



Welcome to Yatsushiro!

Contents:

[Overview](#)

[Events](#)

[Buy](#)

[Eat](#)

[Drink](#)

[See](#)

OVERVIEW

Yatsushiro City (or Yats, to the local ALTs) is the second largest city in Kumamoto. With a land area of 680.59 km² (262.78 square miles), Yatsushiro effectively bisects Kumamoto prefecture. With a population of about 133,630 (as of April 2011) Yats is a large city, but still has the heart and vibe of a small town.

In ancient times, Yatsushiro was said to be the place that *kappas* (Japanese mythical water beasts) landed when they came to Japan from China. The kappa spirit is still alive and well here in Yatsushiro. You can see several drawings and statues around town devoted to these sometimes cute, sometimes creepy green creatures. The local radio station is even called KAPPA FM! Some say that they even live in the moat of the Yatsushiro Castle ruins!

When the kappas arrived in Yatsushiro, they probably saw gorgeous mountains and lush green vegetation. However, the first thing that you're likely to see upon entering the city limits are the iconic candy cane-esque smokestacks. They belong to a major paper factory that employs a large number of people in Yatsushiro.

Smoke-spewing factories aside, Yatsushiro has some beautiful places to see and several entertaining things to do. Much of the city sits on reclaimed land from the sea, making it fairly new in comparison to other locations in the `Moto. While you're here, see if you can try the 'Shio-tomato'. Yatsushiro is famous for tomatoes and the Shio-tomato is especially well known for its salty zing. The reason for this is that there is still a lot of residual salt left over in the soil from when the area was covered by the sea.

The Yatsushiro locals are friendly and you're less likely to get oppressively stared at as much as other places – although it still happens. Most people here have seen a foreigner (or a travelling pack of us) before.

The foreign population in Yats includes several nationalities including: Brazilian, Filipino and Cameroonian. The largest foreign population however, is Chinese. And then there are the ALTs. As of May 2012, Yatsushiro City has 12 JETs. Eight that work in the city proper, two that live in the smaller towns just outside the city and two high school ALTs.

We always have ALT events planned, so if you're looking for a night among good company, feel free to contact a Yatzie (Yatsushiro ALT) and see what's going on!

[TOP](#)

EVENTS

Yatsushiro has a few cool festivals and events throughout the year that are definitely worth checking out!



August – (Kumagawa Matsuri). A large festival that many people of Yatsushiro take part in. It's basically just a parade through the streets, but it's a good time for all.

Kumagawa Matsuri

Mid October – Yatsushiro Hanabi Taikai. One of the (if not THE) biggest fireworks festivals in Kyushu. Some say that it's the best in all of Japan. Regardless of its 'official ranking', the Yatsushiro Hanabi Taikai is definitely a must-see! Firework artists from all over Japan come to strut their stuff in the sky. Please bring a blanket, drinks, and your appetite for some amazing festival food as you enjoy some of the best fireworks in the country.



November 23rd – Myoukensai Festival. Considered one of the three main festivals in Kyushu, the Myoukensai is a big event in Yats. While not as loud and lively as the Drunken Horse Festival in Kumamoto City, the Myoukensai has a certain 'Old Japan' charm of its own. Horses are run through a small river and then followed by the 'Game' (pronounced gah-mey) – Yatsushiro's mythical turtle-dragon creature. It is said that if you snag a piece of its fuzzy tail and put it in your wallet, fortune will visit you. Also, if you're lucky enough to be bitten by the Shishi (Red Chinese lions), that is also considered super lucky! The Myoukensai is mild craziness, snack food, and festival hair at its best!

April – Ninja Matsuri. In April, a small exhibition of ninja weapons and activities is held at the Yatsushiro Castle Ruins. This could be an annual event but we aren't 100% sure. If you want to check this little festival out, check with a Yatzie to make sure it's happening!

Kagami Mud Festival. The actual name of it is something else, but 'Mud Festival' is an appropriate name for this odd but entertaining event. It's held in the town of Kagami just north of Yatsushiro City. A group of about fifty drunken men in *fundoshi* (traditional Japanese cloth thongs) rush into a small pond and catch fish with their hands. The fun comes when they begin to throw mud at onlookers! It's said that if you're hit with mud, you're going to be healthy for the year. This event is a lot of fun but if you go, be sure to wear clothes that you don't mind getting dirty – as both fish and mud are flung everywhere!



May – Kyushu International Three-Day March. During the first week of May, Yatsushiro hosts its 3 Day March. Walking enthusiasts from all over the world flock to Yatsushiro to...walk. If you complete a course every day, you'll receive an adorable kappa badge for the fruits of your labor. This may not sound like the most exciting thing in the world, but it's a great way to get to see Yats firsthand! Throughout the day, local musicians, dancers, and groups put on shows and performances for audiences. The usual matsuri food is available as well as local goods.

