

What is NARATIVE ?

“NARATIVE” is the main project of the “Nara International Film Festival”, dedicated to producing films across various locations in Nara.

Film Staff

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Local Government

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Community Residents

“NARATIVE” is a collaborative effort involving film staff, local governments, and community residents. It was initiated by Naomi Kawase, a filmmaker from Nara, with the vision of revitalizing modern Japan through local communities. The project aims to rediscover the charm of the regions, reestablish their value, and create a legacy for the future.



Involvement of Local Residents as Volunteers and Extras

Featuring Filmmakers Poised for Global Success

Unveiling the Beauty of Local Communities

Filmmakers selected from the award-winning works of the Nara International Film Festival visit different areas of Nara to conceptualize their NARATIVE films. Perspectives from local residents and those visiting from outside create unique insights. Different living environments lead to diverse cultural interpretations, ensuring that the filmmakers' perspectives bring fresh discoveries to light.



Energizing Communities Through Participation

During most part of the production, filmmakers and their teams immerse themselves in the community, relying heavily on the involvement of local residents. Local residents play an important role as extras as well as volunteers. Whether it's sharing meals with nearby neighbors or connecting with international crew members, the sense of togetherness becomes one of the project's most rewarding aspects.



Timeless Moments Woven into Stories

Films as Regional Assets

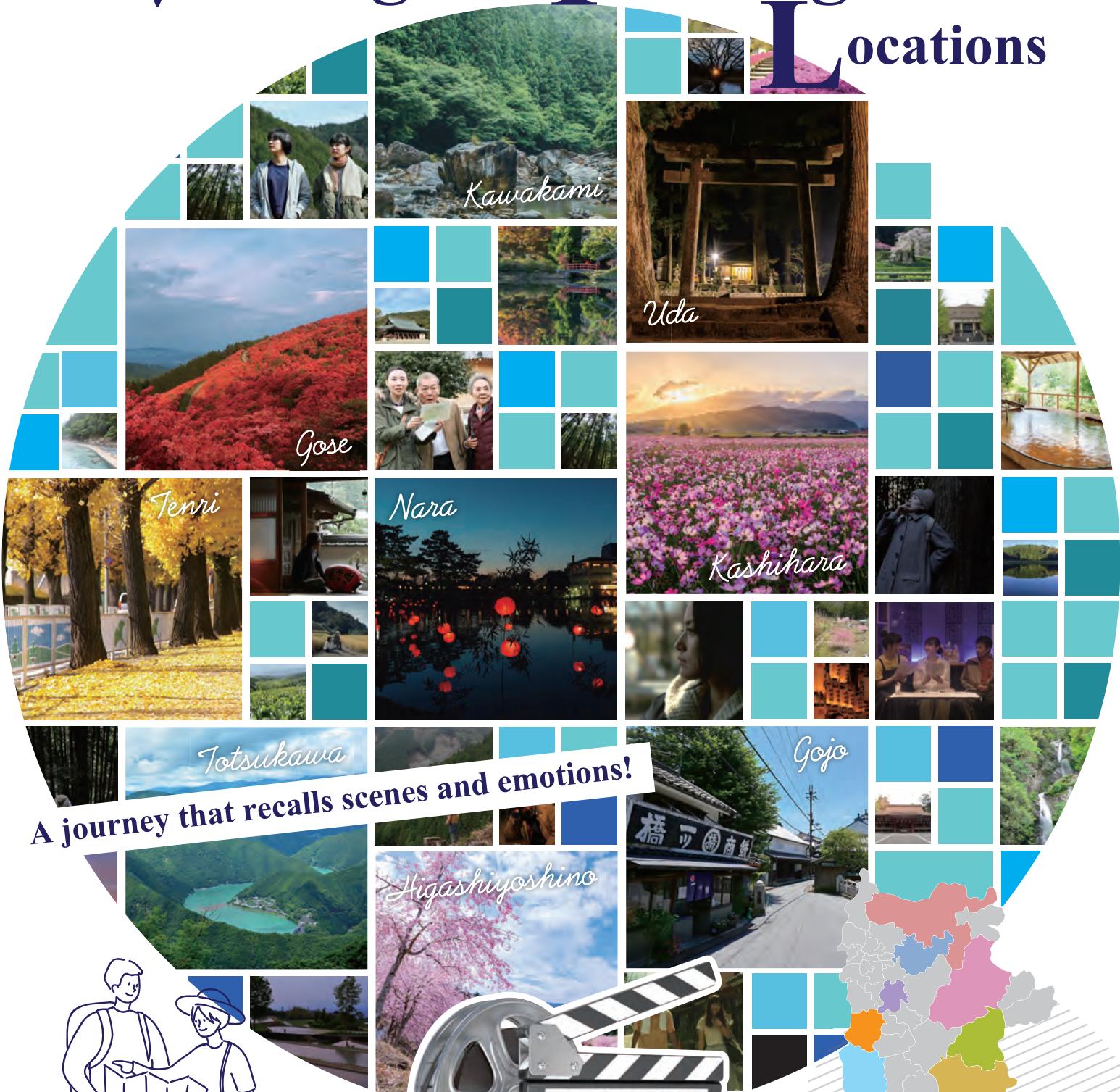
Majestic mountains, serene rivers, breathtaking sunrises peeking through the morning mist, simple yet fulfilling lifestyles, and resilient individuals—these elements are captured in the films and remain vibrant over time. As such, the films become invaluable assets for the community.



