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Policy Section
2022.3

KUMAMOTO CITY GUIDEBOOK

Kumamoto At A Glance





Kumamoto Free Wi-Fi is a free public wi-fi service provided to allow visitors convenient access to information for travel, transportation, events, natural disasters and emergencies.

MORE USEFUL INFO:



Sightseeing Guide



Sightseeing Spots



Kumamoto Castle Official Website



Sightseeing Tips



Transportation in Kumamoto



Articles

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One of Japan's great castles
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Your spot for top eats & great shopping
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KUMAMOTO STATION 09

A serene garden oasis in the city
SUIZENJI 11

SPECIAL FEATURE
Explore Kumamoto's samurai history
MT. KINPO 13

Welcome to KUMAMOTO CITY



Kumamoto Castle



Downtown



Shinmachi & Furumachi



Kumamoto Station



Suizenji



Mt. Kinpo

Packed with useful info for

visitors to Kumamoto City.



Kumamoto Castle

熊本城周辺 Area

熊本城周辺

Over 400 years ago, legendary Lord Kato Kiyomasa spent 7 years constructing his masterpiece—Kumamoto Castle. The keeps have been fully repaired following the 2016 earthquakes, and a new observation walkway provides a view from above of the ongoing reconstruction work. Visitors looking to learn more about Kumamoto's history, culture, and crafts can visit one of the museums located nearby, which include the Prefectural Museum of Art, the Traditional Crafts Center, and the Kumamoto City Museum. Visitors should also check out Sakuranobaba Josaien for local specialties and souvenirs and visit the on-site Information Center to speak with one of the volunteer guides.



10 15-min walk from Kumamoto Castle/ City Hall tram stop

Kumamoto Castle

(Reconstruction Observation Path)

熊本城

This new observation walkway sits 6m above the ground and runs 350m up to the castle keeps. The 6th floor of the Main Keep offers views of Mt. Aso and the downtown area. Historical items are on display on floors 1 through 4.



9 7-min walk from Kumamoto Castle/City Hall tram stop

Kumamoto Castle Museum Wakuwakuzu (in Sakuranobaba Josaien)

桜の馬場 城彩苑 熊本城ミュージアムわくわく座

Take a virtual tour of Kumamoto Castle as it was centuries ago up until right before the Kumamoto Earthquakes. Learn the history of the castle, marvel at its construction, and find the best photo spots as a guide takes you through a detailed 3D recreation of this symbol of Kumamoto.



B4 5-min walk from Sugidomo tram stop

Kumamoto City Museum

熊本博物館

Redesigned in 2018 under the concept of exhibiting Kumamoto's past to bring it into the future, this general interest museum has a planetarium and features a variety of exhibits on Kumamoto's history, culture, and environment.



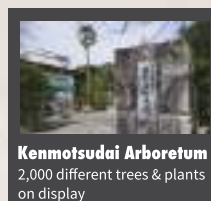
10 Main Building: 15-min walk from Kumamoto Castle/City Hall Tram Stop

10 Annex: 5-min walk from Kumamoto Castle/City Hall Tram Stop

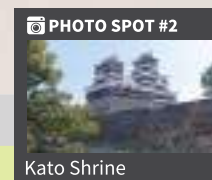
Kumamoto Pref. Museum of Art & Chibajo Branch

熊本県立美術館本館・分館

The main gallery sits in a corner of Kumamoto Castle's Ninomaru Park and hosts a collection of antiquities, paintings, prints, sculptures, crafts, and writings, both classical and modern, from around the world. The annex holds events and exhibits for local artists.



Kenmotsudai Arboretum
2,000 different trees & plants on display



Kato Shrine

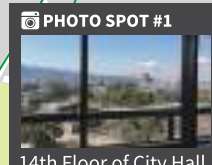


PHOTO SPOT #1
14th Floor of City Hall



Google Maps

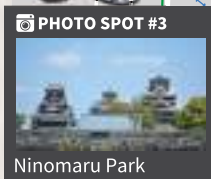


PHOTO SPOT #3
Ninomaru Park



10 7-min walk from Kumamoto Castle/City Hall Tram Stop

Kumamoto Pref. Traditional Crafts Center

熊本県伝統工芸館

This center exhibits local crafts, like pottery, woodwork, knives, and Higo Zogan, a unique style of metal inlay that originated as a sword decoration technique. Crafts are also available for purchase.



