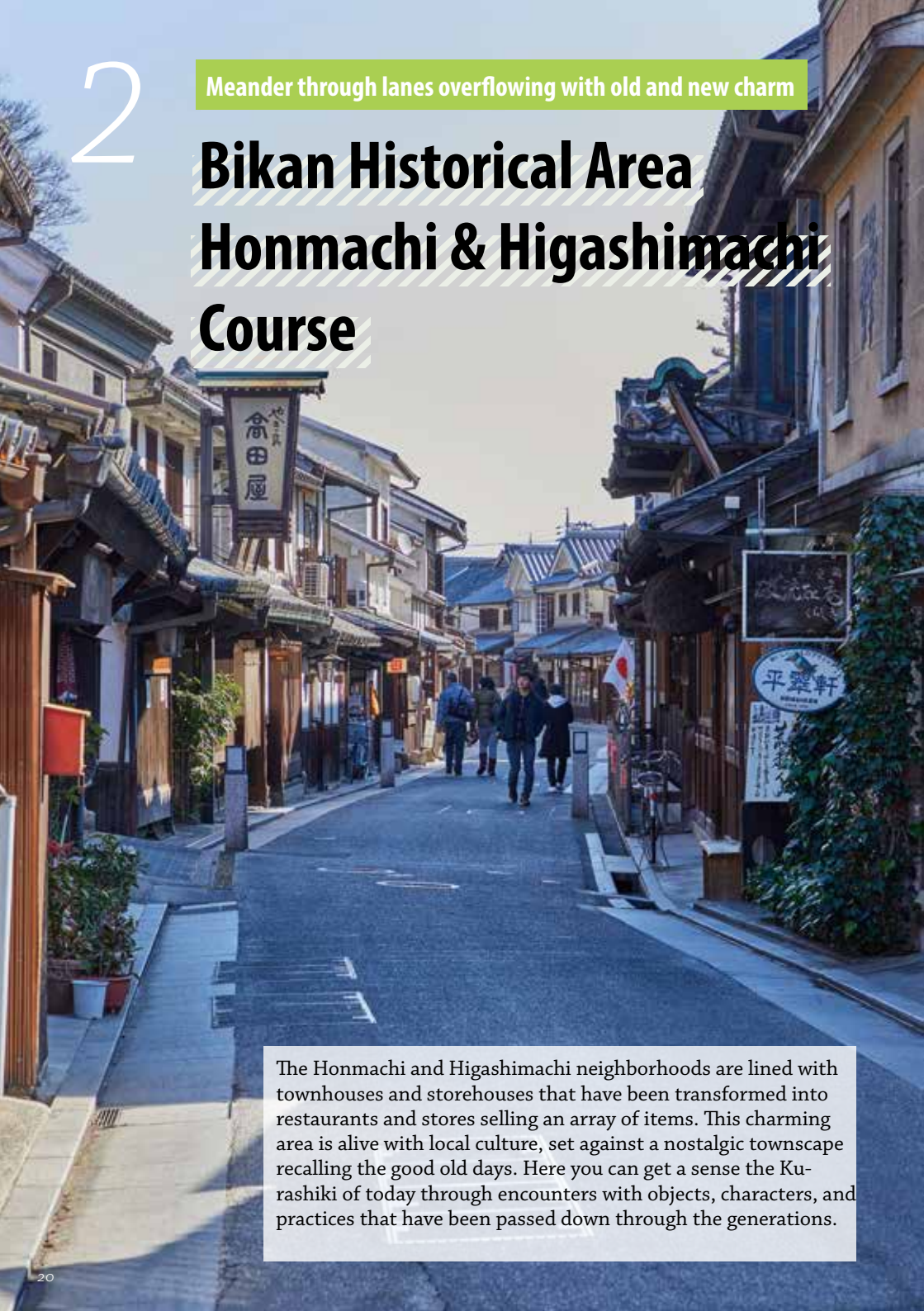


2

Meander through lanes overflowing with old and new charm

Bikan Historical Area Honmachi & Higashimachi Course



The Honmachi and Higashimachi neighborhoods are lined with townhouses and storehouses that have been transformed into restaurants and stores selling an array of items. This charming area is alive with local culture, set against a nostalgic townscape recalling the good old days. Here you can get a sense the Kurashiki of today through encounters with objects, characters, and practices that have been passed down through the generations.

