

## How to Experience and Connect with the Land at Muroto Global Geopark

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Muroto Global Geopark is located on the Muroto Peninsular in the east of Kochi Prefecture. As the land here continues to be uplifted by earthquakes, even now the culture and history of its determined people vibrantly remains. Close to the coastline stand tall marine cliffs topped with flat, wide terrace plains. These marine terraces are symbolic geographical features of the land in Muroto. They were formed by glacial sea level change in the Pleistocene and uplift from earthquakes, causing them to rise around 2m every 1000 years. The terrace plains with the largest surface area were formed in the latest interglacial stage and at some points reach an elevation of 200m. They tell of the scale of uplift that has taken place in Muroto.

One of the features of the Muroto area is how the results of geological uplift have become a part of the peoples' lives. The terrace plains provide good drainage and abundant sunlight, and the people have made extensive use of them as farmland. Also, in the past Muroto prospered as an open sea fishing town, while presently the ports of Muroto are thriving from fresh seafood catches. These ports are known as excavated ports. Here you can see a unique view, where the seafloor of the ports is excavated, and the houses around the ports are around 7 to 8 meters above the water level. This is the result of continuous excavation required every time the land is uplifted by earthquakes. In this way, the people of Muroto have understood the nature of the changing land, and developed methods to live with it.

The greatest charm of the Muroto Global Geopark is without doubt the geotours guided by local residents. Stories from the formation of the land to the activity of the people are called forth by the words of the local guides. Presently there are three geotours on offer at the Muroto Global Geopark.

### <Cape Muroto Guided Tour>

At the tip of the Muroto Peninsula, jutting out into the Pacific Ocean, is Cape Muroto. A promenade stretches along its coastline. Here you get up-close and touch the geology of the Shimanto Belt Accretionary Complex, which provided the first on-land verification for the theory of plate tectonics. 365 days a year you can experience this on a guided tour as you walk through the cape's subtropical and coastal vegetation that is cultivated by the warmth of the Kuroshio current.

### <Mt. Dannotani Guided Tour>

At the Mt. Dannotani Site in the north of Muroto Global Geopark a number of giant cryptomeria grow wild, with trunks larger than 10m in circumference. The locals continue to care for the forest here and as well as cryptomeria, there are a number of other evergreen trees, along with wild deer and monkeys. On this tour, you can observe this ecosystem that flourishes upon land formed by an accretionary complex.

### <Kiragawa Township Guided Tour>

In the east of the geopark is the Kiragawa Township Site. This area has been recognized as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings. Here you can see the form of a traditional Tosa Domain townscape. From the mid-19th century, the township prospered from the production of Tosa Binchotan charcoal. Now, wherever you look you can see examples of the wisdom of the people in the ways they protect themselves while living amongst the climate of Muroto, with its strong winds and rain.

There is much to witness and experience on these guided tours: the formation of the land at Cape Muroto, the prosperous ecosystem that lives upon it at Mt. Dannotani, and the harmony in which the people live with the land at the Kiragawa Township. The way of life of the people of Muroto is about accepting the changing land, utilizing it and living with it. Japan rests upon a mobile belt, and is prone to earthquakes and volcanoes. This way of life in Muroto might just be a signpost for how the Japanese people should live.

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