

Kumamoto

Kyushu · Japan

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Kumamoto is the main city of central Kyushu, with about 740,000 people. It is a good base for travellers who want a castle, a Japanese garden and a volcano. The city is also the home of Kumamon, the black bear mascot created in 2010.

The castle district is the heart of a visit. The 2016 earthquakes badly damaged the castle, and repairs are still going on. Most trips here combine one or two days in the city with a day out at Mount Aso. Kumamoto suits independent travellers who enjoy history, hot springs and regional food.

When to visit

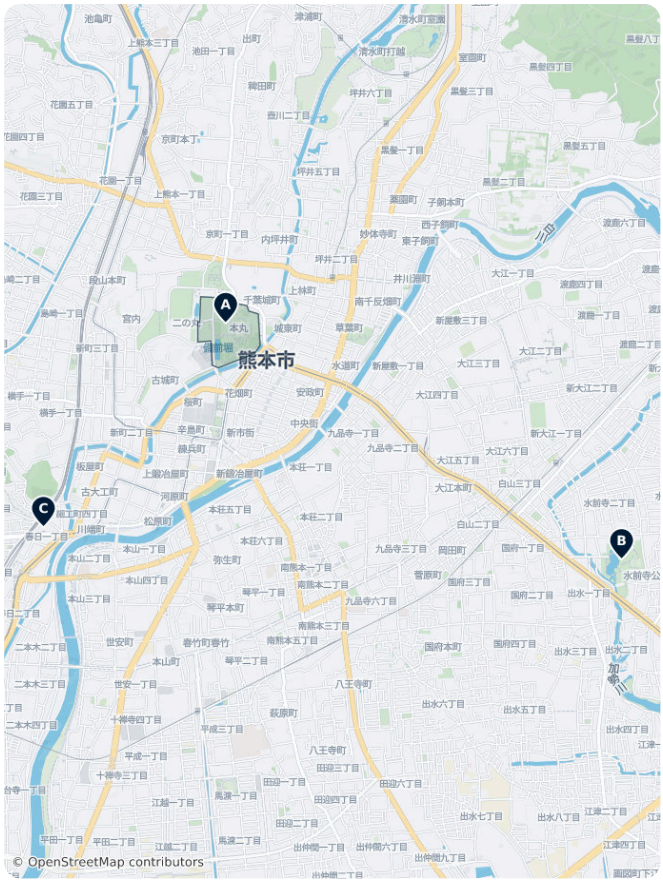
Autumn is the best season, and October is the most comfortable month. Spring is also pleasant. June and July are the rainy season and feel hot and humid. August is very hot. Winter is cool and dry, with an occasional light snowfall in January and February.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	9° / 15° Feels like 5°	3° / -1°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	10° / 17° Feels like 7°	3° / -1°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
March	Fair Fair for sightseeing	14° / 20°	6° / 1°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 24°	11° / 5°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Good Good for sightseeing	23° / 27°	15° / 11°	13 rainy days · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	26° / 30°	19° / 16°	18 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
July	Poor Poor for sightseeing	29° / 33° Feels like 33°	23° / 20°	18 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds
August	Poor Poor for sightseeing	30° / 34° Feels like 34°	24° / 22°	15 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds
September	Good Good for sightseeing	28° / 32°	21° / 16°	13 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 28°	15° / 10°	Calm winds
November	Good Good for sightseeing	17° / 22°	10° / 5°	Dry air · Calm winds
December	Fair Fair for sightseeing	11° / 17° Feels like 8°	5° / 1°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: October

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Kumamoto Castle is the city's main sight. The main keep was fully restored after the 2016 earthquake and has exhibits on six floors. The 6th floor has views over the city and the ongoing repair work.
- B Suizen-ji Joju-en is a Japanese garden begun in 1636 by the Hosokawa lord Tadatoshi. The garden is built around a spring-fed pond and a small hill said to represent Mount Fuji.
- C Kitaoka Shrine is one of the oldest shrines in the city. Its sacred tree is a pair of camphor trees about 1,000 years old. It is close to Kumamoto Station.
- Sakuranokoji, the street of shops and restaurants at the foot of the castle, is a good place for souvenirs and lunch.
- The covered shopping arcades Kamitori and Shimotori are the centre of downtown life, with shops, cafes and restaurants.
- Reigando cave and the tomb of the swordsman Miyamoto Musashi are close to each other, west of the centre. Musashi spent his last years in Kumamoto.
- The Hanaoka Peace Pagoda was built in 1954 and was the first of many peace pagodas built by the monk Nichidatsu Fujii.

