

Sado Island



SADO GOLD AND SILVER MINE

Places to visit on Sado Island

THE HISTORY OF SADO GOLD AND SILVER MINE

Sado possessed the largest gold and silver mine in Japan. It has a 400-year heritage spanning economic ups and downs from its opening in 1601 to its closure in 1989. The development of the Sado gold and silver mine was fully underway by the middle of the 16th century. During the Edo Period (1603-1867), it provided the resources to support a monetary economy both in and outside Japan as the largest gold and silver mining operation in the country. The landscape of the gold and silver mine and the adjacent mining town are still visible nowadays, and the remains of mining-related facilities from different periods of mining history are well preserved. During the Meiji Restoration, which started in 1868, advanced technology from the West was also introduced to further Japan's modernization. A group of former mining-related facilities are preserved as modern industrial heritage sites in Aikawa Gold and Silver Mine, the hub of gold and silver mining at the time. **The site is a nominated candidate for the UNESCO World Heritage List.**

UNMISSABLE SIGHTS AT THE SADO GOLD AND SILVER MINE

AIKAWA GOLD AND SILVER MINE

(Sodayu tunnel/Doyu tunnel)

The full-scale development of the Aikawa gold and silver mine began in 1601 when Sado was under the control of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

The *yamashi* (mine managers) were called into Sado from the mines of Iwami (Shimane Prefecture) and other areas in Japan. They introduced new and cutting-edge techniques in surveying, drainage, and smelting (cupellation, cementation with sulfur, cementation with salt). These techniques transformed the Aikawa gold and silver mine into one of the largest excavation sites in the world. The Edo-period Sodayu tunnel and other mining facilities are open to the public. There is also a gold mine museum where visitors can learn in detail about the living conditions at the mine when it was in operation. A symbol of the Sado gold and silver mine is the remains of the surface mining site of the Doyu vein, excavated during the Edo period. The opening of the Doyu vein extends to a depth of 74m and a width of 30m, splitting the mountain in two.



KITAZAWA FLOTATION PLANT

The Kitazawa area in Aikawa is home to a group of facilities, such as a power plant and a thickener (a designated national historical site), which contributed to the modernization of the mines. The flotation method had originally been used for copper, but at the Kitazawa flotation plant, the same techniques were applied to silver and gold extraction. It was the first time in the world that the method was successfully used to extract silver and gold. During wartime, a large-scale investment was made to increase plant productivity. As a result, the flotation plant could process over 50,000 tonnes of ore per month and was declared the greatest one in the East.



SADO MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE

Established by Okubo Nagayasu in 1603, it was the centre of Sado's mine management and governance during the Edo period. It was restored in 2000.



Places to visit on Sado Island

NATURE

ONOGAME

Onogame is a 167-metre-high monolith projecting into the sea, a truly majestic sight. The giant rock gained two stars in the Michelin Green Guide of Japan. The surrounding area is where amur daylily (*Tobishima kanzo*) grows in clumps, with one million flowers in 500 thousand amur daylilies. Many people visit there when yellow flowers come into full bloom. The blooming season is from late May until early June.



MOUNT DONDEN

Mount Donden, officially named Mount Tadaramine, encompasses a whole highland area which includes three mountains above 900m. The nickname Donden in Japanese indicates mountains with rounded tops. Mount Donden is located at the heart of the steep Osado mountain group and is the only one with gentler inclines in the whole chain. The surrounding area is a treasure trove of alpine plants and wildflowers. Mount Donden has been newly added to the list of the top 100 mountains and top 100 flower-covered mountains in Japan. Many trekkers visit there from April to early Summer.



OSADO ISHINA NATURAL CEDER FOREST

The walking trail in Ishina's natural cedar forest allows everyone to enjoy a hike in the mountain surrounded by beautiful cedar trees at an altitude of 900 metres. You can reach the starting point of the hiking trail by car. Along the 650-metre-long trail, you can see giant trees, some of which were given nicknames such as *Zogesugi* (ivory cedar) or *Hagoromosugi* (magic robe cedar) in a competition. Some of the cedar trees look warped under the influence of strong winds or the humidity of the fog. Trees which were deemed unsuitable for timber were spared from cutting down. Some of the trees are over 300 years old.