[TOP](#)

Buy

Yatsushiro has much in the way of shopping that range between traditional and local products to high-end and fashionable products. While it lacks some of the commodities and luxuries of Kumamoto City, Yatsushiro still has some name-brand stores that can be found in Kumamoto City. In Yats, there are two main juggernauts of shopping: Youmetown and Aeon Jusco Mall. These two malls have many types of shops and restaurants that appeal to a wide assortment of people. The two will be separated since there is a lot to talk about.

Youme Town

Youmetown is located on the way to Yatsushiro Port and an excellent stop for

those coming to Yatsushiro by ferry. If you are coming from the IC, just follow the signs when you get off the exit.

Youme Town offers a wide variety of shops that can keep you shopping for hours (or maybe even days). For those who are into fashion, the second floor has a wide assortment of women's and men's clothes as well as children's clothes including.

However, the biggest draw to Youme Town is its **Uniqlo**. Uniqlo has a great variety of women and men's clothes at affordable prices. While it may be smaller than other Uniqlos, it is a great alternative if you can't make it to the city. While not related to fashion, the sports/outdoor store Xebio has every sporting need and is located right next door to Uniqlo (Just look for the moose!)

If you are looking for more traditional goods, there are several stores on the 2nd floor that offer traditional Japanese products that can be seen everywhere. Also located on the 2nd floor is a **Daiso**. The Daiso is a "100-yen store lovers" dream as it has everything that a Daiso has plus more. Also located on the 2nd floor is a Softbank store, a book store, a otaku store (our slice of Akihabara), and many more! Youme Town is a great place to kill a few hours (or a day) to just shop, people watch, and spend money. I will cover restaurants in the "Eating" section.

Aeon Jusco

The Yatzies are actually confused on what to call this mall as it used to be called Jusco but now it's Aeon. So everyone just calls it Jusco to save the hassle. While Jusco may lack the restaurants that Youme Town has, it has many interesting stores and shops.

Like Youme town, Jusco has a grocery area where one can buy a wide assortment of products. The grocery store is located on the first floor and is the first thing you see when you walk in. Also located on the 1st floor are a bike shop, a flower shop, a **Maki** jewelry store, a pet store, and a furniture store.

The second floor has a much loved **Village Vanguard** that rivals the craziness that is found in the one in Kumamoto City. It also has the 100-yen store **Seria**, a book store, a travel agency, an **ABC Mart**, a **Sports Authority**, and a wide assortment of clothes for both men and women.

Jusco is great way to kill a Sunday by just shopping and looking. If you take Rinko-sen after you get off the IC, it is a straight shot. It is pretty massive and you

will most likely see signs pointing towards it.



Honmachi

Outside of the two malls, the next best place to shop is in the covered arcade district, **Honmachi**. It is located in the heart of Yatsushiro and parking to get into Honmachi is limited.

There are places you can park at in and around Honamchi but some of them are stores/shops and discourage parking unless you are a paying customer. Honmachi is a great place to shop if you are looking for more traditional products such as figurines, umbrellas, clothing, and other products that scream “JAPANESE!!!”

Also located in Honmachi is a Tsuruya and is a worthy stop for those interested in shopping. Also located in and around Honamchi are a plethora of restaurants, cafes, bars, izakayas, snack bars, and other less savory establishments that make up Yatsushiro’s “Nightlife Alley”.

While not in a shopping area, Yatsushiro boasts a very nice **Tsutaya**. While not as large as the Kumamoto City Tsutaya; it is still a great place to shop for movies, games, CDs and books. It is located a few stops before Jusco. Just look for an Eneos and a Fuku Fuku Restaurant.

Yatsushiro also has two great electronic stores: a **Yamada Denki** and a **K’s Denki**. Yamada Denki is located conveniently next to Youme town while K’s Denki is located on Rinko-sen. If you are going to Jusco, you will spot it on your left. Also located within K’s Denki is a **Book Off** (used books) and a **Hard Off** (used furniture and goods). These are both two great places to shop and offer much in electronics.

Besides Youme Town, Jusco, Honmachi, and Tsutaya; there are still many options to choose from if you can find what you want. Located just down the road from Tsutaya is a **Direx!** and a **Geo**. Near Honmachi is a **MaxValue** which is used to foreigners shopping there (maybe even too much). If you are heading to Jusco or K’s Denki, stop off at **A Price Goods**. It has a great selection of foreign foods from different countries and ethnicities. As well, many of these are in bulk so it will last you a while. You could say it’s a mini Costco. Located past Youme Town, towards the port, is the **Trial**. Located off from Rinko-sen, near K’s Denki are a **Nafco**, a **Daiso**, a **Two-One**

Style, and a newly located **Nitori**. While you may not need to shop here if you are just visiting Yatsushiro, they are still great stores nevertheless.

