

Pottery Footpath

Tokoname's pottery has endured for more than 1,000 years and has shaped the city's history, economy, and infrastructure. One of the best ways to learn about this heritage is to walk the Pottery Footpath (Yakimono Sanpomichi), which has two routes. Course A is 1.6 kilometers long and includes several of Tokoname's most popular attractions, while Course B is 4 kilometers long and outlines the city's pottery history. Both courses begin at Tokoname Tojiki Kaikan (Ceramics Hall), where visitors can find displays of Tokoname ware and helpful tourist information.

The footpath centers on the Sakaemachi district, where many well-preserved homes and kilns remain. The narrow, winding streets retain a traditional atmosphere and connect to historical sites. Residents have added to the area's appeal by beautifying the streets and gardens with Tokoname ware while new generations of artisans and entrepreneurs have transformed vacant buildings along the way into pottery studios, art galleries, and cafes.

The Pottery Footpath was launched in 1972 and has contributed to the preservation of the historical townscape and to Tokoname's emergence as a tourist destination. Suggested walking times are around one hour for Course A and two-and-a-half hours for Course B, although many visitors take longer to fully experience the attractions.

Course A (1.6 kilometers)

Takita Family Residence

The Takita family were wealthy shipping agents. Their former home, built in 1850, has fine period furniture, ceramics, and lacquerware, as well as informative displays about Tokoname's shipping history.

Dokanzaka Hill

This gently sloping street is among the most iconic spots along the Pottery Footpath. Tokoname ware is put to innovative use and forms part of the walls and the paving along the route. On one side of the footpath are ceramic pipes produced in the 1870s for water and drainage, while on the other are *shochu* (distilled liquor) bottles dating back to around 1960. Clay rings left over from the pipe-making process have been repurposed and are embedded in the surface of the street to improve traction.

Noborigama (Toei Kiln)

This impressive brick structure is Tokoname's last surviving climbing kiln (*noborigama*), as well as one of the largest in Japan. It was in operation from 1887 until 1974, with eight firing chambers and 10 chimneys of various heights to help maintain an even temperature inside the kiln.

Climbing Kiln Plaza

The plaza is adjacent to Noborigama (Toei Kiln). The main attractions are found inside a two-story building that has a kiln from the early nineteenth-century on the first floor and an exhibition space and studio above. Visitors can enter and walk around inside the well-preserved kiln. Two large, colorful examples of modern ceramic art sit outside.

Brick Chimneys

There were more than 300 brick chimneys in Tokoname when pottery production was at its peak in the 1950s, and the remaining chimneys are some of the city's most iconic landmarks. Around 100 of these have been preserved and have become a prominent feature of the Pottery Footpath.

Course B (4 kilometers)

INAX Live Museum

This expansive complex comprises six interactive pavilions devoted to key aspects of Tokoname's pottery culture.

- Kiln Plaza has a preserved kiln from 1921 that produced ceramic pipes.
- The Tile Museum displays decorative tiles from around the world.
- The Architectural Terracotta Museum showcases terracotta artwork from Japanese buildings.
- Clay Works is where visitors can explore raw materials used to make pottery.
- The Tiling Workshop offers hands-on experiences in tile painting and other crafts.
- The Ceramics Lab undertakes projects ranging from restoring historic structures to developing innovative ceramic techniques and products.

Tokoname Tou no Mori Museum

An informative history museum, a research institute, and a training studio to nurture young ceramic artists are combined in this cultural facility. Fine examples of Tokoname's pottery created over the centuries are on exhibit, all accompanied by detailed English signage.