

The Tottori Sand Dunes—A Collaboration of Water, Wind, and Waves

The Tottori sand dunes were shaped over tens of thousands of years as granite gravel and sand flowed to the sea from mountains in the south, carried by the Sendai River. Over time a sandbar formed offshore. Waves and coastal currents polished and pushed the smallest granules back to land, eventually filling a bay. Fluctuating sea levels, too, played their part in the dunes' early formation, at times shifting whole beds of seafloor sediment onto this newly formed coastal terrace. Wind carried the sand farther inland, sculpting it into ever-shifting shapes. Volcanic eruptions added ash and pumice to the mix. Rising to heights of 47 meters and undulating with depressions that house a surprising amount of flora and fauna, the Tottori sand dunes today are one of the most striking and inspiring sights among the diverse coastal landforms that characterize the San'in Kaigan UNESCO Global Geopark.