In Ishikawa Prefecture, traditional Japanese culture is still very much a part of daily life; it is a defining characteristic of the people who live there. The origin of this strong culture dates back to the Edo period, when the Maeda clan, who ruled the area, used their wealth to promote culture and education. In particular, Kanazawa, which is the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture, flourished as one of Japan’s greatest castle towns. Fine arts such as tea ceremony, Noh play, music and dance became very popular, and crafts of lacquerware, ceramic ware, dyeing, gold leaf also developed as indispensable elements of interior decoration, implements and clothing.

The love of culture has been passed down to this day, and people take classes in cultural activities of daily life such as the tea ceremony and flower arranging, as well as traditional performing arts such as Noh plays and Japanese music and dance. There are still Chaya districts (former amusement areas) that have retained their Edo-period atmosphere, and many old shrines and temples, which fascinate visitors.

A traditional culture that is still very much alive
Ishikawa Prefecture has not only preserved its traditional culture but the prefecture also has a progressive spirit that is conducive to the introduction of new ideas. A friendly competition between the old and the new produces a creative energy, fostering Ishikawa’s rich cultural landscape.

The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, which opened in 2004, is one example of this cultural richness. The circular, glass-walled building that houses the museum can be said to be a work of art in itself, and its collection of modern and contemporary works from both Japan and abroad attracts a great deal of attention. The museum has been featured in magazines such as Newsweek and Beaux Arts.

In this “kingdom of traditional crafts”, there is an increasing number of artists working with glass and other new media. Also, along with traditional Japanese music such as koto, nagauta, subayashi and shamisen, Western music is also very popular. In 2008, Kanazawa became the seventh city in the world to hold the La Folle Journée event, and there is an annual jazz festival that attracts a huge audience.
With 36 crafts that include lacquerware, ceramic ware, dyed silk and metalwork, Ishikawa Prefecture ranks with Kyoto as a Mecca of traditional crafts, which are characterized by exquisite technique and a refined sense of beauty. Made using techniques that have been handed down through the generations, they also reflect the needs and tastes of the age in which they are made, and thus have been constantly evolving. Ishikawa has produced many of the best artisans in Japan, and the prefecture has many art galleries and museums that feature outstanding works.

Ishikawa Prefecture is also known as a “treasure-trove” of food, as it offers an abundance of fresh, tasty ingredients of all kinds. Elegant Japanese dishes served in Kutani ceramic ware and Wajima lacquerware are truly a delight for both the eyes and the palate. You are sure to take home wonderful memories of the warm welcome you receive. Please enjoy the authentic flavor of the carefully prepared dishes that Ishikawa has to offer.
Ishikawa Prefecture has four distinct seasons. In the spring, the cherry blossoms put on a brilliant display, and Kanazawa Castle and Kenroku-en area bustle with people who come to admire these blossoms. The season of fresh greenery follows after the cherry blossoms, and as the summer heats up, the foliage turns a deeper green.

In the fall, the beautifully colored leaves start appearing in the mountains and gradually advance down the slopes. Bright gradations of red, orange and yellow elicit sighs of admiration. Winter brings snow. The fields, mountains and towns are covered with a beautiful, peaceful blanket of white.
Two of Ishikawa’s most famous spring festivals are Seihaku-sai Festival, which boasts of Japan’s largest float, and Otabi Festival, which features children’s performances of kabuki plays on gorgeous floats decorated with lacquer, gold leaf and carvings. The Kanazawa Hyakumangoku Festival celebrates Maeda Toshiie’s taking over of Kanazawa Castle, and its highlight is a magnificent samurai parade. The energetic Gojinjo Daiko masked drummers, who perform to scare away demons, have been designated as an intangible folk cultural asset by Ishikawa Prefecture.

Excitement and energy

Festivals that have been passed down through the generations since ancient times are still celebrated as important events. In the kiriko festival, which is unique to the Noto Peninsula, huge kiriko lanterns are paraded around town to the sounds of vigorous chanting. During the period from July to September, kiriko festivals are held in more than 100 communities.

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Because Ishikawa has a peninsula that juts out into the Sea of Japan, it is a prefecture where changes in nature in both seaside and mountain areas can be enjoyed. Mount Hakusan, now a national park, is one of the three most famous mountains in Japan, and the place of origin of the Hakusan religious faith. There are also quasi-national parks along the coastlines of Kaga and Noto.

