

Tokyo Pulse | June 2025 vol.2

Tokyo Sugoi! - Episode 8 by Steve Gillick

Legendary Island Adventures in Tokyo!!

According to legend, the gods Izanagi and Izanami stirred the ocean with a jewel-encrusted spear. The crystallized saltwater that dripped off the spear became the 14,125 islands of Japan. Over thirty-nine islands are currently part of Tokyo Prefecture, including the three islands in the Izu chain that I've explored.

While there is plenty of adventure in Metropolitan Tokyo, those seeking a different type of getaway can indulge in gorgeous scenery, black (and white) sand beaches, volcanic craters, nature, aquatic sports, gastronomy, shochu, and super-friendly people.



Mt. Mihara on Oshima

Oshima is a two-hour jetfoil ride from Tokyo's Takeshiba Pier. Godzilla is rumoured to be biding his time inside Mt. Mihara, waiting to emerge at the next volcanic eruption. An invigorating 5-hour walk includes clambering over lava stones and boulders and peeking inside the Mt. Mihara crater, where water vapour pours from

underground vents. Other island attractions include black sand beaches, birding, onsen (hot spring baths), wood carving, and Camelia flower oil presses.



(From left top)
Oshima's Lava landscape,
Steaming vents on the Mt. Mihara
circuit walk,
Oshima's seaview

White-eyed Mejiro,
Godzilla-branded products in
souvenir stores

Dramatic outcropping of
sedimentary layers along the
highway



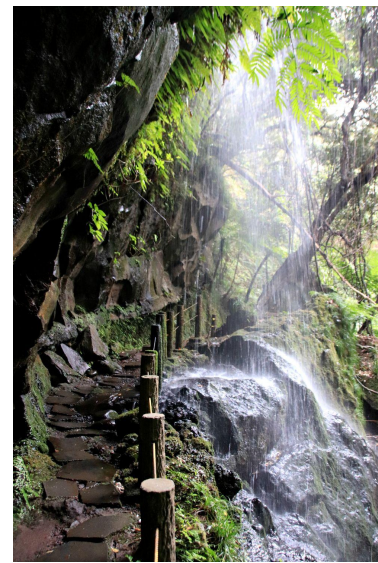
Top Left photo by Mitsuru Sasaki,
Talking Travel

The sashimi at Zakoya Kiyomaru is fresh and delicious, as are the taiyaki, the fish-shaped, red bean paste cakes at Tokyo Voneten.



Hachijojima Taiko Drumming performance

Hachijojima, or "The island of the eight jo", refers to a 3-meter length of the island's traditional yellow silk cloth, called a 'jo'. The one-hour flight from Tokyo's Haneda Airport offers excellent views of the island with one volcano at either end.



(above) Mr. Homare Yamashita of the Yellow Cloth Dream Factory at his loom making Yellow Silk Cloth (Jo)

(right) The Uramigataki Waterfall in Hachijojima

(From top)

Fishing Boat taking us to Hachijo Kojima Island, View of Hachijo-Fuji from Mt. Mihara Lookout.

Spectacular scenery complements other notable island activities: spotting the Black-footed Albatross on the small island of Hachijo-Kojima, hiking to the Uramigataki Waterfall, and enjoying the Hachijojima History and Folk Museum (currently under renovation but due to reopen on October 1, 2025).

Seafood at Aigae Suisan is umami heaven, but for the culinary adventurous, try the 'kusaya' at the Stinky Fish Store. It's tasty with ashitaba (a leafy green) and mayonnaise. A sip of shochu also helps. Shochu tasting is available at the Wine and Liquor Store and Kiyomitsu Okuyama's distillery (Hachijojima Shuzo), featuring sweet potato and camelia flower-infused shochu.

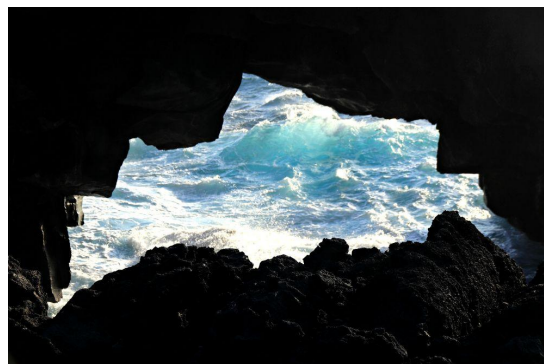
(From top) Seafood Lunch at Aigae Suisan, Sampling Shoshu at the Wine & Liquor Store. Photos by Mitsuru Sasaki, Talking Travel





Chirashi sushi lunch at Ikeyoshi in Miyakejima

Miyakejima is a 55-minute flight from Tokyo's Chofu Airport. Spring is a birders' paradise; summer is prime for swimming, fishing, and coral reef diving. Winter activities include trekking and ocean fishing. Taiko drumming, surfing, biking, and seasonal festivals add to the island's appeal.



(From left top) Hyotanyama and pyroclastic flows, seen from Mt. Sanshici

Miyakejima is the most 'volcanic' of the three islands. Visitors can walk the boardwalk over Ako Hot Spring Village, which was engulfed by lava during the 1983 eruption. The Mt. Sanshichi observation point features views of Mt. Hyotan, the black desert, and the Pacific Ocean. The Akakokko (Izu Thrush) and other endemic birds can be found at the Miyake Nature Center, and 'the eyeglass boulder' at Magane-iwa showcases stunning sunsets.



(From left) Miyakejima--Wild Pacific Ocean water views

After savouring the seafood at Ikeyoshi Restaurant, taste the wheat-based shochu at Miyakejima Shuzo.

Islands evoke charismatic charm. The three Izu islands we explored allow adventurous travellers to create their own legendary Tokyo memories.

*All photos are taken by Steve Gillick and Mitsuru Sasaki (as noted), Talking Travel



Steve Gillick loves to travel and loves to talk to people who love to talk about travel. He's been at it since 1967 when he visited nine European destinations on a school trip. Steve has had over 370 articles published in consumer and travel trade publications. To date he has explored 85 countries and over 770 destinations. He recently returned from his 22nd trip to Japan. Steve is the author of *A Symphony of Camels: Travel Adventures & Conversations Around the World*, available on Amazon.com

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