

Resource-rich Islands of Exile for Nobles

The Oki Islands appear in Japanese school textbooks as the land Emperor Gotoba and Emperor Godaigo were exiled to in the Middle Ages. Oki is also where the poet Ono no Takamura, whose poem was featured in the *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu* (One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each) Anthology, was exiled to. In a span of about 900 years, from ancient times to the Middle Ages, many residents of the capital were exiled to Oki.

At the time, those sentenced to exile in Oki were upper-class people, such as nobles or high-level Shinto priests. Oki was distant enough from the capital to serve as a place of exile, but it also possessed a bustling economy and plentiful food resources, so upper-class exiles could live without difficulty or suffering. In current times, some may see isolated islands as inconvenient, but back in times when there were no roads or cars, compared to a mainland surrounded by land routes, islands surrounded by sea routes were actually much more convenient.

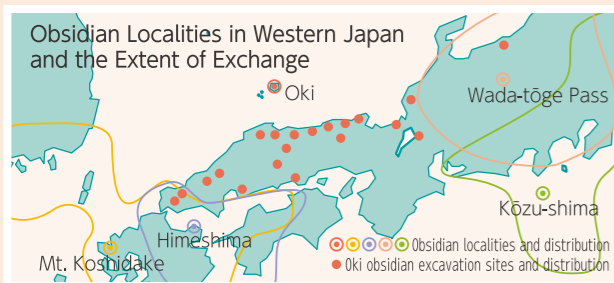
The Oki Islands were utilized for exile because they had bountiful nature and were located the right distance away from the capital. Furthermore, with a long history of human activity, the culture and exchange that developed on Oki was rich and extensive enough to guarantee good living conditions for exiles.



Connected through Obsidian, Ancient Izumo and Prehistoric Oki

Oki's history as a locality of obsidian, a rock known for its use in stone tools, goes far back into ancient times. Historic remains are limited, but we know that tools made from Oki obsidian were transported to the mainland Honshū Island at least 30 thousand years ago. In times without metal goods, tools made with obsidian, a volcanic glass, were treated as precious materials for bladed tools and weapons. Oki obsidian was traded as far out as Niigata Prefecture in the east, Yamaguchi Prefecture in the west, and Shikoku's regions on the side of the Seto Inland Sea in the south. This is because outside of Oki, there were no other areas with high-quality material for stone tools in the Chūgoku region. Therefore, if we analyse the locations of sites where Oki obsidian has been excavated, we can learn more about the extent of trade during this time.

Furthermore, the wide-reaching trade routes revealed by Oki obsidian excavations overlap with distributions of bronze goods from ancient Izumo and tombs. Located in the open sea of the San'in region, a region home to the Izumo Taisha Grand Shrine and *Fudoki* (ancient reports about the provinces) that is full of the mysteries of Japan's ancient history, Oki holds within its shores mysteries from even more distant prehistoric times. 30 thousand years ago, Oki was a peninsula connected to mainland Japan. Oki then became islands, and much of the land that once formed the peninsula currently sits at the bottom of the Sea of Japan as the Oki Strait.



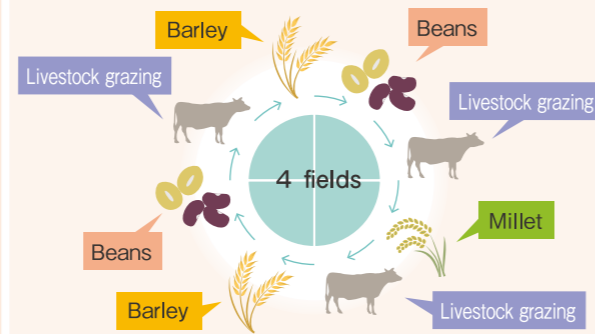
Take only pictures, leave only footprints. Please help protect the Oki Islands for future generations.

