

My name is KAWAGOE. I am an old castle town, 30 minutes by train from Tokyo. If you have one day or half day free time in Tokyo, how about putting me in your list of places to visit? This is an invitation to you to KAWAGOE.

I have a nickname of Little Edo. Do you know Edo? Edo is a key word to learn about Japan and Japanese culture. Edo was the former name of Tokyo. During Edo period (1603–1868), Edo was the headquarters of Samurai government and the shogun lived in the Edo castle. In that people enjoyed the peaceful everyday lives and that many traditional Japanese cultures had developed remarkably, it can be said that Edo was a sort of mother of the current Japan. In KAWAGOE, you can feel the spirits of Edo.



One of the most famous places in KAWAGOE is Kurazukuri merchant houses along the Ichibangai Street. Kura means a storehouse in Japanese. Wealthy merchants in KAWAGOE built their shops and residences in the style of storehouse to be fire resistant structure. Traditional Japanese houses were made of wood and paper, easy to cause a fire. Kurazukuri houses started in Edo and KAWAGOE followed. Although most of traditional houses in Tokyo were destroyed because of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, KAWAGOE could survive. The line-up of thick earthen walls and imposing tiled roofs must tell you about the lives of merchants in Little

Edo, KAWAGOE. They are used as real shops and houses even now by the Kawagoe people. Just step into the Kurazukuri traditional houses and you can be a time traveler.

If you are lucky, you can hear a beautiful sound of bell from the Tokino Kane, Bell Tower in a traditional wooden style near Kurazukuri Street. It is 16 meters tall, a symbol of KAWAGOE.

Another popular spot is the Kashi-ya Yokocho, Confectionary Street. This is an alley with several tens of shops selling cheap and old fashioned sweets, such as candies and rice crackers, attracting many Japanese people who feel nostalgia for the past. By walking this alley, you can find out what the Japanese nostalgia is!



Kawagoe Castle was founded by the same person who built the Edo castle. During Edo period, this castle had an important role as the northern guardian of Edo. There remain only the entrance, main hall and the residence of chief retainer, but you can learn how Kawagoe developed as a castle town at the Kawagoe City Museum located in the former site of the castle.

Kita-in Temple is a treasure box of memories of Edo. This is an old temple founded in 830. The highlights in the history of this temple came in the Edo period when Tenkai was appointed as a head monk by the 1st shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu. Tenkai was a mentor of the 1st shogun, 2nd shogun and 3rd shogun. Therefore, when this temple was burned down in 1638, the 3rd shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, transferred some of the rooms existed in the Edo castle to Kawagoe Kita-in temple. Now that the Edo castle was destroyed by fire, they are the only remnants of the Edo castle in Japan. On the ground of this temple, Gohyaku-Rakan (500 statues of Buddha's disciples) are waiting your visit.

Among many specialty products of Kawagoe, sweet potato is very famous. You can taste it in many



places, such as a sweet shop and restaurant. Farmers in Kawagoe are vibrant with many young successors. They are proud of their family history and skills handed down from generation to generation since the Edo period. For example, every 6 years daikon radish is planted in the sweet potato field to keep the soil well-balanced. Kawagoe farmers were and are powerful to supply Edo and Tokyo with various products.

You can enjoy strolling through the streets of Kawagoe. There are buses to the site spots from the Kawagoe station and also, there are loop buses passing the famous sight spots in Kawagoe, with which you can save your time.

I look forward seeing you in Kawagoe.

by Michiko Matsushima