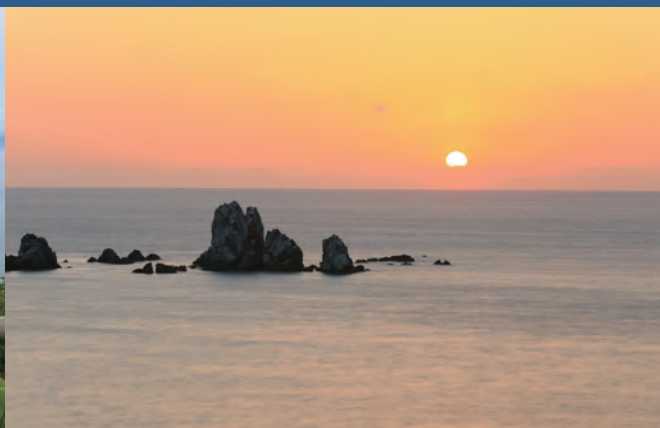




Unzen-Amakusa National Park
Amakusa
Story Book



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The Amakusa Area, in Unzen-Amakusa National Park



Introduction

This book presents the essence of Amakusa, its unique charm and values, and invites visitors to discover and experience them for themselves. It is intended to be shared guide for everyone who welcomes and supports visitors to the Amakusa area of Unzen-Amakusa National Park.

Here, “stakeholders” refers to all individuals who facilitate connections between visitors and Amakusa, whether directly or indirectly.

The Amakusa area is blessed with beautiful seas and island landscapes, abundant marine resources, a rich cultural heritage, including its Christian history, and the ways of life of people who have long lived in harmony with nature. However, these attractions are not always fully communicated to visitors, which may result in short duration of stays and more limited visitor experiences.

This is where the concept of “Interpretation” becomes important. “Interpretation” refers to an approach that presents the region’s diverse resources—its nature, history, culture, and everyday life—as a meaningful “story”, while connecting these stories with visitors. By moving beyond the mere observation of scenery or visits to famous sites, interpretation enables visitors to understand the values shaped through the lives of the people of Amakusa and their relationship with nature, thereby creating deeper and more memorable experiences.

This book was created as a shared foundation for communicating the distinctive stories of Amakusa and for enabling each stakeholder to share them from their respective perspective. By clarifying what we seek to convey to visitors and which aspects of Amakusa’s appeal we hope they will discover—and by disseminating these ideas throughout the region—we aim to establish a sustainable tourism destination that offers meaningful and rewarding experiences.

This initiative has been undertaken through collaboration with numerous tourism operators and residents of the Amakusa area. By rediscovering the valuable resources within our surrounding and continuing dialogue within the community, we are weaving together stories that are uniquely a representation of Amakusa.

We hope this book will be used widely by many stakeholders as a guide for sharing the stories of Amakusa with visitors.

For visitors who pick up this book, we hope it will become a memorable part of your journey. We also hope that you will develop a lasting appreciation for the Amakusa Area and share its distinctive appeal with others.

Overview of the Amakusa Area, Unzen-Amakusa National Park

(1) Overview of Nature

The Amakusa Islands are characterized by diverse coastal landscapes. These include the archipelago seascapes of Amakusa Matsushima, Goshoura-jima Island, Shishi-jima Island, and Naga-shima Island in the inland sea; subsided coastlines around Ushibuka, the eastern coast of Shimo-shima Island, and Yokaku Bay; sea-eroded cliffs along the western coast of Shimo-shima; and Tomioka Island, which is a land-tied island. In addition, the mountain ridges along the eastern coast of Kami-shima Island form a distinctive landscape known as the Kankai Alps, characterized by fault scarp topography.

Geologically, the area is largely composed of Paleogene strata of the Cenozoic Era, while Cretaceous strata of the Mesozoic Era are distributed along both the eastern and western coasts. The Cretaceous formations on islands such as Goshoura-jima Island contain numerous fossils, including bivalves and other marine organisms.

Vegetation in the region has long been utilized and sustainably regenerated for firewood, charcoal production, and timber extraction. As a result, much of the landscape came to be dominated by secondary forests, primarily composed of Japanese chestnut and oak species. However, with the cessation of these activities, the forests are now gradually reverting to their original form as subtropical evergreen broadleaf forests.

Coastal areas, influenced by the Tsushima Warm Current, feature plants typical of temperate regions. Furthermore, unique coastal wind-swept forests are found along coastal slopes.

The region’s fauna is equally noteworthy, particularly its birdlife, coral reefs, and tropical fish. Among avian species, notable winter visitors include the common crane and the red-crowned crane, while resident birds such as the brown booby can be observed year-round. Offshore, the waters of western Amakusa are rich in subtropical fauna, featuring colorful coral reefs, sea fans, and diverse tropical fish species. To preserve these abundant marine environments, the waters around Tomioka, Amakusa, and Ushibuka have been designated as the Marine Parks.

(2) Overview of Use

The opening of the Amakusa Five Bridges and the Kuro-no-seto Bridge in the 1960s connected the Amakusa Islands to the mainland Kyushu, thereby significantly improving accessibility by automobile.

Major recreational activities in the area include coastal sightseeing, visits to historic Christian sites, swimming, and camping. In Ushibuka Marine Park, glass-bottom boat tours, which allow visitors to observe the underwater scenery are also popular.

Access routes include national highways connecting Kumamoto and Kagoshima Prefectures, with branch roads leading to major visitor hubs within the national park.

About This Story Book

The “stories” presented in this book aim to clearly convey how the diverse resources of the Amakusa area—including its natural environment, history, culture, and ways of life—have developed and what value they hold today. Rather than introducing each resource separately, this book organizes their backgrounds and interrelationships into cohesive narratives that communicate the overall character and appeal of the area.

These stories are primarily intended to serve as a shared foundation of understanding among key tourism stakeholders such as accommodation providers, transportation operators, and restaurants, thereby enabling them to accurately understand regional resources and foster a sense of pride in Amakusa. By understanding and communicating the region’s appeal through a shared narrative, we aim to enhance visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. At the same time, this book is designed to be accessible to the general public as an entry point for discovering the charm of Amakusa.

The act of sharing these stories with visitors through experiences and explanations in ways that foster understanding and inspiration is referred to as “Interpretation”. Interpretation is a communication approach widely employed in national parks, World Heritage sites, and tourism destinations to convey the value and appeal of a place to visitors. By explaining the meanings and background of natural environments, landscapes, and cultural heritage in ways that resonate with visitors’ experiences and interests, interpretation creates a deeper relationship between visitors and the region’s significant resources.

At the core of interpretation is the facilitation of visitors’ experience of a “Sense of Place” through engaging experiences and meaningful storytelling. Stories should be communicated consistently across many situations not only in guided tours or experiential programs, but also through everyday interactions, casual conversations, websites, exhibits, printed materials, and even through elements such as local cuisine, souvenirs, and the atmosphere of a place.

This book is not intended as a technical manual on interpretation. Rather, it is designed to assist tourism professionals in identifying and deepening their understanding of the region’s compelling resources, thereby enabling them to practice interpretation—the art of sharing storytelling—in ways that are appropriate to their own roles and settings.

Sharing of stories strengthens collaboration across the area and provides a foundation for creating memorable visitor experiences. This book is intended to serve as an initial step in advancing that objective.



The Story of Amakusa Area in Unzen-Amakusa National Park

The beautiful archipelagic scenery and calm seas offer an intuitive enjoyment for visitors. However, the processes behind their formation and the long history shaped through the interaction between people and nature cannot be fully understood through visual observation alone. The Amakusa Islands, a chain of more than 120 islands of varying sizes (large and small), are surrounded by three distinct seas—the East China Sea, the Ariake Sea, and the Shiranui Sea. Differences in tidal currents, light, and water color create diverse seascapes and nurture rich ecosystems. Extensive tidal flats with large tidal ranges, the clear waters of the open sea, and an inland sea dotted with beautiful islands—each of these marine environments shapes the distinctive natural environment and fishing grounds of Amakusa.

Furthermore, the land of Amakusa has been shaped by more than 100 million years of uplift and subsidence, volcanic activity, and erosion. Ammonite and dinosaur fossils found in Goshoura, cuesta landforms observed at Mt. Kuratake and within the Kankai Alps, and pottery stone and coal resources along the west coast all bear witness to the transformation of this land from the seabed to dry land. These geological and topographical changes have not only created the present landscape but have also formed the foundation for rich biodiversity and sustained human activity.

