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OKAYAMA

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Okayama is a pivotal city linking the Chugoku region of western Japan with Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's four main islands. Okayama also has a shinkansen bullet-train station and an international airport. Unspoiled scenery and rivers flowing into the Seto Inland Sea contribute to the area's natural green appeal. In 2005, Okayama was recognized by the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability as one of the world's first Regional Centres of Expertise for Education on Sustainable Development.



Okayama Pref.
1.88 million people

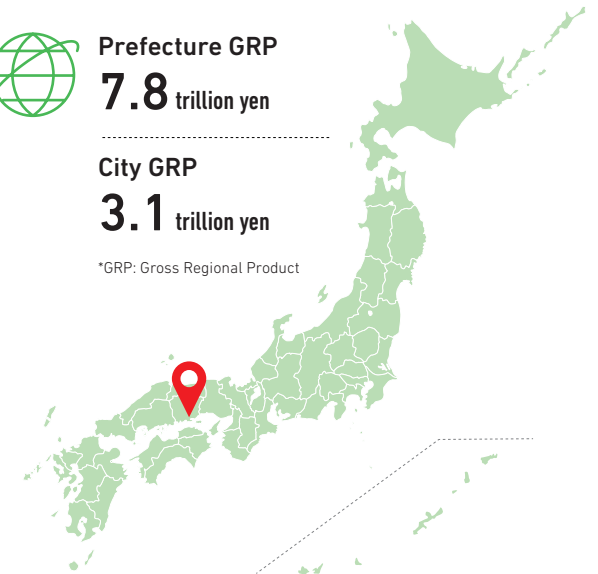


Prefecture GRP
7.8 trillion yen

Okayama City
0.72 million people

City GRP
3.1 trillion yen

*GRP: Gross Regional Product



STRENGTHS

Advantages and Characteristics



Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

- Since 2005, Okayama has been promoting ESD (Education for Sustainable Development), which aims to develop human resources. And in 2014, the city hosted stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the UNESCO World Conference on ESD.
- The “Okayama Model,” which promotes ESD in community centers, schools, and other local facilities, is used around the world.



Balancing natural and urban environments

- Okayama is an attractive city whose urban hub links smoothly to the nearby rural, coastal, and mountainous areas. Residents and visitors alike can enjoy a blend of natural features and high-quality modern facilities.



First Regional Centres of Expertise Thematic Conference
The First RCE Thematic Conference, an international event about working towards the SDGs, was held at Okayama Convention Center.

Major Events



- G20 Okayama Health Ministers' Meeting, 2019 (350 participants)
- International Conference on Strongly Correlated Electron Systems (SCES), 2019 (900 participants)
- First RCE Thematic Conference: Towards Achieving the SDGs, 2017 (120 participants)
- Stakeholder meetings in conjunction with the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), 2014 (2,000 participants)

STRATEGIES

Sustainability Strategies and Plans

SDGs Strategy

SDGs Strategy

Okayama City SDGs Future City Plan

- Okayama was selected as an SDGs Future City in 2018. The aim is for Okayama to become “a city where everyone can learn from each other, and enjoy healthy, active lives.” It has implemented various initiatives relating to health and well-being.
- Health-related efforts for citizens have been yielding results. The next step is to empower everyone to play an active role in society. The goal is for all residents to enjoy a fulfilling, settled civic life.
- To this end, the city has been pursuing sustainable urban development that generates vitality and dynamism by improving “livability” in economic, social, and environmental terms.

Net zero carbon emissions by 2050

- In 2021, Okayama declared a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Goals for 2030

Vision

1. Improve citizens' health (by extending healthy life expectancy, etc.)
2. Allow everyone to play an active role (employment support for the elderly, promotion of women's active participation and gender equality, etc.)
3. Create a livable city for all (decarbonization, development of transport networks, etc.)

Priorities for 2030

Economy

Okayama is promoting strategic industrial development to create new jobs, attract business, and develop industries that use local resources.

Society

Okayama is promoting healthy habits and develop an environment where citizens can act to improve their own health, thereby extending healthy life expectancy.

Environment

Okayama is creating an environmentally friendly, low-carbon city by promoting sustainable energy and reducing greenhouse gases.

The Okayama ESD Project

The Okayama ESD Project involves working with stakeholders, including Okayama University, to offer participatory ESD opportunities in community facilities such as schools and community centers. These activities have earned international acclaim and in 2016, the project was awarded the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD*. Community centers have become tour destinations for teachers and other academic professionals visiting from outside Japan.

