

Activities at the Magariya House

Making soba or udon noodles, crafting a pair of straw sandals, and soaking your feet in hot spring water are only a few of the things you can do at the Magariya House in Nango. The program is varied, and hands-on classes range from workshops on skills vital for traditional village life to internationally inspired options such as baking pizza in the stone oven on the property.

Cooking

One of the surest ways of getting acquainted with local food culture is to prepare from scratch a dish that has been eaten in the area for centuries the traditional way, by cooking over a traditional cookstove. The mountainous land around the village of Nango was not well suited to rice farming, and wheat and buckwheat were the mainstays of the local diet. At the Magariya House, visitors can try their hand at making udon (wheat) and soba

(buckwheat) noodles by rolling out dough, shaping and cutting the noodles, and boiling them in a pot on the cookstove (*kamado*). The noodles are then served with freshly deep-fried tempura and an assortment of small dishes made mainly with local ingredients. Other food-focused experiences rooted in local culinary culture include making *oyaki*, wheat dumplings filled with pickled vegetables or sweet red bean paste and roasted over the open hearth; *suiton*, a hearty soup with wheat dumplings, vegetables, and pork; and *konnyaku* (konjac), a firm, gelatinous food made from the konjac yam that is another staple ingredient in the area.

Crafts

Fashioning a pair of *zori* sandals out of straw gives visitors a feel for a skill once essential in villages like Nango, as this simple form of outdoor footwear was worn by ordinary people in rural Japan for centuries. Seasonal experiences are also available, including decorating *furin* wind chimes, whose ring sounds refreshing in the heat of summer.

Visitors can take a break from exploring the Magariya House by dipping their feet in the foot bath next to the main building. Anyone who has paid the entrance fee to the house can enjoy the bath. Other activities at the Magariya House generally cost between ¥500 and ¥1,000 per person and must be reserved in advance.