

## **Fukue Area**

The Fukue area occupies the eastern half of Fukue Island and encompasses the eponymously named main port and largest city. The area is notable for several important sites related to the island's Edo period (1603–1867) history, as well as the Goto Islands' most famous landmark, Mt. Onidake.

### Highlights

#### *Fukue Castle and Samurai Residences*

Fukue Castle, sometimes called Ishida Castle, is a rare example of a sea castle and was originally built with water on three sides. Completed in 1863, it required an estimated 50,000 laborers and was the last castle built in Japan. The central structures were torn down soon after samurai rule ended in 1867, but the outer stone walls and moat survive, as well as a villa and garden built in 1858 by the thirtieth Fukue lord. Nearby is a street of samurai residences that once housed the domain's high-ranking retainers. The houses are surrounded by the area's characteristic basalt-rock walls.

#### *Abunze Coast*

The 7-kilometer coastline in Abunze is formed of a type of jagged black lava rock known as “aa,” deposited there when Mt. Onidake erupted around 18,000 years ago. Since then, ocean waves have eroded the porous stone, creating a striking coast of oddly shaped pillars and crags speckled with quartz crystals. When the tide recedes, the rocks form tidepools in which tiny creatures—shrimp, hermit crabs, snails, barnacles, and many others—wait for the waves' return. Warmed by the mild waters of the Tsushima Current, many subtropical plants grow along the shoreline. Nearby is the Abunze Visitor Center, where multilingual displays explain the Goto Islands' landscape, ecology, and history.

#### *Mt. Onidake*

Mt. Onidake stands 315 meters high and is the youngest of the Goto Islands' volcanic mountains, last active around 18,000 years ago. It is easily recognized by its gently rounded conical shape and large expanse of green grass. Pine trees once covered its slopes, but they were cut down to build Fukue Castle; afterward, residents chose to maintain the grassland. A short hike to the top gives a 360-degree view of the city of Fukue, the coastline, and neighboring islands. Along the path, sharp-eyed hikers may spot black lava fragments—called “lava bombs”—ejected by Onidake's last eruption.