



Q-13 Amakusa Islands Drive

Kami-amakusa City, Amakusa City and Reihoku-machi Town (Kumamoto Pref.)—**Rebellion of Amakusa-Shimabara, Sunset Road in West Coast, and Geopark Island**—

The Amakusa Islands are more than 120 large and small islands on the border between Kumamoto and Kagoshima, and are included in Shimabara-Amakusa National Park. The scenery route area of "Amakusa Islands Drive" consists of five important islands among them, and belongs to Kami-amakusa City, Amakusa City and Reihoku Town as local governments.

Many islands in this scenic area are tied by bridges. Amakusa Five Bridges was built in 1966. In 1974, the Amakusa Seto Ohashi Bridge between Amakusa-Kamishima Island and Amakusa-Shimoshima Island, and in 1997, the Haiya Ohashi bridge connecting Amakusa-Shimoshima Island and Gesu-Shima Island was built. In short, islands from Uto Peninsula to Gesu Island are connected by a lot of long bridges.

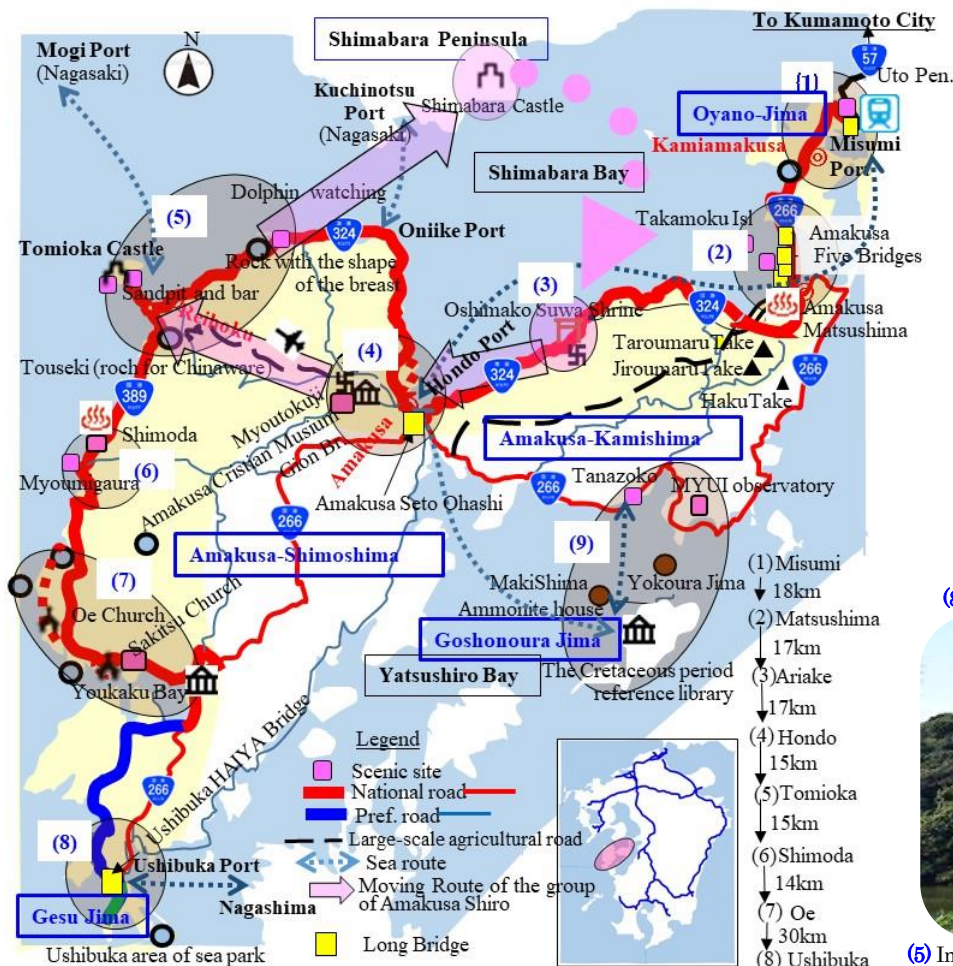
The Amakusa Islands have experienced several remarkable events related to home and abroad. Christianity spread to the Amakusa Islands in the mid-16th century. Also, four boys of the Tensho mission to Europe brought a Gutenberg printing press to the island,



(1) Amakusa First Bridge (Tenmon Bridge) crossing Misumi Strait

and published a book of Aesop's stories ahead of other places in our country at the end of the 16th century.

Amakusa, on the other hand, is islands of hidden Christians persecuted by the Edo Shogunate in the 17th century.



(8) Fossil of Dinosaur in Goshoura Island



(8) Fossil of Ammonite of Goshonoura Island



(5) Impregnable Tomioka Castle in Reihoku-machi Town.

(Main Road). The following is an overview of roads and traffic for traveling the Amakusa Islands.

