The Amakusa Islands are more than 120 large and small islands on the border between Kumamoto and Kagoshima, and are included in Shimabara-Amakusa National Park. The scenery route of "Amakusa Islands Drive" is mainly composed of five important islands. Speaking with local governments, they are the Kami-amakusa City, Amakusa City and Reihoku-machi Town. Many islands in this scenic area are tied by bridges. Amakusa Five Bridges was built in 1966. In 1974, the Amakusa Seto Ohashi Bridge between Amakusa-Kamishima Island and Amakusa-Shimoshima Island, and in 1997, the Haiya Ohashi Bridge connecting Amakusa-Shimoshima Island and Gesu Island was built. In short, islands from the Uto Peninsula to Gesu Island are connected by many long bridges. The Amakusa Islands had experienced several remarkable events related to domestic and abroad. In the mid-16th century, Christianity spread in Amakusa Islands. The four boys of the Tensho mission to Europe brought a Gutenberg printing press to the island, and at the end of the 16th century, published a book of Aesop stories ahead of other places in our country. On the other hand, Amakusa is islands of hidden Christians persecuted by the Edo Shogunate in the 17th century.
(Main Road). The following is an overview of roads and traffic for traveling the Amakusa Islands.

Misumi West Port, which is registered as a “World Industrial Heritage in Meiji era”, is located at the tip of the Uto Peninsula and is the starting point for this scenic route. The main roads on the islands are National Routes No.266, 324 and 384, but some spots require the use of prefectural roads. Gesu Island needs to drive prefectural and city roads, and the Goshono-ura Islands must be approached by boat, and Prefectural Road 333 is needed at islands.

(Access). The Amakusa Islands can be accessed by plane, boat or car. In other words, there are flight courses from Amakusa Airport to Fukuoka Airport and Kumamoto Airport. In the case of a ship, there are several routes from Mogi, Shimabara, Misumi-higashi and Nagashima to Amakusa. There are also JR Misumi Line and the express buses from Fukuoka City and Kumamoto City to the Misumi Town in Uki City or Hondo area in Amakusa City. Due to these traffic conditions, the access to islands is very convenient.

(Scene Resources). The scenic route has two important resources. One was the riots of the people of Amakusa and Shimabara from 1637 to 1638, led by a 16-year-old Christian boy, Shiro Amakusa. Oddly enough, he was almost the same age as the Orleians maid, Jeanne d’Arc (~19 years old).

The battle began at Suwa Shrine (3) in Amakusa-Kamishima Island. After a fierce battle at Hondo Castle (4) and Tomioka Castle (5), rebel farmers crossed Shimabara Bay. After that, they built a barricade at Shimabara Castle on the Shimabara Peninsula and desperately resisted. This story is similar to the Hebrew escape from Egypt in the Old Testament.

Eventually, however, over 30,000 farmers were killed or committed suicide. Such tragedy is not seen anywhere in the world.

Christianity was subsequently banned and forced to switch to Buddhism, but in the southern part of Amakusa City, hidden faith of Cristian continued for over 200 years. After the Meiji Era, the ban on Christianity was lifted, and the Oe Church and Sakitsu Cathedral were built. Five literatuye youths visited these churches from Tokyo and worked on the development of European literature. In that sense, Amakusa is the beginning of modernization in Japan.

Another scenic spot is Geopark of Amakusa Islands. An important place is the Goshono-ura Islands, where fossils of dinosaur and ammonite were found. On the west coast of Amakusa Shimoshima Island, there are strangely shaped rocks, and a Tropical Ocean Park in the south. Amakusa Islands are also a production base of ceramic stone, accounting for 80% of the country's production.
(1) **Misumi Port & (2) Amakusa Pearl Line Road.**

The first bridge of "Amakusa Five Bridges" is called Tenmon Bridge, and crosses the Misumi Strait near the current Misumi West Port. The road section of these five bridges from the 1st bridge on National Route 266 is called Amakusa Pearl Line. As some scenic spots along Amakusa Pearl Line, there are "Amakusa Shiro" Memorial Hall and Tombolo Island. After crossing these five bridges, you will arrive at the Matsushima Onsen area, and from the observatory on the hillside, you can see interesting views of many islands like a miniature garden.

