

KIKKO PARK

MAP AND RESOURCE GUIDE

Tranquil pools, scenic pathways and architecture of old Japan. Spend time uncovering Kikko Park's rich history.

Kikko Park is the former site of the Kikkawa family compound and is a lovely area to spend a relaxing weekend. During festival and fireworks season, thousands of people crowd the area to take in traditional festivities. Hang out with your friends along the banks of the Nishiki River to participate in the traditional 'ohanami' party to celebrate the annual blooming of the cherry trees (called the Sakura) during the spring or take a leisurely hike up to Mt. Yokoyama where you can see thousands of magnificent Japanese maple trees change from green to gold, red and orange in the autumn.

RECOMMENDED ROUTE

- Start:** Nagayamon Gate
- End:** Ice Cream Shop
- Time:** 2 hours
- Accessories:** Camera, Comfortable Walking Shoes, Yen, Kikko Park Map
- Expense:** ¥3,330 (¥1000/Snacks + ¥1300/Museums + ¥100/White Snakes + ¥930/Bridge, Gondola & Castle Package)

Start your Kikko Park discovery at Nagayamon Gate. Then walk down the side street toward the Iris Pond and around the Sasaki statue. Walk through the Kikkawa and Chokokan Museums before you take in the Kikko Shrine area. Cross the small bridge and experience the Iwakuni Art Museum before you take a ride up the gondola to the Magic Clock and the Iwakuni Castle. After your ride back down to Kikko Park take a look at the White Snakes and the Mekata Residence before you relax at the pools and the rose garden. End your adventure enjoying Kikko Park's famous soft serve ice cream.



SIMPLIFYING TRAVEL

MARINE CORPS COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Outdoor Recreation (253-3822)**
Free outdoor gear rentals, maps and guided trips.
- Typhoon Motors Car Rental (253-4245)**
Offering compact cars to flat bed trucks.
- Information, Travel & Tours (253-4377)**
Popular travel agency that provides tours and travel arrangements.
- Cultural Adaptation (253-6165)**
Provides free and affordable day trips along with free Japanese language course.
- IR&R (253-6161)**
Your friendly source to acquire information on area maps and events.

TRAVEL GUIDE

KIKKO PARK

Kikko Shrine

In the Shinto religion the shrine is a place of worship. Built in 1884, the Kikko Shrine was the private family shrine of the Kikkawa family. Today, guests come to the shrine to pray and wish for good fortune.

Magic Clock

At the top ropeway terminus stands a clock-bell tower known as 'Magic Clock'. Originally built with liquid-crystal glass, all of the clock's display had once turned transparent when an electrical current would pass during the music performance. After vandals broke out the glass, only 1 side could be replaced with the expensive liquid crystal. :55 minutes past the hour you can hear Tanaka's 'The Beauty of Nature' which marks an approaching departure for the next gondola.

Nagayamon Gate

A Nagayamon gate is a long structure that once separated the samurai districts from the commoners. Believed to have been built in 1693 by Masatsune Kagawa, this well-maintained gate can only be viewed from the exterior and still provides a barrier for the Kagawa family residents.

HERITAGE FEATURES

Kintai Bridge

Standing gracefully over the Nishiki River, the Kintai Bridge is a national treasure that proudly brings in tens of thousands of visitors every year to the Kintai-kyo area. Originally constructed in 1673, the 5-arched wooden bridge is an example of brilliant engineering that once separated the commoners from the samurai elite. Built and rebuilt numerous times due to flooding, the bridge was finally built with modern construction after a small tax was implemented to assist with care and maintenance. In 1950 typhoon Kijia took down the bridge as it was swept down the torrential Nishiki River. Repairs from the Kijia typhoon lasted till the reconstruction of 2004 where the arches were dismantled one-by-one to be transported to a workshop off-site. Using the existing pieces as a template, the bridge was constructed off-site to ensure everything fit properly, dismantled and then transported to the bridge site and re-assembled. Throughout the year, magnificent lights shine on the Kintai Bridge illuminating the graceful wooden arches for a picturesque glimpse of old Japan. There is a small fee to walk over the bridge. Crossing Fee: ¥300