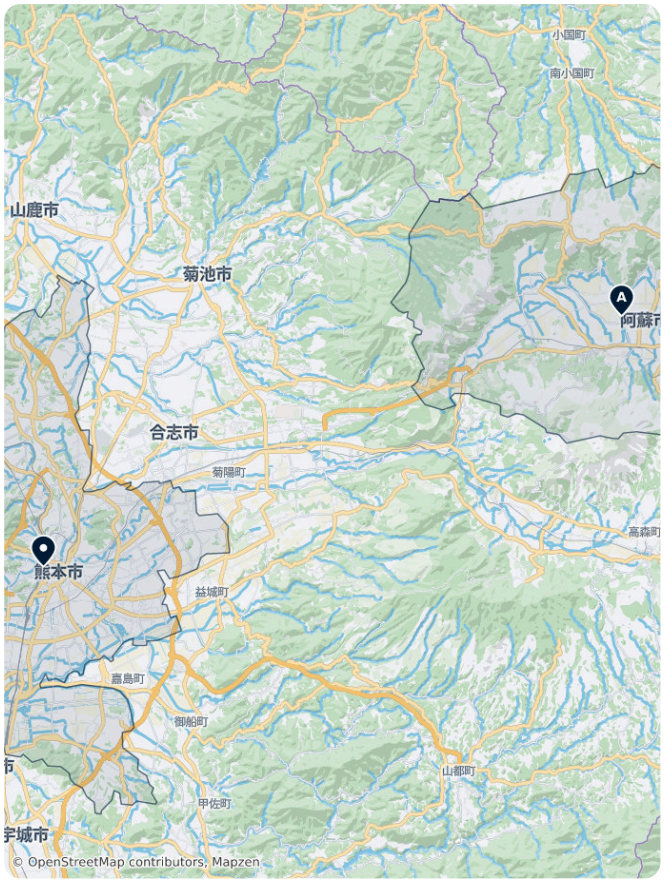
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What to experience

- Ride the city tram for the trip itself. It has a flat fare and it passes both the castle area and Suizenji.
- Go horse riding at Kusasenri, the grassland below Mount Aso, on a day trip.

Day trips

The best day trips go east into the mountains of Aso.



- A Aso is about 50 km northeast of Kumamoto, on the edge of the huge Aso caldera. Mount Aso sits in one of the largest calderas in the world. The Hohi Line train runs from Kumamoto to Aso, and the line has been open again since August 2020.
  - The Nakadake crater area was closed to visitors in 2026. Check the current status before you go.
  - The old Mount Aso ropeway was dismantled in 2019.
  - Kusasenri, the grassland at the foot of the volcano, offers horse riding.
- Kurokawa Onsen is a small hot-spring village in the hills north of Aso. There is no railway, so you need a bus or a car.

Where to explore

Kumamoto fits well into a longer trip around Kyushu.

- For the volcano and caldera, go to Aso.
- To the north, the Shinkansen reaches Fukuoka, the largest city on the island.
- To the northwest, Nagasaki is a port city with a long history of contact with the outside world.

Getting there

- By air: Kumamoto Airport is in Mashiki, east of the city. It has flights from Tokyo Haneda, Osaka and other Japanese cities, and from Seoul, Busan and Taiwan. The limousine bus takes 65 minutes to Kumamoto Station for ¥1,400. A special express bus takes 45 minutes to the Sakuramachi Bus Terminal for ¥1,400. A short rail shuttle runs to Higo-Ozu Station in 15 minutes for ¥200, with onward trains to the city. Kumamoto Airport access
- By train: Kumamoto is on the Kyushu Shinkansen. Sakura and Mizuho trains stop here, and the all-stops Tsubame runs once or twice an hour. Hakata Station in Fukuoka is the main connection point. The Shinkansen has linked Kumamoto with Hakata since 2011. For Tokyo, change trains at Shin-Osaka. JR Kyushu
- By bus: The Kumamoto Kotsu Center is the main bus terminal for local and intercity routes. The Kyushu Odan Bus runs between Kumamoto and Beppu through Yufuin.

Getting around

- City tram: The tram has a flat fare of ¥200 for adults and ¥100 for children. Pay with an IC card, touching the reader when you board and when you leave. A paper day pass costs ¥700, and a mobile day pass costs ¥500.
- To the castle: From Kumamoto Ekimae, take the tram to the Kumamoto Castle City Hall stop. A walk of about 15 minutes through Sakuranokoji leads to the castle.
- To Suizenji: Take the tram to the Suizenji Park stop. The garden is a 4-minute walk away.
- Shiromegurin bus: This loop bus serves the castle area every 20 to 30 minutes from 9:00 to 17:00. A ride costs ¥200, and a day pass costs ¥500.
- On foot: The castle, the arcades and the downtown streets are close to each other and easy to walk.

