

Imayo Soka-shuku Area

Tokyo Gaikan Expressway (National Route 298)

Imayo Soka-shuku

Soka-shuku (Soka post Station) had its origins in 1606 when OKAWA Zusho took the lead on the order of the Edo Shogunate and constructed a new Soka Road to link Senju to Koshigaya on the Nikko Road in a straight line, which had previously made a large detour eastward. After that, in 1630, Soka-shuku was established as a station between Senju and Koshigaya.

"Imayo" means "contemporary, or from today's viewpoint," and incorporates the slow living point of view.

The "signposts" will guide you on your walks.

There are signposts in various spots in the Imayo Soka-shuku area that will help you with your walks. Feel free to use them as guides for your itineraries.



Characters of Soka Walking Map



To Koshigaya

Dokkyodaiakumae < Soka-Matsubara > Sta.

Matsubara Service Center

Tobu-Skytree Line

Shinmeigu Shrine

Statue of KAWAI Sora

Statue of MATSUO BASHO

Statue of Osen-san

Statue of Ako-chan

Statue of Jizo-do of Asako House

Statue of Eki Iriguchi

Statue of Mitsumine-jinja Shrine

Statue of Shiyakusho Iriguchi

Statue of Soka City Hall

Statue of Soka City Products and Tourism Information Center

Statue of Soka Sta. Koban

Statue of Soka Sta. Ent

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National Scenic Beauty

"Scenic Area of Oku-no Hosomichi Soka Matsubara"



To National Scenic Beauty

On March 18, 2014, 13 scenic spots from 10 prefectures related to MATSUO BASHO's Oku-no Hosomichi were commended for their influence on the ideas of landscape held by later generations and for still conveying the atmosphere of the old days, and were named as nationally designated scenic spots. Located to the north of Soka-shuku, which appears in Oku-no Hosomichi, Soka Matsubara has been known since the Edo period as a scenic spot on the Nikko Road. Together with old trees with trunks as large as 2 meters in circumference, this area has been recognized for providing an excellent landscape that conveys the atmosphere of the days of Oku-no Hosomichi.

A road traveled by MATSUO BASHO

In March 1689, Basho left Fukagawa, Edo by boat for Senju, said goodbye to the people who had come to see him off, and later arrived at Soka, the second post station on the Nikko Road. "Hoping that I would return there alive, counting on my unreliable fate, I finally arrived at an inn in a town called Soka that evening." The first station to appear in Oku-no Hosomichi is Soka. It is said that Basho used a character meaning "quick" in writing the place name of Soka because he wanted to emphasize the halting pace on his first day of walking, while missing the people he had had to leave, and being bothered by the heavy load on his shoulders. How would today's Soka Matsubara look to Basho?

The appearance of the old trees

Among the 634 pine trees existing today, there are about 60 old trees dating back to the Edo period. You can recognize them at first glance. They vary in appearance, ranging from trees with trunks as large as 2 meters in circumference, to those that extend branches over the Ayase River. You can enjoy viewing the appearance of the old trees while walking in Soka Matsubara.

Soka Matsubara, now and then

One theory holds that the row of pine trees was planted when the Ayase River was improved in 1630. The first record of any pine trees being planted indicates that 1,230 saplings were planted in 1792. Later on, painters and literati depicted them in numerous works. Worrying that such a landscape had been reduced to little more than 60 trees, local people took the lead in planting additional saplings, and the number of pine trees has now reached 634 later, it was now designated by the national government as a scenic spot in March 2014. The walking trail thus turned as something that links the past to the future.

Now

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

Then

The Eight Views of Soka

To a nationally designated scenic spot

1. Nikko kado Soka Matsubara (Imayo Soka-shuku Area)
2. Otodana Kashi and Simozuka Kado (Matsubara Ayasegawa Park Area)
3. Cherry Blossom Trees of Kasai Irrigation Canal (South of the Hisazuki-jinja Shrine) (Matsubara Kasai Irrigation Canal Area)
4. Minatun Bridge of Forest and cherry blossom (Matsubara Kasai Irrigation Canal Area)
5. The Ten Bridges over the Tatsui River (Matsubara Kasai Irrigation Canal Area)
6. Cherry Blossom Dike of Ayase River (Ayase River Area)
7. Precincts of Sengen-jinja Shrine (Yatsuka Area)
8. Precincts of Tofukuji Temple (Imayo Soka-shuku Area)

Cherry Blossom Trees of Kasai Irrigation Canal

Soka's specialties

Edamame (Green soybeans)

The edamame soybeans of Soka began to be cultivated in earnest in the mid-1940s, and they are actively produced in the whole of the city. They are characterized by their sweet and delicious taste. Shipments peak around early July, and they are harvested until about mid-August.

Arrowheads

When you look at the young arrowhead tubers, you will see sharp-tipped buds extending from the small spines. Since ancient times, this has reminded people of a Japanese phrase used to celebrate a good occasion, so arrowheads have long been used for good luck as a dish in celebratory events. They have a distinctive bittersweet taste as well as a soft and flaky texture. Shipments peak in December and January.

