

Origin of Aira Caldera

Approximately 30,000 years ago, a massive volcanic eruption occurred in what is now Kagoshima, ejecting a huge amount of volcanic material into the air. The volcano's walls collapsed into the emptied inner chamber, and the vast Aira Caldera, 22 kilometers across and 200 meters deep, was formed. Sea water then flowed into this volcanic crater caldera, creating Kinkowan Bay—the local name for Kagoshima Bay.

Tagiri

In the northeast corner of Kinkowan Bay, another smaller caldera called Wakamiko was created by a separate eruption some 29,000 years ago. Deep in this underwater caldera, gas escaping from the submarine volcano beneath makes the water appear to boil. This phenomenon is caused by volcanic fume activity on the seafloor, and is known locally as *tagiri* from the Japanese word *tagiru* meaning “to boil.”

Wildlife

The unique topography of the Aira Caldera and the extraordinary ecosystem it fosters is home to a wide assortment of animal life. Crustaceans, mollusks, and various birds including the endangered black-faced spoonbill can be found on Shigetomi Beach. In the bay, keep your eyes peeled for dolphins.

Shigetomi Beach

There are more than just water sports on offer along this 600-meter expanse of sandy beach, which is also the largest tidal flat in the bay. An abundance of small sea life makes it a popular destination for finding clams, crabs, and other sea creatures. There are excellent views of Sakurajima all year long. The pine forest provides welcome shade in the summer.

Wakamikobana

This coastal route appears to jut into Kinkowan Bay and is famous for its ties to the legendary Yamato Takeru, a prince charged with subduing the Kumaso, an ancient people of southern Kyushu. A small shrine stands where Yamato is said to have embarked on his journey.

Terayama

Located 400 meters above sea level, the Terayama observatory offers stunning views of the area's sights. With the panorama of Sakurajima in front of you, the Kirishima Mountain Range to the north and the waters of Kinkowan Bay below, it is a destination not to be missed.

Kamitsukuri Islands

The Kamitsukuri Islands is the collective term for three small islands in Kinkowan Bay: Hetakojima, Bentenjima, and Okikojima. The islands are made of rhyolite, a volcanic rock, which has eroded over thousands of years, leaving them riddled with intriguing geological formations.

Shirakanezaka

Designated a historic national road, this ancient cobbled roadway traverses the hills between Wakimoto in Aira City and Muregaoka in Kagoshima City. Deviating from the main route takes you to an observation deck where you can enjoy sweeping views of Sakurajima and Kinkowan Bay, as well as the 20-meter-high Nunobiki Waterfall.

Kanze (God's Shoal)

A white lighthouse looks out over the bay towards Kanze, a shoal between Sakurajima and Kagoshima City. At low tide, the sandy beach expands, and in the surrounding waters there are coral reefs, seaweed beds and abundant fish.

Mt. Takatoge

For 360-degree views of Sakurajima, Kinkowan Bay and surrounding sights, visit Mt. Takatoge and its 722-meter-high observation platform. From the coast the mountain can be seen to the northeast of Tatumizu City. Every spring it erupts in color thanks to the thousands of wild azaleas on its slopes.