Kumamoto City Guide: getting around

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The castle, Sakuranokoji and the downtown arcades are close together. The station and Suizenji are best reached by tram.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Driving

- Is a car worth it? Not for the city, where the tram and walking are easier. A car is useful for Aso and Kurokawa Onsen, which has no railway. Traffic drives on the **left**.
- Licence: Japan accepts only an International Driving Permit under the **1949 Geneva Convention**. A permit under the 1968 Vienna Convention is not valid. Drivers from Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, Monaco and Taiwan do not use an IDP. They need an official Japanese translation of their home licence from JAF.
- Tolls: Expressways charge tolls. Rental cars often include an ETC card for automatic payment.

Food & drink

Kumamoto is known for basashi, thin slices of raw horse meat.

For a meal, try Sakuranokoji at the foot of the castle. The Kamitori and Shimotori arcades have many more restaurants and izakaya.

What to eat & drink

DINNER

Sushi · 寿司 (Sushi)
Vinegared rice paired with raw fish, seafood, or vegetables; ranges from casual conveyor-belt shops to high-end counters.

Ramen · ラーメン (Ramen)
Wheat noodles in a meat or fish-based broth, with countless regional styles.

Tempura · 天ぷら (Tempura)
Lightly battered, deep-fried seafood and vegetables.

Okonomiyaki · お好み焼き (Okonomiyaki)
A savory grilled pancake with cabbage and a choice of fillings, popular in Osaka and Hiroshima.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Onigiri · おにぎり (Onigiri)
Rice balls wrapped in seaweed, often with a savory filling; an everyday convenience-store staple.

Yakitori · 焼き鳥 (Yakitori)
Grilled skewers of chicken, popular at izakaya alongside beer or sake.

DRINKS

Green Tea · 緑茶 (Ryokucha)
The everyday non-alcoholic drink, served hot or cold.

Sake · 日本酒 (Nihonshu)
Rice wine served warm or chilled, a traditional accompaniment to a meal.

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Safety & health

Kumamoto is very safe for visitors, and petty crime is rare. The main risks come from nature. Earthquakes are possible, and the main shock on 16 April 2016 was Mj 7.3 (Mw 7.0). Learn the exit routes in your hotel and follow local instructions after a shake. Heavy rain is common in June and July. Near Mount Aso, follow volcano warnings and closures.

History

Kumamoto grew around its castle. The Kato family built it, and the Hosokawa family ruled from it after them. The Hosokawa lords also created Suizen-ji Joju-en as a tea retreat in 1636.

A fire in 1877 burned the castle. The main keep was rebuilt in concrete in 1960, and the 2016 earthquake damaged it again. The main keep reopened after full restoration, and work on the wider grounds continues.

Miyamoto Musashi spent his last years here. The Kyushu Shinkansen was completed in 2011 and gave the city a high-speed link to Fukuoka.

Country facts

Here are the essentials for travelling in Japan:

