Bus Stop

By car

From Osaka Wakimachi IC

From Osaka to Wakimachi IC  
Approx. 2 hr. 40 min. on the Hanshin Expwy, Kobe-Awaji-Naruto Expwy, and Tokushima Expwy



Sustainable Tourism

Visit Agricultural Heritage Systems

Tambasasayama region in Hyogo Prefecture, Minamiawaji region in Hyogo Prefecture, and Nishi-Awa region in Tokushima Prefecture



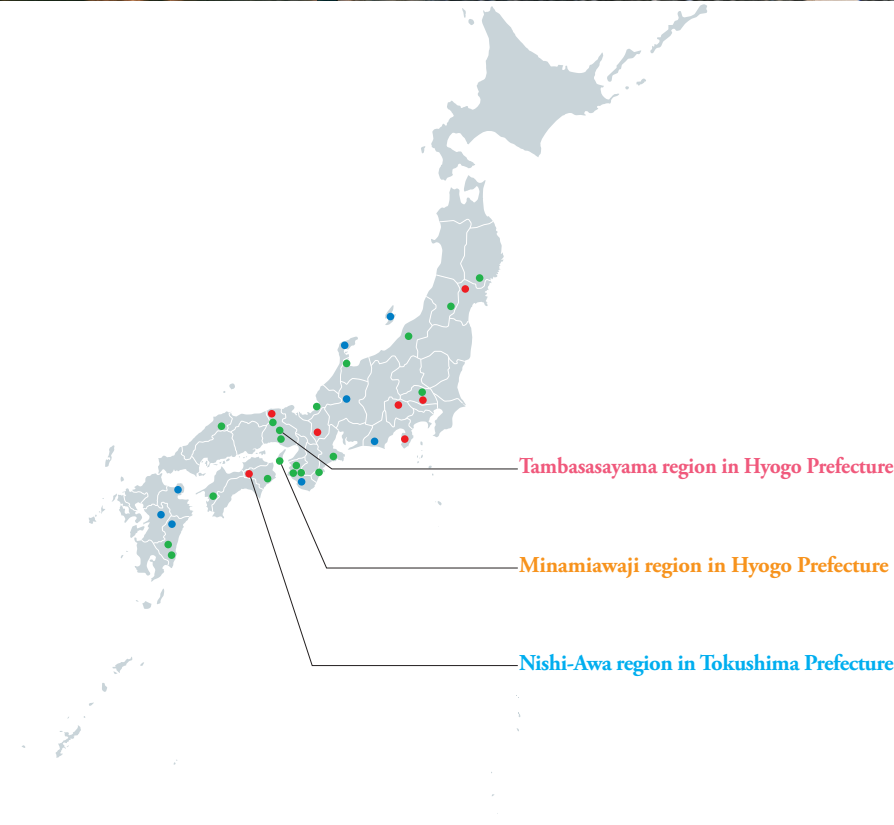
What are Agricultural Heritage Systems?

In regions designated as Agricultural Heritage Systems, farming, forestry, and fishing are practiced using traditional methods that have generally been handed down continuously for more than a century. These traditional practices have been nurtured and formed by the local climate, topography, and historical background, creating a food culture, climate, and landscape unique to the regions.

The agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industry that have been designated as Agricultural Heritage Systems incorporate resource recycling systems that do not deplete natural resources (i.e., soil, forest, and aquatic resources) and have a low environmental impact, which contributes to the preservation of biodiversity, including creatures native to Japan. Agricultural Heritage Systems are a form of “living heritage” that continues to evolve and adapt to changes in society and nature.

There are two types of Agricultural Heritage Systems: Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) designated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and Japanese Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (JNIAHS) designated by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

In Japan, there are 15 Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (●) and 28 Japanese Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (●).  
● areas are designated as both.  
(As of January 2025)



MAFF

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Publisher / Contact:

Wildlife Management and Rural Environment Division, Rural Policy Department, Rural Development Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8950 Japan Tel: 03-3502-8111 (ext. 5621)

Information on GIAHS and JNIAHS is also available on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.  
<https://www.maff.go.jp/f/nousin/kantai/index.html>

For sightseeing information on Agricultural Heritage Systems:  
[https://www.maff.go.jp/f/nousin/kantai/giahs\\_7/index.html](https://www.maff.go.jp/f/nousin/kantai/giahs_7/index.html)



Tambasasayama region in Hyogo Prefecture

Enjoy the rural landscape and traditional culture of growing black soybeans for 300 years

J-NIAHS
“Tambasasayama's Kuromame Cultivation Over 300 Years”

Tambasasayama City in Hyogo Prefecture is one of Japan's leading producers of kuromame (black soybeans). Its history dates back more than 300 years. This area has historically suffered from water shortages due to low rainfall, so farmers began to “sacrifice” certain rice paddies, using them as fields to grow black soybeans instead.



