

ONE DAY TOUR

**Visiting cultural and
Cooling places in Aso**

Guide Notes of tour

September 7th 2025 (Sun)

KIKUYOU MULCH CULTURES CLUB

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1 SUMMARY OF THE TOUR

This is a one-day tour that aims to cool down and experience Japanese culture, focusing on power spots in the eastern and northern parts of Aso.

We will meet at Hanaguri Ide Park before 8:40am and depart at 8:50am, stopping first at nearby Hanaguri Irrigation canal in Babagusu.

It is about a 5-minute walk from the parking lot. At Hanaguri Ide, volunteer guides will give explanations.

We will then depart Hanaguri Ide Park at 9:30am and travel to Takamori Town, Aso District, where our next stop will be Takamori Spring Tunnel Park.

This is a park developed inside a tunnel, and even in midsummer, the temperature is around 16°C, so you can feel the coolness of another world. It takes about 2-3 minutes on a flat road from the parking lot to the entrance of the performance.

After that, we will stop at Takamoridono Cedar, which is a power spot.

After getting off the bus at the parking lot, it's about a 10-minute walk up the mountain path.

The area near the cedar trees is slippery, so please be careful if it's raining.

Next, we will cross the Aso outer rim and move to the N amino area of Aso City, where we will have lunch at Kaguraen, which is also a roadside station. There is a parking lot adjacent to Kaguraen. There is a Kagura Museum here that introduces Kagura from all over Japan, but it is currently closed. We are scheduled to depart Kaguraen at 1:00 pm.

In the afternoon, we will move to Nakae Kagura Hall and watch a performance of Nakae Iwato Kagura, which has been handed down in this region, for about 40 minutes from 13:30 pm. Performances are only held on the first Sunday of the month. A parking lot is attached to Kagura Hall.

After that, we will move to Ubuyama Village, Aso District, and stop by Ikeyama Spring to cool off. This area has been turned into a park, and it is about a 5-minute walk from the parking lot to the spring on the flat ground within the park.

Part of this spring is used for drinking water, so it is prohibited to put your hands, feet, or objects in the water.

We will head home after visiting Ikeyama Spring. We will make a short toilet break at Aso Roadside Station on the way, and plan to arrive at Hanaguriide Park just after 5pm.

2 SCHEDULE

DATE September 7 2025 (Sun)

Meeting place Hanaguri Ide Park
Kikuchi County Kikuyou Town Magarite436-1
Meeting time 8:40am.

Course	Hanaguri Ide Park	Meeting time	8:40	
		Walking departure time	(8:50)	travel time (5 m.)
	Hanaguri Irrigation canal in Babagusu		(8:55 ~ 9:25)	(30 m.)
		A local volunteer guide talks about Hanaguri Ide, which is 400-year-old irrigation system.		
		Bus departure time	(9:30)	travel time (50 m.)
	Takamori Spring water Tunnel Park		(10:20 ~ 11:10)	(50 m.)
		Bus departure time	(11:10)	travel time (10 m.)
	Takamoridon Cedar		(11:20 ~ 11:50)	(30 m.)
		Bus departure time	(11:50)	travel time (30 m.)
	Kaguraen		(12:20 ~ 13:00)	(40 m.)
		Lunch, Rest, shopping	Bus departure time	(13:00) travel time (20 m.)
	Nakae Kagura Hall		(13:20 ~ 14:20)	(60 m.)
		Kagura Watching		(13:30 ~ 14:10) (40 m.)
			Bus departure time	(14:20) travel time (40 m.)
	Ikeyama Spring		(15:00 ~ 15:30)	(30 m.)
			Bus departure time	(15:30) travel time (30 m.)
	Roadside station Aso		(16:00 ~ 16:15)	(15 m.)
		Rest, shopping	Bus departure time	(16:15) travel time (45 m.)
	Hanaguri Ide Park		Bus arrival time	(17:00)

(Due to road conditions, the service may not run as scheduled.)

3 SIGHTSEEING SPOT GUIDE

● BABAGUSU area (KIKUYOU Town) (* The meeting place)

(1) Hanaguri Irrigation canal in Babagusu

Babagusu-Ide is an artificial irrigation canal approximately 13km long and it ends at Ootoroku.

The construction of several weirs (structures that stop the flow of a river and divert some of it) along this canal, diverting the water



Hanaguri irrigation canal

from the Shirakawa River to the surrounding rice paddies, was initiated by Kato Kiyomasa in 1608. These structures have survived for 400 years and continue to function as a production base for our food today.

Among these, the structure of the Hanaguri Ide is a rare agricultural water facility both nationally and globally, and it allows water to be drawn to the rice fields in the three areas along the Shirakawa River - Takuma, Mashiki, and Koshi - without the accumulation of sediment flowing from the Aso area.

"Ide" refers to an artificial irrigation channel, and "Hanaguri" has a structure similar to the hole in a cow's nose ring, so it is called "Hanaguri Ide."

The special structure known as "hanaguri" is achieved when a waterway is created by digging into hard bedrock. Instead of removing all of the rock, a section of the rock is left in place as a "partition" like a wall, and a semicircular hole approximately 2 meters high is then dug out underneath the wall.

The Shirakawa River basin is filled with a lot of sediment caused by volcanic ash from Mt. Aso, and in areas where the banks are high, the sediment cannot be disposed of even if it is removed.

The principle behind this is that by creating 80 holes (underground holes), water will flow through the narrow areas and accumulate in the wider areas at the top, causing the water at the bottom to turn into a torrent, stirring up the sediment and causing it to flow downstream.

● **TAKAMORI area (Takamori Town)**

(1) Takamori Spring water Tunnel Park

Takamori Spring Tunnel has a constant flow of 36 tons of spring water per minute, making it a valuable water source for Takamori Town.

