

One of the best places on Fukue Island to see several of the Goto Islands as well as a panorama of geological history is this scenic overlook, named for a castle built here in 1383. Although the Shirotake Scenic Overlook is only a little over 200 meters high, it shows clearly that massive lava flows spread out and created the plains below.

This area was originally part of the Goto Group geologic stratum and probably had a jagged, rough surface much like the rocky islet of Tatekojima, which is visible off to the left. Somewhere around 900,000 years ago, a volcanic eruption released a huge outflow of lava, which covered this rocky surface. When the lava flows subsided, what remained was a broad, flat plain, what is now the Kishuku Lava Plateau. Over a long period of time, this land became rich, fertile soil and the jagged rocks of the coastline formed from the lava became home to various kinds of fish, shellfish, and so on.

The contrast between the sharp spikes of Tatekojima Island and the smoother surface of the plateau provides a vivid “before and after” view of volcanic activity.

For an even better view of this scene, climb the stairs to the tower behind the Overlook. It has its own observation deck with a spectacular panoramic view of the area. From there you can easily see Shiraishi Bay and other inlets to the left of this scene, which served as safe harbors for sailing ships transporting scholars and Buddhist monks back and forth to China over 1,000 years ago. For centuries, the Goto Islands served as a gateway, helping to facilitate the exchange of goods and learning between the Chinese and Japanese civilizations of the time.