

KUMAMOTO WIDE AREA MAP



Kumamoto City Guide Book

DISCOVER KUMAMOTO JAPAN



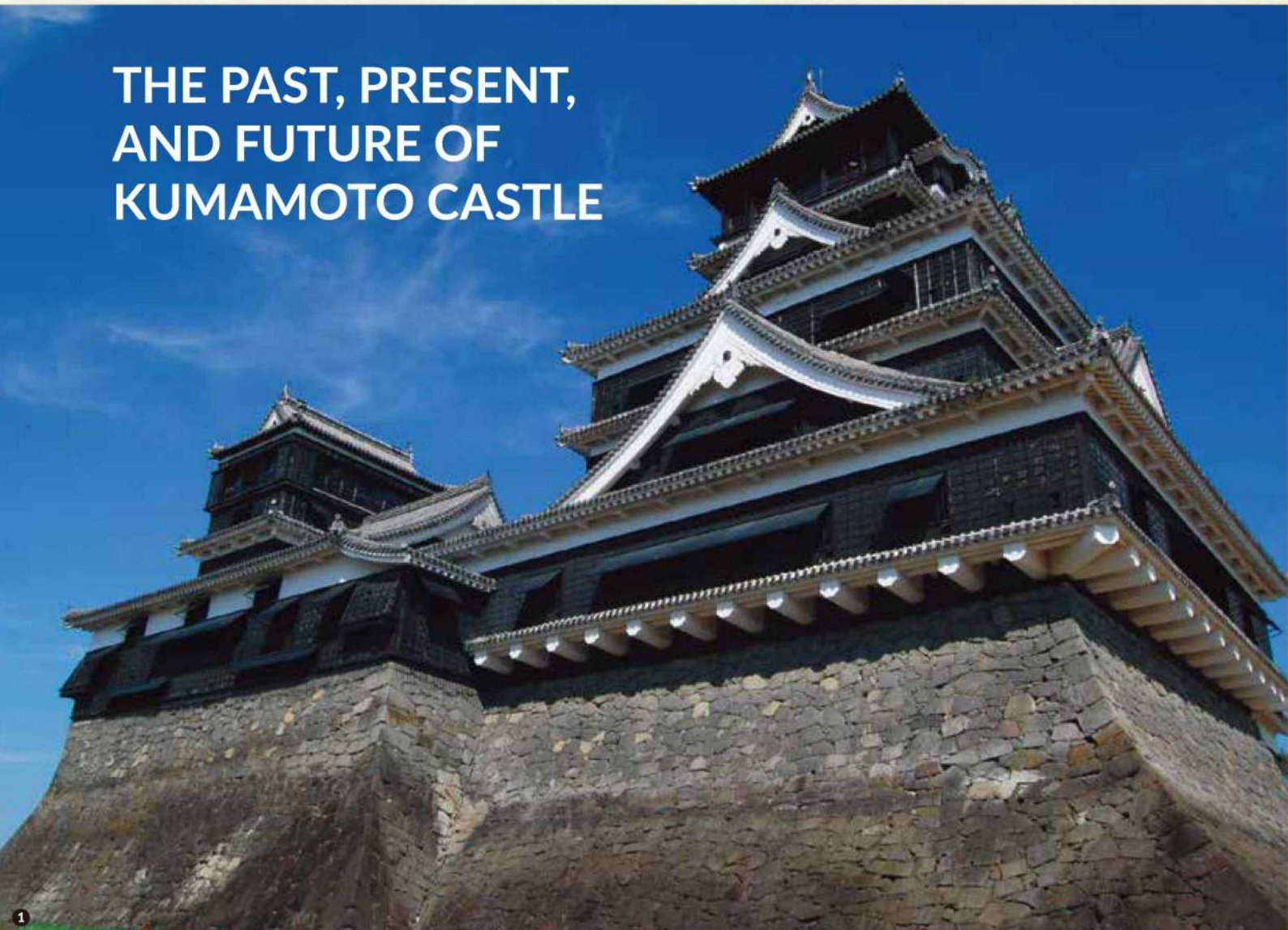
24-Hour Multi-Language Call Center 092-687-6639
 Available languages: English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Korean, Chinese, Thai, Indonesian, Malay, Nepalese, Tagalog, Vietnamese

Contact below about sightseeing Kumamoto City Information Center
<https://kumamoto-guide.jp/en/tourist-information/> Phone:096-322-5060

Publisher Kumamoto City Tourism Policy Division
<http://kumamoto-guide.jp/en/> Phone: 096-328-2393

One of Japan's Great Castles

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF KUMAMOTO CASTLE



A Majestic Fortress Built for War

Construction on Kumamoto Castle began in 1601 at the behest of Lord Kato Kiyomasa and took seven years to complete, the entire project covering 98 hectares with a perimeter spanning 5.3km. In addition to the Main and Minor Keeps, the castle was originally fortified with 49 turrets, 18 manned gates, and 29 unmanned gates. The castle housed over 100 wells, had vast stores of rice, and even had mats made out of edible potato leaves so that castle defenders could outlast even the longest of sieges.

In contrast to the decorative castles found in Osaka and Nagoya, the first priority when building Kumamoto Castle was military might and strategy. Many of the main buildings were burned down in a fire during the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877, a civil war that broke out between the samurai armies of the South and the westernized National Army and inspired the movie *The Last Samurai*. In 1960, almost a century later, the citizens of Kumamoto banded together to rebuild the castle keep through a city-wide donation drive. In 2008, the Honmaru Goten Palace was rebuilt, which features an ornate main hall and rare underground entranceway.

A Look to the Future: Rebuilding the Mighty Castle

The earthquakes of 2016 devastated Kumamoto and its castle, resulting in damage to 13 Important Cultural Properties and 20 reconstructions of original buildings, as well as collapse, deformation, or weakening of about 30% of all of the castle's stone walls. Reconstruction on the Main Keep—the symbol of the castle—began in 2017, and the shachihoko (decorations placed atop the corners of the keep) were finally replaced in April 2018. Starting on October 5th, 2019, the plaza in front of the Main Keep will be open to the public on Sundays and holidays via a temporary access bridge from the entrance on the west side of the keep. The Nagabei Wall, which spans 242 meters and is the longest such castle wall in Japan, suffered a partial collapse in the earthquakes and is also scheduled for repair. Current conditions and ongoing construction work for some of the surrounding buildings and stone walls is expected to be ready for public viewing by Spring 2020. Repairs to the Main Keep are expected to be completed by Spring 2021, after which visitors will once again be able to enter the reconstructed Keep. Access ramps and elevators are part of the new construction and will allow more visitors to enjoy the castle than ever before.



