



A Journey Through Japan's Faith and Culture
from Munakata and Okinoshima
A Museum Guide

HARUKA MUNAKATA

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A Museum Guide

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Editor and publisher

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"Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites
in the Munakata Region"
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<https://www.okinoshima-heritage.jp>

Cooperating organizations

Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo
Sakai City, Osaka
Osaka Pref. Chikatsu-Asuka Museum
Saiku Historical Museum
Mt. Fuji World Heritage Centre, Shizuoka
National Museum of Japanese History

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Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan

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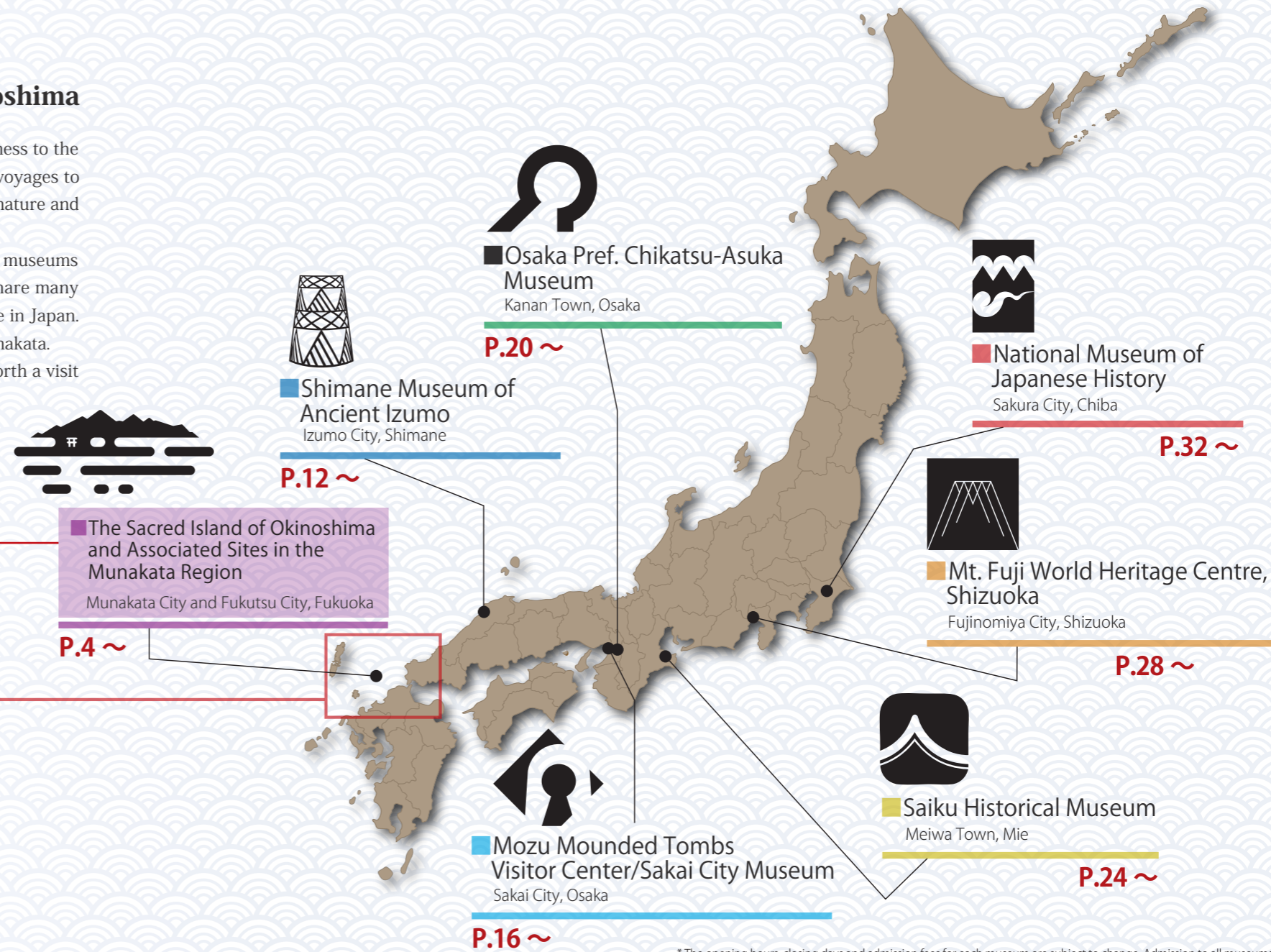


Tracing Japan's Faith and Culture from Munakata and Okinoshima

The Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region together bear witness to the tradition of faith in Okinoshima, where state rituals were once held to pray for safe passage on voyages to the Korean Peninsula in ancient times. These sites retain many aspects of the ancient worship of nature and tell the story of how Japanese culture and faith were nurtured through exchange.

This booklet has been compiled to provide an introduction to the heritage sites and historical museums around the Munakata region, and also to six other museums in various regions of Japan that share many points in common with the sites of the Munakata region in tracing the history of faith and culture in Japan. The booklet details the particular appeals of these six other museums and their relationship to Munakata.

Although these museums may all be far from Munakata and Fukuoka, they are all definitely worth a visit and each offers its own unique and rewarding experience.



* The opening hours, closing days and admission fees for each museum are subject to change. Admission to all museums is free for those with a disability certificate and one caregiver. For further details see the websites of each museum.

The Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region

(Munakata City and Fukutsu City, Fukuoka)

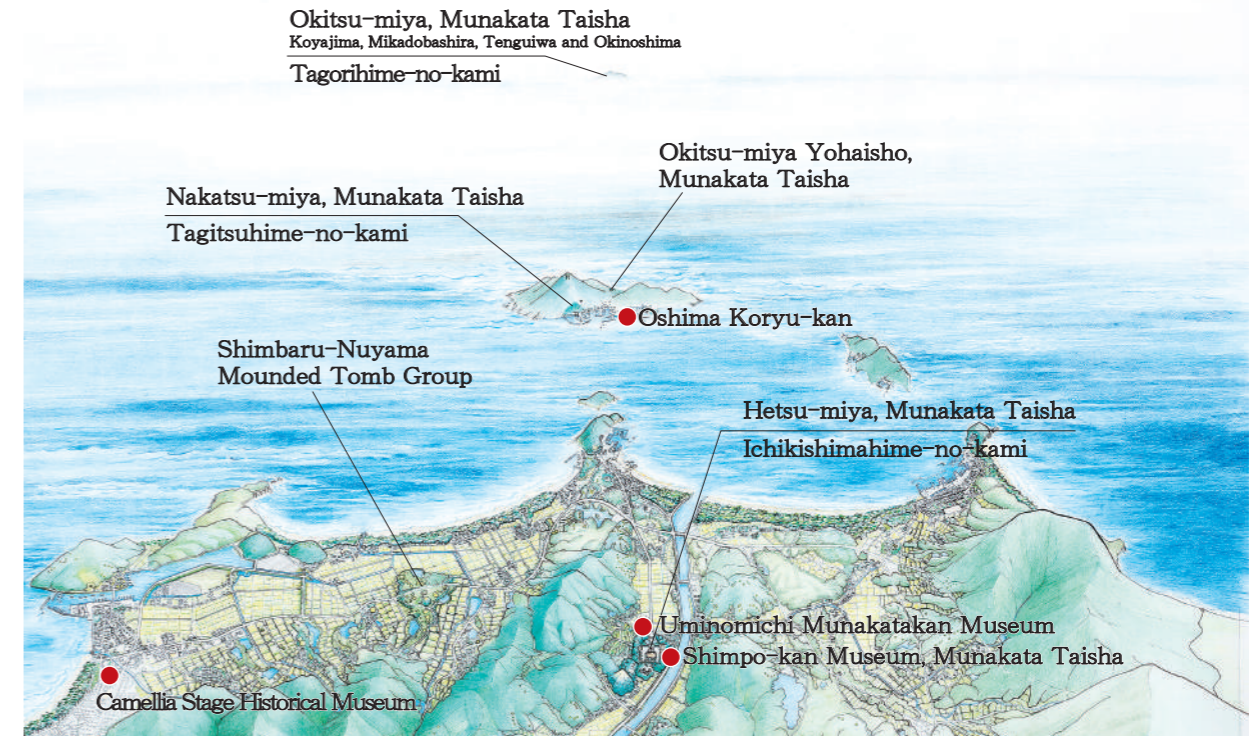
The sacred island of Okinoshima lies approximately 60km off the coast of Munakata City in Fukuoka Prefecture.

The Japanese people in ancient times felt a mystical power (*kami*) in unique natural objects and phenomena, and held them in awe. From the latter half of the fourth century, when overseas exchanges between Japan and the Asian continent became more vigorous, state rituals were conducted to honor the *kami* who inhabited Okinoshima, a beacon for those on voyages to the Korean Peninsula. Okinoshima is a remarkable example of a “Sacred Island,” faith in which continues to the present day.



▲ Main Hall and Worship Hall of Okitsu-miya

▼ Okinoshima (Okitsu-miya, Munakata Taisha)



▲ Panorama of all heritage sites (Illustration by Yoko Kitano)

Overview of the heritage sites

It was faith in the *kami* that inhabited Okinoshima that gave rise to the worship of the Three Female Deities of Munakata, a set of beliefs that has been preserved and passed down to the present day together with traditions associated with Okinoshima, including a number of taboos.

The World Heritage Site is comprised of the following sites. Firstly, the three shrines of Munakata Taisha located on Okinoshima, Oshima and the Kyushu mainland, each one dedicated to the Three Female Deities. Next, the Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, a place for worshipping Okinoshima from afar, given the difficulty in approaching the island. Finally, the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group, built by the ancient and powerful Munakata clan, who conducted rituals on Okinoshima, and developed the practice of worshipping the Three Female Deities.

These heritage sites have been preserved in a favorable landscape bordering the Genkai Sea in Munakata and Fukutsu cities.



▲ Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

The Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region

(Munakata City and Fukutsu City, Fukuoka)

Ancient rituals on Okinoshima and Japanese culture and faith

The 500-year period from the latter half of the fourth century to the end of the ninth century during which rituals were conducted on Okinoshima was a time of great change for Japanese society. From the fourth to sixth centuries advanced culture and technologies came to Japan predominantly from the Korean Peninsula and transformed the lives of the people. Then from the seventh to ninth centuries the diplomatic missions and students who were dispatched to China brought home knowledge, religious practices and goods, which would become the basis for Japanese culture in the following centuries.

As the guardian deity of the sea routes along which all these things passed, a variety of precious items brought from overseas were given in offerings to Okinoshima.

▼ Ritual artifacts of Okinoshima reflecting overseas exchanges



Know and Feel Okinoshima

Make a visit to these museums that explain and illustrate the value and attractions of Okinoshima, which cannot be visited in person due to traditional taboos.

■ Uminomichi Munakatakan Museum

This World Heritage Guidance facility is situated across from Hetsu-miya of Munakata Taisha, and provides an introduction to the value and attractions of the heritage sites, centered around the ancient ritual sites on Okinoshima. Particular highlights are CG-enhanced images projected on the 18m x 7m supersize screen, replicas of ritual artifacts offered on Okinoshima recreated using cutting-edge technologies, and "Landscape Mapping Vision," which visualizes the changes to the landscape of the Munakata region over the years.

588 Fukata, Munakata City, Fukuoka TEL 0940-62-2600

<http://searoad.city.munakata.lg.jp>

Hours : 9:00-18:00

Closed Mondays (when Monday is a holiday, closed the following working day) and New Year's holiday

Admission : Free



▼ World Heritage Explanatory Corner



▼ Supersize Screen



▼ Landscape Mapping Vision



The Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region

(Munakata City and Fukutsu City, Fukuoka)

Shimpo-kan Museum, Munakata Taisha

Situated within the grounds of Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha, this museum houses and displays approximately 80,000 ritual artifacts discovered on Okinoshima, all of them designated as national treasures. The museum also displays many other sacred treasures that have been handed down to Munakata Taisha, including premodern texts and guardian dog statues (*komainu*).



