

Matsue

Shimane · Japan

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Matsue is the capital of Shimane Prefecture, on the Sea of Japan side of western Honshu. The city sits between Lake Shinji and the Nakaumi lagoon. Moats and the Ohashi River run through the old centre.

The castle town is compact and calm. Tea culture is part of local life, and the lake sunsets are a daily event. The writer *Lafcadio Hearn* lived here in 1890 and 1891 and wrote about the city for Western readers. Matsue suits a stay of one or two nights, and it is a good base for Izumo Taisha and the Adachi Museum of Art.

When to visit

May, June and October are the most comfortable months. Summers are hot and humid, and winters are cool, grey and wet with few sunny days.

The main local event is Dōgyōretsu, a drum parade held on the third Sunday of October. A large boat festival, Hōranenya, takes place only once every 10 years. The last one was in May 2019.

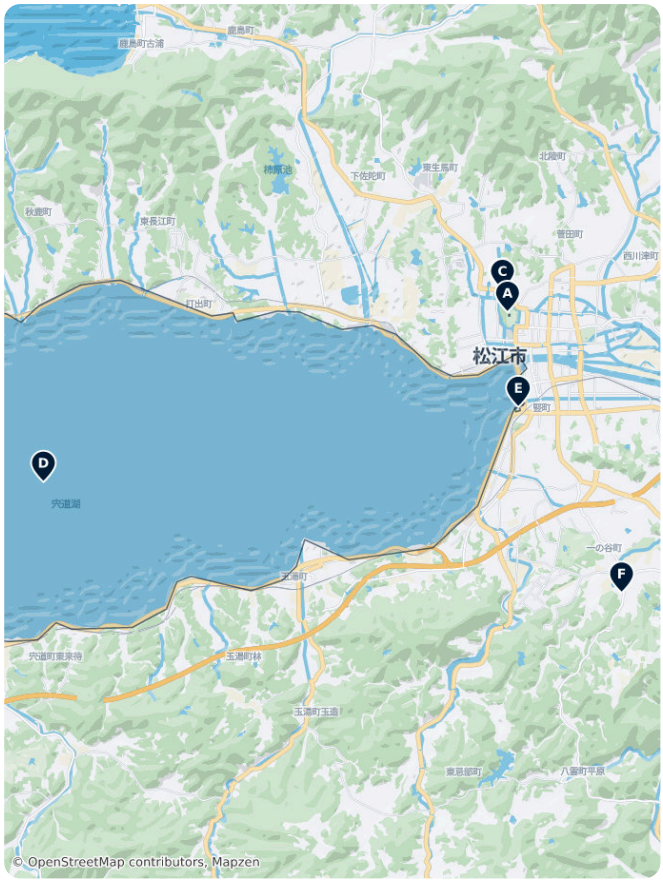
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	8° / 12° Feels like 1°	4° / 1°	19 rainy days · Dry air
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	8° / 14° Feels like 2°	4° / 1°	15 rainy days · Dry air
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	12° / 18° Feels like 6°	7° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
April	Fair Fair for sightseeing	16° / 22° Feels like 12°	11° / 6°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 25°	15° / 12°	
June	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 28°	20° / 17°	14 rainy days · Muggy, humid air
July	Fair Fair for sightseeing	28° / 32°	24° / 21°	17 rainy days · Oppressive humidity
August	Fair Fair for sightseeing	30° / 33°	26° / 23°	15 rainy days · Oppressive humidity
September	Good Good for sightseeing	26° / 31°	22° / 19°	16 rainy days · Muggy, humid air
October	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 26°	17° / 13°	12 rainy days
November	Fair Fair for sightseeing	16° / 21° Feels like 12°	12° / 8°	14 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	11° / 15° Feels like 5°	7° / 3°	18 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: May, June, October

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

- Ⓐ Matsue Castle has one of the 12 original wooden keeps left in Japan. It was finished in 1611 and has been a National Treasure since 2015. It is open daily.
- On the street Shiomi Nawate, beside the castle moat, Ⓑ Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum shows Hearn's belongings, manuscripts and books. Next door, Ⓒ Lafcadio Hearn Former Residence is the old samurai house where he lived. A combined ticket for both costs ¥800, and both open daily from 9:00 to 18:00 (to 17:00 from October to March).
- Also on Shiomi Nawate, the Buke Yashiki shows how a middle-ranking samurai family lived in the Edo period.
- Ⓓ Lake Shinji is the seventh largest lake in Japan. It is famous for sunsets and for its shijimi clams.
- Ⓔ Shimane Art Museum stands on the lake shore. It opened in 1999 and holds Japanese art and Western works by artists such as Monet and Gauguin. The shore in front is a popular place to watch the sunset.
- Ⓕ Yaegaki Shrine is a Shinto shrine south of the old town.



