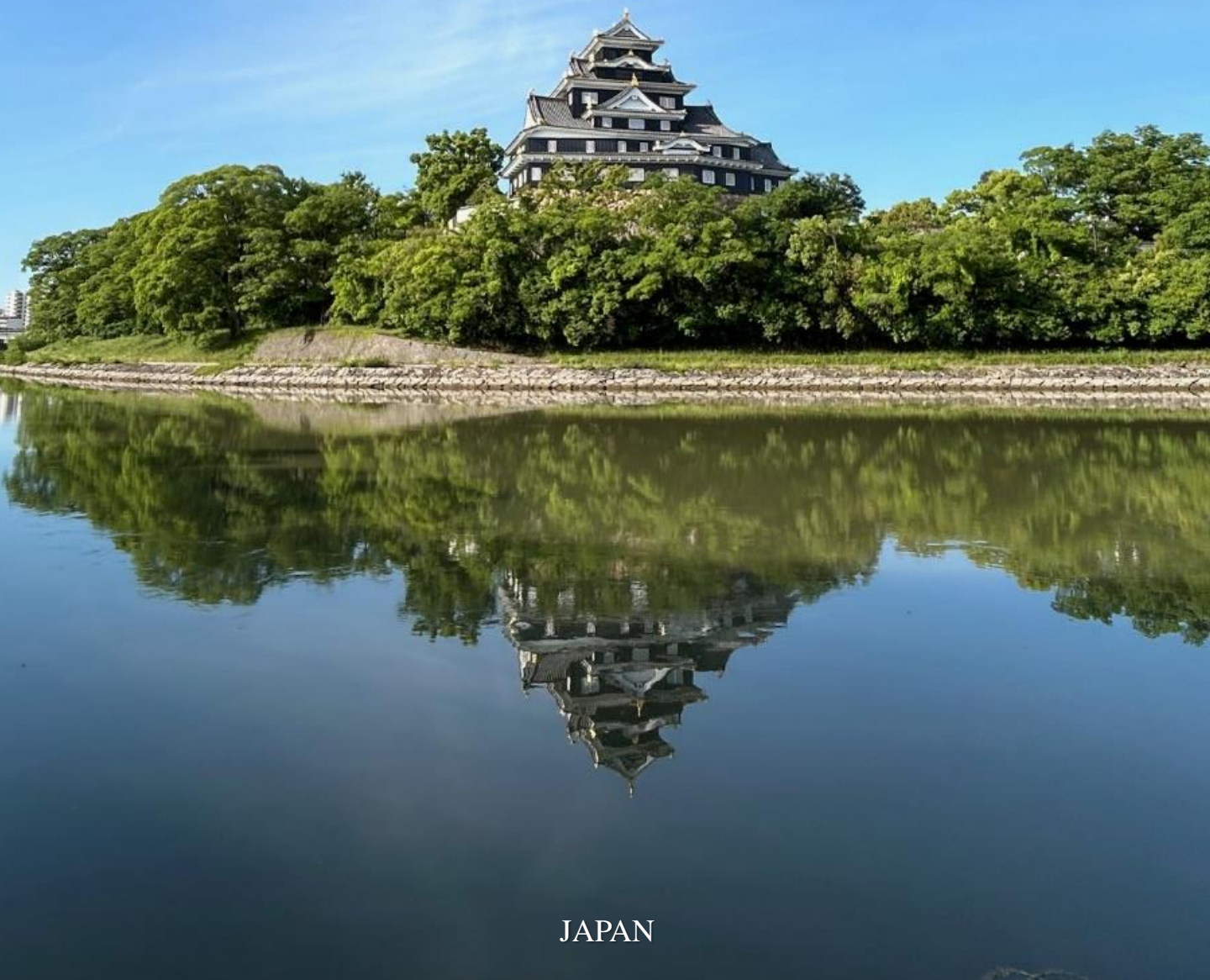
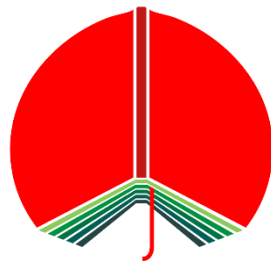


# Okayama

## City of Literature



JAPAN



City of Literature  
**OKAYAMA**

Japan, a country rich in nature, has four distinct seasons with a variety of unique colors of plants, flowers, trees, sky, and mountains.