Within this challenging yet bountiful natural environment, the people of Amakusa have constructed their lives by living in harmony with nature. The fishing knowledge that interprets the rhythms of the sea, the food cultures nurtured on each island, and the exchanges and cultures brought by the sea all reflect this relationship. Sakitsu Village, which preserves the prayers of Hidden Christians who survived the era of persecution, and the Amakusa Five Bridges, built in response to the aspirations of the islanders, symbolize the stories of people who have coexisted harmoniously with nature.

The story of the Amakusa area is structured around three perspectives: (1) Landscapes Shaped by Uplift and Subsidence of the Land; (2) Ecosystems and Food Culture Nurtured by the Cycles of the Sea and Water; and (3) History, Faith, and Life in Harmony with Nature.

It encourages visitors not only to “see” the beautiful scenery, but also to “understand” the layers of time and values underlying it, thereby deepening their connection with Amakusa.

This story serves as a shared framework for connecting the diverse resources and experiences of the Amakusa area within Unzen-Amakusa National Park, and for passing them to future generations.

Key Resources of the Amakusa Area

The resources suggested by participants during the story-building workshop are summarized below.

Food



Food Nurtured by the Land

- Bainiku Pork (High-quality pork brand raised on a proprietary feed which contains plum extract)
- Amakusa Daio Chicken
- Amakusa Wagyu Black Beef
- Yushima Daikon
- Karaimo (Sweet potato)
- Akatsuchi (red clay) potato
- Olive
- Matsutake Mushroom
- Citrus Fruits
- Takahama Grape
- Amakusa Shochu
- *Koppa-mochi*
- *Dago-jiru*
- Champon (Mixed-ingredient noodle soup)

Seafood



- Local Fish
- BURI-OH (literally, king of *huri*)
- Sea Urchin (Recognized by Rosanjin Kitaoji)
- Aquaculture Products
- Japanese Tiger Prawn
- Spiny Lobster
- Octopus
- Octopus Daio (The octopus that saved Akashi's Octopus)
- Pufferfish
- Sea Bream
- *Konoshiro* (Dotted Gizzard Shad)
- Redwing Searobin
- Japanese Common Starfish
- Seaweed (*Wakame*, *Aosa*)
- Dried Baby Sardines
- Karinto with Dried Baby Sardines
- *Buen-zushi*
- *Shiokara* (Salted Squid)
- Japan's Finest *Zatsubushi*



Nature



Nature Nurtured by the Sea and Life

- The Expansive "Amakusa Blue" of the Open Sea
- The Vibrant Blue of the Sea Under Favorable Light
- Seascapes to be Experienced With All Five Senses
- Japan's First Designated Marine Park
- The West Coast, Where Seaweed and Coral Coexist
- Eelgrass beds
- Satsuki Coast
- Sugamuta Coast
- Yokaku Bay
- Shiratsuru-hama Beach
- Nagaura Tidal Flats
- Tsukinoshima Island
- Amakusa Matsushima

Scenery

- Stars
- Sunrise and Sunset
- Sunset over the Grand Panorama of Amakusa's West Coast
- Sunset at the Virgin Mary of Amakusa
- Eight Scenic Sunsets of Amakusa
- Orange Road
- Kayatsumaru Observatory
- Harino Park
- Myui Observatory
- Amakusa Five Bridges
- Mt. Daisaku



Landscapes Shaped by the Earth's Forces

- Stratum Extending to Shimabara
- Exposed Strata
- Cuesta Landscapes
- Takahama Metamorphic Rock
- *Ana-no-kuchi Iwa (Zo-san Iwa: the elephant-shaped rock)*
- Myoken-ura
- Shimoura-ishi (Sandstone)
- *Dago Stone*
- Kikai-ga-ura
- Blue Cave
- Fukumado Cave
- Yushima (Dangō Island)
- Hiai Island (Pearl Sun Beach)
- Takamoku Island
- Goshoura-jima Island
- Tomioka Sandbar and Spit
- Shikimisaki Park
- Shiraiwazaki
- Dinosaur Footprints
- Roman Onsen (Hot Springs)
- Ushibuka Onsen (Hot Springs)
- Shimoda Onsen (Hot Springs)
- Well Water



Scenic Landscapes of the Mountains

- Mt. Kuratake
- Mt. Ryugatake
- Mt. Sengenzan
- Mt. Takabuto-yama
- Mt. Rokuroji
- Amakusa Kankai Alps Course (Kyushu Nature Trail)
- Ubushima Island
- Mt. Tromaru-dake and Mt. Jiomaru-dake
- Sengenmoridake
- Mt. Sira-take
- Mt. Sira-take "Fudo Waterfall"
- Tsurubayama Park
- Nishibira Tsubaki Park
- Karasutoge



Biology

Marine Fauna and Flora

- Rich Marine Ecosystem Led by Dolphins
- Diverse Tropical Fish
- Swimming Crab
- *Uca lactea*
- Sea Turtle
- Umihotaru (*Vargula hilgendorfi*)
- Coastal Plants
- Coral Reefs
- Crested Birds
- *Melithaea japonica*



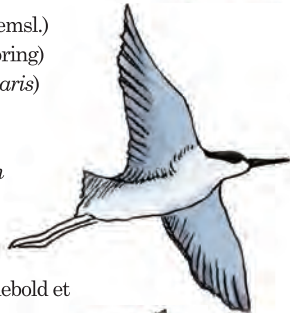
Animals and Insects

- Chinese Sparrowhawks (*Accipiter soloensis*)
- White-naped Crane
- Hooded Crane
- Japanese Murrelets
- Brown Boobies
- Fireflies
- Scarlet Dwarf or Pygmy Dragonfly (*Nannophya pygmaea*)



Plants

- Airatobikazura (*Mucuna sempervirens* Hemsl.)
- Himoduru (*Lycopodium casuarinoides* Spring)
- Balanophoraceae (*Balanophora subcupularis*)
- Getto (*Alpinia zerumbet*)
- Mizugoke (*Sphagnum*)
- Amakusa Mitsuba-azalea (*Rhododendron amakusense*)
- Japanese Camellia
- Hibiscus Hamabo
- Hamajinchou (*Pentacoelium bontioides* Siebold et Zucc.)
- Hego (*Cyathea spinulosa*)
- Sea Fig



History and Culture

Fishing and Coastal Life

- Fisherman's Town
- Port Town Scenery Preserved through the Centuries
- Fishing Practices
- Experience *Shikiriami-ryo* (A traditional fishing method where nets are set across the bay at high tide and fish are caught after the tide recedes)
- Bottom Trawling Net (*Teguri*)
- *Sashiami-ryo* (A classic and representative coastal fishing method)
- *Sumoguri-ryo* (Traditional fishing methods that do not use oxygen tanks or similar equipment)
- *Ebisu*
- *Aka-maki*
- Wild Plants
- *Kuratake-Meido-Salon*

Tradition and Industry

- Kinshoji Temple
- Princess Legend
- Coal Mines that Thrived Along the West Coast
- Shipbuilding Culture Cultivated on Remote Islands
- *Haiya* Festival
- *Haiya* Music

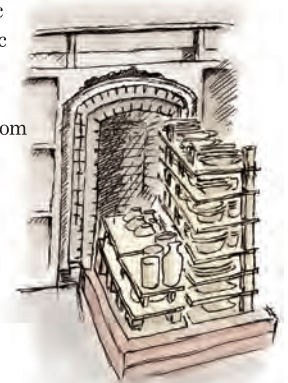


Christian Culture

- History of Hidden Christians
- Secret Rooms
- Use of Abalone Shells Filled with Water as Representations of the Virgin Mary
- A Culture Protected by Topography
- Sakitsu
- Sakitsu Church Seen through the *Torii* Gate

Ceramic Culture

- World-renowned Amakusa Ceramic Stone and Ceramic Culture
- White Porcelain
- Fish-motif Plate from the Oniike-yaki



Historical Cultural Properties

- Tanasoko Castle
- Tomioka Castle
- Kanjoji Temple
- *Goshuin* (Temple or shrine stamps)
- Myojin Shrine
- *Shugendo* (Sacred site)
- Miyazaki Kofun (Ancient Tomb)
- Grandson of Akechi Mitsuhide
- Amakusa Shiro



Experiences Visitors Can Enjoy in the Amakusa Area

The following ideas were shared by participants during the story-building workshop.