The idea of building a railway between Kumamoto and Nobeoka was proposed in 1896, and construction of the Takamori-Takachiho section (total length 6,480 m) began in 1973.

However, in February 1975, a large amount of water suddenly gushed out from inside the tunnel about 2 km from the entrance, and eight springs in the town dried up. Since then, there have been repeated flooding incidents, and construction was halted after digging 2,055 m. In 1980, construction of the

Takamori Tunnel was halted, and the construction plan between Takamori and Takachiho was abandoned.

The area around the tunnel is now open to the public as a waterfront park, and about 550 m of the 2 km long tunnel is open to the public.

It is one of Takamori Town's tourist attractions, along with the water museum "Yusuikan," where you can learn about the importance of water, global environmental issues, and the history of Takamori Tunnel.

The temperature inside the tunnel is 17°C throughout the year, and it is characterized by being cool in the summer and warm in the winter. At the very back, you can enjoy a light illusion called Water Pearl, where a special strobe is used to make the water look like pearls.

The tunnel is decorated with a gorgeous display during the Tanabata Festival in July and the Christmas Fantasy from mid-November to December.



Entrance of the park



Water pearl in the park

(3) Cedar of Takamoridon

Takamoridon Cedar is a pair of gigantic cedar trees over 400 years old, located along the Kyushu Nature Trail, on the southern outer rim of the volcano. The towering male and female trees, which seem to lean against each other, are known as the "married couple cedars" due to their appearance.



Cedar of Takamoridon

With a trunk circumference of over 10m, they have an overwhelming presence and have been attracting attention in recent years as they are said to bring good luck in finding love.

"Takamoridon" refers to Takamori Iyo no Kami Koreori, the lord of Takamori Castle who ruled the Takamori area during the Sengoku period.

In 1586, after a fierce battle with the Satsuma Shimazu army, he committed suicide beneath this cedar tree along with his elder retainer, Mimori Hyogo Noin, and so the tree was given this name.

The age of the cedar is estimated to be between 400 and 1000 years, but considering the location where Iyo no Kami committed suicide, it is likely that it was already a large tree at the time.

Originally, this was the graveyard of Iyo no Kami and others, but in 1629, it was moved to Kanzo Zenji Temple by the vassal Takeda. Currently, the tower beneath the cedar is a memorial tower for Mimori Hyogo.

It is also known for an anecdote that when a famous actress visited the area, she embraced the two cedars, which she took to represent a male and female cedar, and received their power, and her marriage was immediately arranged. In recent years, it has suddenly become famous as a spot for matchmaking. It has become a power spot that is visited by many people from both within and outside the prefecture.

● **NAMINO area (Aso City)**

(1) **Kaguraen (Roadside station NAMINO)**

Kaguraen is a roadside station located along National Route 57 that also serves as an information center for Nmino Kagura.

It is bustling with tourists every day, as they can watch kagura and enjoy flavorful soba noodles and soft-serve ice cream made with buckwheat flour. The premises also include a Kagura Museum that introduces kagura from around the country, and a specialty product store that sells freshly picked highland vegetables and seasonal wild vegetables at direct-from-the-farm prices, where you can also experience hand-making soba noodles using 100% Hanno-grown soba. At the restaurant "Iwatobiraki" you can also enjoy authentic soba noodles, which we will have for lunch here.



Kaguraen

about Nakae Iwato Kagura

Nakae Iwato Kagura is a form of Kagura that has been passed down in the Hanonakae area of Aso City since the Meiwa period of the Edo period, about 240 years ago. It is currently a nationally designated intangible folk cultural property and a prefecturally important intangible folk cultural property, and performances are also held on location.



Nakae Iwato Kagura

With a strong sense of crisis that "if we do not train children, Kagura Hall may remain, but Kagura may disappear," they began training the people who would carry it on. Then, about 30 years ago, they established the Nakae Iwato Kagura Preservation Society (Chairman Sato Yoshikatsu), and have been passing on Kagura as a local performing art, consisting of 33 troupes that incorporate Miya Kagura, Sato Kagura, Imperial Court Gagaku, and Kume Mai.

Regular performances are held at Nakae Kagura Hall on the first Sunday of each month from April to November (except October).

(2) Nakae Kagura Hall

Nakae Kagura Hall is the venue for practice and regular performances for the Nakae Iwato Kagura Preservation Society.

Regular performances were restricted to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but this year they were able to perform from the regular performance in April.

Kagura does not have musical scores or materials, and each dance has been passed down from senior to junior through words and body language. Each performance is determined by playing the flute, bell, and taiko drums and matching them with the dancer's breathing. The drums are beaten with varying intensity and flamboyance, as if speaking on behalf of the gods.

Nakae Kagura regular performances begin with "Goho Reishi," a dance performed by elementary school students who are candidates for the future of the dance, from among the 33 dances, and five are performed each time.



Nakae Kagura Hall



Nakae Iwato Kagura

● **UBUYAMA area (Ubuyama Village)**

(1) Ikeyama Spring

Ikeyama Spring is a water source that has been selected as one of the Ministry of the Environment's 100 Famous Waters. It is surrounded by trees over 200 years old, and its greatest attraction is its magnificent scenery.



Ikeyama Spring

The water temperature is 13.5°C throughout the year, and it boasts an abundant spring water volume of 30 tons per minute, and the water god is enshrined in the center of the overflowing pond. This spring water becomes the Tamarai River and flows into the Ono River, before flowing far into Beppu Bay. It has long been used locally for domestic and agricultural water, and in recent years has also become the source of drinking water. It is a prime example of Kumamoto's delicious water.

4 COURSE MAP



5 MEMO



July 20th 2025
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