

Ochaen Observatory (inside observatory)

Both Ochaen and this observation point are deeply entwined with the past few centuries of Japan's complicated history.

The story begins with the lords of the Hachisuka family, who ruled the Tokushima domain from 1585 to 1871. Their lands encompassed present-day Tokushima Prefecture along with Awaji Island, which was incorporated in 1615. Successive Hachisuka daimyo would travel to this spot by ship from Tokushima Castle in order to enjoy the timeless spectacle of the Naruto whirlpools. Here they also built the temporary tea houses from which Ochaen (literally, "tea garden") derives its name.

Following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the end of the system of rule by the warrior class, and the return of political power to the emperor, as well as the relocation of the capital from Kyoto to Tokyo, the Naruto Strait was fortified for military use. However, the hill was kept open to visitors hoping to admire the famous whirlpools. After the end of World War II in 1945, decades of peace and prosperity, accompanied by thriving domestic and international tourism, have made Ochaen and its sweeping vista even more accessible.