

Discover Your Favorite Giant Trees!

Musashi Ichinomiya Hikawa Shrine · Omiya Park, Saitama

Strolling around "Omiya",
a venerable great residence
of gods

 The name "Omiya", which literally means "Grand Palace", originates that Musashi Ichinomiya Hikawa Shrine was worshipped as a great residence of gods. It is the top shrine of about 200 Hikawa Shrines in Tokyo and Saitama. The approach of 2 km to Hikawa Shrine called Hikawa Sando, starting from "Ichi no torii (the first torii gate)", is said to be the longest approach to shrine in Japan, and is lined with 650 trees including giant Japanese zelkova trees.

Omiya Park is the first prefectural park in Saitama Prefecture, established in 1885 by nationalizing a part of the grounds of Hikawa Shrine. When it was opened, it was covered with pine trees and reminded the visitors of the classic Musashino landscape, hence many literateurs loved the park, tied with Atami as a resort in the countryside for the people live in Tokyo. Here is a course in which you can stroll and appreciate the giant trees through Hikawa Sando, from Omiya station to the historic Hikawa Shrine and the spacious Omiya Park.



Musashi Ichinomiya Hikawa Shrine
Photo credit to
Saitama Tourism and International Relations Bureau

[Access]

Start from the East Exit of Omiya Station of JR East, Tobu Railway, and Saitama New Urban Transit

1 Avenue of 650 zelkova trees

Boulevard trees of Hikawa Sando

The row of approximately 650 trees, stretching approximately 2 km from north to south, is composed of Japanese zelkova and other evergreen broad-leaved trees and deciduous broad-leaved trees unique to Musashino. It was lined with cedar trees until 1940s, however, they were used as fuel during the wartime, and also the number of the trees declined due to the vibration and exhaust gas from cars, so zelkova trees were planted and have been in place ever since.

Some zelkova trees have weakened in recent years, so the neighborhood residents have taken the lead in conducting a tree survey to pass on this valuable green asset to the next generation, leading to the conservation measures.



Tree species Zelkova 62.5% Other species 37.5%

Trunk girth Average 134 cm *15 of them over 3 m

Height Average 13.3 m **Protected designation** Natural monuments designated by Saitama City *11 trees

Address Omiya-ku, Saitama City, Saitama

4 Picturesque autumn leaves and fresh green

Three metasequoia trees in Omiya Park (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)

On the shore of "Swan Pond" next to "Hyotan Pond", visitors can enjoy a beautiful view of metasequoia trees and a fountain. The yellow leaves in autumn and the fresh green in spring, which are clearly visible even from a distance are spectacular. The name "metasequoia" came from an incident that a Japanese botanist discovered an unknown plant from a fossilized tree called "sequoia". Later in 1945, Chinese scholars found that unknown plant in the backwoods of China, hence it is called "living fossil".



Trunk girth 327 cm, 312 cm, 294 cm

Height 22 m, 22 m, 21 m **Est. age** Unknown

Address Takahana-cho 4, Omiya-ku, Saitama-shi, Saitama, Inside Omiya Park

2 Sacred zelkova tree -god of learning

A Japanese zelkova tree in Tenman Shrine (*Zelkova serrata*)

The sacred zelkova tree is located behind the hall of worship, and although it is not specially distinctive, its crown is large and magnificent when it is viewed from a distance. There are eight small shrines scattered throughout the spacious grounds of Hikawa Shrine. Tenman Shrine, located along Hikawa Sando is one of them. It is one of more than 10,000 shrines dedicated to Michizane Sugawara, a historical person who is worshipped as a god of learning, so this shrine is popular among students preparing for entrance exams.



Trunk girth 466 cm **Height** 23 m **Est. age** Unknown

Address Higashimachi 2-191-2, Omiya-ku, Saitama-shi, Saitama, Inside Tenman Shrine

5 In search of a shadow of the resort in Taisho Period

A camphor tree in Saitama Hyakunen-no-mori (*Camphora Cinnamomum*)

Saitama Hyakunen-no-mori is a forest which was made in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Saitama Prefecture. The gateposts of the Amusement Park Hotel, built in 1921, still remain, and it makes a corner of the place that retains the shadow of the park in its early days. You can stand in front of a giant camphor tree quietly in the forest, touch its bark. Large Suda-jii trees can also be seen in the place.



