

## **Suenomatsuyama Hill and Oki no I**

In ancient times, the Tagajo area was the seat of government in the Tohoku region, and there are many reminders of its importance, including these two spots that have been immortalized in the work of some of Japan's greatest poets, such as the haiku master Matsuo Basho (1644–1694).

Suenomatsuyama is a hill with several towering pine trees, some over 400 years old, which shelter rows of tombstones at their base. This contrast, between the beautiful view and reminders of the impermanence of human life, is said to have brought Basho to tears. He wrote about this view in his literary collection *Oku no hosomichi* (The Narrow Road to the Deep North).

Nearby Oki no I, with large rocks and small pine trees rising out of a pond, resembles a tiny island in Matsushima Bay. It is thought to be an early example of a manmade sightseeing spot. It was long protected by the Date family who once ruled the Sendai domain (which encompassed today's Miyagi Prefecture). The fourth lord of the domain, Date Tsunamura (1659–1719), even appointed local village leaders to protect and care for this spot so beloved by poets.