

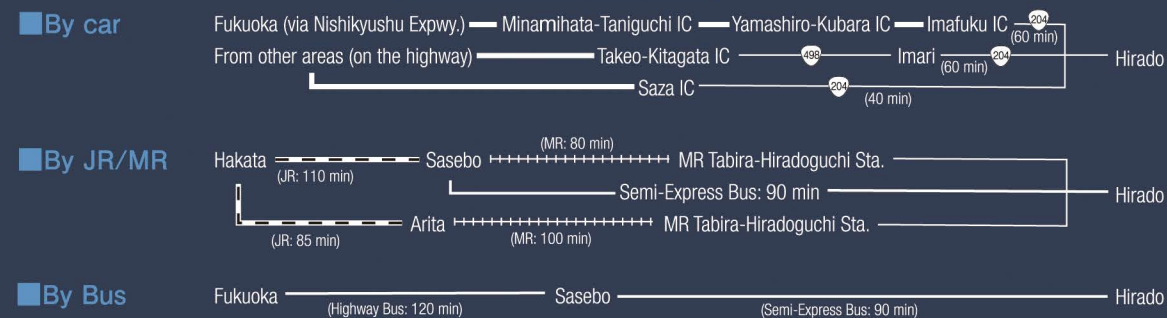
Guide to Early Christianity in Hirado

~Journey to Hirado~



Hirado church map codes **000 000 000** **000 000 000** Enter these into your car navigation system.
Sometimes the location shows up slightly off.

Getting to Hirado



Hirado Tourism Association

TEL 0950 (23) 8600 FAX 0950 (23) 8601
<http://www.hirado-net.com/>



HIRADO
 Hirado City,
 Nagasaki Prefecture

In 1550 Christianity was first introduced in Hirado. Soon after, its followers were oppressed everywhere, being forced to retain their faith underground until 1873, when the Meiji government lifted the ban on Christianity and its believers got the freedom to worship.

It is this kind of historical background that attracts many people to the Christian churches in Hirado, which are architecturally attractive and surrounded by beautiful scenery.

Please enjoy a tour of these churches, and we are sure you will discover many new things.

Christian chronology

- 1549 The first group of Christian missionaries led by Francis Xavier landed at Kagoshima.
- 1550 The first vessel from Portugal arrived at Hirado.
Francis Xavier stopped at Hirado to spread Christianity.
- 1555 Missionaries spread Christianity in Hirado and established a church there. There were about 500 believers.
- 1558 Jesuits were expelled from Hirado, while merchants from Macao continued to be allowed in Hirado Port.
- 1561 The Miya-no-mae incident took place between Portuguese and Hirado citizens.
- 1564 Luis Frois built St. Maria Church (Tenmonji Temple) in Hirado.
- 1580 Sumitada Omura contributed Nagasaki domain to the Society of Jesus.
- 1587 Hideyoshi Toyotomi promulgated the Missionaries expulsion decree. Missionaries gathered in Takushima to work out countermeasures.
- 1599 Many Christian believers with the Koteda and Ichibu families sought refuge in Nagasaki.
- 1609 The Netherlands set up a mercantile house in Hirado. Gaspar Nishi Genka and other followers were martyred.
- 1613 Britain set up a mercantile house in Hirado. The Tokugawa Shogunate placed a ban on Christianity.
- 1615~1623 A large number of missionaries entered Japan illegally.
- 1616 Ships from foreign countries except for those from China were allowed to call on only Hirado and Nagasaki Ports.
- 1622 Father Camillo Constanzo was burned at the stake as a martyr in Tabira. Other Christian followers were martyred in Nakaenoshima.
- 1623 The British mercantile house in Hirado was closed.
- 1624 Japan broke off diplomatic relations with Spain.
- 1639 The Tokugawa Shogunate refused Portuguese entry.
The Ukihashi Mondo incident took place.
- 1641 The Dutch mercantile house moved from Hirado to Dejima in Nagasaki.
- 1800 Crypto Christians moved into Hirado from Kamigoto and other places.
- 1873 The Meiji government lifted the ban on Christianity.
- 1885 Himosashi Catholic Church was built. (rebuilt in 1929)
- 1898 Hoki Catholic Church was built.
- 1918 Tabira (Setoyama) Catholic Church was built.
- 1931 St. Francis Xavier Memorial Church was built.

