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

KIBIJI TOURIST MAP

KIBITSUHIKO AND URA

Okayama City
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KIBITSUHIKO
AND URA

KIBIJI TOURIST MAP

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Okayama City
The Okayama Alliance of Tourism Promotion Organization of Kibiji
TEL 086-803-1902  FAX 086-804-1111  Jitte, Kibiji, Okayama-ken
Ura’s head was buried?
The legend of the Shrine’s burial mound for severed heads.

Hakusan Shrine

Legend Gifts

This place is called Kobe meaning herd 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 Tsuruta, there is a village with the peculiar name “Kobe” situated on the southern foot of Mt. Kii. Kibitsu-shi-no-mikoto, who is believed to be the founder of which the tale of Momotaro is based, engaged in battle with Ura. It is said that after the battle, Kibitsu-shi killed Ura, cut off his head, pierced it with a stake, and left it exposed. According to legend, the exposed head was left in a Kobe village which is believed to be 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 Shishimono 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 villagers.

There are various theories in regard to Ura, but the signboard on the shrine grounds says: Ura was a feared ogre who actually was a gentle young man who brought the rare 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 cultivation.

This guardian dog is said to be in Kobe in Japan.

White peach

Okayama began its cultivation of white peaches when it was introduced to Japan from China in the early Meiji period. In 1892, Okayama Prefecture developed peaches. In 1932, the Shirozu district of Okayama became the center of white peach cultivation. These peaches, which are soft and juicy, are highly appreciated in Okayama.

Kotah Kii, the exalted shrine of Hakusan Shrine, is dedicated to the severed head of Ura, the ogre deity.

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

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 Muroran period (333-1873). The prototype of the ogre has its roots in various regions all over Japan, but the story of Kibitsu-shi’s defeat of Ura, passed down through generations in Okayama, is the most widely accepted. Kibitsu-shi, 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 dispatched to Momotaro’s country. In (Og), the northern part of the island of Shikoku, and Amatomi in Kibi (Pheasant). Then, there is the peculiar being Ura described as an ogre who was 4.2 meters tall, with red hair, a red beard, and glaring eyes. With Kinia Castle as their base, the ogre plundered and wreaked havoc on the people of Kibi Province. Who really was the Ura, who was believed to have been an ogre from another 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 Shi, which was followed later by the Period of the Sixteen Kingdoms. The Korean Peninsula, which was made up of Koguryo, Jirisan, Silla, and the Byoan confederacy, later became one under the control of political instability, which drove many people to cross over into Yamato (Japan). It is believed that Ura, who called himself the prince of Barlot, came to Yamato from the Korean Peninsula as the leader of a group of ogres. These ogres 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 Kibi 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.

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

Suggested tour

Walk from Kibitsu-shi 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 Kibi with all your senses.
A shrine associated with Okibitsuhiro-no-mikoto, the hero of the Tale of Momotaro

Kibitsu Shrine

Location: 1443 Ishinomiya, Kitakyushu, Fukuoka-ken
Access: by car from Fukuoka City
Tel: 093-864-3201 (Kibitsu Shrine)

Zurijin Gate was built by Lord Iseki Tsurumaro in 1937.

Kibitsu Shrine, a subsidiary shrine of Kibitsu Shrine, is a popular winter shrine where people pray for happiness and good fortune. The shrine is located in the heart of Fukuoka City and is easily accessible by public transportation.

It is also highly regarded for the beauty of its shrine pavilions. The shrine is also known as Asashinomiya. The entrance to the grounds is a small torii gate made of red bricks and is a popular spot for taking pictures. The shrine is surrounded by beautiful gardens and is a popular destination for tourists and locals alike.

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

O kibitsuhiro-no-mikoto who is said to have subdued 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 Kibitsuhiro-no-mikoto that sits on the shores of Kibi no Nakayama revered as a shintai (mountain worshipped as the sacred dwelling place of a deity or deities).

Also known as Iseki Ishinomiya, the deity of the shrine became the revered tattooed deity of Bizen Province when Kibi Province separated from Bizen, Bitchu, Bizen, and Mimasaka. This shrine provides valuable records in temple and shrine construction such as the Sangenshugatara-mukai and Hidanocho architectural styles, and the torii-shaped path made of granite.