SENKAKUWAN BAY

Senkakuwan is one of the best scenic spots in Sado, often compared to the fjords in Northern Europe. Senkakuwan bay is an ensemble of five small bays stretching about 3 kilometres from Himezu to Kitaebisu. Someone has compared it to the beautiful steep rocks of Hardangerfjord in Norway. It is an impressive series of steep rocky spires and spurs, about 30 meters high. The surrounding area is a marine park. From the viewing deck at Agheshima Yuen, you can view the entire bay and enjoy the panorama from different angles aboard a pleasure boat.

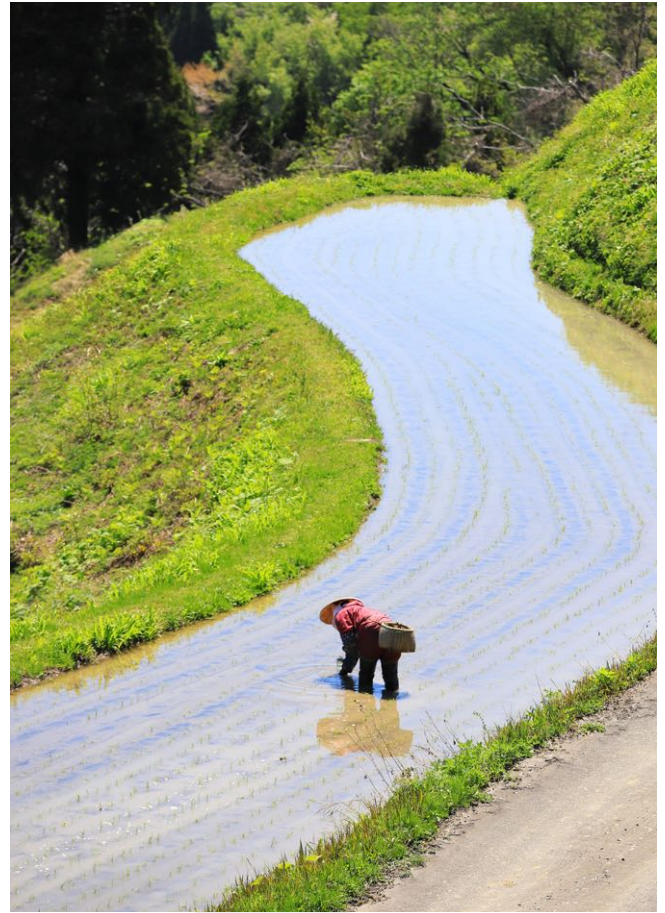


CULTURE AND TRADITION

Places to visit on Sado Island

IWAKUBI RICE TERRACE FIELDS

The development of gold mines on Sado Island led to a rapid increase in the population. The sudden growth led to a higher demand for food supplies. This increased need gave impulse to the development of rice cultivation in various parts of the island, even in hilly areas considered unsuitable for agriculture. Iwakubi terraced rice field stretches in the mountains over 350m high in the Iwakubi area, and about 460 paddies remain today. Even though the conditions on the flatlands are more favourable, traditional farming methods are still being used and passed on while preserving the beautiful scenery. Sado's agriculture has been recognized as a World Agricultural Heritage Site (GHIAS). Here, agriculture preserves the beauty of the countryside landscapes and protects the ecosystem of rice paddies by reducing the use of agricultural chemicals. As a result, the Japanese crested ibis could return to live in their original ecosystem.



SPRING FESTIVAL IN SADO AND ONI-DAIKO (Shinto Diety) Dance

In April, spring festivals are held throughout Sado island. In particular, on April 15th, the local *Oni-Daiko* perform their *kadozuke* ceremony in about 40 villages. In Japanese folklore, the *Oni* (demons or ogres) are considered mischievous creatures of the netherworld to be avoided and fought back; in Sado island, instead, the *Oni* have a positive connotation and are seen to be incarnations of the gods. *Kadozuke* is a ceremony in which several *Oni-Daiko* (demon drummers) go around the villages from house to house and perform their propitiatory ritual at the entrance. The *Oni-Daiko* performance calls on the gods to rid the homes of evil spirits and misfortune, and all the families who receive a visit are offered a lucky charm.