Etiquette when visiting churches

- Please remove hats while inside the sanctuary.
- Please look around quietly, particularly while inside the sanctuary.
(Please look around as quietly as possible outside of the sanctuary as well.)
- As a rule, photographs may not be taken inside the sanctuary.
- Please do not enter areas that are fenced off, the-chancel (the altar and the area surrounding it), and the choir stalls on the second floor.
- Please refrain from eating and drinking, consuming alcohol, and smoking inside the sanctuary.
- Please use the restroom ahead of time at a nearby public restroom or roadside station.
(In an emergency, you may use the church members' restroom)
- Please refrain from entering the sanctuary under the influence of alcohol.
- Please make sure to close the entrance/exit door(s) when you leave.
- Please do not touch items (Bibles, etc.) inside the sanctuary.

*Please note that you may be asked to refrain from entering the sanctuary when events are being held at the church such as Mass, ceremonial occasions, etc.

The stained glass depicts the history of Hirado.

In 1550, the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier visited Hirado and began to minister amongst its people. The feudal lord of Hirado at the time, Matsura Takanobu, supported Xavier's ministry, partially out of hope that the acceptance of Christianity would help foster trade relations with the Portuguese. Many churches were established, Latin hymns began to be sung, and western medicine was taught in the area. However, a national ban on Christianity was later issued and the Matsura clan began to take a strong stance against Christianity, resulting in much martyrdom in the area. Despite the harshness of the anti-Christian era, history shows that Christianity continued to be passed on through the generations.

Memorial Statue of St. Francis Xavier



St. Francis Xavier

Francis Xavier traveled from Kagoshima to Hirado in 1550 after hearing that a Portuguese ship had entered Hirado Port. His ministry in Hirado resulted in the birth of many new believers and must have given Xavier a sense of potential for further ministry in Japan.

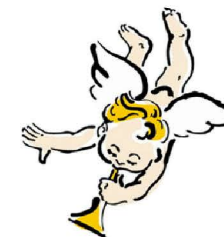
Hirado Dutch trading house

Japan's first Dutch trading house was established in Hirado at the beginning of the Edo period. It served as a hub for Japanese foreign trade for 33 years until it was later relocated to Dejima. The warehouse of the Hirado Dutch Trading House was restored in 2011 and now operates as a museum introducing many different historical trade items and the involvement of the Hirado clan with the Dutch.



Letter from Jagatara (Jakarta)

Location: 2477 Okubocho, Hirado-shi Phone: 0950-26-0636 Access: 5 minute walk from the HIRADO-SANBASHI stop
Access: Adults: ¥300/Elementary to high school students: ¥200 Opening hours: 8:30am-5:30pm
Closed: The 3rd Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in June Parking: N/A (please use the Hirado Port Community Square parking lot)



Hirado Xavier Memorial Church

Built in 1931, the Xavier Memorial Church is surrounded by temples and the resulting view of the church is typical of Hirado in the way it brings together both eastern and western culture. The church also overflows with a sense of art that can be felt in its exotic sculptures and beautiful stained glass windows.

