

JAPAN



The motion of the Earth from the time when the Japanese archipelago was part of the Asian continent. The San'in Kaigan Geopark is full of dynamic geological history and other wonders. Go on a trip to feel the heartbeat of Mother Earth!

Production The San'in Kaigan Geopark Promotion Council & Graduate School of Regional Resource Management, University of Hyogo March 2014/Revised in March 2024

San'in Kaigan Global Geopark

San'in Kaigan Geopark: recording earth's ever-changing activities

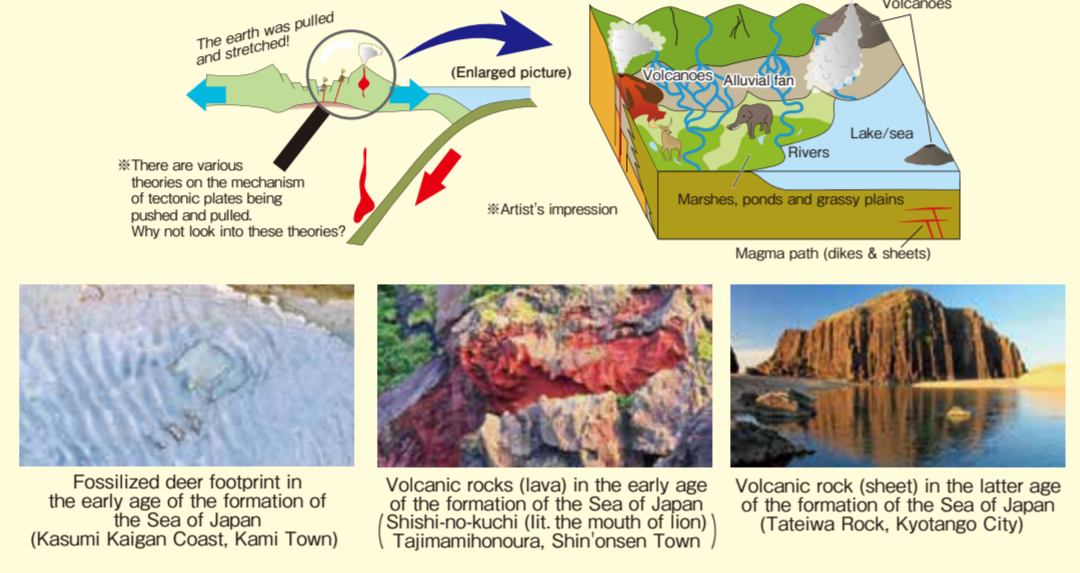
The Japanese archipelago as part of the Asian continent

Long ago, the Japanese archipelago was part of the Asian continent. As a result of volcanic activity, pyroclastic flow occurred on the surface of the earth, while magma slowly got cold and hardened to form granite deep underground.



Formation of the Sea of Japan

The edge of the continent began to split. During the separation, hollows were formed, which later became lakes and rivers. Elephants, deer and other animals lived in these freshwater areas. Later, the hollow spread to form the Sea of Japan. In the process, many volcanic rocks were made by the nearby volcanic activity.



Geological features, natural environment, people's lives, and the formation of the Sea of Japan

Activity of the Japanese archipelago

After the Japanese archipelago began to look like it does today, volcanic activity continued and at the same time, ria coasts and coastal terraces were formed, as well as deep valleys and beautiful waterfalls in the mountains. In the meantime, plains, basins and sand dunes were also formed and people began to live in this region.

