

Enjoy the Oki Islands Geopark !

The Oki Islands Geopark is a place where you can experience firsthand the connections between the Earth, living things and the way of life. The residents of these islands are at the center of activities relating to revitalization of the region and recognizing the value of this region's special resources.

Tours & Hands-On Experiences



Sea Kayaking



Obsidian Tool Crafting

You can take part in sea kayaking adventures, obsidian craft workshops, eco tours and many more fun activities.

Regional Products



Rock Oyster



Snow Crab

This region is well-known for its abundance of fresh seafood, including such delicacies as rock oyster, snow crab and white squid.

Local Guides



Eco-tour Guides

We are training local people to be eco-tour guides. They will share their stories about this special place with you.

Education



Fieldwork with Elementary School Students

We are working hard to ensure children here are proud of their home and can tell others about OKI.

Research



Oki Gneiss

Research groups and universities are conducting research in Oki, helping us to discover even more wonders of the Oki Islands.

Facilities



Oki Nature Museum

Information about the Oki Islands Geopark is on display at local museums and information centers, so that visitors and locals can learn about the Oki Islands.

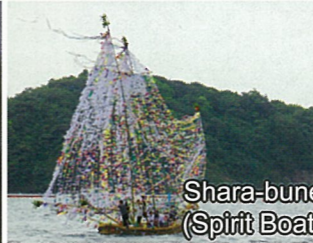
LIFESTYLE AND TRADITIONS



Tamawaku-no-mikoto Shrine Festival



Ushi-tsuki (Bull Fighting)



Shara-bune (Spirit Boat)

UNIQUE ECOSYSTEM



Chichi-sugi Japanese Cedar



Oki Salamander

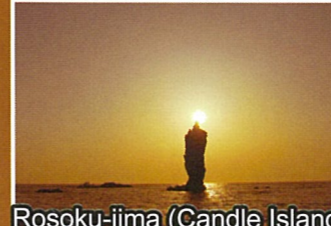


Oki Rhododendron

GEOHISTORY



Kuniga Coast



Rosoku-jima (Candle Island)



Sekiheki (Red Cliff)

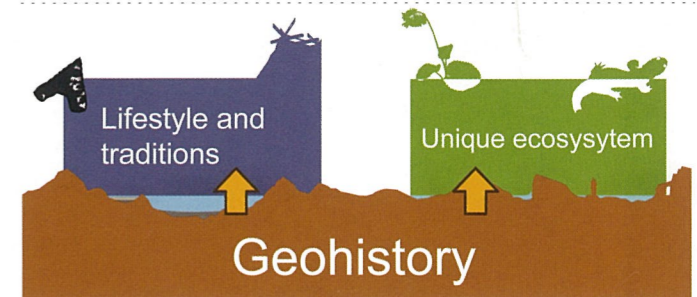
Aspiring to become a member of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN)



Oki Islands Geopark

What is a geopark?

The geoparks program is supported by UNESCO. It recognizes unique areas for their special geological significance and outstanding natural and cultural landscapes. The Oki Islands Geopark became a member of the Japan Geoparks Network (JGN) in 2009, and is aspiring to become a member of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN).



The Oki Islands have developed through a series of stages: from being a part of the Eurasian Continent, to the bottom of a lake, to the bottom of a deep sea, to being connected to the mainland Shimane Peninsula, to finally becoming a group of remote islands.

Through this transformation from continent to small islands, a diverse ecosystem and unique cultural traditions have developed in this region.

Here in the Oki Islands you can discover the origins of the islands hundreds of millions of years ago, the unique ecosystem that has been created over this time, and the lifestyle and culture of the local people which dates back from ancient times to the present day.

Oki Islands Geopark Information

Four inhabited islands and 180 small uninhabited islands make up the Oki Islands Region which is located 40 – 80 km north of Shimane Prefecture (south-west of mainland Honshu). The geographical environment of these remote islands and the lifestyle of the people are important aspects of this geopark. The area of the geopark is 628km² (land area 346 km², marine area 282km²). The fishing industry and marine organisms that inhabit the sea around Oki are vital to the way of life of its people, so coastal areas up to 1km from the shoreline have been included in the total geopark area.



Access



Oki Airport is approximately one hour from Itami Airport (Osaka).