2331 Tashima, Munakata City, Fukuoka TEL 0940-62-1311
<https://munakata-taisha.or.jp/shinpoukan.html>
 Hours : 9:00-16:30 (Last entry 16:00)
 Every day of the week throughout the year

Admission : Adults 800 yen, High school and university students 500 yen, Elementary and junior high school students 400 yen
 * 200 yen discount for groups (20 or more people) and persons over the age of 65



Learning the History Behind the “Sacred Island”

▼ Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group



Although today a tranquil rural landscape stretches along coastal areas of the Munakata region, from ancient times up to the middle ages it was here where the Munakata clan, adept at sea navigation, engaged actively in overseas exchanges and prospered.

The Yamato State had links to the Munakata clan and

conducted rituals on Okinoshima.

The Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group, which was constructed on a hill overlooking the sea and facing what used to be an inlet, bear witness to the history and influence of the Munakata clan.

Camellia Stage Historical Museum

This museum explains the history of the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group to visitors through CG images, models and excavated artifacts. In the special exhibition room a must-see are the many and varied funerary items excavated from the Tsuyazaki Mounded Tomb Group, a nationally designated historic site that includes Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group.

1-7-2 Tsuyazaki, Fukutsu City, Fukuoka TEL 0940-72-1207
<http://camellia-st.com/museum/>
 Hours : 10:00-20:00
 Closed Tuesdays (when Tuesday is a holiday, closed the following working day), the last Wednesday of each month, and New Year's holiday
 Admission : Free

▼ Special Exhibition Room



The Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region

(Munakata City and Fukutsu City, Fukuoka)

Cross the Ocean to Oshima “Guardian Island of the Deities”

Oshima is a tranquil island, lying 10km from Konominato Harbor in Munakata City, or 15 to 25 minutes by boat. With a population of approximately 600, many people who live on the island are fisherfolk who have fished the seas around Okinoshima and passed down its beliefs since ancient times.

On Oshima are two of the component parts of the World Heritage Site, namely Nakatsu-miya and Okitsu-miya Yohaisho of Munakata Taisha. From the summit of Mt. Mitake, the highest point on Oshima, visitors can enjoy panoramic views across the Genkai Sea to Okinoshima itself and back to the Kyushu mainland, gaining a real sense of the unique geographical and historical features of this island that connects Okinoshima with the mainland.



▲ Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, Munakata Taisha



▲ View of the mainland of Kyushu, from the summit of Mt. Mitake

■ Oshima Koryu-kan

Based on the concept of Oshima as the “Guardian Island of the Deities” this facility provides explanations through videos and panels about the people of Oshima and their links with Okinoshima. Here you can get to know the history of the island and its food, lifestyle, festivals and other folk customs.

901-4 Oshima, Munakata City, Fukuoka TEL 0940-72-2797

<http://searoad.city.munakata.lg.jp/oshimakouryukan>

Hours : 10:00-16:00

Closed Mondays (when Monday is a holiday, closed the following working day), New Year's holiday, and when boats to the island are cancelled

Admission : Free



▼ 3-wall Panoramic Screen

Visit the Ancient Capital of Dazaifu

Beyond Munakata and Fukutsu cities, these museums in Fukuoka Prefecture have close links to the heritage sites.

■ Kyushu National Museum

Kyushu National Museum is located next to Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine in Dazaifu City, where the government administration that once ruled Kyushu was located. In the permanent Cultural Exchange Exhibition themed around the history of Japan's cultural interactions with Asia there is a corner displaying ritual artifacts discovered on Okinoshima.



▲ Kyushu National Museum

4-7-2 Ishizaka, Dazaifu City, Fukuoka TEL 050-5542-8600

<https://www.kyuhaku.jp/en/>

Hours : 9:30-17:00 (Last entry 16:30)



Closed Mondays (when Monday is a holiday, closed the following working day) and New Year's holiday

Admission : Adults 700 yen, University students 350 yen

* Free to high school students and under, persons under 18 or over 70



▲ Dazaifu Government Office Ruins

■ Kyushu Historical Museum

This prefectural museum charts the history of Kyushu and Fukuoka Prefecture from the Paleolithic period to the modern era, including items excavated from Dazaifu Government Office ruins, items retrieved from tomb mounds, Buddhist statues and ancient documents.



▼ Kyushu Historical Museum (First Exhibition Room)

5208-3 Mitsusawa, Ogori City, Fukuoka TEL 0942-75-9575

<https://kyureki.jp/lang/en/>

Hours : 9:30-16:30 (Last entry 16:00)



Closed Mondays (when Monday is a holiday, closed the following working day) and New Year's holiday

Admission (First and Third Exhibition Rooms) :

Adults 210 yen, University and high school students 150 yen

* Free for junior high school students and younger and persons over the age of 65. Discounts for groups (20 people or more)

Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo

(Izumo City, Shimane Prefecture)

Situated next to the eastern precinct of Izumo Taisha (Izumo Grand Shrine), Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo introduces the unique history and culture of Shimane from ancient times up to the present.

Izumo is home to various mythological sites and many notable ancient ruins. Of all the myths and legends described in the *Kojiki*, Japan's oldest historical text, approximately one-third are set in Izumo, with the gods of Izumo playing a major role. In addition, the *Izumonokuni Fudoki*, the only ancient Japanese geographical record to be handed down almost intact to the present day, also details a number of precious traditions.

▼ Uzu pillars excavated from within the precinct of Izumo Taisha (in the collection of Izumo Taisha)



▲ Bronze bells excavated from the Kamo-Iwakura site (Yayoi period; in the government collection (Agency for Cultural Affairs))

Introduction to the exhibition

In the exhibition of the central lobby area, find yourself in the overwhelming presence of the base of enormous wooden pillars ("Uzu pillars") believed to have been from the main hall of Izumo Taisha during the Kamakura period (1185-1333).