Gourmet Report

Street Food @ Josaien Castle Town

Featuring a plethora of food stalls and souvenir shops in a samurai-era setting, Josaien Castle Town is a must if you want some fruit-filled soft-serve and local treats, or want to try some free samples of Kumamoto wine and shochu.

Josaien
Articles



Downtown Kumamoto Area

中心市街地周辺

Located at the foot of Kumamoto Castle, downtown Kumamoto City is where you'll find City Hall, large-scale department stores, and shops and restaurants of all kinds, all with easy access to the airport and train station via the conveniently located bus terminal and numerous nearby tram stops. Many hotels are also located downtown, making it an ideal hub for travel to surrounding areas. All kinds of shops and boutiques line the streets centered around two large, covered arcades, meaning you can enjoy stress-free shopping even if the weather takes a turn for the worse. Kumamoto is also famous for its excellent food, which you can try at all manner of cafes, izakaya, and traditional restaurants.



Kamitori Arcade



Shimotori Arcade

11 Short walk from Torichosuji tram stop

Kamitori & Shimotori Arcades

上通りアーケード・下通りアーケード

The 511m-long, 15m-wide Shimotori Arcade is Kumamoto Prefecture's largest shopping area, featuring everything from department stores to ¥100 shops, drug stores, fashionable boutiques, entertainment facilities, ramen shops, and local eateries. The Kamitori Arcade extends north from Densha Dori (the street with the tram) with a design inspired by Paris's Musée d'Orsay. Kamitori is home to a variety of clothing shops, home furnishing boutiques, bookstores and more, with a unique combination of both old and new.



Kamitori



Shimotori



Kaushi wagyu beef



11 Short walk from Torichosuji tram stop

Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto

熊本市現代美術館

See work by world-famous artists like Yayoi Kusama and James Turrell up close. The museum also houses a museum shop and a home gallery that acts as a library stocked with books on a wide variety of subjects.



DOWNTOWN AREA MAP



©2010 kumamoto pref.kumamon

12 Short walk from Suidocho tram stop
Kumamon Square
くまモンスクエア

Kumamon is the official mascot of Kumamoto Prefecture, and Kumamon Square is where you'll find all things Kumamon, including Kumamon dolls, T-shirts, and other merchandise. Tourist information is also available.



Lafcadio Hearn Residence
Former home of renowned author Lafcadio Hearn

Gourmet Report

Kumamoto Nightlife

There's lots to enjoy at night in downtown Kumamoto! Try one of many restaurants specializing in local cuisine, stop by an izakaya for some local sake and shochu, and get a drink at any of the many bars that offer multilingual service.



10 5-min walk from Kumamoto Castle/City Hall tram stop

Iaido Experience

武蔵体験 (居合)

Take an iaido (a sword-based martial art) experience at a dojo that inherited the teachings of famed samurai Miyamoto Musashi. Your sensei will teach how to properly unsheathe and wield your sword. Scan below for details:



Shinmachi & Furumachi Areas

新町・古町周辺

The Shinmachi and Furumachi neighborhoods developed around the time when Kumamoto Castle was being built by Kato Kiyomasa, the first lord of the Kumamoto Domain, around the turn of the 17th century. Shinmachi was the entrance to Kumamoto Castle and was protected by five gates. The neighborhood was home to both samurai and merchants, which was rare at the time. Visitors to Furumachi will find many shrines hidden down back alleys as the area was a base of military operations and the shrines protected the area from fire. Merchants were also located along the Tsuboi River, where they loaded and unloaded wares from transport boats. The locals take great pride in the history of the area.



B7 Shinmachi: Short walk from Shinmachi tram stop

5 Furumachi: Short walk from Gofukumachi tram stop

The Townscape of Shinmachi & Furumachi

新町・古町の街並み

These neighborhoods feature a number of historic *machiya* houses that have been renovated into stylish cafes and retro restaurants where visitors can enjoy a meal or a cup of tea. The walking tours offered by local guides are very popular.



B6 Mitsusuke: 3-min walk from Urusanmachi tram stop

5 Tomodachiya: 5-min walk from Gofukumachi tram stop

Unique Kumamoto Experiences

熊本ならではの体験メニュー

Kumamoto is home to many arts and crafts, so try your hand at making Higo Zogan (a style of gold and silver inlay unique to Kumamoto) at Mitsusuke, or decorate some traditional Japanese sweets at Tomodachiya.