Iwakuni Castle

Originally built by the prefectural lord Kikkawa Hiroie in 1608 (Edo period), Iwakuni Castle took 5 years to construct. Chosen for its natural defense advantages, the castle sits atop Mount Yokoyama and looks down on the Nishiki River and modern day Iwakuni. Only 7 years after construction, the castle was torn down under the 'one castle per province' decree of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Reconstruction of the existing castle, built in similar style to the original castle, didn't occur until 1962. Guests are welcome to enter the castle (10 minute walk from the ropeway terminus and 1 hour moderate hike from Kikko Park) to admire the displays of samurai swords, armor, historical artifacts and breathtaking views of the Kintai-kyo Bridge and the Air Station. [A] ¥260



SAVE WHEN YOU BUY A BRIDGE-GONDOLA-CASTLE ADMISSION PACKAGE FOR ¥930 AT THE KINTAI BRIDGE ENTRY

Mekata Residence

This historic home was the residence of the mid-level samurai Mekata family. In 1974, Japan recognized the structure as a 'nationally designated important cultural property'. Built over 250 years ago during the Edo Period, it is one of the few remaining original structures in Kikko Park. Guests are welcome to walk around the home and look into the living quarters, but are not allowed to enter the structure. FYI: Although the Mekata were ranked lower socially than the Kagawa Family, the Mekata residence has a higher ranking as cultural property than the Kagawa's Nagayamon Gate.

Tsuneie Kikkawa Stone Monument

Lord Tsuneie Kikkawa was sent to defend Tottori Castle (150km northeast of Iwakuni) in 1581 by Motoharu Kikkawa (father of Hiroie Kikkawa and the first lord of Kikkawa family). When he moved into the castle, Tsuneie found that there was not enough food and water to fight. After 200 days of siege, Tsuneie asked his enemy to release the castle and all his people in exchange for him committing harakiri or a noble suicide. The stone monument was built in 1939 to recognize his brave sacrifice. Tsuneie's son and his descendants lived in Iwakuni as directors of the Kikkawa family in Iwakuni.

KIKKO PARK FAMILIES

Kagawa Family

The Kagawa family was one of the highest ranking samurai families living in the Iwakuni area. Known as a 'karo' or director of Iwakuni Clan, the Kagawa family still resides behind Nagayamon gate.

Kikkawa Family

Hiroie Kikkawa was a samurai who preferred strategy and diplomacy to all-out warfare. This is best illustrated at the decisive Battle of Sekigahara. Foreseeing the loss against the eastern Army (led by lord Ieyasu Tokugawa), Hiroie secretly worked with Ieyasu and agreed to not participate in the battle in return for his leader and lord of his western army, Terumoto Mori (Hiroie's cousin) to be spared from harakiri as well as the Kikkawa family being awarded two provinces. When the battle was over, Ieyasu went back on his word and wanted to eliminate the Mori Family, but Hiroie insisted that Ieyasu keep his word. Angered by Ieyasu's desire to kill Terumoto, Hiroie insisted that the two agreed provinces (current day

Yamaguchi Pref.) be handed over not to the Kikkawa family but to the Mori clan.

Kikkawa Hiroyoshi, like his grandfather Hiroie before him, was more interested in peace than war. The Kintai Bridge was built under his tenure as head of the Kikkawa clan. The Kikkawa clan remained senior retainers of the Mori family and were not named lords of the Iwakuni domain in their own right until the Meiji Revolution in 1867 which, ironically, brought an end to the shogunate system of government altogether. The Kikkawa family, now in its 32nd lord, resides in Iwakuni and Tokyo.

Mekata Family

Mekata Family was the middle ranking samurai of Iwakuni and was ruled by the Kikkawa family. They moved from present Shimane Prefecture to Iwakuni with Lord Hiroie Kikkawa. FYI: As the eldest member of a special Japanese committee, Prof Mekota Mekata suggested the name of the current era Heisei, after the Showa emperor died in 1989.