The themed exhibition rooms introduce visitors to the ancient culture of Shimane, based on the three themes of "Izumo Taisha and rituals in the land of the gods," "The world of *Izumonokuni Fudoki*," and "Bronze implements and decorative swords." In the general exhibition room visitors can find a broad introduction to various topics that characterize the history and culture of Shimane, including "Burial mounds with four protuberant corners," "Beads of Izumo," "Iwami-Ginzan Silver Mine," and "Tatara iron manufacturing."



▲ Scale model approximating the main hall of Izumo Taisha in ancient times (in the collection of Izumo Taisha)

The myths of Izumo exhibition room presents the mythological lore of the region in a fun and accessible manner.



Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo

(Izumo City, Shimane Prefecture)



Ancient Izumo and Japan's faith and culture

Izumo has long been known as the "land of the gods," and "home to Japan's myths and legends." For example, in the old lunar calendar October was known around Japan as "*Kannazuki*," or the "month without gods," but in Izumo this month was known as "*Kamiarizuki*," or "month with gods," as it was believed that all the gods from around the country congregated in Izumo at this time.

Izumo Taisha is one of Japan's oldest shrines, with origins that date back to Japan's earliest legends, when the god Okuninushi called for a sumptuous shrine to be built in return for *kuni-yuzuri* (the transfer of the rulership of Japan). The Izumo region, where so many ancient historic and cultural artifacts have been preserved is truly a must-visit region for anyone considering the origins of Japan.

▼ Izumo Taisha



Ancient Izumo and Munakata

Ancient Munakata and Izumo had close links, thanks to maritime transport on the Sea of Japan. According to the *Kojiki*, the god Okuninushi was wedded to the Goddess Tagorihime of Okitsu-miya in Munakata. Also, in the *Nihon Shoki*, another of Japan's ancient annals, it is recorded that a distant predecessor of the Izumo-no-omi clan had travelled to Kyushu and stayed there.

Exchange also took place with the Korean Peninsula. The famous "*kuni-biki*" or "land-dragging" myth describes how surplus land from Shilla on the Korean Peninsula and Hokuriku in Japan was dragged by the gods to form the Shimane Peninsula. From the ritual sites on Okinoshima many items originating from Shilla in the sixth century have also been discovered.



Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo

<https://www.izm.ed.jp/english>

99-4 Kitsuki-higashi, Taisha-cho, Izumo City, Shimane
TEL : 0853-53-8600

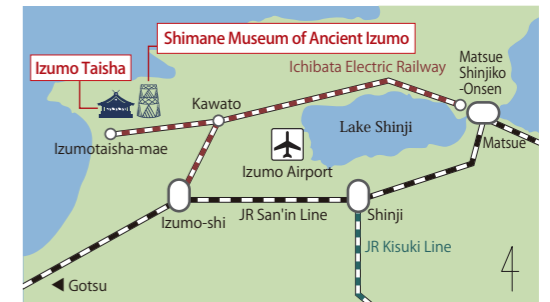


Hours : 9:00-18:00 (9:00-17:00 November to February)
(Last entry 30 minutes before closing)

Closed the third Tuesday of every month (when Tuesday is a holiday,
closed the following working day)

Admission:

Adults 620 yen (490 yen for groups*)
University students 410 yen (320 yen for groups*)
Elementary to high school students 200 yen (160 yen for groups*)
* Groups of 20 or more people.



Access by train

7-minute walk from Izumotaisha-mae Station, Ichibata Electric Railway

Access by car

20 minutes from Izumo Interchange or 30 minutes from the Izumo Taki Interchange, San'in Expressway

Access by air (Izumo Airport)

Airport connecting bus: "Izumo Airport Bus" to "Izumotaisha" (approx. 35 mins)

Mozu Mounded Tombs Visitor Center / Sakai City Museum

(Sakai City, Osaka Prefecture)

Mozu Mounded Tombs Visitor Center is a facility to share the value and attractions of the World Heritage site Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group and is located next to the Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun (Daisen Kofun), one of the world's largest kofun (mounded tomb) with a mound stretching 500 meters in length. Nearby is also Sakai City Museum, where visitors can deepen their understanding of kofun culture through first-hand historical materials.

Mozu Kofun Group was constructed during the period from the latter half of the fourth century to the latter half of the fifth century and is the burial site for the kings who ruled the ancient Japanese archipelago. Located on the Osaka Plain, which was one of the major political and cultural centers at the time and also a point of departure for ships leaving for the Asian continent, the group comprises many unique keyhole-shaped mounded tombs, as well as a large number of smaller tombs. Together with the Furuichi Kofun Group in Habikino and Fujiidera cities, the entire group was inscribed as World Heritage in 2019.

▼ Theater in Mozu Mounded Tombs Visitor Center



▲ Haniwa from Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun in Sakai City Museum (replicas and reproductions)

Introduction to the exhibition

At Mozu Mounded Tombs Visitor Center you can experience the imposing grandeur of the kofun group in a theater equipped with ultra-high-definition 8K video projected on both the walls and floor. There are also introductory exhibits explaining the World Heritage site, together with a tourist information office and souvenir corner.

Sakai City Museum displays a variety of artifacts, both originals and replicas, excavated from the Mozu Kofun Group. Artifacts excavated from the Suemura Kiln Site Group, where large quantities of Sue ware were once fired using techniques introduced from the Korean Peninsula during the Kofun period, are also of great historical value.



▲ Model of the stone burial chamber and stone sarcophagus found at Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun (Sakai City Museum)

Mozu Mounded Tombs Visitor Center / Sakai City Museum

(Sakai City, Osaka Prefecture)

Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group and Japan's faith and culture

The Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group bears outstanding witness to the unique history of the people of the Japanese archipelago, characterized by the expression of power through the formation of mounded tombs, in a time before the establishment of the first ancient, centralized state. These kofun mounded tombs are of a style unique to the Japanese archipelago, and the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group is a representative example, which illustrates the period of the formation and development of ancient kingly power that emerged in response to the political turmoil in East Asia.