Making Japanese sweets



Higo Zogan



B7 2-min walk from Shinmachi tram stop

Meihachibashi Bridge

明八橋

This stone bridge was designed by Hashimoto Kangoro, the same architect who designed Tokyo's Nihonbashi and Nijubashi Bridges. It is currently open only to foot and bicycle traffic. The benches on the bridge are a nice place for a rest.



Rebuilding After the Earthquakes

熊本地震からの再生

These neighborhoods were heavily damaged in the earthquakes of April 2016. Residents wanted to preserve the area's classical atmosphere, so instead of demolishing damaged buildings, some were repaired and repurposed into cafes and guest houses.



B7 Short walk from Shinmachi tram stop

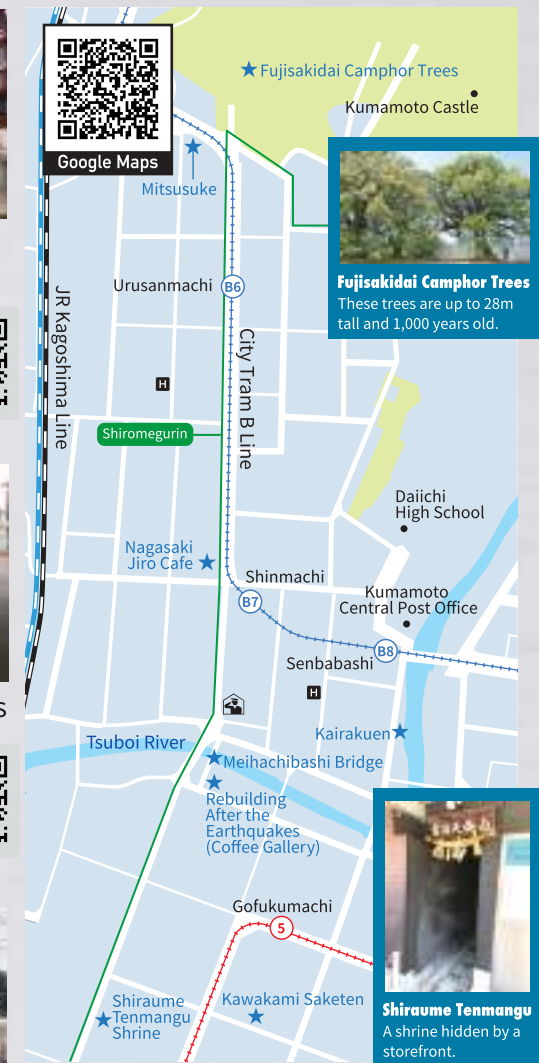
Street Tram

市電のある風景

The Kumamoto City Tram has been in service for almost a century. The Nagasaki Jiro Cafe, located in a late-19th century building, offers relaxing views of the tram as it makes its way through the busy city.



SHINMACHI & FURUMACHI AREA MAP



Google Maps



Fujisakidai Camphor Trees
These trees are up to 28m tall and 1,000 years old.



Shiraume Tenmangu
A shrine hidden by a storefront.

Gourmet Report Taipien

Taipien is a Japanese take on a local dish from the Fujian Province of China that supposedly originated at Shinmachi's Kairakuen. Taipien is a healthier alternative to ramen, with plenty of veggies, seafood, pork, and harusame noodles.



Kumamoto Station Area

熊本駅周辺

Kumamoto Station is Kumamoto City's transportation hub. The area around the station has developed rapidly within the past few years, with the construction of large malls housing excellent places to eat, popular apparel retailers, Kumamoto souvenir shops, electronics stores, and even a movie theater, making the area around Kumamoto Station an excellent place to spend some free time for shopping and eating. There are also a number of outdoor spots near the station that make good places to visit, like Mt. Hanaoka Park and Kitaoka Natural Park, which act as quiet oases amid the hustle and bustle of the city.



3 Short walk from Kumamoto Station tram stop
Kumamoto Station
熊本駅

Kumamoto Station features plenty of shopping options, including places like Uniqlo and GU in the new Amu Plaza Kumamoto (opened April 2021), and big retailers like BicCamera in the JR Kumamoto Shirakawa Building. At the Higo Yokamon Ichiba, located near the Shinkansen entrance, you'll find all kinds of Kumamoto specialties like seafood and ramen, plus cafes, a burger shop, and souvenir stores selling local alcohol and sweets.