From Tokyo

Plane (via Osaka or Izumo)
 Route One: Haneda Airport – Itami Airport – Oki Airport
 Route Two: Haneda Airport – Izumo Enmusubi Airport – Oki Airport

Express Bus (via JR Matsue Station)
 Tokyo Station – Matsue Station – Sakaiminato Port/Shichirui Port – Oki (by ferry)

From Osaka

Plane (Direct Flight, or via Izumo)
 Route One: Direct Flight (Itami Airport – Oki Airport)
 Route Two: Itami Airport – Izumo Enmusubi Airport – Oki Airport

Express Bus (via Matsue or Yonago)
 Route One: JR Osaka Station – JR Matsue Station – Sakaiminato Port/Shichirui Port – Oki (by ferry)
 Route Two: JR Osaka Station – JR Yonago Station – Sakaiminato Port/Shichirui Port – Oki (by ferry)

Train (via Matsue or Yonago)
 Route One: JR Shin-Osaka Station – JR Okayama Station – JR Matsue Station – Sakaiminato Port/Shichirui Port – Oki (by ferry)
 Route Two: JR Shin-Osaka Station – JR Okayama Station – JR Yonago Station – Sakaiminato Port/Shichirui Port – Oki (by ferry)

Transport between the four Oki Islands (Ferry)

Okinoshima Town (Saigo Port) – Ama Town (Hishiura Port) – Nishinoshima Town (Beppu Port) – Chibu Village (Kurii Port)

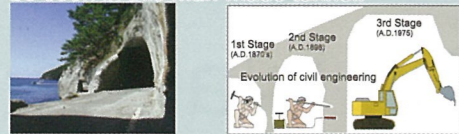
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 http://www.oki-geopark.jp

Topography and Geology

Land and Lifestyle Challenges

Fukuura Tunnel

The internal structure of pyroclastic rocks can be seen in this man-made tunnel.



Utilization of Limited Land

Makihata Stone Walls

Remains of *makihata*, a traditional farming method of stock and crop rotation, can be seen in Oki. *Makihata* crop rotation was an efficient method of utilizing the small amount of flat land available on the islands.



Geography and Geohistory

History and Cultural Development of Remote Islands in the Sea of Japan

Location

The Oki Islands are a group of isolated islands situated in the Sea of Japan between the Eurasian Continent and mainland Japan.



Due to their geographical location, the Oki Islands were an important calling point for ships trading around Japan, and *en route* to Asia. This vast trading system began in the 17th century and was carried out for about 200 years. As a result, the people of Oki came into contact with many different cultures.

1. Obsidian Trade
2. Renge-mai Dance
3. Islands of Exile
4. Kitamae-bune Merchant Ships



1. Obsidian from the Oki Islands was transported throughout the Chugoku Region around 30,000 years ago.
2. Renge-mai Dance has been performed on Oki since the Heian Period (8th – 12th century). It originated at the Oki Kokubun-ji Temple and has features from East Asian style dances.
3. Banishment of important officials to the Oki Islands continued for around 900 years. These officials introduced culture from many different parts of Japan to Oki.
4. The Oki Islands flourished as a port of call for Kitamae-bune merchant ships on their journeys around Japan.

Culture and Festivals

Preservation of Culture and Festivals in the Isolated Oki Islands

Topography

These islands were formed by volcanic eruptions, and feature complex and fascinating landforms that were created by subsequent erosion and weathering. Each island has complex topography.



Due to the mountainous terrain on the islands, travel between settlements was very difficult and communities were historically quite isolated from each other. This isolation has helped to preserve unique cultures and maintain regional identities in each community. Fishing, agriculture and traditions in this region are very important, as is religion. There are the more than 100 shrines in the Oki Islands.

1. Fuse Mountain Festival
2. Mura Festival
3. Classical Sumo
4. Mita-hachimangu Shrine Shuhaira Dance



1. This festival worships a giant tree, and is one of the oldest festivals in Japan.
2. This festival is one of the three main festivals on Dogo (largest island), and dates back to the late Heian Period. It is related to yin yang.
3. This traditional style of sumo has very deep spiritual connections and features characteristics unique to Oki.
4. This performance includes *dengaku* (a rice planting dance) from the Middle Ages, and is rarely seen anywhere else in Japan.

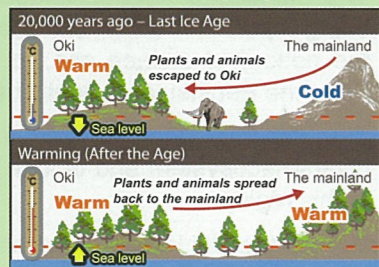
Unique ecosystem created by the geohistory of Oki

Refugium for vegetation during the ice age

During the last ice age (around 20,000 years ago) Oki was connected to the Shimane Peninsula. At that time, the temperature around Oki was comparatively warmer, so various plant and animal species survived in Oki, but disappeared from the mainland. It is assumed that these plants and animals spread back to the mainland around 10,000 years ago, when post-glacial warming began.



