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FURUSATO SPIRITUAL HOME

黒川温泉
KUROKAWA-ONSEN

"*Kurokawa-onsen-kyo*"

A Japanese village and traditional inns existing side by side.
How a local spa became the model of many modern-day
Japanese onsen resorts.

Originally, only the local residents of the mountainous area surrounding Mount Aso shared and enjoyed the small spa resort of *Kurokawa*. However, in 1964 the number of hotels in the area began to increase after *Kurokawa* was designated a national health resort and construction of the *Yamanami* Highway was completed. Even so, visitors to this area were largely limited to those who came to attend banquets on weekends rather than those planning to just relax and enjoy the hot springs. As Japan's post-war economic boom drew to a close many of these new hotels began to experience financial difficulties, and it was around this time that one enterprising innkeeper from *Kurokawa* literally took matters into his own hands by fashioning a cave in the hills behind his house, drawing water from a hot spring and creating a rustic *rotenburo* or outdoor bath. His efforts were soon emulated by several other younger generation innkeepers, and before long the

atmosphere of *Kurokawa* became similar to that of one large inn close to nature in the countryside. Eventually this gave rise to the concept of "The Whole Town as an Inn", where the streets are like corridors and the individual *ryokan* are like the guest rooms leading off from them. In recent years the entire community, including restaurant-owners and shopkeepers have become involved in this movement. In turn this has led to the production of the *Nyuto Tegata* (Onsen-hopping Pass) a kind of coupon encouraging visitors to bathe in up to three different outdoor baths during their visit to the resort. The popularity of the pass continues to grow, thanks largely to the media and by word of mouth. This extremely successful "*Kurokawa* spa resort formula" is now one that other onsen resorts throughout Japan strive to emulate. Currently, *Kurokawa Onsen* is concentrating its efforts on looking at ways of attracting more visitors from overseas.

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The concept of
"The Whole Town as an Inn"



▲ View of Kurokawa Onsen around 1960

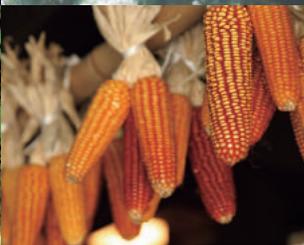
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FURUSATO SPIRITUAL HOME



The whole town is like an inn, where the streets are the corridors and the individual ryokan are the guest rooms.

KUROKAWA ONSEN





Features of *Kurokawa Onsen*

Kurokawa Onsen lies in a mountainous region of northeastern *Kyushu* on the edge of the *Aso* caldera and the *Kuju* mountains. To the south you can view the spectacular five peaks of Mount *Aso* as well as a rich variety of scenery ranging from the *Aso* caldera itself to grassland plains, plateaus, springs and a number of natural geographical formations. The town of *Kurokawa* itself is largely unspoilt and has managed to retain its natural beauty and traditional Japanese charm.

Kurokawa Spa Resort

Just a short distance from the prefectural road you will discover *Kurokawa* and its array of *onsen ryokan*, shops and cafes. Take a stroll through the narrow streets and winding pathways and you'll soon forget your everyday worries and start to imagine yourself transported back to the Japan of old. Traditional architecture combined with the stunning local mountain scenery help to create *Kurokawa Onsen's* distinctive charm.

Onsen-hopping Pass

The *Nyuto Tegata* (*onsen*-hopping pass) is available for only 1300yen and gives the visitor access to any three of the public outdoor baths belonging to twenty five *onsen ryokans* in *Kurokawa*. Wander around the town at your own pace wearing a *yukata*, stop by a café, then enjoy a relaxing dip. This approach has been adopted by many other *onsen* regions in Japan today, and stems from the concept of "The Whole Town as an Inn" which was originally conceived in *Kurokawa*.



