

Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region



A Pilgrimage of Time

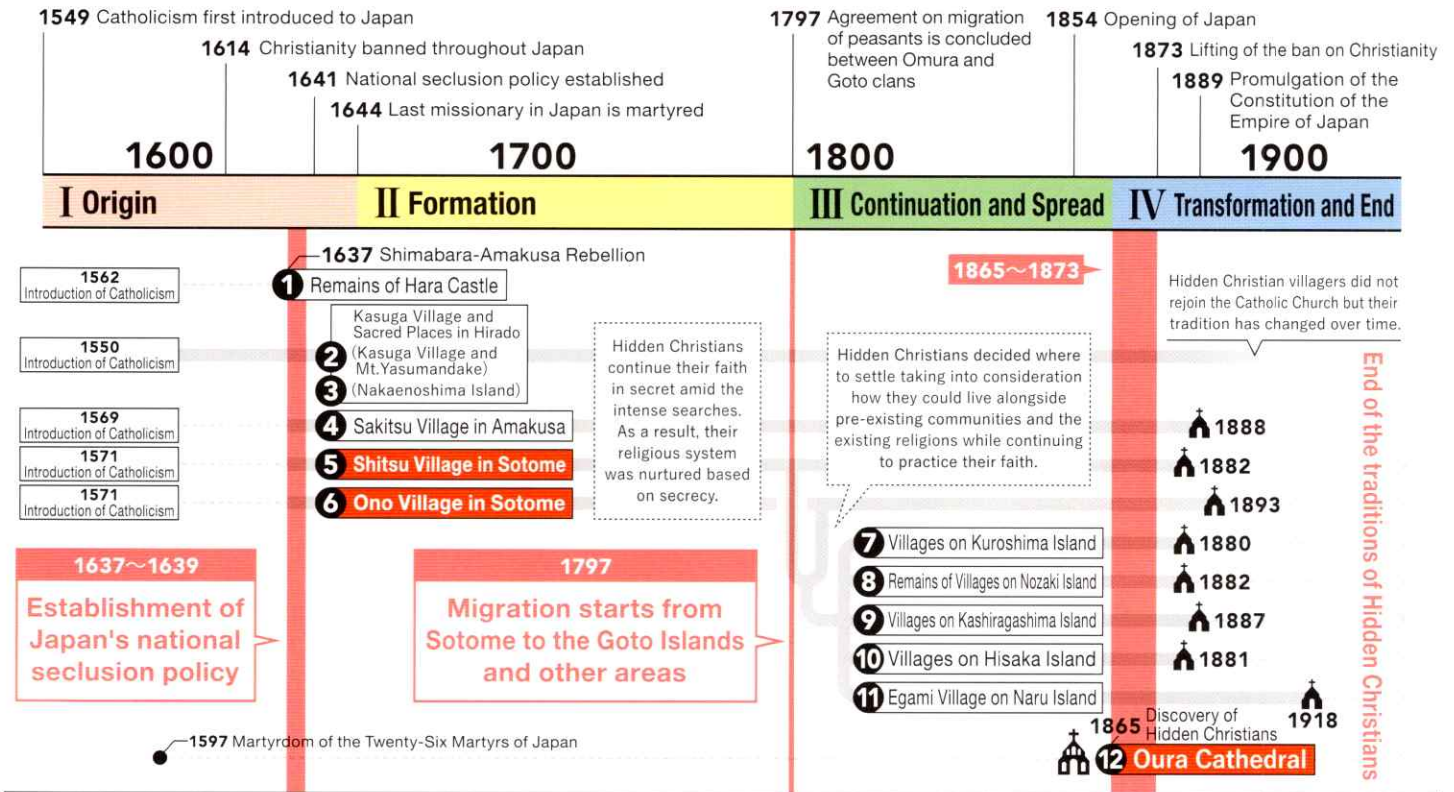
Trip



Japan's unique way of practicing the Christian faith that developed during the ban on Christianity

"Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region" is a unique testimony to the tradition of people and their communities who secretly transmitted their faith in Christianity for two and a half centuries during the time of prohibition.

[Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region] Historical background and interrelationships of the 12 components



Component parts in Nagasaki City



Concealing and venerating sacred icons

5 Shitsu Village in Sotome

The village at which Hidden Christians continued their religious practices by themselves based on the Catholic liturgical calendar and the Christian catechism, and secretly venerated sacred images. After the lifting of the ban on Christianity, the Hidden Christians gradually returned to Catholicism and Shitsu Church was built on a hill overlooking the village.



Using Shinto shrines as places of worship in a manner that overlaps with Shinto practice

6 Ono Village in Sotome

The village where Hidden Christians outwardly behaved as Buddhists and Shinto followers. They secretly enshrined their own deities in the shrines and offered prayers there. After the ban was lifted, Ono Church was built for 26 families who could not make the trip to Shitsu Church.



Trigger for the transitional phase in the religious identity of the Hidden Christians

12 Oura Cathedral

Oura Cathedral, a church built in 1864 by a missionary who came back to Japan after the opening of the nation's port to foreign trade, is the site where the "Discovery of Hidden Christians" took place. This event, where Hidden Christians met with a priest for the first time in over two centuries, led some of these Hidden Christians to return to Catholicism and to other changes which brought about significant religious changes for the Hidden Christians.

Stories in history that connect past and present.

At the time when the traditions of Hidden Christians came to an end, two missionaries witnessed the times, one of whom encountered "Discovery of Hidden Christians", and the other dedicated his life to supporting local residents. Here we will introduce Oura Cathedral, the scene of the unprecedented event, along with existing churches in Sotome. You will find how they took leadership roles in making a contribution to communities of these areas.



Component parts in Nagasaki City

Here's what is amazing about the components in Nagasaki City!



The "Discovery of Hidden Christians": Hidden Christians met with a priest for the first time in over two centuries



"Believers are welcome" The cathedral's doors remain open

During Japan's prohibition of Christianity, Europe did not give up hope that there may yet be some Catholics in Japan.

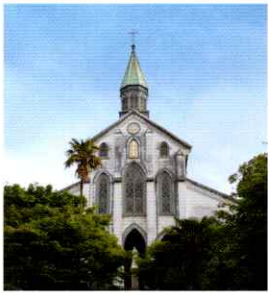
Father Petitjean of Oura Cathedral was one such young priest with these high aspirations. He arrived in Nagasaki in 1863 to join Father Furet. Father Petitjean toiled to build Oura Cathedral, also called the "French Temple", in the foreign settlement. After completion, he ensured that the doors of the cathedral were open every day. Father Petitjean never stopped believing that fellow Japanese Christians would come to his church.

This may be the first time we have seen the statue of the Virgin Mary, but "We are of one heart with you"

After Father Furet returned to France. Father Petitjean remained in Nagasaki.

One month after its completion, Father Petitjean was praying in the cathedral when some women approached him and whispered, "We are of one heart with you". After disclosing that they were hidden Christians from the Urakami district, the women asked, "Where is the statue of the Virgin Mary?" Led by Father Petitjean, they looked up to see a genuine statue of the Virgin Mary for the first time in their lives.

This "Discovery of Hidden Christians" is considered a miracle. This is the moment when the light was shone on two centuries of concealment.



[Oura Cathedral] A national treasure, this is Japan's oldest Gothic-style wooden cathedral. It was consecrated in 1865.

The action of the women led to the "Discovery of Hidden Christians"!

Three women went to speak to Father Petitjean. Rumour has it that their neighbors tried to prevent them from visiting Oura Cathedral, claiming it was a trap made by the Tokugawa Shogunate. The action of these women changed history!



Why did it happen? Why is it amazing? Let's unravel the mystery of the "Discovery of Hidden Christians", an unprecedented event in the history of world religion.

Discover the secret behind the "Discovery of Hidden Christians"!

What made it possible for them to keep their religion alive for two centuries?

Hidden Christians persisted in their Christian faith because they strongly believed that "The Christian God is the truth and is the one true God." Deep conviction and hope of the salvation in the next life caused them to choose the difficult path which demonstrates the spirits of love and giving to others although they knew they had to endure hardships.



Someone prophesied that the "Discovery of Hidden Christians" would happen after seven generations?!

Thirty years after the ban on Christianity was imposed, there was a Japanese priest in Nagasaki named Bastian. He prophesied that "All of you shall be my sons and daughters down to the seventh generation. After that, a priest will come on a black ship and you shall be able to confess your sins every day."



