

## **Walk the Chiririn Lovers' Road to Chiringashima Island**

The small, uninhabited island of Chiringashima is a symbol of love. For much of the year, it is separated from the Satsuma Peninsula by 800 meters of water. But under the right conditions, a sandbar emerges from the sea, creating a narrow but walkable isthmus that connects the island to the peninsula. This sandbar is called the Chiririn Road.

Kagoshima Bay is a deep, bowl-like caldera that drops off steeply from the shoreline, and Chiringashima is located at its mouth, where the water is relatively shallow. From March to October, the Kuroshio Current flows in and out of the bay, depositing sand between Chiringashima and the mainland. In the winter months, when the Kuroshio Current weakens, the prevailing north winds push the sand back out to sea, the sandbar disappears, and the island and shore are separated once again.

The island's romantic associations come partly from the seashells that can

be found along the sandbar. When the shells of two similarly sized blunt cockles (*Lunulicardia retusa*) are put together, they form a heart shape, and according to local legend, anyone who finds a pair of matching shells will find love. During the warmer months, busy beachcombers can be seen walking the Chiririn Road, looking for their two perfect halves.