The lidamaru Five-Story Turret sustained considerable damage in the Kumamoto earthquakes. A single corner of the stone wall miraculously held out through the quakes to prevent a complete collapse of the turret.



A stone with a carving of Buddha was found inside one of the collapsed walls. It is believed that this was a local memorial that was hastily repurposed during construction. The Buddha stone is now on display in Kato Shrine.



Shokun no Ma

A Room Fit for a Shogun

The Grand Hall of the Honmaru Goten Palace was carefully reconstructed based on centuries-old pictures and documents, photos from the 1800s, and on-site excavations. The Shokun no Ma section of the hall is the most formal area, and features stunning wall and ceiling paintings decorated with real gold.



Mushagaeshi Walls

Unscalable Walls of Stone

Mushagaeshi means "warrior-repelling," and refers to the unique construction of Kumamoto Castle's stone walls that start with a gentle slope and gradually grow steeper until becoming unclimbable, even for the nimblest of ninja. The photo shows Niyo no Ishigaki, where two sections of walls built at different times stand next to each other, making it easy to see the differences in stonelaying techniques utilized in later construction.



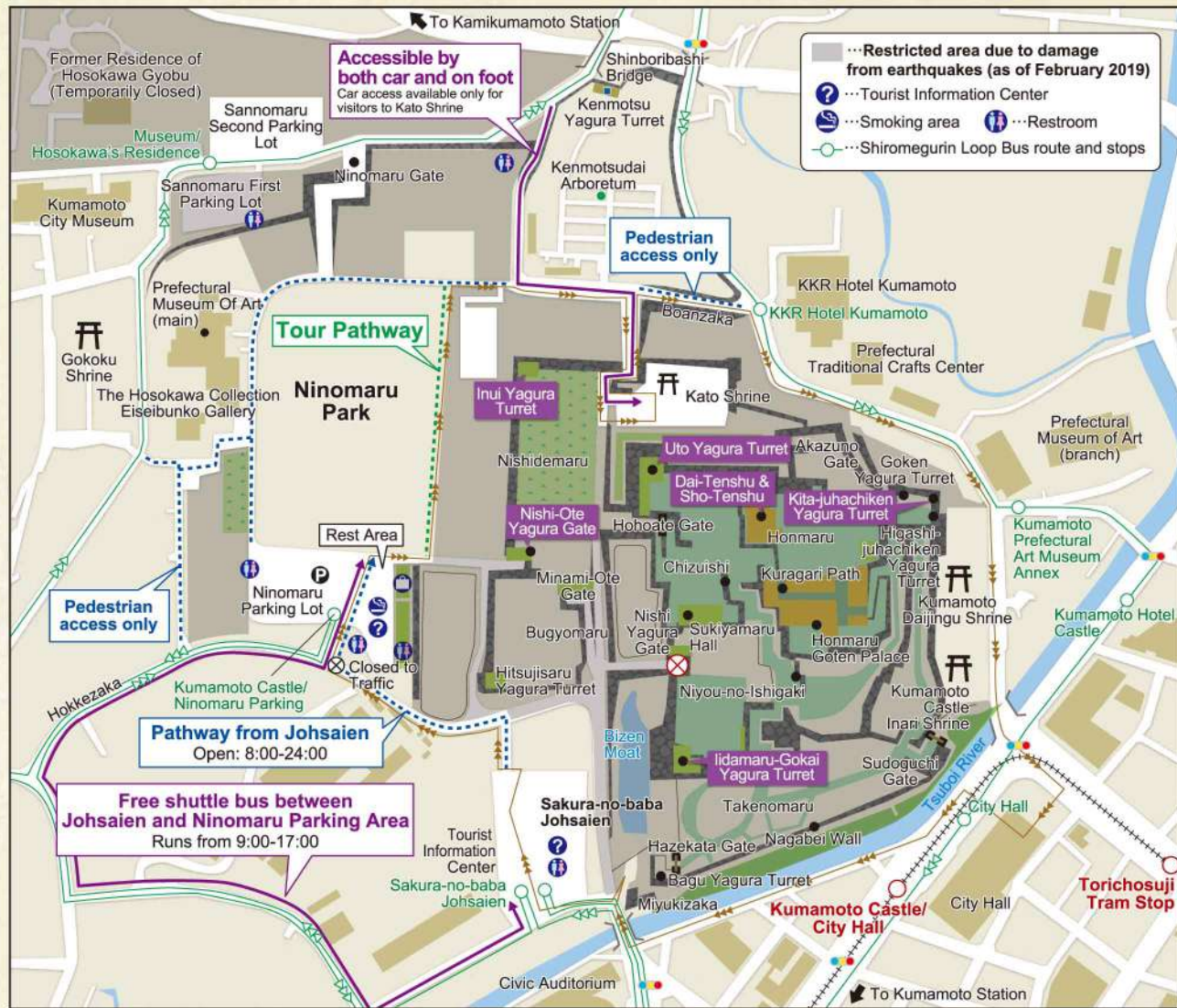
Uto Turret

An Original Piece of the Castle

The Uto Turret, an original construction of the castle and a National Treasure, was partially damaged in the earthquakes but still stands as when it was first built. There used to be 4 other turrets of the same size as the Uto Turret, but now it is the only one remaining.

Honmaru Goten Palace (and Shokun no Ma inside), Niyo no Ishigaki, and Uto Turret are currently under construction and may be off limits. Please visit the Kumamoto Castle Website for details.

Kumamoto Castle Address: Honmaru 1-1, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi HP <http://kumamoto-guide.jp/kumamoto-castle/>

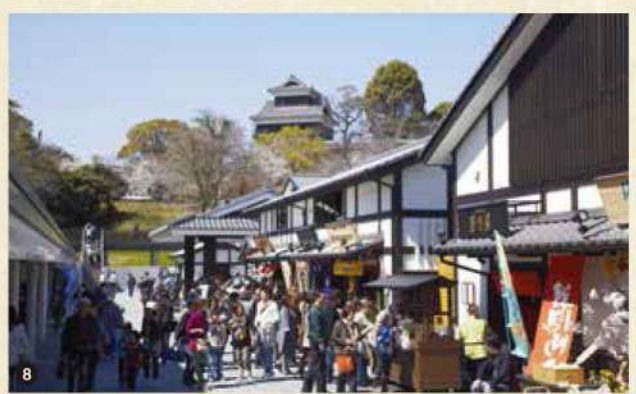


Wakuwakuza Kumamoto Castle Museum

Fun Exhibits Reveal all of Kumamoto Castle's Secrets

Check out the Kumamoto Castle Projection Mapping exhibit to see a stunningly realistic recreation of the damage caused by the earthquakes projected on a miniature replica of the castle. Next, check out the Kumamoto Castle Virtual Reality show to see what the castle looked like before the earthquake and even hundreds of years ago. There is also a set of cameras offering live feeds of the castle, plus a kimono rental area where you can rent different kinds of kimono and samurai outfits and take them out for a stroll around the castle grounds!

