

Tour around Kibiji, a region perpetually alive with history and romance.

KIBITSUHIKO AND URA KIBIJI TOURIST MAP



Okayama City
(2014-18)

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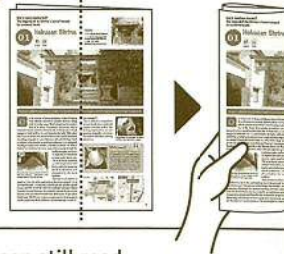
If you cut the cover along the dotted line and attach an elastic band, you can use it as a mask!



If you affix a 120-yen stamp to the back, it will become a picture postcard.

* This picture postcard can only be mailed within Japan.

* If you plan to use the mask as a postcard, please do not punch out the notches for the eyes and elastic band holes.

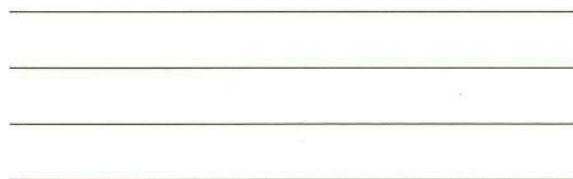


You can still read this pamphlet if you fold it in half.

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Please affix a 120-yen stamp.



Warning: Mask may impair vision. To avoid any accidents, wear the mask on your head or forehead. Do not wear the mask while riding a bicycle.

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Tour around Kibiji,
a region perpetually alive
with history and romance.

**KIBITSUHIKO
AND URA**

KIBIJI TOURIST MAP

Okayama City

The Economic Affairs Bureau sightseeing convention promotion department
TEL.086-803-1332 ☎700-8544 1-1-1 Daiku, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi

Where are you off to today?

Touring with Kibitsu-hiko & Ura

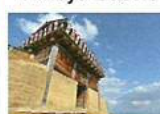
Kibiji Tourist Map

The area around the Ashimori-han manor house and Samurai Residence



Birthplace of Ogata Koan

Kinojo Castle



Yaguinomiya



Saijo Inari



Kibitsu Shrine



Bitchu Takamatsu Castle Ruins



Hakusan Shrine



Tsukuriyama Burial Mound Cluster



Koikui Shrine



Tatetsuki-iseki Tumulus



Kibi no Nakayama



Kibitsu-hiko Shrine



How to calculate calorie consumption

From table 1, find your MA and MB or WA and WB that correspond to your gender and age. From table 2, find coefficient C that corresponds to the type of exercise. Then apply the following formulas.

For male $((MA) \times \text{weight} + [MB]) \times [C] \times \text{exercise duration} [\text{min}] \div 1440$

For female $((WA) \times \text{weight} + [WB]) \times [C] \times \text{exercise duration} [\text{min}] \div 1440$

Example A male weighing 70 kg and age 31 on a bicycle for 1 hour will consume the following calories: $(17.3 \times 70 + 336) \times 3.6 \times 60 \div 1440 = 232.05 \text{ kcal}$

[Table 1]

Age	10~11	12~14	15~17	18~29	30~49	50~69	70~
Male							
[MA]	29.4	24.2	20.9	18.6	17.3	16.7	16.3
[MB]	277	324	363	347	336	301	268
Female							
[WA]	26.9	22.9	19.7	18.3	16.8	16	16.1
[WB]	267	302	289	272	263	247	244

[Table 2]

Type of exercise	Coefficient [C]
Bicycle	3.6
Walking	2.2
Jogging	9.5

*About this method of calculating calorie consumption:
This method of calculation is based on basic metabolic rate estimates using only body weight from "6th revision of Recommended Dietary Allowances for Japanese People" (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare). In reality, these values should be treated as approximate, as they will vary according to an individual's lifestyle, physical condition, and other factors.
Source: Yahoo! Beauty, <http://beauty.yahoo.co.jp/>

Suggested cycling route

By bicycle

Kibiji bicycle tour

Walk around all the main tourist spots in Kibiji. The ground is level, so no one should have any difficulty.

01 Hakusan Shrine

Bicycle: approx. 25 min.
Distance: approx. 5 km

02 Kibitsu-hiko Shrine

03 Kibitsu Shrine

Bicycle: approx. 25 min.
Distance: approx. 5 km

05 Tatetsuki-iseki Tumulus

06 Koikui Shrine

Bicycle: approx. 15 min.
Distance: approx. 3 km

12 Tsukuriyama Burial Mound Cluster

13 Bitchu Kokubunji Temple

Bicycle: approx. 10 min.
Distance: approx. 2 km

By bicycle

Kibikogen Bicycle Road Tour

Go from Saijo Inari to Ashimori's historical district. Tour around the northern part of Kibiji.

10 Saijo Inari

Bicycle: approx. 15 min.
Distance: approx. 3 km

09 Bitchu Takamatsu Castle Ruins

Bicycle: approx. 30 min.
Distance: approx. 6 km

11 The area around the Ashimori-han manor house and Samurai Residence

This area is great for cycling too!

From legend to folk tale – Momotaro defeats the ogre

What was the true form of the ogre who was defeated by Momotaro?

Momotaro is a Japanese tale that is said to have originated in the Muromachi period (1338-1573). The prototype of this tale has its roots in various regions all over Japan, but the story of Kibitsu-hiko's defeat of Ura, passed down through the generations in Okayama, is the most widely accepted. Kibitsu-hiko, who was the model for the character Momotaro, was a general dispatched by the Yamato court to bring Kibi Province under its control. His subordinate Inukai Takeru was depicted as Momotaro's retainer, Inu (Dog), Sasa Morihiko as Saru (Monkey), and Tome Tamaomi as Kiji (Pheasant). Then, there's the peculiar being Ura described as an ogre who was 4.2 meters tall, with red hair, a red beard and glaring eyes. With Kinkyo Castle as their base, the ogre plundered and wreaked havoc on the people of Kibi Province. Who really was this Ura, who was believed to have been an ogre from a foreign land?

Around the 3rd and 4th centuries, in mainland China, the collapse of the Han Dynasty ushered in the start of the Period of the Three Kingdoms consisting of Wei, Wu, and Shu, which was followed later by the Period

Column Stuff You should know

Text: Haruko Yamamuro

of the Sixteen Kingdoms. The Korean Peninsula which was made up of Koguryo, Jinhan (later Silla), Mahan confederacy (later Baekje), and the Byeonhan confederacy (later Imna), was plagued by political instability, which drove many people to cross over into Yamato (Japan). It is believed that Ura, who called himself the prince of Baekje, came to Yamato from the Korean Peninsula as the leader of a group of engineers. These engineers used their advanced skills in iron manufacturing and boatbuilding to help bring prosperity to Kibi Province. For the Yamato court which was expanding its power mainly in the Kinki region, Ura and his group were most certainly perceived as a threat. The tale of Momotaro offers a glimpse into the dynamic history of East Asia.



A statue of Momotaro stands in front of JR Okayama Station, the gateway to Okayama.

Suggested tour

Walk from Kibitsu-hiko Shrine to Kibi no Nakayama, and then head to Kibitsu Shrine. This is a popular route that will let you experience the history and romance of Kibitsu with all your senses.



For a detailed map of Kibi no Nakayama, see page 12.

Ura's head was buried?
The legend of the Shrine's burial mound
for severed heads.

01 Hakusan Shrine



DATA

Location: 236 Kobe, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
Access: 30 min. on foot (approx. 2 km)
from Bizen Mikado on the JR Kibi Line
Tel: 086-222-2912
Momotaro Tourist Information Center



This place is called Kobe (meaning head in English). It is shrouded with a mysterious atmosphere and full of legends passed down through the generations.

On the west side of National Highway Route 53 heading from Okayama city toward Tsuyama, there is a village with the peculiar name "Kobe" situated on the southern foot of Mt. Bozu. Kibitsu-hiko-no-mikoto, who is believed to be the model on which the tale of Momotaro is based, engaged in battle with Ura. It is said that after the battle, Kibitsu-hiko killed Ura, cut off his head, pierced it with a stake, and left it exposed. According to legend, the exposed head was left in Kobe village which is believed to be where the name Kobe in Okayama City originated. Standing in a quiet corner in Kobe is the Hakusan Shrine. Get off your bicycle here and climb the stone steps. After passing through the Zuishinmon gate, you'll see a 2m high mound immediately on your right-hand side. This is the burial mound for severed heads where Ura's head is said to be buried, and which to this day is still cherished by the local residents.