The Tricks to Living on an Island

Nature and history aren't the only things influenced by geology. We can catch glimpses of the culture that originated from Oki's unique features and terrain within seemingly ordinary period-typical townscapes. Through observing the boarded fences built in a village on the west coast of Dōgo Island to prevent winter winds and waves from damaging houses, the town layouts that utilized the land to suit different terrains, and the self-sufficient *makihata* farming method that effectively produced crops, even with poor soil, we can picture how these places looked in the past and how they change throughout the seasons.

In particular, the *makihata* farming method, which was implemented until the 1970s, was deeply connected to the natural topography of Oki. The method combines livestock grazing with the cultivation of barley, beans, and millet. The livestock function as effective farming tools, barley as a staple food, and the hardy crop millet as emergency food stores for years with bad weather. The trick to preventing the depletion of nutrients in soil in order to continue effectively utilizing the land is beans. When you add in beans to the crop rotation not only can you harvest them for food, but you can also use them to enrich the soil.

An Example of the Crop Rotation of Makihata Farming



Geo Tools



Website
More detailed information is available on our official site. You can also find access information and download various pamphlets.



Geopark Signboards
Signboards installed in each port area and at geosites offer more detailed explanations and highlight points of interest.



Guide Map
This easy-to-carry guide filled with information on how to best enjoy the geopark is available at ports and tourism associations on each island.



Educational Comic Book
Children and adults can enjoy learning with this book that introduces the geopark through comics.

*For tourism information, please consult with the tourism associations on each island.

Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee

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OKI ISLANDS

UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK

-Introduction-

English

英語版



Oki Islands
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Introduction

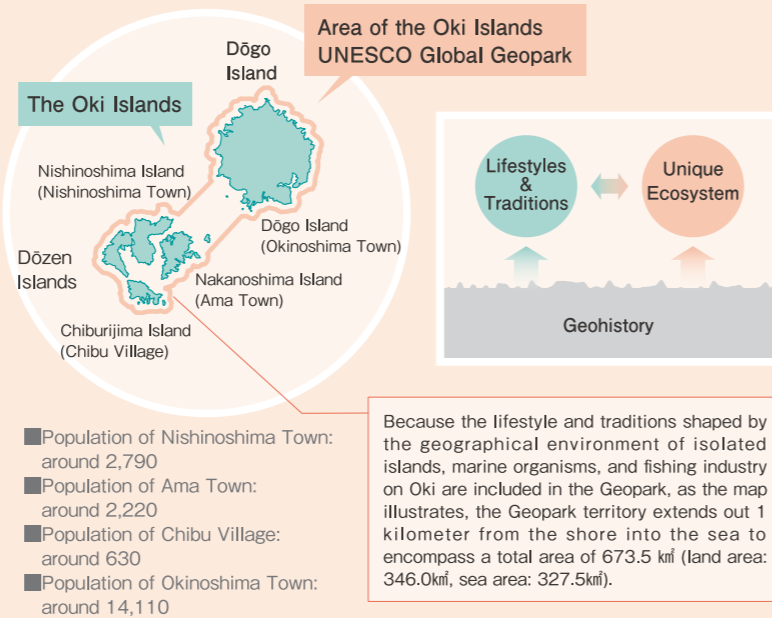


Discover Connections

The Oki Islands are located in the Sea of Japan. Due to their geographical isolation, the unique traits and records of Earth's history can be seen in the geological heritage here, and from this geological heritage we can learn about how the formation of the land connects to Oki's scenery, geography, culture, and history.

