



The area of Ojika consists of 17 islands of various sizes, located within the Goto archipelago. Currently 6 of the 17 islands are populated. These islands are: Ojika, Madara, Kuroshima, Oshima, Noshima, and Mushima. The total population as of March, 2010 was 2,955 people. The population has fallen from roughly 12,000 at its highest. This drastic reduction of population echoes the population decline of rural areas all over Japan. There are 3 main schools in Ojika: Hokusho West High School, Ojika Junior High, and Ojika Elementary. Ojika Elementary has a branch school on the small island of Oshima.

Unlike many other small towns across Japan, Ojika has resisted merging with larger towns and therefore it retains local governance. Recently, Ojika has been working hard to find ways to revitalize the economy, attract tourists, and bring in and retain young residents. Over the past few years, the town has won several awards for its environmental tourism efforts, and has increasingly been featured on Japanese TV programming. Many other small towns are turning to Ojika for advice on how they too can bring new energy to their rural areas.

The history of the island is a long and interesting one. There have been many archeological digs on the island, uncovering ancient tools and pottery. Of particular interest is the SE Asian and Chinese pottery found just off the coast of Ojika, near Maekata. Many anchor stones from Chinese ships have also been found off the coast, and they can now be viewed in Maekata, and at the Ojika History Museum. Ojika has long been a center of trade and activity among the Goto islands. Owing to its relatively flat profile, farming was more easily accomplished here than on the other Gotos. Due to the shallow seas surrounding it, the fishing was particularly good as well.

From the 1600's, whaling became a very important industry in Ojika, and the economy prospered. Many of the tools, daily records, and history of whaling on the island can be seen at the Ojika History Museum.

Because Ojika was such an important center of activity, and frequently received visits from the lord of Hirado, Christianity did not develop as it did on the other Goto islands. The exception to this is the island of Nozaki. Here, three Christians from Omura, who hid under the tarp of a fishing boat, were the first of a community of Christians to live on the island. The community eventually built Nokubi church in the center of the island, which is a popular tourist destination today. The island was abandoned over recent years, with the last resident leaving sometime around 2002. Currently, Nozaki island is home to the Nozaki Nature Park, which includes a hostel/camping area in the remodeled school building. The nature park attracts many tourists and nature lovers eager to get away from busy Japanese cities.

One of the most recent projects in Ojika is the restoration and remodeling of several historic homes. By partnering with Alex Kerr's Company, Iori, the town has set a plan in motion to revitalize these homes as tourist rentals. The first of the remodels to be completed will be located in the main Fuefuki area, near the harbor. Shortly after, the main office and new restaurant will be completed in the restored Fujimatsuke building, where Japanese sake was produced. The homes will retain their historic character, but be updated with more modern comforts as well. The town hopes these homes will attract long-stay tourists to the island, and allow people to experience the unique and friendly lifestyle of Ojika!

Some other interesting places to visit are: Koujima Shrine with its gates to Maegata Bay, The Avenue of Pines, Kuroshima Park during cherry blossom season, Bandake Park, Madara Overlook, and the Oishi stones on Nozaki island.