

Sea Caves of the Eastern Shimane Peninsula

The Shimane Peninsula coastline is at its most dramatic in the eastern region, known for its jagged inlets, precipitous sea cliffs, and wave-worn islets of volcanic rock. Lining the cliffs northeast of Matsue are dozens of sea caves, openings that began as tiny fractures in the exposed bedrock and have been widened by the constant buffeting of the wind and waves.

The area known as Kaka no Kukedo is known for its two sea caves, “Old Kukedo” and “New Kukedo,” which are both significant in the canons of Buddhism and Shinto, respectively. Old Kukedo is said to be the location of *sainokawara*, the riverbed purgatory where deceased children are sent, and New Kukedo is recorded in an eighth-century manuscript as the birthplace of Sarutahiko Ōkami, one of the great deities of Shinto. New Kukedo has three mouths, and the central opening is a 200-meter-long tunnel through the cliffside. Old Kukedo has only a single narrow entrance, but it opens into a wide cavern inside the rock. It is also accessible through a tunnel leading from the bank.

Another spectacular group of sea caves called “The Seven Caves of Tako” (*tako no nanatsu ana*) is found at the peninsula’s northernmost point. These caves riddle a stretch of cliff about 400 meters long and 50 meters high. There are actually four caves in all, though nine entrances are visible from the sea. Both Kaka no Kukedo and The Seven Caves of Tako have been designated National Scenic Monuments and are accessible to visitors by boat.