The Okayama SDGs Plaza at Okayama Convention Center communicates information about Okayama's initiatives in Japan and abroad. It enables local residents to learn more about the SDGs.



SDGs Forum at Okayama University

* A UNESCO prize targeting organizations around the world that have demonstrated excellence in ESD initiatives. Three awards are given each year.

ESD activities in schools

Okayama promotes ESD initiatives in schools and conducts training for teachers in all municipal elementary and junior high schools. The city has about 130 elementary and junior high schools, of which 51 are registered as UNESCO Associated Schools. These are bases for promoting ESD.

Many school officials visit from outside Japan, contributing to the international promotion of ESD.



Local children learn about the SDGs

History and culture at unique venues

Okayama offers unique venues that showcase traditional culture. Okayama Castle and Nohgakudo Hall Tenjin 9 are particularly popular among international visitors.

Okayama Castle's tower is an events venue where visitors can try on clothing worn by feudal lords and princesses. Tenjin 9 can be adapted to various purposes, for example by removing the pillars used for Noh and adding a temporary stage. It is a popular forum for lectures, exhibitions, and corporate ceremonies.

Incorporating cultural heritage into business events is a way to share traditional value with future generations. These facilities differentiate Okayama in Japan as well as abroad.



Nohgakudo Hall Tenjin 9



Trying on traditional clothing at Okayama Castle

SDG Tours

Okayama has created SDG experience tours in cooperation with other cities in Okayama Prefecture. These tours promote the SDGs and draw visitors to areas of value.

The tours showcase various sustainability initiatives. Destinations include a biogas power generation facility that uses food waste as a source material, and a "community fridge" that provides food and daily necessities donated by companies and shops to citizens who are economically vulnerable.

As these tours evolve, they will increasingly include content for visitors who don't speak Japanese.



GREENable HIRUZEN



Fishing experience

Muslim-friendly sightseeing spots

Three municipal governments, including Okayama City, teamed up with private companies to establish the Okayama Health Tourism Coordination Council. The aim is for Okayama to be a truly welcoming destination for visitors from other countries.

Anticipating a growing number of Muslim visitors to Japan, the council has been increasing the availability of halal food. The Peach Mark system identifies accommodations and restaurants that can satisfy the requirements of Muslim visitors. Other initiatives include a Muslim Hospitality Handbook.

These and other efforts have made Okayama accessible to a wider range of business-event participants, including Muslims.



The Peach Mark



Muslim-friendly farmhouse stay

Using oyster shells in recycled products

The Setouchi Oyster Shell Agri-Business, run by JA Group Okayama, uses oyster shells from the Seto Inland Sea as agricultural fertilizer and livestock feed.

By purchasing the resulting produce, consumers help to protect the nature and agriculture of the Seto Inland Sea and of Okayama in particular. The initiative has been recognized for its contribution to the SDGs. The awards it has earned include the Excellence Prize in the 9th Discover Countryside Treasures in Japan Awards, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.



Satoumi rice



Satoumi eggplants

Hayashi Grape Labo

Okayama Prefecture is known as the Kingdom of Fruit. Grape production has thrived since ancient times, and modern growers are making the most of the favorable climate conditions to create new, improved varieties.

Hayashi Grape Labo in Okayama researches and develops grapes unique to Okayama. Visitors can enjoy picking grapes, and learning about them via lectures. They also have a chance to compare the flavors of many different grape varieties.

The facility will continue to boost accessibility and strengthen promotional activities to welcome a broad range of conference attendees and incentive tours participants. Engagements of this kind also contribute to the ongoing success of Okayama's specialty products.



Grape cultivation



A lecture about grapes

Sustainability initiatives at leading hotels

Hotel Granvia Okayama has been reducing food waste by running a food sharing service. Since 2021, about 47 tons of hotel food waste has been provided each year to a biomass power generation plant, which contributes to clean energy.

ANA Crowne Plaza Okayama uses FSC-certified* wooden card keys to reduce the use of plastic. It also promotes diversity and inclusion in its hiring or interns and by holding events in collaboration with local facilities for those with disabilities and with high schools for those with special needs.



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Biomass power generation plant



FSC-certified wooden card key

*Certification indicating that the product comes from a forest managed from an ESG perspective