



To all the visitors

The Nishimikawa area is where people still live mainly by agriculture now. In order to preserve the rural landscape derived from the placer gold mine and to leave it long to posterity, there are few facilities for tourists other than signposts and guideboards.

For your visit, please understand the circumstances of this area different from the general tourist spots and consider the following:

1. Traffic

Please do not drive or park on farm/forest roads other than prefectural/city roads, or on private property.

2. About visits

Please do not park along the roadside due to the narrow roads in the area. Please do not enter any place other than the designated walking routes, such as private property, footpaths between rice fields, and mountain forests.

3. Restroom

Please note that there is no public restroom now.

4. Trash

Please take your trash with you as there are no trash boxes.

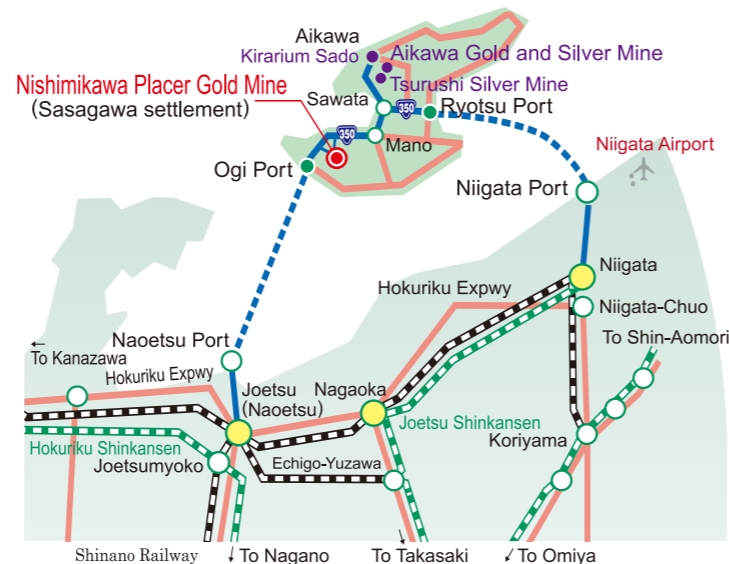
5. Warning against falling rocks etc.

The mountain slopes of placer gold mining sites are where falling rocks and landslides are likely to occur. Please keep away from the slopes.

6. Protection of vegetation

The rich landscapes of natural woodlands in Nishimikawa area is supported by the work that keeps the balance between humans and nature. Please do not gather trees, wild grasses and flowers, the edible wild plants etc. Please cooperate to protect the vegetation.

Access to Nishimikawa area (Sasagawa settlement)



● From Ryotsu Port: About 60 minutes by car
(on National Route 350)

● From Ogi Port: About 30 minutes by car
(on National Route 350 and Prefectural Route 432)

NOTE: There are no direct route buses to Sasagawa settlement.
Please use rental cars or taxis

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Important Cultural Landscape

Rural Landscape from Placer Gold Mining at Nishimikawa, Sado

Sasagawa Highlight Map



Definition of Cultural Landscapes:

Cultural landscapes have developed in association with the works of nature and human life, such as terraced rice fields and natural woodlands. They are the cultural properties to protect what are indispensable for the understanding of the features and livings of the region, including the natural ecosystem.

In the Nishimikawa area, there have been traces in good condition since the closure of the placer gold mine in 1872 until today: mining sites, waterways, and reservoirs formed by a placer gold mining method called *Onagashi* (great flow); and settlements, and surrounding mountain ranges. You can imagine the former prosperity in the area, which has not changed greatly from the drawings from the Edo period (1603-1868).

The landscape was designated an Important Cultural Landscape in September 2011.





01 Stone Monument on the Boundary Marking the Old Sasagawa and Kinzan Settlements

People began to call the Sasagawa settlement *Sasagawa Juhachimai-mura* (lit. 'Sasagawa 18 pieces Village') because the village paid 18 pieces of gold (approximately 2.9 kilograms) to the Uesugi clan in the span of one month at the end of the 16th century. Before that, the Sasagawa settlement was divided into two areas: "Kinzan" of Kodatsumura Village in the north, and "Sasagawa" of Nishimikawa-mura Village in the south. A stone monument of *dosojin* (the travelers' guardian deity) that stands near the current settlement center preserves a vestige of the former village boundary.



02 Tatenokoshi-yama Site

The Tatenokoshi-yama Site is one of the mining sites of the Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine. Here it is still possible to see steep slopes that mine workers dug out by hand. At the foot of the mountain, you can see remnants of waterways from the Tatenokoshi-yama Reservoir. Miners used a method called *Onagashi* (great flow). The method involved flushing large amounts of water over dug-out soil and stones to wash away unwanted dirt, allowing the heavy placer gold to accumulate on the bottom of the waterway. Since around the end of the 16th century, the mine's gold output increased dramatically with the introduction of this new method.



