

From Asian Continent to Japan Sea Islands

The geography, history, and natural wonders of the Goto Islands

Some 15 to 17 million years ago, the rugged contours of the Goto Islands were formed from sand and mud flowing from the Asian continent. As the land mass separated from the continent, creating the Sea of Japan, what would become the Goto Islands slowly shifted south and west, with layers of sandstone and mudstone shaped and formed through faults and folding, volcanic eruptions, and erosion by waves and wind.

The stunning cliffs, rocky lava shorelines, rounded volcanic hills, and unique beachrock formations of the Goto Islands are the results of these processes. The islands have long been the launching place for ships heading to China, as well as a refuge from howling typhoons and the place of passage for thousands of migratory birds heading to and from the Asian continent.

Geological forces have also shaped the distinctive culture and lifestyle of the people of the Goto Islands, as their relative remoteness, particularly in past centuries, made them a place of refuge for people fleeing religious persecution.

Goto City established the Goto Islands Geopark Promotion Council in 2017 to work toward establishing the islands as an official geopark, in the hope that it will help promote the remarkable combination of geology, nature, culture, and history in the Goto Islands. Status as a geopark will contribute to preserving the islands' natural and cultural wonders and help visitors to better understand and enjoy this island group formed from the Asian continent so long ago.