



Leave the crowded tourist spots behind for the charming seaside locations of Wakasa Town and Obama City in Fukui Prefecture, Japan! With this useful English guide in hand, explore storied shrines and temples, learn about the Mackerel Road stretching toward Kyoto, experience traditional local crafts, immerse yourself in pristine nature, and eat your fill of the freshest fish and other delicious food – all here on the coast of the Sea of Japan!

JOURNEY TO WAKASA AND OBAMA

Connecting Kyoto to the Sea



Wakasa Obama Tourism Association
Wakasa Obama Tourist Information Center

6-1 Ekimae-cho, Obama City, Fukui Prefecture, Japan
Tel.: 0770-52-3844
<https://www.sabakaido-traveler.com>



Wakasa Mikatagoko Tourism Association
(in Michi no Eki Mikatagoko Rest Area)

122-31-1 Torihama, Wakasa-cho, Fukui Prefecture, Japan
Tel.: 0770-45-0113
<https://www.wakasa-mikatagoko.jp>



Shrines and Temples | Historic Sites | Cultural Heritage | Rites and Festivals

Traditional Crafts | Scenic Spots | Lush Nature | Local Food

Presented by Japan Heritage Utilization Promotion Council of Obama City and Wakasa Town

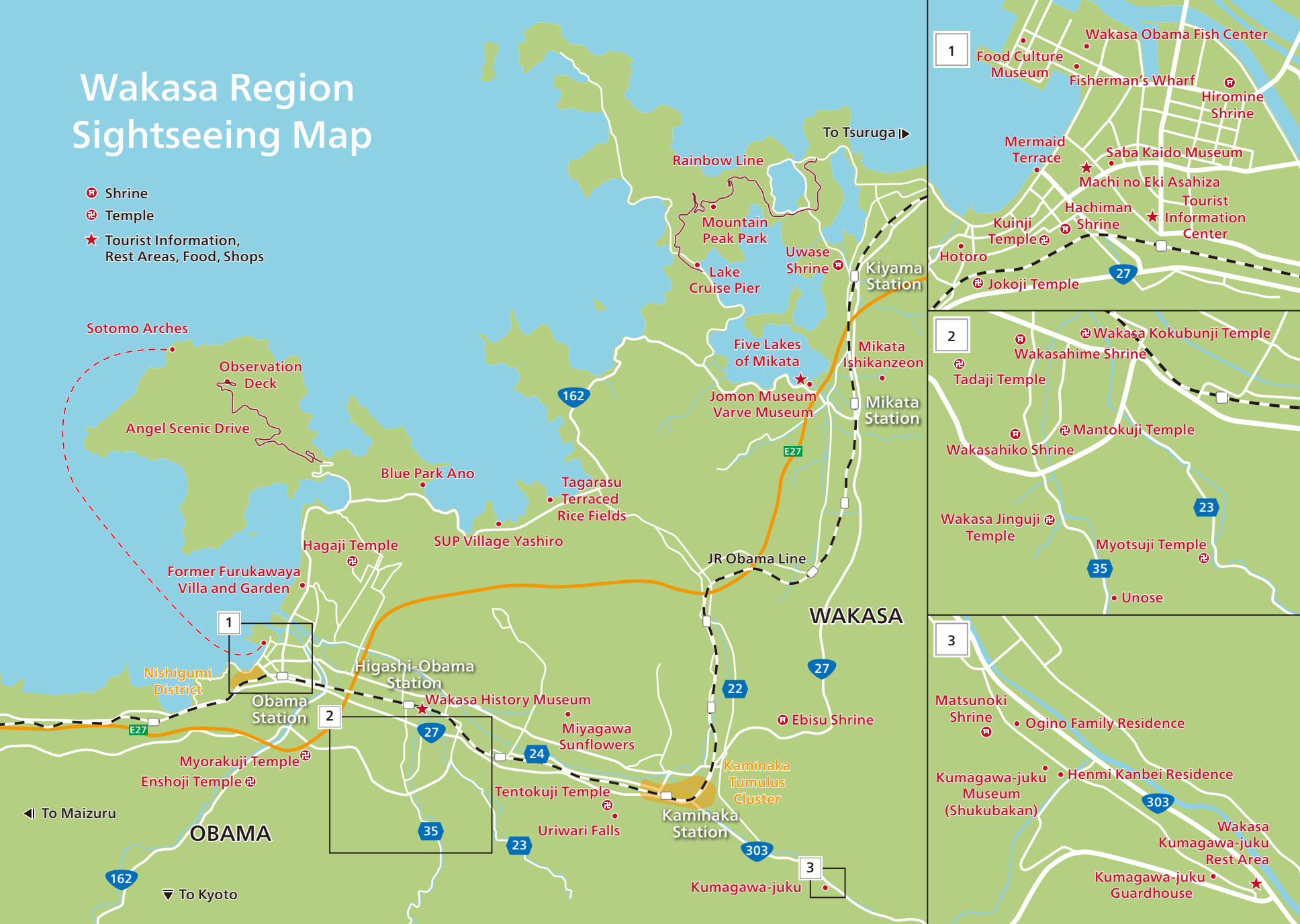


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Wakasa Region Sightseeing Map