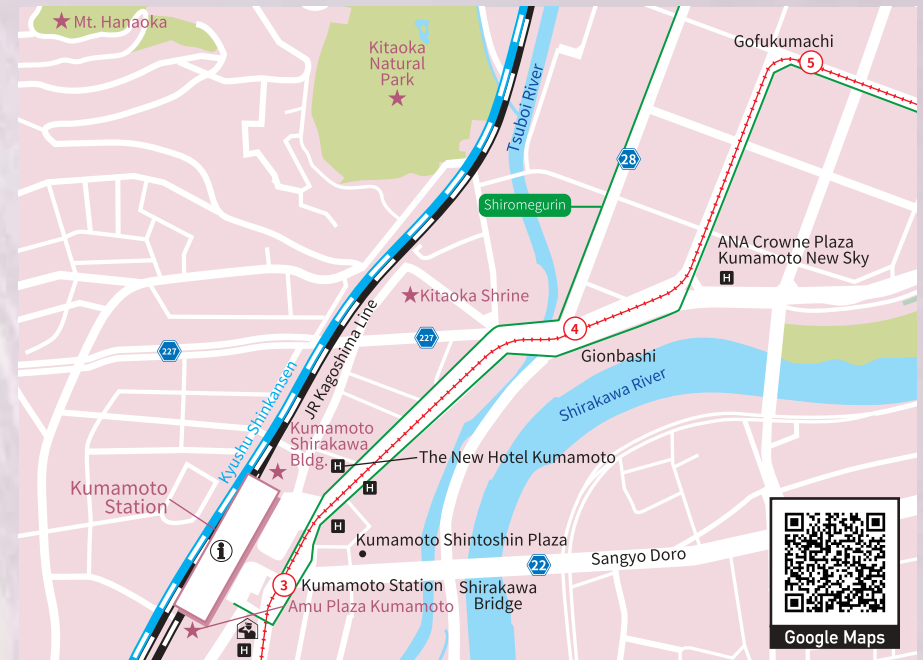


3 20-min walk from Kumamoto Station tram stop
Mt. Hanaoka
花岡山

Mt. Hanaoka is a spot popular for its view over downtown Kumamoto. Located north of Kumamoto Station and just 133m tall, the walk to the top is relatively easy. The best times to visit are at night to see the city lights, and during the cherry blossom season in late March/early April.



KUMAMOTO STATION AREA MAP



4 10-min walk from Gionbashi tram stop
Kitaoka Natural Park
北岡自然公園

This nationally designated historical site at the foot of Mt. Hanaoka is where Myogoji Temple, a temple of the Hosokawa clan that ruled Kumamoto for generations, once stood. The park features stone lanterns and the graves of past Hosokawa leaders.



4 5-min walk from Gionbashi tram stop
Kitaoka Shrine
北岡神社

Famed for its two 1,000-year-old camphor trees guarding the entrance, Kitaoka Shrine is where locals come to pray for good fortune, a strong marriage, and luck in finding love.



Gourmet Report Kumamoto Ramen

Kumamoto ramen is characterized by thick, straight noodles in tonkotsu soup blended with chicken or other broth and topped with fried garlic chips and/or garlic oil. There are numerous well-known Kumamoto ramen shops near Kumamoto Station.



Suizenji Area

水前寺周辺 Area

Suizenji Jojuen Garden, built by the 1st through 3rd Hosokawa lords of Kumamoto, and Lake Ezu, an urban lake fed by a spring that pumps out 400,000 tons of water each day, are two places where visitors can get a feel for the importance of water in the environment and culture of Kumamoto City. The pond in Suizenji Jojuen is also fed by an endless spring, and the gardens take on the colors of each season throughout the year. The aquatic environment of this area is well-preserved with considerable biodiversity, making this a popular place for locals to come and learn about nature or just to relax.



18 4-min walk from Suizenji Park tram stop

Suizenji Jojuen Garden (Izumi Shrine) 水前寺成趣園 (出水神社)

Suizenji Jojuen is a traditional Japanese strolling garden centered around a natural spring-fed pond, with carefully manicured trees and a mini-Mt. Fuji. Izumi Shrine, where the former Hosokawa lords who ruled Kumamoto are enshrined, is located at the north end of the park.



