Kumamoto 5 Best Area Map
Around Kumamoto 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 Nagaberi Wall, which spans 242 meters and is the longest such castle wall in Japan, suffered a partial collapse in the earthquake 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.

Activities

1. Kumamoto Volunteer Tour Guides
   Available Year-Round: 9AM-5PM
   Check out the Kumamoto Castle Projection Mapping exhibit to see a stunning multimedia reconstruction of the damage caused by the earthquakes projected on a miniature replica of the castle. Next, check out the Kumamoto Castle Virtual Reality tour to see what the castle looked like before the earthquake and hundreds of years ago.

2. Wakuwakuza Kumamoto Castle Museum
   Closed: December 29/31 9AM-5PM
   Former residence of the castle’s lord, this museum is located in the castle’s eastern wing and covers the history of the castle from itsorigins to the present day.

3. Amakusa Kairou
   Open Year-Round: 9:30AM-5:30PM
   Visitors can enjoy fresh Amakusa seafood in an atmosphere styled like an old Japanese home. In addition to its seafood donburi, fans of uni (sea urchin) are sure to be pleased, as Amakusa is famous for its Uni Korie, a fried potato croquette stuffed with thick-rich creamy uni.

4. TENTE
   Open Year-Round: 9AM-7PM
   A popular shop with a menu packed with the finest fruits you’ll find in Kumamoto. Especially popular are their fresh juices, their Kudamom Ice Cream topped with seasonal fruits, and their seasonal Oni Mori Strawberry and Oni Mori Melon Ice Creams.

5. Ikinariya Watanabe
   Open Year-Round: 9AM-7PM
   Ikinariya Watanabe specializes in ikinari, a local delicacy made with sweet potatoes (from neighboring Aso & Oza) and Hokkaido sweet beans, wrapped in a pastry dough and streamed. The piping hot potato and delicate sweetness make this a perennially popular homestyle treat.

6. Kato Shrine
   Always open
   Kato Shrine, the shrine where Kato Kiyomasa is enshrined, was rebuilt in 1587 and originally stood between the castle keep and Umi Yagura. It was later moved to its current location in 1874, and then moved again to its current location in 1992. Visitors can purchase a shrine stamp book at the shop and have one of the shrine workers sign and stamp the book with the seal of Kato Shrine. The stamp book can then be used at any other shrine you visit!

7. Kumamoto Prefectural Art Museum
   Closed: Mondays (or following day if holiday) 9:30AM-5:30PM
   The Kumamoto Prefectural Art Museum holds a variety of different displays on display and an excellent place to start during a trip to the castle. One of the hallmarks of the museum is the artist's section, which includes works and portraits of the famous artists of Kumamoto. The museum also holds a collection of historical objects from the Kumamoto Prefecture and from local artists, including prints, paintings, and other art. The museum is open from 9:30AM to 5:30PM on Mondays except for holidays.

Gourmet

Spots

Kumamoto Prefectural Traditional Crafts Center
Closed: Mondays (or following day if holiday), 10AM-5:30PM
The Kumamoto Prefectural Traditional Crafts Center, located beside the castle in the city of Kumamoto, is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of traditional crafts from the region. Visitors can watch artisans at work, purchase handmade crafts, and even take classes to learn traditional techniques. The center is open from 10AM to 5:30PM on Mondays, except for holidays.

The Crafts Center has 90 different kinds of prefecture-designated crafts on display, including cloths, pottery, metal, and more. Arts and Crafts in the Permanent Exhibition Room can be touched and picked up for a closer look, and some are even available for purchase in the shop.
Two covered shopping arcades, Kamitori and Shimotori, comprise the downtown area of Kumamoto City. 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 Shimotori Shopping Arcade features more fashion options and has a more active nightlife while also having a number of cafés 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.

