

Aka Todai: the Red Lighthouse

Showing change over the ages

The tip of the westernmost peninsula of Fukue Island, with its wide variety of geographical features, is an excellent spot for a geotour. The torii gate of a small Shinto shrine leads down to a rough natural beach with many good examples of beachrock, the young sedimentary rock composed of pebbles, shells, and other materials cemented together by carbonate compounds.

Shimayama Island lies across the channel that leads from the ocean to the north to the large bay to the south. The exposed face of the island clearly shows the folding and erosion that has occurred over the millennia, as faults and the forces pulling the islands apart caused layers to tip upwards or downwards, while others remained horizontal. This is perhaps the best place on Fukue Island to see continuous bands of granite, sandstone, and mudstone, as well as dramatic shapes resulting from massive geological forces.

The channel is dredged to allow the passage of fairly large ships. With the approach of typhoons, a common danger in the region, ships head here to weather the storms. The Aka Todai, or “red lighthouse,” is located where the channel opens to the sea. There is a white sand beach just to the right of the entry to the area.