

Hiroshima Naka Incineration Plant

Sleek, spotlessly clean, and almost serenely quiet, the Naka Incineration Plant challenges preconceptions of how trash is processed in modern urban areas. Completed in 2004 as one of a series of buildings originally commissioned to mark 50 years since the 1945 atomic bombing, the plant was conceived by architect Taniguchi Yoshio (1937–), whose other projects include the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The facility sits at the end of an invisible “line” that begins at the A-bomb Dome and passes through several constructions designed by Taniguchi’s mentor, renowned architect Tange Kenzo (1913–2005).

Built on reclaimed land on the waterfront overlooking Hiroshima Bay, the Naka Incineration Plant’s photogenic focal point is the Ecorium. This pier-like wooden walkway—the name combining “ecology” and “atrium”—passes through the center of a vast chamber filled with gleaming processing machinery and dotted with trees. A model of computer-controlled efficiency, the plant is quiet and human activity minimal.

Visitors can proceed to the end of the walkway for a sweeping view over the bay, and a guided tour is available for those who would like to learn more about the workings of the plant. Visitors can watch from above as refuse trucks drive in to deposit their loads in a gargantuan pit where trash is mixed by a giant crane-like apparatus prior to burning. Also explained is the environmentally friendly operation of the plant; the steam generated by incineration, for example, is used to power machinery.