The Misumi West Port, which is registered a “World Industrial Heritage in the Meiji era”, is located at the tip of the Uto Peninsula and is the starting point of this scenic route. The main roads on the islands are National Routes 266, 324 and 384, but some spots require the use of prefectural roads. Gesu Island needs to drive by car on prefectural and city roads, and the Goshono-ura Islands must be approached by boat, and prefectural road 333 is needed in islands.

(Access). The Amakusa Islands can be reached by plane, boat or car. There are flight courses from Amakusa Airport to Fukuoka Airport and Kumamoto Airport. By boat, there are routes from Mogi, Shimabara, Misumi-higashi and Nagashima to Amakusa. There are also JR Misumi Line and high-speed buses from Fukuoka City and Kumamoto City to Misumi Town in Uki City or Hondo Area in Amakusa City. Due to these traffic conditions, access to islands is very convenient.

(Scenic Resources). The scenic route has two important resources. One was the riot in Amakusa and Shimabara from 1637 to 1638, led by a 16-year-old Christian boy, Amakusa Shiro. Coincidentally, he was about the same age as the Orleans maid, Jeanne d’Arc, who died at age 19.

The battle started at Suwa Shrine (3) in Amakusa-Kamishima Island. After fierce battles at Hondo Castle (4) and Tomioka Castle (5), the rebel farmers crossed Shimabara Bay. Then, they built a barricade at Shimabara Castle on the Shimabara Peninsula and desperately resisted. This story is similar to the Hebrew escape from Egypt in the Old Testament.

Eventually, however, over 30,000 farmers were killed or committed

suicide. No such tragedy can be seen anywhere in the world.

Christianity was subsequently banned and forced to switch to Buddhism, but in the southern part of Amakusa City, hidden faith of Cristian continued for over 200 years. After the Meiji era, the ban on Christianity was lifted, and the Oe Church and Sakitsu Cathedral were built. Five literary youths visited these churches from Tokyo to learn about European literature and tackle its development. That is the work of "Five pairs of shoes," and in that sense, Amakusa is the beginning of modernization in Japan.

Another attraction is the Geopark of Amakusa Islands. An important place is the Goshono-ura Islands where fossils of dinosaur and ammonites were found. On the west coast of Amakusa Shimoshima Island, there are strangely shaped rocks, and a Tropical Ocean Park in the south. In addition, the Amakusa Islands are a production base of ceramic stone, accounting for 80% in the whole country.



(1) Misumi Port (1887) of World Industrial Heritage



(2) Amakusa 4th-Bridge (Maejima Bridge)
(Kami-Amakusa City)



(3) Octopus Highway (National Road No.324).



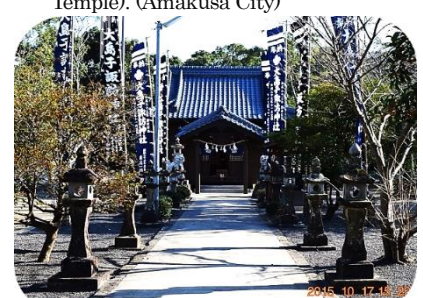
(3) Trace of Nanban-Ji Temple (Current Shokakuji Temple). (Amakusa City)



(2) Isles in Amakusa Matsushima and 5 Bridges in Amakusa Pearl Line.



(4) Statue of Amakusa Shiro. (Amakusa City)



(3) Ooshimako Suwa Shrine of started point of Battle (Amakusa-Kamishima)

(1) Misumi Port & (2) Amakusa Pearl Line Road.

The first bridge of "Amakusa-Gokyou (Five Bridges)" is called Tenmon Bridge, and it crosses the Misumi Strait near the current Misumi West Port. The section of the five bridges from the 1st bridge on National Route 266 is called Amakusa Pearl Line. As some scenic spots along Amakusa Pearl Line, there are "Amakusa Shiro" Memorial Hall and Takamoku Tombolo Island. After crossing these five bridges, you will arrive at the Matsushima Onsen (hot spring). From the hillside observatory, you can see interesting views of many islands like a miniature garden.

(3) Area along Shimabara Bay.

When going from National Route 266 to National Route 324, there is a section nicknamed "Taco (Octopus) Road". If you enter a side street from the Taco road, you will find the ruins of an old Christian church (Nanban-ji Temple) built in the 16th century. At the peak, more than 3,500 people became believers, and Nanban culture developed. However, after the riot of Shimabara-Amakusa (1637~1638), Nanban-ji Temple was destroyed. Instead, Shokaku-ji Temple was built to convert to Buddhism, but it has a unique atmosphere compared to a pure Japanese style of temple.

(4) Area of Hondo Castle.

Then, if you pass Oshimago Suwa Shrine on the way and cross Amakusa Seto Ohashi Bridge, which has a loop approach, you arrive at the center of Amakusa City. A fierce battle in the Amakusa rebellion was fought in the Yamaguchi River and the ruins of Hondo-jo castle. It is said that the water near the stone bridge in the river was stained with blood.

The rare stone girder bridge with many pillars is 28.6m long and is a national important cultural property. The monument shown in photo (4) is for the war dead in both troops. The luxurious Myotoku-ji Temple was founded in 1645 to change the religion from Christian to Buddhist.