The present-day sanctuary was rebuilt by Iseki Tsurumaro, a lord of Okiyama Domain, in 1687.
One of Kibō’s shrines most steeped in legend

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 Kibō — the divine Kibitsushiko-no-mikoto on which the legend of Momotaro is based. Emperor Nintoku is said to have founded the shrine in admiration of Kibitsushiko-no-mikoto’s accomplishments. The entire Kibō is enshrined here as well. It is the most important shrine in three “Bi” districts (Bizen, Bitchū, and Bingo), visited by many pilgrims from all over Japan.

Incidentally, according to the shrine chronicle, Kibitsushiko-no-mikoto built and lived in a thatched 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 Kibitsu-shiko’s fifth-generation descendant Lord Kaya no omi-sarumii no-mikoto built its sanctuary at the site of the thatched shrine to enshrine Kibitsushiko-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 the south of the sanctuary along an enjoyable seasonable flower garden. At the end of it is the Oasanoden shrine, which is known for the Narakama Shrine ceremony and is a national important cultural property.

Inkai no ema, a Shintoist politician from this area and a descendant of Toyosu Inukai, was deeply devoted to Kibitsu Shrine due to his predecessor’s status as a deity, and the shrine sign post had been inscribed by his ancestor Toyosu Inukai. A statue of Inukai himself has been built by the shrine’s sacred pond. Various shrines 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 hornstone stele charter. It is in diameter believed to have been built in the Heian period. It was built at the shrine behind the hall of the west side of the shrine. The same area where the stone has been found is the same as the cloister.

The birthplace of Tea Master, Eisai Zenshi

Gibitsu, Kitakamia, 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 raised to perfection by Sen no Rikyū, a 16th-century tea master. Its origin stems from the great tea ceremony which was imported from China by Eisai Zenshi (1141–1215) during the Kamakura period. Eisai, the founder of the Rinzai 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 in the Soga family and had a close association with Kibitsu Shrine. Eisai traveled 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 Koza Yotoku (How to Stay Healthy by Drinking Tea) in which he outlines the effects and manners of drinking tea and also begins cultivating tea with tea seeds he brought back from China. It is at this stage 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 is a large cup for green tea.
Kibi no Nakayama is a mountain where deities dwell (Mt. Kunita-yama), and which also appears in The Pillow Book by Sei Shōnagon. 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 Bitchū and a national treasure. The fact that a single mountain is home to two ichinomiya besparks the importance of Kibi no Nakayama. The Kokin Waka-shū has a poem that goes, "Blowing snow / Kibi no Nakayama / Like an obi it flows / The refreshing sound of Hosonagawa River."

On the mountain can be found one of Japan's oldest cairn-shaped burial mounds called Yatsujiiyama South, two huge cairn-shaped tombs over 180 m in length called Otose-karasuyama Kofun and Nakayama-chausuyama Kofun, and a later burial mound with a magnificent sarcophagus called Shintomi Kofun. This area is also home to numerous iwakura — large rocks inscribed with divinity — that have been venerated by visitors since ancient times.

Ceremonies are held at Kibitsu Shrine through the cooperation of Kibi no Nakayama Protection Society. Yuki Flower festival at Shintomi Kofun — thought to be the tomb of Urin in the Muramachi Period — on the first Sunday of April, and Iwamura-sai — where people visit the iwakura and burial mounds to perform rituals — or the second Sunday of May.

On Mt. Ryōzan, the highest peak (170 m) on the northern side of the massif, there is a Kannon (kannon mound) and a Hachidokiya shrine to which people have come since ancient times to pray for rains in times of drought. The Ryōsin Festival takes place here on the first Sunday of March. On the southern side, there is a huge burial mound 120 m in length called Nakayama-chausuyama Kofun. Built during the 4th century, this is the tomb of Kibitsu no mino-waka, who was dispatched from Yamato as one of the four Shishi Sloguns 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.
The largest Yayoi-period burial mound in Japan
Tatetsuki-Iseki Tumulus

