

Kobe Travel Guide

A Story of History and the Future, Woven by a Port City





CHAPTER 1

When the Doors to the Foreign World Were Opened

The opening of Kobe Port in 1867 transformed the city into a gateway connecting Japan with the wider world. The Kitano area became lined with Western-style residences, and a cosmopolitan culture began to flourish. The former foreign settlement still retains its elegant Western buildings today, preserving a refined and nostalgic townscape.

1867

The opening of Kobe Port. Japan's first international trading port opens its doors to the world.

Kitano Area

Western-style residences line the streets as European culture becomes woven into everyday life in Kobe.

Former Foreign Settlement

The surviving Western buildings convey the romance of the Meiji and Taisho eras to the present day.

The "Kobe Sweets" That Transformed Japanese Food Culture



Kobe: City of Bread

One of the most competitive boulangerie scenes in the country, with a refined bread culture that continues to evolve to this day.



Japan's First Baumkuchen

During the Taisho era, Juchheim served Japan's first Baumkuchen in Kobe, laying the foundations for Western confectionery culture.



The Origins of Kobe's Western Confectionery

As a port city, Kobe was among the first in Japan to embrace sugar and Western sweets — with Morozoff leading the way — giving rise to a distinctive confectionery culture all its own.

CHAPTER 3

1995: Memories of Upheaval and Rebirth

17th January, 5:46 a.m. The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake struck Kobe, becoming the largest urban disaster in modern Japanese history.

A City Brought to a Standstill

Electricity, water, and transport infrastructure were simultaneously severed, bringing the city's functions to a complete halt.

Catastrophic Losses

6,434 precious lives were lost, and homes, roads, and motorways collapsed across a vast area.

Dawn of Despair

In the darkness and bitter cold, residents drew together for comfort as they faced the break of day.



"The First Year of Volunteering" and the Bonds of Reconstruction

In the wake of the disaster, approximately 1.4 million volunteers from across Japan descended on Kobe. This year became known as Japan's "First Year of Volunteering", and the outpouring of support became a vital cornerstone of the city's reconstruction.



Strengthened Earthquake Standards

A nationwide review of building regulations and the development of disaster prevention guidelines were carried out across the country.

People Rebuild the City

The strong conviction amongst residents that "Kobe's greatest asset is its people" became the driving force behind the city's recovery.



CHAPTER 5

A Light of Hope Born from Disaster: Kobe Luminarie

In December 1995, the illumination festival "Kobe Luminarie" began as a tribute to the victims of the earthquake and a prayer for recovery. The lights that shone through the night streets, still in the midst of restoration, brought courage and hope to the people of the city.

1995

Year of Inauguration-First held in December of the earthquake year

30

In 2025, the milestone 30th edition of the festival takes place

Today: Sannomiya to Motomachi, an Evolving City Stroll



Sannomiya Station A hub for Kobe tourism where 6 railway lines converge. Excellent connections to the Shinkansen, underground, and private railways.



Mountain Side & Sea Side North of the JR line is the "mountain side", south is the "sea side". This unique sense of direction is second nature to Kobe locals.



A Treasure Trove Within 15 Minutes on Foot The Sannomiya and Motomachi area is a compact city perfectly suited for a stroll, where trendy spots and long-established shops stand side by side.





CHAPTER 7

The Bay Area Transformed: Where Sea and City Resonate

Meriken Park

The port's symbolic zone, revitalised following the 150th anniversary of the opening of the port. Here, Kobe's history and present day come together.

Kobe Port Tower

From this retro-modern drum-shaped tower, take in the night views of Kobe — said to be worth ten million dollars.

BE KOBE Monument

A monument inscribed with gratitude and a vision for the future, marking 20 years since the earthquake. It resonates deeply with all who visit.

The Height of Tourism: Experiential Spots for Healing and Discovery



Kobe Nunobiki Herb Gardens

A mountain herb garden reached by ropeway. Sweeping panoramas of Osaka Bay unfold amidst seasonal blooms throughout the year.



Nankinmachi Chinatown

One of Japan's three great Chinatowns. Street food stalls and lanes brimming with an exotic atmosphere engage all the senses.



Nada Gogo Sake Brewery Tour

Immerse yourself in sake culture at Nada Gogo, one of Japan's finest sake-producing regions, where brewers' craft and centuries of history come alive.



Kobe: A Harbour City Facing the Future

Carrying the lessons of the earthquake in its heart, Kobe continues to evolve as an international tourist destination. Your visit becomes part of a story that weaves together people and the city.



Why not head to Kobe this coming weekend — stroll down the hillside streets and feel the sea breeze?

Walk Through History

Explore Kitano and the Old Foreign Settlement, where the spirit of the open port lives on



Savour the Flavours

Indulge in a food culture spanning sweets, bread, Chinese cuisine, and Japanese sake

Meet the People

Experience the warmth of Kobe's residents, who have supported and sustained the city

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