

Kurashiki

Kurashiki

1 Treinstation

An obligatory stop on the San-yo road between the Inland Sea and the northern regions, this merchant town prospered, thanks to the rice and textile trades. Enjoying the status of a free port, linked to the sea by canals, it became so rich that it was placed under the direct supervision of the shogunate during the Edo period. Kurashiki (population 470,000) is currently the largest center for production of jeans in Japan. Located 800m to the south of the station, the historical district of Bikan, with its storehouses and romantic canals lined with weeping willows, has retained its old character. Today, its many art museums, restaurants, ryokan, and handicraft shops make it a lively tourist center.

2 Ohashi House

The Ohashi family built its fortune in the 18C on salt and rice. Because of the influence it exerted, it was given permission by the shogunate to build this residence in 1796. The wide front door leads to an open space separating the house from the street: a style theoretically reserved for the samurai class. The original house had more than 25 rooms, and about 30 people lived here, including servants. The interior is typical of the houses of rich Kurashiki merchants, with tatami rooms at the front, for business and for entertaining guests, and private rooms at the rear. On the upper floor, an attic was used for storing the family's possessions (kimonos, china, scrolls). At the far end of the garden is a storehouse that has been turned into an exhibition hall.

3 Ohara Museum of Art

In 1930, Ohara Magosaburo, who had made his fortune in textiles, created a museum to display his collection of Western art, one of the finest in Japan. Located on the right (west) bank of the canal, the building has a colonnaded façade like a Greek temple, a copy of the entrance to the Royal Museum in Ghent, Belgium. The museum's Main Gallery showcases Western sculptures and paintings, including a comprehensive survey of the various French and European movements at the beginning of the 20C: Barbizon school, school of Paris, Impressionists and post-Impressionists, Nabis, Fauves, Symbolists, and academic painters. Highlights include a vibrant Monet *Waterlilies* (1906), a magnificent Gauguin from the Tahitian period (1892), and an

Annunciation by El Greco (late 16C), as well as works by Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, Pissarro, Puvis de Chavannes, Modigliani, Matisse, and Foujita. Among the postwar artists represented are Fautrier, Soulages, Pollock, and De Kooning. Sculptures by Rodin, Bourdelle, and Henry Moore are on display in the garden. At the far end, the museum's annex, built in the style of a traditional Kurashiki storehouse, is devoted to modern and contemporary Japanese artists such as Fujishima Takeji, Koide Narashige, Aoki Shigeru, Kumagai Morikazu, Kishida Ryusei, and Yasui Sotaro. The Craft Art Gallery displays the work of some of the leading artists of the Folk Art or Mingei movement. The Chinese Room in the adjoining Asiatic Art Gallery, (just before the exit) houses, among other works, a fine stone Buddha of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386–534). Ohara Ken-ichiro, director—and grandson of the founder—of the Ohara Museum of Art, traces the history of the collection: "My grandfather Magosaburo was a cotton baron but also a philanthropist, who among other things founded the hospital in Kurashiki. When it came to art, his first interest was Eastern art of the past, but then his friend, the artist Kojima Torajiro, introduced him to Western painting. Between 1912 and 1923, Kojima made several trips to Paris, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland to buy modern paintings for Magosaburo, visiting Monet's studio at Giverny and Matisse's studio in Paris. At the time, very few Western works could be seen in Japan. Magosaburo's one wish was to enlighten the Japanese public by showing his collection. The works acquired during that period form the kernel of the museum's holdings. My father Soichiro added artists belonging to the Mingei movement, and modern European, American, and Japanese art. I myself continue to buy a great deal of contemporary art."

4 Bushalte Ohara Bijutsukan

5 Kojima Torajiro Memorial Hall

Na zijn opleiding in westerse schilderkunst in Tokio, reisde de Japanse kunstenaar Torajiro Kojima in 1908 met de steun van de familie Ohara naar Parijs om er zijn opleiding verder te zetten. Een jaar later schreef hij zich in aan de Gentse academie, waar hij via de directeur Jean Delvin in contact kwam met diens vriend Emile Claus. Tot 1912 verbleef Kojima in Europa, maar ook na de Eerste Wereldoorlog keerde hij er herhaaldelijk terug. In opdracht van Magosaburo Ohara reisde hij toen door Europa om Westerse kunst aan te kopen, onder meer werk van Claude Monet, Henri Matisse, Henri Marquet, Auguste Rodin maar ook van Claus en Delvin. Deze aankopen vormden de kern van de verzameling Westerse kunst in het Ohara Museum of Art in Kurashiki, geopend in 1929. Als schilder onderging Kojima verschillende Europese invloeden. Naast het impressionisme werd hij ook door het fauvisme beïnvloed.