Location: 269 Kagamigawacho, Hirado-shi Access: 10 minute walk from the HIRADO SHIYAKUSHO-MAE stop
Cost: Free admission Opening hours: 8am-4pm (visitations not permitted during Mass, events, etc.)
Closed: Open all year round Parking: 50 parking spaces for regular cars, no spaces for large vehicles

Monument in memory of the arrival of St. Pedro Bautista

Location: the Hirado Future Creation Hall parking lot

St. Pedro Bautista was born in the San Esteban del Valle village in Avila, Spain in 1544. He arrived in Hirado as the General Director of a special envoy from the Philippines and met with Taiko Hideyoshi in Hizen-Nagoya Castle. He obtained a permit to live in Kyoto and was donated some land where he began a monastery, cathedral and hospital. Devoted to a lifestyle of poverty, St. Pedro Bautista worked to introduce Christianity to Japan and also contributed greatly to social welfare in our country. In February 1597 he was martyred as the leader of the 26 Martyrs of Japan in Nagasaki.



Kamikozaki Catholic Church

Following a historical event called the "discovery of believers" on March 17th, 1865, Japanese Christians emerged after 250 years of hiding, and from this point onwards believers began to reappear openly in society throughout Nagasaki. From around 1880 onwards believers who were in need of a place to live, mostly from Kuroshima and Goto Islands, began to relocate to the Kamikozaki area.

Location: 220 Okubocho, Hirado-shi Access: Right next to the HIKARI-NO-YOCHIEN-MAE stop Cost: Free Admission
Opening hours: 9am-5pm (visitations not permitted during Mass, events, etc.) Closed: Open all year round
Parking: 40 parking spaces for regular cars, 1 space for large vehicles



Come along to "Mary's Kitchen" on the 4th Sunday of every month!

Kamikozaki Church The 4th Sunday / 9:30am-11:00am

Mary's Kitchen is a hospitality ministry started by church volunteers several years ago. About three different varieties of sweets are served, all of which are homemade. Both locals and tourists of any religious background are welcome. The event finishes once the sweets have run out so please come early if you would like to join in. (Sweets are provided free of charge. You may make a voluntary donation if you like.)

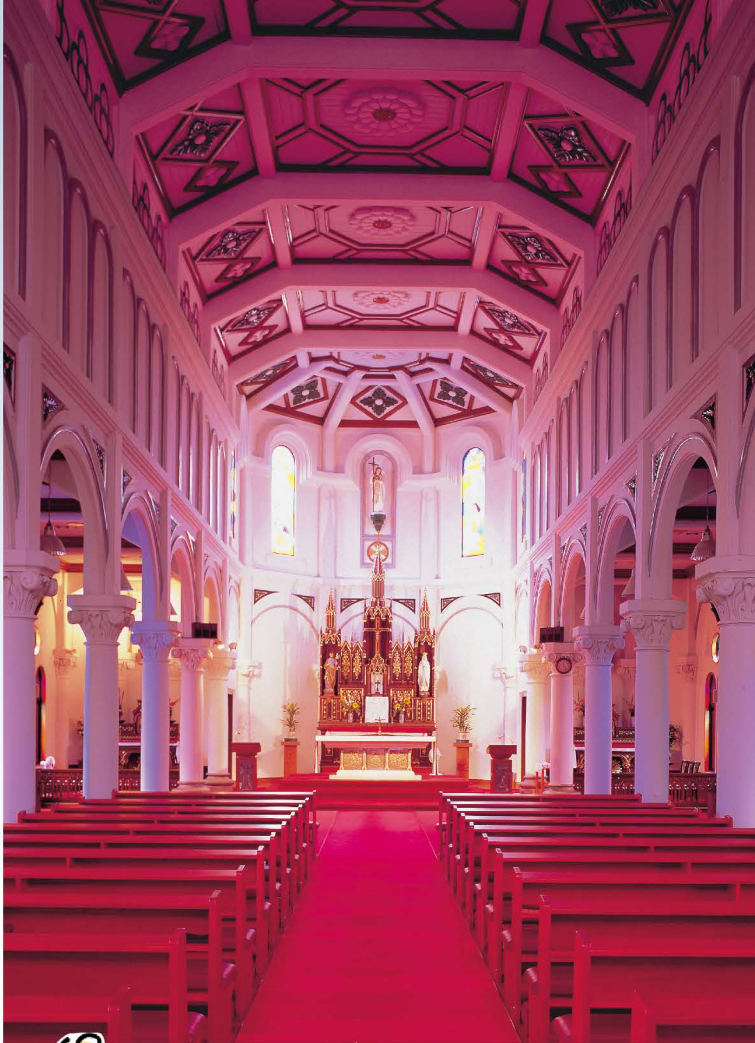


Himosashi Catholic Church

(A designated cultural property of Nagasaki Prefecture)