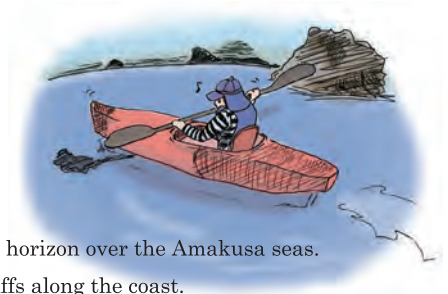
Food

- Learn about fishermen's efforts aimed at restoring seaweed beds, including eelgrass and hijiki, and participate in these conservation efforts.
- Engage in a survival-style fishing experience by swimming, observing marine life, fishing, cleaning, and cooking your own catch.
- Catch a fish and partake of it.
- Participate in offshore rock fishing and coastal exploration in Ohgase.
- Savor the rich, natural umami flavors of Amakusa seafood.
- Enjoy a tasting of Amakusa sea urchin.
- Toast *koppa-mochi* using a toaster oven and enjoy it served warm.
- Sample the traditional delicacy known as *aka-maki*.
- Enjoy freshly prepared seafood sourced from Ushibuka.
- Be surprised by generous portions offered in sashimi platters.
- Experience dishes prepared using dashi made from dried fish flakes.



Nature

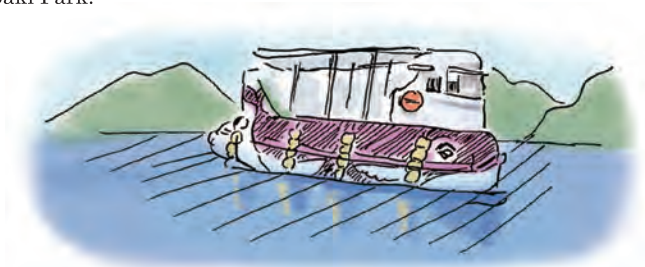
- Watch the sunset descend into the horizon over the Amakusa seas.
- Explore the dramatic sea-eroded cliffs along the coast.
- Enjoy the star-filled skies on clear evenings in Amakusa.
- Experience the ebb and flow of tides along the shoreline.
- Feel the sea breeze while cycling through Amakusa's natural landscapes.
- Spend relaxing camping time surrounded by nature.
- Experience the thrill of a zip line gliding above the forest canopy.
- Feel the excitement of a sea bream fishing tournament in Amakusa's abundant waters.
- Try fossil hunting while imagining Amakusa's ancient world.
- Appreciate the majestic scenery along the Kankai Alps Trail overlooking the sea.
- Walk the Kyushu Nature Trail and experience the charm of Amakusa across all seasons.



Biology



- Discover coral reefs while experiencing *Sumoguri*, a traditional free-diving practiced without tanks.
- Enjoy a natural aquarium experience aboard a glass-bottom boat.
- Search for beautiful large shells along Shiratsuru-hama Beach.
- Dive or snorkel in crystal clear water and observe marine life up close.
- Experience the excitement of encountering and touching marine creatures typically seen only in books or aquariums.
- Relax and enjoy the refreshing sea breeze in the *Yoriso Forest* at Nishibira Tsubaki Park.



History and Culture

- Experience the art of traditional Amakusa salt making using earthenware salt-making pots.
- Discover your creativity through hands-on porcelain painting or pottery-making.
- Create your own pottery using beach materials such as shards, sand, stones, shells, and coral.
- Learn about the history and mining of Amakusa pottery stone.
- Enjoy a traditional banquet featuring the *Ozashiki Haiya* dance.
- Join the lively dancing of the *Haiya* Festival.
- Visit local kiln studios and meet skilled artisans.
- Relax in the hot springs of Shimoda Onsen.
- Try printing using a miniature Gutenberg-style printing press.
- Experience the heartwarming tradition of baby sumo, passed down through generations in the region.
- Learn about traditional charcoal-making and the wisdom of life in Amakusa.
- Walk through the historic streets of Tomioka and experience its culture and daily life.



Unique Values of the Amakusa Area

We have organized the regional charm we wish to share with visitors to Amakusa, as well as the important values we hope to convey, into a series of “stories”. While Amakusa possesses a wealth of attraction and experiences, this book focuses the distinctive elements that truly define Amakusa’s character.

Each story presents concise statements that reflect widely shared perspectives found across the region’s landscapes and cultural resources. Developed through close discussions with local businesses and community members, the following values have been identified as those that best represent the unique appeal of Amakusa and that we hope to share with visitors.

Unique Values of the Amakusa Area-1 : Landscapes Shaped by Uplift and Subsidence of the Land

- Ep.1 The strata of Amakusa, shaped by repeated uplift and subsidence, convey the Earth’s history to the present day.
- Ep.2 From marine life to remarkable dinosaur fossils, Amakusa reveals an environment where both sea and land have thrived since prehistoric times, inviting exploration and discovery.
- Ep.3 The mountains of Amakusa showcase not only the scenic beauty of the region but also the lives of the people who have lived here.
- Ep.4 Rich deposits of pottery stone and coal resources found along the west coast of Amakusa demonstrate how geological changes caused by crustal movements have shaped local industry and livelihoods.
- Ep.5 The land of Amakusa supports a diverse array of wildlife that have adapted to its ever changing natural environment.



Unique Values of the Amakusa Area-2 : Ecosystems and Food Culture Nurtured by the Cycles of the Sea and Water

- Ep.6 Three seas, each with different characteristics, create the diverse seascapes of Amakusa.
- Ep.7 The diverse environments shaped by ocean currents and seabed topography support a rich world of marine life in the seas around Amakusa.
- Ep.8 The convergence of the gentle inland seas, the dynamic open ocean, and the natural cycles linking land and sea has nurtured Amakusa’s rich seafood culture.
- Ep.9 Fishing in Amakusa reflects the wisdom of interpreting the rhythms of the sea and working in harmony with nature.
- Ep.10 Efforts to balance utilization and conservation contribute to preserve Amakusa’s seas as a Marine Park.



Unique Values of the Amakusa Area-3 : History, Faith, and Life in Harmony with Nature

- Ep.11 The intricate coastline formed natural harbors, and the history of exchange carried by ships and songs continues to shape the daily life and culture of Amakusa.
- Ep.12 In Amakusa, protected by the sea, a faith quietly practiced in everyday life continues to be passed across generations.
- Ep.13 The seas and terrain of Amakusa continue to tell the story of the relationship between people and nature.
- Ep.14 The opening of the Amakusa Five Bridges connected the islands and transformed the lives and outlook of the islanders.
- Ep.15 The warm climate and island landscape, surrounded by the sea, have nurtured distinctive crops and a unique food culture in Amakusa.



Landscapes Shaped by Uplift and Subsidence of the Land

episode 1~5

Ecosystems and Food Culture Nurtured by the Cycles of the Sea and Water

episode 6~10

History, Faith, and Life in Harmony with Nature

episode 11~15



The strata of Amakusa, shaped by repeated uplift and subsidence, convey the Earth's history to the present day.

Story




The topography of Amakusa was shaped as the land repeatedly rose and subsided, gradually emerging from the seabed. Today, much of the land is composed of geological strata deposited on the beds of ancient seas and rivers, along with rocks formed through magmatic activity. The archipelago seascape surrounding Matsushima was formed by the tilting of the land and the erosion and weathering of hard sandstone along the coast. The result is the present landscape dotted with islands of various sizes, representing one of the characteristic landforms of Amakusa. Along the entire Amakusa west coast, strata formed from the Cretaceous to Paleogene periods overlie ancient metamorphic rocks. In Myoken-ura, *Anano-kuchi-iwa* (commonly known as *Zo-san iwa*, the elephant-shaped rock) is a landform created by erosion where faults intersect with rock layers of differing hardness, illustrating the relationship between geological structure and erosional process. Islands such as Takamoku Island and Kuratake on Kami-shima Island, and Naga-shima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture, are mainly composed of rocks formed through magmatic activity, reflecting the geological history of the land formation in the Amakusa area.

The landscape has been shaped by the complex interplay of geological strata, crustal movements, weathering, and erosion. This landscape reveals the processes of land formation and provides important clues for understanding the changes in geological environment.