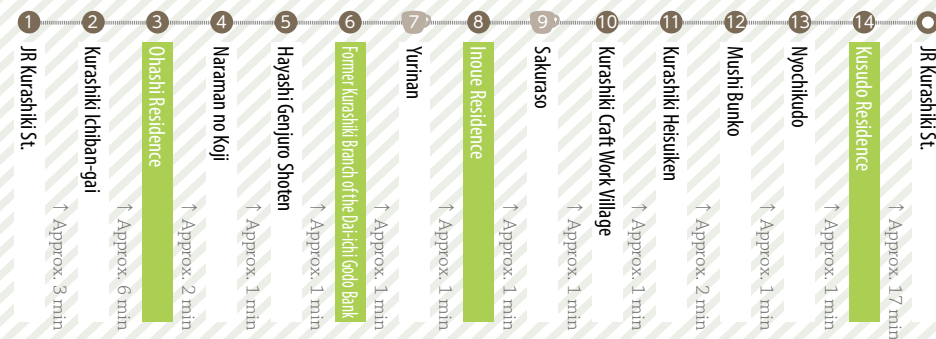


START



Time required: 4+ hours

GOAL



Japan Heritage cultural properties

Honmachi & Higashimachi Course

10 min walk to the Bikan Historical Area. Start here!

1 JR Kurashiki Station (south exit)

Leave from the south exit and cross the West pedestrian bridge to your right over Chuo-odori to find the entrance to Kurashiki Ichiban-gai, a covered shopping street.

Rental cycles are available from the Rent-A-Car office at the south exit of JR Kurashiki Station.

JR Rent-A-Car Kurashiki Office: 20m to the right of the south exit of JR Kurashiki Station

☎086-422-0632 🕒8:00-20:00 (bookings taken until 19:00, reception closed 12:00-13:00) 🗓open year-round 💰¥450 for up to 4 hours, ¥500 for 4+ hours to full day



Cross over via the West bridge



Another *shotengai* that leads to the Bikan Historical Area

2 Kurashiki Ichiban-gai

Soak in the retro feel of Ichiban-gai, a covered shopping street that recalls the Showa period (1926-1989). Stretching some 300m towards southwards, it is lined with many restaurants and *izakaya* bars and comes alive at night with tourists and locals alike.



The entrance to Ichiban-gai as seen from Kurashiki Station



Enjoy the leisurely stroll towards the Ohashi Residence



The entrance to the main building through the garden has a stately appearance



The main building is designed to give every room a garden view



The *nagayamon* gate



An old private house renovated into a center for local cuisine

4 Naraman no Koji

A *ryokan* (traditional inn) that had closed and an old private house, Shirai-tei, were renovated through a public-private partnership to create this culinary center housing eight eateries, including Japanese and Italian restaurants and cafes. It is winning acclaim for its promotion of local food culture and the use of ingredients sourced from around Takahashi River.

🕒🗓💰Varies by store



The corridor opens up into a courtyard

This designated National Important Cultural Property is a fine example of formal townhouse architecture

3 Ohashi Residence

This mansion was the home of the Ohashi family, who made their fortune by developing new rice field during the Edo period. Several of its structures—the *nagayamon* gate, main building, rice storehouse, and inner warehouse—are designated as national Important Cultural Properties and it is counted as one of Kurashiki's best examples of townhouse architecture.

