



History of Japan Toy Museum

In 1963, Mr. Shigeyoshi Inoue, the founder of the Japan Toy Museum, happened upon a book about folk toys of Japan. Realizing that these assets of childhood folk-culture were becoming forgotten, he began to collect toys from all over the world in order to preserve their memory for future generations. In order to present his then 5,000-item collection to the public, he fashioned a part of his own house (46 square meters) into an exhibition room and established the "Inoue Folk Toy Museum" in 1974.

Over the next 10 years he worked hard to expand his collection and facilities and, in 1984, changed the building's name to "Japan Toy Museum." Today, it consists of six buildings totaling 700 square meters and display cases stretching across 170 meters, housing more than 90,000 items from Japan and across the globe.

Although privately-owned, the scale of the collection and its contents has earned the Japan Toy Museum high regard as a first-class toy museum that is representative of Japan. In 1998, it acquired official recognition as a museum and, in the same year, Mr. Inoue received the 20th Annual Suntory Prize for Community Cultural Activities given to individuals and groups who have made remarkable contributions towards the development of culture in their respective local communities.

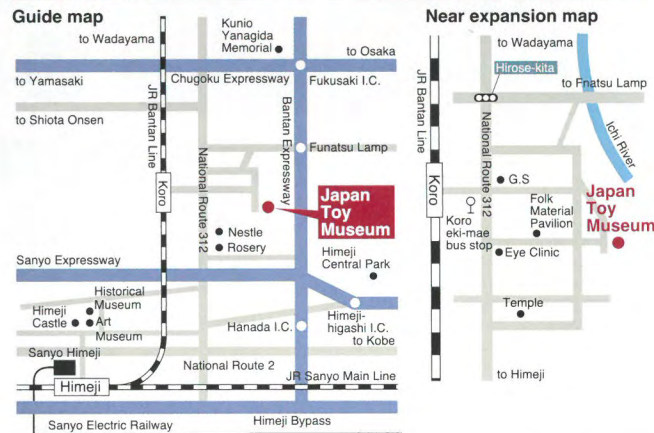
The Collection

This unique collection consists of toys and dolls that reflect a spectrum of ethnicities from 150 countries. The permanent exhibitions can be found in buildings 2, 3, and 4, while buildings 1 and 6 house seasonal and special exhibitions which convey the history, customs, and craftsmanship of different cultures. The collection includes:

- Folk toys from various regions of Japan that are made of paper, wood, and clay
- Seasonal festival decorations, such as Hina dolls, Boys' Festival dolls and chirimen crafts
- Modern toys from as early as the Meiji Era
- Valuable items donated by generous contributors which are displayed alongside Mr. Inoue's main collection



Directions



By train Take the Bantan Line from JR Himeji Station five stations to Koro (about 15 minutes). Walk east from Koro Station about 15 minutes to arrive at the museum.

By car Take the Bantan Expressway to the Funatsu Ramp and travel west for 7 minutes. Or take the Chugoku Expressway to the Fukusaki Interchange and travel south for 15 minutes.

Museum Hours

- Open** Monday-Tuesday, Thursday-Sunday 10am-5pm
- Holidays** Wednesday (Open during national holidays). December 28-January 3
- Admission** General Admission: 600yen, Students: 400yen, Children (4 and older): 200yen. 10% off for physically and mentally challenged visitors. Group Admission: 10% off for groups of 20 or more. ※Please make a reservation in advance for group admission.

日本玩具博物館 JAPAN TOY MUSEUM

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KOHDERA-CHO HIMEJI CITY JAPAN TOY MUSEUM



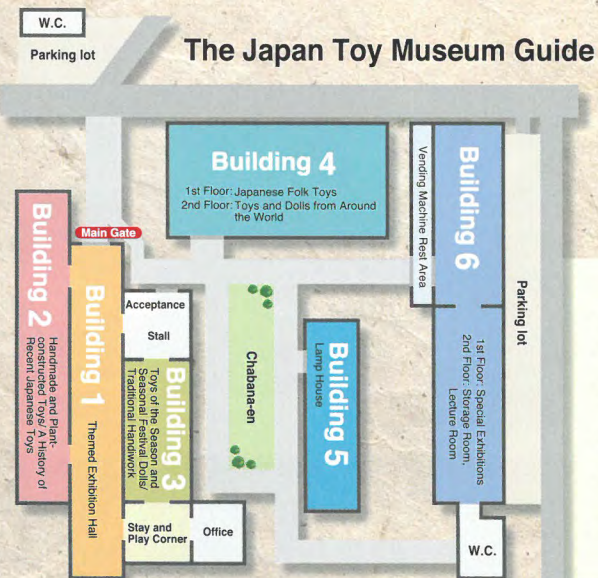
日本玩具博物館
JAPAN TOY MUSEUM



Located just 10 kilometers northeast of Himeji Castle (a World Cultural Heritage Site) the white-wash, storehouse-style building 6 lies surrounded by the green tranquility of the rural countryside.

