

The Western Capital of Ancient Japan

Japan's Hub for Cultural Exchange with East Asia



01 Prologue



A long time ago, the city of Dazaifu in the Tsukushi province of Kyushu in western Japan acted as Japan's western capital. Dazaifu was founded some 1,300 years ago. At its peak, it was one of Japan's major cities and acted as a melting pot of Japanese and foreign culture throughout Japan's ancient and medieval eras.

02 From Tumult to Prosperity



Because Dazaifu is close to Korea and mainland China, it was in early contact with the rest of East Asia and borrowed much culture and technology from China and Korea.

Relations were not always peaceful, however. In 663, Japan participated in an attempt to restore the allied Baekje (百濟) Kingdom to power in southern Korea, but the Japanese forces were defeated at the Battle of Baekgang (Hakusukinoe). Fearing an invasion from the enemy Tang (唐) China and Silla (新羅) Kingdom of Korea, Japan built up its defenses. Fortresses were constructed throughout the Tsukushi region; a region that had once been a hub for international exchange with China and Korea.



When these military tensions eventually subsided, Dazaifu entered a new era of cultural exchange. The city was built out in a grid layout based on observations from envoys to cities in Tang China. Various government offices, a guest house for foreign delegations, and magnificent temples with tiled roofs were constructed, transforming Dazaifu into ancient Japan's Western Capital. Foreign visitors could arrive by sea at Hakata Bay and take the Kando road straight into Dazaifu to enjoy sumptuous banquets and musical performances.

