

Introduction to Munakata

Munakata is a coastal region north of Fukuoka City, facing the Genkai Sea and bordered by mountains. The area contains a World Heritage site consisting of Shinto shrines, ancient burial mounds, and a sacred island.

Nango area

Nango, on the east side of Munakata, is closest to Fukuoka. The Karatsu Kaido, an Edo-period (1603–1867) highway connecting Fukuoka and Saga, runs through the area. Harumachi, a section of the traditional streetscape, remains.

Genkai and Akama areas

The Genkai area on the coast has fishing ports and beaches. It is home to Hetsu-miya, the largest of the three Munakata Taisha shrines. The inland Akama area is bordered by mountains and includes Akamajuku, an Edo-period post town on the historic Karatsu Kaido highway.

Munakata's islands

The islands of Oshima and Jinoshima are easy to visit by ferry from Konominato Port. Oshima is home to two shrines—Nakatsu-miya Shrine and Okitsu-miya Yohaisho—and the remains of an artillery battery from World War II. Jinoshima is known for its groves of camellia trees and easy hiking trails.

World Heritage sites

Munakata has long been an important stop for seafarers to pray for safety before traveling to the Asian continent. Dating back to the fourth century, rituals to protect seafarers were performed on the sacred island of Okinoshima, about 60 kilometers off the coast. The rituals are some of the earliest known examples of Shinto practices. The island and other spiritual locations in Munakata were designated a World Heritage site in 2017 as the Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region.

The World Heritage site comprises Munakata Taisha—three Shinto shrines venerating the Three Female Deities of Munakata—the sacred island of Okinoshima, and around 40 ancient

burial mounds (*kofun*) for members of the Munakata family, which governed the area until the sixteenth century.