

How Did That Rhinoceros Get on This Tiny Island?

Shutogashima Coast is famous for a number of things. One is its curved beachfront, which is covered more with small, round rocks than with sand. The ocean here is a beautiful greenish blue, and there are attractive shallows for wading and swimming.

Island Attached to an Island

Another attraction is the short causeway of land that connects the mainland of Naru Island to the little speck of an island nearby. This rocky bridge is quite flat and easy to cross on foot, allowing visitors to reach the little island easily. While short on scenery for sunbathing tourists, the tiny island is of great interest to anyone looking into the geological past of this area.

In fact, this stretch of flat rock and the many distinct, horizontal layers of sedimentary rock on the island are reminders of the formation of the Goto Islands. These rocks, exposed by ages of wind and wave erosion, were made from the basic layers of sandstone and mudstone that came to form the Goto Group stratum. There is even evidence here of a time long before these islands were born, when the materials that became the Goto Group were still connected to the Eurasian continent.

Footprints in the Mud

For example, on these flat rocks you can find footprints of large animals, such as rhinoceroses. These ancient creatures did not live in the current Goto Islands, but rather, walked in the mud of a marshy wetland eons ago that later became part of the Goto Group stratum that separated from the continent and created these islands.

This small rocky area has been designated a nature conservation area by Nagasaki Prefecture.