

## **An introduction to Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark**

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The Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark is located in Kagoshima, which rests at the very southern tip of mainland Japan. The geopark area includes the active volcano, Sakurajima, and the sea born of volcanic activity, Kinkowan.

Sakurajima was born 26,000 years from our present day. Until now, it has had 17 major eruptions. It presently has approximately 1,000 smaller eruptions per year and, for more than half a century, has been considered a rarity throughout the world because of the ash which showers the surrounding areas as a result of its frequent activity.

Kinkowan, which surrounds Sakurajima, is a bay endowed with an undersea caldera, the Wakamiko Caldera, and a depth of over 200 metres. The Wakamiko Caldera releases volcanic hydrothermal gas on a daily basis. Kinkowan itself is home to over 1,000 species, including dolphins.

Working with the Theme of, “the bonds between the volcano, people, and nature,” the Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark crosses through time and space to tie together nature, history, culture, and industry. Because of this, the Geopark has earned recognition for the lasting impression it leaves with its visitors.

This Geopark’s most unique feature, however, is that for nearly 60 years, right before the lively and actively erupting Sakurajima there lays a city with a population of 600,000 people who take the frequent eruptions and clouds of smoke as daily occurrences. Japan’s highest-level volcanic monitoring system is in place here, including concrete evacuation plans, and disaster prevention practices that have been carried out for many years. These plans help create a complete understanding of disaster counter-measures for many people. This is the realization of “union with the volcano,” something very rare throughout the world.

Presented in Theme 4