

Shirasaki Boat Cruises

The dramatic limestone formations of the Shirasaki Coast are especially striking when viewed from the water. Sightseeing boat cruises afford panoramas of the rocky coastline and close-up views of individual formations from different angles.

Cruises are operated by the Obiki fishing community as part of a program of activities and workshops that introduce visitors to the lives and traditions of local fishermen and their families. Participants ride in a small fishing boat operated by an experienced captain. Audio guidance in Japanese introduces the wildlife and vegetation of the Shirasaki Coast, which includes black-tailed gulls, hardy black pines, and native species of lily that thrive in rocky coastal habitats.

Tours depart from Obiki Fishing Harbor and cruise north along the coast to Shirasaki Ocean Park. They stop at notable points along the way, including a limestone sea arch and islets that are breeding grounds for colonies of gulls. The opening of the sea arch is too narrow to pass through by boat, but when the sea is calm, the captain can position the stern partway into the opening so that passengers can look up at the ceiling for a close-up view of the effects of erosion.

The limestone formations are masses of calcium carbonate formed through the accumulation of biological matter, such as shells and coral. They date back 250 million years to the Permian Period and contain fossils of ancient marine organisms. At Shirasaki Ocean Park, the boat skirts the limestone formations of the headland, getting close enough at points for clear views of the rock faces.

Short tours last 30 minutes and end by turning away from the headland for a final panorama of the formations on the return to harbor. One-hour tours continue to the south and include a visit to Yura Bay for more views of the coastline. With prior notice, the captain can prepare chum for passengers to feed to the gulls during longer cruises. Cruises can be combined with fish filleting and other experiences offered at the fishing harbor. Reservations are required for all activities, including boat cruises.