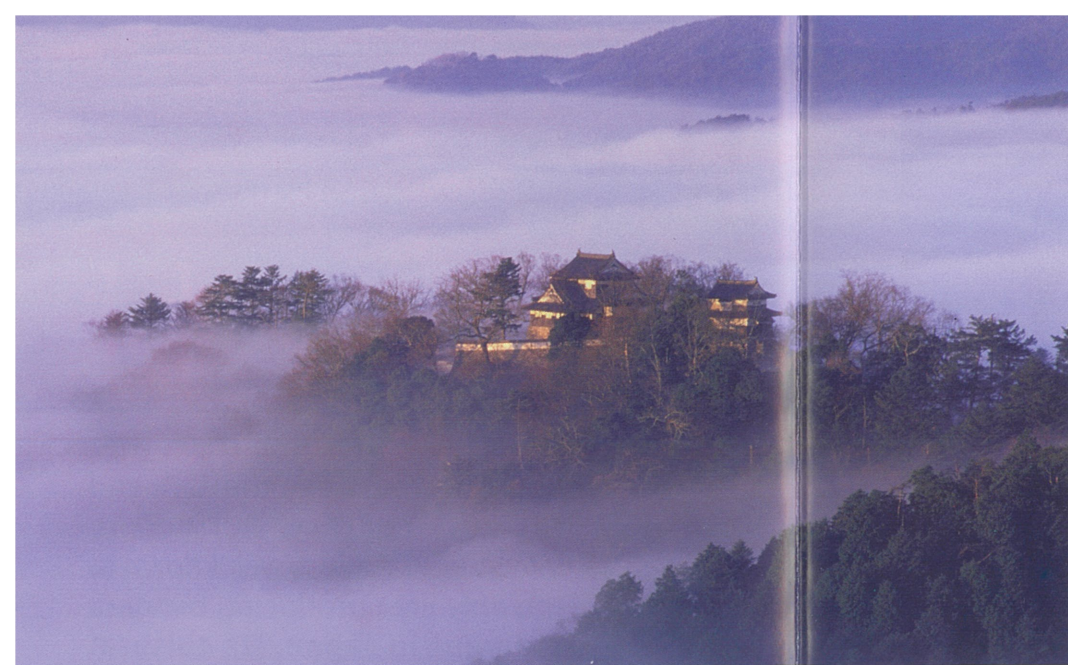




From Fall to Spring, the castle floats on a sea of clouds. This breathtaking scenery can be seen from an observatory early in the morning.

An Important Cultural Property of Japan Bitchu Matsuyama Castle

Walk in the footsteps of the noble warriors of the past

Mount Gagyū is made of four peaks: Omatsuyama, Tenjin no Maru, Komatsuyama and Maeyama. Built atop Komatsuyama Peak, Bitchu Matsuyama Castle is the only mountaintop castle to have an original keep, the others having been destroyed or rebuilt. While climbing Mount Gagyū, you can observe how the architects of the Medieval Period took advantage of the environment to build an impregnable castle.



Takahashi Castle Town



Access to Takahashi City

- From Kayo IC Exit : About 15 minutes by National Road Number 484
- From Ukan IC exit : About 25 minutes by National Road Number 313
- From Okayama Airport : about 50 minutes by car
- Train : Take the Hakubi Line and get off at Bitchu Takahashi Station. about 50 minutes (or 35 minutes by "yakumo" superexpress) from Okayama Station.

Access to Fukiya

- 26 km / 16.15 mi / 50 minutes by car from Bitchu Takahashi Station (via Route 180 and 85)

Contact (Tourism Association, Tourist Center)

- Takahashi City Tourist Center Tel : 0866-22-8666
- Takahashi Visitors Center Tel : 0866-21-0461
- Nariwa District Tourism Association - Fukiya Branch Tel : 0866-29-2205

Samurai Houses

Former Orii House and Haibara House

Ishibiyacho Furusato Village, a feudal district



The Former Orii House was built near the middle of the 19th Century. It was the residence of a guard on horseback. The plastered walls give the house a prestigious look. Don't forget to visit the museum on the back of the garden! The Former Haibara House (Important Cultural Property of Takahashi City) was built in the middle of the Edo Era. Its architecture incorporates elements of temples and tea ceremony rooms.



