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An Under-The-Radar Japanese Village With Striking Architecture Is Known As 'Little Kyoto'

BY [MADISON SCRIVANO](#) MARCH 24, 2025 3:00 PM EST

Japan is a place that feels as though no matter how long you spend there, you'll never be able to see it all. This is especially true for smaller villages, which are often overshadowed by bustling megacities like Tokyo or [Instagram-famous \(but controversial\) towns like Nara](#). One under-the-radar Japanese village — often overlooked due to its proximity to Himeji — offers visitors the chance to explore Kyoto-like architecture without the crowds: Tatsuno. Known as the "Little Kyoto of the Harima Region," this charming little town is steeped in history and tradition.

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and delicious eateries. Follow your nose as it leads you toward the tangy scent of soy sauce coming from Japan's first museum dedicated to this salty condiment, the Usukuchi Tatsuno Soy Sauce Museum.

And be sure to stop by one of the many restaurants serving up somen, a thin noodle served as soup in the winter or chilled in the summer. Nature lovers will also find plenty to admire about the village — from the tranquil flow of the Ibo River surrounded by stunning colors in the fall to the beauty of the cherry blossoms in the spring. Whether you're looking to immerse yourself in history, savor local delicacies, or simply enjoy nature — Tatsuno has a little something for everyone.

Explore year-round beauty in Tatsuno



Although small, Tatsuno is bursting with activities. Outside of learning about soy sauce and slurping on delicious noodles, visitors can spend the day exploring the Tatsuno Castle — a now reconstructed Edo-period building set atop Mount Keirozan. Visitors can explore the grounds, and the inside portion provides insight into a time of samurais.

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Blossom Festival in the spring — complete with a warrior parade, traditional Japanese music concert, and several tea ceremonies. When the festival isn't on, you can also make your way to Shūentei — a historic tea house to enjoy a traditional ceremony with tea and snacks for 500 yen. They are only held on specific dates throughout the year, so you may need a bit of planning or luck to time your visit well. Make sure you check the city's [website](#) for details. Another festival not to miss is the Summer Fireworks Festival held on the first Saturday of August every year.

Tatsuno Park is a gorgeous place to see the more than 3,000 cherry trees in bloom, spend some time picnicking, or explore the Literature Path, which leads the way to the Akatonbo poetry monument (erected in honor of a famous nursery rhyme lyricist). Below the path, visitors will find [the most spectacular spot to see cherry blossoms](#): the cherry blossom tunnel. Between December and February it's common for the temperature to dip below freezing, and if you're lucky, you may see the village's beautiful architecture dusted in snow.

Getting to and around Tatsuno

