

Ogijima: Labyrinthine Streets and Eye-catching Art

The mountainous island of Ogijima in the Seto Inland Sea is some 8 kilometers north of Takamatsu port, from where it can be reached by ferry in about 40 minutes. When approaching Ogijima port near the southwestern tip of the island, visitors will notice how the islanders' residences are built in layers along a steep, terraced hillside reinforced with stone walls. The houses face a wide variety of directions and often stand very close to each other, making the sloped, staircase-dotted streets between them appear labyrinthine. Some of these pathways afford impressive, if narrow, views of the sea below. Visitors should note that the hilly terrain can only be explored on foot and is unfortunately not suitable for individuals with mobility issues.

With a population of approximately 150, Ogijima was hardly a destination until 2010, when it was chosen as one of the venues for the Setouchi Triennale art festival. While the island is busiest in festival years, it also offers plenty to see at other times. The first permanent piece of art visitors come across after arrival is "Ogijima's Soul," a concrete-and-glass structure with a distinctively shaped white roof that dominates the port landscape. Created by the Spanish contemporary artist Jaume Plensa for the 2010 Setouchi Triennale, the building was inspired by the shape of a seashell and is now a place for visitors to rest their legs and purchase ferry tickets.

Active visitors can walk 30 minutes from the port to the northern part of the island. Here, the most popular attraction is the Ogijima Lighthouse, a Western-style beacon tower built in 1895. Next to the unpainted granite structure is a small museum.