**Access**
- From Kumamoto Airport: Airport Limousine Bus: Kumamoto Airport bus stop to Torichoushi bus stop, Fare: ¥700, Time: about 40 mins
- From JR Kumamoto Station: Train: Kumamoto Station to Torichoushi Tram stop, Fare: Adult ¥170 Child ¥90, Time: about 20 mins
- Bus: Kumamoto Station bus stop to Torichoushi bus stop, Fare: ¥210, Time: about 17 mins

**Bars**
- Glocal BAR Vibes
  - Closed: Sunday, 8:00PM-11:30PM
  - The bar of the Japanese, by the Japanese, for the world!
  - The owner is a true expert on shochu, a traditional Japanese distilled spirit most popular in Kyushu, and he shares his passion with every guest. In his bar, shochu is ready to explain any of the dozens of shochus he has on hand in both Japanese and English. Glocal BAR Vibes is #1 on TripAdvisor in the Bar & Restaurant category for all of Kumamoto and is a must-stop for any visitor to Kumamoto City!
  - Tasting set (4 kinds of shochu) + half glass + 2 kinds of finger food + tasting note

**Gourmet**
- Komurasaki - Kamitori Chuo
  - Open Year-Round
  - 11AM-4:49PM (last order: 3:30PM), 6PM-10PM (last order: 9:30PM)
  - Founded in 1954, Komurasaki is a proud purveyor of the classic Kumamoto style of ramen, consisting of original Komurasaki medium-thick noodles in a tonkotsu broth, topped with fried garlic chips and black garlic oil.

- Amamiya
  - Closed: 12/23, 1/1: 11:30AM-10PM (L.O. food 9PM), dessert 9:30PM, Mondays 11:30AM-6PM (L.O. 5:30PM), Fridays, Saturdays, and before holidays 11:30AM-11PM (L.O. food 9PM, dessert 10:30PM)
  - With the motto “Serving Healthy Food that Tastes Great,” Amamiya specializes in sweets & desserts made with local kinako and chestnuts, tea ceremony-grade matcha, and other high-quality ingredients. Meals are also available, including dishes made with traditional local vegetables.

- Tachi Sushi
  - Closed: Contact us
  - 11:30AM-2PM, 6PM-11PM
  - Tachi Sushi offers fresh seafood sushi at a reasonable price, and their popular Uni Ikura Kobune Mori and Chu Tora (Tobikusari) are both over-the-top and delicious. A four-language menu is available and Tachi Sushi is also open for lunch.

**Spots**
- YOKOBACHI
  - Open Year-Round
  - 5PM-12AM
  - Yokobachi is a popular izakaya offering all the Kumamoto specialties like basashi, karashi renkon, and hitomeji purunuru at low prices. Yokobachi also features numerous other Asian-style dishes and is situated in a stylishly renovated traditional Japanese home with outdoor seating.

- Magosaburo - Hanabata
  - Open Year-Round
  - 5PM-11:30PM (last order: 10:30PM)
  - Magosaburo is a charcoal-grill yakikiniku restaurant that buys Kurohara Gyu (Kumamoto wagyu beef) by the cow, meaning they can offer select and rare cuts you can’t find elsewhere. Their famous homemade yakikiniku sauce is made from over 20 kinds of vegetables and fruits and nothing else.

- Komamon Square
  - Closed around New Year’s 10AM-7PM
  - Komamon Square is the headquarters for all things Kumamon, Kumamon’s shibetoring world-famous mascot. You’ll find all kinds of info on Kumamon, plus sightseeing and local info on Kumamoto Prefecture. There’s even a Kumamon souvenir shop and snack space!
The neighborhoods of Shinmachi and Furumachi lie between Kumamoto Station and Kumamoto Castle, the historical castle town of Kumamoto, the area still retains the atmosphere of old Japan and you can find many shops offering traditional crafts and foods. Enjoy tea and a snack in a café situated in a renovated home, or try your hand at making Higo Zogan or Japanese sweets under the tutelage of a true artisan. Tours given by local guides are also available.

Access

Getting to Shinmachi
- From JR Kumamoto Station: Bus: Kumamoto Station bus stop to Shinmachi bus stop, Fare: ¥160, Time: 6 mins
- From Sakuramura Bus Terminal: Tram: Kumamoto tram stop to Shinmachi tram stop, Fare: ¥170, Time: 4 mins
  Bus: Sakuramura Bus Terminal to Shinmachi bus stop, Fare: ¥160, Time: 5 mins

Getting to Furumachi
- From JR Kumamoto Station: Tram: Kumamoto tram stop to Gofukumachi tram stop, Fare: ¥170, Time: 4 mins
  Bus: Kumamoto Station bus stop to Gofukumachi bus stop, Fare: ¥160, Time: 3 mins
- From Sakuramura Bus Terminal: Tram: Karashimachi tram stop (3 min walk from Sakuramura Bus Terminal to Gofukumachi tram stop, Fare: ¥170, Time: 6 mins
  Bus: Sakuramura Bus Terminal to Gofukumachi bus stop, Fare: ¥160, Time: 4 mins

Gen ZONE
Closed: Contact us Reservations req'd (Gen ZONE), 10AM-7PM (Candle House)
Gen ZONE is known as the place to go to learn about Furumachi. Genzo, the proprietor, isn’t satisfied with running just a simple izakaya, so his operation is more of a combo café, bar, event space, and he even does outdoor BBQ. Candies handmade by Genzo’s wife are also available for purchase.