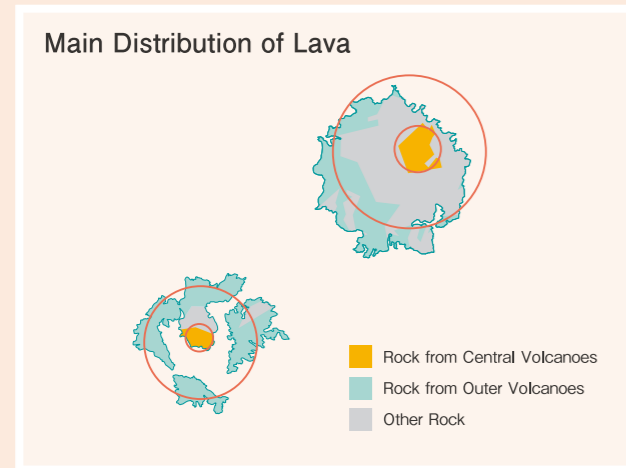
The story of Oki's land is made up of three main components: geohistory, unique ecosystem, and lifestyle and traditions. Shaped by an isolated island environment in the Sea of Japan, born from the formation of the Japanese Archipelago and volcanic activity, and connected to the historically rich San'in Region, the story of the land that came to life here on Oki can't be heard anywhere else in the world.

Geoparks are areas with activities that utilize geological heritage with geology and geographical features of geoscientific value to tell the story of the earth. The Oki Islands are a UNESCO Global Geopark because we can explain the unique story of the land here. We say with confidence that there is no story like Oki's in the entire world.



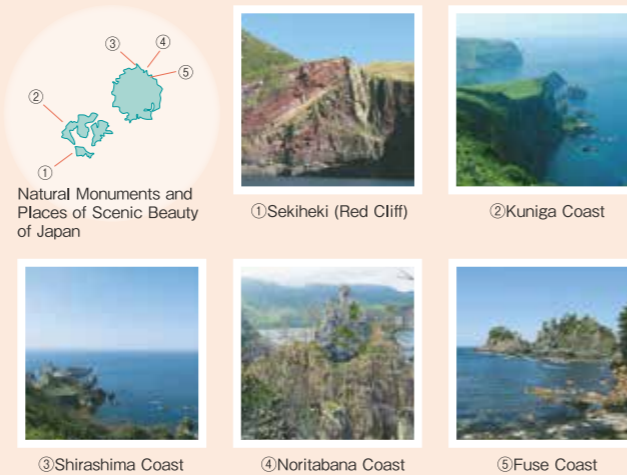
Landforms Created by Volcanoes

The geography of the Oki Islands was shaped by volcanic activity, and many of the elevated above-ground landforms are composed of lava. Oki's isolated environment and the creation of the Dōgo and Dōzen island groups go back to volcanic activity that occurred from two volcanoes. The Dōzen Islands with their inner sea compose a caldera landform, and Dōgo Island, with low elevation in its interior region, was once a volcano.