The mountainous area of Ishikawa Prefecture is densely forested, and dotted with beautiful waterfalls and gorges. The coastline also has amazing attractions, which include unusually shaped rocks and reefs that have been formed naturally over the years, as well as the only beach in Japan on which you can drive your car along the water’s edge.

And last but not least, when you visit Ishikawa, you will experience the lives and warmth of the people who live in harmony with nature, in both mountain and seaside villages.
Onsen (Hot Springs)

Ishikawa Prefecture is blessed with an abundance of Onsen, from large-scale resorts to quaint spas in the mountains, each with its own special attributes and ambiance. Discovered mostly about 1,300 years ago, Ishikawa's Onsen are famous throughout Japan for their historic significance and their healing qualities. So when visiting Ishikawa for its many wonderful attributes and attractions, why not pamper yourself with a relaxing stopover in a soothing spa?

- **Kenroku-en Garden**
- **Sakura Bashi**
- **Oyama Jinja Shrine**
- **Kita-machi**
- **Wakura Onsen**
- **Wajima Onsen**
- **Awazu Onsen**
- **Yuwaku Onsen**
- **Tatsunokuchi Onsen**
- **Katayamazu Onsen**
- **Yamanaka Onsen**
- **Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Traditional Products and Crafts**
- **Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Modern Japanese Literature**
- **Kanazawa Contemporary Art Museum**
- **Kanazawa Castle Park**
- **Jusangen-machi Public Facility**
- **Motenashi**
- **Sanjukken Nagaya Warehouse**
- **Hashiba-cho Market**
- **Kazue-machi Chaya District**
- **Kamishiba-cho Bridge**
- **Motenashi Bridge**
- **Nakajima-Ohashi Bridge**
- **Hokutosu Asanogawa Line**
- **Kutaniyaki World Heritage Site, Kutaniyaki (kinjoro-mae)**
- **Oku-Noto Salt Farm (Hanok Village)**
- **Oku-Noto Salt Farm (Hanok Village)**
- **Gosei Daiko Drumming performance**
- **Ushitsu Festival**
- **Ongakudo Hall**
- **Honda Museum**
- **World Heritage Site, Gokayama**
- **Hokuriku Shinkansen**
- **Kanazawa - Kyoto 2:03 h**
- **Kanazawa - Kansai International Airport 3:22 h**
- **Kanazawa - Takayama 2:10 h**
- **Kanazawa - Shirakawago 1:15 h**

**Getting to and from Ishikawa**

- **By Plane**
  - Komatsu - Seoul 1:40 h
  - Kanazawa - Shanghai 2:20 h
  - Kanazawa - Taipei 3:00 h
  - Kanazawa - Narita 1:10 h
  - Kanazawa - Tokyo (Haneda) 1:00 h
  - Noto - Tokyo (Haneda) 1:00 h

- **By Train**
  - Kanazawa - Tokyo (via Ichigo-Yuza) 3:47 h
  - Kanazawa - Tokyo (via Maibara) 4:12 h
  - Kanazawa - Kyoito 2:03 h
  - Kanazawa - Osaka 2:30 h
  - Kanazawa - Nagoya 2:27 h
  - Kanazawa - Kansai International Airport 3:22 h

- **By Bus**
  - Kanazawa - Takayama 2:10 h
  - Kanazawa - Shirakawago 1:15 h

**Hokuriku Shinkansen**

From Tokyo to Kanazawa

Travel time: 2h 28min (minimum)

The Hokuriku Shinkansen line opens spring March 14, 2015.
Nami-no-Hana

When waves are blown by the wind and crash against the rocks, white foam forms and flies over the sea like flower petals. This phenomenon is referred to as “wave flowers”. Wave flowers can be seen from the Noto seashore in winter on very windy days. The sea changes its aspect just as we change our temper and expression every day; it may be calm, angry or gorgeous. On this day, there was nothing special about the sea for the local residents; the photo shows the sea on a typical winter day.

Photo courtesy of Nohagi Naka

Nohagi Naka
(Photographer, Resident of Ishikawa)