The rural-style interior of the museum holds permanent exhibitions in buildings 2, 3, and 4 and buildings 1 and 6 hold special seasonal exhibits. In buildings 2 and 3 respectively, visitors can enjoy playing with Japanese toys and toys from other countries first-hand.

Although people tend not to take them seriously, toys are tools which play a very important role in our development as human beings. They are not merely playthings for children, but also tell the tale of a culture long since forgotten in today's day and age. It could be said that they are a people's upbringing, culture, aesthetics, and imagination condensed into small items of cultural heritage. We hope that the time visitors spend at our museum will spark interest in them to contemplate the relationship between toys and the human race.



Building 1 Themed Exhibitions

From season to season, themed exhibitions of the museum's holdings (300–400 items) are displayed here. Toys from the New Year holiday, chirimen crafts, housekeeping tools, water toys, and festival toys are displayed to reflect each season. Kites from regions all over Japan hang from the top of the walls as a permanent collection. The large kite hanging from the ceiling is an "oni youzu" from Mishima Island in Yamaguchi Prefecture, so named for the illustration of an oni (a creature from Japanese folklore similar to the Western ogre or demon) that spans across it.



Building 2 Permanent Exhibitions

A History of Recent Japanese Toys

From the end of the Edo Period through the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa Eras. Menko (Japanese pogs), spinning tops, little toys that came with drinks or snacks, tin and celluloid toys, and toys of famous Japanese characters such as Tetsuwan Atomu, Tetsujin 28, Obake no Q-Tarou. You will be warped back into the nostalgia of childhood and understand what children enjoyed during those various periods of history.

Handmade and Plant-constructed Toys

Items made out of natural materials, such as straw insect cages, Japanese centipedes (mukade) and small shrines (mikoshi) made out of soybean plant branches, clamshell flutes, Japanese clogs (geta), and tops that are spun by using a handmade whip.



Building 3 Permanent Exhibitions

Toys of the Season and Seasonal Festival Dolls

Spinning tops, Battledore, Hina dolls, and Boys' Festival dolls.

Traditional Handiwork

Chirimen crafts, Temari balls, and Bottle crafts.

Stay and Play Corner

Feel free to play with wooden toys from Europe and other countries. They are not toys to sit back and watch—they must be handled in order to move—but will still manage to spark interest in children of today's technological age.

Gift Shop

There's no need to come to our museum just to play with our toys; take some home! Traditional Japanese toys, toys and dolls from other countries, and chirimen crafts may be purchased at our gift shop.



Building 4 Permanent Exhibitions

1st Floor Japanese Folk Toys

Handmade paper, wooden, and clay Japanese folk toys are displayed in order of region from northern to southern Japan.

2nd Floor Toys and Dolls from Around the World

The Japan Toy Museum prides itself in its collection of toys from all over the world. These toys and dolls, enriched by diverse ethnicity, have been collected over the past 35 years from regions in Asia, Africa, Oceania, North and South America, and Europe.



Building 5 Lamp House

Here you will find a home with lamps, a sunken hearth, and a traditional Japanese-style veranda that will take you back in time. Visitors can relax on the veranda and soothe the soul by gazing at a beautiful garden of tsubaki (camellia) and other seasonal Japanese flowers while listening to the subtle murmur of a brook.



Building 6 Special Exhibitions

Exhibition cases, stretching across 33 meters, display over 800 items. These exhibits switch between "Hina Dolls" in spring, "Boys' Festival Decorations" in early summer, and "Christmas Round the World" in fall and winter and are very popular among our patrons.



Main Undertakings

- The collection and preservation of toys and other cultural items
- The exhibition of these items in the permanent and special collections, as well as hosting exhibits from other museums
- Conducting research on traditional toys from Japan and abroad, chirimen crafts, and seasonal festival culture with regards to children
- Educating the public through courses teaching the history and construction of handmade toys and chirimen crafts
- The publication of upcoming events and the books Tezukurī Gangu (handmade toys) and Chirimen Zaiku (chirimen crafts)
- The establishment of a "supporter's association" (membership is 1500 yen a year and benefits include free admission and information on upcoming events by mail)