The logo of the City of Literature has traditional colors having been handed down from ancient Japan.

# Overview

Located in the western region of Japan, Okayama city has an area of 789 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 717,000. Okayama city faces Seto Inland Sea, known for its gentle sea, beautiful islands and contemporary art. The Asahi River runs through the centre of the city, which is surrounded by a rich natural and rural landscape of rice fields, wheat, peach and grape orchards spread that mix with the suburbs. This landscape has inspired poets and writers since the 8th century.



Agriculture flourished from the 3rd century, and remains of ancient tombs of powerful families and shrines still remain. From ancient times to the present day, Okayama has been a transportation hub with a concentration of business, medical care, education and culture. Okayama has become a centre for academics, attracting approximately 30,000 students to its 10 universities and 3 junior colleges.

Okayama is characterised by its literary resources, particularly children's literature, which are rooted in history, and by its attempts to use these resources to activate the region through public-private partnerships.

In 2023, Okayama was designated a member of UNESCO Creative Cities Network.



# Background

Okayama has cultural resources in literature. The folktale of Momotaro, who was born from a peach and fought with a dog, monkey, and pheasant against an ogre causing trouble for people, has been the most famous Japanese folktale. The roots of the folktale is in Okayama. The folktale has widely spread among children by picture books. The story has fostered the spirit of supporting others and the affinity for animals in children.



City centre of Okayama



Joji Tsubota

## Joji Tsubota Literary Award

Joji Tsubota, who was born in Okayama, was one of Japan's leading authors of children's literature in the 1930s. Okayama city keeps promoting creative activities by citizens through literary awards commemorating him for 40 years.

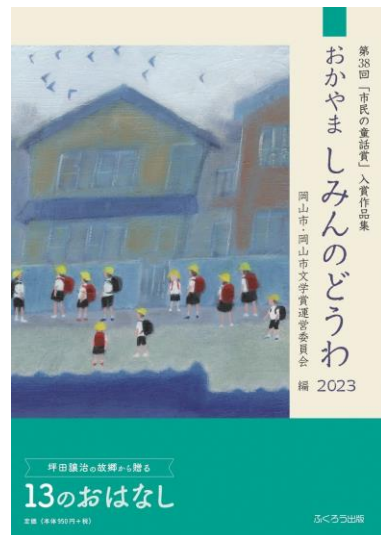
## The Citizens' Fairy Tale Award & The Okayama Citizens' Literature and Art

Okayama city has implemented initiatives such as awards for children's stories and traditional Japanese literary creations to foster civic pride and interest in literature.

The city has hosted "The Citizens' Fairy Tale Award" since 1985. This award is to foster the citizens' creativity. More than 1,300 applications have been submitted from 2019 to 2022.

Applicants include professionals and amateurs. Writing workshops are held by popular authors.

"The Okayama Citizens' Literature and Art Festival" is hosted by The city to promote the writing of essays, poetry, Japanese traditional haiku poems. Citizens submit their writings, and the best works are awarded and published. More than 11,000 entries have been submitted from 2019 to 2022.



"Citizens' Fairy Tales"

# Libraries and Museums

The public sector manages 10 public halls, 10 museums, 11 libraries, while the private sector manages a literature museum. In the 18th century, a private library was established by a local merchant. In the 20th century, a municipal library was built with donations. Even when the access to the books are limited, people of business sector and public sector worked together to promote local education through collaboration.



## Okayama Prefectural Library

Okayama Prefectural Library is located in the centre of Okayama.

It boasts the highest number of books checked-out in prefectural libraries in Japan. 1.6 million books meet the reading needs of the Okayama community.

## Okayama City Libraries

Okayama City Libraries strive to be helpful in the daily lives of citizens by providing access to books, magazines, newspapers, picture-card shows, and other audio-visual materials.

