Cities of Fukuoka and Itoshima in Fukuoka Pref., and Karatsu City and Genkai Town in Saga Pref.—Historic Ruins since ancient ages, Gateway toward Asia, and Scenic Nature facing to Genkai Nada Sea.

Ancient Japan is called “WA”, and the situation in the 2nd or 3rd century is described in “Gishi-Wajinden” (WA’s account in the historical record of the Wei Dynasty, China). According to it, WA had many ancient kingdoms, and facing Genkai-nada Sea in the northern area of Kyushu, three kingdoms were recorded: Matsura, Ito and Na. Based on the current place-name, Matsura is in or around Karatsu City, Ito is estimated to be Itoshima City, and Na shall be in or around Minami Ward of Fukuoka City.

In ancient times, people from the Korean Peninsula landed in the Higashi-matsura area via Tsushima and Iki, and rice cultivation was introduced. In addition, Itoshima City had many sea-related ruins such as shell mounds and fisheries, while Fukuoka City had a landform where the sea entered the inland side.

(Access). In the area of Genkai-nada Scenic Coast, Fukuoka International Airport, Hakata Port, and Hakata Station of...
Kyushu Shinkansen are the main access points, and also the transport hub for the entire Kyushu region.

(Main Route). The main routes of this scenic area are given by urban expressways, national routes of No.202 and 204, and Nishikyushu Expressway, as shown on the map, and they are complemented by several main prefectural roads.

On the other hand, in addition to the Kashii Line, Kagoshima Main Line, and Chikuhi Line, the Fukuoka Municipal Subway and Nishitetsu Kaizuka Line are operated as public transport. Therefore, the railway network and the bus routes from the main stations are also available.

(Scene Resources). Three important resources for this scenic route are as follows:

a) The first is a view of the strong waves in the Genkai-nada Sea and the same old geological strata as the continent. As you drive along the beautiful coast, you can find many rare rock views. (See Photo (6)).

b) The second is the cultural heritage accumulated in this region as an entrance to the Asian continent. When following the chronological order, some heritages are pointed as following.

As shown in the photo (1), a gold seal given to the “Na” kingdom by Kwangmu Emperor of Later Han Dynasty in China was discovered in Shikano-shima Island, Fukuoka. Then, during the Tang Dynasty of China, Japanese diplomatic missions to Tang brought back excellent civilization, and Buddhism to this area.

During the Middle Ages, potters with pottery skills moved from the Korean peninsula to Japan, and their ceramics had a major impact on our lives.

Art, medicine, science, crafts, food culture, lifestyle, and even the faith that supports our spirit have been brought for a long time from Asian countries and Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, those were brought from Europe through Silk Roads.

Our ancestors used them to greatly develop the civilization in the northern Kyushu region. You can see their ruins and customs at each spot in this scenic road area. Then, in the Edo period, cities such as Fukuoka, Maebara, and Karatsu developed, and modern urban areas were established. (See photos (3), (4), (5), (7), and (8)).

c) The third resource in the northern Kyushu is the facts and its associated ruins that there were not only good things but also extremely difficult events and related sites.

From the 7th century to the 8th century, many defense soldiers, “Sakimori”, were dispatched from the eastern part of our country to Kyushu. Poems about the harsh natural environment and heavy missions in the place where they were dispatched, are recorded in the oldest poetry book “Manyoushu”. Some of them are engraved and displayed on stone monuments in various places in northern Kyushu.

In addition, as a defense against the Mongol invasion in 1274 and 1281, walls of soil and rock facing Genkai-nada Sea were constructed. You can see those ruins as shown in Photo (4).

In short, scenic spots in Fukuoka City are the core of the Genkai-nada Route, and have the heritages of over 1000 years related to Fukuoka City and Japan. Also, the urban zones and rural areas in this region are adjacent to each other, so that the entire area can live
comfortably.
If limited to typical of the three resources, this scenic area can be divided into three blocks, and detailed nine zones.

-Fukuoka Area -

The landscape area in Fukuoka City can be subdivided into four zones, as shown on the map on page 1.

(1) Shikano-shima Island

The Shikano-shima island on the outskirts of Fukuoka city is mysterious, and has a lot of information about ancient Japanese history. In other words, despite being a small island (tombolo), people have settled since ancient times and, as mentioned above, have been involved in the great history of ancient Japanese defense and diplomacy. There is also a scenic natural scenery of the sea (Photo (1) and the rich blessings from Hakata Bay and Genkai-nada Sea.

(2) Zone of Kashii-gu Shrine and Hakozaki-gu Shrine.

Famous historical shrines in Fukuoka City are the Kashii-gu Shrine and Hakozaki-gu Shrine. The former is a rare case where an ancient mausoleum converted into a shrine during the Heian period. The shrine faces a street with large trees. The main hall of shrine has no walls and is called “Kashii-making”.