21 5-min walk from Hacchobaba tram stop

Lake Ezu 江津湖

To residents of Kumamoto City, Lake Ezu is a symbol of the groundwater used to provide 100% of the city's tap water. Kumamoto City won the 2013 Water for Life UN - Water Best Practices Award for water management.



19 The Statue of Luffy is a 10-minute walk from Shiritsutaikukan-mae tram stop

24 The Statue of Chopper is a 10-minute walk from the Zoological and Botanical Gardens Entrance tram stop

Bronze One Piece Statues

漫画『ONE PIECE』の銅像

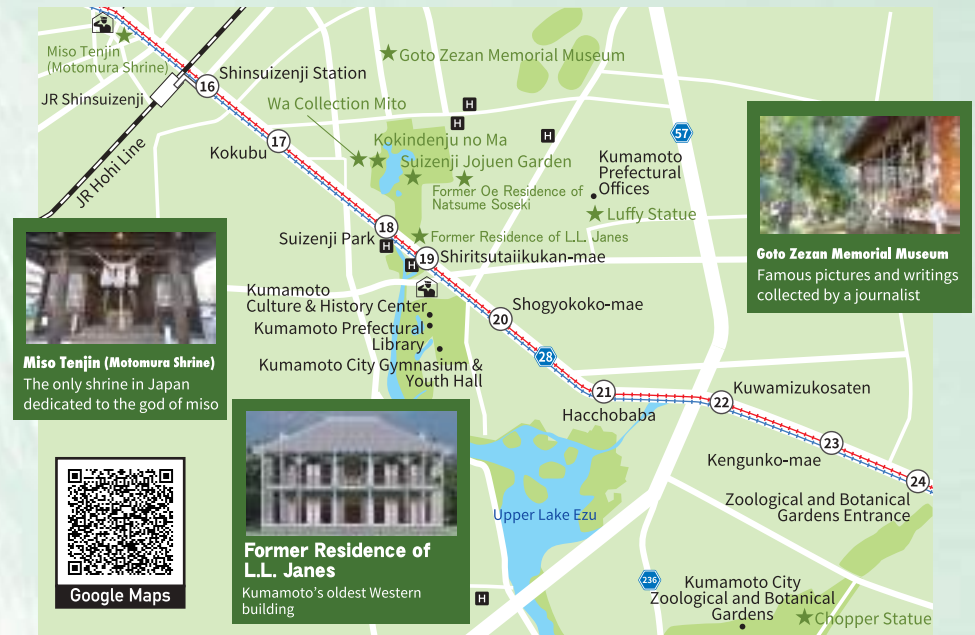
A statue of Luffy, the protagonist of the popular One Piece anime and manga series has been erected in front of the Prefectural Government Office, as part of a recovery project following the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake. The statue also commemorates Eiichiro Oda, the author of One Piece, being awarded with a Citizen's Honor Prize. A statue of Chopper was also later unveiled at Kumamoto Zoological and Botanical Gardens.



Luffy Chopper

©Eiichiro Oda/Shueisha

SUIZENJI AREA MAP



18 3-min walk from Suizenji Park tram stop

Traditional Japanese Experiences

日本を感じる体験メニュー

Enjoy matcha and a sweet at Kokindenju no Ma, a historic building relocated from Kyoto, while you take in the serene garden scenery. Visitors can also rent a kimono at Wa Collection Mito just outside the entrance to Suizenji.



Goto Zezan Memorial Museum
Famous pictures and writings collected by a journalist



19 7-min walk from Shiritsutaikukan-mae tram stop

Former Oe Residence of Natsume Soseki

夏目漱石大江旧居

Natsume Soseki, Japan's most famous novelist, came to teach at Kumamoto University in 1896, and this was the third house he lived in here. His trip from this house to nearby Oama, Tamana formed the basis for his novel *Kusamakura*.



Gourmet Report Ikinari Dango

This popular Kumamoto sweet is made by wrapping a slice of sweet potato and sweet bean paste in dough and steaming it. Ikinari dango make the perfect snack when you're hungry or out for a stroll.