Movies produced through “NARATIVE” are premiered during the biennial “Nara International Film Festival” (held in even-numbered years).



Visiting the Filming Locations



A journey that recalls scenes and emotions!

9 cities and villages in Nara

Introducing
All 9

NARAtive Films

The Wolves of the East

2016



A determined drama rooted in history of Higashiyoshino Village

For over 100 years, the Japanese Wolf has not been sighted in Higashiyoshino Village. However, Akira, an elderly local hunter, believes the wolf still exists. As the chairman of the hunters' association, Akira disregards opposition and uses its budget to search for wolves, driven by an obsession. He ventures deep into the forest, pursuing his elusive goal.

2016 / 72 minutes / Produced by Nara International Film Festival, Seven Sisters Films / Distributor: HIGH BROW CINEMA / Director: Carlos M. Quintela / Executive Producer: Naomi Kawase / Cast: Tatsuya Fuji, Masamitsu Onishi, Masahiro Kobori

2010

Bion



A quiet depiction of a man and woman torn by fate

Shiho, 28 years old, carries the trauma of being separated from her mother at a young age. After many years, she decides to visit her mother, only to find that her feelings remain unreciprocated. Shortly after, she receives news that her mother has been in a car accident. Shiho is suddenly forced into the role of guarantor for the mother who abandoned her, leaving her deeply shaken. Amid this melancholy, Shiho finds solace in her weekly cooking classes. Just as she begins to find her footing, an unexpected piece of news arrives.

2010 / 60 minutes / Distributor: Nara International Film Festival / Director & Screenwriter: Tsuyoko Yamazaki / Producer: Naomi Kawase / Cast: Akiko Monou, Tousa Komizu, Lily

Nara
City

Tenri
City

A tale of family legacy directed by an international filmmaker

Tatsuya and his mother, Haru, are troubled by the impending end of their family lineage after losing Tatsuya's only son. Following the separation with his wife, Haru pressures Tatsuya into an unwanted marriage while secretly hoping his daughter, Yuko, will take a husband to continue the Nikaido Family line. A story of family discord over inheritance and tradition.

2018 / 106 minutes / Produced by LDH JAPAN, Emperor Film Production Company Limited, Nara International Film Festival / Distributor: HIGH BROW CINEMA / Asia Distribution (Outside Japan); Emperor Motion Pictures / Director: Ida Panahandeh / Executive Producer: Naomi Kawase / Cast: Masaya Kato, Shizuka Ishibashi, Keita Machida, Yoji Tanaka, Kazuko Shirakawa, Hana Hizuki, Kayo Ise

The Nikaidos' Fall

2018



Kashi
hara
City

A mother's love, following her son's footsteps

One day, a mother, who is supposed to be hospitalized in Tokyo, visits Kashihara City in Nara Prefecture. Her reason for traveling is to search for her son. Using photographs stored in her son's digital camera, she retraces his steps one by one. Along the way, she encounters kind friends of her son, the majestic nature of Nara, and the deep feelings her son held for her. A heartfelt story of a mother and son from Kashihara City.

