

Amakusa: Land of Living Faith

Faith and Prayer despite Suffering

Oe and Sakitsu Catholic Churches, Where the Flame of Faith has been Preserved

Under the Edo-era government, the oppression of Christianity and the persecution of Christians became increasingly severe. With the Meiji Era, however, freedom of religion was officially recognized and Christians of Hidden Faith began to reveal themselves. Today, the churches of Oe and Sakitsu are cherished as symbols of spirituality and fortitude.

Let members of The Amakusa Treasure Island Association be your guides. See P23 for details.

●Amakusa Shiro Memorial Hall [A-7]



The historical background of the Rebels of Amakusa-Shimabara as well as the influence of European culture is introduced through exhibits and a powerful 3-D film show using state-of-the-art visual technology.

- 977-1 Oyano-machi-naka, Kami-Amakusa City (within Amakusa Shiro Park)
- Open: 9:00~17:00 (Enter by 16:35 from May~Nov., and by 16:20 from Dec.~Apr.)
- Closed: 2nd Wed of Jan, 2nd Wed of June, and Dec. 29th~Jan.1st
- Tel/Fax: 0964-56-5311
- Admission: Adult ¥600, Junior-High or Younger ¥300, Infants free
- *10% discount for groups of 20 or more.

●Oe Catholic Church [E-1]



Oe Catholic Church was one of the first churches built after the ban on Christianity was lifted. The present church building was built in 1933 through the concerted effort of local parishioners and Fr. Garnier from France who dedicated his life to the spreading of the Gospel message.

- 1782 Oe, Amakusa City
- Open: 9:00~17:00, Closed: Mondays
- Tel: 0969-22-2243 (Amakusa Treasure Island Association)
- Admission: free

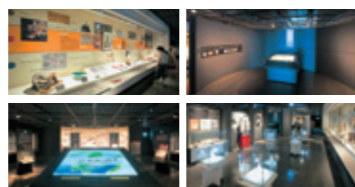
- * Mass is held on Sunday mornings, please refrain from sightseeing at this time.
- * A church is place of prayer. Please keep a respectful manner in the church.
- * Use address based GPS navigation for the church.



Informative displays introduce the Christian Heritage of Amakusa

●Amakusa City Christian Reference Hall [C-4]

On the hilltop of Shiroyama Park near the Mound of 1000 Martyrs (killed during the rebellion) and other Christian graves, the Amakusa Christian Heritage Hall reopened in July 2010. Overlooking the center of Hondo City, the hall houses four display zones of which tell the story of local Christian history with particular focus on the Amakusa-Shimabara Rebellion. On display is the camp flag of Amakusa Shiro - designated as a National Important Cultural Property.



- 19-52 Funano-o-machi, Amakusa City
- Open: 8:30~18:00 (Enter by 17:30)
- Closed: Dec.30th~Jan.1st
- Tel: 0969-22-3845
- Admission: Adult ¥300, High-School ¥200, Younger Students ¥150
- *20% discount for groups of 20 or more



Amakusa Shiro's holy Banner



Romanesque Oe Catholic Church stands on a hilltop

Timeline from the Introduction of Christianity

1566: (Warring States Period) Christianity introduced to Amakusa

A new western European culture is introduced together with Christianity.



1589: The Golden Age of Amakusa Christian Culture

A Catholic seminary - the "Collegio" - opens in Amakusa and the Christian population is estimated at 250,000 in the islands.

- ◆1603 Edo Shogunate Government is established by Tokugawa Ieyasu (The Edo Period begins)
- ◆1612 The Tokugawa regime increases the severity of Christian persecution -

1613~ Period of Christian Oppression

Crop failures are devastating on a national scale. Famine and starvation sweep Amakusa. Taxes are maintained at crippling high levels and the persecution of Christians continues. The people of Amakusa are in desperate straits.

- ◆1633 The Edo Government announces Japan's isolation policy. Foreigners are restricted to Nagasaki and Hirado, (First National Isolation Order)

1637: (Kan'ei 14) Rebellion Breaks Out in Amakusa and Shimabara

Discontent breaks into protest over the ruinous taxes and ban on Christianity. People turn to Amakusa Shiro for leadership and the Rebellion of Amakusa and Shimabara takes hold of the region.



Amakusa Shiro Tokisada, a Legendary Hero

Amakusa Shiro, famous as the unifying force of the Rebellion, was named commander of the rebels when he was only 16 years of age. As a young, handsome and rather mysterious figure, Amakusa Shiro has left many stories and legends still repeated today.

1638: (Kan'ei 15th) Hara Castle falls on Feb. 28th marking the end of the Rebellion

- ◆1639 The Edo Government issues Japan's Isolation Policy #5.

1641: Amakusa is placed under the direct control of the Edo Government. Suzuki Shigenari is inaugurated as the first local governor.

Suzuki Shigenari makes great contributions to restoring the region after the devastations brought during and after the rebellion. He also commissions the building of temples and shrines to bring peace to hearts of the people. He demonstrates his dedication to the people by halving his salary which is paid in local rice. Though a representative of the Shogunate, he advocates on behalf of the local population despite dangers to himself. When his son takes over after his death, his request for a reduced salary is granted.



1659: During the 2nd generation of the Suzuki governorship, a requested deduction of the lord's salary in rice tribute is granted.

1907: A group of Japanese writers renowned for "Five Pairs of Shoes" visits Fr. Garnier

A group of famous writers, Yosano Hiroshi (Tekkan), Kitahara Hakushu, Kinoshita Mokutaro, Yoshii Isamu, and Hirano Banri travel through Kyushu primarily to visit sites of Christian culture. They meet Fr. Garnier and, impressed by the Christian history, exotic environment, and beautiful natural environment of Amakusa, they collectively publish their journals of this trip entitled "Five Pairs of Shoes". Their experiences during this trip greatly influences their literary activities and gives birth to a style referred to as Southern European (literally Southern Barbarian). A new wind of creativity blows through Japanese literature.



1933: Oe Catholic Church is built during the ministry of Fr. Garnier

1934: Sakitsu Catholic Church is built during the ministry of Fr. Halbout.

