Kobe & Himeji

A trip through Japan's traditions and modern beauty

Tourism Information & Inquiries

Kobe Tourist Information Center
Tel. 078-322-0220
8 Kamie-dori, Chuo-ku, Kobe
(South side of JR Sannomiya Station East Exit)
Open 09:00 - 18:00
Open year round (limited hours at year-end and New Year’s)

Himeji City Tourist Information Center
Tel. 079-287-0003
210-2 Eimae-cho, Himeji
(Northwest side of JR Himeji Station central concourse)
Open 09:00 - 18:00
Closed Dec. 26, 30

Official Tourism Websites

Kobe Official Tourism Site: Feel KOBE

Himeji City Official Tourism Site: Himenomichi

SETOUCHI Finder
http://setouchifinder.com/en/

All information contained in this brochure is based on data as of May 2015, and is subject to change without notice.
Modern architecture and cuisine in a relaxing, elegant port city

Kobe

The spirit that supported recovery from disaster

Kobe suffered extensive damage after the Great Hanshin earthquake. With the passion of its citizens and the support of the world, Kobe has recovered and now is a bustling city that shows no signs of the prior damage. In memory of the city’s recovery and rebuilding, an illumination event called Kobe Luminaire is held each December. A visit will light up your spirit and remind you of those who helped make Kobe what it is today.

The neighborhood alive with modern Western culture

It has been 150 years since the opening of the port of Kobe. To enjoy the vestiges of that time period, head over to Former Foreign Settlement or Kitano Ittetsu, where the western-style 19th-century architecture remains. The mansions built by those early foreign residents line the streets, and provide an opportunity to see modern western culture in this Japanese port city. The waterfront, meanwhile, offers its own variety of sightseeing spots. Sleep in the bustling and fashionable Kobe Harborland center, or take unforgettable photos at Meriken Park – the unique shape of Kobe Port Tower and Kobe Maritime Museum make for stunning subjects.

Beautiful gourmet dishes nurtured by cultured Kobe citizens

The port of Kobe served as the gateway of foreign culture and entertainment for the city’s early international residents; the spread of coffee, western-style desserts, movies, jazz, soccer, and more throughout Japan was made possible thanks to Kobe. Even the now-internationally renowned Kobe beef, with its intense marbling and hint of sweetness, is said to have been “discovered” by a foreign resident at that time. Kobe is also famous throughout Japan for its sweets and breads; walking through the city, you’re sure to see numerous unique bakeries and cake shops with lines out the door. Take your time strolling through Kobe, and enjoy corner cafes and the stunning array of desserts in a city that incorporated 19th-century western culture in its own special way. Happiness awaits in Kobe!
Nurture body and soul surrounded by nature and hot springs

Mt. Rokko & Arima Hot Spring

Mt. Rokko range, the backdrop to Kobe’s cityscape, is the perfect place to experience farms, ropes adventure, and other outdoor activities. An observation deck offers stunning panoramas of the Kobe skyline, with the San’in Isolated Sea in the background. The night view from Mt. Rokko is famous throughout Japan—city lights sparkle like diamonds you will never forget.

Arima Hot Spring, connected to Mt. Rokko via ropeway, is one of the Japan’s oldest hot spring towns. It appears in historical texts as far back as the 7th century, and it’s itself a storehouse of history, having hosted numerous powerful figures. The best way to enjoy this town and its rows of traditional houses is via a stroll in your yukata.

Akashi Kaikyo Bridge

With a total length of 3,911 meters, Akashi Kaikyo Bridge is well known as the world’s longest suspension bridge. Visitors can walk Hiko Marine Promenade, or even take a tour to the top of one of the towers. It is also known as the Pearl Bridge for the 28 dazzling light patterns that illuminate the bridge like a jewel.

A convenient way to see all of Kobe’s best sights — City Loop Bus

Use a day pass to see all the central Kobe attractions, from the port of Kobe to Hikojima Park. The pass allows you to ride the Loop Bus as many times as you like during a single day, and will even get you discounts on entrance fees and more.

Hours of Operation: Mon—Fri 11:30—11:00, 11:00—11:30, Sat, Sun, Holidays—11:30
Pass: Adult (adult school and older) (150 yen), Children (elementary school and younger) (100 yen)
Pass: Adult (middle school and older) (90 yen), Children (elementary school and younger) (50 yen)

The Nada area of Kobe has been home to numerous sake breweries for around 900 years, and is still Japan’s top sake-producing region. The fresh and clear spring water from Mt. Rokko results in sake that can’t be tasted anywhere else.

Around 1995, meanwhile, during the peak of the music boom’s popularity in the West, many international residents of Kobe spent their days off listening to the familiar tunes of these bands and reminiscing about their home countries. At Kobe International Music Box Museum, you can learn about their history and even make your own music box.