▼ CG recreating the Mozu Mounded Tombs



Mozu-Furuichi and Munakata

The era of mounded tomb burials reached its peak during the late fourth to late fifth centuries, which was the time when the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group was constructed. This was precisely the same time that ancient state rituals started to be held on top of the huge rock on Okinoshima.

The kings of the Yamato State who built these monumental tombs on the Osaka Plain facing Osaka Bay dispatched diplomatic missions to states on the Korean Peninsula and mainland China, conducting grand rituals on Okinoshima, which was considered the guardian deity of the ocean. The Munakata clan, a powerful local clan involved in the rituals of Okinoshima, also built the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group on the hills overlooking the ocean. (See p. 9)



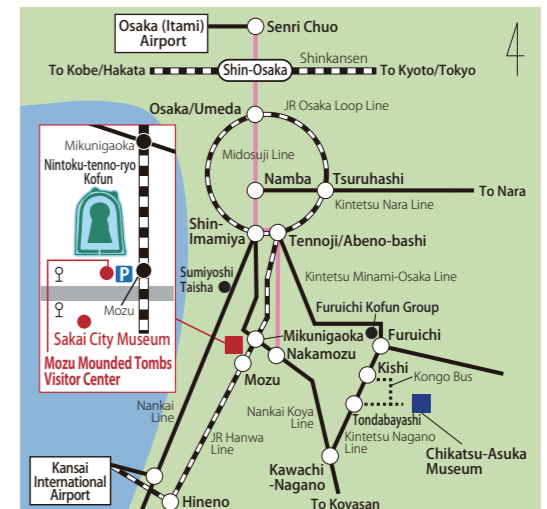
▲ Site 17 of Okinoshima
(State in which ancient bronze mirrors were discovered)



▲ Aerial view of Mozu Mounded Tombs

■ Mozu Mounded Tombs Visitor Center
<https://www.city.sakai.lg.jp/kanko/rekishi/sei>
 2-160 Mozu-Sekiuncho, Sakai Ward, Sakai City, Osaka TEL : 072-245-6682
 Hours : 9:00-18:00
 Closed for New Year's holiday
 Admission : Free

■ Sakai City Museum
<https://www.city.sakai.lg.jp/kanko/hakubutsukan>
 2 Mozu-Sekiuncho, Sakai Ward, Sakai City, Osaka TEL : 072-245-6201
 Hours : 9:30-17:15 (Last entry 16:30)
 Closed Mondays (open when Monday is a holiday) and New Year's holiday
 Admission: General admission 200 yen, University and high school students 100 yen, Junior high and elementary school students 50 yen
 * Discounts for groups (20 people or more)





Osaka Pref. Chikatsu-Asuka Museum

(Kanan Town, Osaka Prefecture)

The Chikatsu-Asuka Museum is run by Osaka Prefecture and housed in a building designed by international renowned architect Tadao Ando, located next to the Ichisuka Mounded Tomb Group, one of Japan's foremost groups of mounded tombs.

The region in the vicinity of Asuka in Habikino City was once an advanced region situated along the route linking Naniwa Bay (Osaka City), which was the main port for the Yamato State, and the political center of Asuka in Yamato (Asuka Village in Nara Prefecture, then known as *Totsu-Asuka*, meaning "Far Asuka"). It is recorded in Japan's ancient historical text the *Kojiki* that this region was named "*Chikatsu-Asuka*," meaning "Near Asuka". To the south of this region is the Shinagadani Valley, which is home to a number of large tombs dating from the late sixth century to the seventh century), including the tombs of a number of Japan's emperors.

▼ Chikatsu-Asuka Museum designed by Tadao Ando in the image of a mounded tomb (Kofun)



▲ Model of Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun



Introduction to the exhibition

The permanent exhibitions of the museum are split into three zones.

Zone 1 covers "Chikatsu-Asuka and International Influence, displaying exhibits on the theme of how from the fourth to the seventh and eighth centuries culture and technologies were brought into Japan from the Korean Peninsula and mainland China.

Zone 2 introduces the "Origins of an Ancient State," displaying exhibits such as haniwa and stone sarcophagi from the Kofun period. One of the must-see exhibits here is a 1/150 scale model of Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun, Japan's largest keyhole-shaped tomb, which recreates what it must have looked like during construction, including 3,000 model people.

Zone 3 covers "Modern Science and Our Cultural



▲ Preserved Shura (wooden sled)

Heritage," exhibiting one of Japan's largest "Shura" (a large wooden sled-like tool used for transportation during the Kofun period, excavated from the Mitsuzuka Kofun in Fujiidera City), which has been preserved using the latest modern scientific technologies.



Chikatsu-Asuka and Japan's faith and culture

The Kofun period (third to seventh centuries) was a period during which the formation of the state that would eventually become modern-day Japan began to crystallize, and the inflow of people, goods, and knowledge from overseas would lead to the establishment of a full-fledged state. Osaka, which is one of the centers of kofun culture, as represented by the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group, is also a region that was profoundly influenced by introduced culture.

At Chikatsu-Asuka Museum visitors can learn about the history of Japan's ancient state and its interactions with the outside world, such as Buddhist culture in the seventh century, and writing culture in the eighth century.

▼ Ichisuka Mounded Tomb Group and Introduced Culture



Chikatsu-Asuka and Munakata

From Okinoshima, various ritual artifacts from Shilla and other kingdoms on the Korean Peninsula and Chinese dynasties have been discovered, as represented by the gold ring excavated from Site 8. From the Ichisuka Mounded Tomb Group next to Chikatsu-Asuka Museum, many funerary items have been found that also relate to people and culture from the Korean Peninsula.

Munakata is known as a region that had an almost constant history of inflow of people from the Korean Peninsula, and many artifacts brought from there have been excavated. It could be very interesting to stop and compare the introduced culture of Munakata and Kyushu with that of the Kinki region.