Noh (能/ Traditional Performing art of Japan)

Noh theatre is a traditional performing art unique to Japan with a history of over 650 years. It combines drama, dance, singing and instrumental accompaniment, and its main themes are myths and legends. The art of Noh was perfected by the actor Zeami, who was exiled to Sado Island in 1434 after losing the patronage of the shogun. After the Meiji Restoration (1868), Noh theatre fell into decline. Not many Noh stages are left nowadays; however, a third of Japan's Noh stages can be found on Sado Island. This is because it is continuously practised by ordinary people who, though not professional actors, are passionate about the art form. There are various kinds of masks used in Noh: men and women of all ages, demons, gods, animals etc. Although Noh masks seem to be expressionless, various emotions can be expressed by simply changing the angle of the head just slightly.



Local foods in Sado Island

KANBURI (winter yellowtail)

The yellowtail, a migratory fish, finds plenty of food in the northern seas during summer; then, in late autumn, it begins to migrate south. In early winter, the so-called *huri-okoshi* (thunders accompanied by cold waves) signal the arrival of the yellowtails. The robustly flavoured *kanburi* sashimi is so fatty that soy sauce beads up on contact. It goes exceptionally well with Sado's local sake, too. One of the best ways to enjoy this fresh fish is by savouring it as a refreshing *shabu-shabu* with vegetables. Other ways of enjoying *kanburi* are *teriyaki* (grilled with soy sauce) and *huri-daikon* (simmered with daikon radish).



RED PEPPER SHRIMP

Shrimp caught in the surrounding sea is called sweet shrimp, but in Niigata, they are popular as *nanban-ebi* (red pepper shrimp) because their bright red colour and shape resemble hot red peppers. They are characterized by a distinctive mellow texture and sweetness and make crowd-pleasing sashimi and sushi toppings.



FRUITS KINGDOM SADO ISLAND

OKESAGAKI (Okesa Persimmons)

Sado produces two varieties of astringent persimmons (*shibugaki*), Hiratanenashi and *Tonewase*, which are marketed under the brand name *Okesagaki*. Sweet and juicy persimmons are one of Sado's specialities. As there are no seeds inside, they are easy to eat. *Okesagaki* feature a soft, melting texture and are rich in vitamin C. You can enjoy them in many ways, such as *sawashigaki* (which has their astringent taste removed), *hoshigaki* (dried), as liquor or wine, and even sorbet, among others.



PEARS (Le Lectier)

Le Lectier is a pear variety, also known as Rare Pears, or Lady of Pear. Le Lectier pears are characterised by a pleasing, rich fragrance, and a luxurious sweetness with moderate acidity. They also feature a melting texture and soft flesh. Just one bite and you will love this pear, which is one of the best of its kind.



HIKING/TREKKING/CYCLING

Things to do in Sado

ISLAND MOUNTAIN WALKS

Feel the unique nature of Sado with all of your senses.

In the Osado mountain range, a series of peaks reaching a height of 1,000 metres, you can enjoy hiking and encounter scenery and vegetation unique to this remote island: the view of the Sea of Japan from the ridge line, natural cedars bent into complex shapes by the snow and an overwhelming abundance of wildflowers. After descending the mountain, your weary body will reinvigorate by soaking in the hot springs and tasting gourmet seafood.

RECOMMENDED ROUTES

Donden Highland to Hakuundai Traverse Route

This is a traverse route from Donden Highland Lodge to Hakuundai. As you proceed from the first peak, Matone, you will see the mountains you are about to climb and the Kuninaka Plain. The Sea of Japan shines in the sunlight on your left, and a glimpse of the Sotokaifu district appears on your right. The walk alternates between forested areas and open ridgelines, with gentle ups and downs that make the walk challenging. Along the route, you will see an endless variety of flowers.

Donden Highland hike (suitable for beginners)

This is a circular route to enjoy the Donden Highland. It is a relatively safe trail with few elevation changes, but nonetheless full of beautiful sights. First, you will climb from Donden Highland Lodge via the road and then a forest path to the traverse leading to Mount Kinpoku. Although you will be walking along forest roads, the mountains of Sado will not disappoint. Even along the forest road, you will see many flowers.