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What to experience

- Horikawa boat tour: small boats circle the castle moats and pass under very low bridges, so passengers must duck. Ask at the castle area for the current fares and hours.
- Lake Shinji sunset: Watch the sun set over the lake from the shore. The city tourism site gives a daily sunset forecast: Lake Shinji sunset forecast. In November the sun sets at about 17:00.
- Tea and sweets: Matsue has a long tea tradition and is known for its tea sweets. Meimei-an is a thatched tea house on a small hill off Shiomi Nawate, with a view of the castle. Tea is served from 9:50 to 16:30 from April to September and to 16:00 from October to March.
- Hot spring by the lake: The Matsue Shinjiko Onsen area has hot spring hotels along the lake shore.

Day trips

Three easy day trips by train. They are listed from closest to farthest.

- Tamatsukuri Onsen: a short JR ride toward Izumo. This hot spring town is a good stop on the way to Izumo.
- Yasugi and Adachi Museum of Art: about 25 minutes by JR San'in Line to Yasugi Station, then a free shuttle bus of about 20 minutes. The museum is known for its Japanese paintings and its gardens. Entry is ¥2,500. It is open 9:00 to 17:30 from April to September and 9:00 to 17:00 from October to March. The shuttle runs about 17 times a day. The first bus leaves Yasugi Station at 8:50 and the last at 16:25. It has 25 seats, with no reservations. The last bus back from the museum leaves at 17:10.
- Izumo and Izumo Grand Shrine: Take the Ichibata Electric Railway from Matsue Shinjiko Onsen Station, change at Kawato, and ride to Izumotaishamae Station. The fare is ¥900. You can also take JR to Izumoshi Station. The shrine is one of the oldest and most important in Japan. The Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo stands next to it.

Getting there

- By air: Matsue has no airport. Izumo Airport (IZO) has domestic flights, including JAL from Tokyo Haneda (about 90 minutes). A shuttle bus to Matsue takes about 30 minutes and costs ¥1,050 to Matsue Station. Yonago Airport (YGJ) has ANA flights from Tokyo Haneda. The bus to Matsue takes about 45 minutes and costs ¥1,000.
- By train: The Limited Express Yakumo runs from Okayama, about 2.5 hours, roughly every hour. Seat reservations are required. At Okayama you change to or from the Shinkansen. From Tokyo the trip takes about 6 to 7 hours (Shinkansen to Okayama, then the Yakumo), and from Osaka about 3.5 to 4 hours. The Yakumo continues to Izumoshi Station, about 30 minutes further.
- Night train: The Sunrise Izumo sleeper leaves Tokyo once a day and takes about 12 hours.
- The Japan Rail Pass covers the Shinkansen (except Nozomi) and the Yakumo. It does not cover the Sunrise Izumo berth.

Getting around

- On foot: The old town and the lake shore are walkable. The castle is about 2 km from Matsue Station.
- Lakeline bus: This loop bus connects both stations and the main sights. A full loop takes about 50 minutes, and buses come about every 30 minutes. A single ride costs ¥250. An all-day ticket costs ¥700.
- City and Ichibata buses: These serve places the loop bus does not reach. Board by the rear door and take a numbered ticket. Pay when you get off.
- Bicycle: Rental costs ¥300 per day at Horikawa Fureai Hiroba near the castle and at Matsue Shinjiko Onsen Station. Rental at Matsue Station costs ¥500 or more per day.
- Taxi: Taxis wait outside both stations.
- Local trains: Ichibata Electric Railway. Local tips: Matsue tourism, getting around.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old town and the lake shore are compact and walkable. The castle is about 2 km from Matsue Station.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Bikes are cheap to rent near the castle and the stations.

Driving

- Is a car worth it?: Not in the city. Trains and buses cover the main sights. A car is useful for the coast and the countryside.
- Left-hand traffic: Japan 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 with a licence from Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, Monaco or Taiwan need an official Japanese translation of the licence from JAF instead.
- Parking: The Hearn Memorial Museum has no car park. Use nearby public parking.

