

Who'd Have
Guessed!

33

Facts About Misasa Onsen and Mount Mitoku

01 Sing for This Statue to Get Rid of a Wart!

This Buddhist statue is said to protect the onsen district from fires. Legend has it that if you want a wart removed, you can sing the first half of a song in front of the shrine, and your prayer will be answered. After your wish comes true, sing the other half as a thank you.



02 A Witness of Stone, Watching Over Misasa Onsen's Benefits

The Tsuenashi Jizō (or "Cane-Ridding Jizō") is said to soothe the legs and lower back, and bring a long healthy life. It is also said that those who came to Misasa Onsen with a cane will recover and then dedicate their no-longer-needed canes to him.

03 Enjoy a Hot Bath at Misasa Onsen even in the Heat of the Summer...?

Nowadays, it's a popular custom in Japan to eat eel during the heat of summer, but a long time ago in Misasa Onsen, it was common to take a hot bath. People would come to Misasa Onsen from all around, because these summertime baths were said to provide even greater health benefits.

04 Misasa Was Beloved by Haiku Poets!

Many famous Japanese poets stayed in Misasa. Some of their poems, inspired by the way the town made them feel, have been adapted into stone monuments. Visiting the scenery that these poets enjoyed just might nourish your own heart and mind.



05 One of Japan's Smallest Sake Breweries, Lauded Internationally

Fujii Sake Brewery was established in 1669, and their flagship brand is called Misasa Masamune. Fujii is best known for their gold-medal-winning koshū, or aged sake, at the 2010 International Wine Challenge.



06 Sanrakutei Garden, Named for the "Three Pleasures of Life"



Visitors can still see remnants of Sanrakutei Garden, created by Mirei Shigemori, one of modern Japan's preeminent gardeners. It is known for the stunning stone arrangements in its dry landscape garden. The sanraku in the name means the "three pleasures of life." What would you consider those to be?

07 Buddhist Statues Point the Way to Mount Mitoku

Major General Yoshimitsu Tsugawa was the regiment leader of the Aomori 5th Regiment's Hakkoda Snow March Exercise. After surviving the catastrophe, he came home a hero and settled in Misasa in 1911. He visited the graves of the fallen soldiers for the rest of his life.



08 The Saitori-Sashi Dance Brings Good Luck

People once worked to catch small birds using long poles coated with a sticky substance called birdlime, in the aim of luring falcons with them afterward. Over time, it developed into a dance with metaphorical associations, like "seizing a chance." Seeing this dance performed by Attakaza regularly may bring you luck.



09 Improving Work Efficiency through Rhythm



Kabe-Nuri Sanko-Bushi is a traditional song and dance of Misasa Onsen. They say it originated when a worker painting a wall (kabe-nuri) heard the song Sanko-Bushi being performed next door, and started working much more efficiently to the rhythm of the music.

10 Misasa Onsen was Beloved by the Sumo Champion Kotozakura



Kotozakura was a famous 20th-century yokozuna, the highest rank in sumo, born in the neighboring Kurayoshi. He rose through the ranks, but broke his ankle during a match against the yokozuna Kashiwado. He took a bath in Misasa Onsen, where all diseases are cured, and after physical rehabilitation, he eventually became a yokozuna.

11 A Nude Photography Studio, Reborn as Local Heritage

When New Lucky closed in 2013, it was the only nude theater left in the San'in region. It then served as a small theater, hosting rakugo performances, silent film screenings, and more.



12 Kajika Frogs, the Divas of the River



At the Mitoku River running through Misasa, you'll find Kajika frogs, the "divas of the river." From mid-April through July or so, their buck-like chirps can be heard throughout Misasa Onsen.



13 88 Jizo Watch Over Misasa Onsen

On the way from the old Misasa Highlands to Hakurō Shrine, there are 88 Buddhist statues along both sides of the road, modeled after the 88-temple pilgrimage of Shikoku. Each one's face is slightly different — it couldn't hurt to make a wish to your favorite one, right?



14 Pilgrims to Mount Mitoku, Guided by Buddhist Statues

Long ago, people would travel on foot from Misasa Onsen to Mount Mitoku to worship, relying on statues and stone pillars to point the way. The stone pillars have markings mentioning things like ryokan inns, suggesting that Misasa Onsen served as a base for pilgrims to Mount Mitoku.

15 The Beautiful Sound of a Violin... That You Made Yourself?



This is the only museum in Japan dedicated to both the making and playing of stringed instruments. Visitors can see concerts by pros, displays of bamboo violins made in town, or try playing — or even making! — a violin.

16 Heal Your Body by Spending Time in Misasa Onsen

The entire Misasa Onsen area is bathed in radon, the vaporized form of radium. Breathing it in is said to stimulate cells, and to boost immunity and self-healing abilities. Steam rooms are especially good for people concerned with their respiratory system, because they're gentler on the body.



17 The White Wolf from the Legend of Misasa Onsen



The legend speaks of a white wolf sent to Mount Mitoku on behalf of the bodhisattva Myōken. The warrior who let this wolf live was also on his way to Mount Mitoku with the goal of reviving the Genji Clan, making this mountain a center of faith for gods and men alike. Myōken is an incarnation of Yakushi Nyorai, the Healing Buddha, so Yakushi-dō Hall in the hot spring town is also dedicated to Yakushi Nyorai.

18 Misasa Onsen in Anime and Manga

The "Manga Kingdom Tottori" project is a prefecture-wide effort to tie in with the anime world, including Tottori Sand Dunes Conan Airport and Yonago Kitaro Airport. Misasa Onsen itself has shown up in anime and manga many times!



