

Marine Life Paradise: The Oshima Strait

The strait between the islands of Amami-Oshima and Kakeroma is about 20 kilometers long, running northwest to southeast and ranging from 2 to 6 kilometers in width. Both sides of the strait are marked by a ragged, irregular shoreline called a ria coast. A ria is a deep, funnel-shaped coastal inlet formed when rising waters flood river valleys, leaving headlands protruding into the sea from both sides.

Marine sports and industry

The coast along the Oshima Strait also features numerous pocket beaches—small, sandy stretches that often front the small villages that dot the shore. Coral reefs fringe much of the coastline, creating rich habitats for marine life that have become popular with scuba divers and snorkelers. The depth of the strait varies between 50 and 70 meters beyond the reef slope, making it accessible to sea turtles, dolphins, and even the large humpback whales that migrate here in the winter. Amami-Oshima islanders farm bluefin tuna and cultivate pearls in the waters of the strait; they also fish for bonito and other food fish. For hundreds of years, the calm waters of this narrow passage have also been a refuge for ships fleeing the strong winds and high waves of typhoons.