Food & drink

Lake Shinji is famous for its shijimi clams, usually served in miso soup. The brackish lake also gives eel, sea bass and whitebait. Matsue is also known for tea sweets, called wagashi, which go with a bowl of tea. Soba noodles are another local choice.

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

Matsue is very safe for visitors. Petty crime is rare. Summers are hot and humid, so drink water and rest in the shade to avoid heat stroke. Typhoons can bring heavy rain between August and October. Earthquakes happen in Japan, so learn the exit routes in your hotel.

History

Horio Yoshiharu built Matsue Castle between 1607 and 1611 and planned the castle town around it. The Matsudaira clan took over the domain in the late 1630s and ruled for ten generations until the end of the Edo period. The seventh lord, *Matsudaira Fumai*, loved tea. His influence is the reason for Matsue's tea sweets today. The Matsudaira gave the castle to the city in 1927.

In 1890 *Lafcadio Hearn* came to Matsue to teach English. He lived in Lafcadio Hearn Former Residence with his wife, who came from a samurai family. His books about Japan, including *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, made Matsue known abroad. Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum keeps his memory today.

Country facts

Here are the essentials for traveling in Japan:

CURRENCY

JPY ¥

ELECTRICITY



Type A / Type B
100 V

LANGUAGES

Japanese

TAP WATER

Safe to drink

Matsue Essentials

Matsue, the 'City of Water,' preserves the architectural and cultural heritage of the Edo period. At its center stands one of Japan's twelve original feudal castles, surrounded by a moat system still used for boat tours. The city's history is reflected in the preserved samurai district and the tea houses established by Lord Matsudaira Fumai. Its unique character is further defined by the literary legacy of Lafcadio Hearn and the expansive views of Lake Shinji, famous for its sunset scenery and local brackish-water clams.





A Matsue Castle

Matsue Castle is a Japanese castle located in Matsue, Shimane Prefecture.

Matsue, Japan (35.47563, 133.05041)

Mo–Su 08:30–18:30

matsue-castle.jp



B Lake Shinji

Lake Shinji is a lake in the northeast area of the Shimane Prefecture in Japan.

Japan (35.44742, 132.95595)

C 嫁ヶ島

A small, uninhabited island in Lake Shinji characterized by a single torii gate and several pine trees. It is the focal point of the lake's famous sunset views.

(35.45617, 133.04678)



D Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum

Museum dedicated to the life and literary works of Koizumi Yakumo, also known as Lafcadio Hearn. It houses original manuscripts, personal effects, and collections related to his ghost stories and travelogues.

(35.47928, 133.04913)

Apr-Sep Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
Oct-Mar Mo–Su	09:00–17:00

hearn-museum-matsue.jp, 0852-21-2147

E 武家屋敷

A preserved Edo-period residence of a mid-ranking samurai family. The wooden structure features separate entrances for guests and residents, traditional tatami rooms, and a bamboo grove garden.

(35.47863, 133.05070)

F Meimei-an

A thatched-roof tea house built in 1779 by the daimyo Matsudaira Fumai. It represents the Fumai-ryu tea ceremony style and offers views of Matsue Castle from its garden.

(35.47884, 133.05223)

Apr 01-Sep 30 Mo–Su	08:30–18:30
Oct 01-Mar 31 Mo–Su	08:30–17:00

meimeian.jp

G 松江フォーゲルパーク

A large-scale floral and avian park featuring one of the world's largest indoor greenhouses. It houses thousands of begonias and fuchsias, alongside owls, tropical birds, and penguins.

(35.47680, 132.94457)

H Matsue History Museum

This museum details Matsue's development as a castle town through interactive exhibits and dioramas. The building follows traditional architectural styles and includes a Japanese garden and a tea room.

(35.47522, 133.05346)

matsu-reki.jp

I 美保関灯台

A historic stone lighthouse built in 1898 at the eastern tip of the Shimane Peninsula. It stands 14 meters tall and offers views of the Sea of Japan and the Oki Islands.