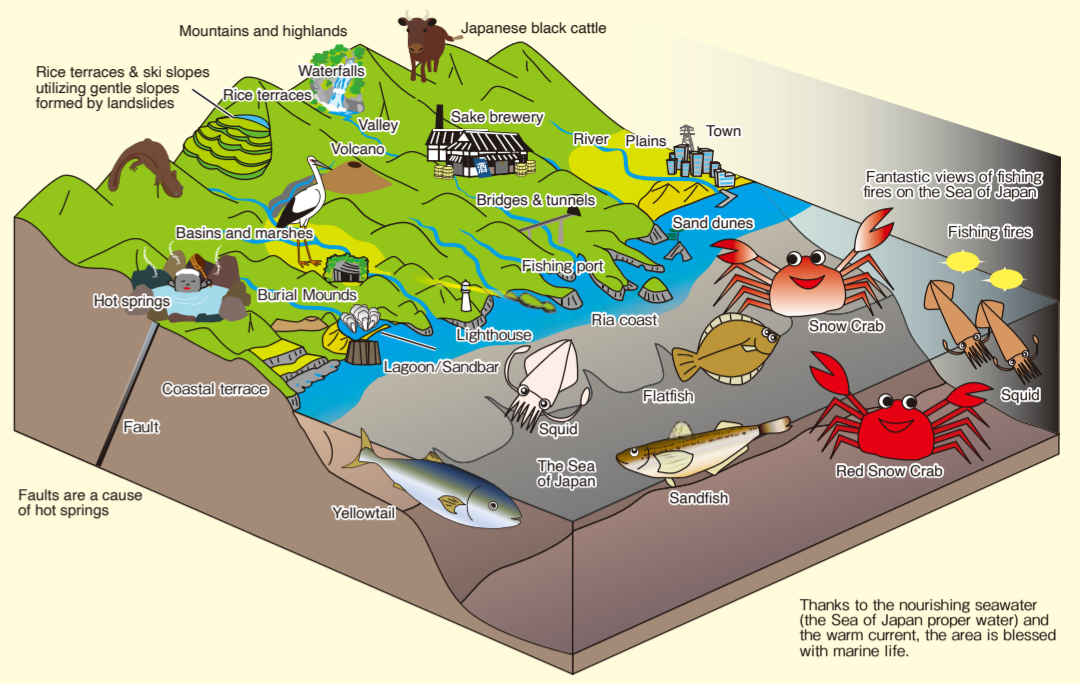


Various landscapes and people's lives in the San'in Kaigan Geopark

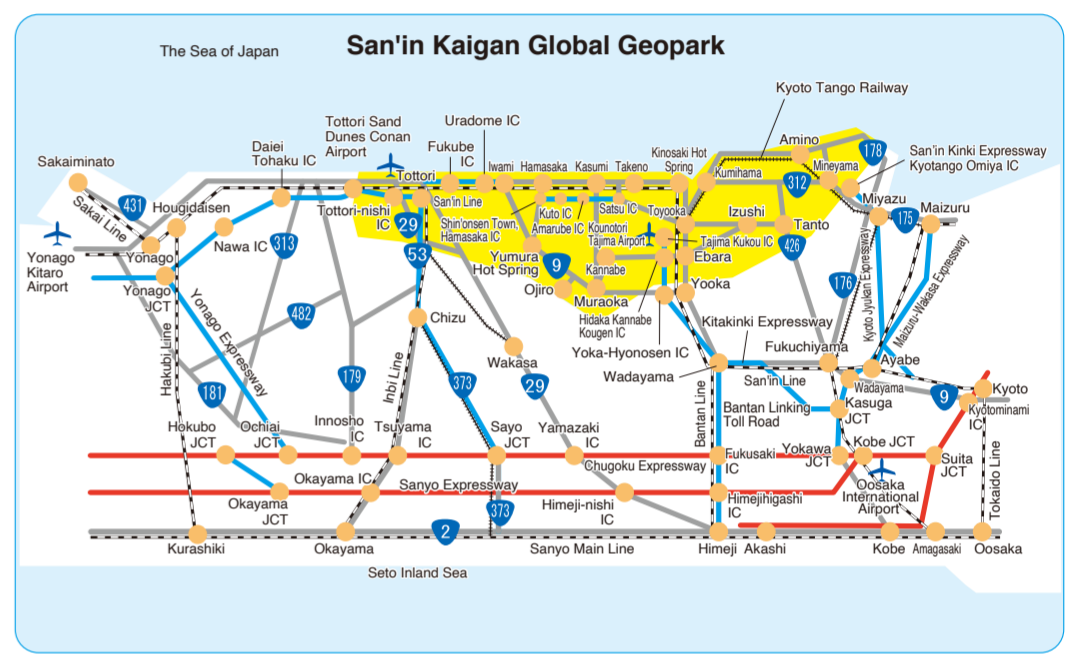
Beautiful landscapes featuring various kinds of rocks, strata, and coastal landforms, as well as inland waterfalls and valleys can be observed in the San'in Kaigan Geopark. Making use of such features, the people of the region developed a highly characteristic way of life.