Kome Kami, the subordinate shrine of Hakusan Shrine, is dedicated to the severed head of Ura, the ogre deity.

There are various theories in regard to Ura, but on the signboard on the shrine grounds Ura is described as such: "Ura who was a feared ogre was actually a gentle young man who brought the tatara iron making technique to Japan from the Korean Peninsula. He worked to spread the use of iron farming tools and dedicated himself to the development of agriculture. Before long, Kibi Province became a prosperous rice farming region and the people were deeply grateful to Ura honoring him as a deity of

rice (abridged)."

The sound of a mound for severed heads may sound a bit sinister, but have no fear. The loving expressions on the guardian dogs who welcome in the visitors will leave a strong impression.

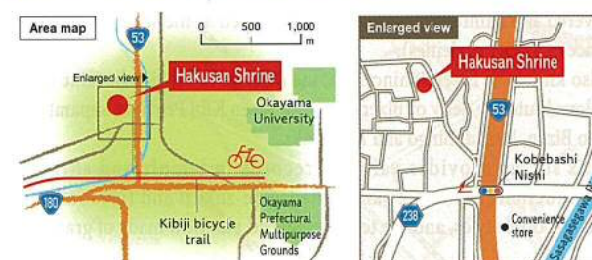


This guardian lion dog with its rear in the air is a rare sight even in Japan.

White peach



Okayama began full-scale cultivation of Suimitsuto peaches when they were introduced to Japan from China in the early Meiji period. In 1901, Okubo Jugoro developed white peaches. In 1932, the Shimizu district in Haga, Okayama city launched the Shimizu-hakuto (Shimizu white peaches). These peaches with its soft fruit and remarkably sweet taste have become an Okayama brand.



A shrine associated with Okibitsu-hiko-no-mikoto, the hero of the Tale of Momotaro

02 Kibitsu-hiko Shrine



►Zuijinmon gate was built by Lord Ikeda Tsunamasa in 1697.

DATA
Location: 1043 Ichinomiya, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
Access: 20 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC
Tel: 086-284-0031 Kibitsu-hiko Shrine



The beautiful main building of the shrine is called Asahinomiya. Behind the shrine stands Kibi no Nakayama.

Okibitsu-hiko-no-mikoto who is said to have subjugated Kibi Province under the order of the Yamato court, is also famous as a model for the character of Momotaro who appears in the old Japanese tale. It is said that the shrine was built among the remnants of the former residence of Okibitsu-hiko-no-mikoto that sits on the skirts of Kibi no Nakayama revered as ashintaisan (mountain worshipped as the sacred dwelling place of a deity or deities).

Also known as Bizen Ichinomiya, the deity of the shrine became the beloved tutelary deity of Bizen Province when Kibi Province separated into Bizen, Bitchu, Bingo and Mimasaka.

This shrine provides valuable records in temple and shrine construction such as the Sangenshanagare-zukuri and Hiwadabuki architectural styles, and the tortoise-shaped platform made of granite.



The present-day sanctuary was rebuilt by Ikeda Tsunamasa, a lord of Okayama Domain, in 1697.

Love amulet



Koyasu Shrine, a subordinate shrine of Kibitsu-hiko Shrine, is famous for its deity of marriage. It has continued to bring couples together in happy unions since time immemorial.
 The "Enmusubi Omamori" is a set of red and white-colored amulets. By requesting a prayer for happiness and leaving one of the amulets at the shrine to receive prayers for a one-year period, it is said that one's wish for a good match will be granted.



Ura, who introduced iron-making techniques to the province of Kibi, is also enshrined within the shrine precincts.

It is also highly regarded for the beauty of its shrine pavilions. The shrine is also known as Asahinomiya since the sunrise of summer solstice rises directly in front of the front torii gate and appears in the shrine's okagami (Great mirror). This name reflects the veneration of the sun as a deity which goes back to the ancient practice of sun worship, and symbolizes the construction of Kibitsu-hiko Shrine as a shrine to pray for the fertility and good fortune of the Japanese people.
 At the summit of Kibi no Nakayama situated behind the main shrine, is an iwakura (megalithic stone structure) believed to be a representative of a divine spirit. Many people flock here for the Iwakurasai festival held every May. The Otauesai festival conducted every August since the

Goshinmei (deity's name) and Gogyo (five elements)



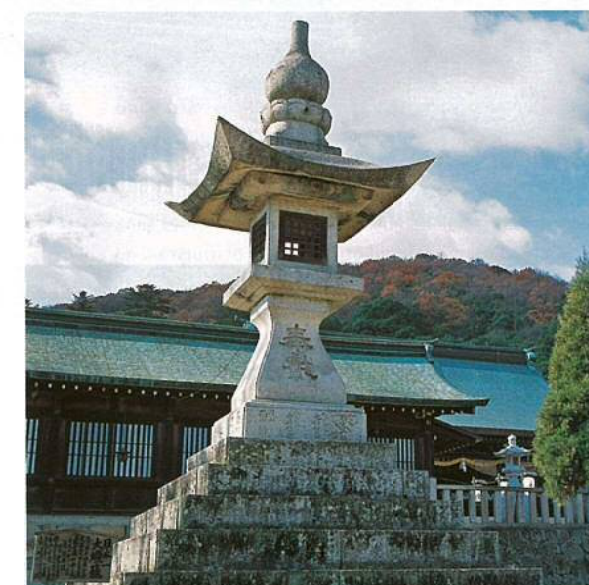
Wu xing (Five Elements Doctrine) which originated in ancient China states that all of creation consists of five elements: Wood (Ki), Fire (Bi), Earth (Tsu), Gold (Ka) and Water (Mi). These elements influence each other, change and circulate. At Kibitsu-hiko Shrine, the prayer chant to the deity is "Ki-Bi-Tsu-Ka-Mi" denotes the five elements that form the core of the natural world."



Kamejima Island, an island in the sacred pond. Numerous turtles ("kame"), from which the island gets its name, can be seen around it.

Heian period to pray for an abundant harvest was designated as an Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1964 and as a National Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1979.

Get off your bicycle and walk slowly toward the Kibitsu-hiko Shrine. The guardian lion dogs on both sides of the great torii gate are made of rare Bizen pottery instead of the usual stone. On the premises is a sacred pond inside which are situated two islands, Kame-jima and Tsuru-jima which enshrine Munakata-no-kami and Sumiyoshi-no-kami. In the open area inside the Zuishinmon-gate is a magnificent stone lantern said to be the biggest in Japan. Climb the stone steps to reach the worship hall which is surrounded in a calm and solemn air. Bow twice, clap twice and bow once, and take your time offering your prayers of gratitude.



This garden lantern, the largest in Japan, is 11.5 m in height.



One of Kibi's shrines most steeped in legend

03 Kibitsu Shrine



The Kibitsu Koma-inu are cute and simple clay figurines of dogs and birds which have been made for hundreds of years. A set consisting of two dogs and a bird is sold for 1,000 yen at the amulet office.

DATA

Location: 931 Kibitsu, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi

Access: 15 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

Tel: 086-287-4111 Kibitsu Shrine



The sanctuary and worship hall with their elegant hip-and-gable roof construction have been designated as national treasures.

The enshrined deity is venerated as an ancestral deity who built the province of Kibi — the divine Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto on which the legend of Momotaro is based. Emperor Nintoku is said to have founded the shrine in admiration of Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto's accomplishments. The entire Kibi clan is enshrined here as well. It is the most important shrine in three "Bi" districts (Bizen, Bitchu, and Bingo), visited by many pilgrims from all over Japan. Incidentally, according to the shrine chronicle, Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto built and lived in a thatched



This rock is where Kibitsuhiko laid the arrows he was shooting when he fought with Ura.

shrine at the foot of Mt. Kibi no Nakayama. It is recorded that he died at the age of 281 and was buried at the mountain's summit. Later, the current shrine had its beginning when Kibitsuhiko's fifth-generation descendent Lord Kaya-no-omi-narumi-no-mikoto built its sanctuary at the site of the thatched shrine to enshrine Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto. Together, the sanctuary and worship hall are more than 330 square meters in size, which is quite large for a Japanese shrine. The elegant hip-and-gable roof style is known as "Kibitsu-zukuri" and has been designated as a national treasure. A 400-meter cloister extends from

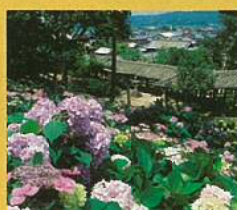


Photo credit: Okayama Prefecture

Place famous for flowers

Plum trees, camellias, cherry trees, peonies, Tsutsuji azaleas, Satsuki azaleas, irises, and hydrangeas have been planted on the shrine grounds and adorn the main shrine building, corridor and pond with brilliant colors in each of the different seasons. The changing colors of the leaves on the ginkgo tree in the fall is also a splendid sight.