Osado Ishina Natural Cedar Walking Trail

(suitable for beginners)

Cedars usually evoke images of vertical straight trees. However, the natural cedars of Sado Island have withstood a harsh environment with winter snowfall and strong winds blowing from the continent for many years; as a result, they have developed warped, beautiful and curved shapes. The Osado Ishina trail is an easy way to see this beauty up close. The ground of this promenade is covered with woodchips, making it very easy to walk on.

ISLAND CYCLING ROUTES

Here we introduce some routes to enjoy the unique lifestyle, culture, and nature of Sado in a relaxed way by bicycle. Enjoy a pleasant ride through Sado's scenery with your friends and family! Rental bicycles with electric power assistance, "Eco-Da-Chari," are also available.

RECOMMENDED ROUTES

Sadoichi circular route around Sado Island (130km)

Estimated duration: 8 hours 30 minutes

This round-the-island itinerary features the highlights of the 210 km-long Sadoichi route. It affords spectacular views of the Z slope and Onogame rock. This route allows cyclists to take in the pristine countryside of Sado where the Japanese Crested Ibis (a nationally protected species) lives, and the traditional rural scenery of Sado in the first part of the route.

Lake Kamo route (21 km)

Estimated duration: 2 hours 30 minutes

The area around Lake Kamo has a well-maintained cycling road with few ups and downs and is very easy to ride along. Convenience stores and supermarkets are located close by in downtown Ryotsu, making it easy to refuel with drinks and other necessities.



Things to do in Sado

MARINE ACTIVITIES

With a coastline of approximately 280 km, Sado is said to have all the coastal landforms of Japan, including sandy beaches and reefs, allowing visitors to enjoy a variety of marine leisure activities, and of course, swimming in the sea. Sado's crystal clear waters, rich fish life, and unique underwater topography attract many divers every year. Even if you do not have a diving license, you can enjoy the marine world through snorkelling. Sea kayaking has recently become popular. Kayaks can take you to places that are inaccessible by boat, such as the caves of Ogi, where the "Blue Grotto" Ryuodo Cave is located, and the caves of the Outer Sea. Schools of fish will pass under your kayak, and you will enjoy a spectacle otherwise not visible from the coast.

Kotoura Cave (Ryuodo Cave)

Located at the southernmost point of Sado Island, the Kotoura Caves feature a variety of formations. Among the caves, Ryuodo is the largest and was formed by the erosion of submerged lava. On sunny days, the cave shines bright blue like the famous blue cave in Capri, earning it the nickname "Sado's Blue Grotto". The cave has two entrances; the one facing the sea can be accessed by sea kayak, *tarabune* (wooden tub boat), or motorboat. This is one of the most popular scenic spots in Sado's beautiful seas.



Tarabune (wooden tub boat)

Originally used as washtubs, these traditional oval boats are somewhat similar to barrels. They are said to have been invented in 1868 and were mainly used for fishing for seaweed and shellfish because big waves are not common in the area. There are different versions and stories about how these tub boats came to life. Some say that centuries ago, some ingenious enterprising person sliced a miso barrel in half and used it as a boat. The locals started giving it a name, *hangiri*, which means half a barrel.



TRADITIONAL OLD TOWNS

Shukunegi

Shukunegi went through a prosperous 17th century thanks to gold mining in Sado and developed as a port of call for the merchant shipping industry. Facing a small inlet, Shukunegi is characterised by rows of over 100 houses with wooden-plated walls made from ship planks. It has been designated as a National Important Preservation Area for Traditional Buildings and Architecture. Three private houses are open to the public (admission charges required), and the entire Shukunegi village represents how important ship-related industries were for the island.



Kyomachi street in Aikawa town

Kyomachi street is a thoroughfare connecting Aikawa's gold and silver mines with the Sado Commissioner's Office. The road leads up the hill from Shimokyomachi, where the time bell tower is located, through Nakakyomachi to Kamikyomachi. In the past, many residences of mine workers and merchants used to stand side-by-side on this street. Kyomachi street is crossed by several narrow alleyways and is a testimony of the haphazard town planning during Aikawa's time of prosperity.