☎086-422-0007 🕒9:00-17:00 (until 18:00 on Saturdays, Apr-Sep) 🗓Fridays, Dec-Feb; year-end (Dec 28-Jan 3) 💰Adults ¥550, Junior high/Elementary school students ¥350, Senior citizens (65+) ¥350



Discover quality items to enrich your daily life

5 Hayashi Genjuro Shoten

A pharmaceutical company building, dating back to the Edo period, has been renovated through a public-private partnership to create a concept space dedicated to “enriching everyday life” that now houses eight stores selling a variety of clothing, food, and household items. These quality products, created by artists and master craftsmen, are hard to resist and rich with the unique charm of Kurashiki.

Varies by store Mondays (excluding national holidays, closed on Tuesday instead)

The complex also features a memorial room about the Hayashi family, who made a significant contribution to Kurashiki's development. Take your time and relax in the cafe, the courtyard, or even the roof terrace!



Enjoy a panoramic view of the Bikan Historical area from the windows and roof terrace



Scone set with seasonal jams, ¥850



The alley-like courtyard space



“Classiky ishoku atiburanti” on the first floor



Beautiful Western-style architecture in the Renaissance style

6 Former Kurashiki Branch of the Dai-ichi Godo Bank

This Renaissance-style building was completed in 1922 as the Kurashiki branch of the Dai-ichi Godo Bank, the predecessor of Chugoku Bank. Its façade features domed stained glass windows; currently only the exterior of the property can be viewed. Work to see the building reborn as a new exhibition space for the Ohara Museum of Art will start in spring 2020.



A cafe filled with conversation and laughter as bonds grow between customers



Take a break from sightseeing in a spot that links humans with nature.

7 Yurinan

An old private house, some 100 years old, has been transformed into this charming guest house. The popular on-site cafe features a menu packed with dishes celebrating Okayama-grown ingredients, such as local favorite Shiawase Purin (literally, “happiness pudding”) and Tamago-kake Gohan (Rice with egg).

086-426-1180 Cafe 11:00-17:00 (last orders); Guest house: check-in 18:30, check-out 10:00 N/A Varies by room and length of stay



The cafe's signature Shiawase Purin (“happiness pudding”), ¥400



Tamago-kake Gohan (Rice with egg), ¥650



Choose a shared or a private room



The oldest townhouse in the Bikan Historical Area, built in 1721

8 Inoue Residence

The oldest townhouse in the Bikan Historical Area is designated a national Important Cultural Property. The heavily latticed windows, known as *kurashi-ki-mado*, on the townhouse feature fire-proof, single-swing shutters finished in lime plaster. At present, the residence is being conserved and renovated in preparation for being opened to the public in 2022.

086-426-3851 (Cultural Properties Protection Department, Kurashiki City)



A narrow alley, known as a *hiyasai*, adjacent to the building



The exterior of the Inoue Residence. The building is currently under renovation

Indulge in seasonal Japanese cuisine in a tranquil space

9 Sakuraso

Enjoy seasonal dishes prepared with fish and seafood caught in the Seto Inland Sea and seasonal vegetables. This restaurant is renowned for its skillful seasoning, which highlights the natural deliciousness of the ingredients used, and its colorful and attractive presentation.

☎086-426-5010 🕒11:30-14:00 (last orders 13:00), 17:30-22:00 (last orders 21:30) 📅Mondays, one Sun-each month (irregular)



The Shokado Bento, ¥1,500
*limited numbers daily



Look out for the restaurant's distinctive pale pink noren curtains

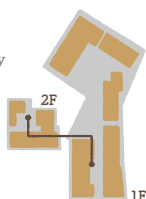


Experience the exhilaration of making by hand!

10 Kurashiki Craft Work Village

A former townhouse transformed into a multi-purpose complex through a public-private partnership. It now houses six stores selling craft items and hand-made items, unified around the central theme of Kurashiki's tradition of craftwork. Each store contains a studio where you can have a go at making items or watch crafters at work.

🕒Varies by store/studio
📅Thursdays



A range so enticing you won't know where to start!