Himosashi Catholic Church is built as a large cathedral and, after the old Urakami Cathedral was destroyed in the atomic bomb, is said to be the largest cathedral in Japan. It is one of the best Romanesque buildings in the East and its interior is fitted with arches and beautiful stained glass, as well as being decorated with floral patterns that were characteristic of Tetsukawa Yosuke. Its pillars feel larger than they appear and the church has a mysterious spiritual feel to it because of the way spaces like those of Japanese Buddhism are mixed amongst Christian spaces.

Location: 1039 Himosashicho, Hirado-shi Access: 25 minutes by car from Hirado Bridge Cost: Free Admission
Closed: Open all year round Opening hours: 8am-3pm (visitations not permitted during Mass, events, etc.)
Parking: 45 spaces for regular cars, no spaces for large vehicles



Hoki Catholic Church

(A designated cultural property of Nagasaki Prefecture)

Hoki Church is a small wooden church tucked away in the mountains in the most remote part of Hoki village. The church was built facing south for good lighting and the contrast between its beautiful white-washed walls and brick color is stunning. The church is deeply rooted in its community and local believers can often be heard praying from inside.

Location: 1170 Hokicho, Hirado-shi Access: 25 minutes by car from Hirado Bridge
Opening hours: 8am-4pm (visitations not permitted during Mass, events, etc.)
Cost: Free Admission Closed: Open all year round
Parking: 25 spaces for regular cars, no spaces for large vehicles



Kigatsu Catholic Church

Kigatsu Catholic Church stands on a hill east of central Hirado and Himosashi. This area was settled by believers who moved from the Nishisono and Goto Island areas under the guidance of Father de Rotz in the early Meiji period. The church was built by its congregation in 1961 from the old Hirado Yukokan High School gymnasium. Fourteen paintings of the "Stations of the Cross" by the late Dr. Nagai Takashi are displayed on the walls of the church sanctuary. These are valuable pieces of artwork that were drawn by Dr. Nagai while he was bedridden only a few months before he passed away. Kigatsu Church received these paintings following Dr. Nagai's death.

Location: 577 Kigatsucho, Hirado-shi Access: 30 minutes by car from Hirado Bridge (from National Route 383, turn onto Prefectural Road 60 towards Kigatsu at the Himosashi intersection)
Cost: Free Admission Opening hours: Irregular Closed: Open all year round Parking: 2 spaces for regular cars, no spaces for large vehicles



Hirado Museum of Early Christianity

The Neshiko area is called the "home of the Kakure Kirishitan," and it was an area in which the faith was continued through use of nandogami during the ban on Christianity. This museum is located in the Ushiwake Forest, a Kirishitan holy place, and collects, displays, and preserves religious artefacts from the early Catholic mission era.

Location: 1502-1 Oishiwakicho Hirado-shi Phone: 0950-28-0176
Cost: Adult: ¥200/High school student: ¥150/Elementary to Jnr. High student: ¥70
Access: 30 minutes by car from Hirado Bridge Opening hours: 9:00am-5:30pm
Closed: Every Wednesday and 12/29-1/2 Parking: 10 spaces for regular cars

The "Stations of the Cross"

The Stations of the Cross is a prayer ritual observed in Catholic churches. It refers to splitting the passion of Christ into 14 scenes and holding up these holy pictures, one by one, while you pray. The images are hung in a line along both sides of the inside of the sanctuary in a Catholic church.

Ikitsuki Island--- The Christian faith is still alive.