Address: Ninomaru 1-1-1, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
 Hours: 9AM-5:30PM (last entry: 5PM) Closed: 12/29-12/31
 Admission: ¥300 (elem. & JHS students: ¥100) (kimono rentals start at ¥500)
 HP: <http://www.sakuranobaba-johsaiei.jp/waku-index/>



Sakuranobaba Johsaiei

The Start of Your Adventure in Kumamoto

Johsaiei is a one-stop-shop for visitors to Kumamoto that features the best local food, culture, and tradition, all right at the foot of Kumamoto Castle. Your first stop should be the Wakuwakuza Kumamoto Castle Museum, where you can learn all about the castle in fun and educational exhibits. Next, take a stroll through the 23 shops and restaurants offering tasty local delicacies and souvenirs. Volunteers are stationed at the Tourist Info Center and are ready to give you helpful information on anywhere in Kumamoto Prefecture.

Address: Ninomaru 1-1-1, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
 Hours: 9AM-5:30PM (some shops have different hours, check website for details)
 Closed: Each shop has a different schedule. Check website for details.
 HP: <http://www.sakuranobaba-johsaiei.jp/about/>



Kato Kiyomasa



Kato Kiyomasa is best known in Japan for his skill as a military commander. A protégé of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, one of Japan's most famous historical figures, Kiyomasa worked as a close bodyguard of Toyotomi. He attained legendary status after subjugating a tiger in 1592 while fighting for Toyotomi in Korea, a heroic act that is a frequent subject in classical Japanese art. In Kumamoto, however, Kiyomasa is loved for all the ways he improved Kumamoto during his time here as lord.

In addition to being the architect behind Kumamoto Castle, Kiyomasa also promoted education, masterminded the construction of numerous canals and waterways to improve agriculture, and built a prosperous domain with a content populace. Many of the levees and riverside constructions he oversaw still benefit Kumamoto to this day. Kiyomasa showed compassion for the common folk by scheduling construction projects for the agricultural off-season and was also devoutly religious. After surviving the invasion of Korea, Kiyomasa showed his thanks to the gods by leading a procession of 100 soldiers to participate in a ceremony at Fujisaki Hachimangu Shrine, a tradition that lives on today as the Great Festival of Fujisaki Hachimangu Shrine. The brave yet merciful Lord Kato Kiyomasa died in 1611 and was laid to rest at Honmyoji Temple overlooking Kumamoto City. He is also revered as a god at Kato Shrine.



The Man Who Built Kumamoto



Kato Shrine

A Historic Shrine with an Excellent View of the Castle

Kato Shrine, the shrine where Kato Kiyomasa is revered as a god, was built in 1871 as Nishikiyama Shrine and originally stood between the castle keep and Uto Yagura. It was later moved to nearby Kyomachi in 1874, and then moved again to its current location in 1962. The shrine was renamed Kato Shrine at the 300-Year Celebration of Kato Kiyomasa in 1909. Visitors can purchase a shrine stamp book at the shop and have one of the shrine workers sign and stamp their book with the seal of Kato Shrine. The stamp book can then be used at any other shrine you visit!

Address: Honmaru 2-1, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: Always open HP: <http://www.kato-jinja.or.jp/>



Kumamoto Castle Bushotai Samurai

Bringing the Historical Figures of Kumamoto to Life

The Kumamoto Castle Bushotai Samurai are a performing group consisting of the legendary historical warriors and royalty who made Kumamoto what it is today. Kato Kiyomasa, builder of Kumamoto Castle, leads the group of ten, backed by Hosokawa Tadaoki (master of both sword and brush), Kuroda Kanbei (tactician for Lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi), and Ama-hime (daughter of Kiyomasa). You can see the Bushotai performing at regularly scheduled shows at Johsaien.

HP: <http://kumamoto-bushoutai.com/>



Fujisaki Hachimangu Shrine

The Brightly Colored Protector of Kumamoto

In 935AD, the Emperor Suzaku prayed for the successful suppression of the Tengyo no Ran conflict by building a shrine on a hill to the west of where Kumamoto Castle now stands. The entire shrine burned down in the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877 and was rebuilt in its current location. Every fall, approximately 20,000 people and over 70 horses come to participate in the Great Festival of Fujisaki Hachimangu, a festival that started over 1,000 years ago and features a parade of historically dressed soldiers and rowdy marchers who lead decorated horses throughout the city.

Address: Igawabuchi-machi 3-1, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: Main Gate 5:30AM-around 8PM (Oct-Mar 6AM-around 6PM)
Open year-round (tourists cannot enter during certain events, e.g., Great Festival)
HP: <http://www.fujisakigu.or.jp/>