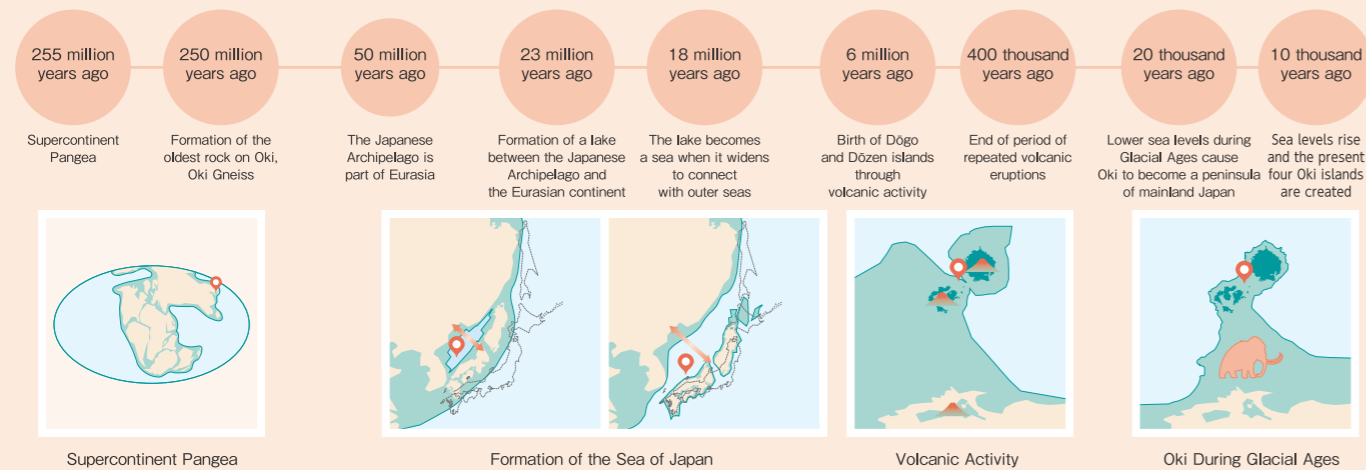


Breathtaking Scenery

The coasts of Oki are part of the Daisen-Oki National Park and include several nationally designated Natural Monuments and Places of Scenic Beauty. A characteristic part of the scenery, Oki's strangely-shaped rocks, formed from geological features such as dikes and faults, are shaped by winter north-westerly winds and rough waves. If you come in summer, while you won't be able to see the rough waves themselves, if you observe and analyse the coastal scenery, you will be able to feel their influence. Therefore, we can understand how these strangely-shaped rocks came to be through the coastal scenery.



History of the Oki Islands



A Mixed Plant Distribution

The region of the Oki Islands is home to some of the most diverse plant life in the Japanese Archipelago. The Japanese Archipelago is said to be a hotspot for biological diversity, with various plant species, including endemic and endangered ones. Within the Japanese Archipelago, Tokyo's Mt. Takao (about 1,600 species) and Kyūshū's Yakushima Island (about 1,700 species) have especially diverse plant life.

Mt. Takao and Yakushima Island have diverse plant life because different climate zones suited to different types of vegetation lie within their areas. On Oki, while the island only belongs to one climate zone, plants normally found in different climate zones grow together. Some data estimates that there are over 1,800 plant species here.

Oki's area is half and the height of its mountains only one-third of Yakushima Island's. However, a unique ecosystem with a mix of plants from different climate zones was born here due to the influence of the warm ocean current, geographical features that trace back to volcanic activity, and the long period of ongoing connection and separation with mainland Japan. So while it is not divided by altitude like on Yakushima Island or distributed along boundary lines like on Mt. Takao, the diverse vegetation on Oki is characterized by the unusual sight of mixed varieties of plants growing together in the same area.

The plant life on Oki teaches us that the distribution of an organism is influenced not only by the organism's characteristics, but also by the climate and geological history of the given area.

An Island of Flowers

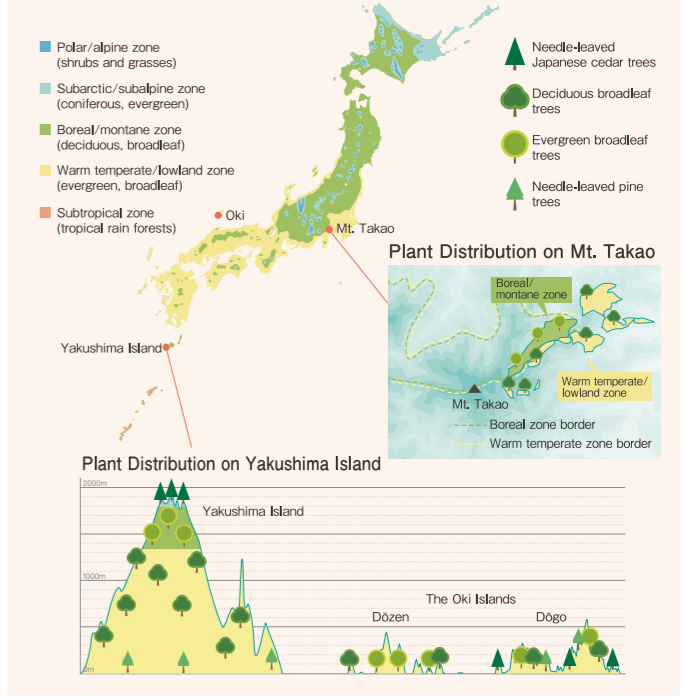
Plant life on Oki includes a mix of northern, southern, high altitude, and low altitude plants; if you add in plants from the Eurasian continent and endemic species, Oki may possess some of the most diverse plant life in Japan, and there are ways to enjoy this diverse plant life even for those without any technical knowledge.

