

Satsuki Matsubara Promenade Observation Decks

The Satsuki Matsubara Promenade is a paved walkway with wooden observation decks offering scenic views along the coast. Visitors can see several islands from the observation decks, including Oshima, Jinoshima, and Okinoshima. The promenade leads through a stretch of Japanese black pines (*Pinus thunbergii*). Pine trees were first planted here over 400 years ago to protect the beach from erosion. Much of the current grove was planted 200 years ago.

Views of a sacred island

Okinoshima is considered a sacred island and the deities that dwell there have been worshipped since ancient times. On a clear day, visitors may be able to see the island, which is about 60 kilometers offshore. Between the fourth and ninth centuries, rituals were performed there to pray for safe sea travel. Locations on the coast with views of Okinoshima are considered *yohai* spots, places for worshipping the island from afar. During the Edo period (1603–1867), people came to these vantage spots in the pine grove to worship.

Two wooden observation decks face the ocean on the walking path, with signs indicating the islands offshore. The largest islands, Oshima and Jinoshima, are clearly visible from the observation decks, with Okinoshima located in the distance between them.

An ancient trade route

Around 80,000 artifacts dating from the fourth to ninth centuries have been found on Okinoshima. They are believed to be offerings to the deities of Munakata Taisha for safe sea travel. These votive objects, including horse accessories, a gold ring and bronze mirrors, are from as far away as ancient Persia, evidence of early trade between Japan and other parts of the world.

Ancient earthenware and pottery fragments have been excavated from the area near the pine grove, some dating to around 5,000 years ago. Some of the later pieces match pottery found on Okinoshima, indicating a direct connection between the two places.

In 2017, the Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region was registered as a World Heritage site.