



What is Enoshima?

Enoshima is a small island, located in Fujisawa City (Kanagawa prefecture), approximately 400 meters from the shore. Its circumference is about 5km and roughly 60 meters above sea level. Since olden times, Enoshima has attracted many people due to the popularity of Benzaiten (originally a Hindu goddess, Sk. Sankata), its long history and tradition and beautiful scenery and for this reason, the island has been depicted in many (shippo en) woodblock prints. On clear days, magnificent Mt. Fuji can be seen across the bay. When the tide is low, a phenomenon called a tombolo (spit or bar) appears, connecting the island with the shore.

1 Enoshima Shrine Memorial Dragon Lanterns

According to the "Origins of Enoshima," Enoshima appeared with the goddess, Benzaiten, in 552 C.E. The dragon lanterns were constructed in 2003 to celebrate the 1450th anniversary of Enoshima Shrine.

2 Enoshima Benten-bashi (Bridge) (Length: 389m)

The first wooden bridge to Enoshima was built in 1891. Before that, at high tide, visitors used small boats or piggybacked to go over to the island. A causeway for cars was built for the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games.

3 The Morse Monument

Dr. Edward S. Morse, well known for his discovery of the Omori Shell Mounds in Tokyo, established Asia's first marine laboratory on Enoshima. Although he stayed here for only one month, Morse studied many kinds of ocean life, making Enoshima the birthplace of marine biology in Japan.

4 Enoshima Yacht Harbor

This was the first yacht harbor for official competitions in Japan. It was built in 1964 for the Tokyo Olympic Games and the present Enoshima Yacht Club House was built in 2014. In 2020, the sailing competition of the 32nd Olympic Games was to be held here as well but it will now take place in 2021. About 1,000 yachts are moored here and the harbor is alive with people enjoying sailing. There are also other facilities, such as the "Turban Shell Island" and the "Tide Pool" on the Center Promenade, which let you "Feel" the ocean firsthand and enjoy the natural aquatic scenery.

5 Bronze Torii Gate

The "Seido no Torii," the bronze torii gate at the entrance to Enoshima, was built in 1823 and is a Designated Cultural Asset of Fujisawa City. The names of the many donors can be found on both columns, demonstrating the popularity of Benzaiten during the Edo period (1603-1868). The plaque atop the gate has the name of the main deity "Enoshima Daimyojin." After passing through the gate, enjoy the bustling crowds heading up toward the shrine and the many souvenir shops lining the narrow street, which has remained almost unchanged over the years.

6 Iwamoto-ro Inn

Until the end of the Edo period, Iwamoto-ro was called Iwamoto-in. As administrator of Enoshima, this Buddhist temple supervised the main shrine and two other temple-shrine sites. It authorized permits and approvals for the island's activities, including lodgings. During this time, when Benzaiten worship was popular, Iwamoto-in thrived as a lodging site for visiting imperial envoys, shoguns and daimyo (feudal lords). It is said that Benten Kozo, one of the five characters in a popular Kabuki play, was modeled after a servant at Iwamoto-in.

11 Haonden (An octagonal hall housing the statue) Hadaka (Naked) Benzaiten Happpi (Eight-armed) Benzaiten

*Designated as an Important Cultural Asset

Enoshima Benzaiten is one of three major Benzaiten shrines in Japan; the other two are Miyajima in Hiroshima prefecture and Chikubushima in Shiga prefecture. Benzaiten is also popular as the only female deity among the "Shichifukujin" (Seven Gods of Good Fortune). People in the Kamakura period (1185-1333) enshrined the eight-armed Benzaiten worship later changed and Edo-period believers sought the naked Benzaiten's help to improve their artistic and musical skills. These two statues of Benzaiten are enshrined in a hall called "Haonden" which was remodelled in 2015. (*An admission fee is required)

12 Yasaka Shrine

Yasaka Shrine within the Enoshima Shrine precinct is for the worship of Gozu Teno, the guardian deity of Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto. This shrine's "Shinkasa" (Enoshima Tenmasu) is a dynamic festival that is held in mid-July every year. Believers carry "omikoshi" (portable shrines) from this shrine and nearby Kyuryuji Shrine into the sea to unite their deities.

