



**INSIDE**

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**JAPAN**



Suzanne Morphet/Special Contributor

The colorful foliage of a maple tree frames a building that is part of the Usa Jingu Shinto shrine in the town of Usa on the Japanese island of Kyushu. Legend has it that in the eighth century, a monk walked the mountainous terrain in pursuit of an ascetic lifestyle, carving thousands of Buddhist images along the way.

## Footsteps of Buddhist monks

An astounding number of walking trails crisscross Kunisaki Peninsula, each leading to rewards

By SUZANNE MORPHET  
 Special Contributor

The crows are angry. One is circling beneath us, and every few seconds their raucous caw caw-ing reminds us we've invaded their space. We're standing atop one of the windswept ridges that radiate from the center of Japan's Kunisaki Peninsula like arms on a starfish. Deep valleys flank these ridges, giving us 360-degree views of wild mountainsides cloaked in colorful foliage. A thousand feet below, rice paddies lie dormant, awaiting spring.

Surprisingly, we even spot a church in the valley at our feet — surprising because the Kunisaki Peninsula is one of the bastions of Japanese Buddhism. Today, this small peninsula on Japan's southernmost island of Kyushu is long forgotten, but a thousand years ago it was a flourishing center of Buddhism.

I'm here with Walk Japan, a company that pioneered off-the-beaten-track walking tours, although the trek that I'm doing was once part of a well-worn track.

The story goes that in the eighth century,

a monk named Ninmon — who may or may not have actually existed — walked the mountainous terrain here in pursuit of an ascetic lifestyle. He took shelter in its caves, established sacred sites, founded temples and carved more than 60,000 Buddhist images out of stone.

Ninmon's followers continued his religious asceticism, laying the foundation for a form of Buddhism that's peculiar to this region of Japan, one that blends Asian Bud-

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**THEATER**

## Shakespeare's world, onstage

Virginia site specializes in authentic re-creations

By DEBBIE MOOSE  
 Special Contributor

STAUNTON, Va. — In Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, a theater is doing things the way Shakespeare did — and it's not how most people have ever seen Shakespeare.

No lighting effects, no opulent sets requiring time to change, no opening-

night stuffiness.

The American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Va., returns to the way the Bard's plays were performed in the 17th century: for pure entertainment.

The experience begins with the theater building itself. Built in 2001, it's a historically accurate re-creation of the Blackfriars Theater in London, the indoor theater where Shakespeare produced plays for a wealthier clientele and in a more intimate space than in the larger outdoor Globe.

Historians believe that *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* were written for that space, according to *Shakespeare's London Theatreland* by Julian Bowsher.

The original London Blackfriars was destroyed in 1655. The Staunton theater is the only re-creation of it in the world, and for it, the ASC used the same advisers as those for the London re-creation of the Globe.

The ASC motto "we do it with the

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American Shakespeare Center

*Love's Labour's Lost* is among the Bard's plays that get the original treatment at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Va.

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