▲ Gold Ring from Site 8 of Okinoshima



▲ Silver Rings from Ichisuka Tomb I-20



▲ Gold Earrings with hanging ornaments from Ichisuka Tomb B-7

■ Chikatsu-Asuka Museum

<http://www.chikatsu-asuka.jp/?s=english/>

299 Higashiyama, Kanan Town, Osaka TEL : 0721-93-8321

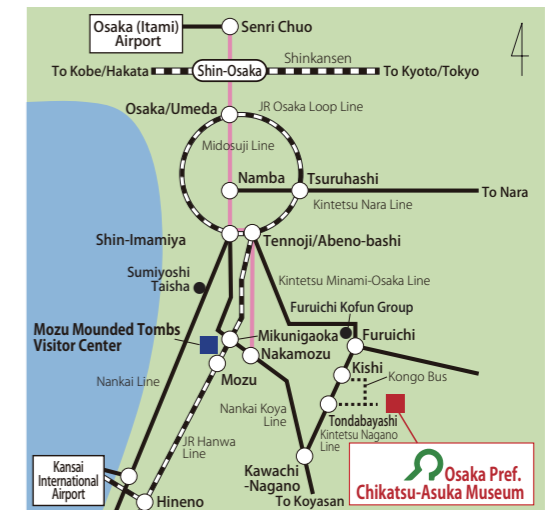
Hours : 9:45-17:00 (First entry to the exhibition rooms 10:00; Last entry 16:30)

Closed Mondays (when Monday is a holiday, closed the following working day) and New Year's holiday

Admission: Adults 310 yen, University and high school students and persons over 65 210 yen, Free for junior high school students and under
* Discounts for groups (20 people or more)

■ Access by train and bus

From Kishi Station or Tondabayashi Station on the Kintetsu Nagano Line, take Kongo Bus to Chikatsu-Asuka Hakubutsukan-mae bus stop, then walk for approx. 8 mins.





Saiku Historical Museum

(Meiwa Town, Mie Prefecture)

Saiku Historical Museum is an archaeological museum that displays the history of the “Saiku,” which endured for approximately 660 years from the seventh to fourteenth centuries. The “Saiku” was the palace of the “Saio,” an unmarried imperial princess, who served the goddess Amaterasu at Ise Jingu on behalf of the emperor. It also served as the offices of the officials who served the Saio.

During the Heian period (794-1185), the Saiku was located on a plot of land 120 meters long on each side. It was here where many government buildings were built and the appearance would have been something like the government office district of the capital. Today the key structures of the Saiku in the early Heian period have been recreated as Historical Park “Saiku Heian Era Park” in the National Historic Site “Saiku-ato Site,” based on excavation research.

▼ Exhibition Hall 1 (Introduction to the Saio system)



▲ Saiku Heian Era Park (Recreation of ancient buildings)

Introduction to the exhibition

Taking clues from historical documents and the outcomes of excavations, the museum displays and explains the processes and characteristics of the Saio system and the appearance of the Saiku, enabling visitors to feel the wonder of history through the Saiku.

Exhibition Hall 1 displays models based on historical documents that give a sense of the ceremonies and lifestyle of the Saio during the height of the Heian period.

Exhibition Hall 2 displays a wealth of archaeological materials and various recreated models of the Saiku from the seventh to fourteenth centuries, as revealed by archaeological excavations.

In the Motion Picture Exhibition Hall visitors can see



▲ Exhibition Hall 2 (Introduction to results of archaeological excavations)

videos of beautiful reenactments of the ceremonies of the Saio, the Saio’s procession from the capital to Ise, and the appearance of the Saiku in the Heian era.

Saiku and Japan's faith and culture

The Saio, an unmarried imperial princess who spent her days in the service of the gods at Ise, far from the capital, had more than 500 officials and ladies-in-waiting in her service at the height of her power, and those grand and opulent times have been described in some of Japan's most famous classical literature, including the Tale of Genji. Unique in the world, the Saio system dates back to the seventh century, when Japan's ancient state was established, and can be said to be of the utmost importance when considering the relationship between the Japanese people and their gods.

▼ The Procession, called the Saio Gunko (Saio departing from the capital)



Saiku and Munakata

In ancient times, Munakata-gun (district) was one of the few "divine districts" in Japan, as was Take-gun, where the Saiku, home to the imperial princesses who served the goddess Amaterasu, was located. The legends of the ancient annals the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, describe how the Three Female Deities of Munakata were born from the breath of the goddess Amaterasu herself.

In addition, from among the ritual sites on Okinoshima a number of ritual artifacts in the original shape of the divine treasures of Ise Jingu have been excavated. These artifacts are therefore a tangible representation that state rituals were held on Okinoshima like those of Ise Jingu.



▲ Gilt-bronze Miniature Pentachord from Site 5 of Okinoshima

▼ Articles unearthed from Saiku-ato site (Important Cultural Properties of Japan)



■ Saiku Historical Museum

<https://www.bunka.pref.mie.lg.jp/saiku/p0048200001.htm>

503 Takegawa, Meiwa Town, Mie TEL : 0596-52-3800

Hours : 9:30-17:00 (Last entry 16:30)

Closed Mondays (open when Monday is a holiday), the day after national holidays (except Saturdays and Sundays), and New Year's holiday

Admission: General admission 340 yen, University students 230 yen, Free for all elementary to high school students

* Discounts for groups (20 people or more)

■ Access by train : Get off at Saiku Station on the Kintetsu Railway, and walk for approx. 15 mins.

* Saiku Station is unstaffed. Ticket barriers are on the north side (for Itsukinomiya Hall for Historical Experience and Historical Park) and the south side.



