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Kitakyushu japan guide

Kitakyushu is a large metropolis formed in 1963 by merging the 5 cities of Moji, Kokura, Wakamatsu, Yahata and Tobata. Home to the largest port in Kyushu, Shikoku and the Chugoku region with a population of around one million, this city is the gateway between Honshu and Kyushu Islands. During the 1600, this area was in the spotlight for the first time in history. The Kokura Castle was built during that time and prospered as a castle town acting as the center for government noticed the geographic advantages of this area, which lead to the construction of many port facilities and railroad lines, turning this area into an important distribution base in Japan. During world war two, the primary target for the "Fat Man" atomic bomb was Kokura in Kitakyushu is one of the largest industrial zones in Japan with many high- technology and biotechnology industries joining in with the traditional steel and ceramic industries. Popular travel locations include Moji port, an international trading port with Meiji and Taisho period western building structures, as well as Kokura Castle originally built in 1602, by Hosokawa Tadaoki creating a strong contrast with the modern structures surrounding this Edo period castle of Japan. Other locations include the Toto museum, Yawata Steel Works, and space world. Visitors can also relax and enjoy the scenery of nature's best colorful wisteria at the Kawachi Fujien Wisteria Garden and the view of the famous Kanmonkyo Bridge, which is the suspension bridge connecting Kyushu Island to Honshu. Activities Tristan Scholze A scenic wonder of northern Kyushu, the limestone plateau of Hiraodai provides an otherworld landscape with ample hiking, caving,.. 1 4 Kitakyūshū (北九州, [1]) is a large city in Fukuoka prefecture on the island of Kyushu, Japan. Together with Shimonoseki it is part of the Kanmon Straits area. In terms of area it is the largest city in Kyushu, though Fukuoka has the bigger population. The population of Kitakyushu is about one million (or 1.3 million including Shimonoseki). Kitakyushu was created in 1963 from the five smaller cities of Kokura (小倉), Moji (門司), Tobata (戸畑), Wakamatsu (若松) and Yahata (八幡), and it retains this sense of being a country area with much diversity and beautiful nature, despite its reputation as a steel town. Districts[edit] Moji is the city's most touristic ward due to its charming historical center, containing several buildings from end of 19th-early 20th centuries. Offers also great views of the imponent Kanmonkyo Bridge leading to Shimonoseki Kokura is Kitakyushu's main transport, shopping and nightlife hub, also containing a nice riverside area where the Kokura castle is located Tobata is a more suburban and industrial area, hosting cheap, good-quality restaurants and the most important cultural event of the city, the Tobata Gion Yamagasa festival Yahata contains a former industrial wasteland which has been completely redeveloped, now containing excellent museums. Wakamatsu, in an island linked to the continent by the "unnecessarily huge" Wakato bridge, is popular among locals for its pleasant green areas and beaches Understand[edit] Kokura, the heart of Kitakyushu, is an ancient feudal castle town guarding the Straits of Shimonoseki. Kokura was supposed to be the target of the second nuclear bomb in World War II. However, it was cloudy on the day of the attack and the plane diverted to Nagasaki instead. The modern city of Kitakyushu dates back only to 1963, when the cities of Moji, Kokura, Tobata, Yahata and Wakamatsu were merged by administrative fiat. Get in[edit] By plane[edit] 33.845556131.0351 Kitakyushu Airport (KKJ IATA 新北九州空港 Shin Kitakyushu Kivako), Kokuraminami. Built on reclaimed land offshore in Suo nada, the most westerly part of the Seto Inland Sea, opened its doors in 2006. The airport is served by several domestic airlines, including JAL/ANA and the new discount carrier StarFlyer. Most flights connect to Tokyo's Haneda and Nagoya's Komaki airports (both within their city limits), but there are also several flights each week to and from Taiwan's Kaohsiung (called Takao in Japanese). More than 30 buses per day run between the airport and the Kokura station, many of them nonstop, but most stopping at each train station along the way. Buy the tickets before boarding for ¥620. The first bus leaves the airport at 24:55, after the last flight from Tokyo. Buses also run to/from Shimonoseki station eight times per day (70 minutes, ¥1000). If