

Kawakami Genryū Tourism

The Kawakami Genryū Tourism organization was created in 2022. Its mission is to introduce aspects of local nature, history, art, and daily life that might not be immediately accessible to newcomers. Despite its small population, Kawakami offers a broad range of attractions and activities.

The backbone of Kawakami Genryū Tourism is its wide network of local guides, teachers, and event operators. For instance, the organization can put visitors in touch with a local tree expert for a forest excursion or contact a ceramicist for a private pottery class. On weekends, residents often gather to make traditional persimmon-leaf sushi (*kaki no ha zushi*), and the organization makes these sessions open to people from outside the community. In this way, Kawakami Genryū Tourism gives visitors access to the expertise of the entire village.

Things to Do

Although certain events are subject to change, some activities are a permanent part of the Kawakami experience. The activities below are available throughout the year.

Forest Learning and Hiking: Guides can take hikers to otherwise restricted places, such as the virgin forest at the headwaters of the Yoshino River (known also as the Kinokawa River) and the Shimotako Planted Forest, a manmade cedar forest where the more-than-400-year-old “Witness to History” grows.

Cooking: Local cooks come together to prepare traditional foods such as *inoko mochi* or the area’s specialty, persimmon-leaf sushi. There are also cooking activities using seasonal fruits and vegetables.

River Fishing: The clean mountain streams in and around Kawakami are frequented by anglers hoping to catch river fish. Guides can direct visitors to the best fishing spots for *ayu* (sweetfish) and *amago* (red-spotted trout)

and assist with obtaining permits and information on seasonal restrictions.

Stocked-Pool Fishing: Hobbyist anglers and families with children can try catching farm-raised *amago* at facilities that cater to beginners. The fish are released into medium-sized pools to be caught with a rod and line, or into shallow wading pools, where they are meant to be caught barehanded.

Barehanded fishing is a lively and entertaining challenge that anyone can enjoy. Both fishing gear and bait are available on site, and there are covered picnic tables with barbecue grills.

Kayaking: Aimed at beginners, these kayaking trips traverse the serene blue waters of the Ōtaki Dam reservoir. Participants receive a lesson in kayaking basics and can round off their experience with a dip in a local hot spring.

Caving: There are two kinds of guided caving trips for those seeking an authentic experience without installed lighting or handrails. Both guided trips include helmets, lamps, and coveralls and each last approximately 5

hours. Children aged five and up are welcome on the easier, family-oriented trip. The other is a more strenuous expedition intended for adults.

Food Gathering: Experienced local guides lead groups into the forest to gather edible wild greens (*sansai*) and other foods that are a staple part of the traditional diet.

Stargazing: Stars twinkle clearly in the sky above Kawakami, far from the light pollution of cities. See the vast expanse of the Milky Way and study the planets and galaxies with a state-of-the-art telescope.

Crafts: Handicraft courses include workshops on woodworking (such as shaping a pair of Yoshino-cedar chopsticks) and ceramics. At Takumi no Mura, the local artists' community, workshop participants can create their own pottery using wheels or by hand. Town artisans will then dry, glaze, and fire the pieces before shipping them to the participants who made them. (Overseas shipping is also available for an extra charge.)