2010 / 60 minutes / Distributor: Nara International Film Festival / Director & Screenwriter & Editor: Zhao Ye / Producer: Naomi Kawase / Cast: Kaori Momoi

Last Chestnuts

2010



Tracing Her Shadow

2020



Gose
City

A journey of three souls united beyond language barriers

The story begins when an elderly Chinese woman visits her "granddaughter" Xiaozie in Japan. She seeks her adopted daughter, Lihua, a Chinese returnee with whom she lost contact years ago. Joined by a former police officer, Kazuo, the three embark on a journey to find Lihua, bonded by fate and mutual understanding.

2020 / 99 minutes / Produced by Beijing Hengye Herdsman Pictures Co., Ltd., Nara International Film Festival, Xstream Pictures (Beijing) / Distributor: Mimosa Films / Director: Pengfei / Executive Producers: Naomi Kawase, Jia Zhangke / Cast: Jun Kunimura, Wu Yanshu, Ying Ze, Shintaro Akiyama, Masatoshi Nagase

2012

Inori



A documentary of villagers living with resilience

In the remote Totsukawa Village of Nara Prefecture lies a small hamlet, Kannogawa. With most young people having left for the cities, the village is now a quiet place where only a few residents live. The villagers continue a way of life intertwined with nature, embodying the cycle of "life." This documentary quietly questions the meaning of "progress" in the modern era.

2012 / 72 minutes / Production & Distribution: Nara International Film Festival / Director & Cinematographer & Editor: Pedro González-Rubio / Producer: Naomi Kawase / Co-Producer: Shunji Dodo / Cast: Sakae Fukui, Shigefumi Kotani, Tetsuo Yanase, Ryo Ikeo, Noriko Ikeo

Totsu
kawa
Village

Kawa
kami
Village

Change comes to the family of Ihika, a 12-year-old girl born into a family running an inn for generations

In a quiet village nestled among the mountains in the southeastern part of Nara Prefecture, there is a community that once bustled with mountain climbers and tourists visiting its shops and inns. This is where 12-year-old Ihika was born into a family running a traditional inn for generations. Though her parents have been separated for several years, her mother, Saki, continues to run the inn with her father-in-law, Shige. One day, Shige suddenly disappears which leads the inn's future in jeopardy. Amid this crisis, a time of transformation begins for Ihika's family.

2022 / 67 minutes / Produced by Nara International Film Festival / Supported by: Nara Prefecture, Kawakami Village, Nara City / Director: Daichi Murase / Executive Producers: Naomi Kawase / Script: Daichi Murase / Cast: Shuri Miyake, Masaki Miura, Shinzo Hotta, Asami Mizukawa

Beyond the Fog

2022



Gojo
City

A modest romance and infinite stories of film

Taehoon, a film director from Korea, travels to Gojo City in Nara Prefecture for script research, accompanied by his Japanese-speaking assistant, Mijeong. Guided by Takeda, a staff member from the tourism department of the city, they explore the town and find inspiration. A story about dreams of cinema and a fleeting romance.

2014 / 96 minutes / Distributor: "A Midsummer's Fantasia" Project 2014-2015 / Director: Jang Kun-jae / Producer: Naomi Kawase / Cast: Kim Sae-byuk, Ryo Iwase, Lim Hyung-kook, Suon Kan

A Midsummer's Fantasia

2014



Uda
City

Transit in Flamingo

2024



A special day where three timelines intersect by chance

Sae has been left behind by the lover she moved in the village with. Akari is on a journey to find flamingos. Ryutaro has never left his hometown. Under the vast sky of Uda City, these three young strangers' paths cross by chance. As their hearts intertwine for a single day, the encounter becomes a fleeting yet warm memory—a small but meaningful transit in their lives.

2024 / 98 minutes / Planned & Produced by Nara International Film Festival / Supported by: Nara Prefecture, Uda City / Director: Yuki Horiuchi / Executive Producers: Naomi Kawase, Jia Zhangke / Cast: Rio Yamashita, Gaku Hosokawa, Kirara Inori, Masaki Miura, Ryuzo Tanaka, Kotone Furukawa (voice)

NARAtive Location Map



Experience the Film's World in the Tea Fields of Tawara



Nara is widely known for its tea production. Yamato-cha tea, primarily produced in the Tawara area, traces its origins to the seeds brought back from China by the Buddhist monk Kobo Daishi. Cultivated in a climate with significant temperature differences between day and night, abundant water sources, and fertile soil, the lush green tea fields featured in the film are unique to this region.