- Sand dunes, sandbars & lagoons**
Highlights: Tottori Sand Dunes, Idegahama Beach, Shotenkyo Sandbar, Kotohikihama Beach, Kumihama Bay
Making use of sand dunes as Chinese shallot field (Fukube Sand Dunes, Tottori City)
- Ria coasts & marine landforms**
Highlights: Kasumi Coast, Tajimamihonoura, Uradome Coast
Canoe tour around sea caves (Takeno Kaigan Coast, Toyooka City)
- Waterfalls & valleys**
Highlights: Hattandaki Waterfalls, Sanodoki Waterfalls, Yoshiki Waterfalls, Kirigataki Waterfalls, Amedaki Waterfalls
Umbrella Dancing (Tottori prefectural intangible folk-cultural property) performed at a seasonal opening festival (Amedaki Waterfalls, Tottori City)
- Coastal terraces**
Highlights: Sodeshi, Fudeshi, Tangomatsushima, Kyogamisaki
Burial mounds on terraces (Onuru Burial Mound Group, Kyotango City)
- Volcanoes, mountains & highlands**
Highlights: Kannabe Volcanic Fields, Mt. Hochibuse, Mt. Oginozen
Highland vegetables grown in kuroboku soil (Kannabe Highlands, Toyooka City)
- Landforms by landslides**
Highlights: Wasabu, Nukida, Yokoo, Tando
Rice terraces (Rice terraces of Nukida, Kami Town)

The rocks and strata in the San'in Kaigan Geopark contain the history of the earth from the time when the Japanese archipelago was part of the Asian continent, through the formation of the Sea of Japan, to the present.



Access



Biodiversity

The formation of the Sea of Japan and the movements of the earth brought about an environment blessed with diverse geological and geomorphological features, which serve as the natural habitat of various creatures.

- Sand dunes & sandbars**
Plant species include: Asiatic Sand Sedge, Sea Bells, Veronica Ornata
Animal species include: Antlion, Wolf Spider
- Forests near coasts**
Plant species include: Eelgrass / Sea Grape, Wakame Seaweed, Japanese Black Pine, Japanese Chirupapin
Animal species include: Horned Turban Shell, Abalone / Iwagaki Oyster, Sea Urchin Caspary, Peregrine Falcon
- Marshes, streams & rice fields**
Plant species include: Rabbitear Iris, Baikamo (Ranunculus nipponicus), Eastern Skunk Cabbage
Animal species include: Oriental White Stork, Japanese Killifish, Four-spot Midget
- Coastline of the Sea of Japan**
Animal species include: Marbled Rockfish, Red-spotted Grouper, Largescale Blackfish, Oval Squid, Swordtip Squid, Horse Mackerel
- Mountains & highlands**
Plant species include: Japanese Beech Tree, Mongolian Oak, Japanese Judas Tree, Horse Chestnut
Animal species include: Asiatic Black Bear, Golden Eagle, Abe's Salamander
- Offshore of the Sea of Japan**
Animal species include: Snow Crab, Red Snow Crab, Sailfin Sandfish, Firefly Squid, Japanese Amberjack, Bluefin Tuna

Geo-gourmet

Various foods owe their great taste to the characteristic climate of the San'in region.

Snow crab & red snow crab

★ Find out what's "Geo" about crabs here!

The Sea of Japan is a huge depression formed after the separation of the Japanese archipelago from the Asian continent. Its center is very deep, but the depth of the channels connecting it to the neighboring seas are shallow (around 50-140m). Therefore, the exchange of seawater is limited to the surface of the ocean's layers, meaning "the Sea of Japan proper water" exists in deep waters. Thanks to this oxygen-rich cold seawater, coldwater fish and shellfish, such as crabs, can live in the Sea of Japan.

Another feature of the Sea of Japan is its complicated submarine topography. Thanks to this, two kinds of crabs are enjoyed in this area, namely, the snow crab and the red snow crab. Snow crabs live at a depth between 100-500m, and red snow crabs live at a depth between 500-2500m. Each type of crab has its own unique taste. The complexities of the submarine topography bring about a variety of marine resources as well as the habitat isolation of each crab.