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

With an overall length of approximately 60 m and a mound measuring approximately 40 m in diameter, this is Japan’s largest Yayoi Furuichihashi 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 side of the hill is another ring of about 30 standing stones measuring 1 m in height and 0.5 m in width. These odd-shaped stones standing in a circle also known as “stone circles” are reminiscent of the neolithic 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 2.4 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 vermilion pigment (limonite) which was a valuable commodity during that period. Considering the conditions of that period, this is an astonishingly large amount of vermilion. In the distant past, vermilion was used in Chinese art as an ingredient in magic drugs and elixirs for achieving long life, and was deeply connected with the phenomena in western countries. What level of sophistication did this person achieve to secure a burial using such a startling amount of a commodity that was as precious and valuable as vermilion? 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 harmonics of a past era will surely spread out before your eyes.

Kibitsu Shrine

Kibitsuiko changed into a coromant to capture Ura who had transformed himself into a carp.

Head toward Kibiji from the direction of Oka-gawa. After crossing the bridge over Akahira-gawa River, there is a small shrine on the right-hand side whose still has remnants of the legend of Kokui (carpentering) associated with Ura and Kibitsuiko. The deities worshiped here are Kibitsuiko-no-mikoto, Inari Morishiko-no-mikoto, and Ura. After his left eye was injured by an arrow fired by Kibitsuiko-no-mikoto, Ura transformed himself into a pheasant and flew into the mountains, but was pursued by Kibitsuiko-no-mikoto who changed himself into a hawk. Ura then transformed himself into a carp and escaped into the Chlinai-gawa River that had turned red with the great volume of blood that flowed from his injured eye. Kibitsuiko-no-mikoto in turn changed into a coromant. According to the legend of Ura, it is said that this is the place where the coromant ate the carp. There is another myth that says that it was in fact Sasa Morishiko-mikoto who was the one that had caught the copper-shaped Ura, and that he is the model for the monster in the Tale of Momotaro. The Gosshi (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, Yamiyama-nashi-no-mikoto cooled the carp and served it to Kibitsuiko-no-mikoto. The main building of the Shrine was constructed in 1711 and 1742, and still exists today. Recently, the hill on which Kofuku Shrine stands is now surrounded by the protective enclosure, and visitors can experience a unique spiritual atmosphere.
The place where Kibitsu-shiki-no-mikoto's arrow
and Ura's stone collided in the sky

Yaguinomiya

Location: Tatsuno, Oka-ku, Okayama City
Access: 15 min. by car from Okayama Station C3
Tel. 086-227-2912
Monaco Travel Information Center

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

Tatetsuki-iseki Tumulus

Strange stone structure similar to Stonehenge.

Tatetsuki-iseki located inside Okayama Historical Park is a tumulus built in the late Yayoi period (late 2nd century to early 3rd century). Artifacts such as ceremonial vessels and rare ornaments were unearthed from this site which is likely 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 Kainatu rock with a design in the Kofun style etched upon its surface. The most striking feature of this prehistoric site, however, has to be the megalithic structures which stand at 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 speak your call.

The distance between Kibitsu Shrine and Kinojo Castle is about 14 km as the crow flies. Since Yagoinomiya is roughly in the middle between the two points, it is said that this is the spot where the arrow shot by Kibitsu-shiki-no-mikoto and the stone thrown by Ura collided and fell. According to the legend behind Ura, Kibitsu-shiki-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 Chisiwagawa river, turning the shore downstream red with blood, which is reflected still today in the spot's name, Ahabara (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 Kibitsu-shiki-no-mikoto that have become rooted in the ground. The deity worshiped at Yagoinomiya is Kibitsukake-hiko-no-mikoto, grandson of Wakatasekibitsu-hiko, a younger brother of Kibitsu-shiki-no-mikoto. This is also believed to be the place where the worship of megalithic structures as sacred stones began first began.

Suggested tour

Full day tour

07 Yagoinomiya

08 Kinojo Castle

09 Oni no Kana

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

The area is maintained as Watarase Park.
The natural fortress where Ura is believed to have lived in seclusion

Kinojo Castle

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

According to the legend of Ura, a ninja 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 9 m in height, the walls were made using the handsake-soni 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 stronghold a site to be reckoned with.

