

Otherworldly Landscape

Saganoshima Island is a small outcropping to the west of Fukue Island. Although its total area is only 3 square kilometers, it produced two pyroclastic cones, Odake and Medake, both close to the sea. Over the ages, the ocean waves and strong winds eroded much of their craters, leaving them stunted (the taller one is only 150 meters high). The rugged sea cliffs are famous, and there is an impressive view of them from the viewing platform on the southwest shore near Medake.

A Thousand Tatami Mats

The most famous feature of the island is the area called Senjojiki Rocks. Less than a half hour's walk from the main pier, this coastline features broad, open spaces of hardened black tuff—a material composed mostly of compressed ash, sand, and small rocks expelled from a volcano—bordered by crashing waves on one side and walls of neatly layered sedimentary rock on the other.

The Japanese name, meaning 1,000 tatami mats, refers to the hard, dark, barren surface across which you can easily walk. But what catches the eye are the walls, which feature unusually distinct, easily visible layers that look something like geologic tree rings.

Caves on the Shore

The effects of wind and water have rendered this otherworldly landscape starkly uneven. In addition to the smooth, flat surfaces where you can walk, there are also deep cracks resembling small gorges, as well as caves where the pounding ocean enters.

This scenery is so breathtakingly unusual that it alone justifies a trip to Saganoshima.