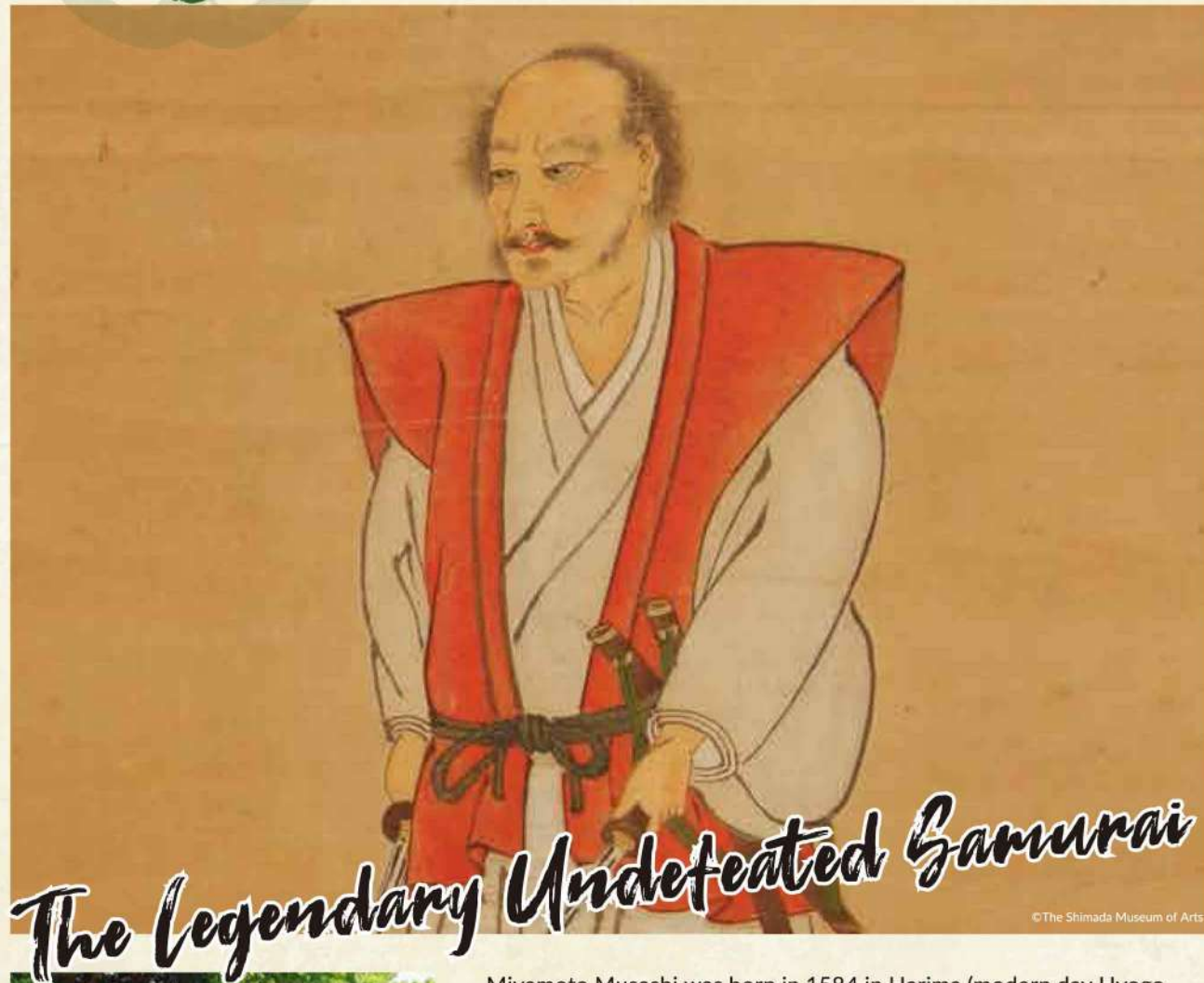
Honmyoji Temple

A Nichiren Buddhist Temple with 400 Years of History

The family shrine of the Kato clan was originally built by Kiyomasa for his father in Osaka in 1585 and was relocated within the walls of Kumamoto Castle after Kiyomasa became lord of the Higo Domain (modern-day Kumamoto). Kiyomasa's dying wish was to be buried at a height equal to that of the keep of Kumamoto Castle, and out of respect for the great lord, his grave was built atop a hill overlooking the city. Shortly after, Honmyoji Temple was moved from the castle to its current location just below Kiyomasa's grave. Every year on July 23rd, the Tonshae Festival is held at Honmyoji to commemorate Kiyomasa.

Address: Hanazono 4-13-1, Nishi-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: Always open
HP: <http://www.honmyoji.jp/index.html>

Miyamoto Musashi



Miyamoto Musashi was born in 1584 in Harima (modern day Hyogo Prefecture). By the age of 29, he had already fought in 60 duels and won every single one. He began to further study and pursue the martial arts and founded the *ningen-ryu* style of swordfighting, a style characterized by dual wielding swords. Musashi came to Kumamoto in 1640 as a special guest of Hosokawa Tadatoshi, first lord of the Kumamoto Domain, and he spent his remaining years here enjoying tea, zen, painting, and writing. A few of his unique ink paintings are available for viewing at the Shimada Museum of Arts. When Musashi sensed he had but a short time left to live, he hermitted himself away in Reigando Cave on Mt. Kinpo (the mountain to the west of Kumamoto City) to author his masterwork on military strategy, *The Book of Five Rings*. When he passed away on May 19th, 1645, it was his dying wish to continue to protect the lord of Kumamoto, and so he was supposedly buried upright, in full armor and helmet, along one of the old thoroughfares into the city.

A Life Spent Perfecting the Way of the Warrior



Unganzenji Temple

Address: Hirayama 589, Matsuo-machi, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 8AM-5PM
Open year-round
Admission: ¥200 to visit Reigando (¥100 for kids)

Reigando Cave & Gohyakurakan (Unganzenji Temple)

The Mystical Spot Where Musashi Penned The Book of Five Rings

To the west of Kumamoto City, deep in the forested hills of Mt. Kinpo, lies Unganzenji Temple. Head even deeper in the forest and you'll find the fabled Reigando Cave. When Musashi came to the realization that he didn't have much longer to live, he removed himself from public life and hermitted himself away for two years in this cave to author *The Book of Five Rings*, his masterwork outlining his philosophies on military strategy. Along the winding path from the temple to the cave sit hundreds of small Buddha statues (the *Gohyakurakan*), all carved by the same artist about 200 years ago. Look closely and you'll notice that no statues are alike. In the exhibit building next to the temple, you can find a painting by Musashi, as well as an actual wooden sword used by Musashi in one of his many duels.



The Shimada Museum of Arts

A Quiet Art Museum that Shows Musashi's Many Faces

The Shimada Museum of Arts is a gallery of the classical works of art and historical documents that Matomi Shimada, a researcher of historical art from Kumamoto, spent his life collecting. Many of the pieces are related to Miyamoto Musashi, and there are even metal and wooden swords supposedly used by Musashi on display. To show that Musashi was much more than just a fighter, the museum also houses some of Musashi's paintings. After your visit, stop by the museum's café or enjoy a look at the museum's 19th-century style traditional Japanese garden.

Address: Shimasaki 4-5-28, Nishi-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 10AM-5PM (last entry 4:30PM)
Closed: Tuesdays (open if holiday), when setting up new exhibits
Admission: Normal admission for main gallery ¥700 (College & HS students ¥400, elem. and JHS ¥200), admission to attached gallery is free
HP: <http://www.shimada-museum.net/index.php>



Musashizuka Park

Final Resting Place of Swordmaster Miyamoto Musashi

The great swordsman Miyamoto Musashi was invited to Kumamoto by Lord Hosokawa Tadatoshi and Kumamoto ended up being where Musashi would spend his final years. The last words of Musashi were supposedly that, even in death, he wished to protect his lord, and so he was buried standing upright in full armor wielding a sword along one of the main highways into Kumamoto, at the site of modern-day Musashizuka Park. The park features a stately bronze statue of the dual-wielding Musashi, as well as a Japanese garden and teahouse. The park is a popular spot for locals to stop by for some quiet time amidst the hustle and bustle of the surrounding city.

