



# DISCOVER NOH in KYOTO



## What is noh

Noh is a traditional performance art bringing together **poetry, chant, dance, music**, as well as gorgeous **costumes and masks**. Originating in the 14th century, its repertory and stage conventions have been refined throughout history to reach today's form. While noh is a distinctively Japanese tradition, its boldness and elegance unified in simplicity have universal appeal.

## A "dramatic" view of Kyoto

In **Kyoto, the ancient capital**, every narrow street, river or hill is stage to a **legend or story** celebrated in **classical literature**. That is why many of its landmarks are the background to noh plays. Kyoto abounds with theatres dedicated to noh, and performances are staged as part of the **seasonal rituals of shrines and temples**. Lectures, workshops, mask and costume exhibitions are also held here, as not only the actors but also many costume makers and mask carvers continue to be based in Kyoto. All of this makes Kyoto the ideal place to experience noh in the **rich fabric of a living tradition**.

## How to see noh

The noh repertory is extremely diverse: its plays tell stories of deities, ghosts of fallen warriors or noble ladies, spirits of flowers and plants, or fierce supernatural creatures. Plays featuring monsters and demons are shorter and action-packed, making them easily accessible even for first timers, while other plays may rely more on the poetry of its texts or feature slow elegant dances. We recommend that you look up the play online before you go to the theatre. Short comic plays of kyogen are often performed between noh plays.

## Where & When

The **Kanze** and **Kongo** theatres are located in central Kyoto and offer performances regularly. These are usually held on **weekends** in the **afternoon**.

Tickets cost around 3,000 – 6,000 yen. Student discounts are usually available starting from around 2,000 yen.

### A 京都観世会館

Kyoto Kanze Noh Theater



### B 金剛能楽堂

The Kongo Noh Theatre



## Discover Noh in Kyoto

Please check our website or Facebook page for information on opportunities to watch or learn more about noh in Kyoto!



▲DNIK Website

THE NOHGAKU  
PERFORMERS  
ASSOCIATION  
KYOTO BRANCH



## 1 野宮神社「野宮」

Nonomiya Shrine *Nonomiya*

### The shrine in the autumn fields

A rustic torii gate and a brushwood fence mark the entrance to Nonomiya, the Shrine in the Fields, where Lady Rokujō met her past lover, Genji, after he had rejected her. Unable to forget her unrequited love, the ghost of Lady Rokujō still wanders within the shrine precincts because her lingering resentment prevents her spirit to leave the desolate shrine. Around the time the sound of the crickets and the hues of flowers fade away, she tells her story to a travelling priest who comes by and quietly dances in memory of the past. **Nonomiya Shrine is now located within the gorgeous bamboo groves of Sagano.**



10-min walk from Saga Arashiyama Station (JR) / 6-min walk from Arashiyama Station (Randen)

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Photos of noh performances by Kin-no-hoshi Watanabe Shashin-jo

## 2 貴船神社奥宮「鉄輪」

Kifune Shrine Oku-no-miya *Kanawa*

### Flickering flames of revenge

Night after night, the betrayed wife prayed in resentment. The oracle said, "Don a red robe, smear your face with red clay and wear an iron crown with three candles lit. If your anger flairs, you shall be given supernatural power." Thunder roars in the sky as the woman attacks the man and his new wife asleep... But alas, it was all an illusion caused by a diviner the man had consulted to protect him. Escaping the sacred spell, the woman disappears swearing to return. **The shrine where the pitiful woman prayed, the Oku-no-miya of Kifune Shrine, sits mysteriously in the deep green shade of Kibune Valley.**



10-min walk from Kibune (Kyoto Bus) / 45-min walk from Kibune-guchi Station (Eizan Railway/Kyoto Bus) OR 1-hr hike from Kurama

## 3 鞍馬寺「鞍馬天狗」

Kurama Temple *Kurama-Tengu*

### The boy and the secrets of martial arts

The young Ushiwaka of the Genji clan was raised in a mountain temple surrounded by forests where the powerful mythical creatures, the tengu, lived. One beautiful day, Ushiwaka meets with the Great Tengu under a blossoming cherry tree. The Great Tengu sees the boy's potential as the future leader of his clan and promises to teach him the mastery of martial arts that will make him defeat the rival Heike clan.

**The steep approach to Kurama Temple and the trail beyond, covered with cedar roots, is where Ushiwaka lived and trained with the tengu.**



2-min walk from Kurama Station (Eizan Railway/Kyoto Bus) to the gate & 20min walk to main temple OR 1-hr hike from Kibune



5-min walk from Inari Station (JR) to main shrine & 40-min hike through torii gates to Mitsurugi Shrine

## 4 伏見稻荷大社 御劔社「小鍛冶」

Fushimi Inari Shrine Mitsurugi-sha *Kokaji*

### The swordsmith and the deity

The swordsmith Munechika has been commissioned to make a sword for the emperor, but he does not have an apprentice worthy of the extraordinary mission. At the end of his wits, he prays to his patron deity for help and his prayers are heard. The god sends help in the form of a sacred fox holding a hammer. When the lively echoes of the hammer seize, the famed sword Kogitsune-maru, "little fox," is forged. After presenting the sword in praise, the spirit jumps up on the clouds and flies back to the hills. **The home of the Inari deity is Fushimi Inari Taisha, famous for its iconic passage of vermilion gates.**