

NIC Walking Guides

-Neighbouring Spot-

② Tokoname Pottery Path



NAGOYA INTERNATIONAL CENTER

INTRODUCTION

With a population of 2.2 million, Nagoya, the capital of Aichi Prefecture, is the core city of Japan's fourth-largest metropolitan area.

As commerce and industry prospered, and culture flourished in the Edo Period, Nagoya grew into a thriving metropolis. Nagoya has continued to grow since Ieyasu Tokugawa, founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate Government, built Nagoya Castle in 1612. A culture and tradition of manufacturing blossomed during the Meiji Period and is still evolving today.

This guide has been prepared for foreign residents of Nagoya and visitors who are interested in viewing local tourist attractions. This is one of a series of walking guides covering various areas of Nagoya.

Contained in this guide is a model walking route applicable to the specified area or spot. You will find a variety of cultural and historical attractions situated around the walking course.

We hope that you find this guide useful.

ACCESS

As Tokoname City is located just beside the Central Japan International Airport, reaching there from Nagoya is very easy. Tokoname Station is only about 35 minutes from Nagoya or Kanayama on the Meitetsu "Tokoname Line" 常滑線 Express. It is only a 5 minute walk from Tokoname Station to the starting point of the Pottery Path.



Tokoname and the Pottery Path in Brief

“Yakimono Sanpomichi” or Pottery Footpath of Tokoname is actually a model walking course of the various points of interest of the pottery town Tokoname, opened in 1972. This path is filled with traditional houses, workshops and other unique and characteristic buildings. The area has remained unchanged, keeping its pottery-town atmosphere unique to Tokoname.

Tokoname was already well-known as a pottery town at the end of the 12th century. The town is one of the six historic pottery towns of Japan. The others are: Bizen, Shigaraki, Tamba, Seto and Echizen. They are known as The Six Ancient Kilns of Japan".

The Tokoname kilns were said to be the largest and oldest of them all. Tokoname took advantage of its proximity to the sea and extended the market throughout Japan by use of ships. A large amount of old Tokoname pottery has been found in many places in Japan. You can see the pottery from olden times at The Tokoname Ceramic Art Institute.

Tokoname ware has a long history and tradition which dates back some 900 years. Redware was invented in the early 1800s. It developed with the production of teaware like teapots and cups for green tea. Producing ceramic pipes, bowls and jars has made Tokoname City prosperous. In the 1900s mass production was introduced which saw the establishment of production systems and improvement of kilns.