We welcome visitors not only from Japan, but from all over the world

Our aim is to unite the town of *Kurokawa*, its *ryokan* and the neighbouring community to create a single resort, where every member of that community strives to provide the visitor, both Japanese and from overseas, with exceptional service. In order to allow everyone to enjoy fully what *Kurokawa* has to offer the town is working to ensure that information relating to *ryokans*, restaurants, shopping etc is readily available in a variety of languages. We look forward to your visit and are already hoping to welcome you back again.



Foreign tourists welcome plan logo
"You more MINAMIOGUNI"

You can access restaurant menus, ryokan guides and more in Japanese, English, Mandarin, Cantonese and Korean.



Pleasant surprises on every corner

Wander around the leafy streets of *Kurokawa* listening to the sound of the nearby river and you will find pleasant surprises on every corner. It could be a scenic view, a cosy café, a warm welcoming bath, a friendly greeting or a hospitable smile...



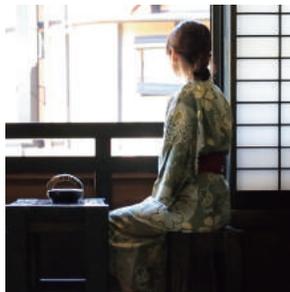
A TASTE OF SPRING IN *KUROKAWA*

Spring brings a unique array of culinary delights, including seasonal sweets, fragrant *tempura* made with wild mountain vegetables and *senbei* rice crackers for snacking on while visiting different stores.



SPRING RELAXATION IN *KUROKAWA*

Sunlight filters through a curtain of fresh greenery surrounding the *rotenburo* (outdoor baths). Time seems to stand still and your mind and body are refreshed.



ENJOY SPRING IN *KUROKAWA*

Spring is the best season for wearing *yukata* (a light cotton *kimono*) while you wander around the town enjoying the scenery and popping into local souvenir shops or cafes when the mood takes you.





夏
SUMMER
KUROKAWA
4 SEASONS



An abundance of green wherever you go

The *onsen* resort of *Kurokawa* lies in a valley almost hidden by dense woods. In summer everywhere is green, although you may spot a row of striking bright red spider lilies blooming along the side of the road in late summer. In the background the constant, soothing babble of the *Tanoharu-gawa* River and nearby mountain streams cools and soothes your soul. If you are lucky, your visit will coincide with the annual summer festival, when the night sky is lit up with fireworks and the sound of the *Yamanami* taiko drums echoes through the valley.



A TASTE OF SUMMER IN *KUROKAWA*

Thanks to the cool, fresh water in *Kurokawa* you can enjoy eating locally-made *zaru-soba* (cold *soba* noodles) together with crisp, colourful vegetables and fish raised in water from crystal clear mountain streams.



SUMMER RELAXATION IN *KUROKAWA*

In the afternoon, sunlight filters through the trees and shimmers on the surface of the water. Later in the evening you can listen to the chirping of cicadas as you relax in your bath as the sun goes down.



ENJOY SUMMER IN *KUROKAWA*

Walking through streets filled with laughing festival-goers while wearing your *yukata* and *geta* (wooden sandals) with a bottle of ice-cold pop in one hand is one of the highlights of summer in *Kurokawa*. Even after that, there is still time for another dip in the bath and a moonlight stroll as the heat of the day fades.





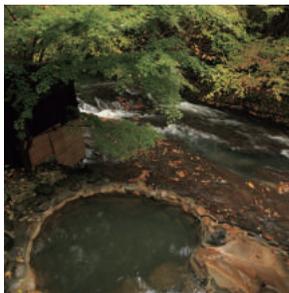
A curtain of vibrant autumn foliage

In autumn it is as if a curtain of rich red, orange and yellow hues is drawn around *Kurokawa*. You will see *kaki* (persimmon) trees beyond the hedgerows, heavily laden, with their bright orange fruit in stark contrast to the often clear blue autumn skies. This is the most picturesque season for visiting *Kurokawa* and enjoying a *rotenburo* (outdoor bath) while admiring the autumn colors all around you.



A TASTE OF AUTUMN IN *KUROKAWA*

As the evenings start to draw in, warm yourself by the traditional Japanese *irori* or sunken hearth, where meals are often served. An array of seasonal autumn delights awaits you.