Tea Fields in Tawara District
Around Tawara District, Nara City



Bion

The Cooking Class Attended by Shiho

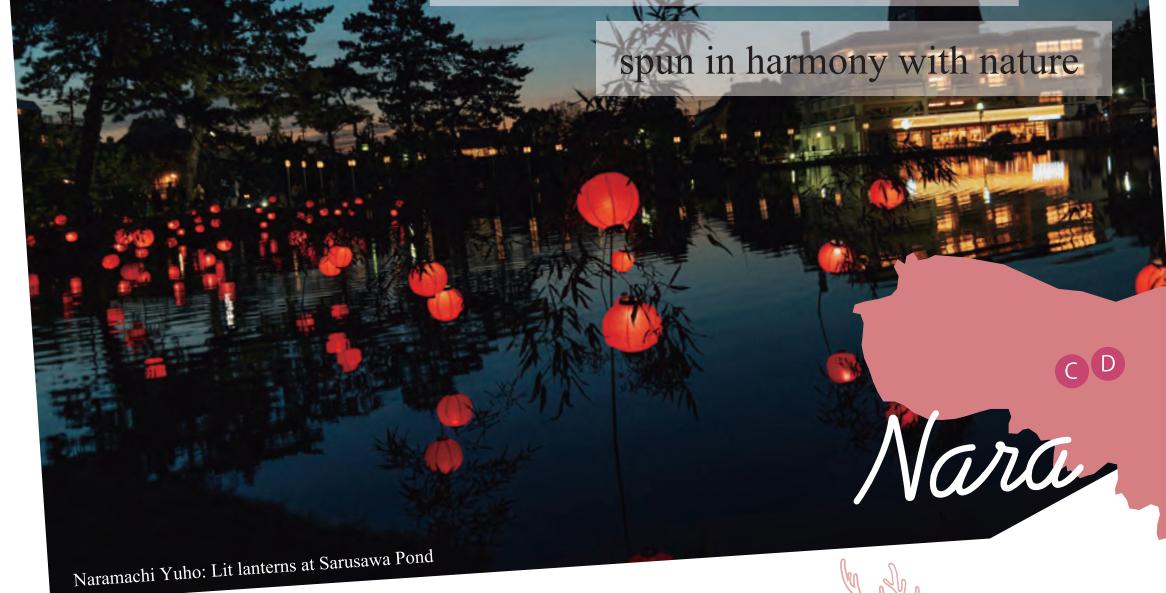


Located in the suburbs of Nara City, this gallery serves as the real-life venue for the cooking classes attended by Shiho, the main character of the story. In addition to hosting exhibitions of pottery, lacquerware, woodworking, glass art, and contemporary art objects, the gallery promotes "quality living" and "mindful lifestyles."

Gallery Fabrile
1400 Myoga-cho, Nara City

Nara City

Feel the deep culture that has been
spun in harmony with nature



Located in the northern part of Nara Prefecture, the city is home to eight assets registered as the "Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara," a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visitors can enjoy historic townhouses in the Naramachi district and scenic countryside with terraced rice fields and tea plantations in areas like Tawara.



Ukimido Pavilion – A Place of
Serenity Visited by Shiho

Floating on Sagi Pond in Nara Park, near the Kasuga Taisha Shrine, the Ukimido Pavilion is a hexagonal structure with a cypress bark roof. The area features cherry blossoms in spring, crape myrtle in summer, autumn foliage, and icy landscapes in winter. Lit up at night, the pavilion offers a magical view, making it a peaceful waterfront spot.



Mount Kasuga Primeval Forest –
A Sacred Mountain Preserved for Centuries

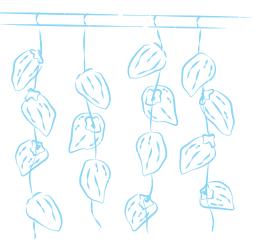


Part of the "Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara" and a Special Natural Monument, this forest has been protected as a sacred mountain of Kasuga Taisha Shrine for over 1,000 years, with hunting and logging forbidden. It remains a rare expanse of evergreen broad-leaf trees, home to unique wildlife. Hiking trails allow visitors to explore its lush beauty.

