

The Landscape of Tea Production

The green hills of Wazuka are covered with row upon row of neatly manicured tea plants—a testament to the town’s long history of tea cultivation. The town’s traditional tea farms create a distinctive landscape: Tea plants line the natural contours of hills and mountainsides, tall poles scattered throughout the fields are topped with fans that circulate air and prevent frost damage, and lengths of dark shade cloth are spread out to protect the leaves from direct sunlight. The landscape bustles with activity as the farmers work the fields from season to season, picking, pruning, and tending the plants.

As of 2020, approximately 412 hectares (1,018 acres) of land in Wazuka are being used for tea cultivation, producing approximately 1,100 tons of rough tea leaves per year. Of the many tea plantations that blanket the hills around the town, four areas are particularly well-known for their landscapes, each offering a unique visual experience.

Ishitera Tea Plantation

The best-known cultivation area is Ishitera in southwestern Wazuka, where the verdant tea-covered hills reach toward the sky. When Kyoto Prefecture established the Scenic Asset designation to promote and protect landscapes representative of an area's unique culture, Ishitera became the first location to receive the title.

In late March, the cherry trees that border the Ishitera Tea Plantation brighten the scenery with layers of soft pink. The best time to view the area in a fully green state is in spring, before the farmers start covering their first-flush harvest with shade cloths. In summer, the harvesting of various types of tea at different times creates a patchwork effect in the fields: some plants are covered with cloth, while others are trimmed or awaiting picking. Autumn brings a few warm colors to the trees and shrubs on the paths between the fields, while winter snows can transform the rows into long, tidy white mounds.

Visitors who wish to enjoy a delicious meal or tea-themed sweet while taking in

the sights may do so at the Dan Dan Café by the viewing point.

Access: Walk 10–15 minutes from the Wazuka Takahashi bus stop. Parking is available for cars and bicycles.

Shirasu and Erihara Tea Plantations

The Shirasu and Erihara tea plantations face each other on opposing slopes, framing the view of the forests and mountains beyond. These plantations are cultivated on rather steep inclines, so they are laid out to make the best use of the sparse soil available. The tea plantations are surrounded by rice fields and plants that flower through the seasons, and the area is a popular stop on walking tours and hiking trails.

Access: Walk approximately 15 minutes down the road from the Ishitera Tea Plantation, or walk approximately 18 minutes from the Shirasuguchi bus stop. When viewing the scenery, please be careful not to obstruct work vehicles.

Kamatsuka Tea Plantation

The rolling hills of the Kamatsuka Tea Plantation unfold in a scenic vista that can be seen easily from the main road that runs east to west through Wazuka. Because Kamatsuka is clearly visible from the Wazuka Town Tourist Information Center, police box and post office, both residents and visitors can easily observe the changing seasons and the annual cycle of farm work. The plantation can also be seen at a distance from the viewing points atop the Tomb of Prince Asaka, the Tenku Café, and Shohoji Temple.

Access: To view the fields up close, walk approximately 8 minutes from the

Nakawazuka bus stop. Parking is available for cars and bicycles at the Wazuka Town Tourist Information Center.