

Tokonyan, the Guardian Cat of Tokoname

Tokonyan is the giant *maneki neko* (lucky cat) figure that peeks over an embankment halfway along Tokoname Maneki Neko-dori (Lucky Cat Street). The name “Tokonyan” is a combination of “Tokoname” and the meowing sound made by a cat (*nyan*) in Japanese. Since its creation in 2008, the statue has become a beloved symbol of the city and a popular subject for photographs.

Tokonyan is 3.8 meters high and 6.3 meters wide, making it one of the country’s largest *maneki neko*. Even though Tokonyan is only a head and a raised left paw, it welcomes everyone from its prominent position. A careful search along the wall near the statue reveals that Tokonyan is accompanied by 11 small and realistic figurines of cats.

Tokoname Maneki Neko-dori, which connects Tokoname Tojiki Kaikan (Ceramics Hall) and Tokoname Station, is lined with 39 modern interpretations of *maneki neko* made by artists with links to Tokoname. Each cat is said to offer a specific blessing, such as a happy marriage, good health, or the successful completion of a task.