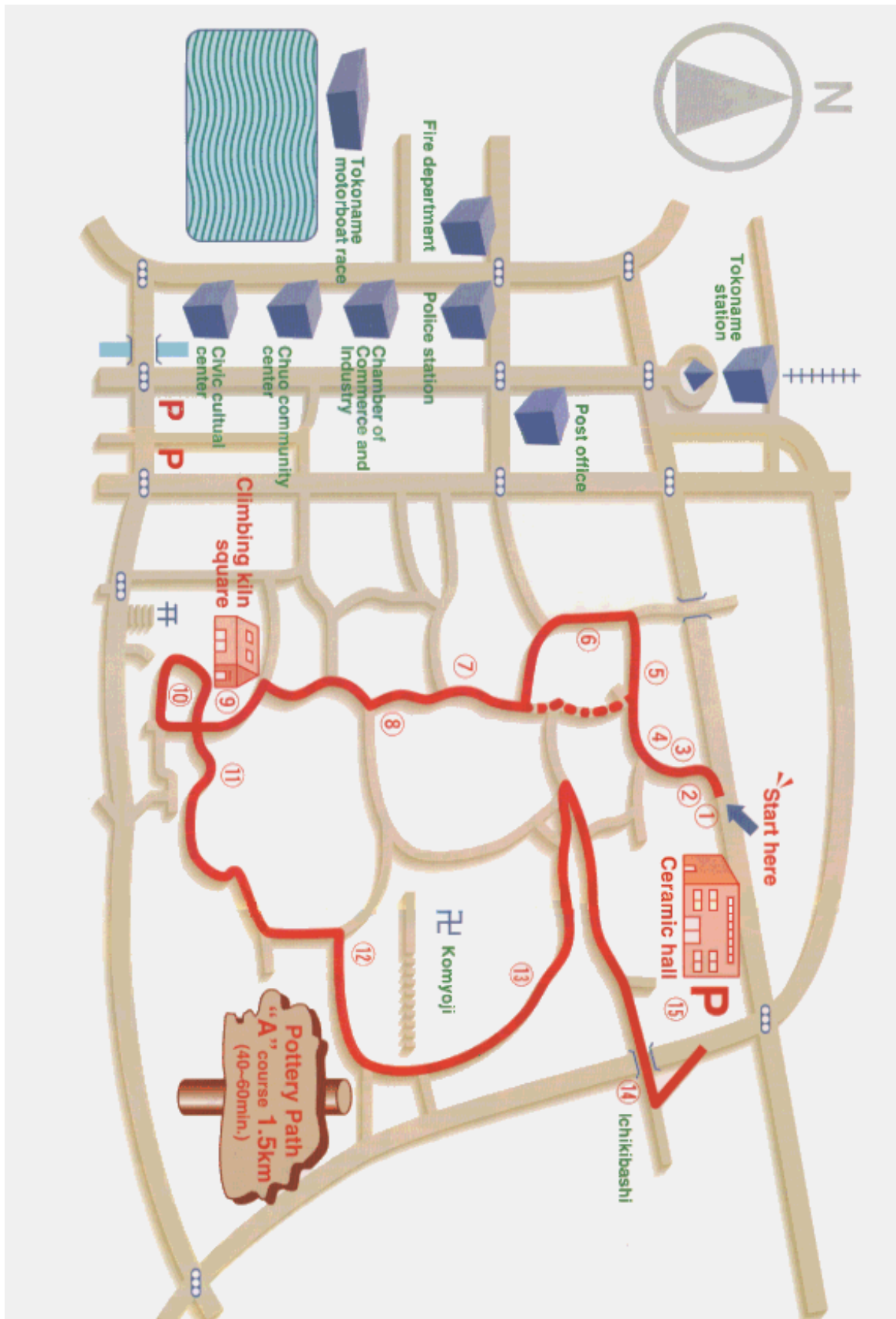
Nowadays a wide range of ceramics from construction tiles and sanitary ware to table ware, vases and art pottery is produced.

The Pottery Footpath area flourished as the center of the ceramic industry in the early and mid 1900s. They mainly produced ceramic pipes, bowls and jars. Though there are some factories and potters' studios which are still operating, the number of them has declined compared to its heyday.

GUIDE MATERIALS

Tourist guide materials including a detailed course map of the pottery path are available at the Tokoname City Tourist Information Center (located inside the Tokoname Station) and the “Tokoname Ceramic Hall” (Tokoname Tojiki Kaikan) which is just next to the starting point of the path.

Course Map



1) Start



The start point is just in front of the Tokoname Ceramic Hall (Tokoname Tojiki Kaikan 陶磁器会館)

You have only to follow the numbered course sign-board like this. The course starts with No.1, and ends with No.25



There is a big jar at the entrance of the Path, it was made for pharmaceutical products in the 1940s. The big bowls along the Path are called "Suijen-bachi", "bowls for water lilies" and are usually filled with water and placed in the corner of a yard. They are commonly used for displaying water lilies, water grasses, old goldfish.



2) A Ceramic Mural

Traditional kilns need to be built on inclines, so it was advantageous to build them on the hillsides. The Path is therefore quite hilly. The ceramic mural on your left was made by elementary school children.



3) Ceramic Pipes

Ceramic pipes are used to support the banks. This style is seen in many places in Tokoname. In this way, inferior pipes are recycled. Ceramic pipes are made for water service and sewage. They are resistant to sudden changes of temperature and heat and are also very durable.

There are many kinds of ceramic pipes such as round, square, and with branches or sockets. Pipes with four, six, or nine holes are used for electrical cables. Ceramic pipes have been known to protect electrical cables even when the surrounding area has been engulfed in fire.



4) Chimneys

Symbolic of the scenery of Tokoname, over 300 to 400 brick chimneys existed in the 1950s, the peak industrial period.



During that time clouds of pure black smoke belched from the many chimneys every day blocking out the sun light. This type of chimney scenery was associated with the pottery products produced in Tokoname.