On the other hand, the Hakozaki-gu shrine is one of Japan’s three major Hachiman Shrines. Hachiman God (Öjin Emperor) is known as the god of war. In historical battles, victory was frequently prayed at the Hakozaki-gu shrine. In the present times, Fukuoka’s professional baseball team, Softbank Hawks, pray for victory every year. We don’t know if this is the result, but the team often the best winner in Japan.

(3) Hakata Merchant’s Town since the Middle Age.

Hakata’s town was a merchant town that was rebuilt by Hideyoshi Toyotome who unified the country in the 16th century. The skeleton of the town at that time was divided into east, west, south, and north with the motif of Buddhist shoulder robe (Kesa). Even now, traces remain in the street network of Hakata Ward, and the district allocation at the Hakata Yamakasa Gion Festival is also based on this division.

There are many old temples along the Mikasa River at the eastern end of Hakata Ward. Among them, two temples and one shrine are popular for citizens. Jyoten-ji Temple (1241) and Kushida-jinja Shrine are related to Hakata Gion Yamakasa Festival, and are registered as an intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. Shofuku-ji Temple (1195) is the first full-fledged Zen temple in Japan, and the precincts are national historic sites. If visiting them, you will understand that temples and shrines are deeply rooted in the lives of citizens and local communities.

(4) Fukuoka Castle Town during the Edo Period

The ruins of the ancient official guesthouse “Kohro’kan” for foreigners were discovered and excavated in the center of this zone. In the same place, Fukuoka Castle was built in the early Edo period. Besides, the area adjacent to the castle is the current central business district of Fukuoka City. Therefore, the area of Fukuoka Castle is the center of Fukuoka City and the core of the landscape of Genki-nada Sea. Please take a walk while watching the city that has been completed over a thousand years.

-Itoshima Area -

(5) Zone of ancient Ito.

Itoshima Area is the ancient Ito kingdom that is listed in the historical records of Wei Dynasty in China, and many royal tombs have been excavated. In particular, it can be inferred that the rectangular tomb in Photo (5) is related to “Himiko Queen” of Yamatai-koku (kingdom), who ruled “WA (Japan)” in the 3rd century. The excavated items from the grave are on display at the nearby Ito Kingdom History Museum. In particular, a large copper mirror with a diameter of 46.5 cm and a weight of 8 kg is famous as Japan’s biggest mirror, and is designated as a national treasure.

(6) Coast Zone of Itoshima Peninsula

On the coast of Itoshima Peninsula, as you can see in the photo, you can enjoy the beautiful natural scenery of white sandy beaches, green pine trees and rough rocks formed by the waves of Genkai-nada Sea. And while it is comfortable to drive in many landscapes, it is recommend that you stop by the couple’s rock and Keyano-Ôto (large rock gate) along the way.

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The Itoshima area is popular as a place for recreations and outdoor activities by Fukuoka citizens. Restaurants of local ingredients, and many of the oyster huts in the fishing village are very popular, and you can enough enjoy foods of countryside.

**Higashi-Matsuura Area**

(7) **Urban Zone in Karatsu City**

On the Karatsu coast in the Edo period, one million black pine trees were planted, to create a green pine forest, which is called "Niji-no-Matsubara". (Niji means rainbow, and Matsubara, pine forest). Originally, pine trees were planted as windbreak forest for the development of paddy fields. But now it is a special scenic spot in our country.

Kagami-Yama Mountain (284 m) is a popular spot overlooking the area. Picture (7) on the page 1 is a panorama of Karatsu City and Karatsu Bay viewed from the top of the mountain. It can be also found that Karatsu Castle is built to protrude towards the Karatsu Bay.

Strolling through the urban area, you can find moats and castle town in the Edo period, as well as houses and buildings of the Meiji era and the Taisho era. Also, the pottery of Karatsu is famous and you can visit the pottery factory.

(8) **Zone of Nagoya-Jo Traces in Karatsu City.**

Hideyoshi Toyotomi built the forefront base of military in the Nagoya district of Karatsu City and dispatched troops to the Korean peninsula, after dominating Kyushu at the end of the 16th century. The core of camp is Nagoya Castle, but now it is a special historical landmark of our country.

(9) **Genkai Town of terraced Paddy Rice Fields**

The terraced rice fields in this area have developed towards the sea in accordance with the topography in the Hizen-chō in Karatsu City, and the Genkai Town. Unlike rice terraced fields surrounded by mountains, this landscape has a vast sense of openness as shown in the photo (9).

Each area of Genkai Route has unique and wonderful festivals. In particular, Karatsu-Kunchi Festival (7) was registered as a UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage along with the festival of Hakata-gion Yamakasa (9) in Fukuoka City. "Kunchi" means autumn harvest festival. If you want to see it, please check the date and time of festival.