(35.56731, 133.32550)

J 松江市立出雲玉作資料館

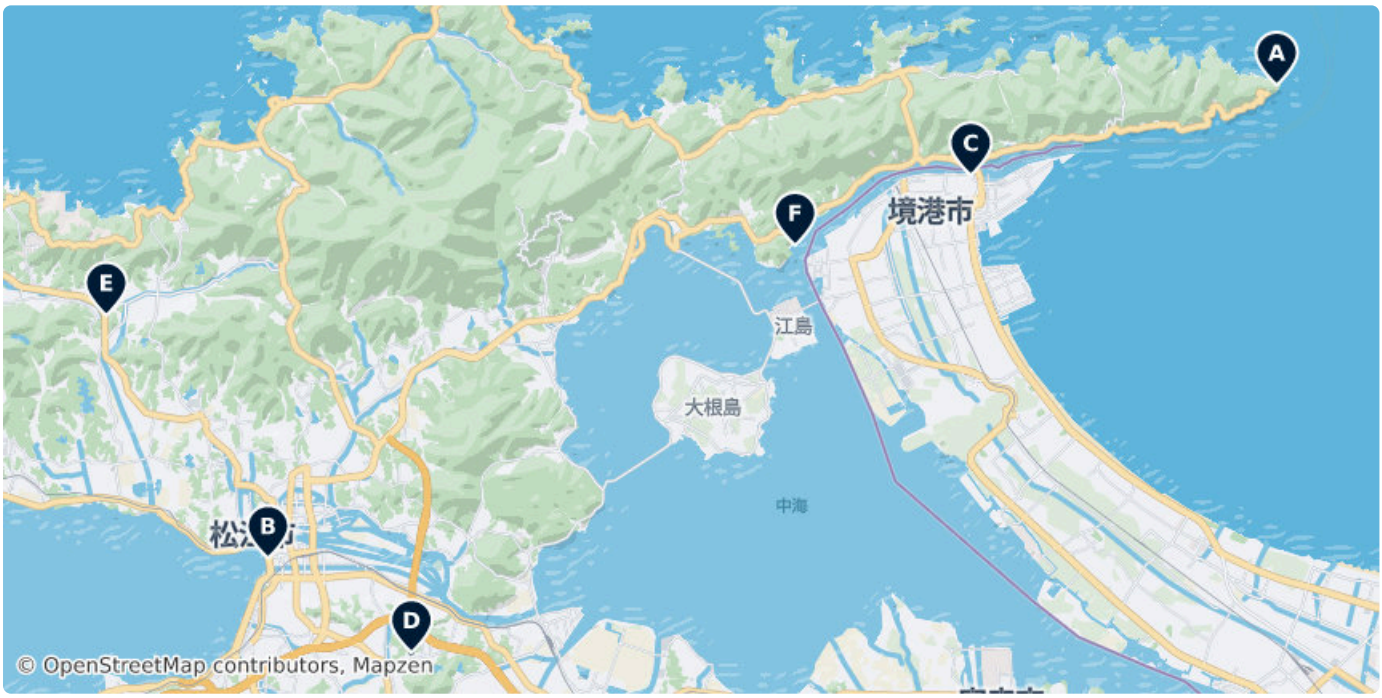
A museum focused on the ancient history of bead-making in the Tamatsukuri area. It displays archaeological finds including magatama (comma-shaped beads) and explains the traditional stone-working techniques used in the region.

(35.41761, 133.01337)

Mo	Closed
Tu–Su	09:00–17:00

Hidden Coastal Heritage

This collection explores the maritime and ancient heritage of the Shimane coastline. It features historic stone and wooden lighthouses, such as the 19th-century Mihonoseki Lighthouse, which served as vital navigational aids for Sea of Japan trade routes. Complementing these are significant archaeological sites, including Nara-period temple foundations at Kurumi Haiji and prehistoric shell mounts at Sata Kobu. These locations provide a direct link to the region's transition from Jomon-era coastal settlements to the early Buddhist era.



A 美保関灯台

A historic stone lighthouse completed in 1898. As the first of its kind in the San'in region, it is designated as a Tangible Cultural Property of Japan and offers views across the Sea of Japan toward the Oki Islands.

(35.56731, 133.32550)

B 青柳楼の大灯籠

A 6-meter-tall stone lantern built in 1863. It originally functioned as a lighthouse and landmark for sailors navigating the entrance to the Nakano-umi and Shinji-ko waterways.

(35.46333, 133.05305)

C 境港灯台

A reconstructed hexagonal wooden lighthouse based on the 1895 original design. It stands near the port as a monument to the maritime modernization of the Meiji era.