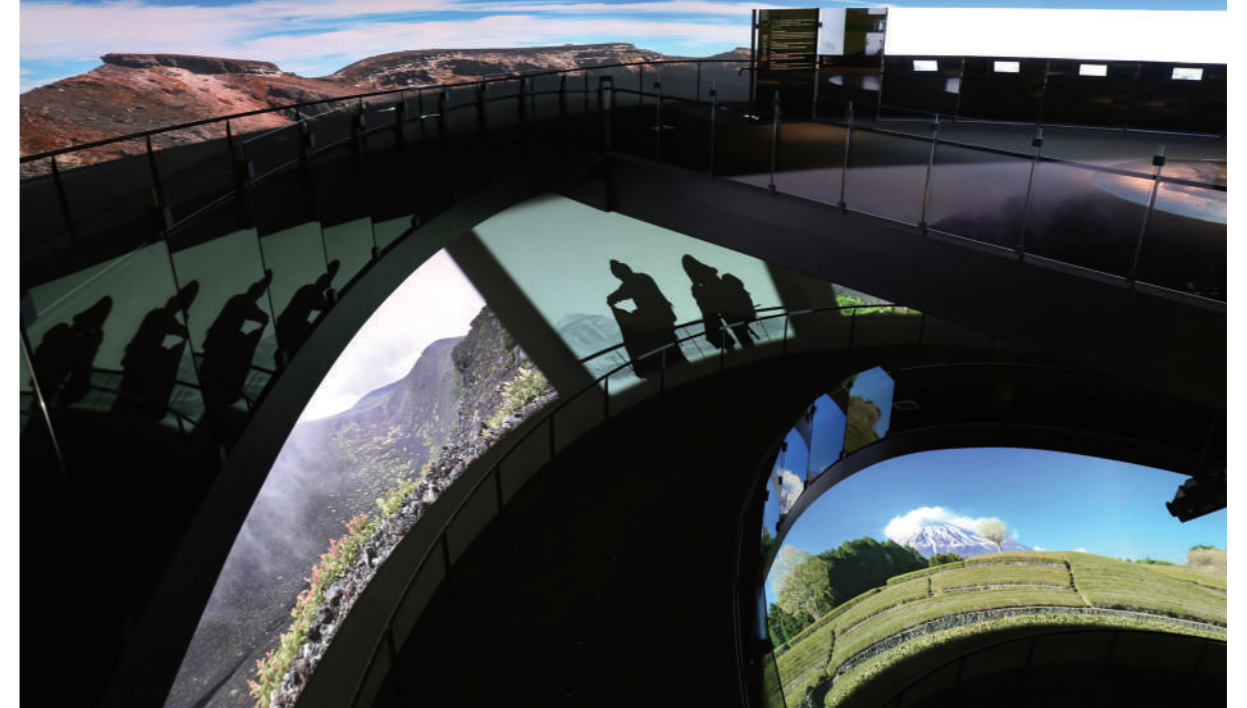
Mt. Fuji World Heritage Centre, Shizuoka

(Fujinomiya City, Shizuoka Prefecture)

Situated close to Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha in Fujinomiya City, Shizuoka Prefecture, Mt. Fuji World Heritage Centre was opened in December 2017 to highlight and protect the appeal of Mt. Fuji. Visitors can experience the wonders of World Heritage site Mt. Fuji through an elaborately designed video display.

In 2013 Mt. Fuji was inscribed as a World Heritage site, as “Fujisan, sacred place and source of artistic inspiration.” As the focal point for worship, as represented by the Fuji-ko faith, and as a place that has helped to nurture various arts, such as ukiyoe woodblock prints, Mt. Fuji is a global treasure to be handed down to the future, symbolizing the symbiosis between humans and nature.

▼ Mt. Fuji viewed from Mt. Fuji World Heritage Centre



▲ Spiral Slope in the Exhibition Hall

Introduction to the exhibition

The facility is laid out on five floors, and visitors can experience what it feels like to climb Mt. Fuji from the ocean, by climbing up the 193-meter-long spiral slope while watching time-lapse videos. They can also enjoy beautiful views of Mt. Fuji from the top-floor hall and the outdoor terrace.

The permanent exhibitions tell the story of Mt. Fuji, from its creation as a volcano, to its presence as a sacred mountain, a beautiful mountain that has inspired the arts, a mountain environment rich in nature, and what the future holds.

In the movie theater with its 265-inch screen, visitors can enjoy beautiful views of Mt. Fuji in all seasons and from the air, in crystal-clear 4K images.



▲ Top Floor Exhibition Hall

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Mt. Fuji and Japan's faith and culture

In the form of Fujisan Worship, Mt. Fuji offers rare evidence of the cultural tradition of mountain worship that remains a living practice to this day, and one that conveys the faith of the Japanese people in nature. Originating from people's beliefs in gods and Buddha, who were thought to reside on Mt. Fuji, the tradition of giving thanks for the spring waters at the foot of the mountain was nurtured, emphasizing the importance of living in harmony with an active and intermittently erupting volcano.

Since ancient times Mt. Fuji has also been the inspiration for various artistic activities. It was first mentioned in classical literature, such as the *Man'yoshu*, and since the fourteenth century it has been a favorite subject for all kinds of paintings. The image of Mt. Fuji as depicted in *Ukiyoe* woodblock prints of the Edo period (1603-1868) also had an impact on Western art, and the mountain has become a symbol of Japan and Japanese culture.

▼ *Fujisan Omote-guchi Shinmen no Zu* (Map of the route up Mt. Fuji (main route))



Mt. Fuji and Munakata

Mt. Fuji is renowned as Japan's "sacred mountain." Similarly to the "Sacred Island" of Okinoshima, this belief in Mt. Fuji can be traced back to ancient times, and both sites share the tradition of "yohai," or worship from afar. These are outstanding examples of nature worship in Japan.

At Yamamiya Sengen-jinja Shrine in Fujinomiya City there is a Yohaisho (site dedicated to worship of Mt. Fuji from afar), where Mt. Fuji itself is enshrined and worshipped as a deity. Although the shrine has no main hall, instead an altar is constructed at the very tip of the lava flow from one of Mt. Fuji's eruptions.

