

Battleship Island Hashima Japan

Here is another cool place you may visit if your close by in Japan. You might remember the last James Bond 007 Movie and the island where the villain Raoul Silva was hiding, the place with the buildings half in ruin that looks and feels so spooky. Well thats exactly the place, the Island called also Battleship Island Hashima Japan because of its shape similar to a battle ship seen from the air. Hashima island or just Hashima (as shima stand also for island in Japanese) is also commonly called Gunkanjima (meaning Battleship Island).

Today it is an uninhabited island, until the seventies coal was mined here underground. In the Fifties Hashima had one of the highest population densities of all time with 83'476 inhabitants per square kilometer. But after the energy reform in Japan, the island was completely evacuated within three months. Some of the inhabitants left the island in such a hurry that up today toys, household appliances and other possessions can be found in the dilapidated dwellings.

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Japan's 2009 request to include Hashima Island, among with 22 other industrial sites, to be added to the UNESCO World Heritage Site list was initially opposed by South Korean authorities on the grounds that Korean and Chinese forced labors used on the island prior to and during World War II.

North Korea also criticized the World Heritage bid because of this same issue, note that many Korean workers lost their lives to the mines of this island as a result of the forced labor programs during Japan's occupation of Korea.

Currently, sightseeing boat trips around the island are provided by five operators; Gunkanjima Concierge, Gunkanjima Cruise Co., Ltd., Yamasa-Kaiun, and Takashima Kaijou from Nagasaki Port, and a private service from the Nomozaki Peninsula. As of April 22, 2009, the island is open once again for public visits. Gunkanjima is about 15 km away from Nagasaki and is reachable by a ferry tour since 2009. A cheap and reliable two-hour cruise around the island is available but you most probably want the 見学 visit course which includes a guided walk on the island and explanations in Japanese. Be aware that due to the precarious nature of the Gunkanjima dock, these tours are cancelled frequently for bad weather. For those of you thinking of jumping the fence and having a free saunter, think again, as all patrons are not only forced to sign a very specific no-fence-jumping waiver. So stay with your group all the time, but never the less its an unforgettable sight.
