

## **A View from a Volcano**

The Goto Islands are home to many volcanoes, and the largest island, Fukue, has a number of volcanic fields. One of the most prominent of these is the Mt. Onidake volcano group, comprised of eleven monogenetic basalt volcanoes. The youngest of these, Onidake, was active as recently as 18,000 years ago.

Onidake is a 315-meter cinder cone covered with grass. The top of what is often translated as “Ogre Mountain” is truncated, with a deep crater inside, the result of the last eruption. About every three years the top of Onidake is burned, so there are no trees or large scrub growing there.

## **Hiking on a Volcano**

It is an easy walk up clearly marked stairs from the parking lot to the first level, which is also covered with grass, and there is a pleasant roofed picnic area and a lookout spot with giant binoculars on a stand. From here you can see the plain below, which includes much of the business center of Goto City, Fukue Port, and Fukue Airport. This broad, flat land is a result of the considerable lava flow from the Onidake volcanic group tens of thousands of years ago.

From the picnic area, it is a short, not very strenuous hike up to the summit on a well-trodden path. Once at the top, you can see not only the Fukue district, but also the Gotonada Sea, the East China Sea, and some of the more than 100 islands and islets that constitute the Goto Islands.

## **Go Fly a Kite!**

One thing you will notice at any level on the mountain is the constant breeze, and at the summit it is quite strong. The winds and the soft grass make this area ideal for flying kites, and there is an annual event for both children and adults. You will see replicas of some of the colorful kite designs in nearby gift shops, restaurants, and other tourist locations. Many places in town even sell kites, so if you’re planning to visit Ogre Mountain, you might want to try your hand.

Next to the parking lot is the Onidake Observatory. Perched on a hillside near a small grove of cherry trees, the observatory is open to the public. For a small fee and a reservation by phone (same-day reservations are OK), you can use their telescope to look at the stars from the side of a volcano. The staff can provide an introduction to astronomy for those who are interested.

Volcanic history, scenic views, picnics, kite-flying, and star-gazing: Few places in these islands can rival Onidake for both geologic history and interesting activities.