[TOP](#)

Eat

Yatsushiro is a great place to come eat! Yatsushiro is home to many diverse restaurants that cater to every taste bud. Yatsushiro is famous for their *banpeiyu* (a type of huge grapefruit), lotus root, tomatoes (seriously delicious!), and strawberries (equally delicious!). But where to start? There are so many restaurants, cafes, and izakayas that it's hard to know where to begin!

The best place to start is probably in Youme Town. Youme Town has many types of stores as well as restaurants. On the 1st floor, you can find a McDonalds, an excellent Italian restaurant with great pizza, a ramen/udon restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, a Japanese restaurant, and a Baskin Robbins. On the 2nd floor is the food court that offers Japanese food, Italian food, takoyaki, a Mos Burger, and crepes.

The next best place for food is in Jusco. While Jusco has more shops than restaurant, it still boasts a good variety. When you first walk into Jusco, you will find a Mr. Donuts. Located near Mr. Donuts is a Baskin Robbins. Located near the furniture store are a Japanese restaurant, a kaiten-zushi (conveyor belt) restaurant, and an excellent buffet with amazing food! Located on the 2nd floor is another food court that has offers ramen, okonomiyaki, and a McDonalds. Speaking of the golden arches, near the IC exit is a McDonalds as well.

A popular place for both locals and ALT's is **Sanji**, an Indian restaurant that is located right near to Yamada Denki and Youme Town. There is another Sanji located in Matsubase as well. The staff is friendly and the food is great! Also located near Sanji is the restaurant, **The Flying Noodle** (Not the official name, but the Yatzies have dubbed it otherwise). Parking and sitting is very limited and it's rather out of the way but it is one of the best noodle places in Yatsushiro. The chef will take, essentially a block of noodles he made, and slice them into your bowl as you eat. However, don't be surprised if you find that seating is full since it's a popular place for locals to eat lunch. However, the owner is friendly and will make a place for you if he can.

Yatsushiro has many Yakiniku restaurants that are dotted around the city. One notable Yakiniku place is **Nabeshima** and is located right down the street from K's Denki.

If you are looking for sushi, Yatsushiro has two kaiten-zushi restaurants: **Sushi Ichiba** which is located next door to Jusco and **Ban Ban Sushi** which is located near Jimland and fairly close to Yatsushiro station.

If you are looking for Chinese, Yatsushiro has some of the best restaurants. Located on Rinko-sen and near K's Denki is the restaurant, **Tanpopo**. It offers some great Chinese cuisine as well as Yatsushiro-famous Tomato Ramen. If you are in Yatsushiro, you should try this at least once! Some other notable Chinese restaurants are within the White Palace, a megalith building that you can see literally from anywhere. It plays host for many enkais, parties, and meetings and the Chinese restaurant is located on the 1st floor. Located right across the street is a newly opened Taiwanese restaurant and offers the usual Chinese cuisine.

As mentioned before, Honmachi has many restaurants and izakaya's dotted in and around the neon signs. Near MaxValue and the Higo Bank is a great karaage (fried chicken) restaurant and **Jay's Bar**, a Spanish Tapas sports bar. Further down is an ice cream stall, a great café (with amazing pizza) called **Mother Goose**, and various ramen/izakaya establishments.

Also, Yatsushiro has **Joyful**, **Mos Burger**, **Gusto**, **Curry House Ichiban**, and more **Hotto Motto**'s than you can count on both hands. These places, while cheap, are great places to stop at for a quick meal.

Lastly, the Yatzies would like to introduce two amazing places fill your belly and quench your thirst. These two places are **Kohi-ya** and **Albatross**. These two cafés are located right near to each other and easily the best cafés in Yatsushiro. Kohi-ya looks like something right out of Game of Thrones with its wooden interior and tavern-feeling. It has an excellent tomato chicken and a unique soup where dough is baked above the soup and forms a mushroom-like shape. Utterly to die for! Near to Kohi-ya is Albatross, a excellent café with one of the best lunch menus (their hirekatsu lunch special is amazing!). Plus, you get tiny little swords that they skewer mini weenies with. Awesome! While Kohi-ya may have Renaissance flair, Albatross is reminiscent of a grandma's house (in a good way)! Two great places if you are planning a trip to the Yatsu. Both places also have amazing tea and coffee.

Speaking of drinks...

