

This is a land in which people have a tranquil flow of life.

Living sustainably for more than 1,300 years
Okuyamato in Nara



“*Yuzen*”

Living Calmly

悠然



Filmmaker

KAWASE Naomi

Q. What does Okuyamato in Nara mean to you?

Okuyamato is a place where people can rediscover what abundance is really about.

The spirit of local people providing assistance to each other is the origin of “hospitality.”

This is a region where all creatures, including humans, and nature—as the crew of Spaceship Earth—work together in harmony.

When looking ahead 100 years into the future, the essence of things, which is applicable to the whole world, exists in Okuyamato.

“We help each other,” says an elderly woman living in Yamaten settlement in Totsukawa Village. The spirit of mutual help developed among local people has never faded away, which is the truth behind the economic growth Japan has achieved in the postwar period. The spirit of sharing happiness and the spirit of caring for one’s neighbors is a noble Japanese ethos. It represents the Japanese culture of “hospitality,” which has been central in the promotional efforts for the Olympics.

Recent events around the world – from Japan’s Fukushima nuclear crisis to the COVID-19 pandemic – seem to signal a warning reminding us of the fragility and limitations of human society. I believe that what is most valuable is the kind of ethos found in Okuyamato, a region in which people live in perfect harmony with other people, other creatures, and nature.

Elderly women actively work in the fields with smiles. Their sons, who have inherited from them their attitude, also work hard. Those families become a magnet for other people. I think that the culmination of these small encouragements is important. Okuyamato makes me feel that I can really be myself. I believe that these many efforts, will help this community continue into the future, 100 years on from now.



Image courtesy: SKEN Image courtesy: KUMIE

河瀬 直美



KAWASE Naomi

Kawase is a filmmaker based in Nara, where she was born and raised. Her films that consistently pursue “reality” have received many awards, beyond the boundaries of documentaries and fiction, from film festivals around the world, including the Cannes Film Festival. Kawase’s representative works include “Suzaku,” “The Mourning Forest,” “Still the Water,” “An” and “Radiance.” Her latest film, “True Mothers,” was selected to be shown at the 2020 Cannes Film Festival and selected as the Japanese entry for the Best International Feature Film at the 93rd Academy Awards. This film also received the 45th Hochi Film Award for Best Director, the Best Director Award at the 75th Mainichi Film Awards, and the 44th Japan Academy Film Prize for Excellent Director.

In addition, Kawase endeavors to foster young filmmakers at the Nara International Film Festival. She served as the director of the Official Film of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, and has been appointed as Producer of and Senior Advisor to the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. She is involved in a wide range of activities, including directing TV commercials and authoring essays. In her personal life, she is a mother of a young son and enjoys growing vegetables and rice.

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Living in the mountains, a hometown of the heart



Special Feature

Okuyamato



Totsukawa Village

Yamaten settlement

The scenery of terraced paddy fields and houses scattered on mountain slopes, where people are living an almost self-sufficient life, presents how the original landscape of Japan used to be. Near the settlement there is the ancient pilgrimage route Kumano Kodo.

Hatenashi settlement

The Kumano Kodo Kohechi route, a pilgrimage and community road, passes through the settlement. Located in a high place, Hatnashi provides beautiful views of the Hatnashi mountains, so it is called a village in the sky.



People are living their lives as they are.
That's why they are active and energetic.

Totsukawa is Japan's largest village in area,
located in the southernmost part of Okuyamato.
The village retains the Japanese way of life of the past.



Villagers live a simple life
in harmony with nature.

Mind Travel

Deep mountains create magnificent natural beauty

**Unexplored valley,
with mountains
reflected on the water**

Dorokyo Gorge

This is a massive valley straddling the three prefectures of Nara, Wakayama, and Mie. A valley cruise offers a magnificent view of the gorge, formed by dynamic, gigantic rocks and oddly shaped rocks.

**Beautiful mountain
ranges create a
fascinating landscape**

A landscape of mountain ranges

The many layers of mountains form a landscape that symbolizes the mountainous district of Okuyamato. The appearance of magnificent mountain ranges creates a breathtaking view.

Okuyamato is located in the center of the Kii Peninsula covered with mountains. Visitors are welcomed warmly and gently by the green mountains.