11 city libraries are located as community hubs to play an important role in promoting and disseminating information.



## The Kibiji Literary Museum

The Kibiji Literary Museum is a privately-owned museum established in 1986 by the Chugoku Bank, a regional bank in Okayama.

The museum collects and exhibits books and materials written by novelists, poets, haiku poets, and filmmakers associated with Okayama in order to pass on valuable cultural assets to the next generation.

\* "Kibiji" is an old name of Okayama region.

## Okayama Orient Museum

The Okayama Orient Museum has collected and preserved archaeological, artistic, and folkloric materials from the vast and profound world of the Orient.

Based on research, Research findings are exhibited to introduce history and culture related to the Orient from ancient to modern times.

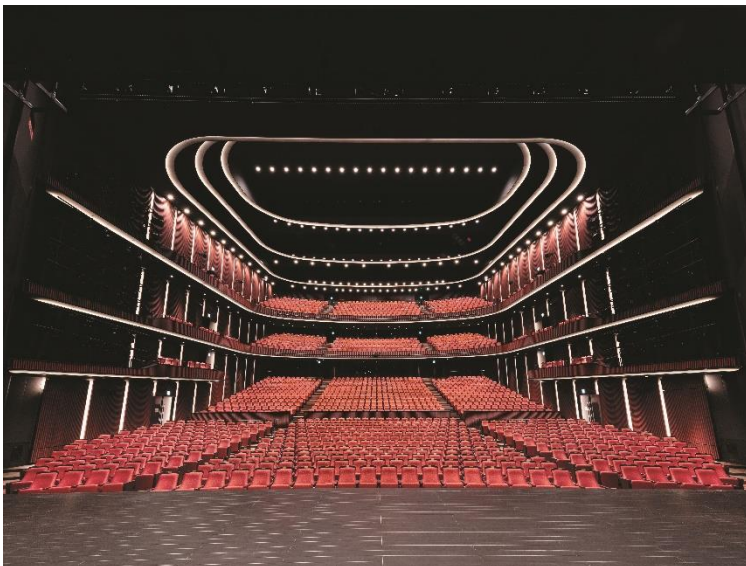


# Okayama Performing Art Theatre, Harenowa

With concepts of “Attract,” “Gather,” “Create,” Okayama Performing Art Theatre, Harenowa opened on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2023.

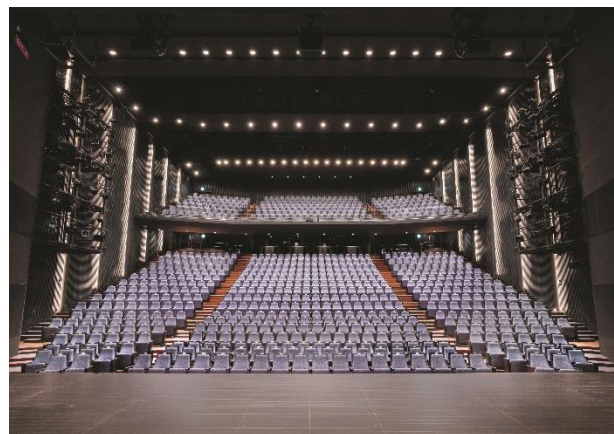


Harenowa is a momentous place to experience exquisite performing arts. Audience can indulge in various performing arts from large-scale performances such as opera, musical, play and dance to traditional performances, pop music and rock.



◀ Grand Theatre (1,753 seats)

▼ Play House (807 seats)



# Okayama Literature Festival

Setouchi Book Cruise and Okayama city hold "The Okayama Literature Festival" for almost 3 weeks. Started in 2022, almost 5,000 people participated in the festival each year.



Several events are held in the Festival such as “Okayama Literary School”, “Okayama ZINE Stadium” and “Okayama Omotecho Book Street”.

## “Okayama Literary School”

Held in a closed elementary school in the city centre, the event is called “Okayama Literary School.” Publishers and bookstores gather to the event for professionals and citizens. More than 30 companies and organisations participate in the event.

