

TAKE ONE FREE

The birthplace of *nishikigoi* (ornamental carp)

Ojiya

おぢや

錦鯉

Nishikigoi no Sato



Hegi Soba



Ramen



Ojiga-chijimi



Yamamotoyama Heights



Come Visit the Hometown of Nishikigoi

Ojiya, Niigata Prefecture

The city of Ojiya extends along the river terrace of the Shinano River at the southern end of the Echigo Plain in central Niigata Prefecture. It is the birthplace of *nishikigoi* (ornamental carp), known as “swimming jewels,” and the home of a distinctive culture that includes *ojiya-chijimi* hemp fabric (designated an Important Intangible Cultural Treasure and listed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity) and *tsunotsuki* bullfighting (designated an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Asset).



Nishikigoi of Ojiya City



Terraced ponds in Higashiyama area, Ojiya, for raising nishikigoi

Origin of Nishikigoi

Around 200 years ago, rice and vegetables were grown in terraced fields in some parts of what are today the cities of Ojiya and Nagasaki. Reservoirs were created on the upper terraces as a source of water for farming and to raise carp for food in the winter. A mutation in these carp created different colors and patterns. With repeated breeding since then, those carp evolved into the beautiful nishikigoi of today.

How to Keep Nishikigoi

Nishikigoi are easy to keep, as long as you follow the basics, including proper feeding, using a filtration device, and changing the water. Nishikigoi have a gentle nature and easily become accustomed to people. They grow to fit the size of the container and number of fish being kept. Thus, they can be raised to the ideal size by adjusting the rearing environment. They will grow big if kept in a garden pond or can be raised in a glass tank for keeping indoors or on a veranda.



Photos by Gekkan Nishikigoi magazine



Varieties of Nishikigoi

Nishikigoi can be defined as, “carp with colors and spotted patterns kept for ornamental enjoyment.” There are many variations, totaling as many as 80 types. The *kohaku*, *taisho sanshoku*, and *showa sanshoku* varieties are especially popular. The *kohaku* has a white body with red markings. The *taisho sanshoku* is characterized by a pattern of black spots on what would otherwise be a *kohaku*. The *showa sanshoku* is also red, white, and black, but it has a lot of black in lines or covering large areas with the pattern often extending to the belly.

Photos by Shin Nippon Kyoiku Tosho Co., Ltd.

Nishikigoi Shows in Niigata Prefecture

Nishikigoi shows are held across Niigata Prefecture from September to early November. The biggest is the Niigata Prefecture Koi Show held in Ojiya. In the show, competitors vie for prizes in a total of 165 categories, 11 according to variety and 15 according to body length, from 15 cm to over 80 cm. The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Prize is awarded for one fish that is the overall winner.

Show Information
Date: A weekend in late October or early November every year
Venue: Community Plaza, Ojiya City Gymnasium



Highlights

Nishikigoi no Sato (the hometown of Nishikigoi) is a symbolic establishment in Ojiya. It is the world's only nishikigoi museum, where you can always enjoy nishikigoi up close and learn about their history, varieties, and how to keep them.



The indoor pond in the large dome-shaped display building has 110 nishikigoi (about 20 varieties) bred in Ojiya.



The pond in the Japanese garden has around 140 nishikigoi on loan from their owners.

Crafts

Ojiya-chijimi fabric was created in the early Edo Period (1603-1868). The weft threads are twisted tightly to create fine wave-like wrinkles called *shibo* as the fabric shrinks. Exposure to snow sharpens the fabric's whiteness.



Experiences

Ojiya Textile Workshop

The Ojiya Textile Workshop has an exhibition gallery introducing the history and techniques of *ojiya-chijimi*. You can also watch weaving demonstrations and try weaving your own coaster. Kimono accessories, interior decorating items, tableware, clothes and other goods are sold on the second floor.



Food



Ramen

Ramen shops are common in snowy regions of Japan like Ojiya. In the fiercely competitive area called “Ramen Street” along National Route 117, shops compete against each other with original flavors.