Raikyūji Temple and Garden

A garden designed by the famous artist Kobori Enshū

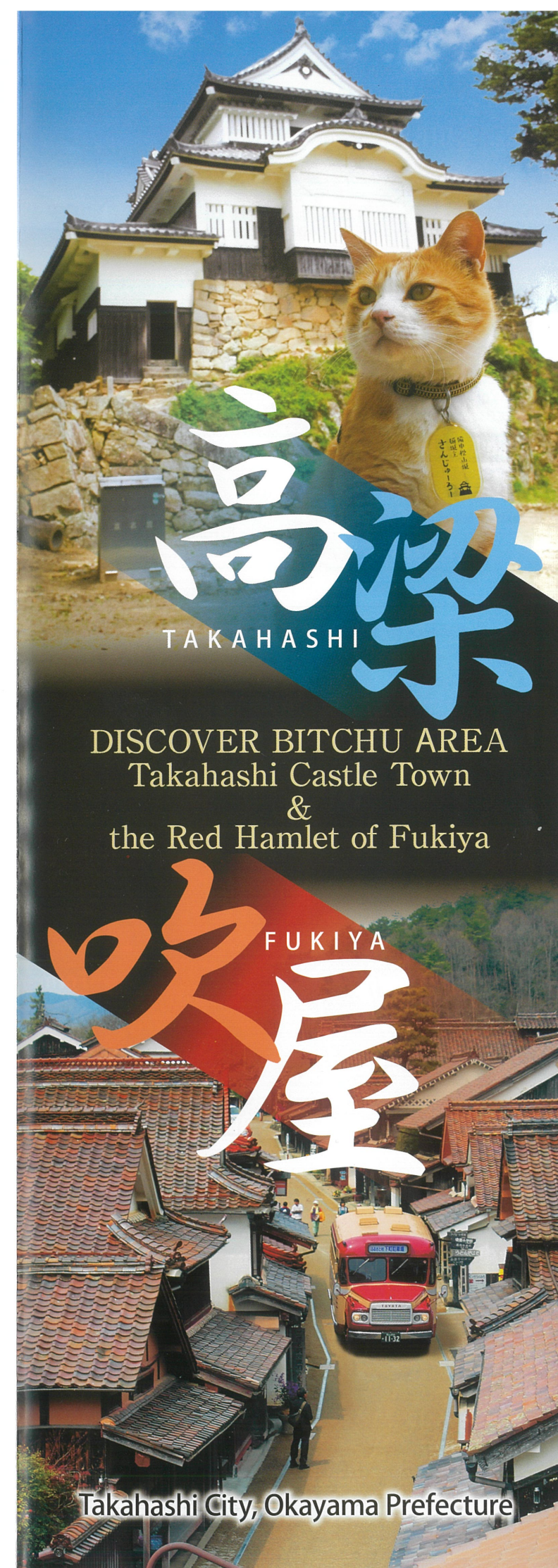
Kobori Enshū designed the dry garden when he was the Magistrate of Bitchu Province, during the beginning of the 17th Century. It is the perfect place to grasp his artistic vision.



Kouya River Banks

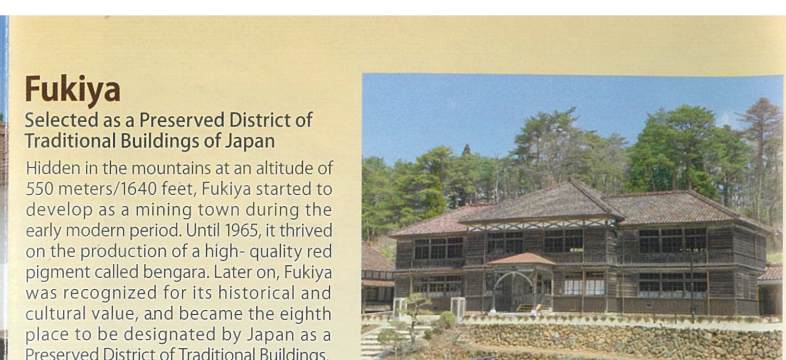
Stroll around and enjoy a picturesque scenery

Bordered with weeping willows and Japanese cherry trees, Koya River was the moat of Bitchu Matsuyama Castle. Close to the river stands Takahashi Christian Church, the oldest Christian building in Okayama Prefecture. You can also see the site of Yushukan, a school that closed in 1871. Kouya River Banks counts among Japan's top 100 roads.



DISCOVER BITCHU AREA
Takahashi Castle Town
&
the Red Hamlet of Fukiya

Takahashi City, Okayama Prefecture



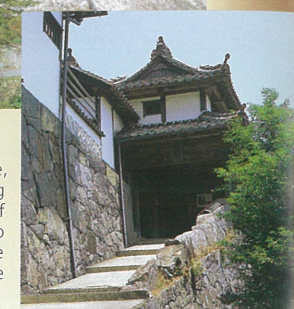
Hidden in the mountains at an altitude of 550 meters/1640 feet, Fukiya started to develop as a mining town during the early modern period. Until 1965, it thrived on the production of a high-quality red pigment called bengara. Later on, Fukiya was recognized for its historical and cultural value, and became the eighth place to be designated by Japan as a Preserved District of Traditional Buildings.



The main building of Fukiya Elementary School was built in 1909, eleven years after Mitsubishi sold the land of the main management center of the mine. The school was known as the oldest wooden school in Japan to be still operating, until it closed in 2012. The Meiji Era-style architecture of the buildings has been well preserved and attracts a lot of tourists. In 2022, the school reopened as a museum, after 7 years of maintenance.



At the beginning of the 19th Century, Motoji Hirokane, manager of Koizumi Copper Mine, made a fortune producing a green powder called roha, which is the main component of bengara. Hirokane Residence was built at the end of the Edo Era (1603-1868). With its imposing outer walls, it can be mistaken for a Japanese castle. The house is known as the filming location of the movie "The 8-Tomb Village".