Japanese black cattle (Tajima cattle & Impaku cattle)

★ Find out what's "Geo" about Japanese black cattle here!

Japanese black cattle are raised in and around the San'in Kaigan Geopark area. Because each inland village was surrounded by steep mountains, it was difficult to mate cattle from neighboring valleys.

As breeding was limited to separate valleys for a long time, excellent pedigrees unique to each valley were established. By cross-breeding such varieties, an even better bloodline of Tajima Cattle has been developed. The area has other factors ideal for the production of high quality cattle. In recognition of this individual management of cattle (such as keeping "Cow's Lineage Record"), in July 2023, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations designated it as a World Agricultural Heritage Site as the "traditional Tajima cattle breeding system in the Mikata region where humans and cattle coexist." For example, cold winters and sheds and pastures at different altitudes are ideal for making cattle with good marbling.

☆ Tajima Cattle is the breeding cattle for Kobe Beef and Matsusaka Beef!

Vegetables grown in Sand Dunes

★ Find out what's "Geo" about vegetables in sand dunes!

In sand dunes, the grains of sand are almost uniform in size and hardness, so root crops can grow large and straight. Using this, sweet potatoes and Chinese yams are produced in this region. Watermelons and melons are also grown in sand dunes because of good drainage and easy control of water and fertilizers.

With people's endeavors and the technological development, the Tottori Sand Dunes have become one of the most eminent Chinese shallot producing areas in Japan since they were successfully cultivated there in 1914.

Variety of geo-gourmet

Bounty of the sea

- Firefly Squid** coastal areas
The fishery yield of firefly squid is the highest in Japan. Firefly squid caught in the San'in region feature a sweet, elegant flavor.
- Sandfish** coastal areas
The San'in region, as well as Akita Prefecture, is a major production area. Fatty young sandfish are mainly caught and landed.
- White squid (Swordtip squid)** coastal areas
Cut up alive to be served as fresh sashimi. With its crunchiness, the clear, white body is sweet and delicious.

Riches of the soil

- Rice** various locations
Brand-name rice with unique characteristics are developed, including Tango Rice, Muraoka Rice, Tanada (rice terraces) Rice and Stork-friendly Rice.
- Fruits & vegetables grown in highlands** various locations
Many kinds of fruits and vegetables, such as pears, peaches, cabbages and Japanese white radishes, are grown on sunny hills and mountain slopes.

Unique climate and peoples' lives

Various cultures and industries that have supported and developed the local communities were established under the unique climate of the San'in region. They are also utilized as tourist attractions.

Hot springs

A large number of hot springs in the San'in Kaigan Geopark have long been utilized as therapeutic bath resorts. There are many faults, or fractures and discontinuities of the ground caused by the movement of the earth. The faults function as conduits to bring water up from deep underground. The heated underground water rises up as hot springs to the surface of the earth through the faults.