Keywords

Archipelago seascape, Takahama metamorphic rocks
Myoken-ura, *Anano-kuchi-iwa*, Fukumado Cave
Takamoku Island, Kuratake, Nagashima Island



[Legend]

-  Photo spot
-  Address
-  Map code (A number that can be used to pinpoint a location on a car navigation system.)

Spots & Activities





Takamoku Island

 Hiai Beach (Pearl Sun Beach)
 372 722 876*30

At low tide, Takamoku Island can be reached on foot from Hiiroi Beach. Formed through volcanic activity around three million years ago, the island features a graceful silhouette that has earned it the nickname "Amakusa Fuji".





Geological Strata of Amakusa Matsushima

 Amakusa Five Bridge No.4
 372 696 360*53

Among the many islands that comprise Amakusa Matsushima, the clearly visible layered strata reveal the ancient geological movements that shaped this landscape.



Kikai-ga-ura

 Kikai-ga-ura Observatory
 474 585 260*82

This scenic spot, known for its sea cliffs and striking rock formations, has been selected as one of "Japan's Top 100 Sunset Views". Stairs leading down to the shoreline allow visitors to observe the geological strata of the west coast up close.



From marine life to remarkable dinosaur fossils, Amakusa reveals an environment where both sea and land have thrived since prehistoric times, inviting exploration and discovery.

Story

Amakusa is one of Japan's premier fossil sites. Cretaceous strata are widely distributed throughout the region and have yielded numerous fossils of marine organisms, including ammonites—among them some of the largest ammonite fossils found in Kyushu—as well as various shellfish. These fossils provide clear evidence that the area was once a rich marine environment. In Amakusa, fossils of dinosaurs have been found alongside with those of marine creatures. The jawbone of a Tyrannosauridae dinosaur, discovered in Reihoku Town—the only such find in Japan—serves as proof that giant carnivorous dinosaurs once roamed this land. Traces of both marine life and terrestrial dinosaurs conjure images of these creatures bringing life into the landscape, just steps from the shoreline. In Amakusa, dinosaur fossils have been discovered alongside those of marine organisms. In Reihoku Town, the jawbone of a Tyrannosauridae dinosaur—the only fossil of its kind discovered in Japan—provides evidence that giant carnivorous dinosaurs once lived in this area. Together, the traces of marine life and land dinosaurs allow us to envision a landscape where dinosaurs lived close to the shoreline.

In Goshoura-jima Island and Shishi-jima Island, visitors can participate in fossil-collecting experiences conducted in accordance with local guidelines. By examining rocks and geological strata firsthand, they can observe traces of ancient life. The valuable fossils preserved in Amakusa provide important clues into the environment and ecosystems of that era, revealing the world of Cretaceous life that once flourished in the region.

Keywords

The largest ammonite fossils found in Kyushu, Dinosaur Fossils, Goshoura-jima Island, Shishi-jima Island fossil-collecting experiences

Spots & Activities



Trigonía Sandstone Fossil Collection Site

📍 4393 Goshoura-Hirayashiki, Goshoura-cho, Amakusa City
☎ 254 025 133*10

Located near the Amakusa Museum of Goshoura Dinosaur Island, the Trigonía Sandstone Fossil Collection Site offers visitors the opportunity to search for fossils of shells and ammonites that lived during the Cretaceous Period, about 100 million years ago.



Amakusa Museum of Goshoura Dinosaur Island

📍 Goshoura-cho, Amakusa City
☎ 0969-67-2325
☎ 254 025 085*22

The Amakusa Museum of Goshoura Dinosaur Island features extensive exhibits on dinosaur fossils and the natural environment of Amakusa. The museum provides visitors with opportunities to learn about the history of life in this region, from about 100 million years ago to the present day.



Shishi-jima Fossil Park

📍 Shishi-jima Island, Nagashima-cho, izumi-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
☎ 906 075 316*18

Shishi-jima Island, together with Goshoura Island, is one of Japan's leading fossil sites. At Shishi-jima Fossil Park, visitors can observe and collect fossils easily.



The mountains of Amakusa showcase not only the scenic beauty of the region but also the lives of the people who have lived here.

Story

From the Kankai Alps on the eastern coast of Kami-shima Island, visitors can enjoy expansive views of the Ariake Sea and the Yatsushiro Sea, with Mt. Aso visible in the distance.

This mountain range includes Mt. Sira-take, Mt. Takabuto-yama, Mt. Konpira, and Mt. Ryugatake. Visitors can appreciate the natural beauty of the area throughout the seasons, and the range is also well known as a part of the Kyushu Nature Trail. The Kankai Alps, including Mt. Jiromaru-dake and Mt. Taromaru-dake, feature steep cliffs on their eastern sides and gentle slopes on their western sides. This landscape, known as a *cuesta* formation, is created when tilted rock layers of differing hardness are eroded, leaving the more resistant layers intact. These landforms contribute to the dynamic scenery characteristic of Amakusa.

Around Mt. Sira-take, boulder fields and wetlands extend across the landscape, providing habitats for rare flora and fauna, including the scarlet dwarf dragonfly (*Nannophya pygmaea*) and the Amakusa Mitsuba-azalea (*Rhododendron amakusense*). Mt. Kuratake, the highest peak in the Amakusa Islands, has long been revered as a sacred mountain by the people of Amakusa. A shrine dedicated to prayers for safe voyages stands at its summit. In winter, strong winds blowing down from Mt. Kuratake toward Tanasoko are known as the “*Kuratake Oroshi*”. To protect their homes from these winds, local residents constructed windbreak stone walls.

From the mountains of Amakusa, visitors can see how the terrain and natural environment are closely connected with the lives of the people.

Keywords

Kankai Alps, Mt. Sira-take, Mt. Takabuto-yama, Mt. Konpira, Mt. Ryugatake, Kyushu Nature Trail
Mt. Jiromaru-dake, Mt. Taromaru-dake, Cuesta Formation, Mt. Kuratake, *Kuratake Oroshi*

Spots & Activities



Mt. Jiromaru-dake

📍 Mt. Taromaru-dake
📞 372 514 032*24

One of Kyushu's 100 Famous Mountains, this peak stands alongside its neighboring summit, Mt. Taromaru-dake, often regarded as its elder brother. According to local legend, the gentle elder brother, Taromaru-dake, once collapsed and lowered its height so that its younger brother could enjoy the beautiful sunset.



Kyushu Nature Trail Kankai Alps Course

📍 Sira-take Wetland
📞 372 455 471*76

This trail stretches approximately 20 km, connecting Mt. Takamabuto-yama on eastern Kami-shima Island to Mt. Ryugadake. It forms part of the Kyushu Nature Trail, a long-distance hiking route that spans roughly 3,000 km around Kyushu.



Tanasoko Village

📍 Kuratake-cho, Amakusa City
📞 254 265 869*73

This settlement is located on the largest alluvial fan in the Amakusa Islands. Windbreak stone walls, built to withstand the strong winds known as “*Kuratake Oroshi*”, and irrigation channels known as “*koguri*” continue to support daily life in the village.



Rich deposits of pottery stone and coal resources found along the west coast of Amakusa demonstrate how geological changes caused by crustal movements have shaped local industry and livelihoods.

Story

About 80 million years ago, rocks deep underground were transformed by tectonic activity and formed the Takahama Metamorphic Rocks. Within this geological setting, low-iron white porcelain stone formed and disseminated as Amakusa porcelain stone, which has supported Japan's tradition of white porcelain. Even today, it remains an essential raw material for porcelains such as Arita wares and Imari wares, and accounts a significant portion of the porcelain raw material utilized in Japan. In Shiraiwasaki, on the western tip of the Tomioka Peninsula, rhyolite—the parent rock of porcelain stone—is exposed along the coastline, producing a distinctive white landscape.

Around 45 million years ago, plants that flourished in wetlands accumulated as peat and were gradually carbonized under the influence of heat and pressure. Carbon-rich layers within the strata were later uplifted toward the surface by tectonic movements and were mined as anthracite coal throughout the Shimo-shima Island. Because this coal possess a high calorific value and produced minimal smoke, it was particularly valued as fuel for naval vessels. As a result, the Ushibuka Coal Mine Eboshi Pit was constructed off the west coast of Shimo-shiima Island. Even today, more than 100 years later, the arched brick entrance to the mine retains its original appearance. Along the west coast of Amakusa, these landscapes demonstrate how humans have long made use of abundant underground resources, such as porcelain stone and coal.