The inner castle covers an area of approximately 30 hectares within which were four gates, seven buildings on foundation stone which probably served as food storage or for administrative purposes, remains of a fire yō 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 is the center of activity in ancient Kibi, as well as Ashinomakigawa 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 Cinojo Eki (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.
Bitchu Takamatsu Castle Ruins

This fallacious 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 3,000 troop members.

On June 4th, Muneharu held a banquet feast with the food and drink sent from Hidetoshi on a boat. After performing the Kusama dance of Seigatsu Temple, Muneharu ended his life at age 46 with a death tanka poem, which read, "Now is the time to go beyond his 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 stand inside the remains of the inner castle of Takamatsu castle. It is said that Hideyoshi praised Muneharu as the paragon of a samurai.

Itchū 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 seize Munehara, lord of the castle, into surrendering, but Munehara, a man who believed in justice, ignored his attempts. At the suggestion of his advisor, Kurata Kanbe, 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 berm some 3 km in length, a significant event that has become very famous.

In the early dawn of June 2, Noyanada was killed by Akechi Mitsuhide at Honno-ji Temple in Kyoto. Hideyoshi kept this fact hidden and invited Mori's strategist Anokuchi Eiki 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 Munehara's head. Munehara agreed to commit seppuku on the
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 1,500 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 escape 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 syncretic fusion of Shintoism and Buddhism, which is maintained even to this day. Every year during the hachimatsuri 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 worshipers for its unique prayer service which combines prayers for the breaking off of bad and the initiation of good relationships. The Grand Torii Gate (27.5 m high) that stands as the temple's symbol and the Reito-don (old main hall) built in 1744 are both important cultural properties designated by Okayama city. The present main hall, Teiki-don, was built in 1839 and the Kusayan Daibo pavilion built in 1891 was relocated and repaired in 2006 due to deterioration. The temple's official name is Saijo Inari-san Myojyoji. It is also called Takamatsu Inari due to its location in Takamatsu in Kita-ku, Okayama city.

Located 710 Takamatsu Inari, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi
Access: 10 min. by car from Okayama Saijo IC
Tel: 086-257-3709/Saijo Inari

Inari souvenirs
Various amulets, novelties, and stylish accessories type items are sold at some 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 Inari cracker.

There is a parking lot on the side for those visiting to visit the Great Torii Gate.

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 in Fushimi Inari Taisha of Kyoto which is dedicated to the main deity of foxes, Uko-no-Mitama no Ochamis Toyokawa Inari is in Aichi Prefecture, on the other hand, is a Shinto shrine that is dedicated to the thousand armed Kannon. Oinarisan is worshiped at both shrines and temples based on the idea of Shinto Buddhist syncretism. It blends Japanese-based Shintoism with the foreign-imported Buddhism. This has led to the offering of Buddhist prayers at shrines and the worship of Inari 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 Era, and a Shinto Shrine temple. It has 77 subordinate shrines dedicated to the local guardian deities related to Saitors who enshrined different aspects of life, such as marriage or warding off evil.
A quiet townscape that still retains its samurai spirit

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

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

Inuyama in Ashinomi is situated northeast of Kibij. The history of the Ashinomori-han holds a fief yielding 25,000 koku of rice (4,509.75 m³) that first began with Kizoshita Isad, 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 Ashinomiyagawa River.

A residence which stands among the private houses made in the hirai-style with wide frontage, is adorned with noble latticework such as the senbunno-ishi-style (every third vertical timber bar) lattice and kirikko-style (fretted devices timber bars) lattice, allowing passerby to enjoy the elegant functional beauty created within everyday life. Nearby is the former residence of the Suga family, chief retainer of the Ashinomori-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 Byke-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

has been well kept and is considered an extremely valuable building that conveys the way of life of a samurai family. Another recommended sighting spot in the Ashimori area is Onizum Park, a Kobori Eikan-style garden constructed around a pond, connected to Lord Kinoshita. Many visitors come to relax at this park where maple trees, cherry trees and buckthorn trees are hundreds of years old surrounding 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 blossom in spring, the colorful leaves in fall, and the moment 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.