coming from the southeastern side of Kyushu, instead of going all the way to Kokura you can disembark at Kusami station (朽網駅), which has shuttle buses every 30 minutes or so to the airport, 20 minutes away, but only local trains stop at Kusami, no express trains. By train[edit] Kokura station from the South side Kokura Station (小倉駅) is the main railway station and is on the San'yo Shinkansen Line. All San'yo Shinkansen trains make frequent runs to/from Hiroshima, Okayama and Osaka, with some Nozomi trains also running from Kyoto, Nagoya and Tokyo. Sakura trains also run to/from Kumamoto and Kagoshima. Remember that the Japan Rail Pass covers all the forementioned sections above, except Nozomi and Mizuho trains. Both the San'yo Shinkansen Line and the Kagoshima Main Line (鹿児島本線 Kagoshima honsen) connect Kitakyushu to Hakata station in Fukuoka. On the Shinkansen, Kokura can be reached from Hakata in 15-20 minutes at a cost of ¥2050 for an unreserved seat. Frequent Kodama runs are made between the two stations during rush hours. By ferry[edit] Kokura ferry terminal connects with Matsuyama in Ehime Prefecture, Shikoku. Shin Moji ferry terminal connects with Osaka, Kobe and Tokyo. The Tokyo service is operated by Ocean Tokyu Ferry, 03-5148-0109; passenger fares are ¥14,000 for second class and ¥26,600 for first class. Get around[edit] For a tourist, JR trains are the easiest and likely the most convenient means of transport (except to and from the airport), as they give access to most of the city's non-natural attractions. Acquiring the JR Northern Kyushu/JR Kyushu pass is an overkill if you just want to go around Kitakyushu, but an attractive option if you also intent to go to nearby cities like Fukuoka and Beppu. Take note that the JR Northern Kyushu/JR Kyushu passes do not allow you to use the Shinkansen to go from Kokura to Hakata (but the normal JR Pass does). By bus[edit] Nishitetsu Buses to nearby cities. Nishitetsu Buses accept most Japanese transport smartcards (Suica, PASMO, Sugoca, etc.) which will save you a lot of hassle and also save you some money when you transfer to the train or another bus to get to your destination. Bus stops are very informative, containing complete information about lines and time tables, although you will need to figure out the Kanji and delays of up to 5 minutes are normal. By monorail[edit] The Kitakyushu Monorail runs every ten minutes from JR Kyushu's Kokura station to Kikugaoka in Kokura Minami ward. The monorail is fun to ride and provides interesting views of the city, but its usefulness is impared by the fact that it does not accept transport smartcards (tickets can be bought only with cash) and it offers no discount for transfer to trains or buses. Only a few station announcements are in English (including the stop for the Kitakyushu), [edit] Walking around the Kokura station is a breeze as there are many covered pedestrian pathways and arcades. Mojiko and Yahata are also more conveniently explored on foot. See[edit] The city has the reputation of being just an industrial area, but this is only true of part of the coastline. The city covers a very large area (much larger than Fukuoka, 486 km² as compared with 340), and there are many pleasant spots for sightseeing and recreation. Kokura[edit] Kokura castle and cherry blossoms (sakura) 33.883130.8831 Kokura Castle (小倉城 Kokura-jō) (a 10-minute walk from JR Kyushu's Kokura Station). Built by Hosokawa Tadaoki in 1602, it was the property of the Ogasawara clan which came from Harima (near Himeii) from 1632 to 1860. The castle was burnt down in 1865 in the war between the Kokura and Choshu clans. The keep was reconstructed in 1990, and the castle was fully restored in 1998. The keep contains a modern folkloric museum. Inside the castle you can see a video show about what Kokura was like during the Edo period, a display of Kokura Castle and its surroundings during the Edo period which is made of many lifelike tiny paper dolls, and you can also ride inside a palanquin like the castle lord would have when traveling. The box rocks back and forth to recreate the motion. It's amusing and free, so enjoy being the daimyo for a minute. You can also see two beautiful paintings of tigers with gold leaf on display. On one floor inside the castle there is a friendly older gentleman who is there to greet tourists. He makes scale models of Japan's castles out of toothpicks and his models are on display. If you can speak a little Japanese he is really kind and interesting to talk to. There is a