

東京の島々 Island hopping in Tokyo

Island hopping in Tokyo is not going from one traffic island to the next! Tokyo, more specifically the prefecture of Tokyo, has more than 130 islands, among them UNESCO World Heritage listed islands sometimes referred to as the Galapagos of the east. Far from traffic and crowds, the Izu and Ogasawara Islands offer a much slower pace of life.

The Izu Islands are made up of over 100 islands. Nine of the islands are inhabited and accessible by sea or air. Visitors can simply relax and do very little or engage in a variety of marine sports.

Within the Izu Island group is Shikine-jima Island, about 160km south of Tokyo city. During the summer season the island can be reached in under two and half hours. There are

seven Izu Islands which form part of the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park. The islands are volcanic (submarine volcanoes), and another of the islands, Oshima Island, is still active.

Much further south, over 1,000km south-south-east of Tokyo in the Pacific Ocean, are the Ogasawara Islands. In 2011, they became Japan's fourth natural site to be listed under the World Heritage Convention.



be found on three islands, including Hahajima.

Subtropical trees such as the very descriptively named 'takonoki' or 'octopus trees' (d) are among those that thrive on the islands. Tourism has increased since the UNESCO listing as people come to enjoy the beautiful scenery (f) and clear waters of the islands. Also a haven for migratory species such as the



beautiful beaches such as the popular Tomari Beach (b). There are several outdoor hot springs that you can try on the island. Being a small island only 12km in circumference, hiking is a great way to see the island and sea kayaking (c) gives a different perspective of its impressive coasts.

On a clear day from the highest spot of Shikinejima, you can see as far as Mount Fuji and the Izu Peninsula on the mainland. Shikinejima is one of

More than 30 sub-tropical islands make up the Ogasawara Islands, but only two are inhabited Chichijima ('Father Island') and Hahajima ('Mother Island'). The Ogasawara islands are also volcanic in structure.

Due to the islands' isolation, plants and animals developed that are unique to the islands and there are more than 600 endemic species of flora and fauna. The Bonin white-eye (a) is a small bird that can now only

endangered green sea turtle (e), island authorities issue special guidelines telling people how to visit without bringing in stowaways, which could affect the local ecosystems.

Getting to Ogasawara takes some planning; the ferry takes 25½ hours from Tokyo City from Takeshiba Pier, the same departure point for Izu ferries. Services to islands vary with the seasons, so plan carefully!

Further information: Japan National Tourism Organisation—Ogasawara www.jnto.go.jp/eng/indepth/scenic/worldheritage/14_ogasawara.html & **Seven Izu Islands** www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/tokyo/izusititou.html; **Go Tokyo**—www.gotokyo.org/en/tourists/areas/index.html

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