Keywords

Takahama Metamorphic Rocks, White porcelain, Amakusa Pottery Stone, Shiraiwasaki Ushibuka Coal Mine Eboshi Pit, Ceramic Culture, White Ceramics, Underground resources

Spots & Activities





Amakusa Ceramics

Amakusa pottery stone constitutes for a large portion of the raw materials utilized in porcelain production in Japan. Kilns specializing in white porcelain have produced a wide variety of distinctive ceramics.





Amakusa West Coast

 Around Shimoda-kita, Amakusa-machi, Amakusa City
 474 616 813*15

The west coast of Amakusa exemplifies how the geological history of the land—shaped by tectonic activity and rich in resources such as anthracite coal and Amakusa pottery stone—continues to influence the region's industry and culture.



Ushibuka Coal Mine Eboshi Pit

 Komori Beach Parking
 299 572 571*34

An undersea coal mine built off the west coast of Gesu-shima Island during the Meiji period was forced to close only a few years later due to flooding from groundwater. The arched brick entrance to the mine still remains today.



The land of Amakusa supports a diverse array of wildlife that have adapted to its ever changing natural environment.

Story

The natural landscape of Amakusa has been molded by repeated cycles of uplift, weathering, and erosion of its geological strata. Through these processes, a variety of environments have developed, including forests, wetlands, and rocky areas exposed to strong winds.

The close proximity of mountains and sea in Amakusa also influences wildlife movement, making the region an important stopover for migratory birds such as cranes and Chinese sparrowhawks (*Accipiter soloensis*).

In Nagaura Mudflat, where sea and land converge, the small fiddler crab Hakusen-shiomaneki (*Uca lactea*) raises and lowers its enlarged claw in rhythm with the tides, delighting observers. In forests and rocky areas, plants establish themselves in the thin soil clinging to rock surfaces and withstand strong winds, while vegetation spreads even into narrow crevices.

At the Nishibira Tsubaki Park, sea figs (*Akou trees*) extend their roots powerfully around massive rocks, as if embracing them. Their striking appearance has earned them the nickname “Amakusa’s Laputa”.

The plants and animals of Amakusa have adapted to the region’s diverse environments and now thrive across the region, symbolizing the richness of Amakusa’s ecosystems.

Keywords

Migratory birds, Nagaura Mudflat, Hakusen-shiomaneki (*Uca lactea*), Nishibira Tsubaki Park Sea Figs (Amakusa’s Laputa), Scarlet dwarf or pygmy dragonfly (*Nannophya pygmaea*)

Spots & Activities



Chinese sparrowhawks (*Accipiter soloensis*)

📍 Mt. Rokuroji
☎ 474 055 537*22

The Amakusa area lies along a critical migratory route for many birds during the spring and autumn migration seasons. Around September, the migration of Chinese sparrowhawks can be observed from Mt. Rokuroji and Mt. Ryujiin.



Uca lactea

📍 Nagaura Mudflat
☎ 372 724 823*32

Nagaura Mudflat is one of Japan’s most important habitats for *Uca lactea* (crab). Male crabs are easily identified by their distinctive asymmetrical claws, with one claw significantly larger than the other.



Scarlet dwarf or pygmy dragonfly (*Nannophya pygmaea*)

📍 Sira-take Wetland
☎ 372 455 742*12

Sira-take Wetland is home to *Nannophya pygmaea*, the Japanese pygmy dragonfly, the smallest dragonfly in Japan, measuring only about 15 mm in length. It can be observed here from May to October.



Three seas, each with different characteristics, create the diverse seascapes of Amakusa.

Story

The Amakusa Islands are surrounded by three seas: the Ariake Sea to the north, the Yatsushiro Sea to the east, and the East China Sea to the west. Each sea possesses its own distinctive character, creating diverse seascapes unique to Amakusa.

The Ariake Sea is known for having the largest tidal range in Japan. Tidal flats and shoals revealed by the ebb and flow of the tides change the color of the sea over time, creating a distinctive coastal landscape. The Yatsushiro Sea is a calm inland sea, enclosed by the Amakusa Islands and mainland Kyushu, offering the expansive scenery characteristic of an archipelagic seascape. To the west, the East China Sea opens into the wider ocean. Its clear waters and strong sunlight, typical of the open sea, produce a deep, vivid blue, forming a dynamic seascape with a strong sense of openness.

The coastline exhibits a variety of landforms, including sandy beaches and rocky reefs. The white sands of Mogushi Beach and Shiratsuru-hama Beach blend harmoniously with the clear waters of the open sea, and during summer the area becomes lively with visitors enjoying marine recreation. On the Tomioka Peninsula, sandbars and spits formed by sand and gravel carried by ocean currents create a valuable landscape in which the landforms themselves narrate the story of the sea's movements. Along the west coast, rocky reef zones, such as Ohgase, are observable in many places.

Collectively, the three seas surrounding the Amakusa Islands give rise to the diverse marine landscapes unique to Amakusa, each shaped by variations in currents, water color, and coastal scenery.

Keywords

Ariake Sea, Yatsushiro Sea, Archipelagic seascape, East China Sea, Mogushi Beach, Shiratsuru-hama Beach, Sand spit of Tomioka, Ohgase

Spots & Activities



Mt. Takabuto-yama

📍 Mt. Takabuto-yama Observatory

📞 372 668 217*12

From Mt. Takabuto-yama, visitors can view the Ariake Sea stretching from Amakusa Matsushima to the Shimabara Peninsula. According to local tradition, the mountain's name derives from a story that local warlords once enjoyed dancing on its summit during the Sengoku period.



Mt. Ryuga-take

📍 Mt. Ryuga-take Mountaintop Nature Park Observatory

📞 372 210 829*40

From Mt. Ryuga-take, the Yatsushiro Sea is visible, dotted with islands such as Hishima, Goshoura-jima Island, and Shishi-jima Island. The mountain is named after a dragon deity believed to dwell within it and has been revered in the region since ancient times.



Mogushi Beach

📍 Mogushi Beach

📞 299 720 423*61

Mogushi Beach is a beautiful stretch of white sand facing the East China Sea, known for its exceptionally clear waters. Its name is believed to date back to the Kamakura period, referring to a "mogushi", an official responsible for overseeing horse grazing.



The diverse environments shaped by ocean currents and seabed topography support a rich world of marine life in the seas around Amakusa.

Story

The seas around Amakusa provide a rich environment for marine life. Swift currents and a rugged seabed circulate nutrients, supporting abundant plankton. This dense concentrations of microscopic life forms the foundation of the diverse marine ecosystems found in these waters.

Located at the boundary between temperate and subtropical climatic zones, Amakusa is significantly influenced by the warm waters of the Tsushima Warm Current. At the same time, water temperatures in sheltered inner bays can fall below 15 °C during winter months. This combination creates a rare environment in Japan where temperate seaweeds and coral species at their northern limits can be found coexisting within the same habitat. Around Shimo-shima Island, corals spread across the seabed. Their complex three-dimensional structures provide shelter for many organisms, including fish —some of which are tropical species—as well as invertebrates such as octopuses and sea cucumbers. In addition, eelgrass beds scattered in areas such as the Tanasoko Bay play an important role as “cradles of life,” providing nursery grounds for juvenile fish and other small marine organisms. In sheltered inner bays such as Yokaku Bay, the presence of intricate coastlines and shallow waters creates an interconnected environment, including tidal flats, sandy beaches, and seaweed beds. These habitats support a wide range of life, including benthic organisms, shellfish, and crustaceans. As zones linking marine and terrestrial ecosystems, they help sustain the biodiversity of Amakusa’s seas.

The rich marine life of Amakusa has developed over long periods through the interaction of tidal currents, seabed topography, and the distinctive characteristics of the three surrounding seas.

Keywords

Marine life, Seaweeds, Coral, Tanasoko Bay, Eelgrass bed, Yokaku Bay

Spots & Activities



Seaweed

The west coast of Amakusa forms a transitional zone where seaweed beds and coral communities coexist. In addition, eelgrass beds, which serve as important nursery areas for juvenile fish and spawning grounds for various species, are found throughout many parts of Amakusa.



Tropical Fish

In the waters surrounding Amakusa, tropical fish can be observed due to the influence of the Tsushima Warm Current. Colorful fish gather around reefs and coral, illustrating the richness and diversity of the marine environment.