Hegi Soba

Hegi soba uses a type of seaweed called *funori*, which is used as a stiffener when weaving *ojiya-chijimi*, as the binding agent. It gets its name from the tray it is served on, which is called “hegi.”



Gifts

Nishikigoi is the city fish of Ojiya. And it is clearly loved by residents, as it is used in numerous items, from merchandise to sake. Also, you mustn't miss local specialties such as hegi soba and the local rice.

Hegi Soba

Dried hegi soba made from buckwheat grown locally in Ojiya is available in packages featuring nishikigoi.



Rice

Ojiyamai, a brand of *koshihikari* rice from Uonuma, is the pride of Ojiya, grown in rich land soaked with pure water in a climate with harsh temperature extremes between day and night.



Nishikigoi merchandise

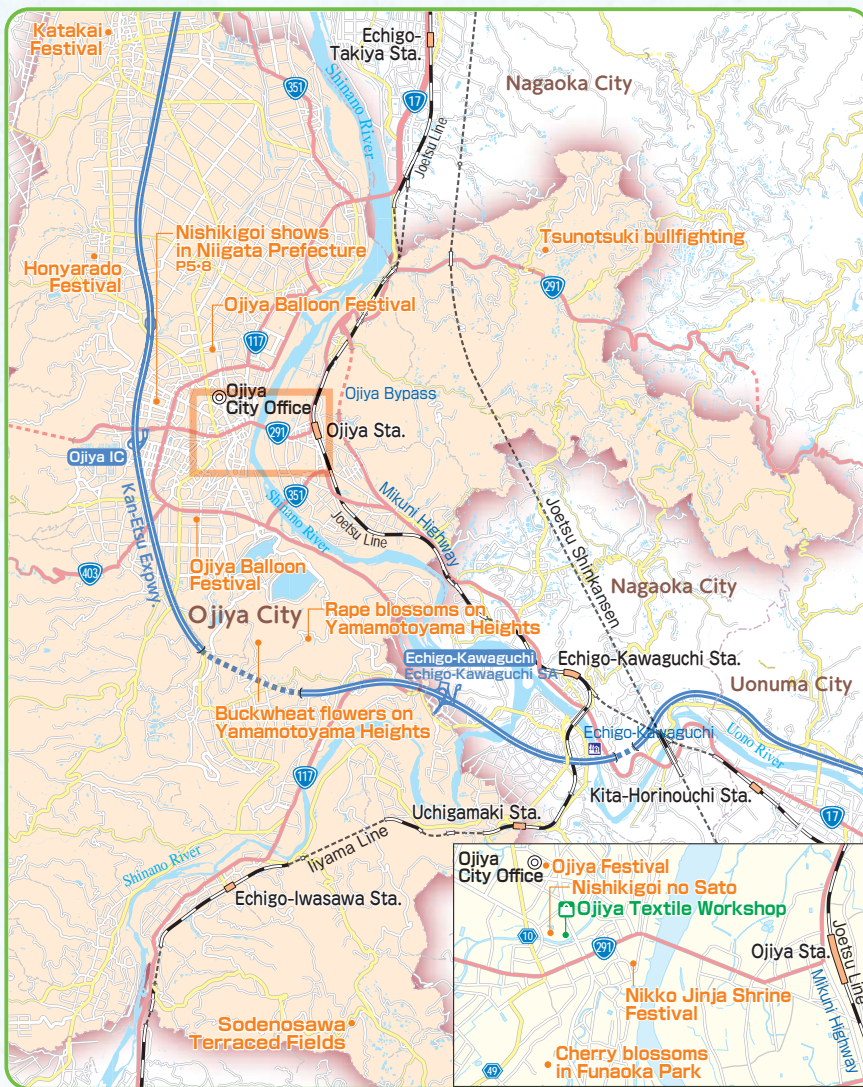
The ornaments, pin badges, lacquered chopsticks, mug cups, towels, trays, and other items with nishikigoi motifs are popular gifts from Ojiya.