Chrysanthemums

Chrysanthemum production in Soka is said to have begun in the Meiji period. It was then resumed after World War II and was actively cultivated in the Yatsuka and Shinden districts. The chrysanthemums produced in Soka are still high in quality and highly acclaimed in the market.

Komatsuna

Also known by the beautiful names "kyuna" (winter vegetable) and "yukina" (snow vegetable), Komatsuna is popular as a yellow-green vegetable with a peak harvest period in winter. It has long been cultivated in greenhouses, so it can be stably cultivated throughout the year. Komatsuna in winter is thick-leaved, loses its bitterness and becomes soft, and develops some sweetness, so it grows even tastier.

Visit: Hands-on experience (Uruoi Workshop)

*For visits and hands-on experiences, please make a reservation by contacting the shop of your choice.

Field trip

Globes

Metal products

Metal products

Paper products

Metal machine parts

Plastic products

Automatic packaging machines

Fusuma paper

Precision metal processing

Acrylic tanks

Experience

Senbei

Senbei

The big three local industries of Soka

Soka Senbei rice crackers are the most famous of all Soka specialties. Other local industries that have been cultivated over history include the art of yukata dyeing, with its long tradition, and high-quality leather products.

Soka Senbei

Soka Senbei are synonymous with senbei rice crackers. The baked 100-percent non-glutinous rice dough with the fragrance of soy sauce is absolutely irresistible. Soka Senbei is registered as a regional group trademark and accredited by the Japan Food Industry Association as a "genuine and authentic" food brand.

Leather

Since the mid-1920s, Soka has had many leather processors and distributors, and the city brings together all processes ranging from the treatment of raw leather to dyeing, cutting, sewing, and finished products. With a wide range of leather types, local distributors sell various products.

Yukata dyeing

This is a traditional product designated as a prefectural traditional handicraft. It is known under the "Tokyo Hanzome Yukata" brand. You will never tire of rolls of cloth and hand towels dyed with even deeper vividness by injecting the cloth with dye.

Traditional Industries Exhibition Room "Parisse"

Look at Soka's local industries and have a hands-on experience!

Permanently available on the first floor of the Soka-shi Bunka Kaikan (Soka City Culture Hall), this exhibition this room exhibits to present the history and production processes of Soka's big three local industries: senbei, yukata dyeing, and leather. You can also see local products on sale, have a hands-on experience of senbei by actually baking it by hand, and attend handicraft classes (reservations required).

DATA

Open

Closed

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Direction

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Things you should not miss in Soka City

The former Nikko Road and Soka-shuku

Soka-shuku, about 4 km from Senju, was on a road traveled by Tohoku region daimyos as they alternated living for a year in their domain and in Edo. This route was traveled by MATSUO BASHO as well. Follow in their footsteps, and experience this history yourself.

Tofuku-ji Temple

Shojusan Fudoji Tofukuji B-4
Founded in 1806 by OKAWA Zusho, who worked to open the Soka-shuku. This temple is said to have been established by the Buddhist monk Ken-ju. The sanctuary, main gate, and bell tower were all erected in the late Edo period. The sculpted transom windows in the outer chamber of the sanctuary, main gate, and bell tower are city-designated cultural assets.

Jizo-do of Asako House

B-6
The Asako clan, a family of successful merchants in the Edo period, is said to have picked up a stone statue of Jizo that drifted along the Akabari irrigation canal, and enshrined it as a child-rearing Jizo. The sanctuary is made open to the public on the 24th each month, except in December.

Statue of KAWAI Sora

A-3
This structure was erected in Osen Park to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the city. Kawai Sora was one of Basho's disciples who accompanied him on his journey of Oku-no Hosomichi.

Osen Jaya Park

A-4
Facing the former Nikko Highway, this park evokes the atmosphere of a post station on the old road. It is used to accommodate the Soka town office and other establishments.

Osen Park

A-3
This park is to the east of Shinmeigu Shrine. It has a local monument to commemorate the birth of Soka Senbei, in the form of a natural rock that evokes a senbei cracker. It is an open space where people can take a rest.

Soka-shuku Shinmei-an

A-3
A repaired version of an old private house, this rest house was opened in July 2011. It is run by community volunteers to receive visitors by giving them sightseeing information and serving them green tea. There is a gallery on the second floor. Open from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Closed Mondays (if Monday is a national holiday, closed the next day).

Soka-shuku Bashi-an

A-3
A repaired version of a rest house made of Japanese cedar and Japanese cypress from Saitama Prefecture, this resting place was opened on May 16, 2018. It sells Soka Senbei and other local products, while volunteers provide sightseeing information and other services. Open from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Closed Mondays (if Monday is a national holiday, closed the next day).

Soka Station East Exit Square

B-5
Installed in the AKOS Plaza at the Soka Station, this is a statue of a woman baking senbei.