CULTURE

TAKIGI-NOH

On summer nights, this programme is performed at the Noh theatre or outdoors on a temporarily erected Noh stage surrounded by bonfires. Sado is the island to which Zeami (the most famous Noh master) was exiled. Noh theatre did not become widely popular until the start of the Edo period. The first Sado magistrate, Okubo Nagayasu, is said to have brought Noh culture to the island. As part of the Shogun's demesne, Sado's Noh evolved into the unique *Shinji Noh*, dedicated to the temples, and gained popularity as the "Noh of the people".



Things to do in Sado

TATAKOU KAN (Sado Island Taiko Center)

This facility is operated by the Kodo Cultural Foundation. It is located on a hill in the area adjacent to the Kodo village. The hall is an open space with excellent acoustics and is made of wood from Sado Island. An original large *taiko* drum, handmade from a 600-year-old zelkova tree, is also on display. A variety of programmes are offered, including drumming lessons by taiko instructors.



ANNUAL EVENT

EARTH CELEBRATION

The Earth Celebration is one of the oldest outdoor festivals on Sado Island, now in its 35th year. In 2018, it was voted "No. 1 destination satisfaction for foreign tourists" by Japan Guide, a website introducing Japan. It is an international arts festival that Kodo has been hosting with Sado City since 1988. Artists and cultural personalities from Japan and abroad are invited to Sado to create a global cultural crucible through the interaction of diverse cultures in the rich natural environment of the island. In 2019, a staggering 27,000 visitors attended the festival during the three most important days.



Our recommended programmes

Agricultural Experience

Iwakubi Shoryu Rice terraced fields

Enjoy the beautiful Japanese landscape and learn about traditional agriculture

The development of gold mines on Sado Island, which began in the Edo period, led to a rapid increase in the population. Therefore, it became necessary to produce more food for the people, and rice paddies were developed in hilly areas that had not been cultivated before.

Iwakubi Shoryu terraced rice fields, located at an elevation of 350 meters above sea level, are one of those areas. Today, approximately 460 rice paddies remain, and even though the conditions are less favourable than on the flatlands, traditional farming methods are still being carried on while preserving the beautiful scenery.

Sado's agriculture has been recognized as a World Agricultural Heritage Site (GHIAS). The agriculture in Sado preserves the beautiful countryside landscape, protects the ecosystem of rice paddies by reducing the use of agricultural chemicals, and as a result, preserves the environment in which the Japanese crested ibis can live. On Sado Island that we want to preserve these agricultural methods and pass them on to future generations. We invite you to come and see it for yourself and interact with the people who farm at Iwakubi.

Highlights:

- ✓ The beauty of local landscapes - Walking on terraced rice paddy fields.
- ✓ Traditional agriculture in Sado - Preserving the terraced rice paddies.
- ✓ Taste the rice of Sado Island - The rich flavour of rice grown with great care and effort.



Sado Matsuri Experience

Festive dish cooking experience and Oni-Daiko

The development of the Sado gold and silver mines in the Edo period was like a gold rush. People from all over Japan gathered on Sado Island. They founded new villages in various parts of Sado Island and blended their original culture and customs with the local culture of Sado. *Oni-Daiko* (demon drumming), is an ancient traditional ritual performed on festival days to pray for a good harvest and safety and is one of the examples of the diversity of Sado's peculiar culture. The 120 or so *Oni-Daiko* teams on Sado Island are family unique, and no two are alike. They have maintained the traditional performing style that was handed down from their ancestors, and will pass it on to the next generations.

On this tour, you will learn about Sado's traditions during festivals. You can experience cooking and eating dishes served on festive occasions, enjoy the fun demonstrations of *Oni-Daiko*, the typical drumming performance of Sado festivals.

Highlights:

- ✓ Learn to cook the traditional festive dishes
- ✓ Watch or take part in an *Oni-Daiko* performance
- ✓ Taste the festive dishes made by you, and local specialties



Recommended itineraries

FROM SADO - 2 nights/3 days

1st Day

- 10:47 Pick up at Ryotsu port.
- 12:00 - 13:00 Lunch at Aikawa town.
- 13:00 - 13:30 Strolling at Kyomachi Street at Aikawa town.
- 13:30 Visit "Kirarium Sado" (See movie of Sado gold mine history).
- 14:00 - 15:30 Visit the historic site of Sado gold and silver mine.
- 15:45 Stop at Kitazawa Floatation Plant.
- 16:15 Check-in hotel.
- 17:30 Start from hotel.
- 18:00 Sado festive dish cooking experience and Oni-Daiko.
- 20:30 Terminate at hotel.