Towards the end of the Warring States period, Ikitsukushima Island became the center point of the Hirado Christian faith. The island was governed by Christian feudal lords named Koteda and Ichibu and the majority of its inhabitants were also Christians. However, in response to the ban on Christianity in Hirado, Koteda and Ichibu, along with a large group of believers, fled to Nagasaki in 1599. It was following this that the tragic martyrdoms occurred. Despite this, the remaining believers stayed together as a group and went on to continue their faith in secret. Alongside the start of the Meiji period the ban on Christianity was lifted and Catholic missionary activity began again. However, many believers from the islands chose to continue to live out their faith in the same way as they had during their time in hiding and this Kakure Kirishitan, or Hidden Christian, form of Christianity lives on today.



Ikitsuki Museum Shima-no-Yakata

At the Ikitsukushima Museum you will be able to learn about Ikitsukushima Island's unique history, including the hidden Christians and whale fishing, through interesting exhibits.

Location: 4289-1 Ikitsukicho Minamimen, Hirado-shi Phone: 0950-53-3000
Cost: Adult: ¥510/High school student: ¥300/Elementary to Jnr. High student: ¥200
Access: 25 minutes by car from Hirado Bridge Opening hours: 9am-5pm
Closed: 1/1 and 1/2 Parking: 56 spaces for regular cars, 6 spaces for large vehicles

Object of worship for Hidden Christians Picture of the Madonna and child

(Part of Shima-no-Yakata)



Designed by Tetsukawa Yosuke (1912)

Yamada Catholic Church

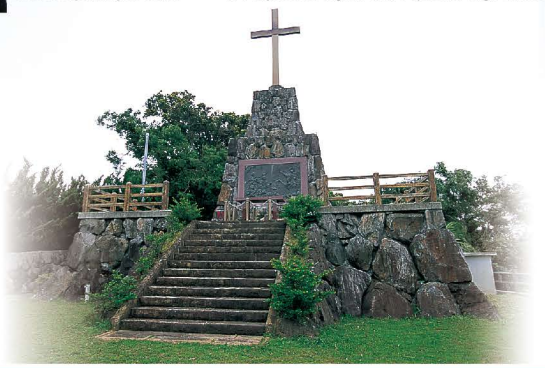
The red-brick Yamada Church that sits on a hill in Yamada village was completed by Tetsukawa Yosuke in 1912. Its unique multi-layered ceiling is adorned with a collage of rare butterfly-wing patterns and the church interior is decorated with things that bring to mind the suffering the island believers went through; reliefs depicting the martyrdoms of Ikitsuki, a cross made out of pine wood from the sacred place, Gaspar, and a statue of the mourning Mary, etc.

Location: 4289-1 Ikitsukicho Minamimen, Hirado-shi Access: 30 minutes by car from Hirado Bridge
Cost: Free Admission Opening hours: 9am-5pm (visitations not permitted during Mass, events, etc.)
Closed: Open all year round Parking: 14 spaces for regular cars, 1 space for large vehicles

Sacred Place of Gaspar

After the departure of the Christian lords, Nishi Genka (his Christian name was Gaspar) took over leadership of the remaining believers on the island. He was arrested in 1609 and executed and buried in Tsuji, Kurose. After his death the place of his martyrdom was deemed a sacred place and a memorial monument erected by the believers still stands today.

Location: 1580 Ikitsukicho Yamadamen, Hirado-shi
Access: 30 minutes by car from Hirado Bridge Cost: Free Admission



Interesting Facts

What are "Senpuku Kirishitans" and "Kakure Kirishitans"?

Those people who became Buddhist parishioners on the surface while maintaining and passing on their Christian faith in secret through things like the use of nandogami (closet god-statues) and worship at sacred places were called Senpuku Kirishitan, or "Hidden Christians." In contrast, people who did not return to the Catholic faith even after the anti-Christian laws were abolished and have chosen to continue expressing their faith the same way as during the ban on Christianity are called Kakure Kirishitan, or "Hidden Christians."