Ria coasts - Ports to wait out storms

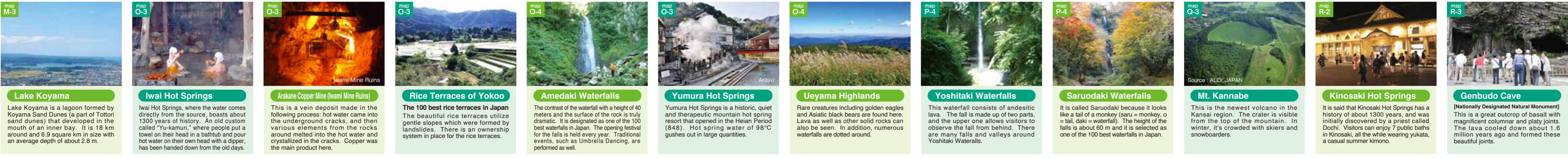
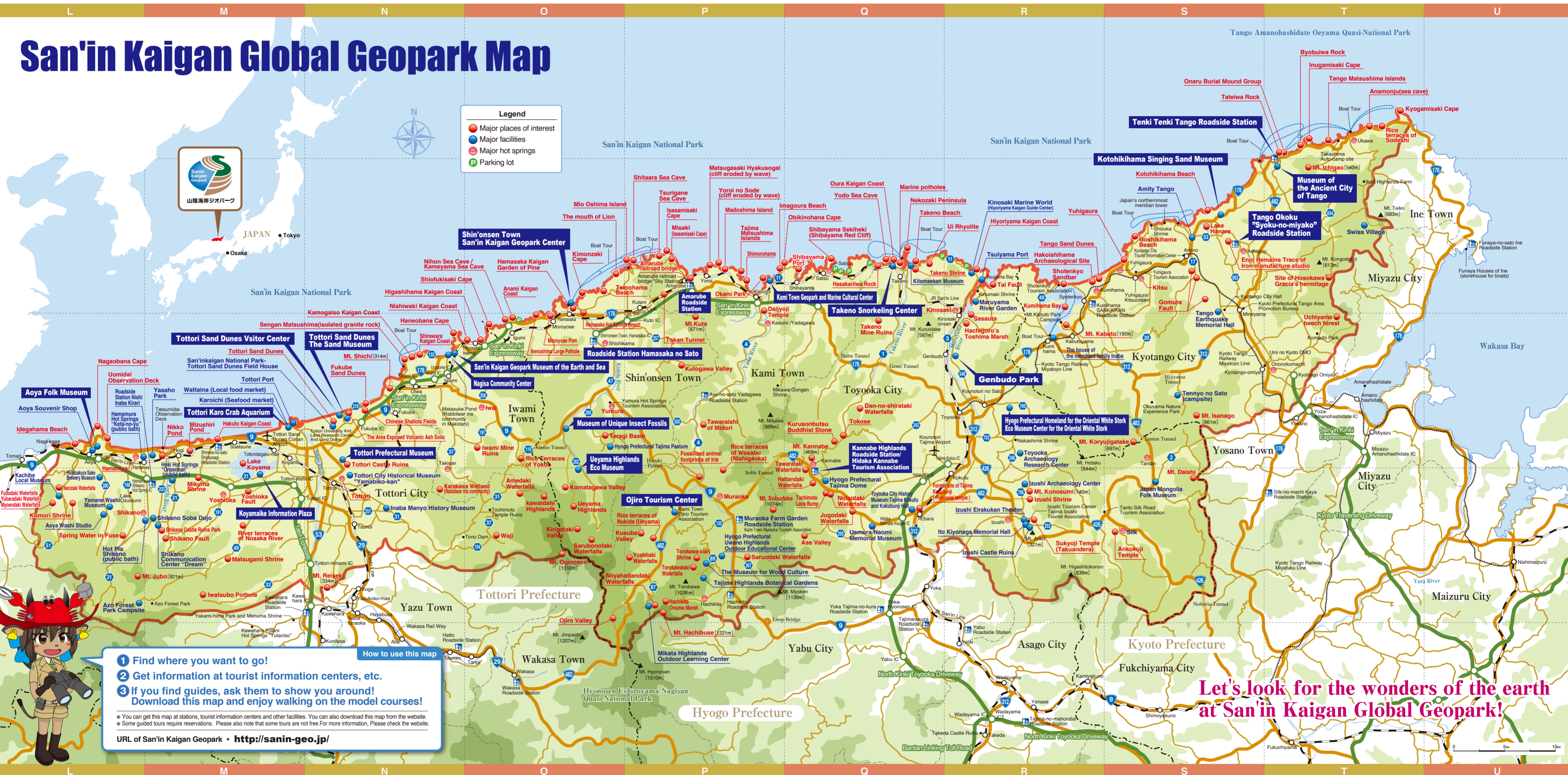
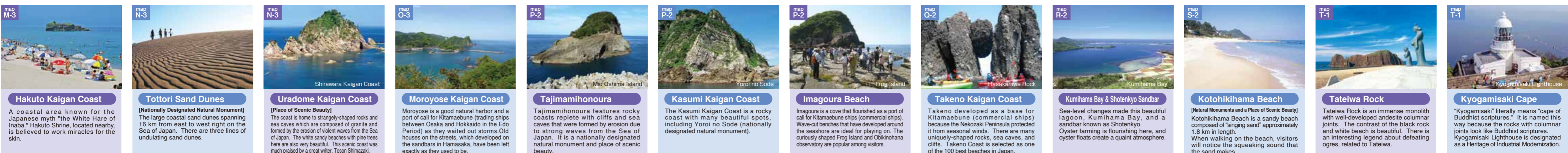
When the sea level rises, its complicated geographical features (mountains and valleys) create coastlines called ria coasts. These coasts are good natural harbors, as they block seasonal winds from the Sea of Japan. They also flourished as ports for Kitamaebune (commercial ships) to wait out storms long ago.