CURRENCY

JPY ¥

ELECTRICITY



Type A / Type B
100 V

LANGUAGES

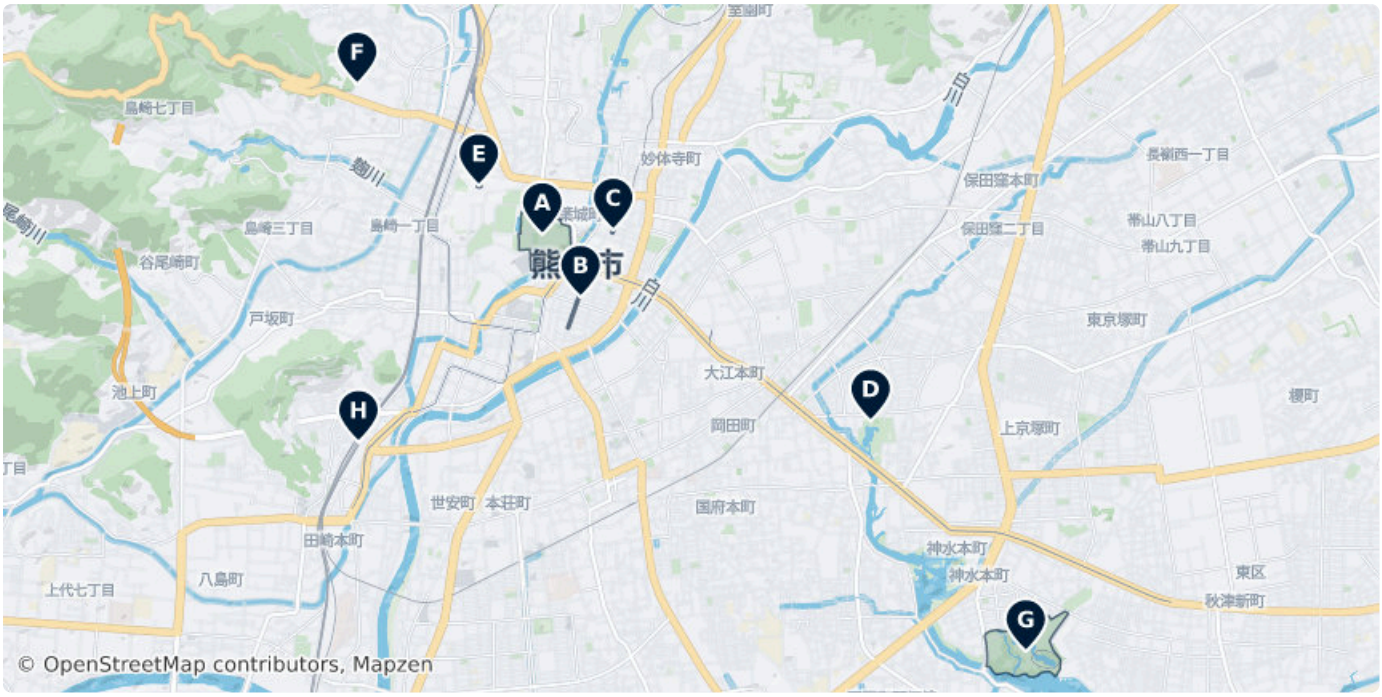
Japanese

TAP WATER

Safe to drink

Kumamoto's Absolute Essentials

Kumamoto's landscape is defined by the formidable Kumamoto Castle, a hilltop fortress known for its curved stone walls and historical significance. The city's cultural heritage is further preserved at the Hosokawa Gyōbutei samurai residence and the Izumi-jinja shrine located within Suizenji Jojuen Garden. For commerce and dining, the Kamitori and Shimotori pedestrian arcades provide extensive covered walkways. Natural spaces including the city’s botanical garden and the mountainside Honmyōji Temple offer quiet retreats within the urban area.





A Kumamoto Castle

Kumamoto Castle is a hilltop Japanese castle located in Chūō-ku, Kumamoto, in Kumamoto Prefecture. It was a large and well-fortified castle.

860-0002 熊本市, JP (32.80580, 130.70525)

Mo–Fr	07:30–22:00
Sa–Su	09:00–22:00

castle.kumamoto-guide.jp, 096-223-5011

B Shimotori

A 511-meter-long pedestrian shopping arcade lined with department stores, boutiques, and diverse dining options. It serves as the city's primary commercial hub and connects to the Kamitori arcade.

(32.80111, 130.70863)

C Kamitori

A 360-meter-long covered shopping arcade featuring high ceilings and natural light. It houses a mix of long-standing traditional shops, specialty bookstores, and modern cafes.

(32.80612, 130.71153)



D Izumi-jinja

Located within Suizenji Jojuen Garden, this Shinto shrine was established in 1878 by former retainers to deify the successive lords of the Hosokawa clan who ruled the Kumamoto Domain.

Kumamoto, Japan (32.79189, 130.73437)



E Hosokawa Gyōbutei

A high-ranking samurai residence formerly belonging to the Hosokawa Gyobu family. The structure showcases Edo-period architectural styles and was relocated to the Kumamoto Castle grounds in 1993.

Kumamoto, Japan (32.80943, 130.69963)

Apr-Oct Mo–Su	08:30–17:30
Nov-Mar Mo–Su	08:30–16:30

F Honmyōji Temple

Honmyō-ji is a Buddhist temple of the Nichiren sect, Rokujōmon-ryū, in Nishi-ku, Kumamoto, Japan.

Kumamoto, Japan (32.81700, 130.68884)

honmyouji.jp, +81 96 354 1411

G 熊本市動植物園

Situated on the banks of Lake Ezu, this facility combines a zoo housing approximately 120 species with a botanical garden featuring a large greenhouse and seasonal flower displays.

(32.77472, 130.74812)



H Kumamoto

Kumamoto Station is the main railway terminal of the city of Kumamoto, Japan.

Kumamoto, Japan (32.79032, 130.68895)

DATA SOURCES

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