Address: Yuge 1-1232, Tatsuda-machi, Kita-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Open 24 hours
Open year-round
Admission: Free

The Hosokawa Clan



Hosokawa Fujitaka (Izumi Shrine Collection)



Hosokawa Tadaoki (Izumi Shrine Collection)

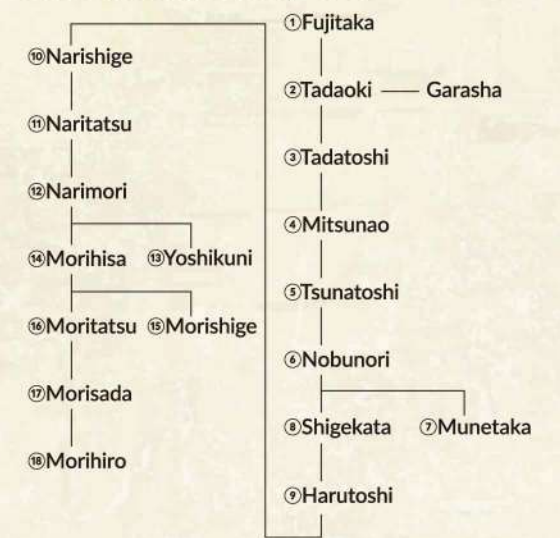


Hosokawa Tadatashi (Izumi Shrine Collection)

The Original Architects of Modern Kumamoto Culture

Now in its 18th generation, the Hosokawa clan ruled over Kumamoto for 235 years. For centuries, the Hosokawas have held both the aesthetic and martial arts in equal esteem and contributed to their independent development in Kumamoto. The Hosokawas are especially well-known for tea ceremony; Sen no Rikyu, the father of modern tea ceremony, considered Hosokawa Tadaoki, the second-generation head of the family, his favorite pupil. The Hosokawas also built Suizenji Park and Taishoji Temple, which is still used as their family temple. The Hosokawas were also integral in the development of *Higo Zogan*, a local style of intricate metal inlay, and *karashi renkon*, a spicy local delicacy of lotus root stuffed with mustard miso and fried. Legendary swordsman Miyamoto Musashi was invited to Kumamoto by the Hosokawas, and it is here that he took interest in the arts of painting and tea ceremony. The Hosokawas have had an astounding effect on the art and military cultures of Kumamoto and a number of precious artifacts and classical documents related to the Hosokawa family are on display at the Kumamoto Prefectural Museum of Art.

Higo Hosokawa Family Tree



Suizenji Park

A Garden of Traditional Japanese Beauty Built by the Hosokawas

In the place where Suizenji now stands today, Hosokawa Tadatashi, the first Hosokawa lord of Kumamoto, discovered a natural spring and decided to build a teahouse nearby. His grandson Tsunatoshi then transformed the surrounding area into a sprawling park designed to recreate different views along the Tokaido Way, including views of Mt. Fuji. Izumi Shrine is located within the park and is where members of the Hosokawa family are enshrined. At the shrine shop, you can purchase a shrine stamp book designed over 400 years ago by Hosokawa Garasha, wife of Lord Tadaoki and a convert to Christianity. You can get the book signed and stamped at any other shrine you visit. A wide variety of kimonos are also available for rental just outside the park and make for great photos amidst the traditional Japanese backdrop of Suizenji.

Address: Suizenjikoen 8-1, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 7:30AM-6PM (Nov-Feb 8:30AM-5PM,
last entry 30 min before park close)

Open year-round
Admission: ¥400 (ages 6 to 15: ¥200)
HP: <http://www.suizenji.or.jp/>



Kokindenju no Ma

A Teahouse Transplanted from Kyoto to Kumamoto

The Kokindenju no Ma is a rare thatch-roofed teahouse located on the grounds of Suizenji Park. The building was originally built around 400 years ago in Kyoto and was granted to the Hosokawas in 1871. In 1912, the entire building was dismantled and transported to Suizenji Park, where it was rebuilt as it once stood in Kyoto. Kokindenju no Ma offers serene views of the park and visitors can enjoy a traditional sweet and bowl of matcha green tea inside.

Address: In Suizenji Park, Suizenjikoen 8-1,
Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 9AM-5PM
Open year-round
Price: Tea & sweet set ¥650
(¥550 for seats outside Kokindenju no Ma)



Tatsuda Nature Park (Taishoji Temple)

A Nature Park that Houses the Family Temple of the Hosokawas

Tatsuda Nature Park has been on loan to Kumamoto City from the Hosokawa family since 1955 and holds a dear place in the hearts of the residents of Kumamoto. The site of Taishoji Temple, the family temple of the Hosokawas, lies within the park, as well as the graves of the first and second Hosokawa lords and their wives, and the Koshoken, a teahouse built according to the designs of tea ceremony master Hosokawa Tadaoki. Tea ceremonies are still held in the Koshoken to this day and are performed in the unique Higo school style of tea ceremony.

Address: Kurokami 4-610, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 8:30AM-5PM (last entry 4:30PM)
Open year-round
Park admission: ¥200 (elem. and JHS ¥100)



Higo Zogan

Precious Gold and Silver Intricately Inlaid in Pitch Black Metal— an Art with Roots in Martial Culture

Higo Zogan was developed by a gunsmith serving Lord Hosokawa Tadatashi as a way to decorate gun barrels and sword guards. Higo Zogan is characterized by its ornate yet sturdy designs that reflect the military tradition the art was born from. Deep black metal is decorated with sparkling gold and silver to create elegant yet understated designs that are distinctly Japanese in flavor. Although Higo Zogan originally began as a way of decorating weapons, when swords were outlawed in Japan, Higo Zogan became a popular decoration for jewelry and other accessories and is now available on a variety of different objects including cufflinks, pendants, fountain pens, and more.



The Hosokawa Collection Eisei Bunko Gallery at the Kumamoto Prefectural Museum of Art

An Art Museum near the Castle with Hosokawa-Related Exhibits

Eisei Bunko is an organization that preserves and researches over 700 years' worth of cultural properties, precious art works, and classical documents. The Hosokawa Collection Gallery, opened in 2008, features a number of historical objects from the Hosokawa Collection on loan from Eisei Bunko. Works by artists like Tsuguharu Foujita, Chimei Hamada, and other artists with a connection to Kumamoto are also available for viewing. The Kumamoto Prefectural Museum of Art has art from a variety of different disciplines on display and is an excellent place to stop by during a trip to the castle.