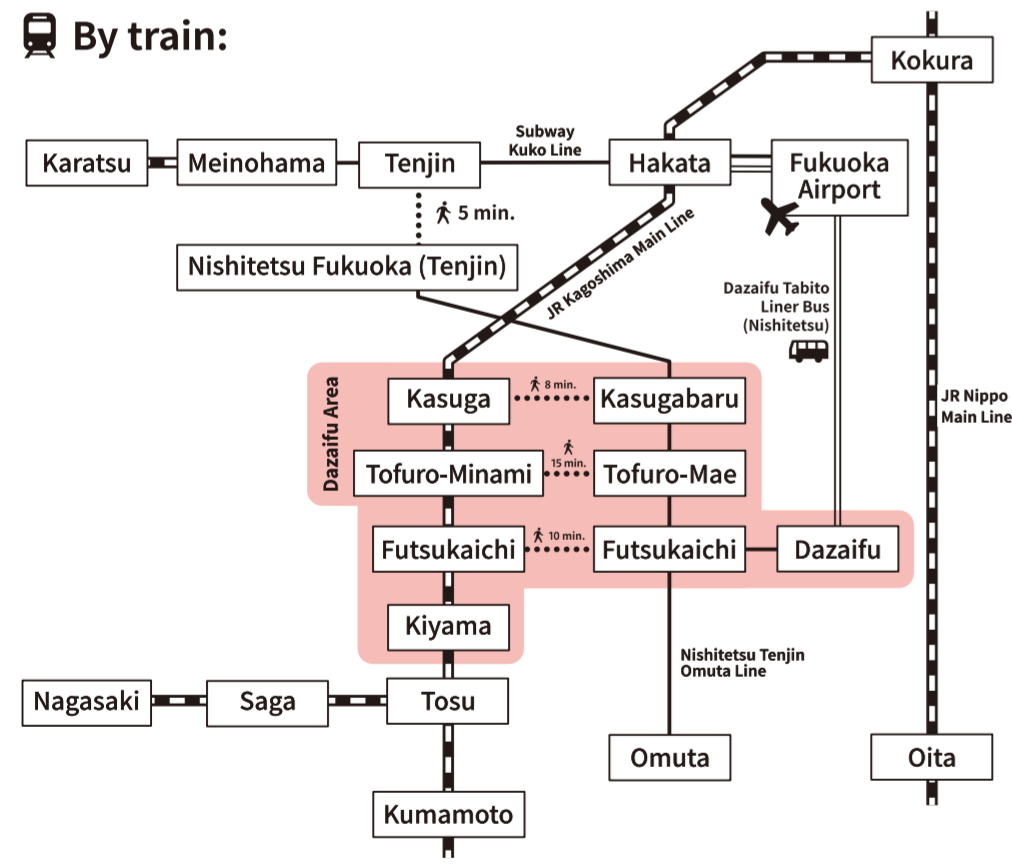
03 A Blossoming Culture



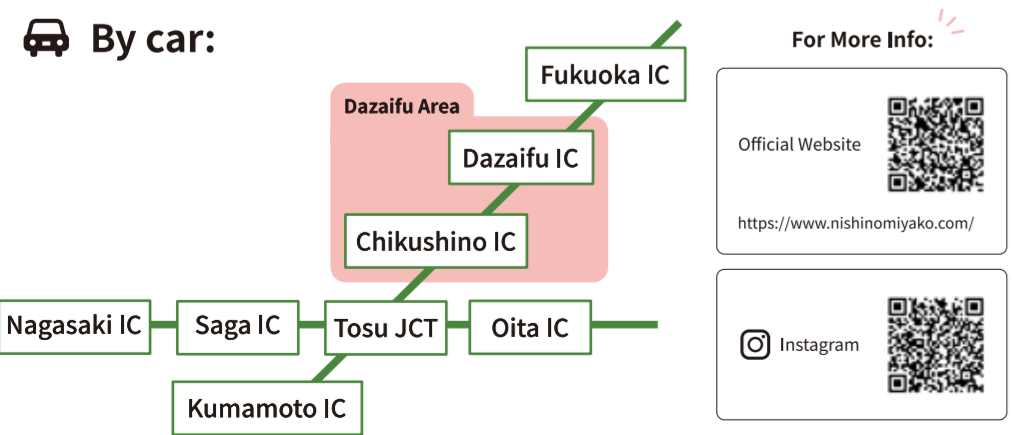
As the Western Capital, Dazaifu accumulated and incorporated a variety of foreign cultural influences. Plum blossoms are a symbol of Dazaifu originally brought over from Tang China. Otomo no Tabito, Governor-General of Dazaifu, held Baika no En parties where guests composed poems while viewing the beautiful blossoms.

Japan also actively adopted Buddhist beliefs at this time, which allowed Buddhist culture to flourish in the Tsukushi region. Many cultural assets remain from Dazaifu's period as the Western Capital that communicate its history as a place of great cultural exchange both within Japan and with the rest of the world.

By train:



By car:



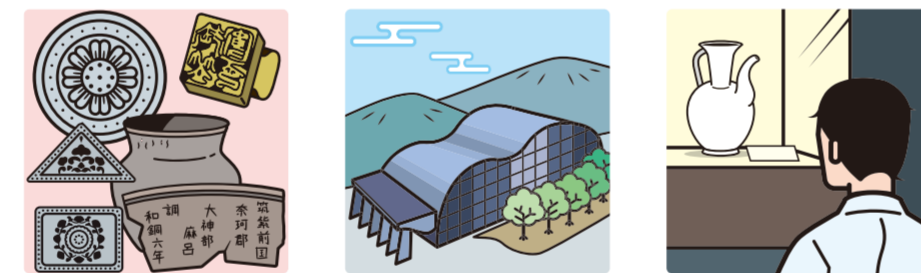
For More Info:



See & Learn

A-O

Find out more about Dazaifu's history



Kyushu National Museum

An International City

1·6·14·15·16

A city connected to East Asia



Dazaifu City Grid

Site of Dazaifu Government

Site of Kando (Public Road)

Defensive Relics

2·3·20·21

Japan's oldest defensive fortifications



Site of Mizuki Fortifications

Site of Ono-jo Mountain Fortress

Site of Kii-jo Mountain Fortress

Michizane & Tenmangu

10·12·18·19

A mecca for literary arts where visitors pray for test success



Monzen

Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine

Umegae Mochi

Must-see

Highlights of the Western Capital

Hi! My name is Miyako Nishino and I am your guide here at Dazaifu—the Western Capital of Ancient Japan. There are all kinds of historical and cultural sites here in Dazaifu, each with its own unique charm. These are some of my favorite spots. I hope you enjoy your visit to Dazaifu!



