



Japan's National Natural Treasure, the Endangered Oriental White Stork
This spring, newborn stork chicks are wowing locals and tourists alike in Kinosaki
Onsen and Toyooka City.

The endangered Oriental White Stork is a large carnivorous bird with populations throughout east Asia, including Japan. In Japan, due to excessive pesticide usage during and after World War II, many of the Oriental White Stork's feeding grounds such as the rice fields became difficult places to find food. The stork's numbers dwindled throughout Japan over the decades, and in 1971, the last stork disappeared from Japan's skies in Toyooka City. To save the Oriental White Stork from complete extinction, citizens thankfully captured some of the last remaining ones in the 1960s and began to raise them in captivity.

Now, over 400 Oriental White Storks fly Japan's skies thanks to Toyooka City's
locals. Where to Find Toyooka's Storks:

[Artificial Nesting Towers](#)



Toyooka City is dabbled with man-made nesting towers for stork families to call home, many in the area's rice paddies and wetlands. During the hatching season, visitors may be lucky enough to see newborn stork chicks starting to wiggle their wings with their parents! Popular sightseeing spots with nesting towers include the Hyogo Park of the Oriental White Stork and Hachigoro Toshima Wetlands.

Guided Stork Tour with Morizu and Taki Rice Fields

A guided tour can take visitors to the nearby Morizu and Taki Rice Fields. This well-loved patchwork of greenery receives peckish Oriental White Storks on the hunt for food. Local storks have taken to these fields as one of their frequent stomping grounds for catching frogs, insects, and other small creatures. Feeling a bit hungry yourself? Step into the nearby restaurant Amita for some local cuisine coupled with panoramic views of the rice fields beyond.



Oriental White Stork Village Walk (with English-Speaking Local Guide)



Start a journey through a rural village with an English-speaking local guide on a small train bound for Kounotori no Sato Station. Sit back and relax as the beautiful scenery of the Japanese countryside passes by. Stroll past traditional homes and rice paddies while breathing in the fresh countryside air! Your guide will explain the special agricultural practices local farmers use in their rice paddies to ensure a healthy coexistence between residents, food production, and the Oriental White Storks.

Izushi Castle Town & Izushi River

Direct buses running between Kinosaki Onsen and Izushi Castle Town offer a wonderful day trip add-on of sites including the Izushi Castle Ruins, Eirakukan Kabuki Theater, and local crafts such as Izushi Porcelain, Willow Craft, and the local cuisine Izushi Sara Soba Noodles. The bus ride from Kinosaki Onsen to this historic samurai town takes travelers past the Izushi River, dappled with shallow patches popular with storks hunting small fish and insects. A handful of nesting towers also line the ride, with the occasional chick's head peeking out from their parents' nests.





[Kinosaki Onsen](#) is a town of time-honored tradition dating back 1300 years ago. It is home to seven tattoo-friendly public hot springs, all within walking distance. 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 400 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 samurai-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, hiking, 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 hot springs, a giant field of tulips in the spring, brilliant red-leaved trees in the fall, and waterfall meditation.