Leading a secret hidden life beyond the reach of the authorities

The hidden Christians who confessed their faith, lived in the Urakami area of Nagasaki City. They were mostly engaged in agriculture. Being far away from the central area that was under the direct control of the Shogunate, the location allowed Christians to escape from the watchful eye of the authorities. Incidentally, since roads in Sotome were very steep, this inaccessible environment may have also helped hidden Christians avoid detection.



Father Petitjean still rests within Oura Cathedral.

"I have a dream that one day I want to meet the Christians who endured and survived over two centuries of strict persecution." Without this dream of Father Petitjean, the miraculous "Discovery of Hidden Christians" would not have happened. After his hopes came true, Father Petitjean was laid to rest under Oura Cathedral, the very site where the "Discovery of Hidden Christians" took place.



Father de Rotz came to Sotome and sowed the seeds of hope in an isolated land



[Shitsu Church] Consecrated in 1882, the church was built by Father de Rotz and local believers. It is the symbol of Shitsu.

Even today, the people admire Father de Rotz, who was so full of love

The Meiji government finally lifted the ban on Christianity in 1873. Freedom was granted after 259 years!

Six years later, a priest came to Shitsu (Sotome district, Nagasaki). This was Father Marc Marie de Rotz, whose spirit and teachings have been passed down to this day, and who is still adored by the people of Shitsu. Father de Rotz's arrival coincided with the revival of Christianity in Japan, and he began to pour his love into Sotome.

After his arrival, Father de Rotz designed and built Shitsu Church. Standing on the hill the church became a beacon of hope for those suffering in poverty. Since the location can be seen from everywhere in Shitsu, it was chosen as the church construction site.

Father de Rotz's love and kindness were poured into this humble structure

Visitors may be surprised by the simple appearance of Shitsu Church, which is the symbol of Shitsu. However, the sisters will tell you that, "This simplicity is the representation of de Father de Rotz's love". In those days, the Christians in Shitsu were living in extreme poverty. In order not to burden them with repair costs, Father de Rotz designed a simple yet solid building that could withstand strong winds from the sea.

Father de Rotz built the church at his own expense, while worshippers poured their efforts into the physical labor necessary for construction, such as cutting trees from the mountains. Shitsu Church symbolizes the cooperation between the local Christians of Shitsu and Father de Rotz.

An explosion of Father de Rotz's love and talent!

DE ROTZ 建築 collection

DE ROTZ Architecture Collection



Aside from being a priest, Father de Rotz was also a skilled architect. Let's take a look at some of the structures in whose construction Father de Rotz played a central role!

2 Protects against strong winds

Former Shitsu Aide Centre and the de Rotz Wall at the south entrance

The outer walls of the 1st floor of the Former Shitsu Aid Centre's vocational facility were made using the "Father de Rotz's method". In addition, the freestanding wall constructed at the south entrance with the same "Father de Rotz's method" was built to shield from the strong winds blowing from the Sumo-nada Sea. The building, designed by Father de Rotz, is simple yet stylish.

since 1883



The modern-day Lady de Rotz.

Sugino Hiu. She runs a restaurant called "Vaux-sur-Aure". ▶

Vaux-sur-Aure is Father de Rotz's hometown. France's Vaux-sur-Aure and Nagasaki are sister cities! Both cities carry out exchange!

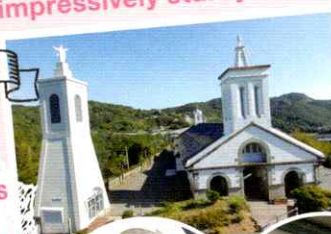


1 Simple but strong

Simple but strong enough to withstand typhoons! An impressively sturdy church

since 1882

These are the secrets to their sturdiness!



Mr. Yamamoto and Mr. Takahashi, as "Church Watchmen" ▶

Shitsu Church

A white church seemingly floating in terraced rice fields on the hillside, almost dazzling against the blue sky. In the foreign-looking town of Shitsu, the church stands like a mirage. Contrary to its gentle image, its structure is sturdy. Father de Rotz prioritized the robustness of the building. His goal was to build a sturdy church that could withstand the typhoons from the Sumo-nada Sea which directly hit the area.