1 A black soybean field at Tamba Tabuchi Farm. During the autumn harvest season, the farm bustles with visitors who come to buy black soybeans. 2 Tamba-guro, a soybean variety originating from the Tamba region of Hyogo Prefecture. It is one of the world's largest black soybean varieties. 3 ODAGAKI mamedou's black soybean kinako soft-serve ice cream parfait. 4 One of the Han-ya scattered throughout the city. These huts add to the traditional rural landscape.

Minamiawaji region in Hyogo Prefecture

Visit Awaji Island for its delicious produce, nurtured by a cyclical agriculture system involving paddy rice, cattle, and onions

J-NIAHS
“Cyclical Production System for Paddy Rice, Onions, and Livestock in Minamiawaji”

In the Minamiawaji area of Awaji Island, Hyogo Prefecture, locals have adapted to an island environment characterized by scarce farmland and water. They have developed an irrigation system that combines reservoirs, rivers, irrigation canals, and groundwater. They have also practiced double cropping, growing onions after harvesting rice. These adaptations led to the establishment of a cyclical system in which rice straw is used to feed dairy cows, whose manure is then composted and plowed back into the soil to grow onions.



1 Sweet and tender Awaji Island onions. Minamiawaji City boasts the fourth-largest onion cultivation area in Japan. 2 An onion hut where onions are dried naturally using wind. 3 A circular tank diversion system, established to distribute water for agriculture equally. 4 Several farmers still raise cattle in a nagayamon, a wide building that also functions as a gate.

Day 1

JR Sasayamaguchi Sta. (JR Takarazuka Line and Fukuchiyama Line)

Convenient rental bicycles for touring the city are available at the JR Sasayamaguchi Station East Exit Cycle Port and the Sasayama Tourist Information Center. Scan here for more information! ->



Approx. 9-min. drive



Tamba Tabuchi Farm

During its farm tours in July and August, you can learn why traditional farming methods were developed and the secrets behind the delicious taste of Tamba-guro brand soybeans, as well as harvest and taste summer-ripened edamame. From early October to early November, you can pick your own black edamame.



Address: 158-3 Kuchisakamoto, Tambasayama City, Hyogo Tel: 090-8650-0415

Approx. 4-min. drive



Heritage Footpath

Explore a roughly one-hour walking loop around a peaceful satoyama (land between Japan's foothills and arable land). Tours are available with a local guide (inquire for more details). The sight of rice paddies with no visible power lines or telephone poles and about 10 remaining Han-ya for producing fertilizer are signs of the traditional farming methods that have been handed down to the present day.

Address: Around Ono and Yashiro, Tambasayama City, Hyogo Tel: 079-552-1114 (Agricultural Policy Division, Tambasayama City)

Approx. 10-min. drive



Sasayama Castle Oshoin, Ruins of Sasayama Castle

Sasayama Castle was built in 1609 during the early Edo period on the orders of Tokugawa Ieyasu. The castle's main hall, called the Oshoin, is unprecedented in terms of size and architectural style for a feudal lord. Inside the hall, there are displays on the history of Sasayama Castle, and visitors can try on suits of armor and uchikake (formal outer kimono).



Address: 2-3 Kitashinmachi, Tambasayama City, Hyogo Tel: 079-552-4500

Approx. 15-min. drive



Stay Maruyama Village

Spend the night in your own traditional cottage in the village of Maruyama, nestled in the foothills of the mountains. The facility has been renovated to be modern and practical while retaining its original floor plan. In the morning, staff from the village come to the kitchen to prepare breakfast using local ingredients and freshly cooked rice.



Address: 30 Maruyama, Tambasayama City, Hyogo Tel: 079-550-0243

Day 2

Maruyama Village

Approx. 13-min. drive



Tambasayama Historical Art Museum

A former courthouse that was renovated into a museum. The building is one of the oldest wooden courthouses in Japan and has been designated a cultural property of the city. You can tour the old courtroom and check out the armor and art on display. The museum also offers Ojiyama-yaki pottery workshops for making chopstick rests and magatama (comma-shaped beads) in the style of the Sasayama domain's local kiln.



Address: 53 Gofukumachi, Tambasayama City, Hyogo Tel: 079-552-0601

Approx. 14-min. walk



Kawaramachi Tsumairi Merchant House District

This district once flourished as the commercial center of the Sasayama domain. It still retains the look of an Edo-period (1603-1867) castle town, and the district has been selected as one of Japan's Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings. In addition to the historic stores, modern cafés and knick-knack shops make the streets a fun place to stroll around.



