

# 岡山 Okayama—land of sunshine

Many people travelling the traditional tourist route might have noticed the name ‘Okayama’ while on the shinkansen from Kyoto or Osaka through to Hiroshima. It is well worth breaking your trip at Okayama station to explore Okayama, the city and the prefecture. It really has so much to offer visitors—including good weather. Okayama Prefecture has gained the name “land of sunshine” thanks to its mild climate—minimal rain and warm temperatures.

A good place to start getting to know Okayama is the prefectural capital, Okayama City. The city’s two most famous sights are **Okayama Castle** [image a] known as U-jo or Crow Castle for its black exterior, and the beautiful **Koraku-en Garden** [b] that the castle towers over. Koraku-en Garden is more than three centuries old and like many gardens near castles was developed by the local *daimyo* feudal lord. It is considered one of Japan’s top three gardens, and has a wonderful sense of space with wide open expanses unusual for Japanese gardens. It is easy to forget that a modern city lies beyond its trees.

A short trip by train lies the smaller city of **Kurashiki**. It has long been a popular destination thanks to the attractive **Bikan Historical Quarter** [c] with its canal and well preserved buildings. Many are now shops, cafés and galleries. Among the traditional white-walled *kominka* houses, you will come across the neo-classical façade of

**Ohara Museum of Art**, Japan’s oldest private museum showcasing Western art with El Greco, Gauguin, Monet and Matisse among other artists represented. If you have time, take a boat trip on the canal.

A more recent attraction is **Kojima Jeans Street** [d] considered the birthplace of jeans in Japan. Japanese denim fabric is highly rated among fans and there is even a brand that uses the name of the area’s most famous folk-hero, Momotaro, the boy with super-powers born from a peach.

More traditional crafts include the highly prized **Bizen pottery** (Bizen-yaki) [e] which has a history of more than 1,000 years. The pottery is known for its lack of glazed ornamentation with simple and dramatic effects achieved by the interplay of fire with the clay in the kiln. A piece of Bizen ware would make for an excellent souvenir of your time in Okayama.

Rest assured that in this land of sunshine, there is some **excellent local produce** to try—fruit is a speciality, grapes and of course, **peaches**.

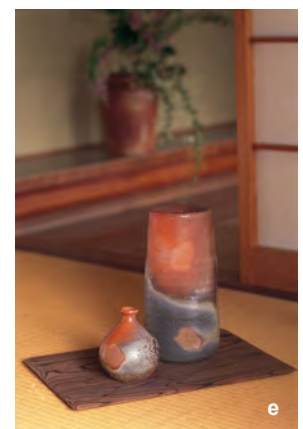


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## DISCOVER MORE!

Okayama Prefecture’s official tourism website is very informative and a pleasure to explore.

Great images and videos of places and experiences will have you itching to visit.

The 4.5-min video on the top page is an excellent introduction to the many charms of Okayama.

[www.okayama-japan.jp/en/](http://www.okayama-japan.jp/en/)