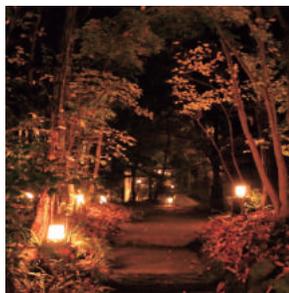
AUTUMN RELAXATION IN *KUROKAWA*

The breezes may be a little chilly as summer gives way to autumn, but you can always warm up in an *rotenburo* (outdoor bath) or step into a *uchiyu* (indoor bath) while still enjoying the patchwork of color around you.



ENJOY AUTUMN IN *KUROKAWA*

As the days get shorter and the light fades, intricately-carved bamboo lanterns glow warmly along the river, lending *Kurokawa* a distinctive atmosphere at this time of year. A must-see if you are visiting in late autumn or the winter.





冬
WINTER
4 SEASONS
KUROKAWA



Warm baths, warm hearts

Clear, cold winter air, steam rising from the hot spring baths... these are the kind of scenes of Japan that until now you have only pored over in magazines and coffee table books. Open the door to any inn or store and you will be greeted by an *irori* (traditional Japanese sunken hearth) as well as hospitable smiles. As you walk briskly through the streets of *Kurokawa* in your thick *hanten* (padded jacket worn over a *yukata*) with your hands tucked up into the sleeves against the cold, the people, food and hot spring baths will soon warm you up again.



A TASTE OF WINTER IN KUROKAWA

A cooking pot of colorful winter vegetables simmers at the center of the *irori*, winter foods in *Kurokawa* are warming and satisfying.



WINTER RELAXATION IN KUROKAWA

Bathing in a *rotenburo* (outdoor bath) while the steam rises and the snow falls is an unforgettable, almost magical experience. It may be the middle of winter in Japan, but don't worry, your body and soul will soon be warm.



ENJOY WINTER IN KUROKAWA

The winter season in *Kurokawa* means that it's time once again for enjoying "*Yuakari*" and "*Kurokawa Kappo*". Lanterns carved from bamboo, called *Yuakari*, light up the center of town with a warm, gentle glow and visitors may admire them while out for a drink using their special *Kurokawa Kappo* pass for sake at selected local inns, stores and restaurants.





Here is why you want to visit *Kurokawa Onsen*... The onsen-hopping pass



When it comes down to it, *Kurokawa* means *onsen* ... it's not just the old world shopfronts or the unique character of the individual *ryokan*, it's not just the delicious food, the atmosphere or the hospitality of the local people, it's the *onsen* that have made *Kurokawa* the success story that it is today. It boasts a large variety of *rotenburo* (outdoor baths), ranging from cave baths to riverside and mountainside baths as well as 7 (out of a possible 9) types of hot spring water, which is rare even for Japan. To allow visitors (day-trippers as well as staying guests) to make the most of their stay in *Kurokawa* we offer the *Onsen-hopping pass (Nyuto Tegata)* for only 1300yen, which enables you to try up to 3 (out of 25) different *rotenburo* (outdoor baths). The attractive cedarwood pass may be worn around the neck and then kept as a souvenir of your stay in *Kurokawa*, a talking point when you tell your friends back home about your journey of discovery to a traditional Japanese spa resort in a wooded valley in a remote corner of *Kyushu*.

Nyuto Tegata
(*Onsen-hopping Pass*)

¥1,300/pass

Kurokawa Onsen Ryokan Association

“KAZENOYA” Visitor Center

At the Visitor Center “Kazenoya” we offer general tourist information as well as details about inn vacancies and the various *rotenburo* (outdoor baths). Free maps and brochures are available, the *Onsen*-hopping pass and other original merchandise may be purchased here and *Yukata* may be rented nearby for a small fee. Why not pop in and see us and start your *Kurokawa* sightseeing from here?