- 🛕 Shrine
- 🏯 Temple
- ★ Tourist Information, Rest Areas, Food, Shops



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Ocean views, delicious seafood, rich history,
and a welcoming community eager to share
their culture and traditions with visitors...
All this and more awaits you on your journey!



The seaside city of Obama and the neighboring town of Wakasa may not be as well known as tourist hubs like Tokyo and Kyoto, but this historic region has a lot to offer for visitors willing to venture a little way off the beaten track!

Driving what is now known as the Saba Kaido (Mackerel Road) or taking a train along the scenic Lake Biwa and the Sea of Japan will bring you to Obama and Wakasa in Fukui Prefecture. This rural area has a population of approximately 41,000 people, who mostly make a living in the agricultural and commercial fishing industries. Local traditional crafts include lacquerware (especially chopsticks), agate carving, and *washi* papermaking. Popular cuisine features winter crab, *kuzu manju* sweets, pickled sea bream topped with bamboo leaves, Yatabe green onions, fresh eels, *ume* plums, and a dizzying variety of mackerel! Seasonal tourism usually consists of beach lovers, autumn color chasers, and seafood connoisseurs, but Obama and Wakasa are worth visiting for their heritage and art as well.

In earlier periods of history, when Kyoto was still the capital of Japan, mountain routes through Wakasa to Obama were Kyoto's primary mode of access to the Sea of Japan. This went beyond just fishing, as the port in Obama also served as the gateway to the Asian mainland. With foreign goods and travelers arriving from abroad to proceed to Kyoto along with shipments of local staple foods such as fish and salt, Obama and Wakasa inevitably absorbed aspects of their trading partners' refined culture, some of which has survived to this day in the form of culinary traditions, architecture, hospitality customs, and festivals.

Keep reading to discover even more about this charming region by the sea!

When you think of major port towns in Japan, you might envision somewhere like Yokohama or Kobe, but until a few centuries ago you would have been thinking of Obama! Situated in Wakasa Province, now Fukui Prefecture, Obama was a bustling seaport that welcomed ships from mainland Asia, serving as an important hub on the trade routes that connected the city of Kyoto with the rest of the world. It was from Obama that the old capital received much of its seafood, carried by men traveling on foot over steep mountain roads or through the post town of Kumagawa-juku. The main catch transported inland was *saba* (mackerel), which eventually led to the name Saba Kaido (Mackerel Road).

Wakasa Province was a *miketsukuni*, one of the provinces tasked with providing foodstuffs to the imperial court. But it wasn't only fish being carried along the Saba Kaido! Metalwork, Buddhist statuary, books, emissaries, and even Japan's first elephant also made their way along this network of roads. In turn, Kyoto's distinct culture reached the north, as the routes to the sea were responsible for bringing religious, festive, and culinary traditions from the old capital that can still be observed in Obama and Wakasa.

Special Feature

Saba Kaido

The Mackerel Road 鯖街道



One of the most lasting testaments of this exchange is the large number of Buddhist temples in Obama. Normally you would not see nearly as many in a rural area, let alone with such an amount of precious, well-preserved statues and other treasures! Another example is the dining and entertainment district of Nishigumi, where *geiko* (as geisha are called in both Kyoto and Obama) performed for guests at luxury establishments serving elegant cuisine not usually seen outside the capital. Even Kyoto's famous Gion Matsuri Festival has been paid homage in the form of Hoze Matsuri, a festival in Obama in which various neighborhoods showcase their floats and performances.

You will not be passing any porters rushing about on foot these days, but you can still explore the Saba Kaido! A plaque on the sidewalk in front of the Obama City Saba Kaido Museum marks the "official" starting point of the old Mackerel Road. After visiting the museum, you can get a handy map of the hiking trails and head out on a tough but rewarding journey through mountain forests and valley villages between Kyoto and Obama. Those less trek-inclined can enjoy parts of the Saba Kaido by car, including some gorgeous views from the mountain peaks, or stroll around Kumagawa-juku post town, taking in the traditional scenery and architecture. Either way, you don't have to carry baskets of mackerel to do it!

Obama City Saba Kaido Museum
小浜市鯖街道ミュージアム

〒917-0084 福井県小浜市小浜広峰17-1
17-1 Obama Hiromine, Obama City