Shrines & Temples

4·5·8·9·17·23·25

Holy places related to Dazaifu



Kanzeonji & Kaidan-in Temples

Site of Han'nyaji Temple

Mt. Homan

Off the Beaten Path

11·13·19·28

Dazaifu's cultural spots located in quiet areas



Mikasa no Mori Forest

Plum Trees of Dazaifu

Site of Sugizuka Temple

Relaxation

1·2·8·20·22·24

Pleasant views and soothing springs



Mt. Tenpai

Suita no Yu

Man'yoshu Tsukushi Kadan

Experience Heritage

7·26·27·29·30

Find something new to enjoy

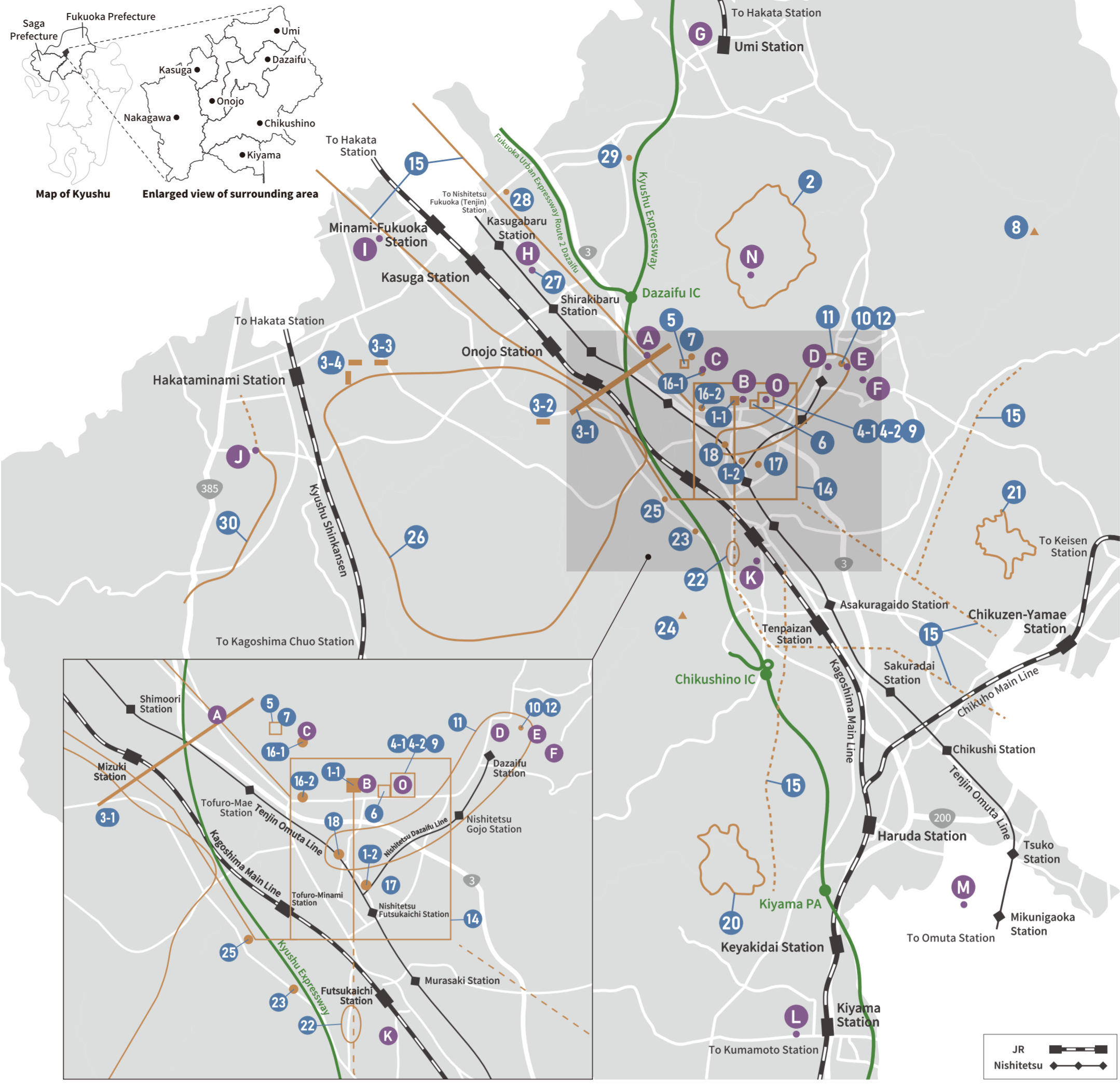


Ushikubi Sue Ware Kiln Ruins

Zen-ichida Burial Mounds

Sakuta no Unade Waterway

**Dazaifu—the Western Capital of ancient Japan—
flourished as a hub for cultural exchange in East Asia.
Numerous sites remain that tell the story of its history.**