gift shop and telescopes at the top floor (no ATM, bring your cash!) where you can buy souvenirs of the paintings inside the castle. There is a wheelchair lift sort of device. See also Japanese castles. Keep ¥350, Japanese garden ¥300, Matsumoto Seicho museum ¥400, all three ¥700. Mori Ogai house in Kokura. Literary giant Ogai was based at the castle at the turn of the 19th-20th century when it was a military base. He was born in Tsuwano in Shimane prefecture. The Hiraodai karst plateau Hiraodai (平尾台). A rare karst plateau in Kokura Minami ward, 30-40 minutes by car from Kokura station. The grassy mountains are covered with large gray round rocks which the locals will tell you look like sheep grazing. Great for walks, hiking and camping. Caves can also be visited and the Shonyudo cave is not to be missed - wade through ice cold water in midsummer. There is no direct public transportation to Hiraodai, but a reasonably priced taxi service is available. The taxi leaves from the Nakatani Nishitetsu bus terminal (中谷車庫) and stops five minutes later at the JR Ishiharamachi Station (石原町駅) on the Hita-Hikosan Line (日田彦山線). It leaves the bus terminal twice a day M-F (09:40 and 16:05) and four times a day on Sa Su and holidays (09:40, 10:45, 13:40, 14:50). For more information desk on the third floor. Sugao no taki waterfall in Kokura Minami ward - cool and popular with Japanese residents in the summer. Watch out for baby wild boars (uribo) which have been known to nibble at feet in search of food (from personal experience). You can rent bicycles from Dobaru cycling terminal and cycle around the whole area for a few hundred yen. Buses run to here from Kokura Station. Moji[edit] The old Moji customs building and rickshaw for hire Moji-ko Retro, a few minutes walk from Moji-ko station, is also attractive, and aimed specifically at the tourist trade. You can hire a rickshaw, visit the old buildings (including the room where Albert Einstein stayed the night at the Mitsui Club in 1922) and shop for souvenirs. Also be sure to go up the Moji Port Retro Observation Deck - there is a great 180-degree view from the 31st floor on fine days. Moji-ko is linked by a small and rapid ferry with Shimonoseki on the other side of the Kanmon straits. There is also an underground walk-way through the Kanmon Strait that connects Kyushu to the main island of Honshu. Moji-ko is famous for its Yakicurry, rice topped with Japanese curry, covered in cheese with an egg thrown in, and then baked. There are several restaurants in the area that serve variations of this specialty. The shabu restaurant in Moji-ko station is also well worth a visit. Moji supposedly was a place where banana treats at touristy places there. For those with a little extra cash and an adventurous appetite, it is also famous for its Fugu (blowfish). Wakamatsu[edit] Iwaya beach in Wakamatsu ward. You can catch the Kitakyushu City bus No. 41 from JR Kokura and Orio Stations. Get off at the last stop, Iwaya. Direct buses from Kokura station leave at 12:09 on weekdays and 10:16 on weekends and holidays. ¥440. Beware jellyfish after mid-August! Yahata[edit] Kawachi reservoir in Yahata Higashi ward has an onsen (hot spring) with a rotenburo (outdoor bath). Courtesy bus from Yahata station. You can walk round the reservoir in about an hour, or rent a bicycle. Mount Sarakura, accessible by Hobashira cable car, provides superb views of the city, especially at night. Museums[edit] 33.869861130.8265282 Kitakyushu City Art Museum (北九州市立美術館, Kitakyūshū Shiritsu Bijutsukan) (in Tobata ward). 33.88589130.875273 Kitakyushu City Art Museum (ゼンリン地図の資料館, zenrin no chizu no shiryōkan) (in Riverwalk, on the 14th floor). M-F 10:00-17:00, closed at weekends and on national holidays. The Zenrin company, whose head office is in the black segment of the Riverwalk complex, is a major local employer which pioneered mapping software in Japan. This location has been chosen because a famous Edo period mapmaker, Ino Tadataka, started making his map of Kyushu here. The views of the city and Kanmon straits from the museum on a fine day are excellent. entry ¥100. 33.8692130.80835 Museum of Natural & Human History (北九州市立いのちのたび博物館, kitakyūshū shiritsu inochi no tabi hakubutsukan). Near Space World train station. 33.8679130.80756 Environment Museum (環境ミュージアム, kankyō myūjiamu) (near Space World train station). 33.944130.95677 Kaikyo Dramaship (海峡ドラマシップ) (in Moji-ko). Has a museum and a light show about the history of the Kanmon straits, good nautical souvenirs and regular live music events. 