

KARATSU/GENKAI

Adventure Travel

A journey exploring the food and livelihoods brought by the Sea of Genkai

“Karatsu” is written as “唐津” in Chinese characters (Kanji) and means a port leading to the continent. It is said that rice, the center of Japan's diet, was introduced to Karatsu from the continent long ago. Japanese people have devised ways to make the rice even tastier and have pursued ingredients and cooking methods that go well with the rice.

Karatsu is the perfect place to find these ingredients. The plateau provides good winds and a good environment for growing crops. The rich nutrients from the mountains are carried by the great rivers, which also support the rich sea. The people who live here are grateful for the blessings of nature in their daily lives. On this trip, let's use e-bikes to pursue the culture of Karatsu, which has been passed down from generation to generation, such as food, people's lives, and gratitude for the blessings of nature!



- Area: Karatsu City & Genkai Town, Saga Pref.
- Main Activity: Cycling around Karatsu area
- Difficulty: 3
- 1 nights 2 days
- A cycling guide (2 people including National Interpreter Guider will take care of you)
- Support vehicle and luggage transfers.
- PAX: Minimum 4 / Maximum 8
- Price: JPY 120,000 (Accommodation not included) /person

❖ Course Features

- Two national guide interpreter and a cycling guide will run in front of and behind the support car to ensure everyone's safety.
- A course with varied landscapes: You can enjoy a wide variety of landscapes including the sea, mountains, and countryside.
- Aroma of history and culture: You can experience the culture of Karatsu by visiting historical sites such as Karatsu Shrine and other places of historical interest.
- Fresh seafood: You can taste fresh local seafood at the Yobuko morning market and grilled turban shells at Cape Hado.
- Breathtaking views: The terraced rice paddies of Oura, the terraced rice paddies of Hamanoura, the Nanatsu-gama, and Tatekami Rock offer breathtaking views.
- Lots of ups and downs: The route has many ups and downs, but you can easily cycle the whole way by using an e-bike.

Day 1



Karatsu Castle

The starting point is JR Karatsu Station. We will start our trip around Karatsu and Genkai on rental e-bikes. First, we will go to the observation deck of the castle tower of Karatsu Castle to enjoy the magnificent 360-degree panoramic view of the castle. Let your thoughts drift to the next two days of cycling with a view of the Uwaba Plateau surrounded by the vast Sea of Genkai where we will be heading



Matsurokan

Matsurokan, which exhibits artifacts from the Nabata Ruins, the birthplace of Japan's oldest hydronic rice cultivation, visitors can learn about the ancient history of rice cultivation and the roots of the food culture brought by the Sea of Genkai.

Ancient "red rice" was once the staple food of the people of Karatsu, and over the years it has been bred and improved, evolving into the white rice of today. During the harvest season, visitors can listen to a story about the "red rice." In addition, a pit dwelling and ancient rice paddy field have been restored in the nature-rich plaza.

Kirigo Agricultural Products Market

Enjoying the scenery as it transitions from city area to hilly terrain, we head for Kirigo Agricultural Products Market. The e-bike is a comfortable way to ride up hills. The farmers' market, where we can arrive after riding through the peaceful countryside, sells a wide variety of fresh local vegetables and fruits. Enjoy talking with the farmers while eating their specialty, Kirigo-Botan-dango (mochi rice cake).



Kokumin Shukusha Irohajima

You will enjoy a lunch full of the bounty of the Sea of Genkai, including Kamado-cooked rice (Hearth-cooked rice) and fresh seafood, at a wonderful restaurant with a view of the islands of Imari Bay with its tranquil waves through the window.

The people of Karatsu have devised various ways to make their rice more delicious. Fresh seafood from the Sea of Genkai and vegetables grown on the Uwaba Plateau have become the best "side dish" to complement the rice. In this way, the Japanese food culture of combining "rice" and "side dishes" was born and has been passed down through the generations.



