

Oitabe Island

Close by, but somewhat inaccessible

This small, flat island between Akashima Island and Oshima Island is interesting both for its geology and its archaeology. Like Akashima, it is surrounded by basalt deposits; like Oshima, it has lava tubes: one large tube in the eastern part of the island, the second on the north shore leading to the ocean. The larger tube to the east is the more interesting, with an entry that is quite steep, requiring the use of a rope to descend into the tube. The effort is worth it for those with the necessary skills, though, as the tube's walls are covered in sparkling yellow pyrite.

Obsidian tools and human bones were discovered in a cave at the top of the tube, proving that people lived on this small island as far back as the Jomon period (10,000–300 BCE). A shell mound containing dugong bones was found at the site where a pond once existed. Special permission is required to visit Oitabe Island, and it is not a recommended destination for children.