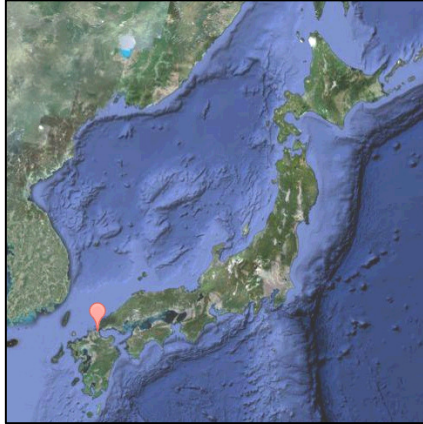




Japan Local Government Centre

Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), London



Local Japan: Case Studies in Place Promotion

Using sustainability as city branding

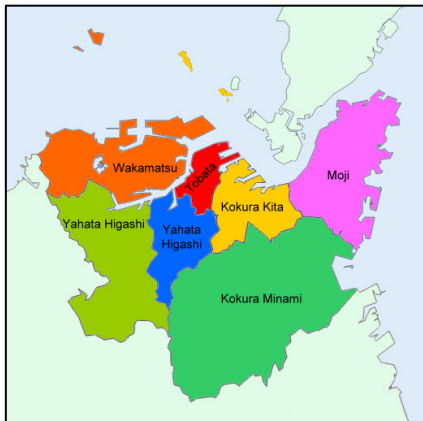
Kitakyushu city profile

Designated city of Japan since 1963

Area: 486.81km²

Pop: 983,037

Density: 2,019.34/km²



The cityscape of Fukuoka prefecture's metropolis of Kitakyushu may have fewer chimney stacks and blast furnaces since a group of housewives were driven to protest against its air quality in the 1960s, but its reputation in Asia in the 21st century is now driven by a declared aim to be the 'World Capital of Sustainable Development'. Bold ambitions require bold actions however and the city's transition 'from grey city to green city' has been accompanied by a rapid wave of initiatives and projects to embed both its sustainability and global image, beginning with its presence at the 1992 UN Rio Summit (as one of 12 cities chosen to showcase their environmental programmes) to being chosen in 2011 by the OECD as its first green growth model city in Asia.

The OECD were particularly impressed by "*Kitakyushu as a city that has overcome pollution problems,*" according to the programme selectors. Kitakyushu was formed in 1963 from the merger of five municipalities (Moji, Kokura, Tobata, Yahata and Wakamatsu) and became one of the four largest industrial zones in Japan during its post-war economic expansion. However, economic expansion came at a price to the city's environment and its Dokai Bay was so contaminated by industrial and domestic waste that it became known as the 'Sea of Death'. Eventually the city and its residents, as well as civil society and local industry, made efforts to overcome its over-polluted tag, outpacing even national government by establishing in 1971 the country's first Environmental Bureau and introducing stringent anti-pollution

ordinances. As well as seeking agreements with local industry on curbing emissions and tackling polluters, a large-scale urban greening project was embarked upon under the city plan.

In autumn 2011 Kitakyushu hosted the Asian Environmental Cities Summit to discuss Japanese cooperation for other Asian cities to resolve their environmental problems, such as air and water pollution. The summit saw Kitakyushu host mayors and officials from the cities of Tianjin,



Chongqing and Lanzhou in China, and the Bangkok metropolitan government as well as the province and the city of Chiang Mai in Thailand and concluded with an adopted statement of future intent on regional cooperation. This builds on the wide range of international conferences and seminars held in the city in order to educate developing countries with regard to environmental improvement or offering specific technological guidance. In September 2000, the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/MCED4) was held in Kitakyushu. The 'Kitakyushu Initiative for a Clean Environment' was adopted at that MCED, and in 2001 the Kitakyushu Initiative Network was founded. By January 2006, 61 cities from 18 countries in Asia and the Pacific Region had joined the network and are exchanging information and carrying out pilot projects.

The city also participated in the Johannesburg 'World Summit on Sustainable Development' (WSSD) in 2002 to advocate the importance of international cooperation. It was officially accepted at the WSSD that environmental improvements led by respective regions are significant for the environmental preservation of those regions, and the 'Kitakyushu Initiative' was incorporated in the 'Plan of Implementation' of the Johannesburg Summit as a leading-edge initiative. The city of Kitakyushu also has overseas offices in Dalian and Shanghai for the purpose of sustainability knowledge transfer and city cooperation.

To further its twin ambitions of becoming 'World Capital of Sustainable Development' and 'Technology capital of Asia', Kitakyushu inaugurated its EcoModel City project (as certified by the Japanese government in July 2008). In addition to knowledge transfer of the city's experience in fighting pollution and best practices accumulated through the



implementation of the project, it aims to reduce CO2 emissions city-wide by 50% and throughout Asia by 150% from 2005 levels by the end of 2050. As part of efforts to achieve these goals, the city has established the Kitakyushu Asian Centre for Low Carbon Society, to act as a core facility dedicated to vitalization of local economies through a commitment to carbon reduction projects in Asian societies.

The strong political lead given by the city's mayor in realising these initiatives builds on earlier work in the 1990s, such as the Kitakyushu Eco-Town Programme (the first in Japan) to implement specific projects such as the recycling of electric appliances, automobiles, plastic bottles and other recyclable wastes, mainly in the Hibikinada district in the northwestern part of the city. Furthermore, many facilities conducting research and development on the most advanced waste disposal and recycling technologies, with the cooperation of enterprises and universities, are located in this area; this effort is expected to generate new environment-related industries. In addition, the city is also advancing the programme through a wide range of efforts, including implementation of the 'Policy of Kitakyushu Industrial Eco Complex' to recycle resources and energies and generate new industries as city-wide activities, through the use of industrial infrastructures in the city, with the cooperation of the organisations concerned, and the promotion of environmentally conscious activities in all of the city's business activities.

Kitakyushu was the fourth city selected for the OECD's Green Cities Program, following Paris, Chicago and Stockholm: *"As indicated by a recent eco-town project and the like, it is a city that makes the most advanced efforts in Asia on environment conservation."*



Editor: Andrew Stevens
Text and images: Keith Kelly and Irmelind Kirchner

Map of Japan with Kitakyushu pinpointed
© Google Maps; wards of Kitakyushu map; View from Mt.Sarakura taken by JKT-c, panorama of Mojiko taken by Hinohino; Kokura castle from the Japanese garden, Hiraodai karst plateau photos taken by Ian Ruxton

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