Special Feature Mt. Kinpo Area

Mt. Kinpo Samurai Trekking Area

Mt. Kinpo is the mountain that looms over Kumamoto City to the east, opposite the great Aso caldera that lies further to the west. The area around Mt. Kinpo is very important to the history of Kumamoto City, as it is where you'll find places like Reigando Cave, where Miyamoto Musashi wrote his Book of Five Rings, and Honmyoji Temple, where Kato Kiyomasa, first Lord of Kumamoto, was laid to rest. Mt. Kinpo is also popular with hikers and trekkers as there are many hiking courses that take you up and around the mountain and offer scenic views.




Kato Kiyomasa

加藤清正

Active around the turn of the 17th century, Kato Kiyomasa laid the groundwork for Kumamoto's growth. Renowned as a castle builder, Kato took to building Kumamoto Castle once he was named lord of Kumamoto. Such skill was employed in its design that Kumamoto Castle was (and still is) renowned as an impregnable fortress. He also implemented a number of beneficial irrigation projects that made him so popular with the people of Kumamoto that the locals still hold festivals honoring him to this day.



 10-min walk from Honmyoji Temple Entrance tram stop

Honmyoji Temple

本妙寺

This Nichiren Buddhist temple dates back about 400 years and is the home temple of Kato Kiyomasa. Climb the steep stairs to the rear to reach Kato's mausoleum, behind which you'll find more stairs that take you to a bronze statue of Kato standing guard over Kumamoto City.



Miyamoto Musashi


宮本武蔵

Miyamoto Musashi is a legendary swordsman who never lost a single duel. When he was in his fifties, he was invited to Kumamoto by Lord Hosokawa Tadatoshi. While in Kumamoto, Musashi retreated to Reigando Cave and wrote The Book of Five Rings, a treatise on martial philosophy. Musashi was also very gifted at painting and calligraphy, and his work is very highly regarded.



Statue of Miyamoto Musashi




 3-min walk from Toshi Bus Jikei Byoin-mae

Shimada Museum of Arts 島田美術館

This museum features a collection of items related to Kumamoto samurai, with many weapons, historical pieces, and writings relating to Miyamoto Musashi. Don't miss the quaint Japanese garden next to the museum.



 20-min walk from Sanko Bus Iwato Kannon Iriguchi bus stop

Reigando Cave 霊巖洞

Reigando is the cave on Mt. Kinpo where Miyamoto Musashi secluded himself to write his famed Book of Five Rings. The approach to the cave is populated by dozens of small stone statues called the Gohyaku Rakan, lending the area an eerily mystical air.