**A refreshing place
created by nature
and humans**

**Forests of Japanese cedar
and cypress**

Kii Peninsula, which has high precipitation, is one of Japan's major forestry regions. The forests showcase the centuries-old history of forest development and conservation in the region.

**Hiking trails with
a fascinating view
like a utopia**

Soni Highlands

This high plateau, spreading out at the foot of Mt. Kuroso, is covered with shimmering gold pampas grass in late autumn, attracting many tourists.

**Clear stream from
seven blue fall
basins**

Zenki Fudo Nanae Falls

A seven-tiered falls creates spectacular scenery. The fall basins contain clear emerald-green waters called "Zenki blue."

Sacred land of prayer for a peaceful state of mind



Inner shrine on
Mt. Koya in which
Kobo Daishi
practiced
asceticism

Kou Jinja Shrine, which worships Kamadogami (the tutelary deity of the hearth), features a path to the shrine with more than 170 torii gates and a hill commanding a beautiful view of Mt. Omine.

Kou Jinja Shrine
347 Kojindake, Iketsukawa,
Nosegawa village



A very old shrine
filled with pure
spirit energy

Takakamo Jinja Shrine, which dates back to the Yayoi period, is one of the oldest shrines in Japan and the grand main shrine of all Kamo shrines nationwide, including Kamigamo and Shimogamo shrines in Kyoto.

Takakamo Jinja Shrine
1110 Kamogami, Gose City

A sacred land of healing based on nature worship, as represented by “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes of the Kii Mountain Range,” registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site



Head temple for
Shugendo, a religion
which regards nature as
Shinto and Buddhist
deities

Kinpusenji Temple is a symbol of Mt. Yoshino, a sacred land for mountain ascetic practices. The temple boasts a number of magnificent structures, including the Zendo Hall, which is reminiscent of nature, and the hidden statue of Zao gongen.

Kinpusenji Temple
2498 Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho



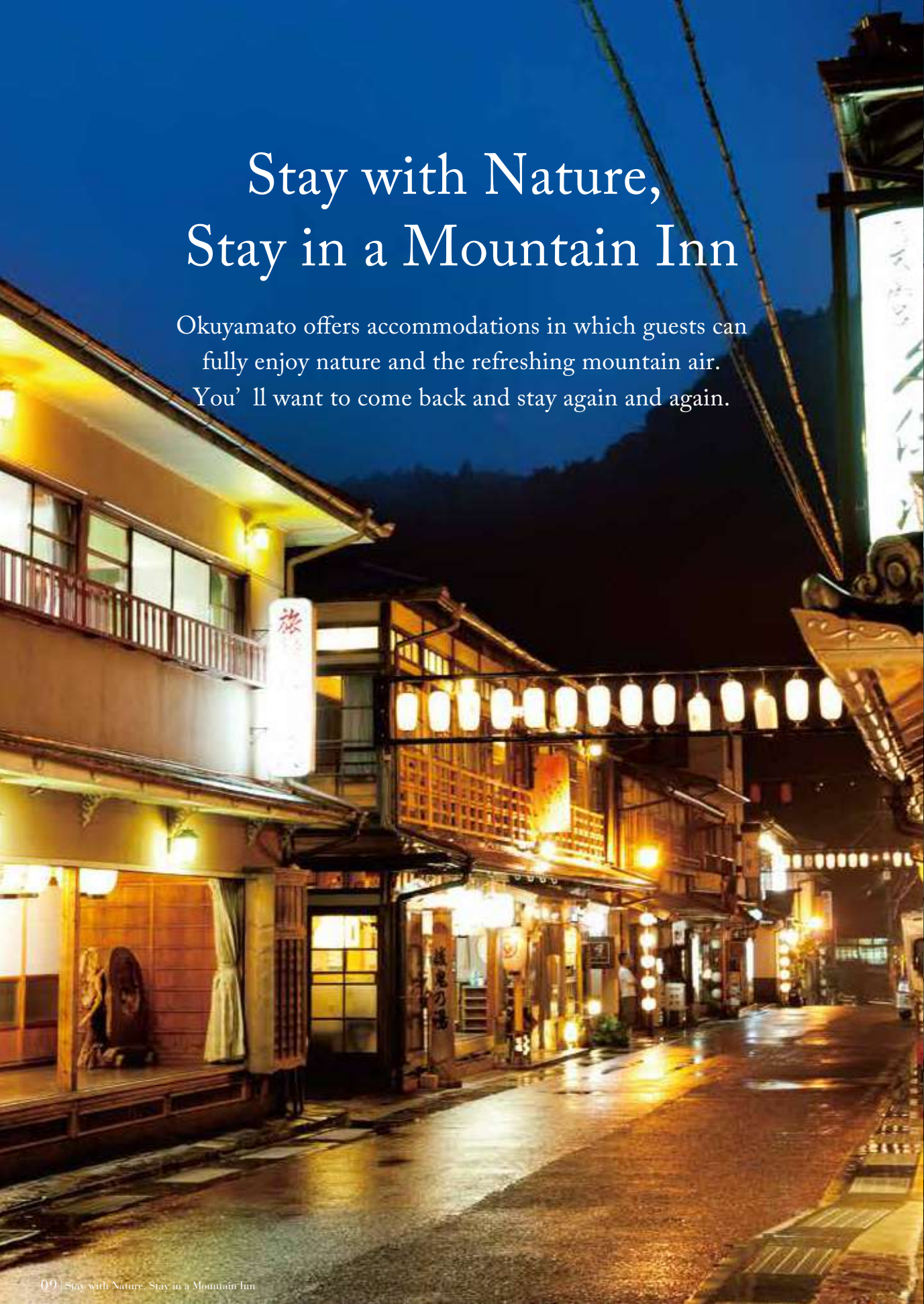
Worship of the oldest
water deity, a source of
life

