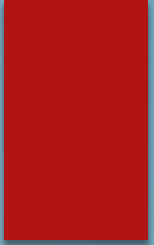


Sado Island

Where is Sado?

Sado is an island located in the Sea of Japan, west of Japan's main island, Honshu. It is part of the Japanese prefecture (province) of Niigata.





People have lived on the island for over 12,000 years. There is clear archeological evidence that settlers from the mainland of Japan brought customs and culture to Sado in the 8th century B.C.E.

In the 8th century C.E. Sado became a place of exile. Poets, playwrights, intellectuals, and members of the nobility who wound up on the wrong side in wars and politics were banished to Sado. The artistry, folk traditions, and beliefs they brought with them flourish on Sado today.

Facts about Sado

- It is the sixth largest Japanese island.
- Sado covers 331 square miles (857 square km).
- There are two parallel mountain chains on Sado with steep precipices and ravines. Osado Range is in the northwest and Kosado Range is in the southeast.
- The narrow Kuninaka Valley in between the two mountain ranges is where most people live.





- **Agriculture is the main industry. Warm ocean currents touch Sado's southern edge, and provide a climate where crops can flourish.**
- **With the sea surrounding the island, fishing is also an important industry.**
- **In 2011, the population of Sado was 63,231.**

- The rocky north end of the island is very different from the south - both the topography and plant life.
- There, Mt. Kinpoku (3,280 feet) is surrounded by old growth forests.
- Gold was found in this area in 1601. Sado became the home of one of the largest gold mines in the world. Sometimes the exiles were forced to work in the mines.



The rugged coast of Northern Sado



Kodo performing the ending of the taiko piece titled "Yatai-bayashi"

The arts are an active and important part of life on Sado.

The famous Japanese taiko drum group, Kodō performs around the world but Sado is its home base. The word kodō conveys two meanings. It can be the "heartbeat" of a mother's heart first heard by a baby. But the word can mean "children of the drum."

The theater art of Noh also thrives on Sado.

Noh, performed since the 14th century, is a major form of classical Japanese musical drama. It is the oldest major theatre art still regularly performed.

One-third of all Japanese Noh stages are concentrated on this small island. Noh was originally an art form for the ruling class. But on Sado it has been preserved and passed on by the farmers.



Dedication of Noh play, A Venerable Old Man, on New Year's Day

Matsuo Bashō saw a “stormy sea” when he stood on the western shores of Japan and looked across the water towards Sado Island.

He knew it was a place where people endured exile far from their homes and families.

His haiku begins with the power of the seas around Sado – but then pulls our eyes to the sky stretching over the island.



The Sea of Japan



Filled with the Milky Way from one end to the other, the tranquility of Heaven's River offers comfort and brings hope.

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