

Kabushima

Welcome to Kabushima Island. This is the northernmost terminus of the Michinoku Coastal Trail, a long-distance walking course that stretches from Hachinohe in Aomori Prefecture southward along the Pacific coast to the city of Soma in Fukushima Prefecture.

Kabushima is considered a sacred place by inhabitants of the Hachinohe area. In the past, fishermen considered the black-tailed gulls (*Larus crassirostris*) that nest here to be messengers of the gods, and a good omen for bountiful catches. Atop the hill sits Kabushima Jinja Shrine, which was first built in 1269. The shrine is dedicated to Benzaiten, the goddess of art, wisdom, and seafaring. Though destroyed by fire in 2015, it was rebuilt over the course of five years and reopened in 2020.

From February to August, the first thing anyone notices upon arriving at Kabushima is the huge number of black-tailed gulls—*umineko* (“cats of the sea”) in Japanese—that nest here during those months. Kabushima is an important breeding ground for the gulls, and was designated a National Natural Monument in 1922. As many as 40,000 birds come to the island to breed, and their cat-like cries can be heard from a considerable distance. It is said that anyone struck by the birds’ droppings will have good luck, but visitors who prefer to avoid the experience can make use of the umbrellas placed near the steps up to the shrine.

For further information on the history of Kabushima, the black-tailed gulls, and more, visit the nearby Kabushima Rest Area.