

Tomie Area

The Tomie area is the southernmost part of Fukue Island, located on a low peninsula. About 1 million years ago, volcanic activity in the area began producing flows of low-viscosity basaltic lava. One of these flows, estimated to have occurred between 510,000 and 180,000 years ago, created the lava plateau that makes up much of Tomie.

Highlights

Iana Lava Tube

Lava tubes are formed when erupting lava moves downhill, melting a channel into the rock as it flows. The core of the flow remains hot and fluid, while the outer surface cools and solidifies as it comes in contact with air and water. As the central, liquid core flows on, its hardened shell is left behind, forming a hollow tunnel of stone. Many of these tunnels can be found in Tomie. Iana is the largest, extending some 1,400 meters into the earth. The lower part of this lava tube has filled with water and is home to rare cave creatures such as *Luciogobius albus*, a goby species first discovered in the Goto Islands. Several bat species also inhabit the cave-like upper regions, which were sometimes used as quarries by local residents in need of stones for construction.

Tomie Stone Storehouse

The walls of this 9-meter-by-25-meter basalt-block storehouse are all that remain of a large structure built by a local samurai lord in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Volcanic basalt, found in large quantities all over Tomie, has long been an important building material, as it is very hard and provides good thermal insulation. While local farmers often used rough-hewn or natural stone, the lord who commissioned this storehouse exacted higher standards and spared no expense in the construction. The stones were laboriously cut and shaped into blocks that would fit together without mortar. A weather- and vermin-proof storehouse was particularly important for storing the community's rice harvest, as set units of rice were equivalent to currency at the time.