Yokaku Bay

📍 Near the Maria Statue
Sunset Viewing Deck

☎ 474 200 283*05

Yokaku Bay features a complex ria coastline and provides habitat for numerous species, including many rare shellfish and crustaceans.



The convergence of the gentle inland seas, the dynamic open ocean, and the natural cycles linking land and sea has nurtured Amakusa's rich seafood culture.

Story

The Ariake Sea and the Yatsushiro Sea are sheltered from the rough waves of the open ocean and are generally calm. At the same time, their large tidal range promotes effective seawater circulation, creating favorable conditions for fish and shellfish to grow. Rainwater that falls on the Kyushu Mountains slowly seeps into the ground and eventually flows into rivers, which carry mineral-rich water to the sea. These nutrients help maintain a stable and productive marine environment. The waters surrounding the Islands of Amakusa are home to a wide variety of fish throughout the year, allowing visitors to enjoy different seasonal seafood.

Areas where rocky reefs and seaweed beds are well developed provide ideal habitats for shellfish such as sea urchins and spiny lobsters, which thrive due to the abundant food supply and stable water quality. Yellowtail and red sea bream also grow in the waters around Amakusa, influenced by both the inland seas and open ocean, and are among the representative fish of the region. In Ushibuka, dried fish products known as “Zatsubushi”, made from fish such as mackerel and sardines, are produced in the largest quantities in Japan.

The rich seafood of Amakusa has been nurtured by the convergence of several natural conditions: the region's complex coastal terrain, the movement of ocean currents, the calm waters of the inland seas, the dynamic conditions of the open ocean, and the abundant nutrients flowing from the land.

Keywords

Demersal fish, Sea urchin, Spiny lobster, Yellowtail, Red sea bream, *Zatsubushi*

Spots & Activities



Seafood

📍 Roadside Station
Kamiamakusa Sunpearl
and other locations

☎ 0964-58-5600

📠 372 845 740*02 etc

A wide variety of seafood is caught throughout Amakusa. Fresh seafood can be purchased at local fish markets, shops, and specialty product stores, including the Roadside Station Kamiamakusa Sunpearl.



Zatsubushi

📍 Roadside Station
Ushibuka Kaisaikan
and other locations

☎ 0969-73-3818

📠 299 663 796*67 etc

In Ushibuka, the production of zatsubushi has flourished for centuries and has supported the dashi-based culinary culture of Japanese cuisine. Its rich umami flavor is highly valued and is used not only in home cooking but also as a key ingredient in products such as instant noodles.



Aosa (Seaweed)

📍 Roadside Station
Ushibuka Kaisaikan

☎ 0969-73-3818

📠 299 663 796*67 etc

Aosa is a type of seaweed cultivated in the calm inner seas of Amakusa. Known for its distinctive ocean aroma, it allows visitors to savor the bounty of Amakusa's sea when enjoyed in dishes such as miso soup or tempura.



Fishing in Amakusa reflects the wisdom of interpreting the rhythms of the sea and working in harmony with nature.

Story

Fishing in Amakusa has long been practiced in harmony with the rhythms of the sea. Along the west coast, a fishing method called “bottom trawling (*tegori*)” has been practiced since around 1955, catching fish such as sea bream and flounder. Fishing operations are suspended during the summer spawning season, reflecting continued efforts to conserve marine resources.

In Miyajiura Bay, *shikiri-ryo* (a traditional fishing method in which nets are set across the bay at high tide and fish are caught after the tide recedes) has been revived after an absence of about 60 years. This revival represents an effort to apply traditional wisdom to contemporary fishing practices. Ushibuka, located at the southernmost tip of Amakusa Shimo-shima, is a natural deep-water harbor surrounded by the sea on three sides. Because its deep waters allow large vessels to enter the port, it has long served as a hub for the distribution of goods. Today, it remains one of the leading fishing towns in the prefecture, where fishing traditions continue alongside the distinctive scenery of a historic port town. Aquaculture adapted to local marine environments is also practiced throughout Amakusa. Naga-shima Island is Japan’s largest producer of farmed yellowtail, while Oyano is known as the birthplace of Japanese Tiger Prawn aquaculture. Japanese Tiger Prawn farming continues to thrive along the Amakusa coast. Around the Tomioka Peninsula and in areas such as Yokaku Bay, the cultivation of vividly colored *Hiougi-gai* Scallops has also become firmly established.

In this way, the people of Amakusa have inherited the wisdom of living in harmony with nature, continuing a variety of fishing practices adapted to the characteristics of each of the surrounding seas.

Keywords

Bottom trawling (*tegori*), *Shikiri-ryo*, Ushibuka
Aquaculture (Japanese Tiger Prawns, yellowtail, *Hiougi-gai* Scallops)

Spots & Activities



Shikiri-ryo

📍 Miyajiura Bay

☎ 254 006 131*84

Shikiri-ryo is a traditional fishing method that was revived after about 60 years. In Miyajiura Bay, nets are set across the inlet, and fish are caught after the tide recedes. This technique utilizes the natural movement of the tides.



Ushibuka Fishing Port

📍 Ushibuka-cho, Amakusa City

Ushibuka Port, located at the southern tip of Amakusa Shimo-shima Island, is a natural deep-water harbor surrounded by the sea on three sides. Since ancient times, it has developed as an important fishing port, and its fishing culture continues to thrive alongside the distinctive scenery of the port town.



Japanese Tiger Prawn

Japanese Tiger Prawns (shrimp) cultivated in the rich waters of Amakusa, are known for their sweetness and firm texture. Oyano-jima Island is widely regarded as the birthplace of Japan Tiger Prawn.



Efforts to balance utilization and conservation contribute to preserve Amakusa's seas as a Marine Park.

Story

The seas of Amakusa have long been both used and carefully protected by local communities. Characterized by swift currents, an intricate coastline, and undulating seabed topography, these waters support a rich marine biodiversity. At the same time, they are sensitive to environmental changes caused by human activities such as fishing, coastal development, and tourism.

To preserve the value of these precious seas for future generations, the national government designated Japan's first Marine Park (originally called an Underwater Park) within the national park system. Protected areas were established in the coastal waters surrounding Tomioka, Amakusa (near Ogasese), and Ushibuka.

A Marine Park is not an area where nature is restricted from human use. Rather, it enables fishing and nature conservation to coexist by regulating development activities while permitting the collection of plants and animals. Within the Ushibuka Marine Park, controlled tourism activities such as glass-bottom boat tours and recreational diving are popular, allowing visitors to enjoy the beauty of the sea both above and below the water surface. Around Ogase, fishing operations and shore-based angling are also actively practiced.

Protected and carefully managed by people, the seas of Amakusa continue to function as shelter for diverse marine species and simultaneously inspiring visitors today.

Keywords

Japan's first Marine Park, Tomioka Marine Park, Amakusa Marine Park, Ushibuka Marine Park
Glass-bottom boat tours, Diving

Spots & Activities

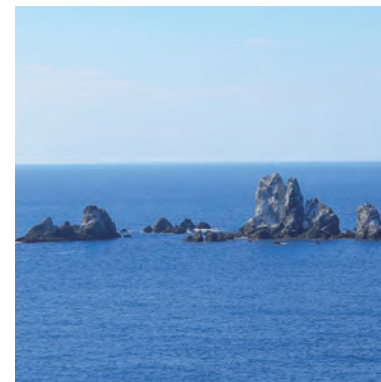


Tomioka Marine Park

📍 Tomioka Marine Park

☎ 713 063 191*37

The waters around Shiraiwasaki and the nearby Tsutsumase area are designated as the Tomioka Marine Park. Influenced by the Tsushima Warm Current, these waters support abundant seaweed communities, while gorgonians and sea fans add vibrant color to the underwater landscape.



Amakusa Marin Park(Ogase)

📍 Nishibira Tsubaki Park

☎ 474 342 206*33

Ogase is a rocky reef located off the coast of Amakusa, where strong tidal currents create an environment that attracts a wide variety of fish species. The area has been designated as a Special Protection Zone within the national park due to its significant scenic and ecological value.



Ushibuka Marine Park

📍 Tsuruhayama Park

☎ 299 545 711*48

A total of nine locations, including the waters around Tsukinoshima-jisaki, south of Hoga-shima Island, and Oshima Island, have been designated as part of the Ushibuka Marine Park. The area is home to colonies of table corals and various species of tropical fish.



The intricate coastline formed natural harbors, and the history of exchange carried by ships and songs continues to shape the daily life and culture of Amakusa.