The Narukama Shinji ritual involves telling someone's fortune based on the sound made by the pot. Legend has it that the head of Ura is buried beneath this hearth.

the south of the sanctuary along an enjoyable seasonable flower garden. At the end of it is the Okamaden shrine, which is known for the Narukama Shinji ceremony and is a national important cultural property.

Inukai Takeru-no-mikoto, a Showa-era politician from this area and a descendent of Tsuyoshi Inukai, was deeply devoted to Kibitsu Shrine due to Lord Okubitsuhiko's status as a deity, and the shrine sign post had been inscribed by Inukai Tsuyoshi himself. A statue of Inukai himself has been built by the shrine's sacred pond.

Various amulets are available at this shrine, thronged by numerous pilgrims from all over Japan. One of the most famous is a peach-shaped amulet. It is said to be helpful in romance and matchmaking, and is particularly popular among young women. It is also popular as a souvenir.



The ancient burial mound on the grounds of Kibitsu Shrine

The burial mound with a horizontal stone chamber 10 m in diameter is believed to have been built in the latter half of the 6th century. The entrance to the stone chamber can be seen from the slant of the mound where the hydrangeas have been planted beside the corridor.



Column Stuff YOU should know

Text: Haruko Yamamuro

Vol.2

The birthplace of Tea Master, Eisai Zenshi

Kibitsu, Kita-ku, Okayama city

The Japanese tea ceremony is a part of Japanese culture. It has its origins in Okayama.

The art of the Japanese tea ceremony was honed to perfection by Sen No Rikkyu in the late Muromachi period. Its origin stems from the green tea ceremony which was imported from China by Eisai Zenshi (1141-1215) during the Kamakura period. Eisai, the founder of the Rinza school of Buddhism, is a famous Zen monk credited with the founding of Kenninji Temple in Kyoto. He was born in the late Heian period into the Kaya family affiliated with Kibitsu Shrine. Eisai travelled to Song China where he studied Zen Buddhism, and on his return to Japan he introduced the green tea ceremony practiced at Zen temples in China. In addition, he wrote a book called Kissa Yojoki (How to Stay Healthy by Drinking Tea) in which he outlines the effects and manners of drinking tea, and also began cultivating tea with the tea seeds he brought back from China. It is in this light that Eisai is also revered as Japan's first tea master. A large stone monument in the shape of a green tea ceremony cup has been erected at the remains of Eisai's birthplace near Kibitsu Shrine.



This monument represents the founder of the tea ceremony, and it is shaped like a cup for green tea.

A mountain where deities who have been revered since ancient times dwell

04 Kibi no Nakayama



DATA
 Location: Kibitsu, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
 Access: 20 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC
 Tel: 086-222-2912
 Momotaro Tourist Information Center



Both Kibitsu Shrine and Kibitsu Shrine are nestled on this mountain. What does this mean?

Kibi no Nakayama is a mountain where deities dwell (Mt. Kannabiyama), and which also appears in The Pillow Book by Seisho Nagon. At the eastern foot of the mountain is Kibitsu Shrine, the ichinomiya (main shrine) of Bizen, and at the western foot of the mountain is Kibitsu Shrine, the ichinomiya of Bitchu and a national treasure. The fact that a single mountain is home to two ichinomiya bespeaks the importance of Kibi no Nakayama. The Kokin Wakashu has a poem that goes, "Blowing steel / Kibi no Nakayama / Like an obi it flows / The refreshing sound of Hosotanigawa River."

On the mountain can be found one of Japan's oldest keyhole-shaped burial mounds called Yatojiyama Kofun, two large keyhole-shaped tombs over 100 m in length called Onoue-kurumayama Kofun and

Nakayama-chausuyama Kofun, and a later burial mound with a magnificent sarcophagus called Ishifune Kofun. This area is also home to numerous iwakura — large rocks indwelt by deity — that have been venerated by visitors since ancient times.

Ceremonies are held at Kibitsu Shrine through the cooperation of Kibi no Nakayama Protection Society: Ura's Flower festival at Ishifune Kofun — thought to be the tomb of Ura in the Muromachi Period — on the first Sunday of April, and Iwakurasai — where people visit the iwakura and burial mounds to perform rituals — on the second Sunday of May.

On Mt. Ryuoan, the highest peak (170 m) on the northern side of the massif, there is a Kyozuka (sutra mound) and a Hachidairyuo shrine to which people have come since ancient times to pray for rain in times of drought. The Ryujin Festival takes place here on the first Sunday of March. On the southern side, there is a keyhole-shaped burial mound 120 m in length called Nakayama-chausuyama Kofun. Built during the 4th century, this is the tomb of Kibitsu-no-mikoto, who was dispatched from Yamato as one of the four Shido Shoguns and ruled the province of Kibi. The tomb is maintained and managed by the Imperial Household Agency. Maintenance and management of the walking paths in Kibi no Nakayama, including the mowing of grass, is conducted by the Kibi no Nakayama Protection Society. We should be thankful to them whenever we enjoy taking walks in the area.



Hanaguri-zuka
 (Nose-ring mound)

Cow nose rings are offered at Fukudenkai Temple situated in between Kibitsu Shrine and Kibitsu Shrine. Over 7 million colorful nose rings have been collected up to now for memorial services for cows bred for human consumption.

Kibi no Nakayama Walking Map



Hosotanigawa River and Ryokoku-bashi Bridge

Under the legal codes of the Nara period, Kibi Province was divided into zen, chu and go (near, middle, far) and named Bizen, Bitchu and Bingo Provinces. At this division, Hosotanigawa River of Kibi no Nakayama fell on the border between Bizen and Bitchu which is connected by the Ryokoku-bashi Bridge built over the small stream that flows below it. This area appears in the Kokin Wakashu collection of poems as a famed location in classical Japanese poetry.

The largest Yayoi-period burial mound in Japan

Tatetsuki-iseki Tumulus

05



History Mystical Energy

DATA

Location: Hibata, Kurashiki-shi
Access: 14 min. by car from
Okayama Soja IC
Tel: 086-222-2912
Momotaro Tourist Information Center



You'll be amazed by the mysterious stone circles and the gorgeous burial accessories!

With an overall length of approximately 80 m and a mound measuring approximately 40 m in diameter, this is Japan's largest Yayoi Funkyubo burial mound in the third century preceding the Kofun Period. On top of the main tumulus are five large stones arranged as if enclosing the wooden coffin, and on the slant of the hill is another ring of about 20 standing stones measuring 1 m in height and in width. These odd-shaped stones standing in a circle also known as "stone circles" are reminiscent of the megalithic remains in Europe. Recently, this place has been attracting attention as a power spot.

Uncovered from within the wooden coffin measuring a total length of about 2 m and a total width of about 0.7 m were iron swords, necklaces, jade jewels, glass beads and other gorgeous burial accessories, and also spread thickly inside the coffin was over 30 kg of vermillion pigment (cinnabar) which was a valuable commodity during that period. Considering the conditions of that

period, this is an astonishingly large amount of vermillion. In the distant past, vermillion was used in China as an ingredient in miracle drugs and elixirs for achieving long life, and was deeply connected with the philosophers' stone in western coun-

tries. What level of prominence did this person achieve to deserve a burial using such an astonishing amount of a commodity that was as precious and valuable as vermillion?

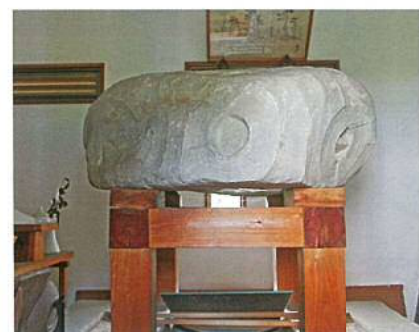
Unfortunately, only two teeth fragments have been found but the remains have not been discovered.

If you stand contemplating on top of the main tumulus with the gentle wind in your face, the romanticism of a past era will surely spread out before your eyes.

What are the ceremonial vessel-stand and ceremonial jar fragments?



