

***Kentoshi* Sites in the Southern Goto Islands**

Fukue Island was the final staging ground for many of the *kentoshi*, the Japanese envoys who traveled to Tang China between the eighth and ninth centuries. The **Mimiraku Peninsula** on the island's northwestern end is the most famous site on Fukue associated with the emissaries. For numerous envoys, the windswept cape was the last they saw of home: only around half of the *kentoshi* who set out from Japan survived the journey to China and back.

By the main road to the peninsula is the **Michi no Eki Kentoshi Furusatoka**, a museum that doubles as a highway rest stop and produce market. Exhibits include historical documents and other materials related to the *kentoshi*, as well as panels describing how Mimiraku was depicted in ancient poetry.

Some envoys are thought to have made port in Shiraishi Bay to the east of Mimiraku, where a stone to which *kentoshi* ships are believed to have been moored has become a place of worship. Local people pray to the **Tomozuna stone** for protection at sea, and have built a makeshift shrine to house the timeworn post.

The **Daihoji** and **Myojoin** temples on Fukue claim an association with one of the most famous travelers from Japan to the Tang. The priest Kukai (774–835), founder of the Shingon school of Buddhism, was part of the *kentoshi* mission of 804, which departed from Goto, and is thought to have passed through the islands again upon his return in 806.