Niu Kawakami Jinja Shrine Shimosha is one of three Niu Kawakami shrines located in the Yoshino district. The shrine, which features majestic stairs with 75 steps leading to the main shrine building, is said to be the birthplace of the Ema (wooden votive tablet).

Niu Kawakami Jinja Shrine Shimosha
1-1 Nagatani, Shimoichi-cho

Stay with Nature, Stay in a Mountain Inn

Okuyamato offers accommodations in which guests can fully enjoy nature and the refreshing mountain air. You'll want to come back and stay again and again.



Hot spring merged with a natural background

Kamiyusou is a hot spring inn in Totsukawa Village which boasts "100% fresh hot spring water." Major features of the inn are an open-air hot spring bath facing a valley and delicious freshwater fish and wild game dishes.

Kamiyusou
220 Dedani, Totsukawa village



Spend a relaxing time at a farmhouse inn

Standing on a small hill, Laputa Uda commands a splendid view of nature. It accepts only one group per day. Guests can enjoy homemade pizza and an open-air Goemon bath.

**Pizzeria and farmhouse inn
Laputa Uda**
433 Yataki, Haibara, Uda City



Inn for travelers and local residents at the entrance to Soni Village

This guest house is designed to give the impression of a new Soni Village. It can also be used as a workspace.

**SONI GATE
YAMAGASUYADO**
1145-2 Yamagasu, Soni village

Long-established inn in the hot spring resort area for ascetic Buddhist monks

Dorogawa Onsen, Kadojin is a long-established hot spring inn which has been operating for 330 years. It has large rooms for Shugendo practitioner groups. Wild boar hotpot is one of the famous foods served at the inn.

**Dorogawa Onsen,
Kadojin**
240 Dorogawa, Tenkawa village



Okuyamato Cuisine

Okuyamato has a wide variety of food culture created in a rich natural environment. The delicious food is further enhanced by the smiles of local people.

Tofu (bean curd) made with quality natural spring water is loved by local people.

A new proposal: Yoshinoyama + eel

Beautiful dishes using vegetables freshly picked in Gojo

Mild and tastes best after 2 days

Enjoy the rich flavor of wild boar meat.



Meisui tofu Yamaguchi-ya
258 Dorogawa, Tenkawa village

For three generations since its establishment about 100 years ago, Meisui tofu Yamaguchi-ya has continued to make tofu (bean curd) using a simple traditional method. Its customers include inns in the neighborhood and people from farther afield. [Shop owner YAMAGUCHI Seiki]



Kakinoha sushi Hyoutaro
429 Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho

Kakinoha sushi is a bite-sized portion of rice topped with a piece of mackerel or other fish, originally developed for people living in mountain areas, a long way from the sea. It's a perfect combination of salt-preserved mackerel and fluffy vinegared rice. [Third-generation owner MIZUMOTO Kotaro and his family]