Sake

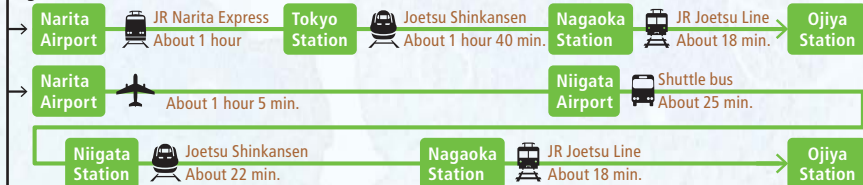
The thriving local sake breweries use *koshitanrei*, a variety of rice suitable for sake brewing grown in Ojiya. Some have labels with nishikigoi designs.



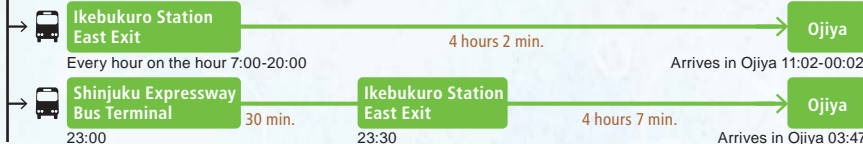


Getting to Ojiya

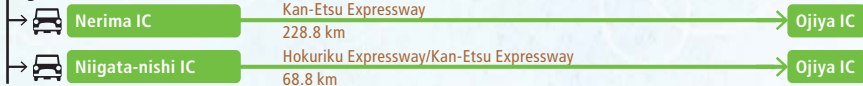
By Air & Shinkansen



By Expressway Bus



By Car



INQUIRIES

For Sightseeing
Ojiya Kanko Association
TEL: 0258-83-3512

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Seasonal Events and Dates for Blossoms

Spring

Mid- to Late May

Rape blossoms on Yamamotoyama Heights
Around 35,000 m² of rape flower fields are spread out on the side of Yamamotoyama.

Early to Mid-April

Cherry blossoms in Funaoka Park
With some 300 cherry trees planted in the park, this is one of the best spots in Ojiya for viewing cherry blossoms.

Once a month, May to November

Tsunotsuki bullfighting
Designated an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Asset, this is a traditional event continued from the later half of the Edo Period.



Tsunotsuki bullfighting

Summer

Mid-July

Nikko Jinja Shrine Festival

The festival includes a puppet show, dance performance, and parade featuring puppets in the form of a maiden and old man.

Mid-August

Sunflower fields on Yamamotoyama Heights

Sunflower fields are spread out over Yamamotoyama Heights, where there is an observation deck.

Mid-August

Ojiya Festival

This exciting festival includes folk songs, Bon festival dancing in costume, a parade of mechanical lantern dolls, fireworks, a parade of fighting bulls, and more.



Ojiya Festival

Fall

Early to Mid-September

Sodenosawa Terraced Fields

Located in the southern most part of Ojiya, from here you can look out over the Uonuma Hills and Mikuni Mountains.

September 9 and 10

Katakai Festival

Around 15,000 fireworks are shot off, including the world's largest fireworks (the Sho-Yon-Shaku-Dama) and a "star mine" fireworks display.



Katakai Festival

Winter

Mid-January

Sai no Kami

An event at the time of the First Full Moon Festival, when New Year's pine decorations and shimenawa (ropes used to cordon off sacred spaces) are burnt.

Mid-February

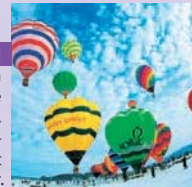
Honyarado Festival

Candles are lit in small igloos (called honyarado) in a snowfield. There is also a fireworks display.

Late February

Ojiya Balloon Festival

This is a hot air balloon competition held above the snow. At night, there is a fireworks display as beautifully lit balloons float in the air.



Ojiya Balloon Festival