Address: Ninomaru 2, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 9:30AM-5:15PM (last entry 4:45PM)
Closed: Mondays (or following day if holiday)
Admission: ¥420 for access to 2nd floor gallery and separate building gallery, ¥270 for access to 2nd floor gallery only, ¥210 for access to separate building gallery only (admission prices for special exhibits subject to change)
HP: <http://www.museum.pref.kumamoto.jp/>

More Tourist Spots



Kamitori & Shimotori Arcades

One of the Largest Arcades in West Japan

The Kamitori Shopping Arcade, stretching 360m long and 11m wide, features a variety of stores both old and new, ranging from fashion to boutiques and bookstores. The arcade's roof was styled after Paris's Musee d'Orsay, with its arched roof windows that let in natural light. The Shimotori Shopping Arcade features more fashion options and has a more active nightlife while also having a number of cafes and izakayas specializing in local dishes. Foreign visitors have greatly increased in recent years and now there are more shops able to cater to visitors from other countries.



Pick-Your-Own Fruit

Nothing Beats Fruit Fresh off the Vine!

Kumamoto is well-known for its considerable fruit production and there are numerous locations within the city where you can do pick-your-own. Located north of downtown in Ueki is Kichijien Farm where visitors can pick grapes, apples, mikan oranges, pears, strawberries and more (depending on the season) surrounded by quiet mikan fields and a beautiful landscape. The famous Ueki Onsen is also located nearby, and these two destinations make for a perfect day-trip by car from Kumamoto City.

Kichijien Farm
Address: Kitome 1033-1, Ueki-machi, Kita-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: Fruit Tree Area 9AM-5PM, Strawberry Area 10AM-5PM, Shop 8:30AM-6PM
Open daily during picking season
Food: Differs depending on season/fruit (see website for details)
HP: <http://www.kichijien.jp/>



Kumamoto Tram

A Variety of Different Train Styles to Delight the Train Fan in All of Us

The Kumamoto Tram Lines run roughly east-west through the center of Kumamoto City. Started almost 100 years ago, the city trams are still a vital means of transportation for the residents of Kumamoto. A number of different train models run along the lines, from vintage models with wooden floors and analog controls to sleek modern trains. Especially popular is the COCORO train designed by famous train designer Eiji Mitooka. Train fans from all over Japan come to Kumamoto just to see this tram. Tram day passes are available (¥500 for adults), making the tram a convenient and cost-effective way to get around the city.



Ueki Onsen

Hot Springs That Will Leave Your Skin Feeling Beautiful

Known for centuries as Hirashima Onsen, modern-day Ueki Onsen is supposedly where soldiers wounded in the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877 came to recover. Consisting of a group of quiet ryokan situated along the Koshi River, Ueki is a relaxing onsen town. The hot spring water is alkaline with a pH of around 8.0 and can soften hard patches of skin, improve metabolism, and leave your body feeling silky smooth. Many ryokan baths are open to non-overnight guests and Ueki Onsen pass books (6 passes for ¥2,000) are a convenient way to try the different styles of baths in Ueki.

HP: <http://ueki-onsenkumiai.com/>



Famous Manga Spot Tour

Many Famous Mangaka Artists Call Kumamoto Home

With a global print total exceeding 450 million copies, ONE PIECE is one of the world's most famous manga and its creator, Eiichiro Oda, hails from Kumamoto. Since the Kumamoto Earthquakes, Oda has been involved in a variety of recovery activities, one of which was placing a bronze statue of Monkey D. Luffy, hero of ONE PIECE, in front of the Prefectural Offices. Statues of eight other characters are planned to be erected elsewhere in the prefecture. Coamix, publisher of City Hunter, a manga that was recently turned into a live-action film in France, opened up the Coamix Manga Lab, an incubator for new manga artists, in Kumamoto.

Coamix Manga Lab
Tsuruya WING Bldg. 7F, Tetorihoncho 6-1, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 1PM-7PM Closed: Tuesdays Admission: Free HP: <https://mangalab.jp/>



Kumamoto City Museum

General Purpose Museum with a Great Planetarium

The Kumamoto City Museum reopened in December 2018 after undergoing renovations. Based around the concept of displaying Kumamoto's past to bring Kumamoto into the future, the 1st floor lets you see the entire history of Kumamoto, from ancient stoneware to modern-day exhibits. The most popular exhibit is the reconstruction of part of the luxurious boat used by the Hosokawa family when visiting Tokyo. The nature of Kumamoto is on display on the 2nd floor, with a diorama of Lake Ezu and a skeleton of a huge Stegodon elephant. You can also learn about the stars and space in the museum's Planetarium.

Address: Furukiyomachi 3-2, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 9AM-5PM (last entry 4:30PM)
Closed: Mondays (or following day if holiday), 12/29-1/3, during inspections, etc.
Admission: General ¥400, College & HS students ¥200, JHS and younger ¥200 (separate admission required for Planetarium)
HP: <https://kumamoto-city-museum.jp/>



Kumamoto City Zoological and Botanical Gardens

A Zoo with 90 Years of History

Located next to Lake Ezu just outside the downtown area of Kumamoto is the Kumamoto City Zoological and Botanical Gardens, a facility home to 700 animals and 50,000 plants. It is the only zoo in Japan where you can see golden snub-nosed monkeys (shown above), which inspired the ancient Chinese legend of Sun Wukong the Monkey King on whom Dragon Ball Z's Son Goku is based. The botanical garden area features a Japanese garden, an arboretum, and greenhouse-cultivated tropical plants.

Address: Kengun 5-14-2, Higashi-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 9AM-5PM (last entry 4:30PM)
Closed: Mondays (Open every 4th Monday and closed the following day. If holiday, closed the following weekday), 12/30-1/1
Admission: Adults & HS students ¥300, elem. & JHS students ¥100, younger than elem. school: free HP: <http://www.ezooko.jp/>



The Old Neighborhoods of Shinmachi and Furumachi

Two Vintage Japanese Neighborhoods, Just a Short Walk from Kumamoto Station

The Shinmachi and Furumachi neighborhoods form the historical downtown area of Kumamoto City. Although the area was heavily damaged in the Kumamoto Earthquakes, residents have taken it upon themselves to protect the retro atmosphere of the area and restore the around 200 traditional merchant houses in the area to their original states. Shinmachi and Furumachi are home to a variety of interesting shops and restaurants, and there are even workshops where you can try making traditional Japanese sweets and other fun crafts. The Nagasaki Jiro Bookstore, founded in 1924, features a wide selection of books on the first floor and a chic café on the 2nd floor that offers quiet views of Kumamoto's old-fashioned tram line.



Kengun Shrine

Kumamoto City's Oldest Shrine

Founded over 1900 years ago, Kengun Shrine is Kumamoto's oldest. Kengun Shrine, Aso Shrine (Aso), Kosa Shrine (Kosa), and Konoura Shrine (Uki) are together known as the Four Shrines of Aso. Starting with a large torii gate on Densha Dori (Kumamoto's main street with the tram line), the approach to the shrine stretches for over 1200 meters and is lined with cedar trees said to have been planted during the reign of Kato Kiyomasa. The shrine is especially well known for the oddly short torii gate that stands just outside the main shrine and is a popular place to visit to pray for safe driving.