Kinoshit Jisai (1543–1608), the first chief of the Ashinomi Domain, was the brother of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's Legal Wife, Lady Kita no Man dokoro Nene. Her family name at birth was Sugihara and she is believed to have descended from the Hishi. Because he had a younger sister married to Hideyoshi, he was permitted to use both Kinoshita and Toyotomi as his surnames. Despite his conversion with the Toyotomi clan, Jisai remained neutral during the Battle of Sekigahara. For this, the Tokugawa Shogunate gave him the Toyotomi Domain rice fields with an overall yield of 35,000 koku (4,509.75 m³) and the Kinoshita clan continued for 13 generations to the Meiji Restoration.

Kinoshita Jisai (1806–1815) was the nephew of the last lord of the Ashinomori Domain who continued the clan line as the adoptive head of the head. While studying at the Temple Imperial School, he published the literary magazine Shimbun together with Mutsuhiko Chausu, Shiga Noya and others. He gained popularity for what became known as Atsuro – a (genre-style) tanka (short poem) that boldly made use of spoken language and colloquialisms.

The birthplace of Kinoshita Jisai. In recent years, usable homes related to the Toyotomi clan have been discovered in the close vicinity to the right of the entrance.
The burial mound cluster of the King of Kibi and his vassals

Tsukuriyama Burial Mound Cluster

Location: Ibi-cho, Ibi-gun, Okayama Pref.
Access: 10 min. by car from Okayama Box IC
Tel: 086-222-2012
Managed by: Tourism Center

The silhouette of Kibi

There is a sundial installed in a small stone circle about 100m southeast of Tsukuriyama Burial Mound. The sundial combines the numerals positioned in a curve similar to clock hands, together with the north-south line engraved in a date line between the summer and winter solstices. If you stand near the present day’s date, your shadow will indicate the time.

The appearance of a Heisei burial mound! Karachiyoshi, Soja-cho, Okayama Pref.

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

In the fall of 2013, the third “Tsukuriyama (IBU)” burial mound was constructed in Kibi. There are two other burial mounds with names that are synonymous with “tsukuriyama,” (IIB) and (IIC). The stone-enclosed keyhole-shaped tomb measures 4.5m in length, 3m in height, and is surrounded by a road. It took about five hours to complete the construction of the mound, with the help of 20 people using shovels and hoes to dig the dirt and water it into a mound.

In the parking lot of the nearby Tsukuriyama (IBU) Burial Mound, you can see a full-size replica of the stone partition used in the stone chamber of the former Burial Mound. This was constructed by Akashi Nishihara, a craftsperson who owns an atelier in Kibi. In an attempt to recreate the texture of the actual stone partition, choko-ko-ni (arc and straight-line patterns) were engraved into the stone which was brought from Kumamoto Prefecture where the original object was said to have been constructed. Standing in the same place as another must see item — the brighter golden Kibi no Daini (Great King of Kibi) statue, carved by the same artist.

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

Tsukuriyama (IBU) Burial Mound, the largest burial mound in Okayama Prefecture after Tsukuriyama (IBI) Burial Mound

The Tsukuriyama Burial Mound is 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 (Ibuki-shinden), this area is dotted with other enormous burial mounds including Tsukuriyama Burial Mound (Ibuki-shinden) in Soja City and Ryogun Burial Mounds in Sanyo-cho to the east, showing that Kibi was once as powerful as the province of Kii.
Bitchu Kokubunji Temple is one of the many Kokubunji temples built throughout Japan by the wish of Emperor Shoma to pray for the protection of the region in 741. It is a Buddhist temple of the Onna-school of the Shingon sect and its bonotic mountain name prefixed to the temple’s name is Bitchu. The principal image of the temple is Yakushi-kyōryō. After the seven-storied pagoda built in the Nara period (estimated to be 15 m high) and the small stupa (the lower stupa) 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 752 and ending between 844 and 847. The five-storied pagoda which leaves a strong reminder of the architectural style of the latter Edo Period is the only

These are the ruins of a provincial summerhouse that was built at the wish of Emperor Shoma during the Nara period.

In Bitchu, with its analyses of rice fields and stone 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 path 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.

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 several red rice eaten in panesium dishes. At the Shinto shrine in Bitchu, the rice served in this place is cultivated and preserved in the shrine as offerings. Japanese and Western-style confectionary, sweet tall sake and miso are also made here using red rice.