

## Mimiraku Peninsula

The Mimiraku Peninsula on the northwestern end of Fukue Island, the outermost of Goto's main islands, was the final staging ground for many of the Japanese envoys who traveled to Tang China between the eighth and ninth centuries. From Mimiraku they set out on a treacherous journey directly westward across the East China Sea—a voyage from which only around half of those who departed would return alive. Trees and bushes on the grassy peninsula grow almost horizontally due to the storm winds that blow in from the sea and across the landscape in winter, when Mimiraku can feel like a bleak and unforgiving place.

The peninsula's often grim weather and its location at the western edge of the Japanese archipelago, where the envoys to China bid farewell to their native land, inspired its name, a reference to the end of the world. In a poem included in the tenth-century *Kagero nikki* (The Mayfly Diary; published in translation as *The Gossamer Years*), the author prays to one day meet her dead mother at *mimiraku*, a place between the mortal world and the afterlife.