Himeji

A dazzling city of history and traditional culture

Exploring history at Himeji Castle

With over 400 years of history, Himeji Castle is indisputably one of Japan’s most famous castles. Visitors here will see an excellent example of Japan’s unique castle structure in near-entirety. The beauty of the wooden construction is unlike anything else in the world, and it has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Himeji Castle hides a number of tricks designed to protect the keep. To confuse enemies, for example, the castle grounds there are three complicated, sprawling layers of walls and masts creating a labyrinthine complex that is rare even among Japanese castles. The centrally located main keep (Donjou) has five layers but houses six stories plus a basement, near 97 meters above sea level; three small keeps face east, west, and northwest and boast their own layered roofs. Because the gleaming whit of the exercise castle walls is said to resemble a heron spreading its wings, the castle is also commonly known as the “White Heron Castle.” Parts of the castle, notably the two pillars of the main keep, are built entirely with wooden materials intricately fitted together using some of the most advanced woodworking techniques of the period. Every visitor should be sure to climb to the top of the main keep and take in the wondrous views of the city of Himeji.
Kokoen Garden
Located in short walking distance from Himeji Castle, Kokoen Garden allows visitors to see an historical Japanese aesthetic up close without leaving the city center. It is comprised of nine large and small gardens, such as the Oyashiki-no-Nawa with its tranquil pond. Nagare-no-Hiraken with its beautiful river. There are tree-lined paths and pavilions, and the garden in beautiful year-round: cherry blossoms in spring, tender greens in summer, and deep red leaves in autumn. A teahouse offers a matcha tea experience for 500 yen. You can even enjoy a kaiseki nearby and enjoy the garden in traditional wear.

Himeji Castle Surrounding Area
About ten-minute walk from Himeji Castle, Himeji City Museum of Literature was designed by world-renowned architect Arata Isozaki. On display inside are works of local authors and scholars. Nagomuro Stupa houses ashes of the Buddha - a gift to the city from former Indian Prime Minister Nehru as a wish for eternal peace for humankind. In addition to the striking exterior, the inside house rows of seated statues of Buddha well worth a look. At Japan Toy Museum, which is home to over 9,000 artifacts, visitors can actually try their hand at games inside.

Himeji Castle Loop Bus
This retro-style bus is the convenient way to see the area around Himeji Castle. Show City Pass to get discounts at certain spots.

Availability
Daily 9:00 - 17:00
Sat., Sun., and Holidays only 9:00 - 17:00

Shoshaan Engyoji Temple
Boasting more than 1,000 years of history, Shoshaan Engyoji is one of western Japan’s most prominent temples. A visit here will give you a rare opportunity to see precious historical structures, from the impressive Main Hall nestled in the mountainside of Shoshaan to the Jogyakura, registered as an Important Cultural Property of Japan. The area has long been known as a site for ascetic training, and thus has a deep, solemn atmosphere that is ideal for experiencing ancient traditions such as zazen meditation or soto writing. You can even dine in shoji ryori, a type of cuisine made without the foods that monks are prohibited from eating, such as fish and meat. Lastly, take the ropeway that takes you to the peak of Shoshaan to take in colorful and ever-changing panoramas of the city of Himeji.

Himeji souvenirs
There are many great options for Himeji souvenirs, such as unique, well-crafted wooden crafts, or some modern handcrafted according to techniques passed down for about 600 years.

Himeji cuisine
To enjoy the best of Himeji’s cuisine, visitors should try local eden dipped in ginger sauce. The area around the city is the largest producer of Tanbara Nishiki rice (the preferred rice for sake-making), and thus considered the birthplace of Japanese sake and home to a treasure trove of local specialties. And since the successive family heads of Himeji Castle have had an affinity for tea ceremonies, it’s also a good place to bring home souvenirs of traditional Japanese culture.
The beauty of Japan, past and present

Walk through Kobe, the port town responsible for cultivating modern Japanese culture, then explore traditional Japan at Himeji Castle and other Himeji spots. After that, complete your exhilarating trip by seeing the modern art on the island of Naoshima, Inukashira Shrine with its 1,400 years of history, and other sights along the coast of the Seto Inland Sea.

Day 1
- Korean International Airport
- Amnora Hot Spring and explore town
- Stay overnight at Amnora Hot Spring

Day 2
- Ammora Hot Spring
- Takamasa Carpentry Tools Museum
- Former Foreign Settlement
- Stay overnight in Kobe city

Day 3
- Central Kobe
- Himeji Castle
- Stay overnight in Himeji city

Day 4
- Central Himeji
- Okayama Prefecture Oto Park
- Stay overnight in Himeji city

Day 5
- Central Takamatsu
- Nara Art Museum
- Stay overnight in Takamatsu city

Day 6
- Tsuyama city
- Tottori-jo Castle
- Explore the famous Tsuyama Bridge
- Stay overnight in Tottori city

Day 7
- Central Hiroshima
- Stay overnight in Hiroshima city

Course 2
World Heritage Site Himeji Castle and other traditional culture

3 nights, 4 days
In Kobe International Airport - out Kobe International Airport

Day 1
- Korean International Airport
- Stay overnight in Kobe city

Day 2
- Central Kobe
- Stay overnight in Kobe city

Day 3
- Shikoku
- Stay overnight in Shikoku city

Day 4
- Kobe International Airport
- Kobe International Airport

Course 3
A leisurely walk through Kobe

3 nights, 4 days
In Kobe International Airport - out Kobe International Airport

Day 1
- Korean International Airport
- Stay overnight at Amnora Hot Spring

Day 2
- Central Kobe
- Stay overnight in Kobe city

Day 3
- Central Kobe
- Stay overnight in Kobe city

Day 4
- Central Kobe
- Stay overnight in Kobe city