Travel Guide of Scenic Byways in Kyushu.

**Q-5 Munakata Historic Byway**

Munakata region (Munakata City and Fukutsu City) in Fukuoka Prefecture. ---History road of Karatsu Kaido, Town of white wall, and Munakata Taisha Shrine (World culture Heritage) ---

While the Munakata Region is used for the name of wide-area autonomous organizations such as firefighting, that is the whole area across Munakata City and Fukutsu City in the northern part of Kyushu. In addition, it was used as the name of the old local area where was ruled by the powerful Munakata Clan in ancient ages. It was also the sacred area of Munakata Shrine’s possession, at the past.

However, the landscape of the car window seen from the Kagoshima main line of JR Kyushu Railroad or the National Highway No. 3 is a bed town where houses accumulate on a large scale. This is due to the fact that the Munakata district is a commuting area located just in the middle of Fukuoka City and Kitakyushu City. Incidentally, Munakata City has a population of 100,000, and that of Fukutsu City is 80,000.

Even if it is Munakata City or Fukutsu City, the topography is similar. Each is surrounded by mountains on three sides, only the north facing Genkai Nada Sea is opened, making a sandy beach drawing a beautiful arc. There is a river that collects rainwater in the center of each town and flows into it, and urban areas are developed in flat lands and hilly sites around it. Therefore, if you simply pick up the keyword of the regional landscape, it is the Genkai-Nada seaside, Munakata Shrine and the new town. In addition, there is the Karatsu Kaido road built in the modern era, and the scenery of old town streets and rural areas is surrounded and buried in the new town in some places. It is a typical case of medium city in the suburbs of the metropolis.

Among them, there are two regional resources. One is the ruins of the ancient ritual and the Munakata shrine registered a World cultural heritage in 2017. The Munakata area had several coves ancient times and was located in the shortest course connecting Japan and the continent. Under this geographical conditions, the local clan dominated widely the ocean in the period from the 4th century to the 9th century, but the Munakata shrine originated with the ancient ritual that prays for the safety of its navigation at that time. In addition, there is also a theory that this clan belonged to the Emperor.

The other thing is the Karatsu Kaido road splited from the Nagasaki Kaido at the southwest end of Kitakyushu City, and the traffic from Fukuoka and Karatsu in the middle ages to the early modern era flourished. The Karatsu Kaido road passed from the...
east to the west of the Munakata area, and the Akama station town and Haramachi town had seen important events of our country. Their aspects are still left in the town.

From these two contents, many visitors into the Munakata district has great interest in the World Heritage including Munakata Shrine. However, there are organizations such as municipalities and Munakata Taisha Shrine in the activities to take Munakata World Heritage as a tourism project. And, an English rephlet has been issued by it (http://www.okinoshima-heritage.jp). Therefore, as a way to visit the world heritage of Munakata, this pamphlet introduce the town walking based on the scenery street of the Akama-Juku town in the old Karatsu Kaido and the development of the nostalgic city of Haramachi.

(Area and main route) The Karatsu Kaido road in Munakata district was the main transportation axis during the ages from the Edo period to the Meiji era. However, in the Meiji era, the Akama station on JR Kagoshima Main Line was constructed in the adjacent other area and the main facility of the administration was relocated, so the Akama inn-town on Karatsu Kaido was left behind the development of the area. In the Haramachi area, the original commercial function moved to the area along the bypass of national highway and returned to the quiet old road.

However, in the streets along the Karatsu Kaido, old cityscapes such as white walls and latticed windows are still maintained, and we can propose a scenery road that walks along the sidewalks of the landscape walking through old towns and villages. It is "Munakata History Byway", and as shown in the figure, it consists of two spots: Akama-Juku town and Haramachi village.

The main route of the scenic highway is the section along the prefectural road No. 75 from the intersection which advanced a little to the southwest of the road of educational university front station (Kyouiku-daigaku-mae station) of the Kagoshima trunk line and is included somewhat the prefectural road No.503 . The total length is only 5 kilometers including the linkage section on the way, and it is the shortest among the 14 Kyushu routes.

It is an important historical road where Hideyoshi Toyotomi who took control of the government at the end of the 16th century walked towards Nagoya Castle in Karatsu City and dispatched troops to the Korean Peninsula. Also, for the system of Sankin-kotai which was required to live in Edo in every other year, the lords such as the Fukuoka Clan and the Karatsu Clan took parades of the Karatsu Kaido road.

Furthermore, many revolutionaries passed through Haramachi and Akama-Juku in the revolts by the anti-shogunate movement at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, or by the politic member in the early Meiji Era.

(1) Suga shrine and a well at the street corner

(1) Shop house of Sake brewery

(1) Akama-Juku town festival

(1) The old shop house (1893) of Idemitsu Sazou. (Tangible cultural assets of the country)

(1) Trace of Banishment of Gokyou (Five Lords) in the political change in 1863 and the guide map of the Akama inn-town
In short, the Munakata historical road connecting various parts of the northern Kyushu inevitably had watched the important events of our country that occurred according to the times. If you walk on the scenery road, you can find some remains of that time.

(Access) There are two ways to access the Munakata area from the airport in Fukuoka City and Kitakyushu City; railway and road. From Fukuoka Airport, there is Hakata Station on the Kagoshima Main Line in 5 minutes by subway, and there is Akama Station in about 30 minutes by a limited express train from there.

From Kitakyushu Airport, it takes 35 minutes by airport bus to Kokura Station on Kagoshima Main Line and 40 minutes by express train to arrive at Akama station. In addition, since the Education University front station is only a regular train stop, the Akama station is good to move to the streets of Haramachi and Akama-juku. (See the map).