<p>1-1 Site of Dazaifu Government Offices</p> <p>The government offices that formed the core of ancient Dazaifu.</p>	<p>1-2 Site of Dazaifu Kyaku-kan</p> <p>Building located on main Dazaifu road for welcoming foreign delegations.</p>
<p>2 Site of Ono-jo Mountain Fortress</p> <p>Japan's oldest mountain fortress that protected Dazaifu to the north.</p>	<p>3-1 Site of Mizuki Fortifications</p> <p>An enormous embankment built across flatland with gates leading into Dazaifu.</p>
<p>3-2 Site of Mizuki Fortifications (Kamiori Section)</p> <p>Smaller defensive embankment built with great skill to protect the valleys around Dazaifu.</p>	<p>3-3 Site of Mizuki Fortifications (Odoi Section)</p> <p>An earthen embankment under which ran wooden water pipes in the same manner as the main Mizuki fortification.</p>
<p>3-4 Site of Mizuki Fortifications (Tenjinyama Section)</p> <p>The westernmost earthen embankment built to defend the smaller valleys around Dazaifu.</p>	<p>4-1 Kanzeonji Temple</p> <p>One of Dazaifu's preeminent temples that houses numerous ancient cultural assets.</p>
<p>4-2 Kaidan-in Temple</p> <p>The only location in ancient Kyushu where Buddhist priests could be ordained.</p>	<p>5 Site of Chikuzen Kokubunji Temple</p> <p>One of the many Kokubunji temples built throughout Japan in the 8th century at the order of the emperor.</p>
<p>6 Site of Dazaifu Gakko-in</p> <p>A school for government officials attended by the children of Kyushu's most powerful families.</p>	<p>7 Site of Kokubu Tile Kiln</p> <p>Kiln that produced roof tiles for Chikuzen Kokubunji Temple and the government buildings in Dazaifu.</p>
<p>8 Mt. Homan</p> <p>Mountain where people prayed for Japan's protection and safe passage at sea.</p>	<p>9 Bonsho Bell</p> <p>The oldest bell in Japan that still rings the same as it did centuries ago.</p>
<p>10 Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine</p> <p>Shrine built on the burial site of famed scholar and politician Sugawara no Michizane.</p>	<p>11 Dazaifu Tenmangu Jinko Procession</p> <p>Fall event to mourn the death of Sugawara no Michizane at Dazaifu.</p>

Facilities for Learning

<p>A Mizuki Hall</p> <p>Kokubu 2-chome 17-10, Dazaifu-shi TEL: 092-555-8455</p>	<p>D Dazaifu Hall</p> <p>Saifu 3-chome 2-3, Dazaifu-shi TEL: 092-918-8700</p>	<p>H Onojo Cocoro-no-furusato-kan City Museum</p> <p>Akebonomachi 3-chome 8-3, Onojo-shi TEL: 092-558-5000</p>	<p>L Kiyama Town Library</p> <p>Miyaura 60-1, Kiyama-cho, Miyaki-gun, Saga Pref. TEL: 0942-92-0289</p>
<p>B Dazaifu Exhibition Hall</p> <p>Kanzeonji 4-chome 6-1, Dazaifu-shi TEL: 092-922-7811</p>	<p>E Dazaifu Tenmangu Museum</p> <p>Saifu 4-chome 7-1, Dazaifu-shi TEL: 092-922-8225</p>	<p>I Nakoku-no-oka Historical Museum</p> <p>Okamoto 3-chome 57, Kasuga-shi TEL: 092-501-1144</p>	<p>M Kyushu Historical Museum</p> <p>Mitsusawa 5208-3, Ogori-shi TEL: 0942-75-9575</p>
<p>C Dazaifu Fureai Museum</p> <p>Kokubu 4-chome 9-1, Dazaifu-shi TEL: 092-928-0800</p>	<p>F Kyushu National Museum</p> <p>Ishizaka 4-chome 7-2, Dazaifu-shi TEL: 050-5542-8600</p>	<p>J Milica Roden Nakagawa</p> <p>Chu 2-chome 5-1, Nakagawa-shi TEL: 092-954-2211</p>	<p>N Shioji Prefectural Forest Park</p> <p>Shioji 207, Umi-machi, Kasuya-gun TEL: 092-932-7373</p>
<p>G Umi Museum</p> <p>Umi 1-chome 1-22, Umi-machi, Kasuya-gun TEL: 092-932-0011</p>	<p>K Chikushino City Historical Museum</p> <p>Futsukaichi-minami 1-chome 9-1, Chikushino-shi TEL: 092-922-1911</p>	<p>O Kanzeonji Treasure House</p> <p>Kanzeonji 4-chome 6-1, Dazaifu-shi TEL: 092-922-1811</p>	