Mount Kasuga Primeval Forest Kasugano-cho, Nara City



A Shinmachi Street – The Main Setting of the Film



B Gojo Station Front – Where the Drama Began



In front of Gojo Station lies the tourist information center where Hye-jeong, the main character, first meets Yusuke, the persimmon farmer. Nearby are the diner where the two share lunch and the pub where the director, Taehoon, and assistant Mijeong converse—locations central to the film's story.



Gojo Station Front & Tourist Information Center 3-70 Sue, Gojo

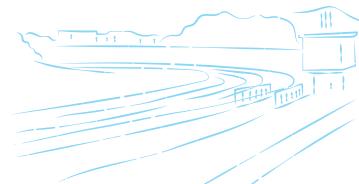
Stretching for about 1 kilometer, Shinmachi Street is home to buildings dating back to the Edo and Meiji periods. Together with Gojo City on the eastern bank of the Nishikawa River, a tributary of the Yoshino River, it forms Japan's longest Important Preservation District for Groups of Historic Buildings. Many scenes were filmed here, such as Hye-jeong watching fireworks from Yamada Ryokan and the bar where she connects with Yusuke. Walking down this street feels like stepping into the film's world.

Shinmachi Street Gojo City

Gojo City



D A Midsummer's Fantasia



C Yoshino River – A Scenic Film Highlight



The Yoshino River, a symbolic landscape of Gojo City, features prominently in the film. Originating in the Odaigahara region of Kamikitayama Village, it flows into the Kiso River in Wakayama Prefecture. Along its banks are stunning rock formations, historic sites, camping spots, and areas for ayu fishing. The annual Yoshino River Festival in August draws large crowds.

Yoshino River Gojo City



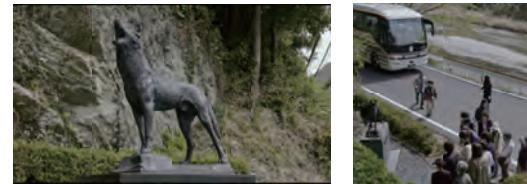
D Shinohara District – A Haven of Seasonal Nature



About 1.5 hours south of central Gojo City by car, the Shinohara District offers breathtaking mountain and valley views. The film's scenes featuring villagers were shot at Manpukuji Temple here. The area also boasts the three-tiered Miya-no Waterfalls, with a height of 40 meters, noted for the unique splash of its second tier.

Shinohara District Oto-cho, Gojo

A Japanese Wolf Statue – A Village Symbol



The statue of the Japanese wolf that appears at the beginning of the film was brought to Higashiyoshino Village in 1905 by a hunter for use as an animal specimen for Malcolm Anderson, a member of a zoological expedition organized by the Zoological Society of London and the British Museum, when he visited the village for animal research. This wolf was the last recorded capture of a Japanese wolf. It is now preserved at the Natural History Museum, London.

