

Kurokawa Noh-no-Sato Ogi Kaikan - Noh Experience

The quiet farming community of Kurokawa has maintained and preserved Kurokawa Noh, a local form of noh, Japan's classic dance-drama, for more than 500 years. It began as performances for the deities enshrined at the nearby Kasuga Jinja Shrine and continues to be closely tied to the shrine and lives of local residents.

This half-day experience allows you to learn about the training and dedication to centuries of tradition that have made Kurokawa Noh a National Intangible Cultural Property. You will visit the Kurokawa Noh-no-Sato Ogi Kaikan (Kurokawa Noh Village Ogi Hall), a cultural center where exhibits tell the story of this respected performing arts tradition and how it is connected to Kasuga Jinja Shrine.

The Kaikan stores more than 250 noh masks owned by the upper and lower troupes. Many date back centuries and some are in styles that are still in use today. There is also an array of luxurious costumes that have been used over the years.

After the tour, participants will pay a visit to Kasuga Jinja Shrine, the base for Ogi Festival. Performances of Kurokawa Noh are the central aspect of this event, which is the largest and most important festival of the year. The stage has been built for the most important members of the audience: the deities. While visiting the shrine, you will learn more about the Ogi Festival and preparations for it, which take almost a year.

At the Kurokawa Noh Training Center (Denshukan) you will meet an experienced master performer to learn how the actors dress and perform their intricate moves. You can try on a costume and understand first-hand how the actors' range-of-motion and peripheral vision is limited after they put on their masks.

The next part of the experience is lunch at Kurokawa Noh-no-Sato Ogi Kaikan. Enjoy a traditional meal featuring roasted tofu, which is based on the celebratory meal served to noh performers and guests on the night of the Ogi Festival.

This immersive experience is available from March through December. The Ogi Festival, which is the occasion for the biggest performance of Kurokawa Noh in the year, takes place on February 1–2.

Included in the noh experience:

- English interpreter
- Entrance to all venues
- Interactive session relating to noh performances
- Lunch featuring roasted tofu, the central dish served at the Ogi Festival

Kurokawa Noh half-day experience itinerary (Total time: five hours)

- Meet at Kurokawa Noh-no-Sato Ogi Kaikan (Kurokawa Noh Village Ogi Hall)
- See the exhibits and join a guided tour of historic cultural properties related to noh
- Visit Kasuga Jinja Shrine and the private noh theater for the deities
- Explore Kurokawa Noh Training Center (Denshukan)
- Receive insight from a noh master and hands-on time with traditional noh costumes and other equipment
- Return to Kurokawa Noh-no-Sato Ogi Kaikan for lunch

Be sure to wear weather-appropriate clothing and shoes for walking around the village.