

An Artsy Autumn in Toyooka City



As a small city with a profound focus on the arts, ranging from Kabuki performances to bag craftsmanship and from traditional straw craft to modern art performances, it's no wonder that Toyooka City serves as the epicenter of art in Japan's Hyogo Prefecture. Consider this your formal invitation to some of the city's liveliest creative scenes coming this fall.

[Toyooka Theater Festival](#)

The Toyooka Theater Festival is scheduled to be held for the fourth year in a row from September 6 to 23, 2024.

As one of the largest theater festivals in Asia with over 23,000 attendees during its 2023 run, festival organizers are revving up for another busy month of various events ranging from official Director's Programs, Fringe Programs, and festival markets. Last year's festivities welcomed a wide variety of multilingual performances from theater troupes from around the globe, and 2024 festival runners aim to continue carrying out the goal of recruiting both local and international performances for a diverse and globally-conscious lineup.



"I am a Seagull" was performed at the 2023 Toyooka Theater Festival and is set in the year 3023 on a spaceship bound for Earth where Japanese and French students perform Chekhov's "The Seagull." (Photo ©igaki photo studio)

The Toyooka Theater Festival is one of the largest events of its kind in Asia. Hosting performances in Japanese, English, French, and other languages, the festival provides a sense of belonging and community among fellow art lovers who visit the area, regardless of language.

Kabuki Performance at Eirakukan Kabuki Theater



The month of November annually welcomes some of Japan's most prolific and skilled Kabuki actors to grace the stage of Izushi Castle Town's Eirakukan Kabuki Theater, one of the oldest Kabuki theaters in the Kansai region and only 30 minutes away from Kinosaki Onsen. Among the actors gliding across the theater's century-old stage in gilded robes and vibrant makeup is Kataoka Ainosuke, renowned Kabuki stage performer, actor, and TV host.

Although tickets tend to sell out quickly for such an awaited event, Eirakukan Kabuki Theater will hold multiple performances **from November 4 to 11**. The unique chance to experience the lantern-lit theater, a historical treasure astir once more with nostalgic turn-of-the-century theatrics, should not be missed by drama buffs visiting the area.

[Toyooka Art Season](#)

A year-round festivity with over 20 events spanning multiple days at a time, Toyooka Art Season is an annual homage to local creatives eager to share their art, whether it be opening a painting class for the public, an exhibit for a collection of antique pottery, or even a jazz concert on the streets of Kinosaki Onsen. Events are spread throughout Kinosaki Onsen and the surrounding areas, including Izushi Castle Town's Eirakukan Kabuki Theater, Tanto Farming Village's Japan Mongolia Folk Museum, and the Toyooka Museum of History near the Kannabe Highlands.

Evening light illuminations, movie nights, dance recitals, and orchestra concerts are just a few of the events and exhibitions included in the 2024 lineup.



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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

[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 300 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 with landscapes part of the UNESCO San'in Kaigan Geopark. 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 cedar homes.

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