Unagiya Taikoban
1278 Yoshinoyama, Yoshino-cho

Unagiya Taikoban offers fresh Japanese eel that is carefully prepared and grilled, resulting in a deliciously thick and fluffy texture. Reservations are required. [Shop owner HIGASHI Hiroaki]



Gojo Genbei
2-5-17 Hommachi, Gojo City

Gojo Genbei is a traditional Japanese-style restaurant serving dishes using local vegetables freshly picked by the chief chef every morning. Several hundred kinds of locally grown vegetables are used, including Yamato Highlands vegetables. [Chief chef NAKATANI Akihito]



Omine Boar meat

The meat of wild boars hunted in the Yoshino Omine mountains is offered at inns in the Dorogawa hot spring resort area. [Sakaguchi shouten Jibiedo] Hunter SAKAGUCHI Tadasu

Find a new Lifestyle!

A new movement to bring a breath of fresh air into Okuyamato

A growing number of people are paying attention to Okuyamato in the high mountains of Nara as a place of interest in which new lifestyles and subcultures are being created.

3

Beautiful cocktails of a former inn town at night

GOJO GIROCCO is a dining bar known for its cocktails made with fresh seasonal fruits. Enjoy exquisite drinks using local sake or liqueur at a hideaway-like place created by renovating a sake warehouse.



GOJO GIROCCO
2-2-2 Hommachi, Gojo City

7

Ecologically friendly inn in harmony with nature

A married couple who travelled the world has realized a “life friendly to both people and nature.” The whole-house-rental inn comprises a cottage within a biotope garden which is available for rental by groups. Barbecue rental and seasonal vegetables are also available.



Mountain Lodge haru∞baru
351 Teragaito, Shimokitayama village

4

Enjoy an herb lunch that's easy on the body!

Hilltoco Café offers healthy lunches and sweets using herbs and organic vegetables grown in the Yamato Highlands. Forget about time and fully enjoy your meal at an old traditional Japanese farmhouse located in a forest.



Hilltoco Café
129 Nakanosho, Ouda, Uda City

8

Enjoy conversations with the owner who is familiar with Tenkawa

Sakaya Hanjiro is a small guest house with just three rooms, constructed by renovating a 200-year-old Japanese-style farmhouse, providing a first-hand experience living in a *satoyama* (village forest) area. Guests can enjoy magnificent mountain scenery in front of the house.



Sakaya Hanjiro
413-1 Minamihiura, Tenkawa village

1

Accommodation and base for art activities in the mountains

“noad” is designed to be a base for a variety of art activities, including art showcases and workshops. The facility can also be used as a residence for artists and tourists from both Japan and overseas.



noad
232 Taketou, Totsukawa village

5

A whole-house- rental inn blending into the atmosphere of the old town

There are two types of accommodations, created by renovating an old Japanese-style house and a traditional storage house in Gojo Shimmachi. Each of the whole-house-rental inns—a perfect blend of old architecture and modern design—accepts only one group per day so that guests can spend time in the dignified Japanese-style rooms as if they were actually living there.



Tabiyado Yanaseya Lodgings
2-7-3 Hommachi, Gojo City

9

In search of your own way of life

POST INN is a guest house created by renovating a former post office. It has four private rooms and a café & bar. The owner has the unique background of becoming a hunter after settling into this community.



Guest House POST INN
273-2 Kawaai, Tenkawa village

2

A breath of fresh air brought into Okuyamato

This shared office created in 2015 acted as a trigger for many people to move to Okuyamato and the emergence of creative activities. Stop by at the coffee stand and feel the breath of fresh air that has been brought into the district.



OFFICE CAMP HIGASHIYOSHINO
610-2 Ogawa, Higashiyoshino village

6

A small café in a furniture workshop

“Little oven” is a café run by a married furniture maker and pastry chef. Visitors can enjoy pastries in a comfortable room decorated with sophisticated furniture. Its location by a stream is also very soothing.



Little oven
77 Kogurisu, Higashiyoshino village

10

Fresh vegetables and the landscape of the highlands are a feast for the eyes and the stomach.

“Auberge in the forest ki-ra-ra” offers French cuisine using a wide variety of vegetables and other ingredients delivered from local farmers and the fields next to the restaurant. The owners, a married couple who are experts in cooking and agriculture, extend cordial hospitality to one group per day in a luxurious location.



Auberge in the forest ki-ra-ra
658-1 Konagao, Soni village