Trunk girth 560 cm

Height about 20 m **Est. age** More than 90 years old

Address Takahana-cho 4, Omiya-ku, Saitama-shi, Saitama, Inside Omiya Park

3 Spiritual place with the history

A couple camphor tree in Hikawa Shrine (*Camphora Cinnamomum*)

It is an unmissable giant tree as it is the sacred tree of Hikawa Shrine. The shrine itself is known to bring you good luck with marriage, since the deity of the shrine Susano-no-mikoto has defeated the eight-forked serpent and married to Inadahime-no-mikoto, and had children with her. They say that if you pray to this couple camphor tree, your wish will be fulfilled even more. Within the grounds of Hikawa Shrine, there is a spring called "Snake Pond" (Ja-no-ike), which is said to be the origin of the shrine, and there is a campaign to revive fireflies in the pond.



Trunk girth 510 cm (main trunk 270 cm)

Height 18m *Measured in 1988 **Est. age** Less than 99 years old

Address Takahana-cho 4, Omiya-ku, Saitama-shi, Saitama, Inside Hikawa Shrine

Survey on Giant Trees

The Ministry of the Environment has been conducting Survey on Giant Trees and Forests since 1988 as a part of the baseline survey for conservation of natural environment, targeting trees of 130 cm above ground and with trunk girth of 300 cm or more. For information on giant trees and forests, please visit the website Database of the Giant Trees and Forests.

<https://kyoju.biodic.go.jp/>
(*Japanese text only)



National Association of the Forests and Big trees

If you are interested in giant trees and forests, check out the website National Association of the Forests and Big Trees! The association conducts the activities related to giant trees and forests, such as observing giant trees and forests, publishing the newsletter Big Trees and Forests, and organizing National Forum for talking about Giant Trees, etc.

<http://www.kyoju.com/>
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Musashi Ichinomiya Hikawa Shrine · Omiya Park, Saitama

Strolling around "Omiya", a venerable great residence of gods

Omiya Station

About 10-minute walk (600 m)* from Omiya Station East Exit to a police box at Hikawa Sando

1 Boulevard trees of Hikawa Sando

About 3-minute walk (250 m)

2 A Japanese zelkova tree in Tenman Shrine

About 10-minute walk (650 m)

3 A couple camphor tree in Hikawa Shrine

About 3-minute walk (100 m)

4 Three metasequoia trees in Omiya Park

About 13-minute walk (700 m)

5 A camphor tree in Saitama Hyakunen-no-mori

About 13-minute walk (700 m)

Omiya-koen Station

Required time:
about 2 hours (approximately 3 km)



5
In search of a shadow of the resort in Taisho Period
A camphor tree in Saitama Hyakunen-no-mori
(*Camphora Cinnamomum*)
Trunk girth 560 cm
Height about 20 m
Est. age More than 90 years old
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Picturesque autumn leaves and fresh green
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(*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)
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O-torii gates on Hikawa Sando

There are three large torii gates (O-torii) on Hikawa Sando, and they are called "Ichi no torii (the first torii gate)", "Ni no torii (the second)", "San no torii (the third)", the further from the shrine, the smaller number they have. In this course you will start walking from the close point to "Ni no torii".

"Ni no torii" was transferred from Meiji Jingu Shrine in 1976 as a gift, and it seems to be the largest existing woden torii gate in Kanto area. It is made of 1200-year-old cypress tree from Alishan, Taiwan.



Hikawa Sando. "Ni no torii" can be seen in the back.

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Sacred zelkova tree -god of learning-
A Japanese zelkova tree in Tenman Shrine
(*Zelkova serrata*)
Trunk girth 466 cm Height 23 m
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Avenue of 650 Japanese zelkova trees
Boulevard trees of Hikawa Sando
Tree species Zelkova 62.5% Other species 37.5%
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Protected designation Natural monuments designated by Saitama City *11 trees
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1
An old hornbeam tree
A standing dead tree, more than 100 years old, almost looks like an art work.

2
Within the grounds of Hikawa Shrine, there is a spring which is believed to be the origin of the shrine. They say that it is one of the water source of Minuma, a vast pond which used to be spread throughout the area where the city of Saitama lays nowadays.