Earthenware buried with the deceased in Yayoi burial mounds have been found mainly in Okayama prefecture as well as parts of eastern Hiroshima prefecture, and Shimane and Nara prefectures. The ceremonial vessel-stand has a hole in the bottom and is believed to have been used in religious rituals. It is said that these objects are a varied form of the jar and stand formerly used in harvest-related festivals, and which had developed into cylindrical clay haniwa (clay figures) in the Kofun period.



It is said that the Kotai stone stored in the repository was originally enshrined within the Tatetsuki Shrine which stood on the main burial mound.

A historic shrine associated with the legend of Ura

06

Koikui Shrine



Legend

DATA

Location: 109, Yabe, Kurashiki-shi
Access: 10 min. by car from
Okayama Soja IC
Tel: 086-222-2912
Momotaro Tourist Information Center



Kibitsuhihiko changed into a cormorant to capture Ura who had transformed himself into a carp.

Head toward Kibiji from the direction of Okayama. After crossing the bridge over Ashimorigawa River, there is a small shrine on the right-hand side which still has remnants of the legend of Koikui (carp eating) associated with Ura and Kibitsuhihiko. The deities worshiped here are Kibitsuhihiko-no-mikoto's retainer, Sasa Morihiko-no-mikoto, and Ura. After his left eye was injured by an arrow fired by Kibitsuhihiko-no-mikoto, Ura transformed himself into a pheasant and fled into the mountains, but was pursued by Kibitsuhihiko-no-mikoto who changed into a hawk. Ura then transformed himself into a carp and escaped into the Chisuigawa River that had turned red with the great volume of blood that flowed from his injured eye. Kibitsuhihiko-no-mikoto in turn changed into a cormorant. According to the legend of Ura, it is said that this is the place where the cormorant ate the carp.

There is another myth that says that it was in fact Sasa Morihiko-no-mikoto who was the one that had caught the carp-shaped Ura, and that he is the model for the monkey in the Tale of Momotaro. The Goshintai

(object of worship housed in a Shinto shrine and believed to contain the spirit of a deity) is said to be the knife and cutting board, and according to local legend, after catching Ura, Yameyama-nushi-no-mikoto cooked the carp and served it to Kibitsuhihiko-no-mikoto.

The main building of the Shrine was constructed in April 1701 and March 1842, and still exists today.

Recently, the hill on which Koikui Shrine stands is drawing attention as a Yayoi period barrow. (Please see the column on the next page for details)



The large guardian dogs that greet you at the entrance are made of Bizen pottery. The dignified expression on the statue's face is an impressive sight.

Shapeshifting

Shapeshifting in which humans alter their physical appearance to the likeness of animals, plants, containers and the like, can be found in myths, stories and legends around the world since ancient times. In Japanese myths, deities or humans alter their forms into birds, snakes, alligators and other animals, or into objects such as combs or arrows. One such example is the shifting of Kibitsuhihiko into a pheasant and cormorant, and Ura into a hawk and carp during their battle.



Column Stuff You should know

Text: Haruko Yamamuro

Vol.3

Tatetsuki-iseki Tumulus A UFO landing site?!

Strange stone structure similar to Stonehenge.

Tatetsuki-iseki located inside Obo-no-oka Historical Park is a tumulus built in the late Yayoi period (late 2nd century to early 3rd century). Artifacts such as a ceremonial vessel-stand and ceremonial jar fragments were unearthed from this site which is likely to be the grave of a chief from the early stages of Kibi Province in a period before the Kofun period. Enshrined within Tatetsuki Shrine located near the standing stones is a Kameishi rock with a design in the Kotai style etched upon its surface. The most striking feature of this prehistoric site, however, has to be the megalithic structures which stand on top of the tumulus. These types of standing stones are called stone circles and are ancient monuments that can be found all over the world. One of the most famous is the stone circles of Stonehenge in England. The peculiar stone structures at Tatetsuki-iseki look similar to Stonehenge and this area is rumored to be a UFO landing site. If you stand on top of the tumulus and wish hard enough, perhaps a UFO will come down to answer your call.

Koikui Shrine The Yamatai Kingdom Kibi theory

Could it be Queen Himiko of Yamatai Kingdom who rests in the burial mound where the shrine stands?

This is the spot where Kibitsuhiko finally captures Ura at the end of their battle. In light of the unearthing of a fragment of a Kotaimonseki stone object, the burial mound where the shrine stands is now believed to be a tumulus from the Yayoi period. The tumulus is estimated to have been built slightly after the construction of the Tatetsuki-iseki tumulus in the late 3rd century around the end of the Yayoi period. Some scholars of the Yamatai Kingdom Kibi theory claim that this is the burial site of Queen Himiko of Yamatai Kingdom, who died around 248. The Hashihaka burial mound in Nara Prefecture is another possible candidate for Himiko's gravesite, but Princess Yamato Totohimomoso who is said to lie in this grave is the imperial princess of Emperor Korei, sister of Kibitsuhiko. Are Himiko and Kibitsuhiko linked together in some fascinating way?!



A nice view can be seen from the north side of the hill where Koikui Shrine was built.

The place where Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto's arrow
and Ura's stone collided in the sky

07 Yaguinomiya



DATA
Location: Takatsuka, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
Access: 1 min. by car from
Okayama Soja IC
Tel: 086-222-2912
Momotaro Tourist Information Center



Could the granite megalith on the shrine grounds be the "Yagui no Iwa" stone thrown by Ura?

The distance between Kibitsu Shrine and Kinojo Castle is about 10 km as the crow flies. Since Yaguinomiya is roughly in the middle between the two points, it is said that this is the spot where the arrow shot by Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto and the stone thrown by Ura collided and fell. According to the legend behind Ura, Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto shot two arrows simultaneously; one collided with Ura's airborne stone and the other pierced Ura's eye. The blood that gushed out from Ura's eye is believed to have flowed into Chisuigawa river, turning the shore downstream red with blood, which is reflected still today in the spot's name, Akahama (red shore).

By a curious coincidence, Kinojo Castle can be seen from the rear of the Shrine's main building. Legend says that the granite megalith that stands on the shrine grounds is the stone thrown by Ura, and the bamboo that sprouts beside it are the arrows shot by Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto that have become rooted in the ground.



The area is maintained as Yaguinoiwa Park.

sacred iwakura stones first began.

This place is located around the spot where Chisuigawa river converges with Ashimorigawa river. It is situated in the tranquil rural landscape that appears as you head in a northeasterly direction on National Highway Route 180 after getting off Okayama Expressway at Okayama Soja IC. This area is presently maintained as Yaguinoiwa Park where the stone is enshrined. Enjoy an exhilarating bicycle ride in the tranquil and stunning setting of Kibi.

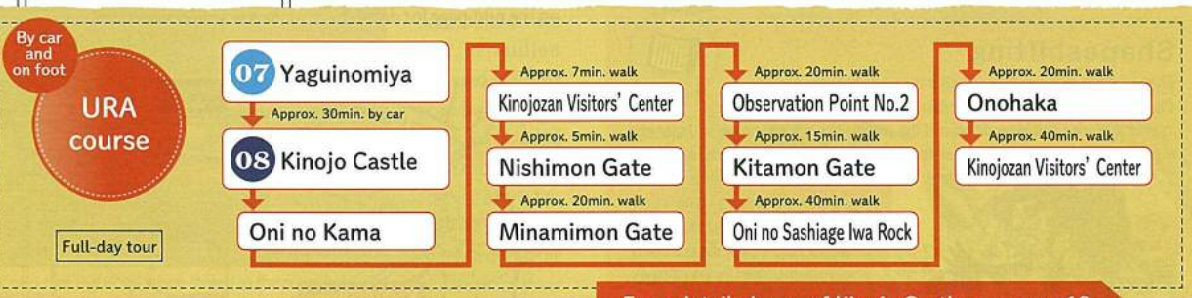
Beautiful women of ancient Kibi

Many women of Kibi such as Ehime, imperial princess of Emperor Ojin; Kurohime, imperial princess of Emperor Nintoku; and Wakahime, imperial princess of Emperor Yuryaku, were held in affection by the Great King. Behind the romances, was the plan of the Great King of Yamato Court to deepen ties of influence by marrying women of powerful provincial families.

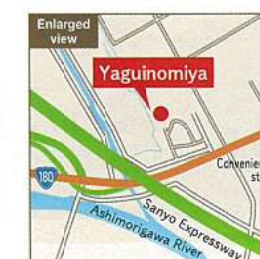


Suggested tour

This route is for advanced tourists who want to do a tour of places related to the Ura legend. Get the most out of your visit to Yaguinomiya Shrine and magnificent Kinojo Castle, both of which have numerous legends associated with them.