In Munakata, the Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, a place for worshipping Okinoshima from afar, is situated on the north coast of Oshima, approximately 48 kilometers from Okinoshima, and is the place where rituals to the gods of Okinoshima were held. (see p. 10)



▲ Fujisan Yohaisho of Yamamiya Sengen-jinja Shrine / Photo: Fujinomiya City

Mt. Fuji World Heritage Centre, Shizuoka

<https://mtfuji-whc.jp/en/>

5-12 Miyamachi, Fujinomiya City, Shizuoka
TEL : 0544-21-3776

Hours : 9:00-17:00 (July/August: 9:00-18:00)
(Last entry 30 mins. before closing)

Closed the third Tuesday of each month (when Tuesday is a holiday, closed the following working day) and facility inspection days

Admission : Adults 300 yen (groups 200 yen*)
Free for people under 15, over 70, and junior high school to university students

* Groups of 20 or more people.



■ Access by train : Get off at Fujinomiya Station on the JR Minobu Line, then walk for approx. 8 mins.



National Museum of Japanese History

(Sakura City, Chiba Prefecture)

The National Museum of Japanese History, known popularly in Japanese as Rekihaku, is a general museum of Japanese history engaged in the research and exhibition of Japanese history and culture. Since opening in 1983, the museum has been presenting the history and folklore culture of the Japanese archipelago from the Paleolithic period 37,000 years ago to the 1970s. In addition to actual historic artifacts the museum enables all visitors to deepen their understanding, using a diverse range of precise replicas, reconstructed models, and dioramas.

In Permanent Exhibition Gallery 1 “Prehistory and Ancient Time” there is an exhibit about Okinoshima with many replicas of ritual artifacts, and a full-scale diorama that elaborately reproduces the Okinoshima ritual site. Following the renovation of Exhibition Gallery 1 in 2019, an exhibit on the ritual site of Jungmak-dong on the west coast of the Korean Peninsula, which similarly to Okinoshima was an ancient ritual site for safe navigation, was added to the gallery’s exhibits.

▼ Gallery 1 (Okinoshima Island)



Gallery 1 (Ancient State vs. Diverse Archipelagic World)



Introduction to the exhibition

The museum’s permanent exhibitions are housed in a total of six galleries. Gallery 1 (Prehistory and Ancient Time) was renovated in March 2019 on three basic themes of social history, environmental history, and international interactions, and to reflect the latest research outcomes and contemporary perspectives. The lifestyles and cultures of prehistoric and ancient peoples of Japan are introduced in line with eight broad themes.

In addition to the exhibition rooms, the corridor in the courtyard forms a “pathway of stone monuments,” featuring a row of precise replicas of ancient stone monuments. Only 17 such ancient stone monuments remain in Japan, and 11 of them are on display here at Rekihaku, including the Three Stelae of Kozuke, which are inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World register.



▲ Pathway of Stone Monuments



National Museum of Japanese History

(Sakura City, Chiba Prefecture)



Rekihaku and Japan's faith and culture

Rekihaku is home to exhibits representative of Japanese history and folklore culture from the Paleolithic period through to the present day under 29 themes, with a focus on social history. The museum engages actively in promoting understanding of Japanese history and culture, by providing diverse historical perspectives and a flexible understanding of history to all people, from both Japan and overseas.

Gallery 1: Prehistory and Ancient Time



People Who Lived Through the Last Glacial Period / Diversity of the Jomon Culture in the Japanese Archipelago / The Beginning of Wet Rice Cultivation / Emergence of Wa / Keyhole-Shaped Kofun of Wa and East Asia / Ancient State vs. Diverse Archipelagic World / Okinoshima Island / The Shosoin Documents

Gallery 2: Japan from the 8th to 17th Centuries



Court Culture (10th - 12th Centuries) / East Versus West (12th - 15th Centuries) / Daimyo and Uprisings (15th - 16th Centuries) / Commoner Life and Culture (14th - 16th Centuries) / Japan in the Maritime Age (15th to mid-17th Centuries) / History of Printing (8th - 17th Centuries)

Gallery 3: Early Modern Japan



Early Modern Japan and the International Community / The Urban Age / The Flow of People and Goods / A Village Perspective on "Modern Japan" / Early Modern Japan in Maps

Gallery 4: Folklore Culture



A Focus on "Folklore" / Anxiety and Prayer / Life and *Waza*, Skills Informed by Accumulated Knowledge

Gallery 5: Japan in the Modern Era



Civilization and Enlightenment / Industrialization and Development of Hokkaido / A New Urban Lifestyle

Gallery 6: Contemporary Japan



War and Peace / The Postwar Lifestyle Revolution

Rekihaku and Munakata

It was in 1979 that the preparatory office for the planned new museum "Rekihaku" decided to exhibit the Okinoshima ritual sites, in recognition of the academic importance of the sites and their vital presence in any museum dedicated to Japanese history. Staff were dispatched to Munakata, and not only did they create precise replicas of ritual items found on Okinoshima, they also made a diorama that recreates Site 5 and Site 17 on the island. Very shortly after the opening of Rekihaku itself, the exhibition on Okinoshima was opened to the public in March 1984.

The life-size dioramas of the Okinoshima ritual sites are the only ones of their kind in the world.



▲ Diorama of Site 17 (National Museum of Japanese History)

■ National Museum of Japanese History

<https://www.rekihaku.ac.jp/english>

117 Jonaicho, Sakura City, Chiba

TEL : 050-5541-8600



Hours : March to September 9:30 - 17:00
October to February 9:30 - 16:30
(Last entry 30 mins. before closing)

Closed: Mondays (when Monday is a holiday, closed the following working day) and New Year's holiday

Admission:

General admission 600 yen (Groups* 350 yen)

University students 250 yen (Groups* 200 yen)

Free admission for all students of high school age and under.

* Groups of 20 or more people.



■ **From Tokyo** : Take the JR Sobu Line from Tokyo Station to Sakura Station (approx. 60 mins), then take a bus for approx. 15 mins
Take the Keisei Line from Keisei Ueno Station to Keisei Sakura Station (approx. 55 mins), then walk for approx. 15 mins

■ **From Narita** : Take the JR Narita Line from Narita Station to Sakura Station (approx. 16 mins), then take a bus for approx. 15 mins
Take the Keisei Line from Keisei Narita Station to Keisei Sakura Station (approx. 10 mins), then walk for approx. 15 mins