The city produced relatively large ceramics like pipes, jars and bowls. They needed big kilns and this gave rise to these big chimneys. Therefore, the scenery is unique and symbolic of Tokoname. Chimneys were as much as 25 meters high, but in recent years have been shortened to prevent collapse from earthquakes and typhoons.



The type of fuel used in the kilns has changed from coal to heavy oil, and recently to gas. Once kilns had been converted to the gas system, chimneys lost their important roles and became unnecessary. Old chimneys in danger of collapse have been demolished one after another. Today 90 still exist, but only 50 to 60 of them remain in perfect condition



5) Jars

Large water jars, big frog-shaped jars and pots are displayed here. They are made by a method called "Himozukuri".

Thick clay coils are formed first, then the coils are gradually piled up one by one. A potter begins by placing one coil on another and waits until they dry, and he repeats this process many times. Making a big jar by this method requires about one week.



6) Preserved Atmosphere

Many old pottery factories are lined up in this area with wooden walls painted black, representing atmosphere unique to Tokoname.

7) Takita House 滝田家 (Old Shipping Agency)

The Takita family ran the shipping trade business during the mid to late 19th Century. The old building was restored to the original state as you see today in 2000. The building is a Municipal Cultural Property and serves as a museum showing the life of a rich merchant family during the 19th Century.

Admission fee 300 Yen.

Open 09:30 - 16:30; closed on Mondays



8) Dokanzaka 土管坂 (Clay Pipe Hill)

Here is "Dokanzaka", one of the highlights of the Pottery Path. It has been selected as one of "the 30 famous Japanese hills". You can enjoy the beautiful ceramic pipes and humorous look of the sake bottles. See how the narrow path was beautifully paved by clay rings.



9) Noborigama Hiroba 登窯広場 (Climbing Kiln Square)

This is "Noborigama Hiroba", Climbing Kiln Square, which opened in 1995. At one time there were a lot of pottery factories in this area especially on the adjacent hill sides. In the exhibition pavilion there is a well preserved square down-draft kiln with two fire mouths built in 1910s. A pottery class providing

pot-making experience for the general public is held on the second floor. Reservations are necessary.

Admission: Free Open: 09:30 - 16:30; closed Mondays & Holidays

Pottery Class 2500 Yen (10:00 - 12:00, 13:00 - 15:00); reservations at Tel 0569-35-0292

10) Noborigama - The Climbing Kiln 登り窯



This Climbing Kiln has been designated an Important National Cultural Asset. It was built in about 1887 and operated till about 1973. It is the largest in Japan. Coal and wood were used to fire it. The firing took eight days and nights. Products made here were mostly flower pots, teapots, charcoal braziers, vases, and sake wares.



11) The Footbridge

Here is a foot bridge crossing two factories above the Path, which was used to increase the efficiency of the factories. Removal and demolition of past bridges make this one quite rare.



12) A Wall Decoration

Old ceramic pipes were thoughtfully buried in the wall to suit the landscape of the Pottery Path. This kind of consideration maintains the landscape of the Pottery Path.

13) The Water Lily Bowl

This is the studio of a craftsman who still uses traditional techniques. He makes large works with the technique of coil building.



14) “Ichikibashi” Bridge 一木橋

This is a bridge called "Ichikibashi". There were more chimneys and factories operating in this area thirty years ago. Factories which opted for modern producing systems and mass production have moved to the suburbs.



As you may realize after walking the area, the roads for cars are limited and also very narrow. Some factories are stopping production because of difficulties in finding successors. The scenery will gradually change. But the City of Tokoname is very keen to carefully maintain this scenery that is unique to Tokoname.

15) Goal!

Now we are back to our starting point at Ceramic Hall. The Pottery Path also has another course (course B), including institutions such as The Ceramic Art Institute, The Ceramic History Museum, INAX Tile Museum and The Kiln Museum Gallery. If you have time, please visit them, too. Moreover, there are pottery galleries and a wholesale pottery market in Tokoname. You can enjoy shopping for Tokoname-ware there as well.

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This Tokoname Pottery Path walking guide has been prepared by Nagoya International Center with a kind collaboration of Tokoname City Tourism Division

For further information about the Tokoname Pottery Footpath, contact:-

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