For a detailed map of Kinojo Castle, see page 18.

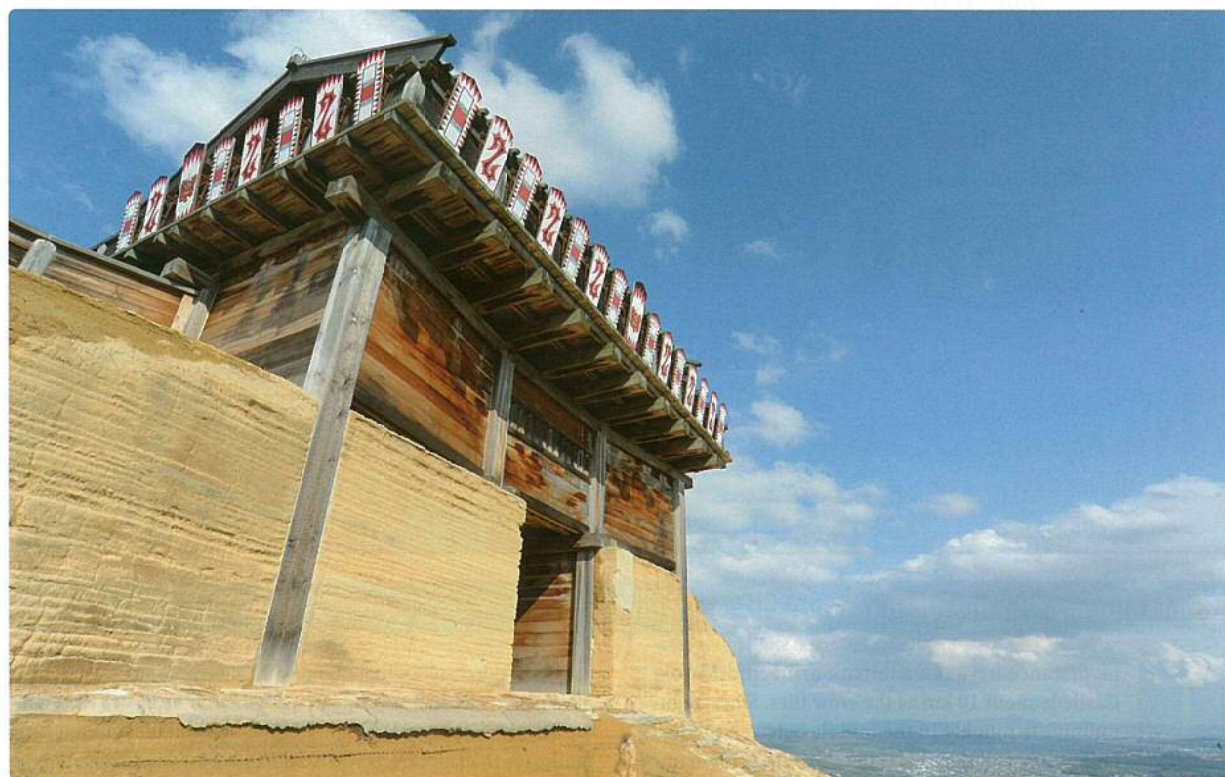
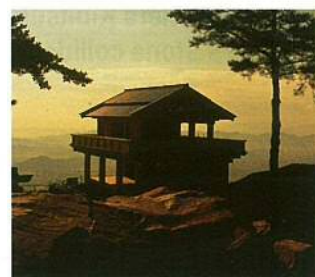


The natural fortress where Ura is believed to have lived in seclusion

08 Kinojo Castle



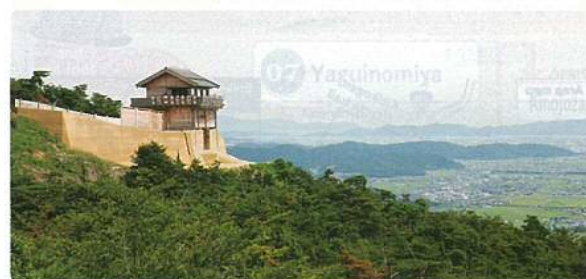
DATA
 Location: Okusaka, Soja-shi
 Access: 18 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC
 Tel: 0866-99-8566
 Kinojozan Visitors' Center



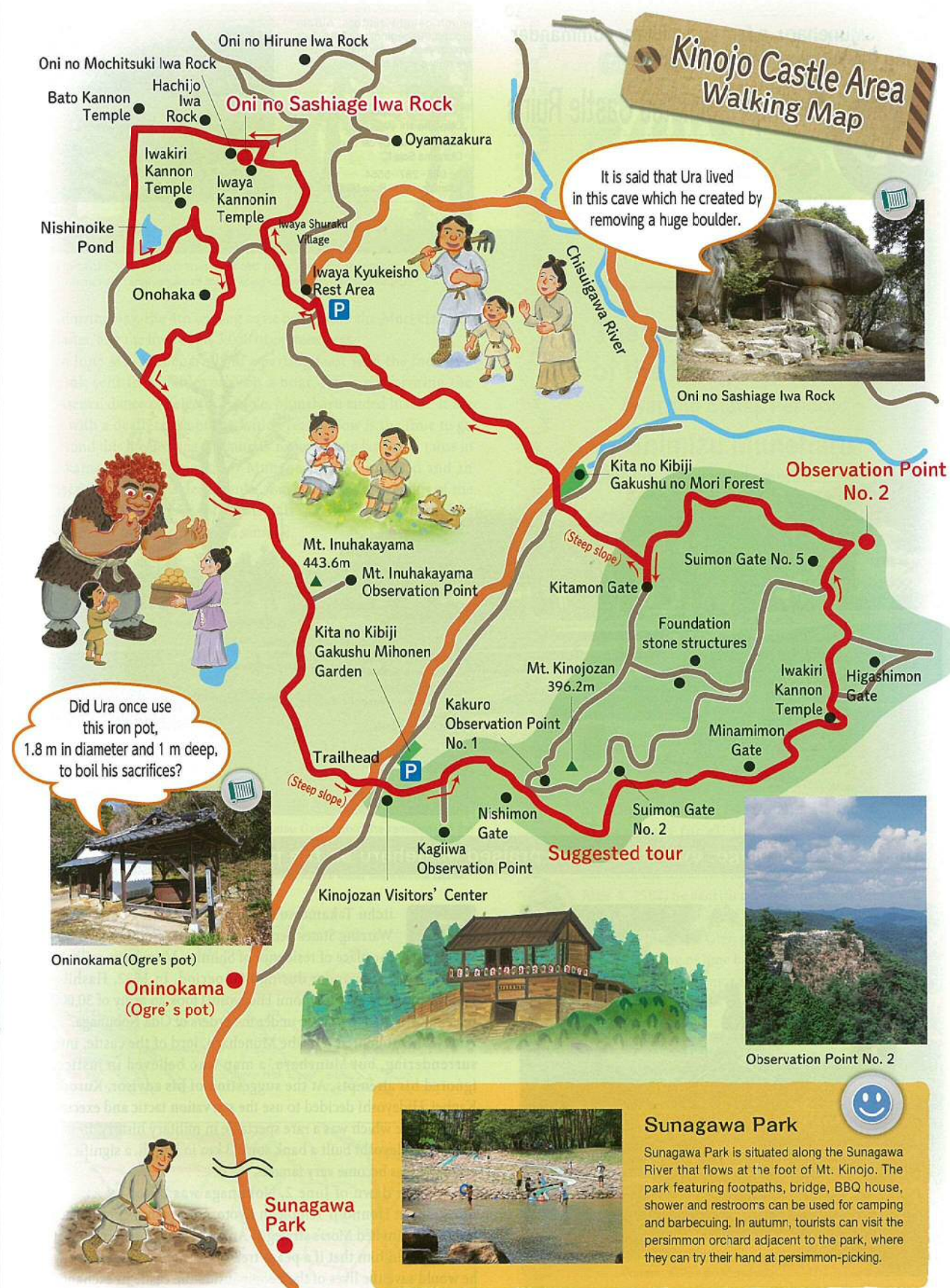
A full panoramic view of Kibi can be seen from the 400 m high mountain summit

According to the legend of Ura, a motif in the tale of Momotaro, the remains of the ancient mountain castle which stands on the summit of Mt. Kinojo (altitude 400 m) is where Ura lived in seclusion. Measuring approximately 7 m in width and 6 m in height, the walls were made using the hanchiku-dorui method in which earth rammed between columns of stone was hardened. Strong, towering stone walls were used in crucial areas of the castle, making this intimidating and impregnable strong-

hold a force to be reckoned with. The inner castle covers an area of approximately 30 hectares within which were found four gates, seven buildings on foundation stone which probably served as food storage or for administrative purposes, remains of a fire pit which probably served as a signal fire, an area for drawing water, foundry and remains of a borrow pit for use in construction. The road leading to Kinojo Castle is quite steep, but your efforts will be paid off with a spectacular view once you reach the top. Spread out below you'll see Soja Plain, the center of activity in ancient Kibi, as well as Ashimorigawa river. On a fine day, you can enjoy superb views that stretch far into the distance from the Seto Inland Sea to the far-off mountain range in Shikoku. Kinojo Castle is not mentioned in any formal historical records, but appears in later literature such as Kinojo Engi (History of Kinojo Castle). According to the literature, a prince from the Korean kingdom lived in this area. What were these men who came from a foreign land thinking about as they lived in this castle? Even today, the impressive castle relays the story of the hapless fate of Ura and his men.



