

A Uniquely Interesting Spot to Watch the Sun Set

The Goto Islands are one of the westernmost parts of Kyushu, and Cape Osezaki is the westernmost part of the Goto Islands. Aside from the islands of Okinawa, this is the last place the setting sun can be seen in Japan.

A Picturesque Lighthouse Stands Alone

At the end of this point of land is a large lighthouse, one of the brightest in Japan, standing alone against the crashing wind and waves of the East China Sea. If you make the trek to the lighthouse, there is an observation deck, which has a magnificent view of the surrounding scenery. On clear days you can see the Danjo Islands far out to sea.

Parallel Dikes

The lighthouse sits on a jagged promontory jutting out from the coast. This chunk of rock is part of the Goto Group, an accumulation of sand and mud that were deposits from mainland Asia. During the Tertiary period, the Goto Group deposits filled the space between the mainland and the land that became Japan.

Viewed from the west (ocean) side, you can see a basalt dike—what appear to be several parallel grooves cut deeply into the rock face. All around the sheer rock walls of this promontory we can see a pattern of similar but less pronounced grooves.

Rare Flowers

This promontory is famous for flowers and birds. The ladybell, shimashajin (*Adenophora tashiroi*) is classified as endangered by the Ministry of Environment. These tiny, bright purple flowers grow in the open fields of Osezaki and nowhere else on the Goto Islands. You can find some growing within easy reach quite close to the lighthouse. The purple blooms generally flower from mid-September to early November.

Ten Thousand Birds en Route to China

The other attraction of Osezaki is the flocks of migrating birds that pass overhead in the fall, especially the Oriental or crested honey buzzards (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*). These are quite large birds of prey with wingspans of well over a meter, so they are easy to see. In a period of just a few weeks between mid-September and early October, over 10,000 buzzards will pass overhead on their way

west. The buzzards fly all the way down through China and beyond even to Indonesia. You can easily see hundreds flying overhead in a single day.

Worth a Visit!

At first glance, the Cape may look desolate and uninteresting, but between the majestic lighthouse, the interesting rock formations, the unusual local flowers, and the flocks of large birds flying overhead, the area has a combination of charms that make it well worth a visit.