**Welcome to Kikuchi**

The municipality of Kikuchi, population 47,000, extends across fertile plains on both sides of the Kikuchi River. The river is the lifeblood of the area, where agriculture—particularly the cultivation of rice—has been the main source of prosperity for more than two millennia. Farming remains the foundation of local culture and fostered a variety of traditions, many of which date back to the most celebrated era in Kikuchi’s history: the 450-year rule by the Kikuchi clan.

 The house of Kikuchi descended from a high-ranking court official who was granted lands here in the eleventh century. Through skilled diplomacy, success on the battlefield, and a monopoly on trade along the river, the clan expanded and enriched its domain until it encompassed most of central Kyushu. The Kikuchi used part of their wealth to support education and the arts, building a cultural legacy that lives on even now, 500 years after they fell from power. Statues of Kikuchi heroes dot the streets of the modern-day city of Kikuchi, and a shrine dedicated to these historic figures stands on the hilltop site of what was once the clan’s castle.

 Since the eighteenth century, more and more visitors have been coming to Kikuchi for the scenery in the area’s mountainous northeast. The most noteworthy destination in these parts is Kikuchi Gorge, the source of the Kikuchi River, where waterfalls are enveloped by dense native forests that nurture a great diversity of plant and animal life.