Nishimon Gate



The remains of a castle on the plains connected to Shimizu Muneharu, a famous military commander during the Warring States period

09 Bitchu Takamatsu Castle Ruins



► These "Muneharu lotuses," which delight visitors, bloom around the beginning of July in a typical year, and by mid-July they are truly a sight to behold.

DATA

Location: 558-2 Takamatsu, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
Access: 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC
Tel: 086-287-5554
 Takamatsu Castle Ruins Museum



After the water siege, even Hideyoshi praised Muneharu as the paragon of a samurai.



This burial mound was relocated here from the precincts of Jiho-in Temple in 1910.

Bitchu Takamatsu Castle is the remains of a typical Warring States period castle on the plains, which was the place of residence of Shimizu Muneharu, military commander during that period. In 1582, Hashiba Hideyoshi (known as Toyotomi Hideyoshi) took an army of 30,000 men and attacked this castle under the orders of Oda Nobunaga. Hideyoshi attempted to bribe Muneharu, lord of the castle, into surrendering, but Muneharu, a man who believed in justice, ignored his attempts. At the suggestion of his advisor, Kuroda Kanbei, Hideyoshi decided to use the starvation tactic and execute a water siege which was a rare spectacle in military history. In just 12 days, Hideyoshi built a bank some 3 km in length, a significant event that has become very famous. In the early dawn of June 2, Nobunaga was killed by Akechi Mitsuhide at Honno-ji Temple in Kyoto. Hideyoshi kept this fact hidden and invited Mori's strategist Ankokuji Ekei for a meeting at which he told him that if a peace treaty was signed that same day he would save the lives of the people inside the castle in exchange for Muneharu's head. Muneharu agreed to commit seppuku on the

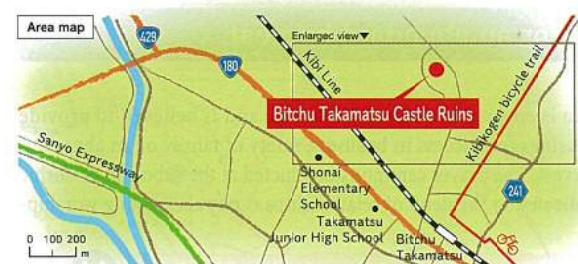


This tanka inscription was erected here in 1982 to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the passing of Lord Shimizu Muneharu.

following day, the 4th as long as he could save the Mori clan, his master, and the lives of his 5,000 troop members. On June 4th, Muneharu held a parting feast with the food and drink sent from Hideyoshi on a boat. After performing the Kusemai dance of Seiganji Temple, Muneharu ended his life at age 46 with a death tanka poem, which read, "Now is the time to go beyond this life, leaving a samurai's name as long lasting as moss in Takamatsu." The mound for Muneharu's severed head and an inscription with his death tanka stands inside the remains of the inner citadel of Muneharu's castle. It is said that Hideyoshi praised Muneharu as the paragon of a samurai.



Enjoy the view overlooking Bitchu Takamatsu Castle from the remnants of the Ishiyama troop headquarters on the eastern side of Takamatsu Castle Ruins Park. If you proceed further down the path, you will reach Taiko-ishi stone which is believed to have served as the strategic target during Hideyoshi's water siege on the castle.



Column Stuff YOU should know

Text: Haruko Yamamuro

Vol.5

The aesthetics of men of the Sengoku Period (Warring States Period) – Shimizu Muneharu

The refreshing wind that blows through the castle ruins carries the scent of Muneharu's way of life.

Betrayal was a part of everyday life during the Sengoku period when rivalry between local warlords was rampant. Men like Ukita Naoyie (1529-1582) who devised a strategy to climb from his humble status as a local samurai lord (lord of a local manor) in Toyohara Bizen (present day Setouchi city) to become the first lord of the Okayama Domain is a typical example. A warlord who was praised even by his nemesis Toyotomi Hideyoshi as a "paragon of a samurai for all times" for living an honorable life devoted to his master despite the nature of the times was Shimizu Muneharu. On June 4, 1582, he sacrificed his own life at the age of 46 to save those of his allies. Even to this day, over 400 years later, a ceremony is held on the first Sunday of June by his descendants and local residents to honor the anniversary of his death.



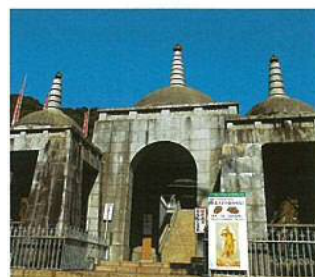
Portrait of Shimizu Muneharu

One of the three great Inari shrines
in Japan next to Fushimi and Toyokawa

10 Saijo Inari



DATA
Location: 712 Takamatsu Inari,
Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
Access: 10 min. by car from
Okayama Soja IC
Tel: 086-287-3700 Saijo Inari



Praying for success in business, safety of family, or an abundant harvest.

Considered one of the three great Inari shrines in Japan next to Fushimi and Toyokawa, Saijo Inari is famous for prayers. It is said that the shrine was opened by Hoon Daishi about 1,250 years ago in this spot which is blessed with a picturesque panoramic view of the Kibi Plain. It is the only Buddhist temple in Okayama that escaped the effects of the anti-Buddhist movement at the beginning of the Meiji period. Although Saijo Inari is a temple, it has a Shinto torii gateway and a shrine-style main building allowing syncretistic fusion of Shintoism and Buddhism, which is maintained even to this day. Every year during the hatsumode period (the first visit of the year to a shrine or temple made during the New Year), the temple attracts the highest number of visitors in Okayama. The temple is also famous for events such as its grand bean-throwing festival. Many worshippers flock to the temple to pray to the highest deity

who is enshrined in the main shrine and is believed to provide blessings for success in business, safety of family or an abundant harvest. The prayer ceremony conducted at the subordinate shrine dedicated to the deity of relationships is popular among worship-



Kenmyokaku hospicea guesthouse

Kenmyokaku situated on the temple grounds can be used for training and lodging. Immerse yourself in the tranquil atmosphere and sense the natural aura that flows in Mt. Inari. You can also enjoy vegetarian meals and Kaiseki cuisines consisting of seasonal ingredients.

Inari souvenirs

Various amulets, rosaries, and stylish accessory-type items are sold at temple shops. There are also retro-style souvenir shops and restaurants lined up in front of the gate where you can buy souvenirs such as the famous Yuzu-senbei rice crackers.

pers for its unique prayer service which combines prayers for the breaking off of bad and the initiating of good relationships. The Grand Torii Gate (27.5 m high) that stands as the temple's symbol and the Reio-den (old main hall) built in 1741 are both important cultural properties designated by Okayama city. The present main hall, Reiko-den, was built in 1979 and the Konpon Daido pavilion built in 1881 was relocated and repaired in 2006 due to deterioration. The temple's official name is Saijo Inari-san Myokyoji. It is also called Takamatsu Inari due to its location in Takamatsu in Kita-ku, Okayama city.



There is a parking lot on the side for those wishing to visit the Great Torii gate.

Ryoen-nadeishi

(Stroking stone for a good match)

Saijoi-enbiki-tenno is one of the 77 subordinate shrines where people came since the Edo period to pray for the miracles of love and marriage. After offering prayers at the shrine, it is said that your wish will come true if you walk around the nearby Ryoen-nadeishi stone and then stroke it.