## “Okayama ZINE Stadium”

Creators make self-produced booklet and sell their works in “Okayama ZINE Stadium.” Participants enjoy talking each other about how they’ve made their works.

## “Okayama Omotecho Book Street”

Held in Okayama’s largest shopping district, “Okayama Omotecho Book Street” is an event for used bookstores and citizens to sell a variety of used books. Major used book vendors also join the event to attract a wide range of customers.



# Residency Programme



Writers stay in Okayama city in the Residency programme. The writers stay in the city to interview citizens, write articles, and hold workshops.

Yusuke Norishiro, winner of the 37th Tsubota Joji Literary Award, stayed here.

This would be an opportunities for the authors to meet local people and unique history of the city.

The programme empowers local creative talents by having resident authors engage in workshops.

Participants of the workshops sketch the landscape and walk back to the workshop room. They work diligently to improve their work.

Some participants commented that “I could write to draw the landscape better than the first time,” and “I became more conscious of landscape sketching in their daily lives, and that it changed the way I see things.”





# International Book Delivery Project

International Book Delivery Project aims to provide learning opportunities and improve the quality of education through the donation of books to children in various countries and regions living under harsh conditions. In collaboration with an international Non-Governmental Organisation Shanti Volunteer Association, the city promote volunteer activities to deliver picture books to areas that lack access to books and education.

We intends to have students and children help with the tasks associated with book donation and, at the same time, arrange opportunities for the children to learn about the countries and regions where the books are being sent.



Through book-giving, participants will gain a deeper understanding of various social situations. Such understanding of other countries and regions is a prerequisite for working to achieve multiple SDGs indicators.



## Kibito Publishing Co. Ltd.



Founded in 1995. Under the slogan "Publishing books is Building community," Kibito Publishing Co. Ltd. is a publishing company rooted in the local community. It aims to create books that explore the local culture. We publish each book with the idea focus on the originality to be made in Okayama.

## Okayama NIPPAN Association

Okayama NIPPAN Association is a group of 40 bookstores established in 1972. The association aims to promote reading, expand demand for books and strengthen the network among bookstores.



## Notre Dame Seishin University

Notre Dame Seishin University, whose founding parent organisation is the Sister of Notre Dame de Namur of France, was founded in 1949 and is recognised as one of the first liberal arts institutions established in Japan.

The university has been collecting and researching materials on Joji Tsubota.

"The Joji Tsubota World Explorers," a group of Notre Dame Seishin University professors and students, conduct research and fieldwork on Joji Tsubota from various perspectives, including the environment and human ties, and present their findings to local residents and children.

# Authors born in Okayama

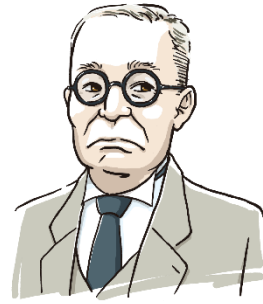
## Joji Tsubota



1890  
- 1982

Many of Joji's works depict the landscape of Okayama at that time, with its wide expanses of rice paddies and rich natural surroundings. The children in his works are also depicted as innocent and mischievous, yet strong, and the harsh realities of society are also expressed.

## Hyakken Uchida



1889  
- 1971

Born as the only son of a sake brewer in Okayama, he graduated local high school and university. A novel that drawn inexplicable horrors as if they were the successors of a dream, and an essay that can be said to be the running of an iron geek. He wrote essays living with a stray cat. His name "Hyakken" was named after a river running through Okayama.

## Kiyoko Nagase



1906  
- 1995

Kiyoko was transferred to live in Kanazawa, Nagoya, and Tokyo, and she returned to Okayama to escape the war.

She cultivated the fields and raised her children. She visited Nagashima island where leprosy patients were segregated to teach patients to write poetry for years.

## Shinko Tokizane



1929  
- 2007

Shinko was born in Kuban Village in Okayama. She married with a man at the age of 17. Her husband was a disabled veteran, and Shinko suffered from violence. She met a satirical haiku in the newspaper column. Her collection of works were published in 1987 and attracted attention of public as works expressing the passions of women. She was popular as an artist who expressed true feelings of women.

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