

# Travel Guide of Scenic Byways in Kyushu.

## Q-⑤ Munakata Historic Byways

**Munakata region (Munakata City and Fukutsu City) in Fukuoka Pref. —History road of Karatsu kaido, Town of white wall, and Munakata Taisha Shrine (World culture Heritage) —**

Between the two major cities of Kitakyushu and Fukuoka in the northern part of Kyushu, there are several small and medium-sized cities along the coast of the Genkai-nada sea. Among them, there are two cities, Munakata and Fukutsu, which are collectively referred to the Munakata area.

The bird's eye view of Munakata area is a beautiful view of arc-shaped sand beaches tied in a chain. Behind the sandy beach are hills and small mountains, with small and medium-sized rivers flowing towards the sea, forming a small plain. Despite the suburbs of two big cities, there are still some peaceful rural towns and fishing villages.

By the way, we can point out two perspectives that characterize the Munakata region. One of them is the history and heritage of marine people of the Munakata region since ancient times.

In other words, ethnic groups of the sea settled in the Munakata area, and Munakata clan appeared in the 4th century and played a role in trade with the continent. At the same time, by connecting the islands of Genkai-nada Sea, they became to pray for the safety of the voyage, which is the origin of Shinto in Japan.

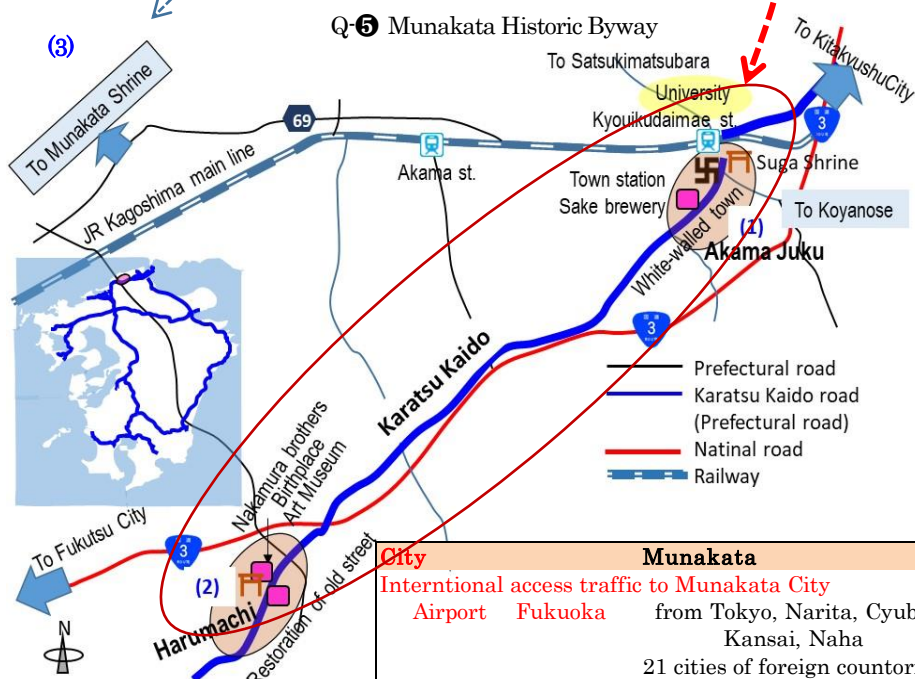
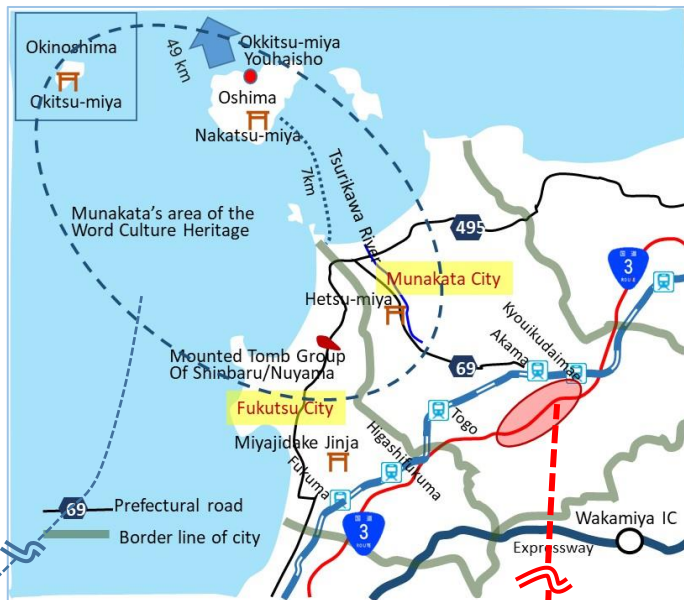
Since then, it has been handed down from generation to generation, and in 2017, related sites in Okino-shima island and Munakata area were registered as World Cultural Heritage.