Carson Plaza

This plaza, used as a venue for events, was named to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Soka's founding exchanges with an international sister city of Carson, California, USA.

Shinmeigu Shrine

A-3
According to a history of Soka, this shrine was established by enshrining an object of worship on the premises in 1615, and then relocated to its current location at the request of the nine villages of Soka in 1713, as the general sacred protector.

Hachiman-jinja Shrine

A-5
A history of Soka says that this shrine originated in the Kyoto area (1716-36) as an Inari deity shrine, and that it was given its current name in 1777 when a wooden image of the deity Hachiman was enshrined.

Eko-in Temple

B-6
This is a temple of the Buddhist Jodo sect, called the Mt. Soka Kannon-ji Temple. The sanctuary enshrines the Amida triad, and the monks Shandao and Honen. The outer space of the sanctuary also enshrines Fudo Myoo (Acala) and the monk Dorynu.

Fudaba Kashi Park

A-3
Located at the south end of Soka Matsubara, this park reproduces an image of what the riverside used to be. The park includes a replica of the formerly bustling riverside wharf for boat transportation in the Fudaba Kashi Park. There is also a pentagonal observation tower 12.5 m high (including the height of the stone walls as a foundation; the inside of the watchtower is open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and it is illuminated from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.). The Soka-shuku Bashi-an rest house is also in service.

Jinzaemon Sluice

A-3
This is a double-arched brick water gate for the Den-ri River. This dam was used to control the water for paddy field. The existing dam was repaired in 1894 and has been designated as a cultural asset by Saitama Prefecture.

Statue of MATSUO BASHO

A-3
This structure was erected to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the start of Basho's journey in Oku-no Hosomichi. The image shows him with his stick in his right hand, with a bamboo hat, looking back in the direction of Soka as if he was sorry to leave his friends and disciples.

MASAOKA Shiki Poem Monument

A-3
"Looking at the ume trees and looking at the fields, I have walked as far as Soka."

Soka Matsubara (National Scenic Beauty)

A-1~3

Soka Matsubara Walking Trails

A-1~3
The row of more than 600 pine trees along the former Nikko Highway, about 1.5 km from the area near the Soka 6-chome Bridge, has been called "Sembon Matsubara (Row of a Thousand Pines)" since the Edo period, and has always enjoyed fame as a scenic spot along the highway. On March 18, 2014, Soka Matsubara became a National Scenic Beauty "Scenic Area of Oku-no Hosomichi Soka Matsubara". The walking trail is paved with cobblestones, and is an area of relaxation for the public.

Hyakutai Bridge

A-2
This is one of two drum-shaped bridges located on the Soka Matsubara Walking Trail. Erected in 1986, the bridge takes its name from Oku-no Hosomichi: "Days and weeks are like hundreds of people passing by." From over the bridge, you can have a good view of the row of pine trees, so the bridge is an ideal viewing spot.

MIZUHARA Shuoshi Poem Monument

A-1
"I put Soka Senbei made with grass and red leaves out in the open for them to do."

Yadate Bridge

A-3
This is one of two drum-shaped bridges on the Soka Matsubara Walking Trail. Erected in 1994, this bridge (Yadate Bridge) takes its name from Oku-no Hosomichi: "With the spring gone, birds are singing as if crying, and the eyes of fish look as if filled with tears, with which I begin my writing." Here, "writing" was written with the word "yate".

Zenso-an Hakutai no Kakaku

A-2
This wooden single-story building of the sukuya type of Japanese residential architecture was named by Japanese literature scholar Donald Keene, who also wrote the name by calligraphy. The facility is designed to disseminate all kinds of things about the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, koto, shamisen, and other traditional Japanese cultural assets related to Soka. The facility also has a rest house designed for visitors from in and around the city, and tea is served for a fee.

Application / Inquiry

TEL

Open

Closed

First Wednesday, New Year holidays

For a guide in Soka, ask to the Soka Guides Association.

As you walk through the town, you will see merchant houses and whitewashed storehouses that evoke the atmosphere of what stations on the old highways used to be like. The premises of the temples are home to many monuments to commemorate literati as well as painters and calligraphers. Fudaba-Kashi Park also serves as a stage for expressing culture and literature beginning with the image of MATSUO BASHO. The centuries-old pine trees of Matsubara speak of the emotions of the people who passed by. We consider it our task to present these attractions and scenes of Matsubara to our visitors, and that is why we provide different courses to meet the diverse wishes of various groups.

A guide is provided to a group of at least five visitors as a rule. You should apply in advance.

Application / Inquiry

Soka City Products Tourism Information Center

TEL

Open

Closed

New Year holidays

Soka City Products and Tourism Information Center

B-6

The center for disseminating sightseeing information on Soka!

This information station is for disseminating information about the diverse segments of commerce and industry in the city. The facility provides a multi-purpose space designed for events, exhibitions, and other sessions about local products and commodities in the city. There is a sightseeing corner to present sightseeing information, and the facility also makes recommendations and provides contact services in connection with volunteer guides (from the Soka Guides Association).

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