If you use the Expressway, you can reach Wakamiya IC by driving Kyushu Expressway via the Fukuoka IC on Kyushu Expressway. From Kitakyushu airport, proceed to Kanda IC, advance to the west of the expressways of East Kyushu and Kyushu. From this Wakamiya IC, you will be led to Akama-Juku town in the pass of the prefecture road No. 75, if going northwest about 8 km.

(1) Town of Akama-juku

Akama-Juku in Munakata City is a former post town that was developed along Karatsu Kaido Road, which was the urban area in Munakata region. There is a T-shaped intersection at the front of Suga Shrine. Namely, going southwest a little in the front road of Kyouiku-Daigaku-Mae Station on JR Kagoshima Main Line, there is the sign post of "left to Koyanose", and the Torii (gateway) for shrine on the left. A section ahead about 600 m along the prefectural highway 75 straight is Akama Post Town.

On the way of the street, you can find some of old style of houses and histrical monument. There is the house of Mr. Sazo Idemitsu, which is a shop in Meiji era and is registered a tangible cultural asset of the country. Or, the town station that is named "Akama-kan", and Katsuma Brewery, can be looked also. The Akama-Kamaeguchi intersection on the road is the end of Akama-Juku Town.

As mentioned above, The Town of Akama-Juku flourished in Edo and Meiji era and was the base of the Munakata district. Many public facilities such as Honjin (an officially pointed inn for the use of Daimyo), Waki-Honjin (a subsidiary inn used by a Dimyo's attendants), Toiyaba (a site of the notice board), Gun-ya (office of the county), and so on were built there. Then, even in the Meiji era, there was a strong commercial functions and there was a coal boom of Chikuho later, many shopping customers gathered from a wide area of the neighborhood, and it was very busy. It was said that everything can be got, if going to the town of Akama-juku.

However, in 1890 the Akama station on JR Kagoshima Main Line was constructed at a present location a little away from Akama-juku, and after World War II, the bypass of National Road No. 3 was constructed in the neighboring area, and large-scale housing development has promoted. From these, the town of Akama-Juku was left behind the development, its town function has decayed greatly.

Fortunately, in the latter half of the 20th century, a university transferred into the neighboring area of Akama Town from Fukuoka City. The function of the student city added to the old city, the function of the town also recovered. As seen in the photo, in conjunction with the opening ceremony of New Year's "Sake" cellar, the Akama Festival (costumes parade) was held in February, many students participated and crowded.

(2) Signboard for guide at the entrance of Harumachi Town

(2) The remodeled street of nostalgic Harumachi Town

(2) Town of Harumachi
Advancing the prefecturer road No.503 straight from the Akama-Juku town by 3.5 km, there is the intersection of Haramachi. Then, the Harumachi's small town is formed about 350 m along the old Karatsu Kaido road, as in Photos. Commercial facilities in this area also moved to the national highway bypass with the advance of motorization. Therefore, an important issue in this town was how to regenerate a livable city and how to maintain the activities of the town.

An organization of residents was established and the reconstruction of the town was promoted. Konjac kiosks, butchers, buckwheat noodles, shops of antique arts and antiques, etc. are opened with the use of old houses, so that they fit the surrounding rural areas. There is also an art museum which refurbished the barn. The so-called Haramachi is a reproduction of the nostalgic village of Kyushu, and you can enjoy the atmosphere of old street 100 or 150 years ago.

(3) The Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region (World Cultural Heritage)

"The Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region" was registered in 2017, as another one of World Cultural Heritage in Kyushu. This World Heritage consists of the five sites of three shrines of Munakata shrine, ruins of ancient rituals and a group of big tombs. It is believed to be the origin of Shintoism in Japan.

The Munakata area was dominated by the ancient clan and had excellent navigation techniques. A clan of Munakata developed ancient ritual at the Munakata Shrine and its surroundings, and prayed for a safe voyage between Japan and the Asian continent. Originally it was a ritual at the place of large rock, but the current shrines were created lastly, after various transitions. They are Okinatsu shrine of Okinoshima Island, Nakatsu shrine of Oshima Island, Hetsu shrine of Tajima in Kyushu Main Island, and so on. (See the map)

Especially the furthest Okinoshima is an isolated island where no people live in, the people's landing is severely restricted, and, women still cannot land on the island by customs. Also, it is forbidden to take out one tree, one grass, and one stone. As a result, many relics in ancient times remain intact, some of which are important treasures of the country. In addition, general people cannot visit the Okinatsu-miya Shrine directly, but, from Oshima island that is in front, a place for worship is set up. A system that pray for island far beyond the sea is a case that can hardly be seen elsewhere.

The main shrine (1578) and the hall of worship (1590) of the Hetsu-miya in Munakata Shrine have been rebuilt in the 16th century and are currently designated as important cultural assets of the country.

In addition, there is the Shinbaru-Nuyama tumuli near the seaside facing the Genkai-Nada Sea in Fukutsu City. This is a group of tombs of the ancient clan who took charge of rituals at Okinoshima. 41 tombs of five keyhole-shaped tumuli, 35 radial tumuli, and one rectangular tombs are still remained.

An important shrine's event is a big festival in autumn. Gods of Okitsu-miya Shrine and Nakatsu-miya Shrine move to the Hetsu-miya shrine by ship, and the festival is the maritime parade held by hundreds of fishing boats, that is extremely splendid, and a magnificent sea event.

(3) Hetsu-miya in Munakata Shrine, Munakata City

(3) Shinbaru-Nuyama Mounted Tomb Group, Fukutsu City