

Collect Cool Ema Plaques Around Kinosaki Onsen!



To most international tourists, any visit to Japan wouldn't be complete without making a pilgrimage to a Shinto shrine. Whether a visitor seeks a spiritual cleansing with a small offering to the enshrined gods or an hour or two to bask in the stunning architecture of towering torii gates, a large number of guests do not leave empty-handed.

What are Ema Plaques? Where can I Find Them?

Ema plaques are wooden plaques used by shrine-goers for writing down hopes and prayers, often decorated with elaborate designs exclusive to that particular shrine. Many visitors leave their ema plaques tied around a rack at the shrine so that the residing gods can assist in granting the written prayers, however, visitors are also free to bring the plaques home with them as a memento of their pilgrimage. Ema plaques can also occasionally be found at Buddhist temples. Nowadays ema plaque collecting is becoming a popular pastime! Most ema plaques can be purchased simply by asking the shrine or temple staff.



Start your collection traveling around Kinosaki Onsen!

Odai Shrine in [Downtown Toyooka](#)



Did you know? [Toyooka City is Japan's largest producer of bags!](#) At the very end of Caban Street (bag street) in downtown Toyooka, the only shrine in Japan dedicated to Odai, the god of bags, offers unique ema plaques for pilgrims in the shape of - you guessed it - a bag!

[Straw Craft](#) in Kinosaki Onsen

Straw craft is a traditional artform native to Kinosaki Onsen where dyed strips of barley straw are meticulously cut and pasted into fine designs on boxes, jewelry, and even postcards. Before every new year holiday season, the local straw craft workshop Kamiya Mingei releases specialty straw craft ema plaques adorned with the upcoming zodiac animal. These ema plaques are made in limited quantities, with only 200 available for sale each year.



[Onsenji Temple](#) in Kinosaki Onsen



As the guardian Buddhist temple protecting Kinosaki Onsen from its post halfway atop Mount Daishi, Onsenji Temple is steeped in over a millennium of history. In fact, the very name “Kinosaki” came from a statue housed in this temple! The esteemed Eleven-Faced Kannon Bodhisattva at Onsenji Temple is said to have been carved from the top of a tree, phonetically “ki no saki” in Japanese. Temple-goers can pick up an ema plaque with a drawing of the legendary statue at the temple entrance. At the very

top of Mount Daishi, visitors will also find another special ema plaque with a drawing of Kukai, a Japanese Buddhist monk and the founder of Shingon Buddhism.

Takano Shrine in [Takano Beach Town](#)

Takano Shrine’s ema plaques are decorated with a vibrant drawing of a Kitamae ship sailing into Takeno, a fishing town just one train stop from Kinosaki Onsen. On the walk to Takeno Beach from Takeno Station, chances are you’ll be passing by Takano Shrine. This shrine was historically a guardian shrine for the Kitamae ships, cargo vessels which carried goods to various ports of call around Japan, including Takeno, from the mid-1700s until the dawn of the 20th century.



Check [here](#) for more cool ema plaques!



[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. Guests wear yukata and geta, stroll through the town, and enjoy onsen-hopping.

[Toyooka](#) is home to the Oriental White Stork, a national natural treasure that was revived from extinction in this very city. Toyooka's efforts restored the Oriental White Stork population, and now over 300 fly the skies of Japan. Toyooka is also known as one of Japan's largest producers of handbags.



[Izushi](#) is a residential 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 Japanese-style clock tower. The town's specialty is Izushi Sara Soba, buckwheat noodles served in small portions on five plates.

[Kannabe](#) is a mountainous area with outdoor activities year-round and a perfect destination for adventure travelers. In the winter, visitors go skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and sledding, and during the green season, camping, paragliding, fishing, and tree climbing are popular pastimes.



[Takeno](#) is a quaint fishing and beach town with landscapes part of the UNESCO San'in Kaigan Geopark. Takeno beach has clear, blue waters while the surrounding mountains offer great hiking opportunities. Visitors stroll through the peaceful town, discovering small shops and traditional cedar wood homes.

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

