



LEGOLAND® Japan entrance

# A Theme Park That Combines Education and Tourism

**The experience-led theme park LEGOLAND® has arrived in Japan, sparking children's imaginations and breathing new life into Nagoya at the same time.**

**MAO FUJITA**

LEGOLAND® Japan, an outdoor theme park offering fun for all the family, opened its doors for the first time in Japan in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture in April 2017. Consisting of seven different areas, including attractions, shows and restaurants, LEGOLAND® provides a fun and imaginative experience for children, as they immerse themselves in the world of LEGO® Bricks, and also an enjoyable way for adults to relive their childhood. There are now eight parks in seven countries worldwide, with this being the second in Asia, following on from Malaysia.

“LEGO® founder Ole Kirk Christiansen actually had a dream to open a LEGOLAND® in Japan for over thirty years,” explains Ayumi Takagi, Head of Public Relations for LEGOLAND® Japan. “We had to scour Japan for a suitable location. You need a huge area of land to build a theme park however, and we were unable to do that under our own steam. We were thinking we

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would need local people on board and would have to ask the government for help. Then three or four years ago, we were approached by the City of Nagoya, which led to us opening the first LEGOLAND® in Japan in the Kinjo-Futo area of the city.

The Greater Nagoya area that surrounds the city is one of Japan's three major metropolitan areas alongside Tokyo and Osaka, which it is located roughly halfway between. One of the deciding factors in locating LEGOLAND® however was that Nagoya had no large-scale leisure facilities to rival the other two cities.

Popular with people all over the world, locals and overseas LEGO® fans alike were excited about the park opening in Japan.

“Attracting increasing numbers of overseas tourists is key to new local development in Japan,” comments Takagi. “Opening LEGOLAND® gives Nagoya added appeal as an option for overseas tourists visiting Japan. As a result tourist numbers are increasing and the number of visitors to the park is on the increase too.”

In an effort to stimulate new demand for travel, LEGOLAND® is working with domestic travel agencies to offer high added value travel products for



MINILAND exhibits, all made from LEGO® Bricks

overseas and domestic customers, to further regional development, and to promote Japan as a tourism-based country.

“Overseas customers come mainly from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China and other Asian countries, and from parts of the world such as the United States and Europe,” explains Takagi. “We get all sorts of visitors, including couples and groups of friends as well as families. People often take photos in MINILAND in particular, against the backdrop of Japanese landmarks such as Nagoya Castle, Tokyo Tower, Tokyo Skytree, and Kobe Port Tower, all recreated with LEGO® Bricks.”

To develop the park into a leisure destination where visitors can happily while away the time like this, LEGOLAND® is working to expand its Japanese and English signage and to move in a more multilingual direction in the future. Plans are also in place to open a hotel resort inside the park in 2018. Working with the local authorities, LEGOLAND® is looking to provide a theme park offering that will encourage visitors to stay over and discover more of Nagoya, rather than just making a day trip as they may have done previously.

“We are constantly organizing events and other activities to make children happy, aimed primarily at children aged from two to twelve and their families,” says Takagi.

The name LEGO® comes from the Danish phrase “*leg godt*,” which means “play well.” By providing services that cater to specific needs, in terms of helping children to grow, the company is looking to create high added value businesses that will appeal to a market that actually has a declining birthrate.

LEGOLAND® is more than just an educational theme park that encourages creativity in children. It is a new tourism resource for Nagoya, bringing in local authorities and Japanese companies alike, and is definitely one to watch for the future. **7**



Children play in the Secret Chamber of Amset-ra.