

Onomichi Station

The new Onomichi Station, opened in 2019, is both the ideal gateway to the city and a distillation of the whole Seto Inland Sea region. Located roughly in the center of town, the station is unmissable no matter how visitors first arrive. The extra wide main entrance is more than just a boon for busy commuters rushing to their trains. It also frames one's first view of Onomichi—the station plaza with its old-fashioned street lamps leading directly to the Onomichi Channel and the islands beyond—like a postcard one can walk through.

Inside, Onomichi Station is similarly innovative, with a second floor boasting a book lounge, a sandwich shop (Onomichi Tom's Sandwich and Bar), and an observation deck with uninterrupted views of the Onomichi Channel. The second floor is also home to the m3 Hostel, which offers a communal space for guests with a view over the platforms—perfect for people-watching, train-watching, or as a launchpad for a last-minute dash to the platform. Taking full advantage of the station's high ceilings, the m3 Hostel has sleeping-car-style bunks made of cedar from Hiroshima Prefecture. The bunks were built using the traditional *itakura* method, which involves slotting pre-cut boards between the pillars of the bunk, avoiding the need for plaster.

The scale and shape of the long, low building is a deliberate counterpoint to the tall hotels and offices nearby. Rather than draw the eye straight upwards, Onomichi Station's slanted roof with its low eaves invites viewers to cast their eyes across the station plaza, then up towards the hill behind the station. From the outside, the building is almost like a ramp connecting the Onomichi Channel and the plaza to the peak above.

Construction of the new station building took about two years, and the design was supervised by Tokyo-based architecture firm Atelier Bow-Wow. Although the building is new, the station has a long history, which is reflected in its new design. The distinctive roof shape is based on the roof of the original station, built during the Taisho era (1912–1926). Beams from the old station serve as tables and chairs for the book lounge, and the wall of the m3 Hostel lounge is made of bricks from the original building.

Onomichi Station is designed to be a destination for tourists and local residents alike. Rather

than waiting on the platform, check out the ground-floor Onomaru Shoten store, which sells a range of local food and products made in Onomichi, as well as offering bicycle rental. Unlike other train stations, Onomichi Station turns waiting for a train into an experience to look forward to.