

Ochaen Observatory (at entrance to observatory)

From this tranquil location in the hills of Naruto Park, the Ochaen observation point commands a panorama over land and sea, offering a 360-degree view of sights both distant and close at hand. Visible from here are the Naruto Strait and its mesmerizing whirlpools, the wonder of modern architectural engineering that is the Onaruto Bridge, Awaji Island, the verdant hills that roll toward the city of Naruto, and the tiny wild islet of Tobishima. In spring and fall, there is also the chance to witness thousands of raptors flying overhead as they migrate.

For centuries, people have traveled from near and far to take in the breathtaking view from this spot. Generations of daimyo (feudal lords) from the Hachisuka family, who ruled these lands from 1585 to 1871, came by ship to enjoy themselves; they erected the tea houses that gave Ochaen (meaning “tea garden”) its name. When the aristocrats were absent, common folk would flock here to admire the Naruto whirlpools.

Although the surrounding area was a key military installation throughout World War II, in the subsequent decades of peace, Ochaen and its sweeping vistas have attracted increasing numbers of visitors from around the world.