[TOP](#)

Drink

The Yatzies are known to get pretty wild on occasion. Yatsushiro plays host to many drinking establishments that range from nice and comfy to loud and chaotic. For the coffee lovers, both Youme Town and Jusco have Starbucks on their first floors. It is an excellent place to bring a book to study or unwind. Additionally, Mother Goose in Honmachi has amazing tea that is a must drink if you have the chance. Aside from that, Yatsushiro has many drinking holes that will keep your spirits high and feelin' fine.



One particular drinking establishment is **Freak**. Freak is located in Honmachi and is one of the best bars in town. The owner, Yutaka, is a lover of jazz and music all around. You can tell by all the records he has lined up in the shelves behind the bar. He is also an avid fan of Star Wars and will share his knowledge with you; if you dare. He takes requests and will eagerly discuss music with you. His drinks are a tad bit pricey but you pay for the atmosphere. It is a great place to come and think or just talk about life. A favorite among ALT's.

Located near Freak is the bar **Campanule**. If Freak is relaxed and chill, Campanule is loud and edgy. The owner, Makoto, is a great guy and is always interested in meeting foreigners and talking to them. In fact, he usually does a 2,000 yen nomihoudai for most foreigners (something he doesn't do with Japanese customers apparently). His drinks are cheap and he will always keep you filled up. Campanule usually plays modern music and MTV can usually be found in the background. Campanule always plays host to many DJ/Dance parties and is an excellent place if you are looking to talk to people, meet up and have a crazy night.

Others bars that are located within Yatsushiro is the sports bar, **Jay's Bar**, **M's Garden** (a lounge bar), **Raspberry** (a large lounge/darts/pool bar) a punk music-themed bar that is hardly ever open, and **Sunny Day Walk** (a darts theme). These are all located within the Honmachi district.

There are also various snack bars and hostess bars located within Nightlife Alley and, on a Friday or Saturday night, you can see a multitude of business men, Yankis, young adult hipsters, aspiring DJ's, and even a old obaachans walking around this 'neon sanctuary'.

[TOP](#)

See

Yatsushiro is rich in history and culture and many of its landmarks have a long story to tell. While Yatsushiro may seem very concrete and smoky (due to the smoke stacks), there are still many beautiful places to visit.



Yatsushiro Castle Ruins

I would first like to highlight **Yatsushiro Castle Ruins**. The Yatsushiro Castle Ruins is located near the City Hall and the middle of the city. A moat flows around the ruins and you can see many types of birds such as pigeons, ducks, and even a beautiful black swan named Natalie (I'M PERFECT!). Inside

the ruins are beautiful sakura trees, gardens, and a shrine. It is an excellent place to view sakura, to take a walk, and enjoy nature (but it scary as hell at

night!)



Mizushima

Another famous place within Yatsushiro is **Mizushima**. Is located south of the city center and past the island between the Kumagawa River. I would suggest Google mapping or using a GPS map to locate it since it can be tricky. Mizushima is a shrine located on an island in the Yatsushiro Bay. It is an excellent place to watch the bay, seagulls, and the waves. You can walk into the shrine and even

onto the island if the tide is out (they sometimes rope it off). It is truly a beautiful sight. Located next to Mizushima Shrine is a park and information concerning the island in different languages.

Another popular draw for Yatsushiro is the **777**. The 777 is seven-hundred and seventy steep stairs that goes up the side of a mountain in Yatsushiro. It is a hard and tiring climb but the view from it is none like you've ever seen. It offers amazing views of Yatsushiro City, Yatsushiro Bay, Amakusa islands, and even Mt. Unzen in Nagasaki prefecture. Coming up here in the evening is the best since the sunsets are amazing! However, beware of mukade since they seem to infest this place at night.

Bring your hiking gear and most comfortable shoes because it s quite the climb.



Yatsushiro has many other cultural and historical places such as the tea garden **Shihouhinken**, the **Myoken shrine** (from which the Myokensai takes its name from), **Ryuhouku Park** (Dragon Slides FTW!), **Hinagu Hot Springs**, the suspension bridges in and viewpoints from the **Kumagawa River**. Another interesting sight is a mural that is located off from Honmachi has five beautifully draw naked Kappa women. Erotic Kappa Art FTW! Yatsushiro has everything for everyone and is a great place to spend a day to visit!

[TOP](#)

While Yatsushiro might lack the tourist draw of Kumamoto City or the beauty of Aso, it has its own unique beauty if you look hard enough. The people are friendly, the food is great, the mountains and rivers are beautiful, and the smoke stacks loom over Yats like Mount Doom. So, if you are ever planning a trip to the Yats and need advice, don't be afraid to hit any of us up on Facebook or by email. We would be glad to suggest places to see, eat, drink, and do! So *douzo* on over to Yatsushiro and enjoy a day with the Kappas!

