

Megijima: Here Be Ogres

The island of Megijima is located about 4 kilometers north of Takamatsu port, from where it can be reached in 20 minutes by ferry. The convenient location makes Megijima an ideal point of entry for visitors looking to explore the islands of the Seto Inland Sea.

Megijima styles itself the “island of ogres” in reference to a popular Japanese folk tale about the adventures of Momotaro, Peach Boy. The young protagonist travels to a distant island, Onigashima, to battle a band of ogres (*oni*) together with his companions, a dog, monkey, and pheasant. Momotaro and his friends defeat the ogres and retrieve a treasure from their lair, returning home as heroes. According to local legend, the Onigashima caves on Megijima, which are hundreds of meters deep and are thought to have been dug into the cliff by the island’s ancient residents, were once inhabited by ogres. This theme appears in several place names on the island, including Onigashima Beach, a popular summertime getaway for Takamatsu residents that provides views toward that city and the flat-topped mountain of Yashima.

Unrelated to the ogre legend but still worth a visit is the Washigamine scenic lookout, located on the top of a mountain 188 meters above sea level and affording 360-degree views of the Seto Inland Sea. Reachable on foot in about 10 minutes from the Onigashima caves, this vantage point is particularly popular in spring, when some 3,000 cherry blossom trees on Megijima paint the island in shades of pink. Another noted flower-viewing spot is the promenade that connects the port of Megijima with the island’s lighthouse.

Viewable year round are the massive stone walls that protect houses on Megijima from the wind, which often blows hard from the northwest across the island in winter. Some of these structures are higher than the homes they shield from the elements, and together with the narrow streets that snake between them make the populated parts of Megijima feel somewhat like a medieval fortress.