The current situation is as shown in the map above. Looking at Tsuyazaki District on the north side of Fukutsu City, which is in adjacent to Munakata City, the fishing port is connected to a small inland sea, and several groups of ancient mounted tombs are dotted on inland hills. In addition, Munakata Taisha (Shrine) in Munakata City is nearby.

The second is Karatsu Kaido Road, which runs through the Munakata area. Karatsu Kaido has two routes from the Kokura area in Kitakyushu to Koyanase and Wakamatsu. They joined together in the Akama area of Munakata City. And it reached Karatsu (Saga Prefecture) via Hakata (Fukuoka City).

Therefore, the Munakata area is an important part of Karatsu Kaido, and from the Middle Ages to the present, we have seen and listened to various events that have shaken the country. This includes Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea, the Meiji Restoration at the end of the Edo period, and the modernization of industry during the Meiji period.

Of course, the biggest concern of visitors to this area is Munakata Taisha Shrine, a World Cultural Heritage Site. However, a tourism organization for that purpose was established by Munakata Taisha, local governments and tourism associations, and various activities are being carried out. Leaflets, guidebooks and



Munakata	
<b>City</b>	
International access traffic to Munakata City	
Airport	Fukuoka from Tokyo, Narita, Cyubu, Kansai, Naha
	21 cities of foreign countries
Kitakyushu	from Tokyo
Railway	High-speed Kokura st. Hakata st.
Conventional	Akama st. (Togo St.)
	Kyokudaimae st.
	(Kagoshima Main Line)
Length of main route	about 5km
Further information	Munakata Toulst Association
	Tel +81-940-62-3811 FAX +81-940-62-3821

related maps are already available. (<http://www.okinoshima-heritage.jp>).

Meanwhile, people in the Munakata area, including residents along Karatsu Kaido, have long supported and maintained the faith



of Munakata Taisha. For this reason, the content introduced here is mainly about walking around the area along Karatsu Kaido.

In other words, the purpose of this landscape road is to visit Munakata Taisha Shrine and go around the old streets (Akamajuku town and Harumachi district) where the people of the Munakata area who supported it live.

**(Area and main route).** From the Edo period to the Meiji period, Karatsu-Kaido Road was the main transport route in the Munakata area. However, in 1890, Akama Station on the JR Kagoshima Main Line was built, and major local government facilities were relocated there. As a result, commercial functions along Karatsu-Kaido Road declined, and development stagnated. The Akama inn-post town in the scenic area has turned into a residential area, and the adjacent Haru-machi Town has returned to its former quiet village.

Therefore, along the Karatsu-Kaido, an old streets with white walls and lattice windows is preserved or reproduced. You can also explore the historic streets of the Munakata district and enjoy the atmosphere of the old town and village.

The main route of Munakata Scenic spots is a section along Prefectural Road 75 from the slightly southwest intersection of the Educational University Front Station on the Kagoshima Main Line, and includes a part of the prefectural road No.503. Even if a connecting section is added on the way, the total length is only 5 km, which is the shortest of 15 scenic routes in Kyushu.

Karatsu-Kaido Road was an important historical road where Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who ruled the country at the end of the 16th century, walked towards Nagoya Castle in Karatsu City and dispatched troops to the Korean Peninsula. In the attendance system of the Daimyo (Sankin-kotai), which was forced to live in Edo (current Tokyo), the lords of Fukuoka and Karatsu and their servants marched this section every year.