The Church Watchmen in happy yellow jumpers!



Father de Rotz's love and kindness were poured into this humble structure



For the first time, a future of independence brought a sparkle to the young women's eyes!

Father de Rotz launched many projects to help the people of Sotome escape from poverty. He gathered jobless women in Shitsu and made such products as bread and somen noodles. They were even engaged in production of tea and macaroni, which is said to have been very popular among the residents of the foreign settlement in central Nagasaki.

devoted to ensuring the happiness of the people of Shitsu can surely be considered world heritage in its own right.

Father de Rotz's teachings are passed down from mothers to children

A good speaker and quick to join the villagers in the fields, Father de Rotz was an architect and sometimes served as a doctor, and soon became a father figure to the people of Shitsu. Under his guidance, young women gained confidence and became independent. After marrying and becoming mothers, they passed on Father de Rotz's spirit and wisdom to their children. Father de Rotz's teachings were passed down to the present day, and today Shitsu produces a large number of clergymen. Shitsu is also known for its many kind-hearted people. As he is still in their hearts the people wonder, "Does Father de Rotz know how popular Shitsu has become?"



[Former Shitsu Aid Centre] [Father de Rotz Memorial Hall]

The 1st floor has a workshop for making bread, macaroni and Japanese somen noodles. The 2nd floor houses a prayer room.

Originally a sardine net workshop, this building was later used for Japan's first nursery school. It now houses a museum dedicated to Father de Rotz's achievements.

However, Father de Rotz did not consider making money to be the purpose of these projects. Instead, he wished to give independence to the people of Shitsu. In particular, he wanted to emancipate the young women by teaching them skills which would give them independence. He hoped that this would allow them to lead happier lives.

The time Father de Rotz spent

3 de Rotz walls

Still standing 100 years on!



Ono Church

The church's most distinctive features are its walls, which were constructed using the "Father de Rotz's method". Locally sourced stone was piled up and bonded with joint sealant which would not be washed away by the rain (made in the Western style with red soil, lime, and sand). It is still in excellent condition!

Sotome's speciality "yuko" fruit! said to have been introduced by Christians!



4 The unknown last stage

The Former House of Archbishop (Oura Cathedral)

The Former House of Archbishop was built by Yosuke Tetsukawa, a well-known constructor of churches, according to designs drawn by Father de Rotz in his old age. Father de Rotz fell down from some scaffolds while making repairs on the house, which worsened his chronic illness and led to his death. The Former House of Archbishop, which was not open to the public, turned into the "Museum of Christianity" and opened on April 1, 2018. The museum introduces a number of materials and exhibits that are mainly relevant to suppression and concealment of Christianity during the Edo period.

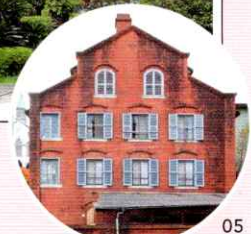


A gentle and intelligent sister tells the story of "Shitsu from my perspective"

The field cultivated by Father de Rotz is called "Odaira" in Japanese, but the locals say "Oo-deh-rah", pronouncing the name with a foreign and peculiar ring.