(3) **Area along Shimabara Bay.**

When going from National Route 266 to National Route 324, there is a section called “Octopus Road” as a nickname. If you enter a side street from Octopus Road, you will find the ruins of an old Christian church (Nanban-ji Temple) built in the 16th century. At the peak, more than 3,500 people became believers, and Nanban culture developed. However, after the riot of Shimabara-Amakusa (1637~1638), Nanban-ji Temple was destroyed. Instead, Shokaku-ji Temple was built to convert to Buddhism, but it has a unique atmosphere compared to a pure Japanese style of temple.

(4) **Area of Hondo Castle.**

Then, after you pass through Oshimago Suwa Shrine on the way and cross the loop bridge, you arrive at the center of Amakusa City. A fierce battle in the Amakusa rebellion was fought in the Yamaguchi River and the ruins of Hondo-jo castle. It is said that the water near the stone bridge in the river was stained with blood.

The rare stone girder bridge with many pillars is 28.6m long and is a national important cultural property. The monument shown in the photo (4) is for martyrs in both troops. The luxurious Myotokuji Temple was founded in 1645 to change faith from Christian to Buddhist.

When going around this area, you can know the actual situation of Amakusa and Shimabara rebellion.

(5) **Dolphin Watching and Tomioka castle ruins in Reihoku Town.**

The main scenic points in this area are the ocean dolphin watching and Tomioka Castle. At the entrance of Shimabara Bay in the northwest of Amakusa Shimosima Island, you can see a flock of dolphins from the boat and it is very exciting.

Next, if you proceed while watching the natural rocks in the shape of a breast made of waves (Phot. (5)), you arrive at the Tombolo Island. It is the island of Tomioka Castle that was not even occupied by the revolt of Amakusa. If you look at the harsh island terrain, you will understand that.

In the Edo period, the Amakusa islands were under the direct control of the shogunate and the magistrate's office was in Tomioka Castle. From the castle, you can see the scenery of Tombolo and sandbar. Tomioka Island is a scenic spot to stop by to understand the history and spirit of Amakusa.

(6) & (7) **Southern area (Oe and Sakitsu) in Amakusa City.**

Going south on Route 389 and returning to Amakusa, you will arrive at the Shimoda Onsen area. If go further south, you will encounter eight scenic spots of the wonderful sunset of Amakusa behind a strange rock.

There are two famous churches in the south. By pouring his property, the French priest Garnier built a white elegant Oe church on the hills of Oe and spread Western culture. On the other hand, the place adjacent to Sakitsu Fishing Port was the residence of Shoya (village chief)
during the Edo period. Under the ban of Christianity, villagers were checked to see if they could step on the picture of Christ to prove that they were not Christians. After the ban of Christianity was lifted, the magnificent Gothic church, Sakitsu Cathedral (1934) was built in the same place. In addition, Christians hiding around the church have created their own villages for agriculture and fishing. It is the current important cultural regional landscape of our country.

(8) Ushibuka Area in Amakusa City.

The Ushibuka district is the birthplace of Haiya folk music, in which "Haiya" means the south wind. The song and dance began with a party held temporarily by crew members staying in the harbor to wait for the wind of voyage. A large dance parade is held every spring near the Haiya Ohashi Bridge.

(9) Goshoura Islands in Amakusa City.

Goshoura-jima is accessible from several ports on Amakusa Kamijima and Shimojima, but the main port is Hondo Port. However, as shown in the photo (9), when using Tanasoko Port in Amakusa Kamijima, you will encounter a rare village landscape surrounded by stone walls. This is a device to prevent wind in each house, but it is close to the port and can be visited in about an hour, so access from Tanasoko Port is also recommended. The Goshoura Islands in Amakusa City were once a world geopark. However, it is currently designated as a Japan Geopark along with other Amakusa islands. The fossils of dinosaur skeleton and ammonite were discovered. They are on display at the fossil park and the island museum.

It will be also interesting to walk the course to find fossils contained in stone walls and house garden stones. In addition, you can rent a bicycle and a boat on the island to see the lives of the people on the island where nature and fossils coexist.