Address: Kengunhonmachi 13-1, Higashi-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: Open all hours for visiting but parking lot closes at 9PM
Open year-round Admission: Free



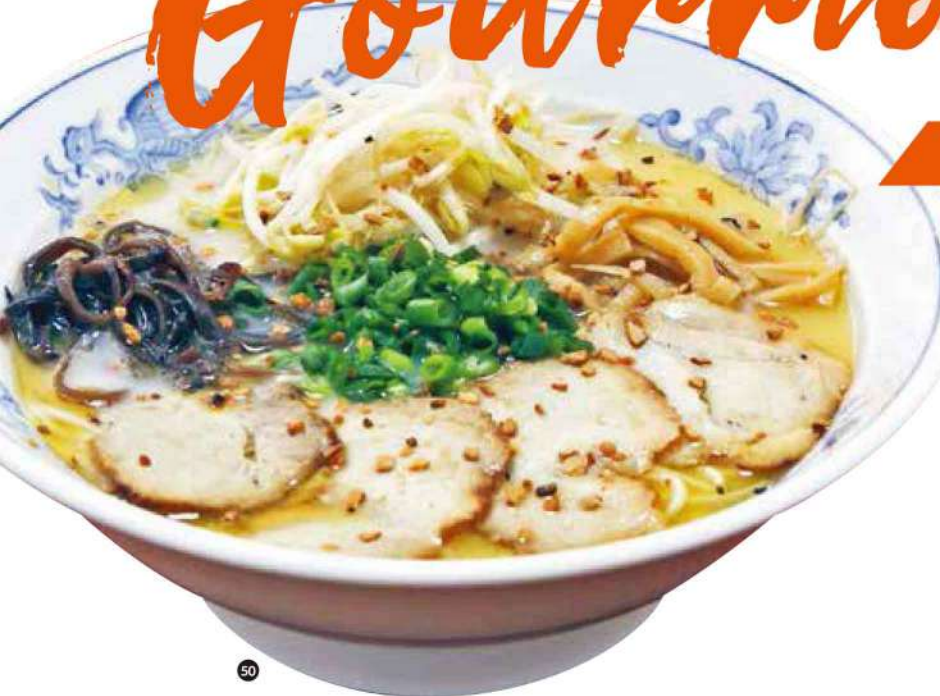
Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto

An Art Museum of Now

The Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto (CAMK) is Kyushu's first contemporary art museum. In addition to a main gallery that shows a variety of rotating exhibitions (admission required) there are also other areas that are free for visitors to peruse. In addition to works by world-renowned artists such as James Turrell and Yayoi Kusama, there is also a library with a wide selection of books, a kid's area filled with toys and picture books, and a museum shop offering a number of unique souvenirs.

Address: Bipuresu Kumanichi Kaikan 3F, Kamitoricho 2-3, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 10AM-8PM (last entry to gallery 7:30PM)
Closed: Tuesdays (or following weekday if holiday)
Admission: Free (admission required for gallery) HP: <https://www.camk.jp/>

Kumamoto Gourmet



Kumamoto Ramen

Black Roasted Garlic is the Secret to True Kumamoto Ramen

Kumamoto Ramen has roots in Kurume Ramen, the birthplace of the *tonkotsu* style of ramen, which made its way to Kumamoto via Tamana. Traditionally, Kumamoto Ramen consists of noodles of medium thickness in a *tonkotsu* (pork bone) broth mixed with chicken broth and topped with black roasted garlic chips and black garlic oil. The garlic marries with the mild *tonkotsu* broth to make a creamy, hearty soup. A popular topping on Kumamoto Ramen is *kikurage* (cloud ear mushrooms).

Komurasaki – Kamitori Chuo Shop
Address: Kamitoricho 8-16, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 11AM-4PM (last order 3:30PM),
6PM-10PM (last order 9:30PM)
Open year-round



Horsemeat Cuisine

A Low-Calorie, Low-Cholesterol Superfood

Kumamoto Prefecture is Japan's leading producer of horsemeat. The consumption of horsemeat supposedly began long ago with Kato Kiyomasa. Horsemeat is rich in vitamins and minerals while also being low in both calories and cholesterol. The most popular way to eat horsemeat is as *basashi*, i.e., horsemeat sashimi. *Basashi* cuts can come from the neck, rib, tongue, and even liver of the horse. The fats in horsemeat also have a very low melting point, making it feel like the horsemeat actually melts in your mouth. Horsemeat can be enjoyed in a variety of other ways, including hotpot, sushi, and on the grill.

Suganoya – Kamitori
Address: Empire Parking Kamitori, 2F, Jotomachi 2-12, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 11:30AM-3PM (last order 2PM), 5PM-10PM (last order 9PM)
Open year-round

51

Local Sake

Expertly Crafted Sake Made with Superior Ingredients and Pure Water

Good water is essential in making good sake. Kumamoto Prefecture is blessed with excellent water resources, as it is home to over 1000 natural springs and 100% of all tap water in Kumamoto City is groundwater. Having water of such good quality in such abundance means that the rice and fruit grown with this water are also going to be of excellent quality, resulting in some really top-class sakes. Kumamoto sake is especially unique as brewers had to develop a new kind of yeast in order to brew sake in the warm Kumamoto climate. This Kumamoto Yeast creates a fruitier, more aromatic kind of sake and is now used by breweries all throughout Japan. In recent years, wineries and beer breweries have also opened in Kumamoto and are making a name for themselves both domestically and overseas.



52

Kumamoto Wine Co., Ltd.
Address: In Foodpal Kumamoto, Izumi-machi 168-17,
Kita-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 10AM-5PM Closed: Wednesdays
HP: <https://www.kumamotowine.co.jp/>

Kumamoto-ken Shuzo Kenkyujo
Address: Shimasaki 1-7-20, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 9AM-5PM
Closed: Sat & Sun

Zuiyo Co., Ltd. Sake Brewery
Address: Kawashiri 4-6-67, Minami-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 8:30AM-17:10PM
Closed: Sat & Sun
HP: <https://www.zuiyo.co.jp/>

Akaushi Wagyu Beef

Akaushi Beef: Melt-in-Your-Mouth Savory Goodness

This *donburi* (rice bowl) is topped with Akaushi wagyu beef from cattle raised in the great outdoors of Aso. The beef is carefully cooked until medium-rare, sliced atop some white rice, then topped with a soft-boiled egg. Akaushi beef is different from other wagyu in that it is much leaner, more full-flavored, and healthier while still being deliciously tender and bursting with umami.