Japanese Wolf Statue Ogawa, Higashiyoshino Village, Yoshino

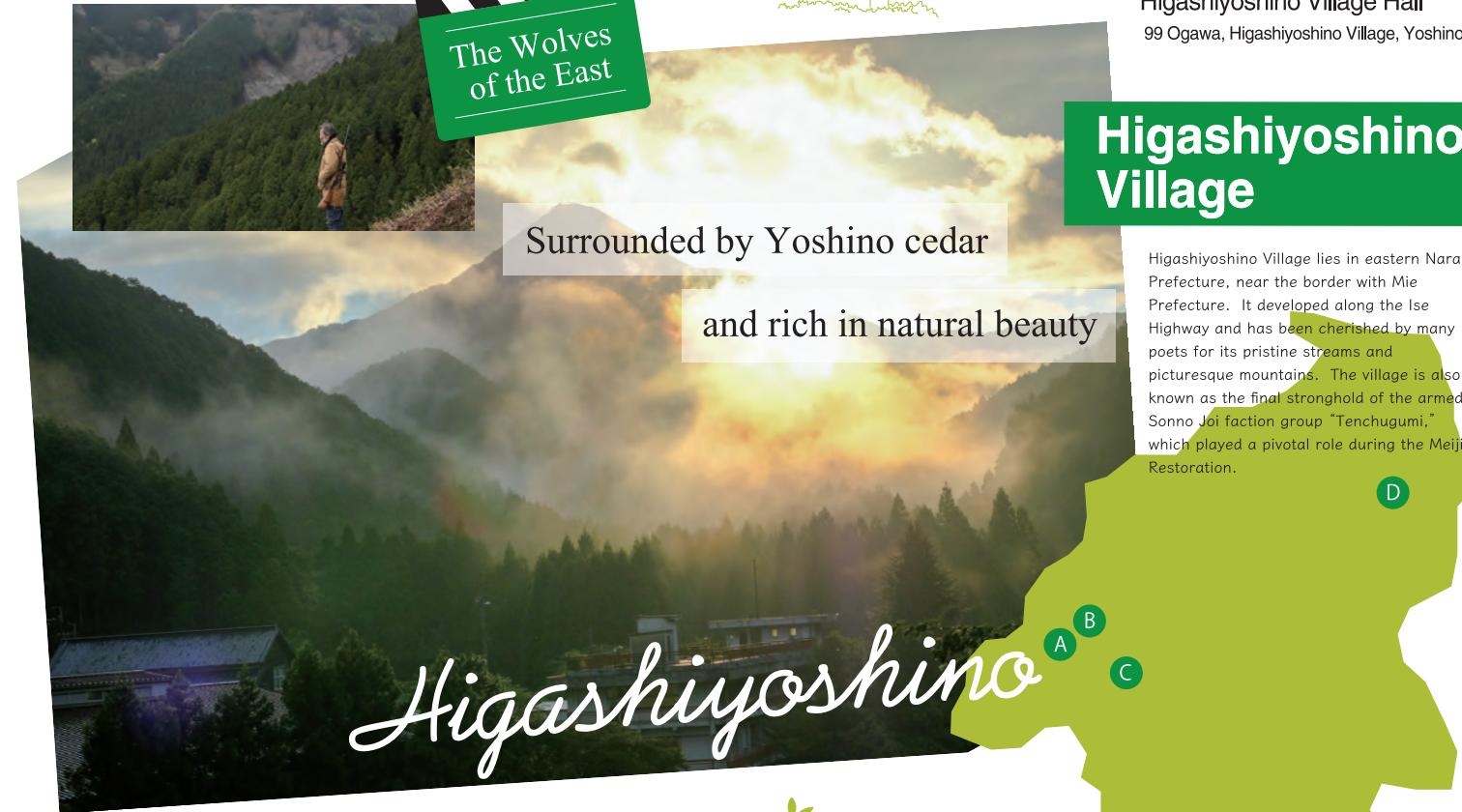


B The Setting of the Film: Higashiyoshino Village Hall



The Higashiyoshino Village Hall, where the protagonist played by Tatsuya Fuji argues with the village mayor, was the actual filming location. This area along the Takami River was once the site of a fierce battle between the Sonno Joi faction's Tenchugumi and the Shogunate forces. The location of the hall served as the headquarters for the Hikone troops, the enemy side. Nearby, you'll find Hosen-ji Temple, the mortuary temple for the Tenchugumi, where an annual memorial service is held on November 5.

Higashiyoshino Village Hall
99 Ogawa, Higashiyoshino Village, Yoshino



Higashiyoshino Village

Higashiyoshino Village lies in eastern Nara Prefecture, near the border with Mie Prefecture. It developed along the Ise Highway and has been cherished by many poets for its pristine streams and picturesque mountains. The village is also known as the final stronghold of the armed Sonno Joi faction group "Tenchugumi," which played a pivotal role during the Meiji Restoration.

D



C Shrine to the Deity of Water: Niukawakami Shrine

Founded in 675 by Emperor Tenmu, this shrine is dedicated to Mitsuwa-no Me-no Kami, the goddess of water. Known as the site where Emperor Jimmu prayed for victory, the shrine has a strong historical connection to the imperial court, evidenced by frequent visits by emperors from the Tenmu era onward. In June, the Suijin Festival is held, and in October, the Ogawa Festival features eight large drum floats parading through the shrine grounds. A prayer scene in the film was shot here.