(35.54749, 133.24288)

D 来美廃寺跡

The archaeological site of a Buddhist temple dating to the Nara period. Excavations have revealed stone foundations and 8th-century roof tile fragments, indicating the site's historical religious significance.

Japan (35.44260, 133.09180)

E 佐太講武貝塚

A Jomon period shell midden that provides evidence of prehistoric coastal life. The site contains layers of shells, fish bones, and earthenware fragments used by early inhabitants.

(35.51672, 133.00938)

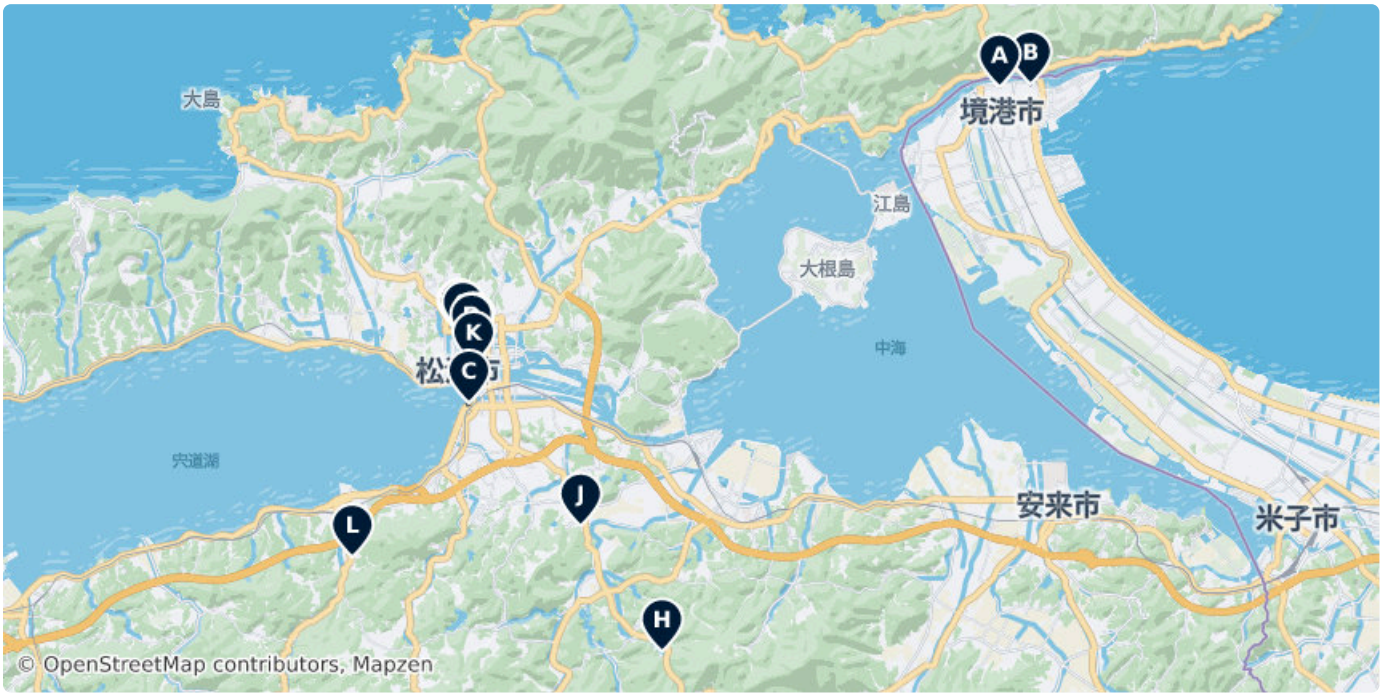
F サルガ鼻洞窟住居跡

A natural sea cave used as a dwelling during the Yayoi and Kofun periods. Excavations at this site have uncovered ancient pottery and human skeletal remains.

(35.53210, 133.19541)

Top Art & History Museums

Matsue’s museum scene spans from ancient Izumo history to modern lakefront galleries. Explore the city's samurai heritage at the Matsue History Museum and preserved residences, or delve into the supernatural at the Shigeru Mizuki Memorial Museum. The region’s deep connection to the tea ceremony is showcased through specialized art collections, while unique sites like the Horan-enya Memorial Hall preserve vibrant local traditions. These institutions offer a detailed look at the craftsmanship, folklore, and historical figures that shaped this castle town.