Kurokawa Onsen Ryokan List

IKOI RYOKAN
RYOKAN ICHINOI
REKISHINOYADO OKYAKUJA
RYOKAN OKUNOYU
IYASHINOSATO KIYASHIKI
OYADO KUROKAWA
KUROKAWASO
KOHNOYU
SAN-AI KOGEN HOTEL
RYOKAN SANGA

SHINMEIKAN
RYOKAN NANJOEN
RYOKAN NISHIMURA
OYADO NOSHIYU
RYOKAN NONOHANA
FUJIYA
FUMOTO RYOKAN & BEKKAN ROKUAN
GENRYUNOYADO HOZANTEI
WAFURYOKAN MISATO
RYOKAN YAMANOYU

YAMABIKO RYOKAN
YAMAMIZUKI
YUKYONOHIBIKI YUSAI
SENMOTOKAN YUMERINDO
YUMERINDO HANADOMARI
YUMOTOSO
RYOKAN WAKABA
SATONOYU WARAKU
MIYAMASANSO

KUROKAWA ONSEN RYOKAN ASSOCIATION VISITOR CENTER

Kurokawa Sakura-dori, Minamioguni-machi, Aso-gun, Kumamoto 869-2402 JAPAN

CALL: +81-967-44-0076 FAX: +81-967-44-0819



KUROKAWA ONSEN ACCESS

To Aso City.....30min. by car(25km)

To Kumamoto City.....110min. by car(70km)

To Hita City.....65min. by car(50km)

To Beppu City.....100min. by car(72km)

To Fukuoka City.....120min. by car(118km)

To Crater of Mt.Aso...60min. by car(44km)

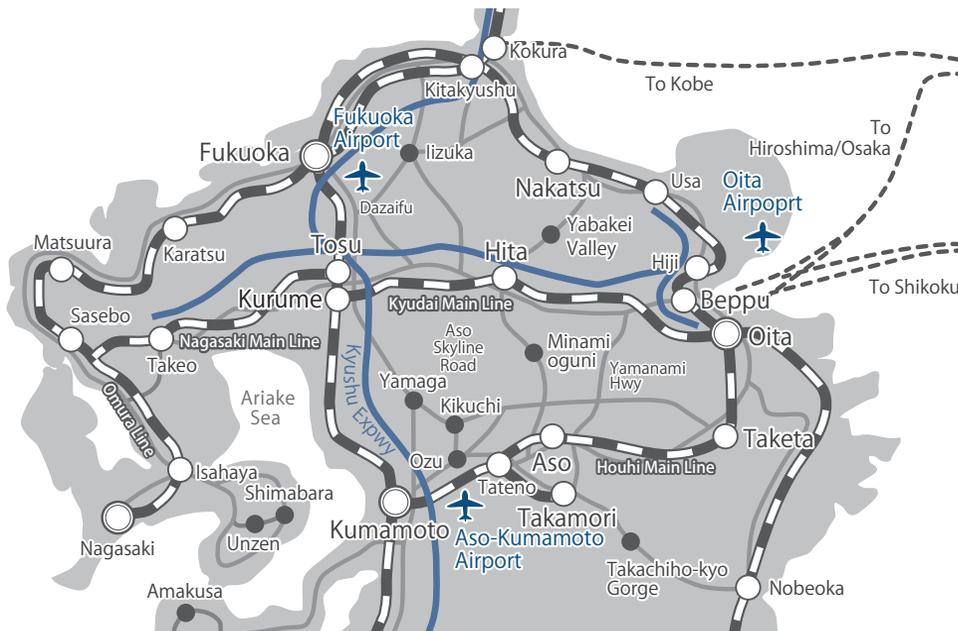
To Aso Shrine.....30min. by car(26km)

To Kumamoto Castle.....110min. by car(73km)

To Kumamoto Airport.....75min. by car(60km)
(Aso-Kumamoto Airport)

To Fukuoka Airport.....120min. by car(113km)

To Oita Airport.....90min. by car(98km)



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