A boutique food store selling a curated selection of exquisite products from across Japan

11 Kurashiki Heisuiken

The lovingly curated line-up of food products on sale here, chosen by the owner of the sake brewery, is made up of secure, safe, and delicious items that connect to daily life. The store also features a gallery cafe on the second floor.

☎086-427-1147 🕒10:00-18:00 (13:00-17:00 Mondays only)
📅None



An intimate second-hand bookstore where time slows down

12 Mushi Bunko

This second-hand bookstore, located along Honmachi-dori, has been run by owner Ms. Tanaka for more than 25 years. The store holds some 6,000 second-hand and vintage books spanning across all genres, including natural sciences, literature, and social sciences. The store also sells new publications from boutique publishing houses and the owner's own books. In this tranquil space you are sure to find a book that's perfect for you.

☎086-425-8693 🕒11:00-18:00
📅N/A



Three collections of essays by the store owner



Focus

Achi shrine and the Suinkyo

Achi Shrine is located at the top of Mount Tsukurugata, a 40m-high hill located at one edge of the Bikan Historical Area. This venerable shrine, standing in a location that has been a place of worship for more than 1700 years, enshrines Munaka Sannyoshin, goddess of the seas. Praying to this goddess is said to bring about safe sea journeys, improvement in performing arts skills, and commercial success.

The annual Great Fall Festival held at Achi Shrine is where Kurashiki's famous masked *suinkyo* characters make their appearance. The *suinkyo* are really young locals wearing masks intended to look like old men and women. These masked figures walk alongside the lion dancers in the festival procession to transfer the goddess's body, in a portable shrine, away from her main shrine.

The *suinkyo* tradition is said to have begun in



Suinkyo roaming through the Bikan Historical Area



Achi Shrine

1692, when Sawaya Zenbei of Ebisu-machi, an area close to Achi Shrine, was feeling the strain of his advancing years and asked a dollmaker to make a mask in his likeness. He then had a local young person wear the mask and take his place in the procession to move the portable shrine.

If you are lucky enough to be hit on the head with one of the fans the *suinkyo* carry, you are said to be rewarded with improved intelligence or good health.

Feature

Kurashiki's Byobu Festival

This festival is held in the elegant setting of the Bikan Historical Area. Some two dozen townhouses, mostly in the Honmachi and Higashimachi areas, throw open their lattice doors and invite visitors to take a look at their heirloom collections of *byobu* (multi-paneled folding screens), which are displayed with seasonal *ikebana* flower arrangements and other family treasures. Visitors to the area during festival time will find themselves captivated by the elegant atmosphere created by the combination of beautiful *byobu* and charming Edo-esque townscape.

The Byobu Festival ceased to be held for a time during the Meiji period, but was revived during the Heisei period to enjoy renewed attention. It is held in mid-October every year to coincide with the Achi Shrine Great Fall Festival.



Visitors are treated to displays of *byobu* folding screens and family heirlooms



Retro items, such as these hanging paper lanterns, are also popular



Packed with more than 800 varieties of masking tape and paper accessories

13 Nyochikudo

A specialist retailer of unique paper accessories sourced from across the whole of Japan. It boasts more than 800 varieties of masking tape, a Kurashiki specialty item, with new products introduced in quick succession. You can also find a wide range of other small household goods and ornaments, including candles, another specialty Kurashiki product.

☎086-422-2666 🕒10:00-17:30 📌None



Have a go in-store at being decorative with paper accessories



Founded in 1918

The store's interior is lined with masking tapes in all colors

A precious townhouse where Meiji period style has been left untouched

14 Kusudo Residence

This is a quintessential merchant house from the Meiji period that is still today home to a kimono fabric dealing business, Hashimaya Gofukuten. It is distinguished by its architectural features, such as its street-front construction style and its lime-plastered *mushiko-mado* latticed windows, which have led to it being designated an Important Cultural Property of Kurashiki City as well as a national Tangible Cultural Property. It also houses a cafe, Yume Kukan Hashimaya.