03 Nishimikawa Oyamazumi-jinja Shrine

The Nishimikawa Oyamazumi-jinja Shrine was built in 1593 to pray for the prosperity and safety of the placer gold mine. It is said that a shrine of the same name in Aikawa enshrines the same deity. Built around the late 19th century, Noh plays were performed on the shrine's Noh stage until the mid-1950s. During the Meiji period (1868-1912), migrants traveling from Sasagawa to Hokkaido donated stone structures to the shrine, including the *torii* (a gate to a shrine) and *komainu* (a pair of guardian dogs).



04 Kaneko Kanzaburo House

The Kaneko family served as a village head of the placer gold miners from the 1850s until the closure of the mine in 1872. The main building was built in the late 1700s and the storehouse in the 1850s. Later on in the 1870s, the shed, cow barn and toilet were built, showing the transition of trades from mining to agriculture after the placer gold mine was closed. (Please do not enter the property during repair work.)



05 Site of the Mine Administration Office and Mine Official's Residence

During the Edo period (1603-1868), the Sado Magistrate's Office set up an office for mining officials in Nishimikawa and dispatched two officials there. The sites of the office and official's residence are in the same place today as shown in drawings from the Edo period. The officials' residence site lies on a flat area of land surrounded by stone walls, while the office site is located in a field across the road. It was here that officials weighed collected placer gold at the end of every month. After weighing the placer gold, officials determined the amount to be paid to the Magistrate's Office and the share that would go towards mine workers' salaries.



06 Inokamisawa Area

There used to be a Shinto shrine here called Suwa-jinja. It is said that the shrine also owned a rice field called Inokamisawa. Tradition says that a person called Matsunami Yunin dug the fields tirelessly with placer gold mining between 1555 and 1558. Between 1661 and 1673, the shrine relocated to the neighboring Kodatsumura Village. The residents of the current Sasagawa settlement restored and cultivated the rice field.



Sasa 笹 : (bamboo grass) / gawa 川 : (river) / ju 十 : (ten) / hachi 八 : (eight) / mai 枚 : (piece) / mura 村 : (village)



07 Remnants of Tatenokoshi-yama Reservoir

During the Edo period (1603-1868), people built reservoirs to store large amounts of water for the *Onagashi* (great flow) method in Nishimikawa. This reservoir's water source is about one kilometer away. Drawings from the Edo period show that a tunnel was dug to allow water to flow in. After the closure of the mine, the reservoir was converted to a pond to provide water to the surrounding farmlands. The pond has now been filled in.



08 Remnants of a Stone Masonry Waterway

Stone masonry waterways such as this one were built to bring reservoir water to mining sites of the Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine. Remnants of this waterway start from the Tatenokoshi-yama Reservoir to the Sankyo-yama mining site. Stones discarded during mining were used to build the waterways. Some parts of the waterways are disrupted due to the road development, but you can still see the traces of where the water flowed. Flat stones that were placed on top of the stonework are still visible. Look closely, and you'll also notice that traces of clay, spread along the bottom of the walls to prevent leaks, still remain.



09 Toramaru-yama Site

The Toramaru-yama Site is the largest mining site of the Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine. Remnants of waterway for the *Onagashi* (great flow) method that lead to the Toramaru-yama Site are about 3.9 kilometers long, which is the second longest of all the waterways leading to the placer gold mine. The placer gold mining conducted here is depicted in drawings dating back to the Edo period (1603-1868), showing mining done in both higher and lower areas of the mountain. An outcrop of red soil exposed after miners dug away at the mountain can still be seen today on the mountain slope. This red soil became a symbol of the Sasagawa settlement's prosperous placer gold mining history.



10 Mt. Arakami

It is said that travelling Buddhist monks practiced asceticism on this rocky mountain. An Edo period (1603-1868) drawing describes the mountain, saying, "The residents were afraid of being cursed if they entered." Near the mountain, you can still see traces of a waterfall where the travelling Buddhist monks practiced asceticism. It is said that the monks, who went deep into the fields and mountains to practice asceticism, may have been involved in the discovery and development of the placer gold mine. Many religious places that show traces of this still remain around the Sasagawa settlement.



11 Amitabha Hall

The Amitabha Hall is a building depicted in Edo period (1603-1868) drawings. The *shumidan* (a dais for a Buddhist image) inside the hall is decorated with carved spiral patterns, resembling the aesthetic style of the medieval period. The statue of Amitabha (Buddha) installed in the *shumidan* is believed to date back to the early 1600s, and historians estimate the hall to have been built around the same time. In the same vicinity as the hall, there are also training sites for travelling Buddhist monks that date back to the medieval period, and traces of the faiths of the old placer gold miners can be seen.



12 Former Sasagawa Branch School of Nishimikawa Elementary School

The Sasagawa Branch School of Nishimikawa Elementary School was founded in 1880, and the present school building was built in 1962. The number of students in attendance peaked at 35 in 1958, and there were only 4 students in 2009. The school officially closed in March 2010, ending its 129-year history. Although the school is now officially closed, the building and grounds are still used by the residents of the current Sasagawa settlement. Every July, they hold a sports day here, and every November, a harvest festival.