How are ria coasts formed?

The ground is gradually worn away by rain and rivers, and ridges become capes. Capes act as wind breakers and coves become ports to wait out storms.

Weather, climate & benefits of the Sea of Japan

The San'in region is a rainy and snowy area. The locals' phrase "Don't forget to bring an umbrella with you even if you forget your lunch box" expresses this situation well. In winter, there is a lot of snowfall caused by the northwest seasonal winds from Siberia. The snow in the mountains is over one meter in depth. This is because the moisture-laden seasonal winds from the Tsushima warm current on the surface of the Sea of Japan blow against the mountains, climb upward and form snow. People's lives in the San'in region are greatly affected by the climate. On the other hand, deep in the Sea of Japan, the cold "Sea of Japan proper water" exists. Thanks to the Tsushima warm current and the cold proper water, the harvest from the Sea of Japan includes both coldwater fish and shellfish (crabs, etc.) and warmwater fish and shellfish (yellowtails, etc.).



Lake Koyama
Lake Koyama is a lagoon formed by Koyama Sand Dunes (a part of Tottori sand dunes) that developed in the mouth of an inner bay. It is 18 km around and 6.9 square km in size with an average depth of about 2.8 m.

Iwai Hot Springs
Iwai Hot Springs, where the water comes directly from the source, boasts about 1300 years of history. An old custom called "Yu-kamuri," where people put a towel on their head in a bathtub and pour hot water on their own head with a dipper, has been handed down from the old days.

Arakane Copper Mine (Iwai Mine Ruins)
This is a vein deposit made in the following process: hot water came into the underground cracks, and then various elements from the rocks around melted into the hot water and crystallized in the cracks. Copper was the main product here.

Rice Terraces of Yokoo
The 100 best rice terraces in Japan! The beautiful rice terraces utilize gentle slopes which were formed by landslides. There is an ownership system in place for the rice terraces.

Amedaki Waterfalls
The contrast of the waterfall with a height of 40 meters and the surface of the rock is truly dramatic. It is designated as one of the 100 best waterfalls in Japan. The opening festival for the falls is held every year. Traditional events, such as Umbrella Dancing, are performed as well.

Yumura Hot Springs
Yumura Hot Springs is a historic, quiet and therapeutic mountain hot spring resort that opened in the Heian Period (848). Hot spring water of 98°C gushes out in large quantities.

Ueyama Highlands
Rare creatures including golden eagles and Asiatic black bears are found here. Lava as well as other solid rocks can also be seen. In addition, numerous waterfalls are dotted around.

Yoshitaki Waterfalls
This waterfall consists of andesitic lava. The fall is made up of two parts, and the upper one allows visitors to observe the fall from behind. There are many falls and valleys around Yoshitaki Waterfalls.

Saruodaki Waterfalls
It is called Saruodaki because it looks like a tail of a monkey (sar = monkey, o = tail, daki = waterfall). The height of the falls is about 60 m and it is selected as one of the 100 best waterfalls in Japan.

Mt. Kannabe
This is the newest volcano in the Kansai region. The crater is visible from the top of the mountain. In winter, it is crowded with skiers and snowboarders.

Kinosaki Hot Springs
It is said that Kinosaki Hot Springs has a history of about 1300 years, and was initially discovered by a priest called Doshi. Visitors can enjoy 7 public baths in Kinosaki, all the while wearing yukata, a casual summer kimono.

Genbudo Cave
[Nationally Designated Natural Monument] This is a great outcrop of basalt with magnificent columnar and play joints. The lava cooled down about 1.6 million years ago and formed these beautiful joints.

Source: ALEX JAPAN