☎086-451-1040 (Yume Kukan Hashimaya) 🕒11:00-17:00 (last orders 16:30) 📌Tuesdays (some temporary closures)



The cafe is housed in the renovated storehouse



The street-front construction of the main building showcases quintessentially Meiji period construction methods

Focus

Barazushi

Barazushi (literally, scattered sushi) is a local variety of sushi that exemplifies the food culture of Okayama prefecture. Vinegared rice is topped with fish and seafood caught in the Seto Inland Sea, such as Spanish mackerel, Japanese scaled sardine, and octopus, as well as other toppings such as shiitake mushroom, shredded egg crepe, and dried gourd. It is enjoyed by Okayama residents as a local dish served on auspicious days, such as festivals or celebrations.

Barazushi was first developed at the beginning of the Edo period. Ikeda Mitsumasa, the third generation *daimyo* of the Bi-zen-Okayama domain, was an advocate of frugality among his retainers and commoners, and ordered that "meals are to comprise one soup and one side dish". The commoners then came up with barazushi, in which the toppings are mixed into the rice, as a way of concealing them as a side dish. So the barazushi dish, which was born out of the ingenuity of the common folk, was passed down through the generations. It is now available to enjoy at sushi restaurants and Japanese cuisine restaurants throughout the prefecture.

At KuraPura, you can enjoy the taste of hako-zushi (wood-box sushi), a dish invented during Ikeda's rule in which ingredients were concealed at the bottom of the box. Their modern interpretation of the dish is called Kaeshi-zushi.



Honmachi & Higashimachi Course



Kaeshi-zushi, served in a wooden box. The dish is topped with shredded egg crepe only



Flip it over to reveal some 20 luxury ingredients at the bottom



A luxury sushi restaurant that brings a touch of the unexpected to beautifully presented seasonal ingredients

KuraPura Wazen Fu

As well as its signature dish, the Kaeshi-zushi set (¥2,040), this restaurant offers a range of dishes showcasing locally sourced ingredients such as fish and seafood from the Seto Inland Sea and locally grown yellow chives. The dishes served in the restaurant, which follows a traditional residential structure boasting a traditional Japanese garden, are indulgent and so beautiful as to delight the eyes as much as the stomach.

☎086-435-2211 🕒11:30-14:30 (last orders 14:00), 17:00-22:00 (last orders 21:00) 📌Wednesdays (with some irregular closing)



The restaurant offers private rooms as well as a spacious shared room



The restaurant also offers an exceptional garden view

Take a little trip

Sakazu

Access

1. Approx. 2 min by bus from Kurashiki-Ekimae bus stop on a Ryobi bus bound for Kurashiki-eki Hokuguchi (alight at Kawa-iri bus stop)
2. Approx. 5 min by foot from Kawa-iri bus stop to Sakazu Park



The area around the sluiceway is perfect for a stroll

- **A valuable agricultural water distribution facility from the Taisho period(1912-26)**
- **A Takahashi River East-West Water District's Treatment and Distribution Facility**
- This facility was designed to deliver water, the most precious resource for human activity, across the entire area by dividing the water equally across six distribution channels. It was constructed at the same time as flood prevention repairs were carried out on the Takahashi River. The sluiceway is built from reinforced concrete, while its 15 arched gates feature *kiri-ishi* (free cut granite stones). In 2016 it was designated a national Important Cultural Property.
- ☎086-434-2251 (Sakazu Park Management Office) 🕒Standard park opening hours ⓧNone 💰Free



Sakazu Park, built in the area around the water distribution facility, is a popular local relaxation spot



The park is also famous for its cherry trees

Everyday items to enrich your everyday life

B Sakazu-yaki Kiln

Kurashiki's oldest style of ceramics, with a history of more than 150 years. Tea cups, vases, and crockery are the main focus of production. Sakazu-yaki pieces are characterized by how easily they mold to the hand and their ease of use, as well as their elegant, lustrous hues and handsome form.

