

Kizakura Memorial Hall and Kappa Gallery

Kizakura is a household name across Japan and is inseparable from its brand mascots, mischievous water sprites known as *kappa*. The Kappa Gallery contains a treasure trove of media featuring the mythical creatures.

The exhibit starts with an introduction to the two artists who created the specific *kappa* that made Kizakura famous: Shimizu Kon (1912–1974) and Kojima Kō (1928–2015). Shimizu was already famous for his comics about *kappa* when he was asked to create mascots for Kizakura in the form of a wholesome family of water sprites who love sake. When Shimizu died, Kojima took over, portraying the *kappa* in a gently suggestive, sensuous style.

The gallery has on display a fascinating series of *Sake wa Kizakura* (“Kizakura is sake”) TV commercials dating back to the early years of television in Japan. Beginning with Shimizu’s charming 1950s cartoons of a *kappa* family enjoying sake, the commercials show samurai battling ninja, geisha serving Kizakura sake in a teahouse, and a host of 1970s and 1980s actors who praise Kizakura sake, all to the sound of nostalgic *enka* music.

In the adjoining room are a series of exhibits on *kappa* worldwide and museums, festivals, legends featuring kappa and even recorded sightings.