<p>12 Traditional Events at Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine</p> <p>Court festivities that originated in ancient China.</p>	<p>13 Man'yoshu Tsukushi Kadan</p> <p>Group of poets from Tsukushi who contributed greatly to the <i>Man'yoshu</i>, Japan's oldest collection of poems.</p>
<p>14 Dazaifu City Grid</p> <p>The streets of Dazaifu were laid out in a grid pattern modeled after the capital in Nara.</p>	<p>15 Site of Kando (Public Road)</p> <p>A national network of roads traveled by foreign diplomats and merchants.</p>
<p>16-1 Location of Excavated Army Seal (Mikasa Corps)</p> <p>Site where seal of army corps composed of Dazaifu locals was discovered.</p>	<p>16-2 Location of Excavated Army Seal (Oka Corps)</p> <p>Site where seal of army corps composed of soldiers from northern Fukuoka Prefecture was discovered.</p>
<p>17 Site of Han'nyaji Temple</p> <p>Site of an 8th-century temple atop a hill overlooking central Dazaifu.</p>	<p>18 Site of South Hall</p> <p>Where Sugawara no Michizane spent the final two years of his life.</p>
<p>19 Plum Trees of Dazaifu</p> <p>A symbol of Dazaifu brought over from Tang China and still beloved today.</p>	<p>20 Site of Kii-jo Mountain Fortress</p> <p>Built in 665, Japan's oldest mountain fortress that protected Dazaifu to the south.</p>
<p>21 Site of Ashiki Mountain Fortress</p> <p>Built in same era as Ono-jo and Kii-jo, the earthen and stone embankments of this fortress are all that remain.</p>	<p>22 Suita no Yu (Futsukaichi Hot Springs)</p> <p>Located along a Kando road to the south of Dazaifu and visited by Governor-General Otomo no Tabito in the 8th century.</p>
<p>23 Site of Tonoharu Pagoda</p> <p>Center pillar foundation stone for a pagoda of a late 7th-century temple.</p>	<p>24 Mt. Tenpai</p> <p>Mountain south of Dazaifu that overlooks the site of the ancient city, the Mizuki fortifications, and Ono-jo.</p>
<p>25 Site of Sugizuka Temple</p> <p>Site of a temple built in early 8th century that would have been seen by foreign diplomats on the Kando.</p>	<p>26 Ushikubi Sue Ware Kiln Ruins</p> <p>Supplier of ceramics to Dazaifu and largest producer of Sue ware in western Japan.</p>
<p>27 Inscribed Sue Ware Excavated from Ushikubi Sue Ware Kiln</p> <p>Sue ware inscribed with dates and names that was used as payment for taxes.</p>	<p>28 Mikasa no Mori Forest</p> <p>Forest mentioned in a poem by Otomo no Momoyo, an 8th-century high official at Dazaifu.</p>
<p>29 Zen-ichida Burial Mounds</p> <p>Burial mounds where ceramics from Korea were discovered, indicating the level of international exchange at the time.</p>	<p>30 Sakuta no Unade Waterway</p> <p>Man-made waterway that irrigates the farmlands to the west of Dazaifu and is still used today.</p>