

A Day in Toyohashi - Summer

With the Pacific Ocean to the south, Mikawa Bay to the west, and mountains to the east, Toyohashi is a town rich with nature. It is conveniently located between Osaka and Tokyo, making it very easy to access. Today I would like to introduce Toyohashi, and more specifically, what a day exploring Toyohashi in the summer might look like.

Let's start the day by heading to the coast. There is a bicycle trail running from Lake Hamano in Hamamatsu City, through Toyohashi, and to the end of Cape Irago. From Ikobe beach in Toyohashi to the end of Cape Irago takes about 2 and a half hours by bicycle. Along the way you will be able to see gorgeous scenery and beautiful flowers. If you go early in the morning, you can catch a beautiful sunrise at Yahachijima or at Hinode Rock. Of course if you get tired or hot during your ride, you



The bike trail is separated from the road

can stop at one of the many beaches along the way and go for a swim. And if you're lucky, you may see a loggerhead turtle. (Tours are also offered to see the turtles when they come ashore to lay their eggs.) If you go all the way to the end, you can see the famous Cape Irago lighthouse. To get back to Toyohashi, we can take the Atsumi Line train, which allows you to carry on your bicycle on Saturdays and Sundays.

If you left early in the morning, you should arrive back to Toyohashi around noon. After a long bike ride, you may feel like eating watermelon. Well luckily Toyohashi is home to the delicious *tenpaku* variety of watermelon. After refreshing yourself with some watermelon, how about trying Toyohashi's famous curry udon? Toyohashi's version of curry udon has rice and *tororo*, or grated yam, in the bottom, and quail eggs on top. After a bowl of curry udon, you'll be satisfied and stuffed.

Next, for those with some energy left, let's go for an easy hike. Toyohashi is bordered by mountains to the east, and has a variety of hiking trails. One of those mountains is Ishimaki Mountain, which is home to the very old Ishimaki Shrine. There are castle remains, and a number of beautiful lookout points as well. Take your time exploring the shrines and ruins, and watch the sunset from the top of the mountain. Once it's dark, you'll be able to see Toyohashi's beautiful nightscape.



Ishimaki Mountain

For those who want to take it easy in the afternoon, head to Kamoshobu Garden. There you can experience Toyohashi's summer time flowers and enjoy a pleasant walk. Nearby is Kamo Shrine, where you can learn a bit about the history of Higashi Mikawa.

At night, you may get a chance to see Toyohashi's traditional *tezutsu* (handheld) fireworks. In the summer, Yoshida Shrine, known as the home of *tezutsu* fireworks, has its Gion Festival, where you can watch the brave people of Toyohashi hold fireworks in their arms as huge pillars of fire extend into the sky. When the fireworks near their end, they explode, making a loud bang! *Tezutsu* fireworks are a must see.



A pillar of fire erupts from a *tezutsu* firework

On a hot summer day, there aren't many things better than a cold beer. In the summer in Toyohashi, you can board the streetcar which has been running since 1925, and experience the *Beer Densha*, or beer train, where you ride around downtown Toyohashi and drink all the beer that you like. Finish the day by reminiscing with friends and having a delicious drink. ¹

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