

## 5 Attractions of Kawagoe not found in Tokyo



Originally from Germany, Chris has long been captivated by the town of Kawagoe, where the Edo culture of Japan endures. Intrigued by the town's rich history, he thoroughly enjoys residing in Kawagoe and actively participates in local events, such as the Kawagoe Festival. We sat down with Chris at his favorite spot, the Asahinoya Bunko, to delve into his insights on the allure of Kawagoe.

### Profile



#### Chris Brünger

Mr. Chris Brünger. Born in Germany, he has lived in Kawagoe for over 20 years. He first visited Kawagoe as a high school student and was impressed by the town which still retains facets of Japan during the Edo Period (1603-1867).

### Q. What aspects of Kawagoe do you find particularly appealing?

(Chris) There are many things I find attractive here. Let me highlight just five. The first is Kita-in Temple. Kawagoe is called Little Edo because here you can still find elements of the Edo Period. In 1638 Kita-in Temple was destroyed by a fire but was quickly rebuilt with buildings from Edo Castle which were brought to Kawagoe because the first shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu and the head priest of Kita-in were on close terms. So, while Edo-period buildings in Tokyo were destroyed by the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923) and World War II, such buildings can still be seen in Kawagoe.

The second are the traditional Kura storehouses. In the great fire of 1893 (Meiji year 26) many places in Kawagoe were destroyed, but one of the remaining buildings was an Edo Period classic storehouse. Many merchant families began to build such Kura storehouses because they were fire-resistant. These buildings were coated with black lacquer in the latest Kura fashion. In Kawagoe, many storehouses can still be seen in use as stores and residences. At Kawagoe City Museum visitors can also see how these storehouses were built and used.



The third is Honmaru Goten, the only surviving building at the center of the former Kawagoe Castle. You can learn how it was used in the Edo Period (1603-1867).

The fourth is the Kimono. In Kawagoe, there are many places where you can rent a Kimono. Wearing a Kimono, Obi, and a pair of Geta or sandals, you can enjoy a stroll around town experiencing authentic Japanese culture, Kura storehouses, sweet potato snacks, the Kawagoe Festival Museum and Kashiya Yokocho candy lane.

The fifth, and my favorite, is the Kawagoe Festival, which originated in the 17th century and is designated as an UNESCO World Heritage. It is held every October. What I find special about it is that it is not organized by professional entertainers, but by the citizens of Kawagoe. People from each neighborhood dress in colorful festival Kimonos and pull very tall Dashi floats weighing approximately 4 tons through the streets of Kawagoe. This strengthens the bonds of the community and is important both in terms of enjoying life and preparing for disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons. In both cases close cooperation is essential.

I want people to come to Kawagoe and see the real Japan that is still alive here. You can build your own experiences of life in Japan, both past and present. There is so much to discover in Kawagoe. For more information, please visit the website of the Kawagoe Tourism Bureau (add URL here).



### Q. Do you have a favorite place or favorite food in Kawagoe?

(Chris) One of my favorite places is Mukade-ya (Centipede Store) in a traditional house and Kura. I go there with friends and visitors to enjoy Matcha tea and traditional snacks in an authentic environment. They love it! My favorite foods are Sushi and Unagi, grilled eel, a specialty of Kawagoe. There are many good Unagi restaurants in Kawagoe, and Sushi in Kawagoe is delicious.

### Q. Please tell us about a moment that brings you joy living in Kawagoe.

(Chris) Because of my job, I travel all over Japan, from Hokkaido to Okinawa. I am always glad to be back in Kawagoe because I get a real sense of being connected to tradition while living in a bustling city. Many traditions are rapidly disappearing in Japan. But in Kawagoe, modern life and the traditional Kawagoe lifestyle coexist.

### Q. Please tell me about places in Kawagoe where you feel the essence of Japan.

(Chris) The sound of neighborhood bands playing traditional festival music coming from somewhere makes me feel that I am really in Kawagoe.