

## Mizuki Shigeru Road

Mizuki Shigeru Road is an 800-meter stretch of the main shopping street from Sakaiminato Station that celebrates the world-famous manga artist who was raised in this city. The street is lined with 177 bronze statues of *yokai* (Japanese monsters), including many of the characters made famous in Mizuki's best-known work, *GeGeGe no Kitaro*, and other creatures from Japanese mythology and folklore that Mizuki also drew. It is a fine example of using public artworks to stimulate urban revival, attracting Mizuki fans and other visitors to the city.

### *Yokai Zones*

The statues are grouped into five thematic zones: Mizuki's Manga World, Yokai in the Forest, Yokai in the Home, Yokai Hidden in Familiar Places, and Yokai Who Control Gods and the Buddha. The bronze statues were cast in many sizes—some nearly miniature, and many of human scale. Almost all of them are quite humorous. With many guide maps available, visitors can enjoy exploring the neighborhood as they hunt for their favorites. A Yokai shrine is located on one block, accessible through an unusual shrine gateway that opens to the street. A large black granite-and-wood object stands in the center, and a tall stone water basin with an eerie motif stands to one side. Wooden *ema* talismans inscribed with wishes cover one wall. Spirit fortune-telling slips (*yokai omikuji*) are available, as is a *yokai* postal delivery service. A street-corner plaza not far away is the site of the Kappa Fountain, in which nine *yokai* lounge around while Kitaro strikes a pose modeled on the “Manneken Pis” (Brussels' famous landmark statue of a young boy urinating). Mizuki Shigeru appears on another corner, accompanied by his wife Nunoe; he is shown elsewhere at his drawing table, along with his characters Medamaoyaji, Nezumiotoko, and Kitaro.

### *Yokai Shopping*

The entire Mizuki Shigeru road is lined with an amazing array of *yokai*-themed establishments, from bakeries to ramen shops, ATMs, antique stores, and, of course, souvenir shops. Virtually all have adopted a *yokai* theme, and the variety of humorous adaptations is endlessly amusing. The Mizuki Shigeru Museum, one of the city's main attractions, is near the end of the road opposite the railway station. The road underwent extensive renewal at the time of its 20th anniversary in 2018, and the entire route is now illuminated at night, with over 50 computer-controlled projectors casting shadow figures of the familiar characters onto the street and sidewalks.