

Oshima Memorial Museum Mission and Policy

The history of the National Sanatorium Oshima-Seishoen began when it was established in Kagawa Prefecture, Kita-gun, Aji-mura (today, Kagawa Prefecture, Takamatsu City, Aji-chō) under Law Number 11, “The Law Concerning the Prevention of Leprosy” (effective after 1909). The institution was established by a group of eight prefectures from the Chugoku region, the western part of the island of Honshu Japan that includes the prefectures of Okayama, Hiroshima, Shimane, and Yamaguchi; and Shikoku, which includes Tokushima, Kagawa, Ehime and Kochi. After that, under the “Leprosy Prevention Law” (effective 1931), it came under the management of the Ministry of Health and Welfare as a national sanatorium, and that has continued into the present.

Under the new “Leprosy Prevention Law” (1953) promulgated and enforced under the Constitution of Japan, measures against people with Hansen’s disease were still taken, with isolation as preventative in particular promoted; this changed the course of the lives of many residents and deprived them of opportunities. Resident organizations continually appealed against the compulsory isolation policy as an infringement of their basic human rights that were guaranteed by the Constitution, and the “Leprosy Prevention Law” was finally abolished in 1996.

Oshima-Seishoen is today the only remaining “quarantine island” among the national sanatoria in Japan, and here, under the administration of the Oshima Memorial Museum, we aim to showcase the results of our efforts to collect, preserve, research, and create archives of materials that convey the “life” within, and the history of the people who have survived and the people who supported them, as well the history and current issues surrounding the national measures against Hansen’s disease and the human rights abuses. In addition, we remember those who have passed, and call for an end to prejudice and discrimination. With the hope that the human rights of all people will be respected we have created a place for interaction between all elements of “society.”

1 Raising awareness and promoting correct information

We promote the awareness of the illness and the dissemination of correct knowledge about the history and current issues surrounding Hansen’s disease. For that purpose, we promote research into these issues and research into archival materials, reflect on the results of this research in the exhibits, and provide a place for appropriate commentary and guidance for visitors.

2 To promote social exchanges with the Universal Museum (a museum that is available for anyone to use regardless of gender, age, nationality, or ability level)

We promote opportunities for a wide variety of people to interact with each other including people from both outside the sanatorium and those living on Oshima. To that end, we established the Oshima Memorial Museum as a place that is open to all to be a space where people can feel safe and comfortable.

3 To recover of the dignity of people affected by Hansen’s disease, memorialize the deceased, and promote the concept of an “island of human rights”

We display the dignity of life in Oshima, memorialize those who have passed, and aim to establish an “island of human rights” to act as a heritage site for the experiences and memories of Oshima and its residents to be passed on to the future. The Oshima Memorial Museum has collected and preserved tools, documents, records, books, testimonies, relics, and traces of everyday life that relate the history of Oshima, and it functions as an archive for these historical materials.

Visitor Guidelines

Basic Information

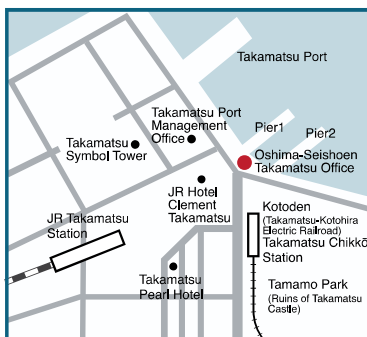
- Hours of Operation: 9:30–16:00
- Closed: Saturdays and Sundays, national holidays, New Year’s holidays (Dec. 29–Jan. 3), days when maintenance is scheduled on the building or exhibits, days when inspections of materials and equipment is scheduled
- Admission: Free
- Prior Reservations: Required - Contact the Welfare Office (Weekdays 9:00–17:00)

* The ferry from the port in Takamatsu to Oshima is publicly owned and operated. If you have advance reservations for a group, you may be asked to change the boarding time, as the number of passengers is limited.

Access (Information for Boarding the Ferry)

* The ferry to this institution is government owned and operated

- It is about 5 minutes walking from JR Takamatsu Station to Takamatsu Port.
- It is about 20 minutes to 30 minutes from Takamatsu Port to Oshima by government ferry. It departs from Pier 1 in the Takamatsu Part. Please contact the Takamatsu Port Office for ferry times.



Oshima-Seishoen Takamatsu Office

Address:
8-1, Sunport, Takamatsu City,
Kagawa 760-0019
Telephone and fax:
087-851-2826

* The Takamatsu Office does not accept tour requests. The departure time of the ship is the listed departure time. Please be ready to board 5 minutes before the departure time for scheduled arrivals and departures. For your safety, follow the instructions of the crew on board.

* Cancellation of the ferry may occur due to inclement weather conditions (high waves, heavy fog, typhoon, or other dangerous weather conditions).

Contact / Reservations



National Sanatorium Oshima-Seishoen Welfare Office

Address: 6034-1, Aji-cho, Takamatsu City, Kagawa 761-0198
Telephone: 087-871-3131 (Representative) Fax: 087-871-3151
Welfare Office: 087-871-3231 extension 6464 (Weekdays 9:00–17:00)



National Sanatorium Oshima-Seishoen Oshima Memorial Museum

What is Hansen's Disease (leprosy) ?