Gourmet Report
Pick-Your-Own Fruit

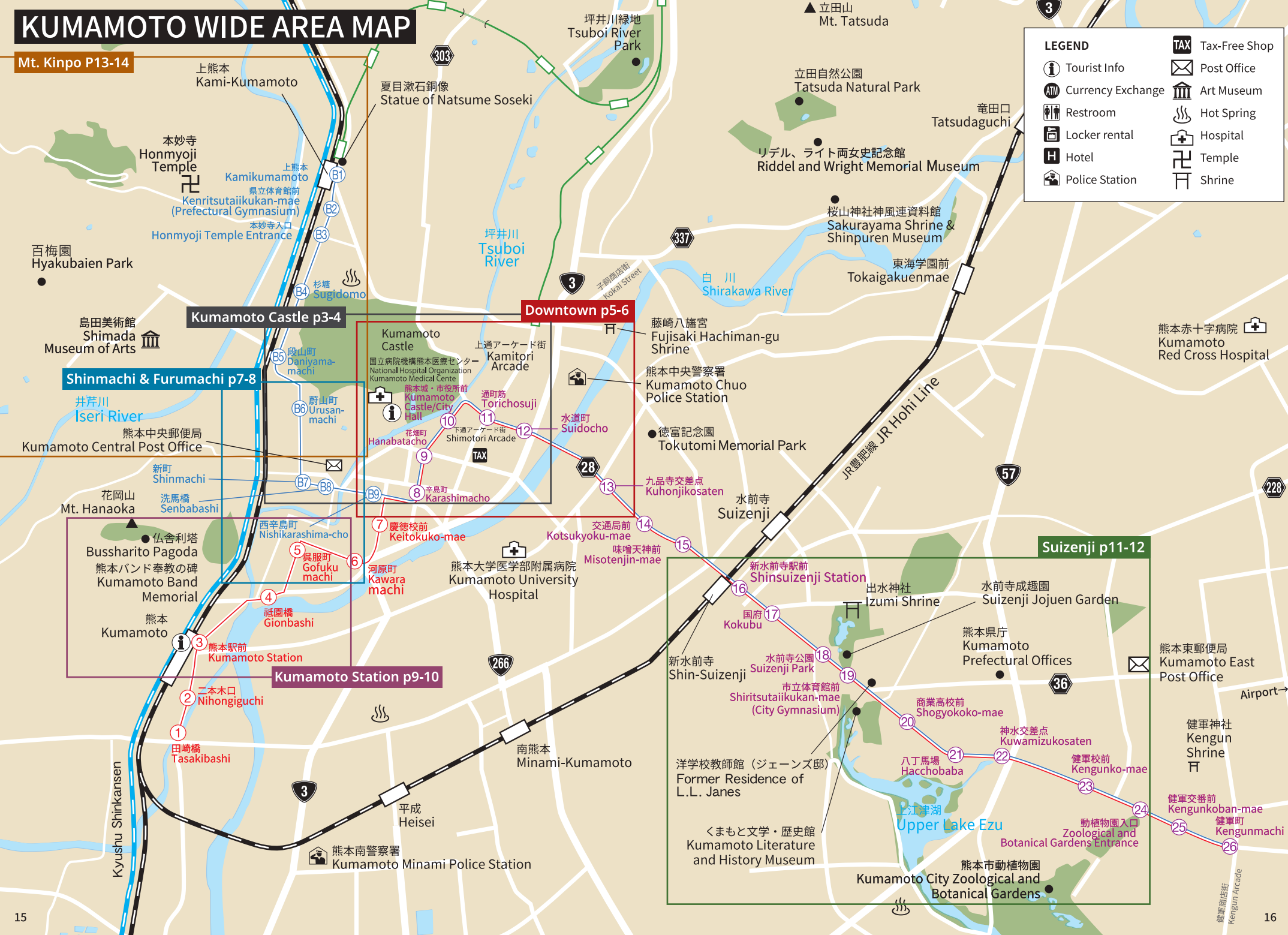
Kumamoto is a producer of all kinds of fruits. There are a number of PYO farms around Mt. Kinpo, and depending on the time of year, visitors can pick oranges, pears, grapes, strawberries, and more.




KUMAMOTO WIDE AREA MAP

Mt. Kinpo P13-14

LEGEND	
	Tourist Info
	ATM
	Restroom
	Locker rental
	Hotel
	Police Station
	Tax-Free Shop
	Post Office
	Art Museum
	Hot Spring
	Hospital
	Temple
	Shrine



Information

Tourism

JNTO Official website (English)



Japan Official Travel App



Tourist Information Centers

Josaien Tourist Information Center
Tel: 096-322-5060
Address: 1-1-3 Ninomaru, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto
Hours: 9:00-17:30

Kumamoto Station Tourist Information Center
Tel: 096-327-9500
Address: 3-15-30 Kasuga, Nishi-ku, Kumamoto
Hours: 9:00-17:30

Batteries for charging phones in case of emergency are available at the information center

ATM

Shimotori Family Plaza
(next to Kumamoto Shimotori McDonald's)
Address: 5-17 Tetorihoncho, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto City
Hours: 9:00-21:00 (year round)

Sakuranobaba Josaien Shunsaikan
Address: 1-1-2 Ninomaru, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto City

SEVEN BANK ATM
Tel: 0120-77-1179
All 7-Eleven stores in Japan offer 24-hour access to cash with foreign cards (Visa, Discover, American Express, Diners Club, etc., Pin required).



ATM Locator

Emergency

JNTO
(Japan Visitor Hotline)
050-3816-2787
(24 hours/day)

Police
110
(24 hours/day, no charge)

**Ambulance/
Fire Service**
119
(24 hours/day, no charge)

NHK WORLD JAPAN

International broadcasting by Japan's public broadcaster. Check the latest news regarding natural disasters and other unexpected events.



For iPhone



For Android

Safety Tips - Disaster Info App

Provides warnings for earthquakes, tsunamis, heavy rains, etc. Available for free.



For iPhone



For Android

JNTO Twitter

@JapanSafeTravel (English)

Follow Japan Safe Travel for safety tips and the latest information on natural disasters.



If You Are Feeling Sick... List of Medical Institutions



Search for medical institutions by clinical department and language.