Story

The intricate coastal terrain of Amakusa has created numerous natural harbors, offering shelter from the rough seas. Since ancient times, these harbors have served as important maritime hubs, facilitating the movement of people and goods.

In the 16th century, the spread of Southern European Culture, centered on Nagasaki, introduced new knowledge and cultural influences to Amakusa through maritime trade routes. During the same period, exchanges symbolized by the Tenshō Embassy introduced new learning, music, and technologies, such as movable-type printing. Port towns functioned as gateways linking the region with the outside world and played an important role in shaping the lifestyle and culture of Amakusa. One cultural tradition nurtured through a life with the sea is Ushibuka *Haiya* music. This song spread to many regions through sailors and is regarded as the origin of the approximately forty variations of *Haiya* music found across Japan. Known as the “Original *Haiya-bushi*”, it reflects the warmth and hospitality of the people of Ushibuka and continues to be passed down today through festivals and dance.

The port culture and performing arts of Amakusa are not simply the result of human activity; they were born from deep connections with the terrain and the sea. The wisdom and practices of people who have long understood and harnessed the natural world have shaped the distinctive lifestyle and culture of Amakusa.

Keywords

Natural harbor, Southern European Culture, Tenshō Embassy, Movable-type printing
Ushibuka *Haiya* music (Original *Haiya-bushi*)

Spots & Activities



Ferry Terminals

Nakata Port, Ushibuka Port, and Tomioka Port are among the ports that have long supported maritime transportation in Amakusa. As hubs for trade and the movement of people, these ports have played an important role in sustaining the region's way of life and culture.



Haiya

The Ushibuka *Haiya-bushi*, a folk song that originated in Ushibuka, is regarded as the source of the many *Haiya*-style folk songs found throughout Japan. In the local dialect, the southerly wind is called “haen kaze”, and it is said that the word “hae” eventually evolved into “haiya”.



Amakusa Collegio Museum

📍 175-13 Shirakikawachi,
Kawaura-cho, Amakusa City
☎ 0969-76-0388
📠 474 235 363*62

The Amakusa Collegio Museum introduces the history of Nanban culture and Christian education, highlighting the scholarship and cultural exchange that took place in Amakusa during that period.



In Amakusa, protected by the sea, a faith quietly practiced in everyday life continues to be passed across generations.

Story

The Amakusa Islands fostered a distinctive Christian culture in which faith and everyday life became deeply intertwined within communities supported by rich fishing grounds.

After the prohibition of Christianity in the Edo period, believers were forbidden to practice their faith openly and became Hidden Christians. While outwardly presenting themselves as Buddhists or Shinto followers, they continued to pray in the privacy of their homes or in attics. They entrusted their prayers to familiar objects from daily life—for example, using abalone and tairagi (pen shells) obtained through fishing as symbols of the Virgin Mary—thus preserving their unique form of faith. When the ban on Christianity was lifted during the Meiji era, many Hidden Christians returned to Catholicism. Missionaries were sent to Amakusa, and Catholic evangelization resumed. The French missionary Fr. Garnier worked closely with the faithful, devoted himself to operating an orphanage, and used his own funds to build Oe Church.

In addition, Fr. Halbout constructed Sakitsu Church on the site where the practice of fumi-e (where Christians were forced to step on Christian icons to show they were non-followers) had once occurred. This tatami-floored church is a rare structure in Japan, blending elements of traditional Japanese daily life with Christian worship. It symbolizes a form of faith rooted in Japanese ways of living, where believers pray while seated on tatami mats rather than in chairs. The cultural landscape of the Sakitsu Town, where this distinctive tradition of faith was preserved, has been recognized as a rare example of religious practice and was inscribed as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.

Keywords

Christian culture, Hidden Christians, Oe Church, Sakitsu Church, Sakitsu Town, Oe Church UNESCO World Heritage Site

Spots & Activities



Oe Church

1782 Oe, Amakusa-machi, Amakusa City
474 314 012*01

After the ban on Christianity was lifted in the Meiji era, this church was built by the French missionary Fr. Garnier with members of the local congregation. Standing on a hill overlooking the sea, it is regarded as a symbol of the revival of Christianity in Amakusa.



Sakitsu Church

539 Sakitsu, Kawauramachi, Amakusa City
474 228 071*82

Designed by Yosuke Tetsukawa and constructed on the former site of the Yoshida family residence, where fumi-e—symbols of the persecution of Christians—were once conducted under the direction of Fr. Halbout, a French missionary.



Sakitsu Village

Sakitsu, Kawaura-cho, Amakusa City
474 228 519*07

This fishing village is a place where Hidden Christians continued to practice their faith during the period when Christianity was prohibited. Its distinctive cultural landscape, in which Christian faith coexisted with Buddhism and Shinto, has been recognized and inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Spots & Activities



The seas and terrain of Amakusa continue to tell the story of the relationship between people and nature.

Story

Separated by the sea, this landscape of islands, intricate coastlines, and mountain ranges has at times hindered movement while also serving as a place where people gathered and formed connections.

In the early Edo period, Tomioka Castle was built on elevated ground overlooking a natural deep-water harbor, establishing it as an administrative center for governing the Amakusa Area. Tomioka was also linked by sea to the Nagasaki area, functioning as a strategic point that enabled swift travel to the Nagasaki Bugyosho (magistrate's office), an important administrative center in western Japan. Later, during the Shimabara–Amakusa Rebellion, which arose amid heavy taxation and religious persecution, people are said to have crossed the sea to rally together under the banner of Amakusa Shiro, uniting their prayers and hopes. Tradition recounts that people from Shimabara and Amakusa gathered on Yushima to hold military councils, and that on Mt. Sengenzan they shared cups of *sake* before setting out for battle. During the Meiji era, five literary figures, including Tekkan Yosano, walked along the west coast traveling to visit Ft. Garnier at Oe Church. They recorded their journey in the travelogue *Five Pairs of Shoes*. Their accounts depicted Amakusa not as a territory to be guarded or governed, but as a landscape interwoven from the sea, villages, and everyday life.

Even today, the relationship between people and nature continues to be reflected in the landscapes of the national park—through its castle ruins, scattered islands, and sweeping views of the sea.

Keywords

Tomioka Castle, Shimabara and Amakusa Rebellion
Amakusa Shiro, Yushima, Mt. Sengenzan, Gosoku-no-kutsu

Tomioka Castle Ruins /
Tomioka Visitor Center

📍 2245-15 Tomioka, Reihokumachi, Amakusa City

☎ 0969-35-0170

📠 713 093 059*86

Protected by a natural harbor and steep slopes, Tomioka Castle once served as the administrative center of Amakusa. The Tomioka Visitor Center, built on the site of the former main keep, introduces the nature, history, and culture of Amakusa.



Amakusa Shiro Museum

📍 977-1 Naka, Oyano-machi, Kami-Amakusa City

☎ 0964-56-5311

📠 372 845 654*63

This interactive history museum presents the life of Amakusa Shiro, the leader of the Shimabara–Amakusa Rebellion, along with the historical background of his era through videos and exhibits.

Gosoku-no-kutsu:
Promenade of the Poets

📍 Shimoda-kita, Amakusamachi, Amakusa City

📠 474 615 175*05

This walking trail follows the route described in the travelogue *Gosoku-no-kutsu* (meaning *Five Pairs of Shoes*), written by literary figures such as Tekkan Yosano and Hakushū Kitahara. Visitors can experience both the natural scenery and the literary heritage of Amakusa along the trail.



The opening of the Amakusa Five Bridges connected the islands and transformed the lives and outlook of the islanders.

Story

In 1966, the Amakusa Five Bridges were opened, linking islands that had long been separated by the sea and enabling travel by land. Their construction was driven by the long-held aspirations of local residents and by strong community support, symbolized by the “one-yen donation” campaign.

The opening of the bridges dramatically transformed transportation and logistics, which had previously relied on boats. Access to schools and hospitals improved, the movement of goods became more efficient, and the safety and convenience of everyday life were greatly increased.

The bridges also span the scenic, multi-island seascape around Matsushima, a landscape that attracts visitors as one of the distinctive features of the National Park. Views of the bridges and surrounding islands from Mt. Takabuto-yama and Mt. Sengenzan are widely recognized as symbolic landscapes of Amakusa and have appeared in numerous films and advertisements.

