

# Matsue

## Matsue

### M Matsue Station

Known as the “water city” because of its many canals, Matsue stands by the sea, where Nakumi lagoon and Lake Shinji meet. A former feudal stronghold, capital of Izumo province (now Shimane prefecture), this pleasant city is a mine of cultural and historical treasures, such as its castle, one of the best-preserved in the country. Matsue also prides itself on having been the adopted home of the writer Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), the author of many books on Japan, who became a Japanese national under the name Koizumi Yakumo.

### T Ichibata Travel Service

Tickets voor de Ichibata trein, gelegen naast Lawson. Open van 9:00 tot 18:00.

### H Matsue Plaza Hotel

### 9 Shiomi Nawate bus stop 9

### 2 Theehuis Meimei-an

In a little street to the N of Buke Yashiki. This superb tea house, with its curved thatched roof, was built in 1779 in the garden of the residence of one of his vassals by the feudal lord Matsudaira Fumai, the seventh of that name, a respected master of the Tea Ceremony. Restored and moved here in 1966, it regularly attracts experts in the art of tea. You can have matcha tea served here (¥400), though without the ceremony.

### 3 Buke Yashiki

Situated midway along Shiominawate-dori, a beautiful street lined with Edo period houses, this samurai residence dating from 1730—the largest in Matsue—once belonged to the Shiomi, a medium-ranking military family in the service of the Matsudaira lords. The grand appearance of the front gate contrasts with the Spartan sobriety of the interior, which still contains furniture and domestic objects.

### 4 Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum

Although the writer Lafcadio Hearn spent barely 15 months in Matsue, where he taught English in the city’s high school, it was this city that

sparked his love of Japan—he recorded his impressions of it in *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*. The museum has a large collection of his letters and manuscripts, as well as objects recalling his life in Japan. Next door is the house where he lived, unchanged since his departure, and with a pretty garden. The writer’s great-grandson still lives in Matsue, where he teaches literature at the university

### 5 Woning Lafcadio Hearn

Born in 1850 to an Irish father and a Greek mother, the writer and journalist Lafcadio Hearn was a tireless globetrotter (London, New York, Canada, Martinique). But it was in Japan, where he arrived in 1890, that he found his spiritual home. In Matsue, he met and married a samurai’s daughter, converted to Buddhism, and took Japanese citizenship under the name Koizumi Yakumo. Appointed Professor of English Literature at the University of Tokyo, he taught there until his death in 1904, and published several books on Japanese culture, myths, and folklore, becoming a true link between Japan and the West.

### 6 Matsue Castle

The dark silhouette of the keep of Matsue Castle rises in the center of a hill surrounded by moats. Built in 1611 by the daimyo Yoshiharu Horio, it is a fine example of military architecture—although it never came under attack—and one of the best-preserved in Japan. Six stories high (98.4ft/30m), it has a wooden framework adorned with gables and roofs that turn up at the ends. Inside, documents, scale models, weapons, and armor trace the history of the city. When you get to the top, don’t miss the 360-degree view over Matsue and its surroundings, Lake Shinji, and Mount Daisen.

### 7 Sightseeing boat boarding point

The castle moats, known as Horikawa, are linked to a network of canals that were once used for transporting goods. This pleasant tour in a flat-bottomed boat, steered by an often-talkative boatman, will take you beneath bridges and past banks

fringed with cherry trees and willows. It’s a good way to soak up the relaxed atmosphere of the city.

### 8 Shimane Art Museum

This futuristic, light-filled building has a permanent collection of modern and contemporary Japanese and Western artworks, and also holds temporary exhibitions. There are works on the theme of water, sculptures on wood, photographs, and many prints, including Hokusai’s famous Views of Mount Fuji, and Hiroshige’s series on the Tokaido road. Visit toward evening, as this is an ideal place to see the romantic sunset \* over Lake Shinji.

### 23 Karakoro art studio bus stop

### 1 Yasugi Station

### 2 Adachi Museum of Art

In 1970, Adachi Zenko (1899–1990), a business tycoon who made his fortune in Osaka, built this museum to display his collection of modern Japanese art in his native region. He also set about creating, with a team of gardeners, a remarkable Japanese garden, which the American magazine *Journal of Japanese Gardening* has rated the most beautiful garden in Japan (ahead of the garden of the Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto). The garden covers an area of 16.5ha and has four different sections: a dry landscape garden, a moss garden, a pond garden, and a white gravel and pine garden, with the wooded ridge of the mist-shrouded mountains in the background. Visitors are not admitted to the garden, but have to look at it through the windows of the museum, which nevertheless effectively frame the views. Works by various Japanese artists are on display, notably Yokoyama Taikan (1868–1958), and are changed with the season.

### 1 Izumo-taisha

The great shrine of Izumo Taisha, also called Izumo Oyashiro, is the second most important Shinto shrine in Japan after Ise. It is dedicated to the kami Okuninushi, god of the earth and the harmony of nature, agriculture, and medicine, who is said to bring happiness and harmony to

human relationships, especially marriage, which is why the shrine attracts a lot of young women who wish to get married. To begin a prayer here, clap your hands not twice, as is usual, but four times to draw the deity's attention not only to you, but also to your loved one.

Izumo Taisha is said to be the oldest shrine in Japan and is known to have existed since at least the 7C. The area where it stands was once an island, separated from the coast by a sound that has since been filled in by alluvial deposits. Most of the existing buildings, however, date from 1874, and the main building from 1744 (apparently its 25th reconstruction). The main shrine is surrounded by a rectangular double fence. It is accessed via an avenue of pines twisted by the wind, then through the O-torii, the largest shrine gate in Japan, adorned with a huge sacred rope of rice straw (shimenawa) 42.7ft/13m long and weighing 3 tons. The Honden (main hall), some 78.7ft/24m high, stands on a raised platform. This is typical of the architectural style known as taisha-zukuri, the oldest style used for shrines, characterized by a roof of cypress bark with a double slope and curved canopies, and an imposing front staircase on piles. Its proportions are fairly modest in comparison with the previous building dating from the Heian period, which, with a height of 157.5ft/48m, was then the largest wooden building in Japan, ahead of Todai-ji in Nara.

**2 Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo**  
Opened in 2007, this museum traces the history of the region of Izumo. Relics unearthed by archeological excavations (bronze bells and swords, pottery, funerary objects) are on display. A 1:10 scale model gives an idea of how the shrine looked

1,000 years ago, when it stood on high piles and was reached by a huge 109m-long staircase.

**3 Sobadokoro Tanakaya**

Lunch plek

**4 Former Taisha Station 旧JR大社駅**

**T Izumotaisha-Mae Station**

**I Izumoshi Station**

**K Kawato Station**

**S Matsue-Shinjiko-Onsen Station**