Interesting facts about Hidden Christians

"Orasho" chanting

In Neshiko, approximately 40 ceremonies were held a year. At the center of these ceremonies was an act of worship which involved chanting the "Orasho." It is said that, in order to keep their faith a secret, these Christians couldn't chant the "Orasho" out loud and therefore mixed the words of the chant as they talked amongst themselves instead. In Ikitsuki, the "Orasho" was passed on in many different ways, including chanting and, nowadays, reading from a book.

Nandogami

Nandogami are the objects of worship used by Kakure Kirishitan and were given their name, which means "closet god-statue," because in the past they were hidden in a shrine in believers' closets. There are many different types of nandogami, including medallions, hanging scrolls, and holy water.



World Heritage site candidate

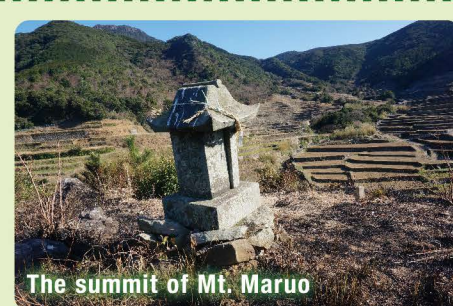
Location: Kasugacho, Hirado-shi
Access: 30 min by car from Hirado Bridge Cost, Opening hours, Closed: Visits allowed anytime Parking: 3 spaces (use the community center parking lot)

Important cultural landscape of Japan The sacred places and villages of Hirado



Kasuga Village

©Figure Yuichi



The summit of Mt. Maruo

Many remains of what is thought to have been Christian graves dating back to the era of Catholic missions. Mt. Maruo looks out over terraced rice fields and is a place that has long been important to the village people.

A sacred place Nakaenoshima

When Father Camillus Costanzo was arrested, his servants John Sakamoto and Damian Deguchi were decapitated on Nakaenoshima Island, followed by the execution of Joan Jiro Uemon. Their bitter deaths stayed with the believers and the site of their martyrdom became a sacred place. It has been said that no matter how dry the weather was, fresh water would begin gushing from the rocks when the believers prayed the "Orasho" in the rocky area in the middle of the island. Even now, the water from these rocks is collected and used as holy water in baptisms and other ceremonies.



Tabira---Have a chance to stay lofty in the lingering sound of Angels Bell.

The ban on Christianity was dropped in 1873, and in 1886 Father Raguet of Kuroshima and Father de Rotz of Shitsu personally financed the purchase of houses and land for development in Tabira and sent 3 families from Kuroshima and 4 families from Shitsu to live there. Later on, others relocated from the Goto Islands and Hirado at their own expense and the number of believers in the area increased. The first Mass was performed Father Raguet in 1887, and now there are almost a thousand believers in three churches in the area.