13 Stone Monument from the Song Dynasty, China (Enoshima Reiseikouji Monument)

In 1239, the Buddhist monk, Roshiu visited the Chinese court in the Song dynasty as an envoy of Shogun Minamoto Sanetomo. He studied under the Chinese Zen priest, Kenin and brought back the teachings to Japan. The stone for the Reiseikouji monument is said to have been a gift from him.

15 Stone Monument of the Perennial Youth Gate (Furo-mon)

There used to be a gate here called the "Furo-mon" but only an 1861 memorial, marking its reconstruction, remains.

16 Enoshima Samuel Cocking Garden Enoshima Sea Candle (Lighthouse Observation Tower)

As this place was once owned by Samuel Cocking, a British merchant in Edo period, it is named after him. Nowadays, the theme of this garden is "international exchange." Some sections honor Fujiwara's sister cities, containing a variety of seasonal flowers and tropical trees. The lighthouse, known as the Enoshima Sea Candle, is 60 m (196'2") high and 13.6 m (44'9") above sea level. You can enjoy beautiful panoramic views of Oshima Island to the south, Mt. Fuji to the west and Miura Peninsula to the east. (*Admission fees for both the Samuel Cocking Garden and the Sea Candle are required.)

Temporary Tsunami Evacuation Site

17 Enoshima Daishi

The Shingon Buddhist temple, Saifu-ji in Kagoshima prefecture, established a branch temple in 1993. The red-faced "Akafudo" statue in the main hall is about 6m tall. Beautiful Chinese embroidery with Buddhist themes is also displayed here. You can also walk around a water lily pond in the garden that is often home to migrating birds.

18 Sacred Stone Monument with Engravings of Monkeys

On your left as you go toward Otsutsumiya Shrine, there is a curious "koshintor" engraved stone. It is one of Fujiwara City's Designated Important Cultural Assets. A total of 36 monkeys are engraved on its four sides; some dance with "eboshi" (ancient hats) or fans, some walk on a rope or climb a pole. You can find stone snakes winding round its base.

19 Torii Gate Donated by Minamoto Yorifomo

Minamoto Yorifomo, the first shogun of the Kamakura shogunate, donated this stone torii gate in 1182 to mark the transfer of Benzaiten to Iwaya Caves in order to pray for victory over his enemy, Fujiwara Hidetada.

21 Dragon's Love Bell (Byuren no Kane)

Erected in 1996, the bell reflects the theme of "love" in the legend of Benzaiten and the five-headed Dragon. Many couples come here to ring the bell and profess their eternal affection for each other.

22 Chigogafuchi Abyss

The name "Chigogafuchi Abyss" comes from the tragic tale of a "chigo" (a young Buddhist page) called Shiragiku at Sogen Temple in Kamakura, who killed himself by jumping into the deep water here. The evening glow is very beautiful on a clear day and the site is designated one of the fifty selected scenic spots in Kamagata prefecture.

23 Enoshima Iwaya Caves

Iwaya Caves were formed through centuries of tidal erosion. The system consists of two caverns: the first is 152m long while the second is 56m. These two have long been the subject of religious belief and during the Edo period, many worshippers gathered here as a sacred site of the Benzaiten faith. From the exhibits on display here, visitors can get a sense of how Enoshima's history and culture have developed over the centuries.

It is said that the roots of Enoshima Shrine come from Iwaya Caves, which are considered to be a sacred site. In the first cave, you can walk inside, carrying a candle. (If crowded, candles are not used.) In the second cave, the dragon god welcomes you. Walking along the 128m footbridge, you will be refreshed by the expansive views of Sagami Bay, Mt. Fuji, Hakone and Izu Bay. (*An admission fee is required)

24 The Red Torii Gate and Zushin-mon

The Red Torii Gate" was rebuilt and donated by Hasegawa Toshiko, head of the Yamada Koto School, in 1936. Zushin-mon, donated in 1886, was modeled after Ryugasaki (The Dragon Palace), belonging to the dragon god of the sea, Ryujin, who appears in the popular fairy tale "Urashima Taro." As "Zushin" literally means "freshly purified," we should enter as it suggests. In front of you, you can see a monument of Benzaiten with 15 young male servants, which was donated to celebrate the 1450th anniversary of Enoshima Shrine.