Column Stuff YOU should know

Text: Haruko Yamamuro

Vol.6

Is Oinarisan a shrine or temple?

Saijo Inari, where monks chant Buddhist sutras and a Shinto torii gateway stands at its entrance.

Oinarisan is a popular deity known for answering prayers. The head shrine of Inari is Fushimi Inari Taisha of Kyoto which is dedicated to the main deity of food, Uka no Mitama no Okami. Toyokawa Inari in Aichi Prefecture, on the other hand, is a Soto Zen temple that is dedicated to the Thousand-armed Kannon. Oinarisan is worshiped at both shrines and temples based on the idea of Shinto-Buddhist syncretism that blends Japanese-based Shintoism with the foreign-imported Buddhism. This has led to the offering of Buddhist prayers at shrines and the worship of Shinto deities at temples. Syncretism is believed to have been prevalent before the Edo period, but shrines and temples were separated with the ordinance to separate Buddhism and Shintoism issued during the Meiji Restoration. Saijo Inari is a Nichiren Shu temple. It has 77 subshrines dedicated to the devas (guardian deities) related to Saijioson who each preside over different aspects of life, such as marriage or warding off evils.



77 subordinate shrines surround the old sanctuary.

A quiet townscape that still retains its samurai spirit

11 The area around the Ashimori-han manor house and Samurai Residence



►The former Ashimori Shoka Fujita Sennenji house is the manor house of the Fujita family, which produced soy sauce for several generations. This precious building preserves the appearance of Ashimori merchants' houses. Built in the late Edo period, it has been restored to its magnificent state as it was from the Meiji period, with a tiled hip-and-gable roof and plastered walls.

DATA

Location: Ashimori, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
Access: 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC
Tel: 086-295-0983 Cultural Properties Office, Okayama Municipal Board of Education



A rare space associated with the Kinoshita clan, descendants of Lady Kita-no-Man dokoro Nene.

Jinyamachi in Ashimori is situated northeast of Kibiji. The history of the Ashimori-han holding a fief yielding 25,000 koku of rice (4,509.75 m³) that first began with Kinoshita Iesada, the brother of Lady Kita-no-Man dokoro (Nene) who was the legal wife of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, still lives on today in this town embraced by the clear waters of Ashimorigawa River. The residence which stands among the private houses made in the

hirairi-style with wide frontage, is adorned with noble latticework such as the senbongoshi-style (evenly spaced vertical timber bars) lattice and kiriko-style (facet design timber bars) lattice, allowing passersby to enjoy the elegant functional beauty created within everyday life. Nearby is the former residence of the Sugihara family, chief retainer of the Ashimori-han. This residence is a typical example of a former Ashimori-han samurai residence. Enclosed by a white nagayamon gate and mud walls, this residence, built in the Buke-shoin-zukuri style of architecture is said to be the prototype of modern-day Japanese architecture. After the Meiji Restoration, many samurai residences rapidly disappeared, but this residence



Former Ashimori-han Samurai Residence



Ashimori melons

The cultivation of melons began in Ashimori in the early Showa period. The Earls melon variety accounts for a large portion of the melon production in the prefecture. It has rich aroma and mouth-watering sweetness and is also known as "Maboroshi no Melon" (imaginary melon) due to its rarity. The Ashimori Melon Festival is held in October every year.



Omizuen Garden (meaning "near water") gets its name from the fact that it is near Ashimorigawa River.

has been well kept and is considered an extremely valuable building that conveys the way of life of a samurai family. Another recommended sightseeing spot in the Ashimori area is Omizuen Park, a Kobori Enshu-style garden constructed around a pond, connected to Lord Kinoshita. Many visitors come to relax at this park where maple trees, cherry trees and hackberries that are hundreds of years old surround the pond, and two small islands, Tsuru-shima and Kame-shima, are skillfully positioned in the pond. The park is especially worth a visit to see the cherry blossoms in spring, the colorful leaves in fall, and the season when peonies are in bloom. Each spot is on level ground making it a perfect area for cycling. Enjoy the best of history and culture.



Photo credit: Dshinokikikikai

Hotaru no Sato in Ashimori

Hotaru no Sato (Firefly Village) is certified by Okayama city as one of the firefly-viewing spots in the city. At the end of May to the beginning of June, you can see the dancing of the *Luciola cruciata* and *Luciola lateralis* in the Ashimori Basin of Oi district and Takata district.



Column Stuff You should know

Text: Haruko Yamamuro

Vol.7

The people of the Kinoshita clan – Iesada and Rigen

Members of the Toyotomi clan sat in the inner parlor of Okayama castle, Ashimori.

Kinoshita Iesada (1543-1608), the first chief of the Ashimori Domain was the brother of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's lawful wife, Lady Kita-no-Man dokoro Nene. His family name at birth was Sugihara and he is believed to have been descended from the Heishi. Because his younger sister married Hideyoshi, he was permitted to use both Kinoshita and Toyotomi as his surnames. Despite his connection with the Toyotomi clan, Iesada remained neutral during the Battle of Sekigahara. For this, the Tokugawa Shogunate gave the Ashimori Domain rice fields with an overall yield of 25,000 koku (4,509.75 m³) and the Kinoshita clan continued for 13 generations to the Meiji Restoration. Kinoshita Rigen (1886-1925) was the nephew of the last lord of the Ashimori Domain who continued the clan's line as the adoptive heir of the lord. While studying at the Tokyo Imperial University, he published the literary magazine Shirakaba together with Mushanokoji Saneatsu, Shiga Naoya and others. He gained popularity for what became known as Rigen-cho (Rigen-style) tanka (short poem) that boldly made use of spoken language and colloquialisms.



The birthplace of Kinoshita Rigen. In recent years, valuable items related to the Toyotomi clan have been discovered in the storehouse to the right of the entrance.

The burial mound cluster of the King of Kibi and his vassals

12 Tsukuriyama Burial Mound Cluster



DATA
 Location: Shino Shita, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
 Access: 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC
 Tel: 086-222-2912
 Momotaro Tourist Information Center



The Tsukuriyama Burial Mound is the largest ancient burial mound in Japan that allows people to enter!



Tsukuriyama (作山) Burial Mound, the largest burial mound in Okayama prefecture after Tsukuriyama (造山) Burial Mound

The Tsukuriyama Burial Mound cluster is a huge group of burial mounds consisting of Tsukuriyama Burial Mound, a colossal burial mound that is the fourth largest of its kind in Japan (with a total length of approximately 350 m), and six medium to small-sized burial mounds built in the area on the west side. Tsukuriyama Burial Mound which boasts the most impressive dimensions within the cluster is the largest of its kind in Japan that allows people to enter. It is said to be the grave of the king who ruled Kibi in the early 5th century and the medium and small-sized burial mounds are believed to be the graves (subordinate burial mounds) of the vassals who served the king. Including the aforementioned Tsukuriyama Burial Mound (造山古墳), this area is dotted with other enormous burial mounds including Tsukuriyama Burial Mound (作山古墳) in Soja city and Ryoguzan Burial Mound in Sanyo-cho to the east, showing that Kibi was once as powerful as the province of Kinai.

The silhouette of Kibi

There is a sundial installed in a small corner approximately 500m southwest of Tsukuriyama Burial Mound. The sundial combines the numbers positioned in a curve similar to clock dials, together with the north-south line engraved with a cate scale between the summer and winter solstice. If you stand near the present day's date, your shadow will indicate the time.



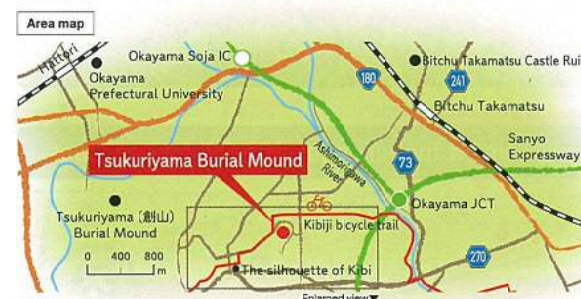
The flat, clear summit of the round part of Tsukuriyama (造山) Burial Mound.

In order to experience the enormity of Tsukuriyama Burial Mound, take a walk on top of the mound. Starting from the back, walk slowly down the slope to an extensive leveled area covered by forest. It is said that the top of the rear sphere portion of the mound was flattened by Mori's army to build an encampment during the siege on the Mori castle by Toyotomi Hideyoshi.