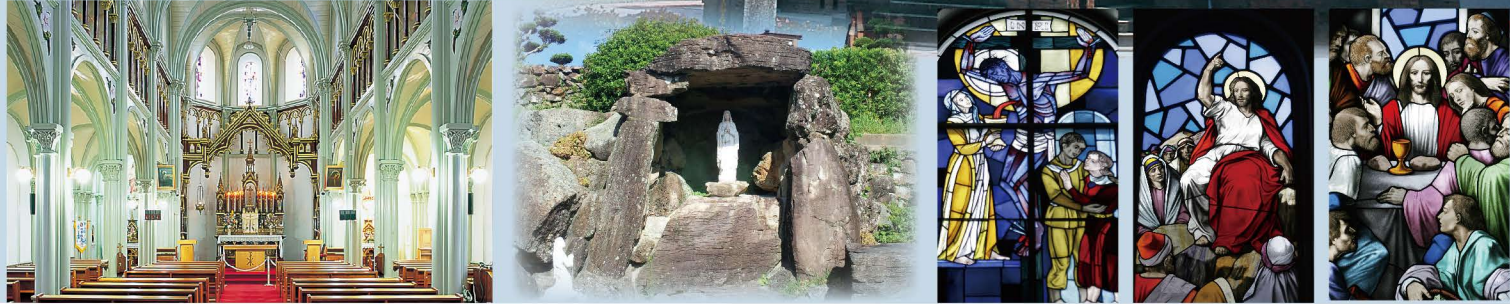
World Heritage site candidate

Important cultural property of Japan

Tabira Catholic Church

The believers in Tabira worked hard to cultivate the land the Tabira Cathedral is built on and church was completed in 1918, funded by these local Christians. A large bell tower rises from the front of the red brick church building. The church has a multi-tiered ceiling and its interior is divided into three sections separated by rows of columns adorned with Corinthian-style capitals.

Location: 19 Tabiracho Kotedamen, Hirado-shi Access:Right next to the TENSHUDO-MAE stop
Cost:Free Admission Opening hours:9am-5pm (visitations not permitted during Mass, events, etc.)
Closed:Open all year round Parking:30 spaces for regular cars, 4 spaces for large vehicles



Tabira Yaiza Historic Park

This location looks out over Hirado-Seto and was where Father Camillus Costanzo, who had secretly ministered to believers in areas such as Hirado and Ikitsuki during the Edo government's ban on Christianity, was burned at the stake.

Location: 210 Tabiracho Nodamen, Hirado-shi
Access: 5 minutes by car from Hirado Bridge
Cost,Opening hours,Closed:Visits allowed anytime Parking:10 spaces



Hirado and Christianity

Everyone in the domain converted Christianity spread instantly

It was the beginning of trade relations between the Hirado feudal lord, Matsura Takanobu and the Portuguese in 1550 that marked the introduction of Christianity to Nagasaki. Father Francis Xavier began to actively minister amongst the people of Nagasaki and Matsura's chief retainer, Koteda and Ichibu, also joined the faith. People who lived in their territories were all forced to convert to Christianity, and many Christian believers were born in Hirado.

Oppression followed by a resurgence in church construction

Matsura Takanobu passed away in 1599 and Shigenobu, who took his place, intensified oppression of Christians in the area. At this time, Koteda and his family, along with 600 believers, fled the area for Nagasaki. The believers in Hirado were thus plunged into the anti-Christian area without any support. They placed household altars in the rooms of their houses and set up family Buddhist altars, but they only appeared to be Buddhist on the surface, and continued their Christian faith by hiding holy images of the Mother Mary, etc. in their closets. Later, when the Meiji government recognized freedom of religion, these undercover Christians returned to Catholicism and began building churches where believers could pray publicly.

Christian culture continues on today

With the recognition of religious freedom by the government, some Christians returned to their original faith, but there were some who chose to continue in their faith the same way as they had during the ban on Christianity. These Christians are referred to as Kakure Kirishitan, or "hidden Christians." There are currently very few believers who have continued in the Kakure Kirishitan faith, but the believers have personally maintained holy places such as martyrdom sites and graveyards, and there is hope that these will one day be registered as World Heritage sites.

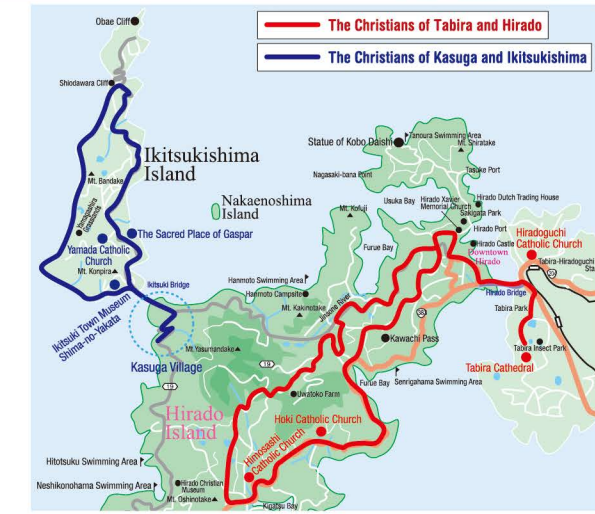


What are the Churches of Nagasaki?

