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## Discover Ojika: the island of a thousand stories

Welcome to Ojika, an island where every café, boat, and house hides a unique story. Located in the far west of Japan, near Nagasaki, Ojika is often overlooked by visitors who prefer bustling cities and famous cultural landmarks. Yet, the island offers a window into centuries-old traditions, local life, and the peaceful atmosphere of an authentic Japan.

Ojika is the perfect invitation to escape the conventional and experience “slow travel” in Japan. The island welcomes you like a friend, ready to weave its story with yours.



Goryo Cliffs and Beach (c) Todd Fong

## Once Upon a Time in Ojika

[In Ojika](#), you won't find luxury boutiques or busy streets. With its modest 25 square kilometers, the island is best explored on foot or by bicycle. Unlike other island destinations, Ojika's charm is subtle, like a delicate fragrance that reveals itself over time, gently saturating the senses without ever being overwhelming. The island's culture is rooted in the concept of omoiyari (おもいやり in Japanese), which emphasizes the importance of consideration for others. The heartbeat of Ojika is its community, which practices the old custom of bartering and daily acts of selfless kindness.

## A Homestay Experience

One of the most cherished ways to experience the essence of Ojika is [through a homestay](#). This rare invitation into the island's homes offers a unique chance to experience everyday Japanese life. During a homestay, you will be welcomed into your host family's home with genuine warmth and hospitality. You'll have the chance to learn about traditional Japanese customs and etiquette. Your host family may also teach you how to cook local dishes or share their special skills and crafts with you.

But above all, a homestay in Ojika is an opportunity for cultural exchange. As you spend time with your host family, you'll not only learn about their way of life but also share your own experiences and perspectives. This mutual exchange of knowledge and understanding is what makes a homestay in Ojika truly special.

Whether it's harvesting crops, fishing, or dining with a family, it's an opportunity to immerse yourself in a world so different from your own—and sometimes, even forge long-term friendships.

## The Unique Appeal of Kominka Houses

At the heart of Ojika's cultural preservation efforts is restoring kominka (traditional-style houses). This project, guided by renowned Japanologist Alex Kerr, has restored many traditional buildings across Japan since the 1970s. [Staying in a restored kominka](#) is another way to experience the island while enjoying modern comforts. Each kominka has its own history and character, from the materials used to the views it offers. For example, the Hoshu house features a cedarwood shower and bath, wooden beams, and tatami-covered floors, creating a timeless atmosphere for passing visitors.

## Fishing with the Locals: Diving into Tradition

Ojika's deep connection with the sea is undeniable, and one of the most rewarding ways to immerse yourself in its culture is by participating in traditional fishing practices. Fishing has

long been a cornerstone of Ojika's economy. At one point, the fishermen were so numerous that there weren't enough houses to accommodate all the newcomers, so many lived simply on their fishing boats.

Even today, the islanders are happy to share their knowledge with visitors. [Joining a fishing expedition](#) with a guide offers a rare opportunity to learn techniques passed down through generations and to truly understand the island's intimate relationship with the sea. The experience is a lesson in patience and a chance to bond with the fishermen who live and work in these waters. Fishing mainly focuses on small, easily caught fish, particularly horse mackerel (aji), abundant and commonly consumed in Japan. Of course, other less sought-after fish are also caught and released back into the water. But it's not just about catching fish: it's about gaining a deep appreciation for the hard work, skill, and respect for nature involved.

## Culinary Experiences and Encounters

Quiet and secretive doesn't mean boring! Ojika's cafes and restaurants are warm and welcoming, making you feel at home. During your visit, be sure to stop by [Turtle Café](#), run by Taguchi-san. His father, originally from the island, moved to Tokyo before returning in retirement to open the café. When his health began to decline, Taguchi-san also came back to care for him and took over the café, never returning to Tokyo. Some visitors claim his coffee, roasted on-site, is among the best in Japan. You might also chat with Egawa-san, who drives around the island in his store truck with the slogans "Love Beer" and "Love Ojika" painted on the side. He's deeply involved in local community issues. Or have lunch at Fujita-san's, who opened the [restaurant KONNE](#) with his wife, originally from Fukuoka.

At Fujimatsu restaurant, enjoy the island's signature fish, isaki, with its pale flesh and mild flavor. The kominka that houses [Fujimatsu](#) was the first renovation project by Alex Kerr on Ojika and was once the residence of one of the island's wealthiest families. The 2019 Michelin Guide notes that the restaurant typically serves seasonal seafood and vegetables prepared in various ways: stewed, cooked with rice in a hot pot, grilled, or fried. Here, there's no fixed menu! The chef personally goes to the market to craft his menu from the best of the day's catch.

## A Zen Escape

Though small, the island offers visitors various walks, such as Kakinohama Beach and the Goryo Cliffs, one of Ojika's most spectacular natural landscapes of black lava rock. However, as the area can be difficult to access with rockslides, tides and so on, it's best to exercise caution.

If you're drawn to Japan's spiritual side, Ojika Island is home to Choji Temple, a historical site offering a space for reflection and meditation. One of the unique offerings here is the chance to participate in [creating zen garden patterns](#) at the temple, guided by a local monk.

The peaceful surroundings and the silent concentration required for this activity make it one of the island's most serene experiences.

## A New Chapter for the Island

After discovering her love for typography during her studies in Tokyo, [Momoko-san](#), the fourth generation of Ojika's typographers, returned to the island to open her own typography and design workshop next to her father's. While her father focuses on mass printing for local businesses, Momoko-san turned towards creative projects, creating a complementary relationship between their workshops, now connected by an open door—a potent symbol of their collaboration.

Alongside this, she is actively preserving local arts by promoting art exhibitions and events on the island with a group of artisans and creators, regularly inviting artists to showcase their work in Ojika. Through her innovative spirit and passion for craftsmanship, Momoko-san contributes to the cultural revival of this small Japanese island.

Ojika is brimming with secrets waiting to be uncovered, stories the islanders eagerly share. Much like a captivating novel where you bond with the characters and dread the final page, each encounter invites you to forge genuine connections and embrace the beauty of simplicity.

So, pack your bags and bring a few personal stories to share with the locals. Don't just be a visitor—participate and become part of their story.

By Isabelle VanSteenkiste, Journalist.

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## Media Press Kit



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People of Ojika (c) Todd Fong



Home Visit with the Yamamotos (c) Todd Fong





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