

Sekiheki, “Red Cliff”

This magnificent cliff face is a cross-section of a volcano that erupted during the initial formation of the Oki Islands caldera, between 6.3 to 5.3 million years ago. Eroded by wind and waves, the 200-meter-high span of scoria (hardened lava) reveals the same geological processes that shaped the island of Chiburijima. The red layer was produced when eruptions shot plumes of basaltic lava high into the air. As it rapidly cooled, exposure to oxygen turned it a vivid red. The black layers were formed by slower, less explosive lava flows that did not oxidize. The wedge of white stone that intersects the other layers formed during a later eruption, after magma rose in a narrow funnel through the rock.

Sekiheki is one of the most visually striking spots in the Oki Islands, where the red and black of the scoria is set against the green hillside and blue sea. Tide pools host bright yellow algae, while storm runoff sometimes forms a waterfall that spills over the cliff face, casting rainbows. In winter, the colorful cliff stands out against the snow.

The Sekiheki Lookout Point can be reached by a short footpath from the parking area. The grassy slopes are dotted with cattle and home to several interesting plants. It is believed that the Japanese pepper found here (*sanshō*) has gradually evolved to have a spicier flavor through selective pressure from local grazing livestock, who now avoid it.
