

Hakata, Japan



Since 1889, the old port of Hakata has been part of Fukuoka city, the major commercial center of Northern Kyushu. This region is perhaps the oldest settled area in Japan, and for centuries Hakata served as Japan's cultural and commercial gateway with China and Korea. The twin cities played another major role in Japanese history - it was here that Kublai Khan launched his two invasions of Japan in the 13th century. Two anchor stones from the great Mongol fleet destroyed by the famous typhoon or Kamikaze are still on display at Hakata's 8th century Kushida Shrine. Beyond the hustle and bustle of today's modern metropolis, visitor will still discover and enjoy the serenity of ancient shrines, superb formal gardens, and a duo of fascinating museums.

When Hakata and Fukuoka merged in 1889, the combined metropolis was to be named Hakata. Until a group of disaffected samurai from Fukuoka - an important castle town in feudal times - intervened to ensure the new city's name honored their old home.

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1 Kokura Castle & Garden

This postcard perfect 17th century castle is surrounded by a beautiful garden where you can watch a traditional tea ceremony. The castle houses a historical museum and offers spectacular views from its lookout tower.

2 Karatsu & Kyozan Kiln

Pottery from the town of Karatsu is known for its simple dark brown glaze and is often used in tea ceremonies. To watch skilled craftsmen at work, visit the Kyozan Kiln.

3 Kushida Shrine

Fukuoka's oldest shrine was founded in 757 and plays a large part in the city's cultural history. Merchants visit to pray for prosperity and it's the site of a 1,200 year-old festival called Yamakasa.

4 Fukuoka Tower

This city icon is Japan's largest seaside tower. Standing 767 feet tall, it functions as a broadcast antenna for TV and radio networks. The top floor offers sweeping views of Hakata Bay and Kyushu mountains.

5 Kyushu National Museum

The rich cultural heritage of Japan and how other Asian cultures have influenced the nation is reflected in its collection of National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties.

6 Yanagawa River

Once a castle town, Yanagawa offers leisurely boat rides in a gondola-like boat called a donko. Enjoy cruising up and down the river, soaking up the spectacular scenery.

7 Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine

Registered an Important Cultural Property, the shrine was built over the grave of Sugawara Michizane in 1591, 690 years after his death. The tranquil grounds contain two ponds, a treasure house and 6,000 plum trees.

8 Moji Historical District

This charming area sits along Kyushu's waterfront and boasts many interesting historic buildings. Take a stroll past the Moji Misui Club where Albert Einstein once visited in 1920. Or walk along Japan's only pedestrian drawbridge.

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