☎086-422-1962 🕒10:00-17:00 ⓧN/A 💰Experiences are charged (price varies)



Try a ceramics experience in the on-site studio, prices start at ¥3,000 (reservations need to be made one week in advance)



Honmachi & Higashimachi Course



A moment of peace enjoying the waterside view

C Waterside Cafe: Miyake Shoten Sakazu

This cafe, housed in an old family home nestled by the river, is walking distance from Sakazu Park. It is in a beautifully relaxing natural setting, with a lovely waterside view that opens up outside its windows and a lush green garden viewable from the porch.

☎086-435-0046 🕒Mar-Nov, 9:00-17:30 (last orders 17:00); Dec-Feb, 9:00-17:00 (last orders 16:30) ⓧNone



Homemade Cake of the Day, ¥850(with a hot drink). Desserts made with seasonal fruits are particularly popular

Take a little trip

Funao

Access

1. Approx. 20 min by train from JR Okayama Station to Nishiachi Station on the Sanyo Mainline
2. Approx. 45 min on foot from Nishiachi Station to Ichi-no-kuchi Lock.



A lock standing over the Takahashi River canal

A Ichi-no-kuchi Lock

- The remains of a lock that was opened in the early Edo period, to the north of the canal that was also known as the Takase-doshi. It played a crucial role in water transportation along the lower reaches of the Takahashi River. It is retained today as a city designated historic site.

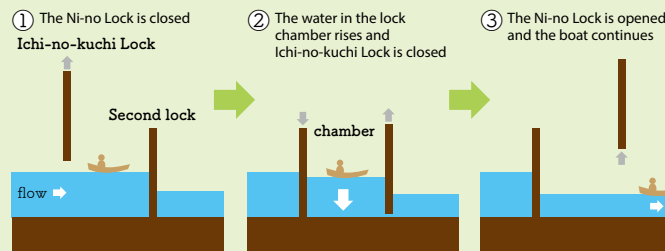


The Ichi-no-kuchi Lock retains its original construction



The Ni-no (second) Lock

The Lock Mechanism



A bottle of popular sweet wine



The venue is also used for events and harvest festivals



Muscat jam 120g, ¥1,080. Makes the perfect souvenir



The winery also makes sparkling wine and juice

Home of a premium wine made from 100% Kurashiki-grown Muscat grapes

B Funao Winery

This winery stands at the top of a small mountain. It is known for its premium wines, made with 100% Kurashiki-grown Muscat of Alexandria grapes; these wines are distinguished by their mellow aroma and fresh, crisp taste. Try some samples, buy bottles to take home, and peruse the other items on sale including jams and confectionery.

☎086-552-9789 🕒9:00-17:00 📅Year-end (Dec 29-Jan 3)

Focus

The Ichi-no-kuchi Lock and Canals

The Takase Canal, linking Tamashima Port with the western branch of Takahashi River, was first opened by Mizunoya Katsutaka, lord of the Bitchu-Matsuyama domain. At the time it was 10km in length and 9m wide, dropping to 3.6m at its narrowest points along its middle reaches. Katsukata ordered the construction of the Ichi-no-kuchi Lock and Ni-no (second) Lock, as well as a 350m lock chamber, in Kagiwa Valley, which today is in the Funao district of Kurashiki City. When the Ni-no Lock is closed, the water level in the lock chamber rises. Once it has risen some 2-3 meters above the water level of the lower reaches of the river, opening the Ni-no Lock meant that the 10 or so canal boats waiting in the lock chamber would be quickly transported downstream. This twinned lock system, which made clever use of differences in water levels, is believed to have been opened in 1664.

