

Kabashima Island

Small island; massive columnar cliffs

This small, mountainous, and lightly populated island lies just south of Naru Island and 16 kilometers east of the Goto Islands' main island of Fukue. It is best known for the rugged dacite cliffs and small inlets that run along the southern coast. The cliff faces, vertical sandwiches of soft basalt surrounded by hard dacite, are unusually tall examples of columnar jointing. The columns were created by the cooling and contracting of lava flows estimated to have occurred some eight million years ago.

One of Kabashima Island's most scenic spots is the Taka no Su lighthouse, built on a tiny islet off the island's southeast tip. It takes some effort to get here, as the columns are only visible from the sea and there is no regular boat service along this coast. Boat-taxi services, however, are available from Fukue Island and Naru Island, though rough seas and currents make the area inaccessible at times.

Kabashima Island has a circumference of some 25 kilometers and is 85 percent mountainous. Most of its approximately 175 residents are engaged in fishing, as there is no flat land for farming. The dacite does contribute to the island's economy, however, as dacite columns are mined in a large rock quarry on the northern part of the island. At one kilometer in length and 260 meters in height, the quarry is one of the largest in the Kyushu area.