Anyone can appreciate Oki's diverse plant life, which spans from the wild origin plants of garden variety flowers to the mountain flowers often seen when hiking. In Oki, each season and environment brings different beautiful flowers, including Asian fawnlily, Oki rhododendron, Oki dandelion, o-iwa-kagami schizocodon, ki-ebine orchid, no-daikon wild radish, wild chives, Nagoran orchid, rugosa rose, hamabō hibiscus, daruma-giku chrysanthemum, and Oki-no-abura-giku chrysanthemum. Just as one of Oki's popular folksongs, 'Shigesa-bushi', states, Oki is truly 'an island of flowers'.

From season to season, these flowers found in the various environments of coasts and mountain paths show us the connections between organisms and the environment.



Plant Distribution of the Japanese Archipelago



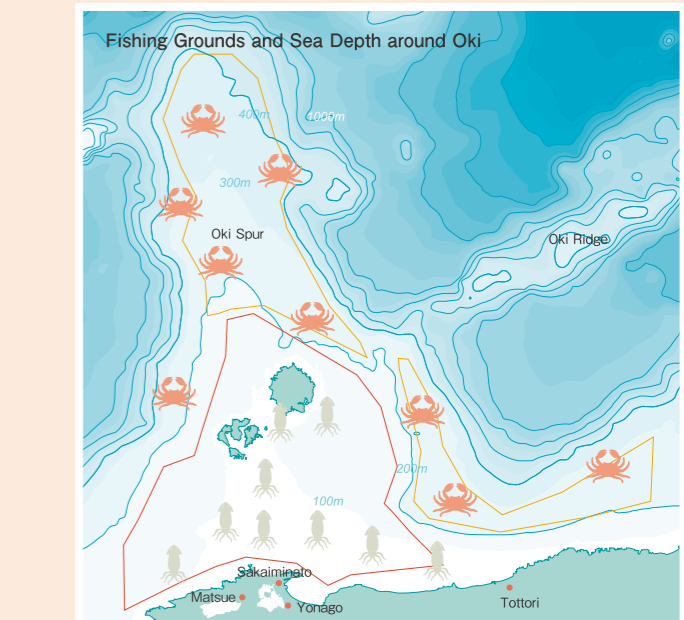
Abundant Fishing Grounds

Fishing, one of the main industries in Oki, is deeply connected to the nature here. Although located in the Sea of Japan, two wide, flat continental shelves extend out to Oki, and these areas serve as year-round fishing grounds for squid and winter fishing grounds for snow crab.

In winter, while the rough waves and wind shape Oki's eroded, rocky coasts, fisherman catch abalone and turban shell. There are many rocky fishing spots, and locals enjoy the unique food culture built upon the animal life found around the rocky shores.

Furthermore, bays, carved from volcanic terrain and characterized by beautiful clear water and calm surfaces, are also utilized for aquaculture. Nishinoshima Island was the first region in Japan to successfully start a rock oyster aquaculture business.

Fishing grounds are also important in Oki history and tradition. In ancient times (538-1185) Oki was a *miketsukuni*, a territory designated for royal provisions, and its marine products played vital roles in many official imperial court rituals. In the Edo period (1603-1868), Oki became a production area for goods exported through Nagasaki (*tawara mono*, goods in straw bags), and in the Meiji period Oki dried squid dominated the top ranks in national product exhibitions. Even now about forty percent of Shimane Prefecture's fishing haul comes from Oki.



*For further information, please visit the 'Geohistory', 'Unique Ecosystem', and 'Lifestyle and Traditions' pages on the Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark's official website.