The canal boats carried mostly rice, copper, iron, tobacco, charcoal, and firewood to the south of Japan from the north, and salt, marine products, and fish fertilizer from south Japan back up to the north. The Takase Canal also had a role in supplying water to land across the Bitchu-Matsuyama domain, the lord of which had ordered its



construction. However the opening of a railway service between Kurashiki and Shisawa (present-day Gokei) along the Hakubisen line in 1925 brought an end to the canal boats fulfilling that role. Along the lower reaches of the Takahashi River. Still, thanks to the Takase Canal, water could be collected in the Sakazu Reservoir and siphoned through the Takahashi River all the way to Ichi-no-kuchi lock. This gave it a vital role as a channel delivering the bounty of water to the right-banks of the Takahashi River.

Take a little trip

Mizushima

Access

1. Approx. 24 min by train to Mizushima Station
(take the train from Mizushima Rinkai Railway Kurashiki-shi Station, accessible via JR Kurashiki Station)
2. Approx. 40 min on foot from Mizushima Station



Stones slabs engraved with the names of the people involved in constructing the lock remain to this day



The industrial backdrop of the Mizushima industrial complex

A historical landmark that tells the story of land reclamation

A Itajiki Lock

Fukuda-shinden is the name of an area spanning the Kitase, Nakase, Minamise, and Higashizuka districts of present-day Kurashiki City. The area was reclaimed from the sea between 1845 and 1852, under the direction of Okayama domain. Along the embankments surrounding Fukuda-shinden, locks were built in three locations to enable the removal of excess and polluted water; one of these was the Itajiki Lock. It is 10m tall by 6m deep, with distinctive granite walls. It also features an inscription giving the date of its construction: Built in summer, the sixth month, of the second year of the Kaei era (in other words, June 1849).

☎086-426-3851 (Cultural Properties Protection Department, Kurashiki Board of Education)

The only railway serving a waterfront industrial area in west Japan

B Mizushima Rinkai Railway

A *rinkai* railway is a local railway service built to transport freight around waterfront industrial areas. This particular railway covers an area of some 10km, running from the center of Kurashiki to the Mizushima area, and carries passengers as well as freight. It still uses carriages dating back to the Kokuetsu (former national rail company) era, with their nostalgic color and charm, that cannot be seen in service anywhere else today.

☎086-446-0931 (Mizushima Rinkai Railway Company)

🕒5:23 (first departure)
– 23:00 (last departure)

🚶None 🚶Starting
fare, ¥190; Kurashiki-shi
Station to Mizushima
Station, ¥330



Mizushima Station



Mizushimachokoku-dori is lined with works by famous sculptors



Honmachi & Higashimachi Course



The Rintetsu Garden, a night market held in the underpass

Focus

The Itajiki Lock and Land Reclamation

In 1584, the *daimyo* Ukita Hideie ordered work to start on the development of lowland to the east of Kurashiki through the construction of the Ukita embankment, which was to stretch from Tamongahana, located at the boundary of Hayashima and Mishima, to Iwasaki in Futsukaichi, Kurashiki. The land reclamation work carried out by the Okayama domain from the second half of the 17th century is representative, in terms of both scale and technology, of the capabilities of the early modern period. By the second half of the 1660s, the hardness and strength of granite were being leveraged to great advantage in the construction of grid-pattern locks (water gates), in which huge slabs were used for columns and beams. The background to this was that good quality granite could be excavated in large quantities along the coast of the Seto inland Sea and the excavated granite was readily transportable to the reclaimed land by water.

In 1845, the Okayama domain started work on developing the Fukuda-shinden area, successfully reclaiming some 6.25million m² of land by 1852.



Three locks were built on the reclaimed land, in order to remove excess and polluted water; today, the Yobimatsu Lock and Itajiki Lock remain. The locks are fairly small, only around 4m square in width, but the Shiodome Embankment built behind them, standing at some 10m wide and 6m tall, remains today in almost perfect form. The embankment, built using the *kirikomihagi* (cut and insert) masonry technique, contains a stone engraved with the year of construction (June 1849). Stone slabs also remain which are engraved with the names of local magistrates and tax clerks, such as Fukai Chujiro.