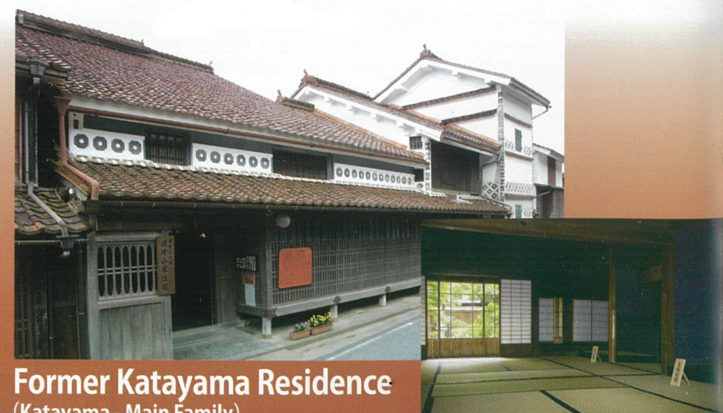
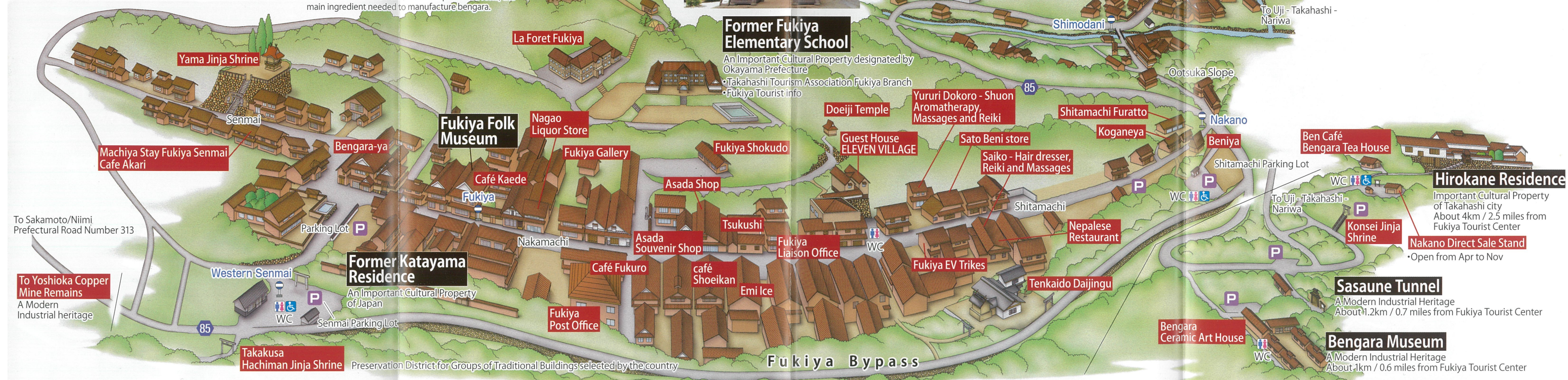


To Nariwa, Ibara

As Nishie Family was at the head of the village and in charge of the district's administration, their residence included a Summary Court Room, a shared warehouse, a stable and a calligraphy classroom. In 1751, the 6th head of the family, Nishie Hyozzaemon, started to extract ore from Yamamoto Mine. He mass-produced roha, the main ingredient needed to manufacture bengara.



Wakusugizan Enmeiji is a Soto-zen temple. It is said it was first built in 1505 and rebuilt in 1807, after it burnt during the Kan'ei Period (1789-1801). During its most prosperous time, rich merchant families such as copper mine managers or bengara potters were affiliated to the temple.



The Katayamas' launched their business in 1759. They manufactured and sold Bengara during more than 220 years. Since its architecture is typical of the bengara shops during early modern times, their residence is highly valued and received a designation as an Important Cultural Property of Japan in 2006.



Katayama Yoshikichi, who was the general manager of the Main Katayama Family, hired miya-daiku master-builders (carpenters generally in charge of temple and shrines construction) from Sekishu. They achieved the house in 1879, after 5 years of labor. They used chestnut wood for the foundations and the outdoor, and cherry tree for some parts of the inside. The surroundings of the study are coated with filtered raw lacquer and bengara. At the second floor hides a "secret room" of about 10m² / 98.8 square feet.



Fukiya started to produce the first Japanese bengara in 1707. The area thrived and developed until the mine closed during Taisho Era. This Bengara Museum recreates a Bengara Manufactory as it was during Meiji Era. Inside, it is possible to see how the area looked like during its golden age, and to learn about bengara's manufacturing process.



Bengara was produced in Fukiya until 1965. The pigment was used in ceramic and lacquerware, such as Kutani and Wajima ware. It also prevents the wooden boats and houses from molding and rotting, and makes an excellent material to pre-dye clothes. The Bengara Ceramic Art House uses bengara to make ceramic and organizes pottery classes.



Chalcopyrite and iron sulphide were extracted from this tunnel from Edo Era to Taisho Era. It is open to public since its restoration in 1978. The inside is about 15°C / 59°F all year round.