The "Undercover Christian Sites of the Nagasaki-Amakusa Area" are places that tell of the process of Christianity taking root in Japan and its historical legacy of over 450 years. The road to acceptance of Christianity in Japan was not at all easy,instead, it progressed from "introduction and prosperity," to "oppression and latency" and finally through to "resurrection" and it was in Nagasaki that this unique historical process developed. The Christian faith was preserved without any leadership throughout 250 years of oppression.



Suggested Tour of Christians of Hirado



The Christians of Tabira and Hirado Route (3 hours by car)

Tabira Cathedral

Hirado Bridge

Hirado Xavier Memorial Church

Himosashi Catholic Church

Hoki Catholic Church

Kawachi Pass

The Christians of Kasuga and Ikitsuki Route (3 hours by car)

Ikitsuki Town Museum Shima-no-Yakata

Yamada Catholic Church

The Sacred Place of Gaspar

Nakaenoshima Island can be seen from Ikitsukushima Island

Shiodawara Cliff

Kasuga Village

The summit of Mt. Maruo

Ikitsuki Bridge

Sunsetway Road

Charter Taxi (includes a local guide)

Drive the above tour route in a charter taxi (includes commentary provided by a local guide)

The Christians of Tabira and Hirado Course (3 hours)

Regular-sized charter taxi: ¥17,800 for up to 3 people
Large charter taxi: ¥24,800 for 4 to 8 people

* You can choose to be picked up and dropped off at a hotel, Hirado Port Community Square, MFR Hiradoguchi Station, etc.
* If you would like to be picked up and dropped off in Sasebo, please feel free to discuss this with us. (Extra charge)

The Christians of Kasuga and Ikitsukushima Course (3 hours)

Regular-sized charter taxi: ¥17,800 for up to 3 people
Large charter taxi: ¥24,800 for 4 to 8 people

* You can choose to be picked up and dropped off at Shima-no-Yakata, an inn on Ikitsukushima Island, etc.
* If you would like to be picked up and dropped off in Hirado or Tabira, please feel free to discuss this with us. (Extra charge)

Cruise around Nakaenoshima Island

This cruise departs from Tachiura Port or Ichibu Jetty on Ikitsukushima Island and will take you around Nakaenoshima Island (you will not be able to go onshore). You will be able to experience what it's like to be on a fishing boat and will be able to learn in detail about Nakaenoshima Island which is a World Heritage site candidate.
Meeting point: Tachiura Port or Ichibu Jetty / Required time: Approx. 1 hour / Price: from ¥3,500 per person (may change depending on numbers) / Maximum participants: 9 *Reservations must be made a week in advance. The boat will not be able to sail under some circumstances.
Cruises will start in October of 2017. For more details, inquiries can be made through the Hirado-net website starting in October .
http://hirado-net.com

For those visiting in December Hirado's Silent Christmas

Hirado's churches stand quietly, adorned with beautiful lights during the Christmas season. Visiting Hirado in December allows you to experience Hirado at its best. You can participate in a real Catholic Mass, enjoy the different nativity scenes on display, purchase a donation ribbon, and more.

Nativity Displays

A nativity display is a model depicting the manger scene from Christ's birth in Bethlehem. There are 11 places in Hirado including hotels and tourist facilities that each display unique nativity scenes during the Christmas season.



Experience Christmas Mass at Church

You can experience what it's like to participate in a real Catholic Mass on December 24th and be blessed by a priest. After participating in Mass, light refreshments are served by church members. (Bookings required in advance)
Inquires: Hirado Tourism and Cultural Exchange Center
TEL 0950-22-3060

Christmas by Candlelight

Candles are lit at Saiwaibashi, the Hirado Xavier Memorial Church and Kamikozaki Catholic Church.