19 Misasa Kannokura Soybeans, Grown in the Southern Foothills of Mount Mitoku



This local variety of soybeans has long been grown in the district of Kannokura. They have twice the isoflavones of ordinary soybeans, and have been a valuable protein source for ascetics and people alike. Today, they are used for tofu, soy milk, and miso, and to make nutritionally enriched soy protein powder.

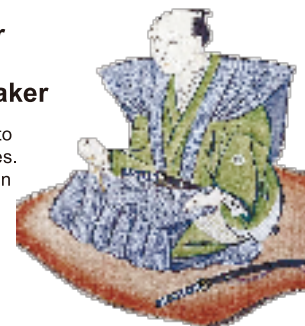


20 Sweet Ozōni Soup for Good Luck

Ozōni is a famous soup eaten for the new year. In Misasa, it is said that eating it with horse chestnut mochi (or tochi mochi) in it will help prevent strokes, and that the sweetness helps people recover their strength. It is available year-round at the restaurants of the onsen district.

21 A Rest Stop for Japan's First Modern Mapmaker

Inoh Tadataka was the first person to map Japan using modern techniques. According to his journal, he stayed in Misasa Onsen on November 20, 1813, at Iwayu Ryokan. (Portrait courtesy of the Inoh Tadataka Museum in Chiba)



22 A Monthly Ritual and Rice Porridge

A Goma Fire Ritual is held on the 18th of each month at Sanbutsu-ji Temple, on Mount Mitoku. This ritual is open to the public. If you request it in advance, you can also have the rice porridge of the month afterward, as a form of Buddhist practice. The meal is eaten in silence, as quietly as possible.



23 Hanging Lanterns Donated by a Famous Warlord

The hanging lanterns at the entrance of Izanrō Iwasaki ryokan are said to have been originally donated by the warlord Katagiri Katsumoto as a prayer for victory over Korea. He then went on to win battle after battle. Some say that these lanterns will help pass your prayers along to the heavens, just like for Katagiri.



24 Onsen Musume Promoting Local Heritage

"Onsen Musume" are goddesses born from hot spring sources, who work to share hot spring culture and promote their own hot spring resort towns. Today, over 100 hot spring towns feature these characters. Misasa Karen was appointed Tourism Ambassador No. 1 for Misasa Onsen on March 3, 2021.



25 Misasa Onsen Bathing Etiquette Passed Down since Edo Period

The samurai-era Tottori Domain's bathing etiquette advised that "hot springs are a blessing; be not greedy," "residents should avoid being rude," and "hospitality should be warm and thoughtful." Even today, Misasa Onsen welcomes visitors with these guidelines in mind.



26 A Must-Try! Horse Chestnut Mochi Makes for a Rare Treat



Horse chestnut mochi, or tochi mochi, have long been part of the local diet. Today, it makes a popular souvenir, especially filled with sweet red bean paste. The shop Matsunoya still makes this mochi every day the old-fashioned way. You might have to get there early, though — they can sell out fast!

27 Could This Statue Be the World's Oldest Time Capsule?

The Statue of Zaō Gongen at Sanbutsuji Temple is an Important Cultural Property, and the first statue of its kind in Japan. This was determined based on a document with a name written on it, found inside of the statue. X-ray scans have also revealed other artifacts inside the statue — it might be the oldest time capsule in the world.



28 The Only Place in Japan Where You Can Touch a National Treasure?

When the National Treasure Nageire-dō Hall at Sanbutsu-ji Temple underwent repairs in the early 20th century, the old lumber was also designated part of that National Treasure. It is on display at the temple's Treasure Hall. It just might be the only National Treasure in Japan that visitors can touch with their bare hands, all year round.



29 Pray for Victory at the Horseback Buddhist Statue!

One of the treasures of Mount Mitoku is the Equestrian Statue of Komori Gongen in Armor, dating back to the first half of the 16th century. This statue of an armor-clad male deity on horse-back was an object of worship by warlords. Maybe a prayer to this figure could bring you victory, too.



30 Misasa Onsen Loves Fermented Foods!

Misasa Onsen makes a great place to enjoy fermented foods. For starters, foods made with Misasa Kannokura soybeans are only available here. There's also highly nutritious non-alcoholic amazake made by local sake breweries, and Misasa yogurt. Pair these with a bath, and refresh and nourish your body!



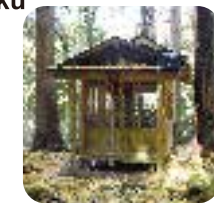
31 Yellow Amulets to Bring Happiness

Mount Mitoku is home to three branch temples. One of them, Kaijō-in Temple, is a sacred site for the Chūgoku region's 49-temple Yakushi pilgrimage. On the eighth day of each month, this temple sells 30 yellow amulets.



32 Why People with Back Pain Go to Mount Mitoku

Many of the people visiting Misasa Onsen also visit the "Senki Jizō," on Mount Mitoku, to pray for improvements in their back pain. In the local dialect, senki means "lower back," and this jizō is believed to even answer prayers related to constipation or fertility.



33 The Smell of Hospitality at the Three Temples on Mount Mitoku

The temples of Mount Mitoku each welcome visitors with a different aroma. At Rinkō-in, visitors can try making "fragrance bags." At Shōzen-in, visitors can sip matcha with a view of the lovely garden. At Kaijō-in, visitors can enjoy a mist of kuromoji, a tree prized for its fragrant bark for centuries.