33.9431130.96188 Railway Museum (九州鉄道記念館, kyūshū tsetsudō kinenkan) (Moji-ko near the station). 33.9489130.96539 Idemitsu bijutsukan) (in Moji-ko). 33.865056130.79688910 Centre for Contemporary Art Kitakyushu (CCA Kitakyushu), 2-6-1 3F Ogura Yahata-Higashi-ku (in Yahatahigashi-ku). The CCA has an annual international artist residency program, studios and an interesting contemporary art gallery. Do[edit] Visit the Blast furnace near Space World train station. Japan's steel industry began here in 1901 and the original furnace is preserved as steelmaking was so important to Japan and the development of Kitakyushu in the 20th century. Also nearby are the city's natural history museum and environment museum. Wakato ferry now used for night cruising Cruise the Dokaiwan sea inlet between Tobata and Wakamatsu wards at night. Advanced bookings required, 19:00-21:00, Fridays in August, leaving from Tobata ferry stage, about seven minutes walk from Tobata station. Four trips only each year. ¥3,000 per person. Includes visit to former Furukawa Kogyo building in Wakamatsu where we were treated to live Hawaiian music and beer. Overall a good evening. The boats used for the cruise are the ferry boats which ply between Tobata and Wakamatsu, Japan's shortest and cheapest ferry (3 minutes, ¥50 per bicycle). Walk to Honshu! Kanmon Pedestrian Tunnel starts in Moji-ko, near Mekari Park. The tunnel runs underwater between the islands of Kyushu and Honshu. After about ten minutes' walk you have emerged in Shimonoseki in Honshu, where you can ride a cable car up Hinoyama and Kitakyushu. Best on a clear day! ChaCha Town is a shopping and amusement center with a movie theater, game center, food court, clothing stores, a grocery store, and a very big ¥100 shop. Popular with families and younger teens. On weekends there are concerts and other attractions in the amphitheater- usually a kids' dance group, a magician, or a local musician. The shopping center's token large red ferris wheel isn't the biggest, but it's kind of a fun way to see the city at night. Take the ¥100 bus marked "Sunatsu/Chacha Town" from the bus platform underneath Kokura station north exit). Easily reached from Kokura station, Aru Aru City is Kitakyushu's center of otaku culture, hosting frequent events per year, several stories of anime-, manga-, and game-themed shops, game arcades, a manga kissa, and the Kitakyushu Manga Museum. While obviously not as huge as Tokyo's Akihabara or Osaka's Den Den Town, it is far more specialised than those two and has the obvious convenience of having all shops under the same roof. Midsummer festivals[edit] Watch one of the summer festivals held in July: Kokura gion (小倉祇園太鼓, Kokura gion daiko). Third weekend in July Tobata Gion (中畑祇園大山笠, Tobata gion yamagasa). Designated an important intangible cultural asset of Japan and dates back to 1802. It involves the carrying of large floats called Yamagasa by about 100 men who shout "Yoitosa" to keep in time. Fourth weekend in July. Kurosaki gion yamagasa). July 20–23 Wakamatsu Summer Festival (若松みなと祭り wakamatsu minuto matsuri). in July Wasshoi Hyakuman Summer Festival (わっしょ い百万夏祭り, Wasshoi Hyakuman Matsuri). Early August. Many dance groups. Ends with a parade and firework display. Midsummer Firework displays (hanabi taikai) are also held in various places in and around Kitakyushu in July and August. Usually at least 3,000 fireworks are let off. The biggest one with no less than 13,000 fireworks (!) is the Kanmon Straits display between Kitakyushu and Shimonoseki (mid-August 13). Be prepared for big crowds, especially on the trains to and from Kokura to Moji-ko. Cherry blossom viewing (hanami) in spring[edit] One of the best and most popular places for hanami is around Kokura castle, but there are many others. Buy[edit] Explore the spacious and ultra-modern Riverwalk shopping complex by the Murasaki river and near the castle Visit the department stores: Colet, Izutsuya Stroll through Uomachi shopping area. The tiny traditional open-air Tanga market has fresh fish fruit and vegetables in abundance. It is the oldest shopping arcade in Japan. Aru City (linked by pedestrian bridge to Kokura station north exit). Aru Aru City is certainly the place for buying manga, anime, games and all related trinkets (posters, cards, action figures, etc.). Highly remarkable is the shop selling a large variety of old second hand videogames - if you still have a working Famicom, there will surely be something for you there, Eatledit Rihga Royal Hotel has several high-priced