If you stop by the nearby Amakusa Christian Museum, you can learn more detail about the rebellion between Amakusa and Shimabara and hidden Christians.

(5) Dolphin Watching and Tomioka castle ruins in Reihoku Town.

The main attractions in this area are the ocean dolphin watching and Tomioka Castle.

At the entrance of Shimabara Bay in the northwest of Amakusa Shimoshima Island, you will be thrilled to see a group of dolphins from the boat.



(4) Arch Stone Bridge (14.3m, 1879) in Kusuura, and Japan's largest Stone Girder bridge (Gion Bridge, 28.6m, 1832). (Amakusa City)



(4) Martyrdom thousand people mounds. (Amakusa City)



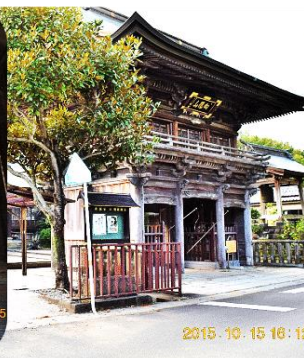
(4) Hondo district (CBD in Amakusa City) and Amakusa-Seto Ohashi Bridge with loop approach.



(5) Dolphin Watching Tour in Amakusa Bay Mouth.



(5) Strange Rock seen at low tide. (Reihoku Town)



(4) Tower Gate with Nio-Guardians of Myoutokuji Temple

Next, while looking the natural rocks in the shape of a chest made of waves (Phot. (5)), you will arrive at the Tombolo Island. As you can be seen from the harsh island topography, it is the island of Tomioka Castle that even the Amakusa Rebellion could not occupy.

In the Edo period, the Amakusa domain was under the direct control of the Shogunate, and the magistrate's office was in Tomioka Castle. The castle offers views of Tombolo and the sandbar. Tomiokajima is a great spot to learn about Amakusa's history, beliefs, and the sea.

(6) & (7) Southern area (Oe and Sakitsu) in Amakusa City

After going south on Route 389 and returning to Amakusa, you will arrive at Shimoda Onsen (hot springs). Further south, you can enjoy the eight beautiful views of the Amakusa sunset over the strange rocks.

There are two famous churches in the south. By pouring his property, French priest Garnier built an elegant white Oe church on a hill to spread Western culture.

On the other hand, in the Edo period, there was a Shoya (village mayor) residence adjacent to the Sakitsu fishing port. There, under the Christian ban, the villagers were tested to see if they could step on the picture of Christ to prove they were not Christians. And after the Christian ban was lifted, the magnificent Gothic church, Sakitsu Cathedral (1934), was built in the same place. In addition, Christians hiding around the church built their villages for agriculture and fishery. It has a unique landscape and is now an important cultural and regional landscape of our country.



(7) Fishing Port and Church of Sakitsu District (Amakusa City)



(7) Ooe Church (Amakusa City)



(7) Replication of Gutenberg Printing Machine (Amakusa Collegio Museum)



(8) Ushibuka Haiya Ohashi

(8) Ushibuka Area in Amakusa City.

Ushibuka district is the birthplace of Haiya folk music, in which "Haiya" means the south wind. The song and dance began at a party held temporarily by a crew member who stayed at the port to wait for the wind of the voyage. Every spring, a large-scale dance parade is held near Haiya Ohashi Bridge.

(9) Goshoura Islands in Amakusa City.

Goshoura-jima Island is accessible from several ports on Amakusa Kamijima and Shimojima, and the main port is Hondo Port. However, as shown in photo (9), when you use Tanasoko Port on Amakusa Kamijima, you will encounter

a rare village landscape surrounded by stone walls. Although it is a device to prevent strong winds in each house, it is close to the port and can be reached in about one hour, so it is recommended to access from Tanasoko Port, too.

The Goshoura Islands in Amakusa City were once a world geopark. However, it is currently designated as a Japan Geopark along with other Amakusa islands. Dinosaur skeletons and ammonite fossils have been discovered and displayed in the fossil park and the island museum.

It would be interesting to roam the island to find fossils in the stone walls and stones of home garden. You can also rent a bicycle on the island to see the lives of the people of the island where nature and fossils coexist.



(6)~(8) Sunset Scenery at the Southern West Coast in Amakusa Shimoshima.



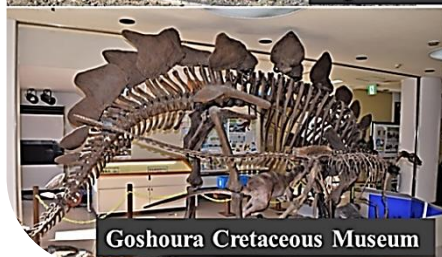
(5) Amakusa Island and Tomioka Bay from Tomioka Castle.



Nigaki Fossil Park



Tour of fossils in the garden



Goshoura Cretaceous Museum

(9) Goshonoura Islands of fossil (Japan Geopark).



(9) Houses surrounded with Stone Walls for Wind Protection in Tanazoko District.

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