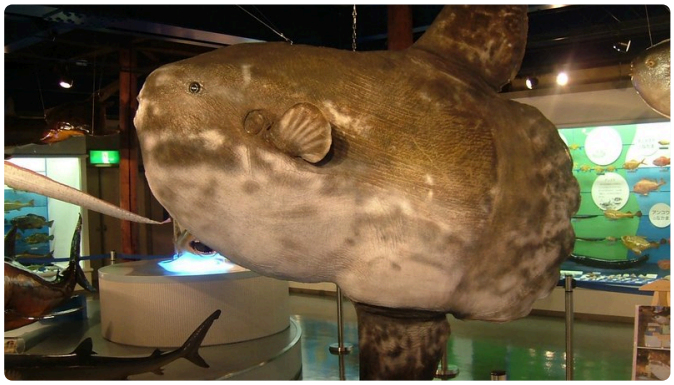
Ⓐ Shigeru Mizuki Memorial Museum

Dedicated to the manga artist Shigeru Mizuki, creator of GeGeGe no Kitaro.
The museum showcases his life, travels, and extensive collection of yokai (supernatural creature) illustrations and dioramas.

Sakaiminato, Japan (35.54641, 133.23127)

Mo–Su 09:30–17:00

mizuki.sakaiminato.net



Ⓑ Sea and Life Historical Museum

Housed in a converted sake brewery, this museum features a vast collection of over 4,000 taxidermy specimens of fish and marine life, including a giant sunfish and various shark species.

境港市 (35.54719, 133.24174)

umikura.com



C Shimane Art Museum

Situated on the shores of Lake Shinji, this museum focuses on water-themed art and photography. It is renowned for its sunset views and outdoor sculptures, including the famous hopping rabbits.

National Highway Route 9, Sodeshicho, Matsue, Hamanogi 1-chome 690-0049, Japan (35.45985, 133.05262)

Oct-Feb Mo–Su	10:00–18:30
Mar-Sep Mo–Su	10:00–sunset +00:30
Dec 28-Jan 01 Mo–Su	Closed

shimane-art-museum.jp, +81 852-55-4700



E Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum

Located next to his former residence, this museum honors writer Lafcadio Hearn (Koizumi Yakumo). It displays original manuscripts, personal effects, and first editions of his Japanese ghost stories.

(35.47928, 133.04913)

Apr-Sep Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
Oct-Mar Mo–Su	09:00–17:00

hearn-museum-matsue.jp, 0852-21-2147

D Matsue History Museum

This museum features Edo-period architecture and details Matsue's development as a castle town. It includes a traditional tea room where visitors can observe the creation of local wagashi sweets.

(35.47522, 133.05346)

matsu-reki.jp

F Tanabe Art Museum

This gallery specializes in tea ceremony culture, displaying a refined collection of tea bowls, calligraphy, and ceramics accumulated by the Tanabe family over generations.

(35.47909, 133.04978)

tanabe-museum.or.jp

G 武家屋敷

A preserved mid-ranking samurai residence dating from the Edo period. The site showcases traditional architecture, including a gatehouse and private quarters, alongside period furniture and household items.

(35.47863, 133.05070)

H Abe Eishiro Memorial Museum

Honors the Living National Treasure Abe Eishiro. The museum documents the history of Izumo Washi (traditional handmade paper) and displays various papermaking tools and finished works.

(35.39167, 133.11763)

izumomingeishi.com/abeeishirou/

I 松江ホーランエンヤ伝承館

Dedicated to the Horan-enya, a boat festival held once every 12 years. It houses full-scale festival boats, colorful costumes, and detailed video footage of the ritual.

(35.47552, 133.05403)

J 八雲立つ風土記の丘

An archaeological museum and park focusing on the ancient Izumo region. It features artifacts from nearby burial mounds, including haniwa clay figures and ancient jewelry.

(35.42612, 133.09026)

K Gogin Karakoro Museum

Occupying a renovated 1938 bank building, this cultural center hosts local art exhibitions and craft workshops. The architecture retains its original Western-style facade and interior details.

(35.47040, 133.05421)

kankou-matsue.jp/kankou/desc/

L 松江市立出雲玉作資料館

Located in the Tamatsukuri Onsen district, this museum focuses on the ancient production of magatama (comma-shaped beads) and the historical development of the local hot springs.

(35.41761, 133.01337)

Mo	Closed
Tu–Su	09:00–17:00

DATA SOURCES

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