

Hashigui-iwa Rocks

This extraordinary formation of around 40 rocks stretches 850 meters into the ocean like a pier. Legend has it that the formation was created by Kobo Daishi (Kukai, 774–835), the famed Buddhist monk believed to be preserved in an eternal state of meditation at Okunoin in Koyasan, in northern Wakayama. Legend holds that he was asked by local inhabitants to build a bridge across the water to nearby Kii Oshima.

The geological explanation for the Hashigui-iwa rocks is that 14 million years ago, magma from an underground chamber rose and seeped into fractures in the mudstone layers where it eventually cooled and solidified. Over a long period of time, the landmass was elevated by earthquakes. The surrounding weak mudstone has been eroded by the sea, leaving the harder igneous rock exposed as a solid wall. Many years of exposure to the elements has eroded the rock into pillar-like shapes. The scattered boulders lying nearby are pieces of rock that have been broken off by tsunamis.

At low tide, you can walk among the rocks, but they are equally spectacular at high tide. An observation deck on the coast enables you to see the rocks from a slightly elevated position, stretching out towards Kii Oshima.