MUSEUMS

Iwakuni Art Museum

Fans of Japanese art and samurai history should stop at Kikko Park's largest museum. Art enthusiasts will appreciate the collection of traditional pottery, glassware, prints and calligraphic works while samurai enthusiasts will be enthralled by the collection of authentic samurai armor. [H] 9 AM - 5 PM, Closed: Thur [A] ¥800

Kikkawa Museum

This small but insightful museum includes various Kikkawa family personal possessions including original documents, swords, and weapons. [H] 9 AM - 4:30 PM, Closed: Wed [A] ¥500

Chokokan Museum

Appreciate articles of everyday life in old Japan, including scroll paintings and miniature replicas of the Kintai Bridge. [H] 9 AM - 5 PM, Closed: Mon [A] Free

POPULAR SNACKS

Iwakuni Zushi

Iwakuni style sushi is a must try before you PCS from Iwakuni. Tasty, healthy and fun to make, Iwakuni zushi differs from other sushi plates because of the shape and preparation. Unlike standard rolls or balls of rice, Iwakuni zushi consists of layers of rice, vegetables and fish stacked and pressed together to form a compact block of sushi. Folklore says that Iwakuni zushi was invented when Kikkawa Hiroie requested that a dish be made that could easily be transported and preserved during periods of warfare.

Soft Serve Ice cream

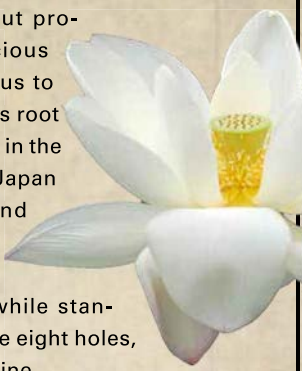
Make your next dessert destination one of the three soft-service cream shops in Kikko Park. Not only do they serve up your favorite ice cream flavors in a cup, basic cone or wafer cone, they serve seasonal favorites like sakura and lotus root. The epicure will enjoy the unusual flavors of roasted garlic, wasabi and sweet potato.

Tako-Yaki

Found outside shopping malls, grocery stores and even shrines, tako-yaki is a bite-size snack with chopped octopus (tako) placed inside a batter of egg and mochi before it is carefully rolled and cooked in a tako-yaki pan.

Iwakuni Lotus Root

The picturesque fields that surround the base are not only beautiful, but produce a famous delicious treat that is indigenous to this area. Iwakuni lotus root ('renkon') is harvested in the fall and sold all over Japan during the winter and spring. What makes our renkon different from others is that while standard renkon roots have eight holes, Iwakuni renkon have nine.



CULTURAL INTEREST

Cormorant Fishing

For over a thousand years, fishermen throughout Asia have been using cormorant birds as a means to catch small fish. Locally, cormorant fishing has taken place on the Nishiki River for over 350 years. Throughout the summer months you can watch fishermen dressed in traditional straw skirts, long black shirts and hats paddle their wooden boats up and down the Nishiki river guided by a burning torch and a flock of tethered cormorants. The light emitted from the torches draws the fish to the surface where they are easily caught by the cormorants. The birds, which wear a collar, are pulled to the boat once they catch a fish. The fisherman then pulls on the collar contracting the bird's neck and forcing the fish up and out of the bird where it drops into a net. The best seat to watch this ancient tradition is from a guided boat tour that hosts up to 20 people. Guests are welcome to bring their own food and drinks as the fisherman work the cormorants to catch fish.

White Snakes

Japan has designated Iwakuni's White Snakes as natural treasures. These rare albino snakes are indigenous to the Iwakuni area and are believed to be messengers from the goddess of good luck. Visitors pray to the snakes for good fortune and to bring riches. [H] 9 AM - 5 PM [A] ¥100