2nd day

- 08:00 Depart from hotel.
- 9:00 - 14:00 Agricultural experience at Iwakubi Shoryu terraced rice fields.
- 14:00 Depart from Iwakubi area.
- 15:00 - 16:00 Strolling at Shukunegi town.
- 16:00 - 16:30 Riding on *taraibune* (Wooden tub boat).
- 17:00 Arrive at hotel.

3rd Day

- 09:00 Depart from hotel.
- 9:30-11:00 Motorboat tour to Kotoura Cave (Blue Grotto).
- 13:30 Arrive at Ryotsu port.



FROM SADO - 3 nights/4 days

1st Day

- 10:47 Pick up at Ryotsu port.
- 12:00 - 13:00 Lunch at Aikawa town.
- 13:00 - 13:30 Strolling at Kyomachi Street at Aikawa town.
- 13:30 Visit "Kirarium Sado" (See movie of Sado gold mine history).
- 14:00 - 15:30 Visit the historic site of Sado gold and silver mine.
- 15:45 Stop at Kitazawa Floatation Plant.
- 16:15 Check-in hotel.
- 19:00 Dinner at hotel.

2nd day

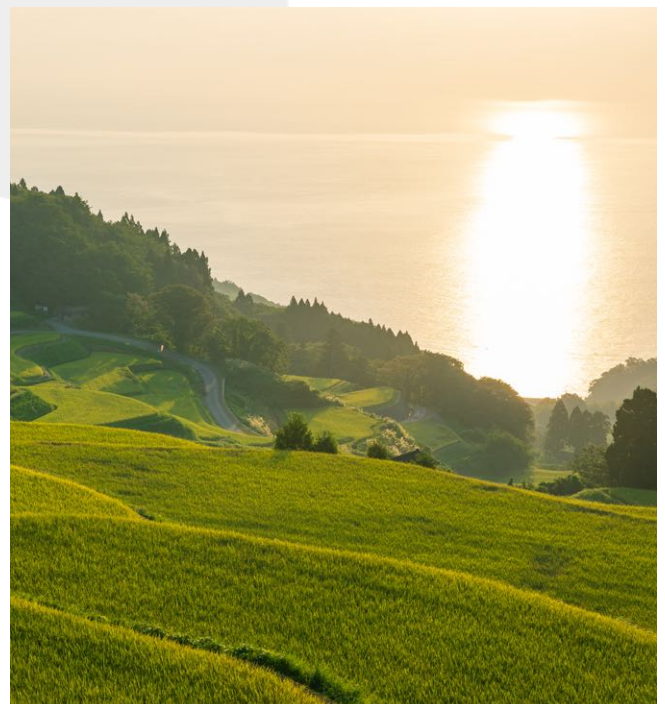
- 08:00 Depart from Hotel.
- 9:00 - 12:00 Donden Highland hike (For beginners).
- 12:00 - 13:00 Lunch at Donden mountain lodge.
- 14:00 Check-in at hotel.
- 14:00 - 17:00 Free time.
- 17:30 Start from hotel.
- 18:00 Sado festive dish cooking experience and *Oni-Daiko*.
- 20:30 Terminate at hotel.

3rd Day

- 08:00 Depart from hotel.
- 9:00 - 14:00 Agricultural experience at Iwakubi Shoryu terraced rice fields.
- 14:00 Depart from Iwakubi area.
- 15:00 - 16:00 Strolling at Shukunegi town.
- 16:00 - 16:30 Riding on *taraibune* (Wooden tub boat).
- 17:00 Arrive at hotel.

4th Day

- 09:00 Depart from hotel.
- 9:30 - 11:00 Motorboat tour to Kotoura Cave (Blue Grotto).
- 13:30 Arrive at Ryotsu port.



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