20,000 years ago
Last Ice Age Period



↑ Oki was connected to the Shimane Peninsula (the mainland) due to the fall in sea level

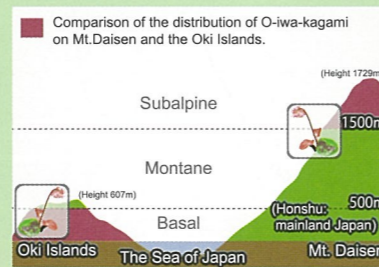
Coexistence of Vegetation (Distribution of Alpine Plants in Lowland Areas)

Following the ice age, Oki became isolated islands when the sea level rose due to post-glacial warming. As a result, various species were left behind on the islands and they adapted to the low altitude environment. As a result of these developments in the geographical history of Oki, the islands have a unique distribution of plant life.

Flora normally found in subalpine areas, Hokkaido (northern Japan) and Okinawa (southern Japan), as well as flora from the Eurasian Continent can be found coexisting on the islands.



10,000 years ago
(After Post-glacial Warming)



↑ Oki became isolated due to the rise in sea level caused by post-glacial warming.

1. Subalpine Plant, 2. Northern Plant, 3. Southern Plant, 4. Continental Plant

1. O-iwa-kagami (Schizocodon)



2. Hamanasu (Sweet Briar)



3. Nago-ran (Nago Orchid)



4. Daruma-giku (Aster)



Endemic and Relict Species

Oki became a group of isolated islands around 10,000 years ago. The islands are an important place for discovering how certain species evolved during this short time span. In 2005 the Oki Salamander was listed as a "World Rare Species", as its evolution process can be clearly identified.

1. Oki-tanpopo (Oki Dandelion)
2. Oki-shakunage (Oki Rhododendron)
3. Yamane (Japanese Dormouse)
4. Oki-sanshouo (Oki Salamander)



1. This is a type of Japanese dandelion. It is an endemic species which has uniquely evolved in Oki.
2. This flower grows on relatively high mountains around Oki.
3. This species is possibly endemic to Oki.
4. This salamander has evolved uniquely in Oki to adapt to rivers with strong currents.

Endemic Species: Living organisms that have evolved uniquely in a certain area.
Relict Species: Living organisms that have survived in a certain area. They are also known as "living fossils".

Diversity of Marine Organisms

The Oki Islands Geopark includes not only the land area, but also the marine area around the islands.

The waters around the Oki Islands are home to marine life from southern Japan, such as Nihon-awa-sango (Japanese Awa coral) and soft coral. In recent years, gigantic starfish have also been found.

1. Kuroki-zuta (Kuroki Seaweed)
2. Umi-hotaru (Sea Firefly)
3. Mitode (1m Starfish)
4. Sode-ika (Red Squid)



1. This species of seaweed can be found in front of the Former Kurogi Imperial Palace on Nishinoshima Island. It is the only species of seaweed to be listed as a National Natural Treasure.
2. This is a type of zooplankton which emits light. There is a wide array of bioluminescent organisms in the Oki Islands.
3. In recent years giant meter-long starfish have been found around the Oki Islands.
4. During the autumn and winter months, meter-long squid can be caught along the coast.

Stage One Continental Period

Until 26 million years ago

Oki as part of the Eurasian Continent
The Japanese Archipelago, including Oki, was once part of the Eurasian Continent.

Planet Earth
255 million years ago (Pangea Supercontinent)

Oki 50 million years ago

Oki Gneiss is one of the oldest types of rocks in Japan at 250 million years old.

Stage Two Sea of Japan Formation Period

26 million – 10 million years ago

Oki at the bottom of a lake
What is now Japan slowly separated from the continental landmass, and a lake formed. Oki was at the bottom of this lake.

Oki 23 million years ago

Fossil of an alligator tooth found in 20 million year-old rock strata

Oki at the bottom of the sea
The land moved further from the continent, and the Japanese archipelago was created.

Oki 12 million years ago

Fossil of a scallop found in 12 million year-old rock strata

Oki (Illustration)

Stage Three Volcanic Islands Period

10 million – 70,000 years ago

Creation of the Oki Islands
Extensive volcanic activity occurred, and the Oki Islands were thrust from the seabed to form the Oki Archipelago.

Oki 5.5 million years ago

Tokage-Iwa (Lizard Rock)

Kannon-Iwa (Buddhist Deity Rock)

Repeated Volcanic Activity
The Oki Islands were formed through repeated volcanic eruptions and collapse.

Oki 500,000 years ago

Mantle Xenoliths "Message from Planet Earth"

Tsutenkyo Arch (Bridge to Heaven)

Fukuura Tunnel

Akiya Coast

Stage Four Peninsula to Isolated Islands Period

70,000 years ago – current

Landforms created by erosion and deposition
The present shape of the Oki Islands is a result of changing sea levels and erosion.

Oki 20,000 years ago

2012

Maenosu Intertidal Platform, Yui

Oki was connected to Shimane Peninsula during the ice ages, so animals such as the Naumann Elephant could move back and forth between the islands and mainland Japan.