Niukawakami Shrine
968 Omura, Higashiyoshino Village, Yoshino

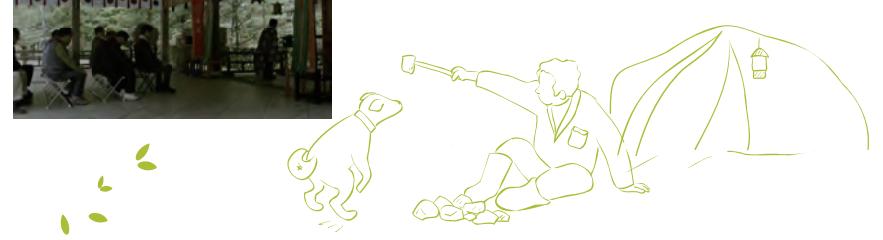


D Mount Takami: Frost Flowers Under a Cerulean Sky



Mount Takami, standing at 1,249 meters on the border of Higashiyoshino Village and Matsusaka City in Mie Prefecture, is famed for its symmetrical and stunning shape, and is often nicknamed "the Matterhorn of the Kinki region." In winter, the summit is adorned with frost-covered trees that glitter against a deep blue sky, creating a masterpiece of nature. At the base, the "Sky Garden Takami-no Sato" offers a panoramic view of about 1,000 weeping cherry blossoms in full bloom in spring.

Sky Garden Takami-no Sato
298-1 Sugitani, Higashiyoshino Village, Yoshino





Nagataki Town: A Picturesque Community of Historic Houses



Nagataki Town, home to the Nikaido and Tada families, is a highland area about 15 minutes from the city center. The town is surrounded by nature, with beautiful old houses and the gentle sounds of a babbling brook, creating a tranquil setting. Local volunteers actively work to preserve the area's scenic beauty, including efforts to restore the "Long Waterfall," from which the town takes its name.

Nagataki Town Nagataki-cho, Tenri

Tenri City

Tenri City, located in northern Nara Prefecture, boasts numerous archaeological sites dating back to the Kofun period. It is known as a city of cultural heritage, featuring relics mentioned in historical texts like the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki. The city is also a religious hub, home to many Tenrikyo facilities. In recent years, new tourist destinations have emerged, allowing visitors to experience different eras in a single city.



Time Travel City



Tenri University: Where Patrick Teaches



Tenri University is an internationally diverse institution with a large number of international students. The film features Yuko graduating and Patrick teaching here. A delicate scene portraying cultural and ideological differences was filmed against a backdrop of the university's Gagaku (Japanese court music) ensemble. Its affiliated library houses six national treasures and many valuable classical texts, and it is open to the public.

Tenri University 1050 Somanouchi-cho, Tenri



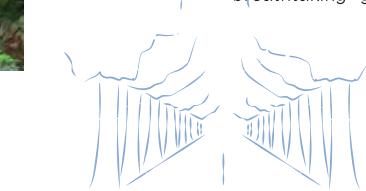
A

Filming Location



B

Tenri's Iconic Ginkgo Trees



A sentimental scene where Tatsuya takes Sara in his car to pick up Satomi was shot along Tenri City's famous ginkgo tree-lined avenue. The ginkgo tree, also Tenri's official city tree, turns the streets into a sea of gold every autumn. The "Oyasan Boulevard" northeast of Tenri City Hall is especially well-known for its orderly rows of trees and the breathtaking "golden carpet" of fallen leaves.

Ginkgo Tree Avenue
Kawaharajō-cho and Mishima-cho, Tenri

Nagataki Town Nagataki-cho, Tenri



C

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B

Filming Location

Tenri University: Where Patrick Teaches



A Kashiwagi District,
the primary setting of the film



The Kashiwagi District, the main stage of the story, is home to the "Omine Okugakemichi," a trail designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Historically a prosperous lodging town for mountain climbers, the district features the "Asahikan," one of the filming locations. This inn is built in the unique local architectural style known as "Yoshino-date," which harmonizes with the mountainous terrain and has welcomed countless travelers over the years.

Kashiwagi District

Oaza Kashiwagi, Kawakami Village, Yoshino, Nara



B Chigoro Natural Deep Pool,
featured in a key scene



In Kawakami Village, which boasts a 500-year history of forestry, approximately 70% of the forest is artificial. Around the Chigoro Deep Pool contains an artificial forest with trees over 300 years old. The pool also features sections of the river lined with large rocks and streams ideal for fishing. A scene was filmed here where Shige talks to Ihika about the mountains and river while fishing for yamame trout.