Kairakuen
Closed: Mondays, 2nd, 4th, and 5th Tuesdays, and holidays
11:30AM-2PM, 5PM-7:30PM [closed 7:30PM] reservations req'd 1 day in advance for dinner
Kairakuen was founded in 1933 and is supposedly one of the originators of taipin, a Chinese-style noodle soup only found in Kumamoto. Unchanged for decades, the recipe calls for harsammee noodles and plenty of vegetables in a flavorful chicken broth.

Purely Café & Market
Closed: Wednesdays
10AM-7PM (Restaurant: 11:30AM-5PM)
Purely is a combination restaurant and market in a 140-year-old renovated house. You can find excellent dishes made with local ingredients, along with organic Kyushu veggies, rice, and naturally fermented foods, as well as various lifestyle goods and more!

Activities

Mitsusuke Higo Zogan
Closed: Contact us
9AM-5PM (weekends and holidays: 10AM-4PM)
096-324-4480 (reservations required)
The Higo Zogan style of gold inlay was developed centuries ago by a weaponsmith to Lord Hosokawa in Kumamoto, and Mitsusuke preserves the tradition and austere style of this art. Workshops are also available to make your own Higo Zogan pins, pendants, and more (reservations req'd 1 day in advance).

Kawakami Liquor Shop
Closed: Sundays, holidays
9AM-7PM
096-326-1568 (reservations required)
Kawakami Liquor Shop offers an excellent selection of Kumamoto sake, shochu, and wine. Tastings available for 3-4 sake or shochu, and with prior reservations, sake and shochu tasting lessons are available (fee charged. For one or more, Interpreter req'd). You’re sure to find a bottle of something you love here.

Tomodachiya Seika Honpo
Closed: Contact us
9AM-5PM
096-325-2212 (reservations required)
Tomodachiya offers artisan-made Japanese sweets crafted with seasonal ingredients, all for the reasonable price of around 100 yen each. Join a workshop and learn to make your own sweet in the traditional Japanese style.

Murakami Karashi Renkon
Closed: Saturdays
8:30AM-6PM
096-355-6170 (reservations required)
Karashi Renkon, a traditional Kumamoto snack of lotus root stuffed with spicy miso mustard and fried, has been around for centuries. Founded in 1955, Murakami Karashi Renkon sells karashi renkon and tried new items like the popular Karashi Renkon croquettes. Karashi renkon workshops are also available.
Suizenji Park is one of Kumanoto City’s top tourist spots and is just a short tram ride from the downtown area. Where Suizenji now stands today, Hosokawa Tadatoshi, the first Hosokawa lord of Kumanoto, discovered a natural spring and decided to build a teahouse nearby. His grandson, Tounoshichi, then transformed the surrounding area into a sprawling park designed to recreate different views along the Tokaido Way, including views of Mt. Fuji. The park is also the site of a number of events throughout the year. Yabusame (horseback archery) exhibitions are held twice a year in the spring and fall and Noh performances are held throughout the year, along with a number of other music and cultural events. Within the park is located Izumi Shrine, which is a shrine dedicated to the members of the former ruling Hosokawa family. At the shrine shop, you can purchase a shrine stamp book designed over 400 years ago by Hosokawa Garashe, wife of Lord Tadatsuki and a convert to Christianity.

Access

- From Sakuramachi Bus Terminal:
  - Tram: Karasukumachi tram stop (3-min walk from Sakuramachi Bus Terminal to Suizenji) Park tram stop, Fare: ¥270, Time: 20 mins.
  - Bus: Sakuramachi Bus Terminal to Suizenji Park bus stop, Fare: ¥270, Time: 18 mins.
- From JR Kumanoto Station:
  - Tram: Kumanoto Station tram stop to Suizenji Park tram stop, Fare: ¥170, Time: 35 mins.
  - Bus: Kumanoto Station bus stop to Suizenji Park, Fare: ¥280, Time: 28 mins.