Komainu

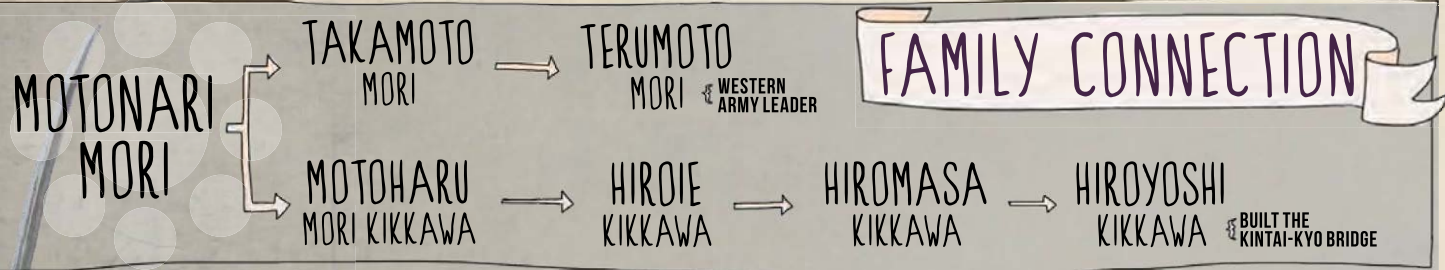
Most people refer to the statues as the 'shi-shi' dogs, which is actually the Okinawan version; Kikko Park's are not. Near the entrance of Kikko Shrine stand a pair of opposing guardian lion-dog statues called 'komainu'. The customary mouth open-mouth shut posture represents the 'beginning and the end of all things'. The open-mouth statue represents the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet "a" while the closed-mouth statue represents the last letter "um".

Torii

You know when you are approaching a Shinto shrine by the iconic torii. The archway structure is often painted vermilion but can be left in its natural wood or stone form. Kikko Park has 5 stone torii's.

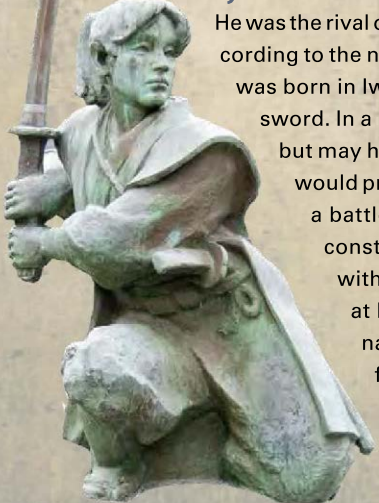
Purification Trough

It isn't just used to cool you down on a hot summer day; the purification trough located near Kikko Shrine is a tradition to honor 'kami', the Shinto gods. Traditionally visitors of the shrine will wash their hands, face and neck before entering the shrine—some even choose to rinse their mouths with the water; if doing so be sure to pour some water from the ladle into your hands and sip it from there (don't sip directly from the ladle).



STATUES

Kojiro Sasaki



He was the rival of the famous double-sword samurai Musashi Miyamoto. According to the novel of Musashi Miyamoto written by Eiji Yoshikawa, Kojiro was born in Iwakuni and was a handsome samurai who used a very long sword. In a novel written by Genzo Murakami, Kojiro was born in Fukui but may have only been a character in folklore. Stories say that Kojiro would practice his long sword under the Kintai bridge and fatally lost a battle against Musashi in 1612 (... but the Kintai Bridge wasn't constructed until 1673!) In Iwakuni their battle still continues—with ice cream! Kojiro-Shoten opened as the first ice cream shop at Kintai-kyo. Before long another shop opened up under the name Musashi and a few years ago Nishiki-ya jumped into the fray. So now three shops are fighting fierce battles every day in the Kintai area with Musashi shop being the most popular, boasting over a 100 different varieties of ice cream, a reported record in Japan.

Hiroyoshi Kikkawa

You can thank Hiroyoshi Kikkawa or the beauty of Kikko Park. The 3rd lord of the Kikkawa family, he was the greatest influence in the development of the Kintai-kyo Bridge in 1673.

Hozumi Tanaka

Known as the 'Master of music for the Japanese Naval Band', Hozumi Tanaka was an Iwakuni native who composed countless songs including 'The Beauty of the Nature'. You can hear his music at the music player near Kikko Shrine and at Magic Clock.

Yuzo Shigemune

Shigemune (1894-1976) was an influential politician and businessman from the Iwakuni area.