Kawakami Village

Kawakami Village, with a total area of 269.26 square kilometers, is a nature-rich village where approximately 95% of the land is forested. To fulfill its role as the source of the Yoshino and Kinokawa Rivers, the village has preserved around 740 hectares of untouched primeval forest for over 500 years. These forests, known as "The Watershed Forest," ensure that clean water flows downstream and are carefully protected.



A village nourished by the pristine
waters of the Yoshino and Kinokawa Rivers



A hotel surrounded by the natural
beauty of the Okuyoshino Gorge



This elegant hotel is nestled among the Yoshino cedar forest of Kawakami Village, offering stunning views of the majestic cedar trees from the rooms and restaurant. It features open-air baths crafted from natural stones and Koyamaki wood. Day-use options are also available. Guests can also savor exquisite kaiseki cuisine prepared by an award-winning chef recognized as a "Master of Nara" by the Nara Prefecture Governor in 2020.

Hotel Sugino

695 Oaza Sako, Kawakami Village, Yoshino, Nara



A Yataki – The house where Sae moved in

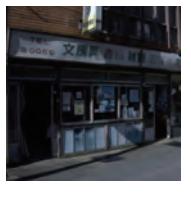


One of the protagonists, Sae, moves into a house in Yataki. The street in front of the house was once bustling with activity, but today, it is a quiet place, with only a bus stop remaining as a reminder of the past. Originally an abandoned house, it served not only as a filming location but also as a rest space for the production staff and a base for the film crew.

Yataki (Bus Stop) Haibara Yataki, Uda City



B Kaneko's Stationery Store
and Playhouse



A nostalgic used book shop and playhouse run by Kaneko, Ryutaro's junior friend. The area is designated as a Preservation District for Important Traditional Buildings, featuring the historic Uda Matsuyama Castle ruins and a charming old castle town.

Ouda District Naka Shin, Ouda, Uda City

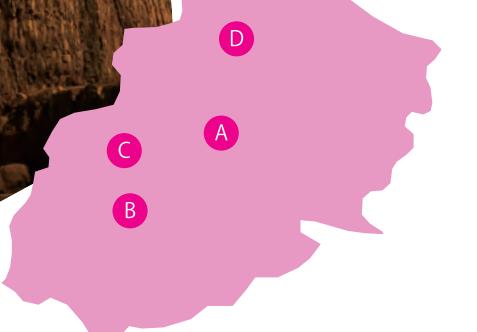


A hometown of the heart

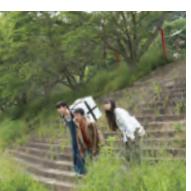
woven with history and nature

Uda City

Located in the northeastern part of Nara Prefecture, Uda City offers convenient access from Osaka and Kyoto. It has been known since ancient times as a region rich in medicinal herbs and still maintains strong ties with pharmaceutical companies. The city is also featured in the ancient chronicles of Japan, "Kojiki" and "Nihon Shoki," serving as a setting for Japanese mythology. With its historic temples, shrines, and traditional architecture, Uda City boasts a charming and nostalgic atmosphere.



The stairs leading to the stream



A staircase where Ryutaro leads the other two to the stream. A memorable scene features a character carrying a refrigerator on her back while peering into the water. The Uda River flows right in front, and the area is surrounded by a tranquil atmosphere.

Hirao, Ouda, Uda City



Ryutaro's place of memories –
The shores of Muro Dam



Muro Dam, a gravity concrete dam built to regulate flooding, maintain river flow, and supply drinking water, has been in operation since 1974, damming the Uda River. The reservoir, also known as Muro Lake, is surrounded by beautiful natural scenery. In the film, Ryutaro takes the two girls here, introducing it as a place of personal memories.

Muro Lake

Haibara Yamabe San, Uda City

New art born amidst nature



Opened in May 1999, "Takumi-no Mura" is a creative haven where artists from various fields establish studios and engage in their work. The village offers a gallery for exhibiting works, a cafe, and workshops where visitors can experience pottery and other art forms. It also provides cottage-style accommodations for an immersive experience.

Takumi-no Mura

135 Oaza Higashikawa, Kawakami Village, Yoshino, Nara