25 The Grave of Sugiyama Kenryo

Sugiyama Kenryo (real name, Sugiyama Waichi) was a blind acupuncturist during the Edo period, who believed that Benzaiten had taught him a technique called "tube-needle therapy." Later, he gained fame for curing the 5th Edo-period shogun, Tokugawa Iyemasa, and as an expression of his gratitude toward Benzaiten, Sugiyama built a three-story stone on the island.

26 Fukushi (Lucky Stone)

27 A stone guidepost to Enoshima

According to island folklore, the blind acupuncturist Sugiyama Waichi tripped over this stone and fell unconscious here. When he recovered, he was holding a pine needle covered with leaves. Inspired by this, he invented the "tube-needle method" for treating illnesses. He eventually became the leader of the blind acupuncturists in the Kanto region. Since then, this stone has been known as the "Fukushi" (Lucky Stone), because people say that you will have good luck if you pick up something around it. 28 A stone guidepost to Enoshima for travelers was built by Sugiyama.

29 Enoshima Shrine consists of three shrines, Hetsumiya, Nakatsumiya and Okutsumiya, each of which enshrines one of the three sisters, i.e. the goddesses of the sea, of happiness and fortune, and of the advancement in musical skills.

30 Hetsumiya

Hetsumiya enshrines Tagitsuminomikoto. This majestic worship hall was built by the Buddhist monk, Ryoshin, in 1206 and renovated in 1976.

31 Nakatsumiya

Nakatsumiya enshrines Ichihihahamamemikoto and was constructed by the Buddhist priest, Jikaku, in 853. The present colorful building was remodelled in 1996. The stone lanterns were donated by kabuki actor guild like Nakamura and Ichimura, reflecting the popularity of pilgrimages to Enoshima in the Edo period. Sukikutsu is a kind of pot with an open top, buried in the ground next to the shrine and when water drips into it, a mysterious sound can be heard.

32 Okutsumiya

Okutsumiya enshrines Tagitsuminomikoto, the eldest sister of the three goddesses. Until the end of the Edo period, the statue of Benzaiten was moved here from Iwaya Caves to avoid damage from typhoons during the summer months.

33 Ryukoji Temple (Jakko-jan)

34 Tatsunokuchi Execution Ground

35 Bussharito (Shupa)

Established by the Buddhist priest, Nippo, this temple is the holiest site in the Nichiren Buddhist denomination. A beautiful five-story pagoda was added in 1930 toward the back of the temple grounds. The main hall, reception building and the pagoda are made entirely of zelkova wood (type of elm).

Nichiren, who was a critic of the Kamakura Shogunate, was sentenced to death without the benefit of a trial. When the executioner was about to execute him, there was a peal of thunder and lightning struck the raised sword. Thanks to this miracle, Nichiren narrowly escaped death, and after spending a night in the dungeon, he was exiled to Sado Island, Niigata prefecture. The temple holds its Tatsunokuchi Honan Festival on September 12th every year to commemorate this event.

The white pagoda-shaped stupa was donated by Nichiren Myojo-ji Temple to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Nichiren's miraculous rescue and enshrines one of the Buddha's bones. This scenic place commands a fine view of Enoshima.

36 Enoshima Aquarium

You can enjoy watching a shoal of 8,000 shining Japanese piliarchs (cardinals) in the big tank that recreates Sagami Bay in front of you. Other highlights of the aquarium include the world's first living "shirusa" (whitebeak) exhibition, a beautiful jellyfish display and beach sea turtles. You can also enjoy the dolphin, sea lion, jellyfish and penguin show!

Shrine Etiquette

The way to pray

1. Bow twice.
2. Clap twice.
3. Pray in silence with your hands together.
4. Bow once more.



O-mikuji

The o-mikuji is either a scrolled up or folded piece of paper and when opened, it reveals the fortune written on it. It includes a general blessing which can be any one of the following:

- Excellent luck (大吉, dai-kichi)
- Very good luck (吉, kichi)
- Good luck (中吉, chu-kichi)
- Slightly good luck (小吉, sho-kichi)
- Uncertain luck (末吉, sue-kichi)
- Bad luck (凶, kyō)