The Amakusa Five Bridges form an essential transportation network connecting the islands of Amakusa across the sea, shaped by its natural topography. Their development has supported the growth of industry and tourism while continuing to influence the lifestyles and culture of local communities. Even today, the bridges remain a powerful symbol linking the natural environment with human activity.

Keywords

Amakusa Five Bridges, Mt. Takabuto-yama, Mt. Sengenzan, Sea Kayaking, Amakusa Five Bridges Cruise

Spots & Activities



Amakusa Five Bridge No.2

☎ 372 755 058*18

This steel arch bridge, connecting Oyano-jima Island and Nagaura Island, was completed in 1966 as an important structure supporting both transportation and the scenic landscape of the area. Today, it remains beloved by local residents as a symbol of regional tourism.



Amakusa Visitor Center

📍 6311-1 Aizu, Matsushima-cho, Kami-Amakusa City

☎ 0969-56-3665

☎ 372 726 335*33

This facility serves as a base for accessing the national park on Nagaura Island, where Bridges No. 2 and No. 3 of the Amakusa Five Bridges are located. On the grounds stands a statue of Mori-kuni Hisashi, who played a major role in realizing the construction of the Amakusa Five Bridges.



Sea Kayak

📍 6215-17 Aizu, Matsushima-cho, Kami-Amakusa City

☎ 372 666 760*76

Visitors can travel across the calm inland sea surrounded by islands, view Bridges No. 3 and No. 4 from below, and stop at nearby islands along the route. Reservations are available at Mio Camino Amakusa.



The warm climate and island landscape, surrounded by the sea, have nurtured distinctive crops and a unique food culture in Amakusa.

Story

Natural conditions such as the close proximity of mountains and the sea, sea breezes, and a warm climate have historically shaped both the livelihoods and food culture of the people of Amakusa. The distinct environments of each island and village affect crops growth and flavor, resulting in foods that are unique to specific localities. On Yushima, the combination of maritime climate and red soil, derived from basalt, support the cultivation of exceptionally large daikon radishes. This rare variety, known as *Yushima Daikon*, is said to be difficult to cultivate outside the island, providing a clear example of how localized soil and climate condition directly shape regional foods.

Akatsuchi (red clay) potatoes, grown in the red clay fields and warm climate of Nagashima, are known for their fluffy texture and rich flavor. They have become a familiar ingredient supporting everyday meals.

In addition, the warm climate, well-drained soil, and sunny slopes make the region particularly well-suited for citrus cultivation. Amakusa Bankan, Shiranui Orange, and many other citrus fruits are grown throughout the Amakusa Area across the seasons.

Across the Amakusa Islands, many landscapes reflect the close relationship between these natural conditions and human activity. The environment, where mountains and the sea lie in close proximity, supports livelihoods such as agriculture and fishing and has fostered distinctive food cultures on each island.

Keywords

Yushima Daikon, Akatsuchi potatoes, Amakusa Bankan, Shiranui Orange

Spots & Activities



Akatsuchi (red clay) potato

Potatoes grown in Nagashima Island's warm climate and mineral-rich red soil are known for their natural sweetness and fluffy texture.



Citrus fruits

Amakusa's warm climate supports the cultivation of a wide variety of citrus fruits. Notable examples include Amakusa Bankan, valued for its refreshing tartness and juicy flavor, and Shiranui, prized for its rich sweetness.



Koppa-mochi

A beloved local confection in Amakusa and Kagoshima, this sweet is prepared by steaming sweet potatoes, glutinous rice, and brown sugar, which together create its distinctive sweetness. It is cherished as a nostalgic taste of home.



Aka-maki

This confection features a distinctive swirl pattern and was traditionally consumed by fishermen as a shipboard snack to restore energy. Although its appearance resembles that of a Western pastry, it is a Japanese-style confection noted for the gentle sweetness of sugar and eggs.

How to Use This Story Book

We hope this book, created in collaboration with local residents, will be used in both daily work and everyday life, helping to share the unique experiences and values of Amakusa with a wider audience.

We encourage all stakeholders to understand the purpose of this book and to apply it practically in their activities, sharing the distinctive experiences and values of Amakusa to as many people.

1. The Role of This Story Book

① Helping Everyone Become a “Storyteller”

This book is not intended solely for specialists or experts. Instead, it is designed as a foundation that enables anyone living or working in Amakusa to become a “storyteller” who can share the region in their own words.

The background information provided for each theme can also serve as an idea notebook, helping you expand your repertoire of stories and develop ways to communicate the appeal of Amakusa.

② Using the Story Book in Learning and Training Settings (Towards the Sustainable Use and Conservation of Resources)

To support the balanced use and conservation of natural resources, this book can be incorporated into guide training sessions and peer-learning opportunities among local guides and tourism practitioners.

Rather than simply being used as a reading resource, it is intended as a practical learning tool—encouraging people to consider how to communicate these stories effectively and to apply those ideas in practice.

③ Using it as a “Portable Idea Book”

This book can also be used as a portable idea book, allowing you to open it whenever you need inspiration in the field.

For example, it can serve as a helpful reference during breaks while guiding visitors or working in customer service, enabling you to revisit ideas and stories that effectively convey the unique charm of Amakusa.

2. On-Site Use (For those who interact with visitors)

For those who interact directly with visitors, we encourage you to share the unique character of Amakusa and the various ways it can be enjoyed—its distinctive value—when answering questions or engaging in casual conversation. Help ensure that visitors leave with experiences and impressions that are unique to Amakusa.

Guides and Interpreters

To establish this book as a shared local resource, we encourage guides and interpreters to use it as a reference in guided tours and experiential programs. By sharing the significance of the resources behind each story, you can help visitors deepen their understanding of Amakusa while also fostering awareness of the importance of protecting and passing on its natural environment and cultural heritage.

Accommodation (Hotels, Ryokan Inns, Guesthouses, etc.)

Accommodation plays an important part of a visitor’s journey, as many guests plan the next steps of their trip while staying at your facility. We encourage you to act as local guides or travel concierges, helping guests discover the distinctive character and attractions of Amakusa.

Restaurants, Chefs, Tourist Facilities

Through your cuisine and its presentation, facility displays and signage, souvenirs and their packaging, and even in-vehicle displays or conversations with passengers, you have opportunities to share the stories and cultural context of Amakusa. By doing so, you can enhance the depth and overall quality of visitors’ experiences.

Government Agencies, Tourism Associations

We encourage you to utilize this book as a shared foundation when considering the overall direction of the region. It can serve as a useful resource for communicating the region’s values and narratives to both businesses and residents. Additionally, it is intended to serve as a foundation for policy development and to support collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Conservation and Sustainable Use Initiatives by the Ministry of the Environment

The Ministry of the Environment implements various initiatives aimed at conserving the landscapes and ecosystems of national parks while also revitalizing local communities through sustainable use of these protected areas. Efforts to conserve landscapes and ecosystems include maintaining park trails and protecting rare flora and fauna. In the Amakusa Area, activities such as weeding as well as the collection and disposal of driftwood and marine debris are carried out at locations including Mt. Senganzan and Mt. Takamatsu on Amakusa Kami-shima Island, in addition to various sites along the west coast of Amakusa Shimo-shima Island. Furthermore, as rare species not found elsewhere have been confirmed in this area, basic surveys of endangered species and initiatives for habitat conservation are also conducted. These activities are carried out in collaboration with residents, including members of the Amakusa Natural Park Volunteer Association, a group formed by individuals interested in protecting Amakusa's natural environment, as well as "Park Volunteers" registered with the Ministry of the Environment. Together, they conduct activities such as coastal cleanups and nature observation events. At the same time, efforts are underway to revitalize the region through the appropriate use of the National Park by promoting a "virtuous cycle of conservation and use". This approach seeks to protect outstanding natural features while also encouraging their use as local resources, thereby supporting effective conservation. National Parks are not only places for protecting the natural environment; they are also destinations where visitors can enjoy meaningful and inspiring experiences through responsible use. This book, which reexamines the unique value and appeal of Amakusa, is intended to serve as a foundational resource for promoting a "virtuous cycle of conservation and use" in a manner suited to the region.

To all visitors to the National Park, we kindly ask that you help protect the natural environment by refraining from collecting plants or animals, avoiding feeding wildlife, and observing nature quietly. By following these guidelines, the national park can continue to be a place where visitors enjoy safe, pleasant, and memorable experience for years to come.



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