Mishima Shrine

Mishima Shrine in Genkai town is approaching as you climb up the hill with a dynamic view overlooking Iroha Island and other beautiful islands, and then take the road along the sea where the wind blows pleasantly.

The festival, a local tradition with a history of over 560 years, is famous for its heroic autumn festivities. In this festival, two Mikoshi (portable shrines) are loaded onto a boat and paraded through the bay with boats flying big fishing flags before being enshrined at Mishima Shrine. Here, you will listen to local people about the culture of the close connection between fishing and faith.

Hamanoura Terraced Rice Fields

The Hamanoura area of Genkai town, facing a small cove, is covered with terraced rice paddies that run up the slope like a staircase from the shore. This landscape has continued since the beginning of rice cultivation in Japan, when land was scarce.

While viewing the beautiful landscape built by the wisdom and efforts of our ancestors, please listen to the farmers of the terraced rice paddies talk about the hardships and joys of rice cultivation and their vision for the future, and feel the importance of living in harmony with nature.

Cape Hado

Cape Hado is famous for its "Grilled turban shell store," where turban shells are grilled right in front of you. Enjoy the delicious taste and conversation while having freshly caught turban shells grilled in front of your eyes with their expert hands. You will stay at Kokumin Shukusha Hadomisaki, which is located near the store and has a spectacular view of the blue Sea of Genkai and the horizon. You will enjoy a variety of dishes that make the most of seasonal ingredients, such as fresh squid caught in the waters around Cape Hado.

During the time till meals, you can enjoy a bicycle ride around the cape and enjoy the beautiful sunset. Cape Hado is also a wonderful place to watch the sunrise. We recommend waking up early in the morning to watch the sunrise over the Sea of Genkai.

Day 2



Yobuko morning market

On the second day of the trip, we will ride from Cape Hado to the Yobuko morning market.

The Yobuko morning market, which has been held since the Taisho era (1912-1926), is famous as one of the three major morning markets in Japan. Nearly 50 stalls line the 200m street, selling freshly caught seafood, processed goods, vegetables, and flowers.

Visitors can enjoy fresh seafood, local specialties, and the company of the stall holders at this lively market.



Nanatsugama Cave

If you take a sightseeing boat from Yobuko Port, you can see Nanatsugama (a sea-eroded cave that looks like a row of seven kamado (hearths)), which is designated as a national natural monument, up close.

Viewing the magnificent scenery created by the power of nature and long history from the sea will give you a different impression.

Karatsu Shrine

If you ride along the pleasant road along Karatsu Bay back to the city area, you will find Karatsu Shrine, with its eye-catching white torii gate, located in the center of the city. The shrine is famous as the site of Karatsu Kunchi, a three-day harvest festival held every year from November 2nd to 4th.

Here, you will have a special opportunity to listen to the priest talk about the history and culture of Karatsu.

Hikiyama Exhibition Hall

Fourteen floats registered as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage "Yama, Hoko, Yatai, Float Festivals" including Karatsu Kunchi's Hikiyama event are exhibited in one place. The main body of the floats, which is over 200 years old, is designated as a Prefectural Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property.

Here, visitors can experience the roots of Karatsu's food culture, "rice," the livelihood of the people who support it, and the gratitude expressed in "Karatsu Kunchi."

Sakanadokoro Kameyama / Taikoh (liquor store)

Today, an increasing number of restaurants in Karatsu are serving kaisen-don (bowls of rice topped with seafood). The restaurant that sparked this kaisen-don boom is Sakanadokoro (Fish Restaurant) Kameyama. Here, you will have the popular kaisen-don. The Nakamachi shopping street, also known as the kitchen of Karatsu, offers other places to eat and drink in addition to kaisen-don.

At the end of the trip, you will get off your e-bike and visit a long-established sake shop, where you will hear about sake made from rice from the owner. Sake can be tasted and purchased, so sake lovers can choose their favorite one.