

Ruins of World War II

During World War II, the Ogasawara Islands were an important Japanese military installation for their strategically important position in the Pacific. After the Allies took Saipan in 1944, the Ogasawara Islands and Iwo Islands became Japan's last line of defense before the mainland.

The base on Chichijima bristled with anti-aircraft guns and other artillery. Tunnels were dug and caves were expanded to provide living quarters, complete with electricity from gas-powered generators, cisterns for water storage, and separate areas for cooking. After the Japanese surrendered on August 15, 1945, the Ogasawara Islands became a US naval base. The Navy left many of the Japanese military installations on the islands alone, and when the island was returned to Japan in 1968, ruins of many of the fortifications remained. An area of Chichijima with an extensive network of trails, war relics, and batteries of artillery is open to visitors, provided they are accompanied by a licensed guide. Reminders of the war are still visible in the waters around Ogasawara: the *Hinko-maru*, a Japanese supply ship, sits on the bottom of the bay off Sakaiura Beach, where it was grounded during the war after being hit by a torpedo.