Hansen's disease is an acid-fast bacillus infection that mainly affects the skin, eyes and peripheral nerves.

Because of illness-induced changes in appearance, Hansen's disease has been misunderstood as a horrible infectious disease or genetic disease, and for many years residents and their families suffered from social stigma.

In the past, this disease has been referred to as leprosy in both Japanese and Chinese characters, and it has been called things such as "the curse of heaven." However, in order to remove the stigma associated with this nomenclature, it is now called "Hansen's disease," for the scientist who discovered the bacillus. The word "leprosy" is used only in historical context and in medical terms (*Mycobacterium leprae*, leprosy reactions, lepromatous, and other such terms).

It is rare to contract the illness now and is weak infectious. There are no endemic sources left currently in Japan under healthy environments for living. This disease is not genetic.

About Oshima Memorial Museum

Oshima-Seishoen is one of 13 national Hansen's disease facilities across the country. Oshima is a small island with an area of about 62 hectares that is located in the Seto Inland Sea (Setonai kai), about 8 kilometers northeast of Takamatsu Port and about 1 kilometer from the larger island of Shikoku. The entire island is the sanatorium, with the exception of small pockets of privately owned land. It can be said that this facility most symbolically represents the ideas behind the shaping of the policy of total quarantine for people diagnosed with Hansen's disease. The only people living on this remote island in the facilities are survivors of Hansen's disease and some of the staff members who support them.

It is a beautiful island surrounded by white sand and speckled with blue pines. Many Hansen's disease patients were forced into quarantine here by national policy. More than 2,100 people rest in the charnel house; prejudice, discrimination, and misconceptions about the illness severed their relationships with the people that were most important to them, their parents, children, and other family members.

Oshima Memorial Museum had a pre-opening in October 2016. After this, with the assistance and cooperation of the residents and many other people in Oshima and elsewhere, the exhibition rooms and library were added, and the grand opening was held on the 110th anniversary of the establishment of the sanatorium (April 2019).

The history of Hansen's disease is by no means a thing of the past. Even now, although the disease can be easily cured with medicine, discrimination and prejudice against the survivor and their families persist. There is much to learn from the brilliance of the strong, resilient, and beautiful ways the people lived and are living on this island and have supported each other. We hope everyone will share the history of Oshima and the "life" of those who have lived here and continue to live here, connecting them and their stories to the next generation.

Introduction / Gallery

Introduction:

What is Hansen's Disease (leprosy)?

This section provides an overview of the history of Hansen's disease in Japan focusing on government policy and lays out medical facts about Hansen's disease and its after-effects to understand correct knowledge about this disease. If you will visit Oshima for the first time, please tour this room at the beginning.

Gallery:

Exhibition of works by residents, special exhibition, and others

This section exhibits calligraphy, ceramics and other works that were made by residents to live with a purpose. * The exhibition will be changed regularly.

The History of Oshima

Our Lives -Through Mutual Support, We Survived-

This exhibit room is centered around the main themes of the residents' lives, through six keywords that symbolize activities which provided the support for their existence at Oshima. "Admittance," "Gathering," "Worshipping," "Working," "Enthusiasm," and "Rest." In each area we introduce authentic documents, photographs, and records that illustrate the history of Oshima and the people who left their mark as they walked through life in the institution. It also covers two perpetual problems that have plagued the residents for many years: electricity and water. We also include information on the ferries, a symbol of isolation and still the only way to access Oshima.

We hope you will feel the splendor of the strong and beautiful lives of those who lived on this island and appreciate the rich history of Oshima.

Diorama of the Past Oshima

Oshima around 1958

At the end of the war, the results of the "Leprosy-Free Prefecture Movement" was...

Beginning around 1929, the government began promoting a national campaign called the "Leprosy Free Prefecture Movement," wherein prefectures competed to find people with Hansen's disease and quarantine them in sanatorium or force them into isolation and be the first prefecture to reach a population of zero patients.

In 1958, many people affected by Hansen's disease were admitted as a result of a resurgence in this movement as part of the efforts to rebuild Japan at the end of the war. This was the second-highest number of residents in Oshima. This room exhibits a diorama of Oshima around 1958 recreated on the basis of residents' verbal evidence (sized 1/150).

Library

Reading was one of the few pastimes allowed for residents. There are books and materials donated by external groups and individuals, things purchased by the Residents' Association, and literary works published by the resident themselves. Originally it was managed by the Residents' Association, but management was transferred to the Oshima Memorial Museum.

In the open library room (the reading room), you can read books that depict features of life in Oshima- Seishoen, and books published by writers in other sanatoria and people who are interested in these issues.

Some of the books have been reread by many people, and some books are likely to be broken just by touching them, but they are also kept in the open library room as proof of the life of the residents. Treat them carefully and feel the mindset of the residents as it is expressed in the book.