Gourmet

1. Kaminomizu
   - Closed: Contact us 11:30AM-2PM, 6PM-9:30PM
   - Kaminomizu specializes in traditional Japanese cuisine, incorporating local ingredients to create dishes that reflect the seasons. Kaminomizu’s bento took the gold in a 2014 Kumanoto bento contest. Their bento are available for purchase by reservation: http://kaminomizu.com/

2. Ajisen Ramen – Flagship Shop
   - Closed: 1/1 11:30AM-10PM (last order: 9:30PM)
   - Ajisen Ramen now has shops all over the world. Ajisen’s take on Kumanoto ramen features a rich tonkotsu broth with medium-thick noodles, special semi oil to bring out the flavor of the soup, and is topped with fried garlic chips.

3. Higo Sougawa - Kenchodori
   - Closed: 12/21-1/3
   - Higo Sougawa was named champion of the Kumanoto Surprise! Gourmet Contest. Specializing in somen noodles, Higo Sougawa also offer a variety of other noodle styles, all hand-pulled. Their famous Junsei noodles are also available in souvenir packs.

Activities

1. Mito Wa Collection
   - Closed: 12/31 10AM-9PM
   - Mito Wa Collection has a kimon rental shop located just outside the entrance to Suizenji Park. Friendly staff will help you pick out and put on an outfit from over 150 kimono and 300 yukata. All-day rentals are available and Japanese-style accessories are also available for purchase.

2. Kokindenju no Ma
   - Open year-round 9AM-5PM
   - Kokindenju no Ma is a rare thatched-roof teahouse located on the grounds of Suizenji Park. The building was originally built around 400 years ago in Kyoto and was relocated 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.
The History and Charm of Kawashiri

Access
● From Sakuramachi Bus Terminal: Bus: Sakuramachi Bus Terminal to front of the Kumamoto Handicrafts Hall. Bus stop: Fare: ¥380. Time: 29 mins
● From JR Kumamoto Station: Train: Kumamoto Station tram stop to Kawashiri Station, Fare: ¥210. Time: 6 mins

Activities

1. Tateyama Kaho
   Close: Contact
   SAM-7PM (Sunday holidays: 10AM-6PM)
   096-357-9956 (Reservation required)
   Tateyama is one of the Kawasera Rokkasu group of sweets shops working to preserve and innovate the Kawashiri tradition of sweets-making, and they have a lot of flower- and fruit-patterned sweets for sale. You can also try to make some yourself at the Kumamoto Handicrafts City Promotion Center.

2. Kumamoto City Handicrafts Promotion Center
   Close: Mondays (or next day if holiday) 9AM-5PM
   096-358-8711 (No Reservation required)
   The Handicrafts Center is located in downtown Kawashiri and houses exhibits on Kawashiri bladework and Higo Zogan, as well as modern crafts like pottery, leatherwork, and stained glass. Numerous workshops are open to the public and crafts are available for purchase.

3. Daizenji Temple
   Open Year-Round: SAM-7PM (Winter: SAM-6PM)
   Daizenji is a Zen temple founded in 1278 and is a main temple of the Soto sect of Buddhism. The temple houses a number of priceless treasures, one of which is a National Important Cultural Property. The Zazen is open to the public on the 3rd Sunday of each month for Zen meditation.

Spots

1. Photo Spots

Gourmet

1. Kokotei Ramen
   Closed: Tuesdays
   11:00AM-3:00PM, 5:00PM-9:00PM
   Kokotei was founded 40 years ago and continues to delight ramen fans of all ages. We make all of our soup, noodles, and gyosha in-house with no preservatives or additives so our customers can enjoy a bowl of ramen that is both healthy and tasty.

2. Zuiyô
   Closed: Saturdays, Sundays
   8:00AM-8:00PM (Hours from 10AM to 5PM)
   Founded in 1867 when a liquor called “akazake” was the only alcohol permitted for production in Kumamoto. Zuiyô was the first brewhery to try producing sake. Check out the Toji Taiho-gura to try and buy some rare full-strength-shochu and learn about akazake and Zuiyô.

Kawaseri Rokkasu
This group consists of six traditional confectioners in Kawashiri:
- Tenmeido
- Kaho Ishihara
- Tateyama Kaho
- Kaho Umezono
- Kaho Kazusa
- Iwamoto Kaho

The group uses traditional Japanese confectionery to strengthen the community and holds exhibits and demonstrations of artisanal confections.
Kumamoto Best 5 Area Map