Address: Kawaramachi, Tambasayama City, Hyogo Tel: 079-552-3380 (Sasayama Tourist Information Center)

Approx. 1-min. walk



Odagaki Shoten

A long-established store specializing in black soybeans that has been in business for 290 years. From the Meiji era (1868-1912), the store started selling black soybean seeds to farmers, then bought back the produce and sold it throughout Japan, spreading the name of the giant Tamba-guro black soybeans. Visitors can also enjoy black soybean sweets at the store's café, ODAGAKI mamedou.



Address: 19 Tatsumachi, Tambasayama City, Hyogo Tel: 079-552-0011

Approx. 12-min. drive

JR Sasayamaguchi Sta.

Getting there from Osaka

By train

JR Osaka Sta. JR Sasayamaguchi Sta. Ride for approx. 1 hr. on the JR Takarazuka Line / Fukuchiyama Line

By car

From Osaka Tannan-Sasayamaguchi IC Approx. 1 hr. on the Chugoku Expwy and Maizuru-Wakasa Expwy

Day 1

Sumoto Bus Center

Approx. 22-min. drive



Awaji Farm Park England Hill

Explore this sprawling agricultural park where you can pick vegetables in the fields, visit greenhouses for tomatoes and strawberries, and see about 30 species of animals, including koalas and wallabies. The restaurant's ushiju (beef rice bowl), made with Awaji beef and Awaji Island onions, is very popular.



Address: 1401 Yagiyogikami, Minamiawaji City, Hyogo Tel: 0799-43-2626

Approx. 2-min. walk



Minacoicoiya

This farmer's market offers a variety of delicious produce from Awaji Island. The market has one of the largest onion sales areas in Japan and also offers fresh vegetables, Awaji beef, dairy products, locally caught fish, local craft beer, and specialty somen noodles. It is the perfect place to find Awaji Island souvenirs.



Address: 1408 Yagiyogikami, Minamiawaji City, Hyogo Tel: 079-43-3751

Approx. 12-min. drive



Awajishima Hamada Farm

After listening to onion farmer Tetsuji Hamada talk about the history of Awaji Island onions, how they are grown, and what makes them so delicious, experience planting and harvesting the onions (available September through June). During the rest of the year, you can experience what it is like to package the onions.



Address: 860-1 Matsuhoshichigawa, Minamiawaji City, Hyogo Tel: 079-1582-7592

Approx. 40-min. drive



Stay Agri Museum NADA

This accommodation facility is located in a closed elementary school. The facility grows "schoolyard tomatoes" and "classroom basil" that you can pick and use to make pizzas. Other popular experiences include catching, cooking, and eating your own fish and barbecuing local ingredients (inquiry required).



Address: 313 Nadayamamoto, Minamiawaji City, Hyogo Tel: 070-9012-1349

Day 2

Agri Museum NADA

Approx. 22-min. drive



Southern Birds Agricultural Heritage Tour

Take an in-depth tour of agriculture on Awaji Island. On this tour, you will see a nagayamon, a structure where farmers used to keep cattle, and the local landscape dotted with reservoirs. Then experience harvesting onions and hanging them to dry (or making onion jam, depending on the season).



Meet-up location: 963 Kashuseigo, Minamiawaji City, Hyogo Tel: 080-4236-0626

Approx. 12-min. drive



Awaji Ningyoza (Puppet Theatre)

A permanent venue where the local performing art of Awaji Island, Awaji Ningyo Joruri (puppet show), is performed throughout the year. Before each performance, there is an explanation of the show, its highlights, and how the puppets are operated. The program that combines a backstage tour with a short performance is also popular.



Address: 1528-1 Fukurako, Minamiawaji City, Hyogo Tel: 0799-52-0260

Approx. 12-min. drive



Uzu no Oka Onaruto Bridge Memorial Hall

This commercial facility overlooks the Onaruto Bridge spanning the Naruto Strait. Ottamanegi, the giant onion statue, is a hugely popular photo spot. Spend your time here enjoying all things onion, from onion burgers to an onion claw machine.



Address: 936-3 Fukurahei, Minamiawaji City, Hyogo Tel: 0799-52-2888

Approx. 30-min. drive

Sumoto Bus Center

Getting there from Osaka

By train and bus

JR Osaka Sta. JR Maiko Sta. Maiko Expwy Bus Stop Sumoto Bus Center Ride for approx. 60 min. on the JR Kobe Line, get off at JR Maiko Sta., walk for approx. 5 min., then ride for approx. 1 hr. on the Awaji Kotsu bus bound for Sumoto Bus Center from the Maiko Expwy Bus Stop

By car

From Osaka Sumoto IC From Osaka to Sumoto IC Approx. 1 hr. 30 min. on the Hanshin Expwy and Kobe-Awaji-Naruto Expwy