▲ Sister Akasako



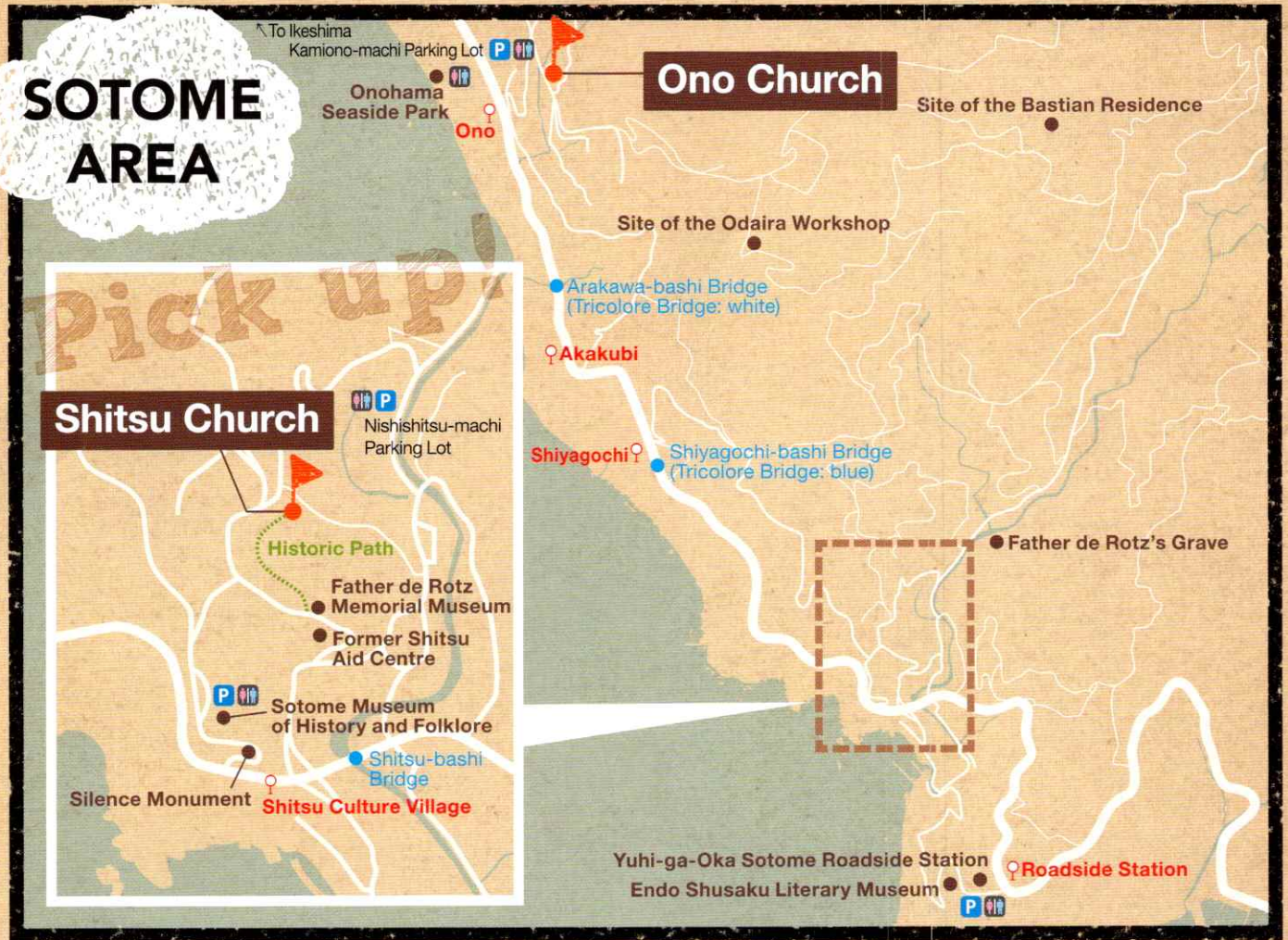
NAGASAKI CITY MAP



For Hashima Coal Mine(Gunkanjima)
Takashima Coal Mine (Hokkei Well Pit)

| Streetcar Routes | | Legend | | | |
|------------------|-------|--------|--|--|--|
| Line | Color | | | | |
| 1 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 32 | | | | | |

Like Italy, Nagasaki has a boot-like shape. Aside from the Hidden Christian Sites, "Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution" are dotted around the front side of the ankle part of this boot. Sotome (Shitsu) is situated in the leg of the "boot", and faces the beautiful Sumo-nada Sea.



ACCESS

Please see the Nagasaki Bus website for the bus timetable (<http://www.nagasaki-bus.co.jp/bus>) (Japanese only).
Contact: Nagasaki Bus (Service Center) ☎095-826-1112/ Saikai-kotsu ☎0959-22-0013

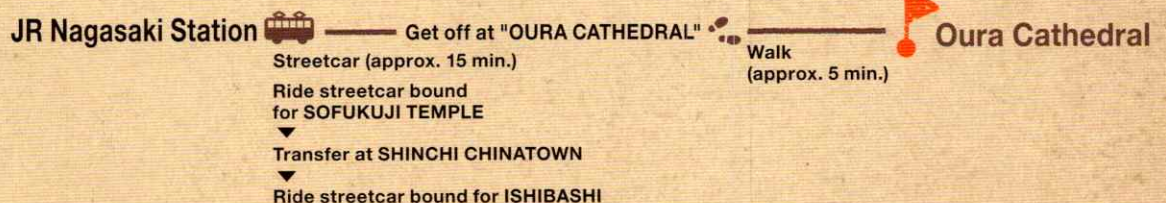
To Nagasaki

The highway bus service is also a convenient way to travel. You can transfer to many highway buses running throughout Kyushu at Kiyama SA.



