

Izumi Shigechiyo Memorial

This bronze statue pays tribute to Izumi Shigechiyo, a notable Isen native who once lived here. Izumi was recognized by Guinness World Records as the world's oldest person in 1979. He claimed to have been born in 1865, which would have made him 120 years old at the time of his death in 1986. Doubts about his actual age emerged later, though he remained a revered figure on the island and beyond.

A Local Celebrity

While Izumi Shigechiyo was alive, politicians, film stars, sports figures, and other celebrities from all over Japan visited Isen to pay their respects. Izumi was known for never turning anyone away, regardless of who they were. He regaled visitors with his life story, starting from his early days working with draft animals at a sugar mill in 1872, and enjoyed drinking *kokuto* (brown sugar) shochu, a popular island liquor, with his guests. He lived through the terms of 71 Japanese prime ministers, and attributed his longevity to “the gods, Buddha, and ancestors.” Despite the questions surrounding his age, Izumi left a lasting legacy on Tokunoshima as a symbol of the island's reputation for long and healthy living.