restaurants to suit all budgets in the Uomachi area near Kokura station, and at the top of the Isetan and Izutsuva department stores. Also try the sixth floor of Amu Plaza building above Kokura station. There is a McDonald's and a Lotteria Burger near Kokura station for the sixth floor of Amu Plaza building, there is a kaiten (revolving) sushi restaurant. The chefs will make sushi to request and oblige requests for substitutions or no wasabi. They also make some grilled/seared fish sushi -- delicious! They have a few vegetarian options like kappamaki and you can also get fresh fruit and fried chicken and other non-sushi dishes. Service can really vary from time to time though -- sometimes the waitresses are more helpful and sometimes they ignore you. For cheaper stuff or deli take-out, you can find lots of good things to eat in the basements of Isetan and Izutsuya. Towards the back of Kokura Station, across from the Shinkansen gate, there is a shopping area called Himawari Street. Downstairs in this area you will find another cluster of places to eat, including a sports yakitori bar, oden, okonomiyaki, yakisoba, Ringer Hut for fast food, and a 1950s-60s retro-styled area of tonkotsu ramen places. Popular foods in Kitakyushu include karashi mentaiko (辛子明太子, spicy pickled cod roe), tonkotsu ramen (the stinkier the better, apparently), and yaki-udon (just like yakisoba but using udon noodles). Chanpon, yakiniku, and Korean food such as bibimba also seem to be enjoying strong popularity. Hardtack has been sold since the 1920s in Yahata. Be careful not to break your teeth. Kokura is, quite literally, synonymous with a type of finely filtered red bean jam known as ogura-an (小倉館) with an alternative reading of kokura-an, which makes its way into all sorts of Japanese pastries and desserts. But in fact ogura-an is from Ogurayama, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, and ogura-an pan (red bean jam in bread rolls) was first made in Tokyo. Drink[edit] Xelha is a large bar near Kokura station. It is behind Isetan department store on the left side as you exit Kokura station. Food available. Open from 17:00 most days. Xelha has a soccer team and a big screen for viewing sports. Address: Kyo-machi 3-6-23, Yoshin Bldg, 1F. Tel 093-551-8683. Booties Irish pub, Japanese-run, Guinness and pub food available. Smaller than Xelha. Opposite Izutsuya department store. Open from 17:00 most days. Big screen for viewing sports. Round 5, 8 +81 93-511-1002. A very small bar in Konya-machi, Kokuta run by a friendly long-term American resident named Bob. ¥100 karaoke. Open from about 20:00. There are three Starbucks in Kokura, one in Riverwalk, one near Kokura station and one inside the SunLive City shopping mall. Don Gaba ChoRestaurant and night bar on Furusemba-machi. Great atmosphere and always a laugh. Scintillating conversation and sophisticated pursuits guaranteed. Sleep[edit] There are all sorts of options from the lap of luxury down to the cheapest ryokan. Ask at the Information desk, third floor of Kokura station. Budget[edit] MediaCafe, 802-0001, Fukuoka Prefecture Kitakyushu, Kokurakita Ward, Asano 1 丁目-1 - (North exit on street level). They have an English price list, and you can find monthly on the bottom of the sheet. Depends on how long you want to stay. Renting from ¥100 to sit down per hour and use their wifi in the common room, open booth, privates and monthly is under ¥40,000. Mid-range[edit] [dead link] Daiwa Royal Hotel. Good rooms and food. Splurge[edit] Stay safe[edit] Kudo-kai, a yakuza organization known to use firearms and explosives, headquarters in Kitakyushu, and have records of using firearms and explosives to deal with anyone and any organizations dare to resist them, and in rare occasions, causing death of innocent civilians. The current situation have been improved, yet for the sake of your safety, stay away from gang activities. During gang wars, explosives, especially hand grenades, are used often. If you encounter any suspicious objects, do not touch them. You should instead, dial 110 for local police assistance. Go next[edit] Shimonoseki on Honshu is a short train ride from Kokura. Additionally, StarFlyer has a promotion where, if arriving from or going to Tokyo on any of their flights, they will offer taxi service between Kitakyushu Airport and Shimonoseki for only ¥1000. Hakata station in Fukuoka is twenty minutes by Shinkansen from Kokura, or about one hour by express. Nakama Nogata Kanda Yukuhashi Munakata Chikujo Kurate Routes through Kitakvushu