To Oura Cathedral

The tourist-friendly streetcars are convenient and easy to use and cover most tourist spots. A one-day open pass is available for ¥500 at the Tourist Information Center and at hotels.



To Sotome

For a thorough sightseeing experience we recommend renting a car. However, the area can also be accessed by bus.



Nagasaki City historical sightseeing example routes.

Enjoy Nagasaki's unique gourmet foods and beautiful night views while you explore Nagasaki's history!
Also explore Sotome and immerse yourself in the world beloved by Father de Rotz.

Nagasaki City



Oura Cathedral

Oura Cathedral, a national treasure, is a must-see spot!



Glover Garden

This area retains the atmosphere of the Nagasaki Foreign Settlement. Inside the garden, you'll find the "Glover House and Office", which is registered as one of the component parts of the World Heritage Site.

The Glover House and Office is a World Heritage Site!



Nagasaki Shinchi Chinatown

Try champon and sara-udon. Alternatively, grab a steamed pork bun and eat it on the go!



Strolling Around Minami-yamate

You may be able to see Oura Cathedral, Myogyoji Temple, and Suwa Shrine within the "Triangle of Prayers" area simultaneously!?

There is a retro rest-space



Dinner in Shianbashi

The busiest part of town! You can find all kinds of restaurants here.



Mt. Inasa Nightview

Designated as one of world's top 3 night views alongside Hong Kong and Monaco!

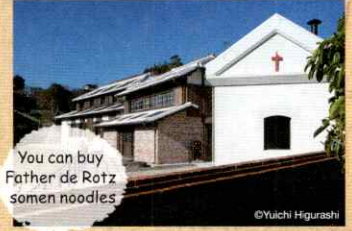
Approx. 5 min. by ropeway to the Mt. Inasa summit

Sotome Area



Shitsu Church

See the symbol of Shitsu.



Former Shitsu Aid Centre

Visit the place where the women of Shitsu learned and worked.

You can buy Father de Rotz somen noodles



Ono Church

Look for the church on top of the hill with an ocean view!



Father de Rotz Memorial Museum

Display includes items which Father de Rotz ordered from France.



Endo Shusaku Literary Museum

Enter the world of the novel "Silence", a story of Hidden Christians. Director Martin Scorsese visited the Museum during his film-making process.



Yuhi-ga-Oka Sotome Roadside Station

Lunch at the Roadside Station. Local dishes are served buffet style at the restaurant.

You can buy Father de Rotz somen noodles.

These are also World Heritage Sites! Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining.



Registered as a World Heritage Site in 2015

Hashima Coal Mine (Gunkanjima)

Landing tours of Gunkanjima depart from at Nagasaki city center. A must-see spot!



Registered as a World Heritage Site in 2015

Former Pattern Shop

The oldest building in the Nagasaki Shipyard. Open to the public as a museum (reservation required).

Close to Shitsu Church



The Tricolore Bridges

The three bridges over rivers in Shitsu, Ono and Konoura are colored blue, white and red respectively. These colors symbolize sister city friendly relationships with Vaux-sur-Aure in France.



Ikeshima Coal Mine

The only coal mine in Japan where you can tour the mining facilities.

Prior reservation is required to visit Shitsu Church and Ono Church.

Please make a reservation from the Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region Information Centre website (<http://kyoukaigun.jp>).

TEL 095-823-7650

* No entry to visitors during mass and services.
* The churches would appreciate your kind support through donations in the donation boxes. Donations are used for church maintenance and management.

Tourist Information

Nagasaki City Call Center あじさいコールセンター

TEL 095-825-5175
(For Foreign Travelers)

- Available in English, Chinese and Korean
- 8:00-20:00 / Open 365 Days
- Nagasaki City Tourist Information Site
<http://travel.at-nagasaki.jp/en/>

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