Akaushi Dining Yoka-Yoka
Address: Mizuta Bldg. 1F, Hanabatacho 11-20, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 11AM-10PM
Open year-round
URL: <https://www.yokayoka-ginzadori.com/>



53

The crest of the Hosokawa Clan



Karashi Renkon

An Addictive Combo of Crunch & Spice

Karashi renkon is a local dish made by stuffing the holes of a lotus root with a mix of spicy mustard and miso, dipping the root in a flour-based batter colored with turmeric, and frying it. The crunch of the lotus root and nasal-passage-clearing punch of the mustard make this a truly addictive snack. The dish supposedly got its start as a health food for one of the Hosokawa lords of Kumamoto who was sick at the time. When cut, the holes of the lotus root also resemble the family crest of the Hosokawa clan (shown to the above left). Even today, the dish is a popular snack to pair with a beer or some local *shochu*.

Aoyagi
Address: Shimotori 1-2-10, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 11:30AM-2PM, 5PM-10PM (last order 9:30PM, open
11:30AM-10PM last order 9:30)
Closed: Contact Us
HP: <http://aoyagi.ne.jp/>

Address of temporary location:
Link Place Bldg. 1F, Shimotori 1-4-26, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi



54

Sushi

Enjoy Excellent Amakusa Seafood in Downtown Kumamoto

The Amakusa archipelago is bounded by the Ariake, Yatsushiro, and East China Seas and is a seafood lover's paradise, with everything from octopus to *kuruma* prawns, sea urchin, squid, sea bream, pike conger, cutlass fish, and much more. Many of Amakusa's sushi shops are very creative in their preparation and presentation and famous people come from far and wide to dine in Amakusa. Because of the close proximity to the seas of Amakusa, excellent Amakusa sushi is available even in downtown Kumamoto. The charm of Amakusa seafood lies in its fresh ingredients delivered daily from the markets and accented with salt or special sauces before serving. Amakusa-style sushi respects the flavors of the basic ingredients while adding a little twist to delight both the eyes and the mouth.

Sushi Fukushin
Address: Hanabatacho 11-14, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto-shi
Hours: 11:30-2:30PM, 5:30PM-10PM
Closed: Contact us for details
HP: <http://www.fukushin.com/>



55

Events in Kumamoto City

Events Fusing Tradition with Modern Life

Fun events are held all throughout the year in Kumamoto, including the Kumamoto Oshiro Matsuri held once in spring and once in fall; the Kumamoto Castle Tsuboi River Garden Party where you can see brightly dressed *oiran* as they parade through town; the Suizenji Matsuri held in Suizenji Park; and the Great Festival of Fujisaki Hachimangu Shrine, a festival with over 1000 years of history and famed for its decorated horses on parade. There are also a number of new events started by young residents in recent years, like the Mizuakari festival where 6000 volunteers band together to carve bamboo into beautiful lanterns, and the popular Christmas Market held at different locations throughout the world. There are many more events in addition to these that celebrate local cuisine, the changing of the seasons, religious traditions, and more. Check out the Kumamoto City Official Guide website for current and future events.

Event Calendar

SPRING

- March Spring Kumamoto Oshiro Matsuri
- March Suizenji Matsuri
- May Kumamoto Castle Tsuboi River Garden Party



Spring Kumamoto Oshiro Matsuri



Suizenji Matsuri



Kumamoto Castle Tsuboi River Garden Party

SUMMER

- July Higo Honmyoji Temple Tonshae
- August Hinokuni Matsuri



Higo Honmyoji Temple Tonshae Festival



Hinokuni Matsuri

FALL

- September Great Festival of Fujisaki Hachimangu
- October Fall Kumamoto Oshiro Matsuri
- October Mizuakari
- November-December Night Illumination of Hosokawa Gyobu-tei



Great Festival of Fujisaki Hachimangu



Fall Kumamoto Oshiro Matsuri



Mizuakari

WINTER

- December Christmas Market
- February Fire Walking at the Kihara Fudosen Temple Spring Festival
- February-March Wa no Akari



Christmas Market



Wa no Akari



KUMAMOTO CITY OFFICIAL GUIDE Event Page

Map of Kyushu & Kumamoto

Travel time from Fukuoka to Kumamoto
Express Bus ... 2hr
Shinkansen ... 30-50min

Distances to Sightseeing Destinations

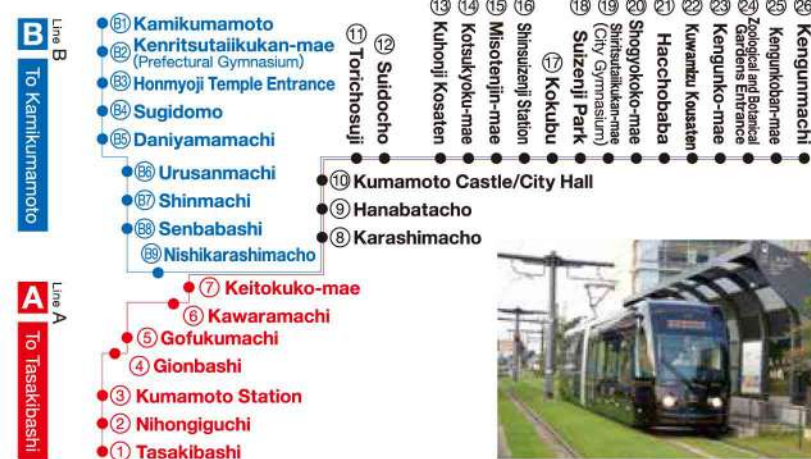
ASO KUMAMOTO Airport

Kyushu Bus Booking

JR Kyushu

Access

Shiden (Kumamoto City Tram)



One Day Pass

Kumamoto City Tram and Bus 1-Day Pass

Sightseeing facilities offer discounts for pass holders, so it is convenient for touring the city.

Tram and bus 1day pass	Tram only 1day pass
Zone ticket ... 700yen	Adults ... 500yen
All line ticket ... 900yen	Children ... 250yen

Kumamoto city tram allows



How to Get on the Bus and Tram

- Enter from the back door and take a ticket. There is no need to take a ticket on tram because the fare doesn't change.
- When your destination is called, press the button.
- Check your fare on the board at the front of the bus. For example, you have a ticket with a "2" on it. You should pay the fare amount that appears below the "2" on the board, in this case 210 yen. Tram fare is always 170 yen per adult and 90 yen per child.
- Put your fare and ticket in the fare box next to the driver's seat. If you need change, use the change machine attached to the fare box.