If you can't speak Japanese... VoiceTra - Multilingual Speech Translation App



For iPhone

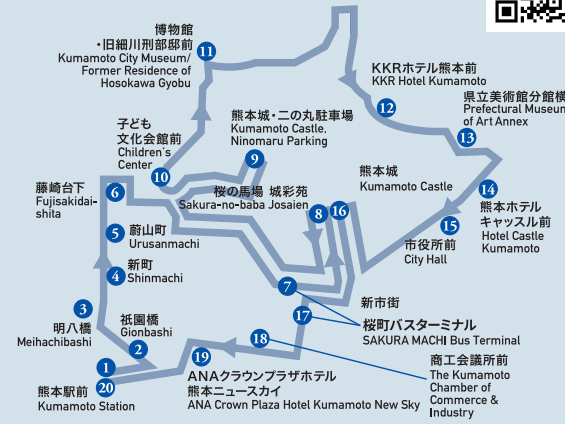


For Android

Converts what you say into Japanese and other languages. Available for free. Provided by the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT).

Shiromegurin (Kumamoto Castle Loop Bus) しろめぐりん

Shiromegurin is the name of the bus that runs in a loop around the castle every 20-30 minutes.



	Bus fare	
	Single use	1Day Pass
Adult	¥160	¥400
Child	¥80	¥200

- Kumamoto Station
- Gionbashi
- Meihachibashi
- Shinmachi
- Urusanmachi
- Fujisakidai-shita
- SAKURA MACHI Bus Terminal
- Sakura-no-baba Josaien
- Kumamoto Castle, Ninomaru Parking
- Children's Center
- Kumamoto City Museum & Former Residence of Hosokawa Gyobu
- KKR Hotel Kumamoto
- Kumamoto Prefectural Museum of Art Annex
- Kumamoto Hotel Castle
- City Hall
- Sakura-no-baba Josaien
- SAKURA MACHI Bus Terminal
- The Kumamoto Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- ANA Crown Plaza Hotel Kumamoto New Sky
- Kumamoto Station (Last stop)

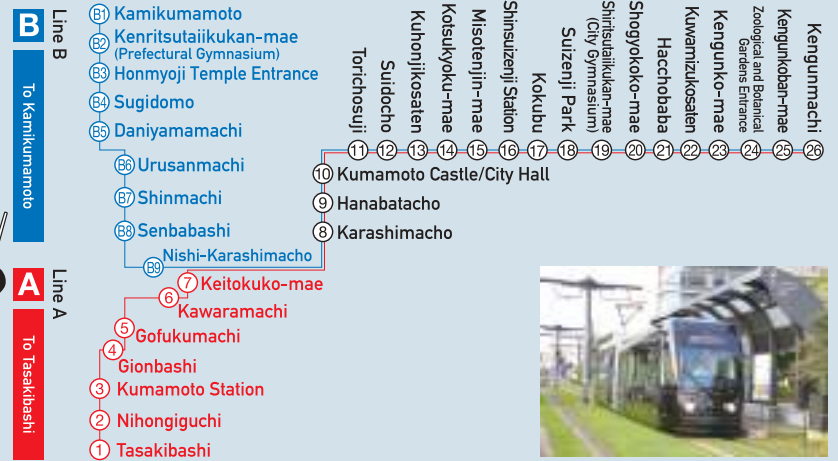


Shiden (Kumamoto City Tram)

Fares:
Adult ¥170
Child ¥90



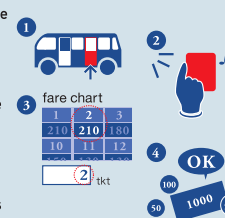
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How to Ride the Bus and Tram

(Public transport IC cards accepted)

- Board through the rear door. When boarding a bus, please take a ticket. You do not need to take a ticket when boarding the tram because it is a flat fare.
- When your destination is called, press the button.
- For buses, check your fare on the board at the front of the bus. For example, if your ticket has the number 2 on it, pay the fare amount that appears below the "2" on the board (in this case, 210 yen). Tram fare is always 170 yen/adult and 90 yen/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.



Single Day Passes

Kumamoto City Tram & Bus Single Day Passes

Sightseeing facilities offer discounts for pass holders, so Single Day Passes are convenient for touring the city.

Single Day Pass (Tram & Bus)	Single Day Pass (Tram Only)
Zone 1 ticket: 700 yen	Adults: 500 yen
Zone 2 ticket: 900 yen	Children: 250 yen