Furthermore, many revolutionaries and activists went back and forth between Haru-machi and Akama-Juku towns due to the overthrow of the shogunate in the late Edo period and political activities in the early Meiji era.

In short, this scenic Munakata area is not just a visit to the Munakata Shrine. By adding a tour of the important Munakata landscape area of Karatsu Kaido that connects various areas in northern Kyushu, you can know important historical events from ancient times to the present, while supporting the shrine.

**(Access)** . By combining railways and roads, access to the Munakata area from the airports in Fukuoka and Kitakyushu is as follows: From Fukuoka Airport, it takes 5 minutes to Hakata Station by subway, and about 30 minutes to Akama Station by limited express train. On the other hand, it is 35 minutes by airport bus from Kitakyushu Airport to Kokura Station, and 40 minutes by the limited express train from Kokura Station to Akama Station.

Except for limited express trains, only local trains stop at Kyouiku University Front Station. Therefore, if there is no convenient connection, the bus or taxi from Akama Station is convenient for the final access to the scenic spots. (See the map).

When using the expressway from Fukuoka Airport, you can arrive at Wakamiya IC on Kyushu Expressway via the Fukuoka IC. If using Kitakyushu Airport, you must proceed to Kanda IC, and drive about 1.5 hours west on East Kyushu and Kyushu Expressways to Wakamiya IC. In either case, if you go about 8 km northwest from Wakamiya IC on the Kyushu Expressway, you can reach Akama Town by passing through Prefecture Road 75.

#### (1) District of Akamajuku machi



(1) Susa Shrine in the Akamajuku inn-town



(1) Akamajuku Town Festival



(1) Old Store House (1893) (Home of Idemitsu Sazou).  
(Tangible Cultural Property of Country)



(1) Town Walking Map of the Akamajuku Town



Akama-juku (now Akama's town) in Munakata City is an old post-inn town along Karatsu-Kaido Road. If going a little southwest on the road of the front station of the Educational University on JR Kagoshima Main Line, you will reach a T-shaped intersection and the main gate of Suga Shrine will on the left. From that intersection, Akama-juku is the street town of about 600m along Prefecture Road 75.

In the middle of the street, you can find old style houses and historical monuments. The house of Mr. Sazo Idemitsu, who are the founder of Idemitsu Kosan's petroleum company, is registered as a national tangible cultural property, and was a typical store house making in the Meiji era. Also, Mr. Sazo Idemitsu is known for his great contribution to the reconstruction of the ruined Munakata Taisha and the investigation of the world heritage site.

You can also see the town-station called "Akamakan", and the factory of Katsuma Sake Brewery. The end in the old town is the intersection called as Kamae-guchi (entrance of post-inn town).

As mentioned above, from the Edo period and to the Meiji period, Akama's town flourished as a base in the Munakata region. Daimyo's accommodation (Honjin), spare accommodation (Waki-Honjin), bulletin board (Toiyaba), county office (Gun-ya), etc. were built. Even in the Meiji era, the neighbouring area was very active in the coal mine, and many shoppers gathered extensively here. It was said that you could get everything when going to Akama's town.

In 1890, however, Akama Station on the JR Kagoshima Main Line was newly constructed in its current location a little away from the old town. In addition, after World War II, a bypass adjacent to National Route 3 was built, and a large residential complex was constructed. As a result, the old town was left behind in development, and its function as a town declined.

Fortunately, in the latter half of the 20th century, a university moved from Fukuoka City to Akama Town. This means that the function of student town has been added to the old town and the function of town has been restored. As seen in the photo (1), the Akama Festival (costumes parade) in February is held to coincide with the opening ceremony of "Sake" brewery in the New Year, and is crowded with many students.

## (2) Remolded Town in Haru-machi

When advancing 3.5km from Akama-juku on Prefecture Road 503, the Haru-machi (town) of about 350m is located along the old the Karatsu-kaido road, as you can see in photos. The commercial facilities in this town also moved to the area of the national road bypass as the motorization progressed. So, an important issue for the town was to revitalize the old streets and promote the activities.