Senzoku Burial Mound, famous as a decorated burial mound

As an aside, the local residents lovingly call the Tsukuriyama Burial Mound (造山古墳), "Zozan," and the Tsukuriyama Burial Mound (作山古墳) in Soja City, "Sakuzan," to distinguish between the two homophonic names.



Column Stuff You should know

Text: Haruko Yamamuro

Vol.8

The appearance of a Heisei burial mound!

Kanbayashi, Soja-shi, Okayama prefecture

The world's newest keyhole-shaped tumulus — the first in 1400 years

In the fall of 2011, the third "Tsukuriyama (創山)" burial mound was constructed in Kibiji [there are two other burial mounds with names that are homophones with "Tsukuriyama": 造山 and 作山]. The three-tiered keyhole-shaped tumulus measures 8.5 m in length, 1 m in height, and is surrounded by a moat. It took about five hours to complete the construction of the tumulus with the help of 20 people using shovels and hoes to dig the dirt and raise it into a mound.

In the parking lot of the nearby Tsukuriyama (造山) Burial Mound, you can see a full-size replica of the stone partition used in the stone chamber of the Senzoku Burial Mound. This was constructed by Takashi Nishihira, a carver who owns an atelier in Kibiji. In an attempt to recreate the texture of the actual stone partition, chokko-mon (arc and straight-line patterns) were engraved into the stone which was brought in from Kumamoto prefecture where the original object was said to have been constructed. Standing in the same place is another must see item – the bright gold Kibi no Daio (Great King of Kibi) statue, carved by the same artist.



Miniature Tsukuriyama (創山) Burial Mound

The historic five-storied pagoda is a landmark of Kibiji

Bitchu Kokubunji Temple

13



History



Gifts

DATA

Location: 1046, Kanbayashi, Soja-shi

Access: 15 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

Tel: 0866-94-3155
Kokubunji Tourist Information Center



A beautiful rural Japanese landscape nestled in a natural environment that changes with the four seasons

Bitchu Kokubunji Temple is one of the many Kokubunji temples built throughout Japan by the wish of Emperor Shomu to pray for the protection of the region in 741. It is a Buddhist temple of the Omuro school of the Shingon sect and its honorific mountain name prefixed to the temple's name is Nishozan. The principal image of the temple is Yakushi-nyorai. After the seven-storied pagoda built in the Nara period (estimated to be 50 m high, the remains of the tower still exist) burned to the ground during the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, it was rebuilt as a five-storied pagoda in a different location with construction beginning in 1821 and ending between 1844 and 1847. The five-storied pagoda which leaves a strong reminder of the architectural style of the latter Edo Period is the only



Red rice

Red rice is an ancient grain which contains red polyphenolic pigments in the seed coating of rice. It is said to be the root of sekihan, red rice eaten at auspicious occasions. At the Kunishi Shrine in Shinpon, Soja city, red rice is cultivated and presented at shrines as offerings. Japanese and Western-style confectionary, sweet half sake and miso are also made here using red rice.



These are the ruins of a provincial nunnery that was built at the wishes of Emperor Shomu during the Nara period.

one of its kind in Okayama Prefecture. Originally designed as a three-storied pagoda, the structure is made of zelkova wood up to the third story, and the fourth and fifth stories are mainly made of pine. Looking from Prefectural Road Route 270 running east and west on the southern side of Kokubunji Temple, the five-storied pagoda rises up in a silhouette against Akamatsu (Japanese red pine) hill. The area is ablaze with rape blossoms and Chinese milk vetch in the spring, and cosmos are in full bloom in the fall.

The scenery is typical of the image that would first come to mind at the mention of Kibiji. With the Komori-zuka Burial Mound and the foundation stone remnants of Bitchu Kokubunji Temple situated nearby, this is an exquisite location for a leisurely stroll. Even with the changing times, this beautiful Japanese rural setting is one that should be preserved and cherished eternally.

Direct sales of agricultural produce

In Kibiji with its stretches of rice fields and other crops, there are numerous shops selling locally-grown produce such as vegetables, fruits and flowers. You'll also find unattended sales booths by the side of the gate at Bitchu Kokubunji Temple. The produce are fresh and often less than market price. The business season of these shops vary depending on the type of produce sold.



Column Stuff YOU should know

Text: Haruko Yamamuro

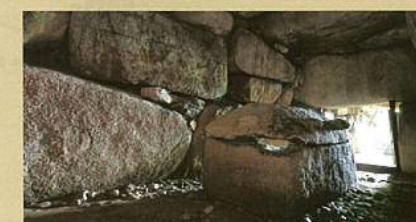
Vol.9

One of the three largest megalithic tombs in the prefecture

Kanbayashi, Soja-shi

If there's a hole, I want to crawl in.
The dark temptation of the horizontal stone chamber.

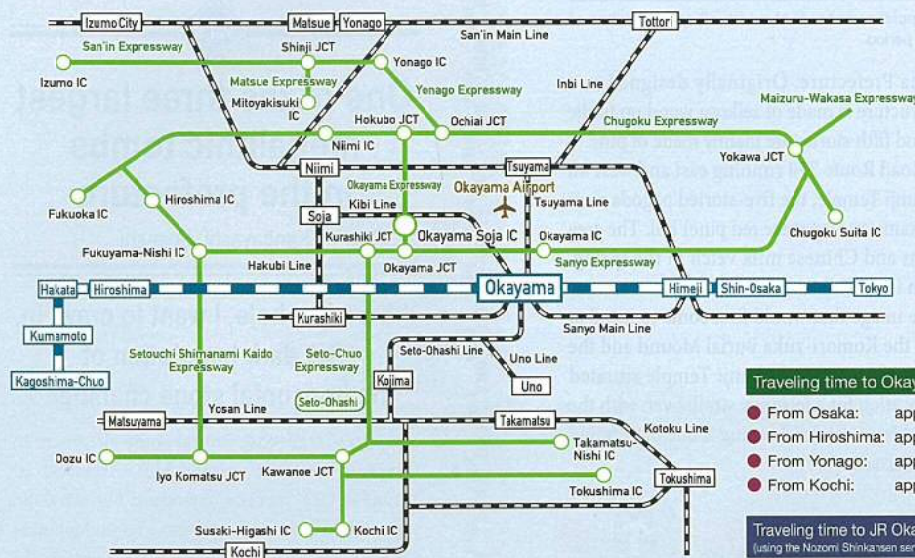
The three largest horizontal stone chambers in Okayama prefecture, namely Musaotsuka Burial Mound in Okayama city, Yataotsuka Burial Mound in Kurashiki city, and Komorizuka Burial Mound in Kibiji are all National Historic Sites. Komorizuka Burial Mound, situated about 200 m east of Bitchu Kokubunji Temple, is a 103-meter long keyhole-shaped burial mound with a stone chamber measuring 19.4 m in length, and is the fourth largest horizontal stone chamber in Japan. According to legend, this is said to be the grave of Kurohime who is known to have been romantically involved with Emperor Nintoku, but the actual year of construction appears to be after her death in the latter half of the sixth century. The name Komorizuka appears to be derived from the countless number of komori (bats) living in the stone chamber. There are numerous small burial mounds that can be found throughout the entire region of Kibiji Fudoki-no-oka. Even holes on slopes at the side of the road may turn out to be entrances to stone chambers. Ancient monuments exist in the spaces of modern life and that is a part of Kibiji's charm.



A house-shaped sarcophagus in the stone chamber of the Komorizuka Burial Mound

ACCESS GUIDE >>>>

If coming by train



Traveling time to Okayama city by car

- From Osaka: approx. 2 hrs. 10 min.
- From Hiroshima: approx. 1 hr. 50 min.
- From Yonago: approx. 1 hr. 40 min.
- From Kochi: approx. 2 hrs.

Traveling time to JR Okayama Station (using the Nozomi Shinkansen service)

- From Tokyo Station: approx. 3 hrs. 12 min.
- From Shin-Osaka Station: approx. 44 min.
- From Hiroshima Station: approx. 34 min.
- From Hakata Station: approx. 1 hr. 37 min.

If coming by airplane

Traveling time to Okayama Airport

- From Seoul: approx. 1 hrs. 30 min.
- From Tokyo: approx. 1 hrs. 15 min.
- From Shanghai: approx. 1 hrs. 50 min.
- From Sapporo: approx. 2 hrs.
- From Guam: approx. 4 hrs. 10 min.
- From Okinawa: approx. 1 hrs. 55 min.



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Written by Reiko Amura
Illustrated by Shogo Natsume

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<http://okayama-kanko.net/sightseeing/>

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