The community organization was established to promote the reconstruction of the town. Shops such as Konjac, butcher, soba noodle and antique store have been re-opened by the use of old houses. There is also an art museum with renovated barn.

In other words, you can enjoy the atmosphere of a town from 100 to 150 years ago in a group of facilities that have remodeled an old village in Kyushu.

## (3) Okinoshima Island and associated sites in the Munakata area (World Cultural Heritage)

Apart from the details, this is a brief introduction to World Heritage, Munakata Taisha & Okinoshima Island. The ancient Munakata clan ruled the Munakata area and had excellent navigation skills. In addition, ancient rituals were held in and around Munakata Shrine and prayed for a safe voyage between Japan and the Asian continent. Originally, this ritual took place on a large rock, but there were various change in the way.



(2) Signboard for Guide at the Entrance of Harumachi Town



(2) The remodeled Street in Nostalgic Harumachi Town





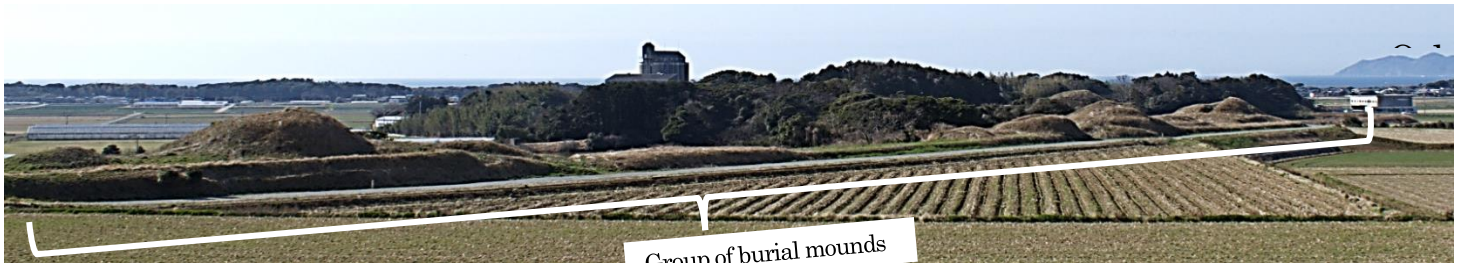
(3) Okitsu-Miya (Shrine)



(3) The Place to worship the Okitsu-Miya in Oshima Island



(3) Nakatsu-Miya and Hetsu-Miya in Munakata Taisha (Shrine) in Munakata City



Group of burial mounds

(3) Shinbaru-Nuyama Mounted Tomb Group, Fukutsu City

The current shrine system consist of Okitsu Shrine on Okinoshima Island, Nakatsu Shrine on Oshima Island, and Hetsu Shrine on Kyushu main Island. (See the map and Photo (3)). In particular, the farthest Okitsu shrine is an isolated island where no one lives, people's landing is severely restricted, and it is impossible for women to land on the island as a custom. In addition, it is forbidden to take out even one tree, one grass and one stone.

As a result, many of the ancient artifacts dedicated to God of Okinoshima are left intact, and many of them are important treasures of the country. Citizens cannot land directly at Okitsu Shrine, but worship place is set up in the Oshima island instead.

At the Hetsu Shrine, the main building and the hall for worship were rebuilt in the 16th century, and are now designated as national important culture properties. In other words, there is no other shrine mechanism to pray across the sea.

There are tombs in Shinbaru and Nuyama near the coast of Fukutsu City. These are the tombs of the ancient Munakata clan, a marine tribe responsible for rituals at shrines such as Okinoshima. There are five keyhole-shaped tombs, 35 circular tombs, and one rectangular tombs.

An important event of these shrines is the autumn festival. The festival is known for its maritime parade with hundreds of fishing boats and amazing marine events, as shown in photo (3). As a result, the gods of the three shrines gather and pray at the outdoor rituals ground near Hetsu Shrine.



(3) Marine Parade in the Autumn Festival of Munakata Shrine

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