

Feline Fragments 39 (2024)

(page cheked March 2026)

Two Far Eastern Cat Sanctuaries Aoshima Island, Ehime Prefecture, Japan



There's more than one 'cat island' in Japan, but Aoshima, in the south of the country, is probably the best-known. It was a fishing community, and as is the case elsewhere fishermen introduced cats to deal with a rodent problem. The cats colonised the island and of course reproduced. The mile-long island once had several hundred inhabitants, but over the years most moved away and now there are just a handful of elderly people – with something like 200 cats! But around 60 visitors a day take the twice-daily ferry from the port of Nagahama.



There are no hotels, restaurants or other tourist facilities on the island, so visitors need to bring their own food and drink – and of course are welcome to bring cat food if they wish! As well as food from visitors, the cats receive donations from all over Japan, and are well-cared for. It is possible to adopt a cat from the island, although I don't know how that works.





There are other 'cat islands' in Japan. Two of the best-known are Tashiro-jima in Miyagi prefecture, and Manabeshima in Okayama prefecture. Tashiro-jima has around 100 residents and a similar number of cats; the island used to raise silkworms, which attracted mice – hence the introduction of cats, which have become a sort of mascot for the place. No dogs are allowed on the island, which is accessible from Ishinomaki port by ferry 2 or 3 times a day.

Manabeshima is smaller than the two islands described above, and is less easily accessible at 19 miles off the coast of Honshu, but there are some 300 residents and a lot of cats! There is a lodge where visitors can stay. See [this link](#).





[Top-His USA](#) (undated) | [The Atlantic](#) (March 2015) | [Catster](#) (Jan. 2024)

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Houtong Cat Village

Ruifang District, Taiwan



Once a rich coal-mining community of some 6000 people in northern Taiwan, many residents moved away when the coal industry declined in the 1990s until only a few hundred remain. But

in 2008 a local cat lover organised volunteers to start giving abandoned cats a better life. Postings of cats' photos on social media resulted in a huge response from cat-lovers around the nation; it became something of a destination for cat aficionados from Taiwan and even from abroad, thus helping to revive the village, which now has shops, cafés and other tourist facilities. These days there are an estimated one million visitors a year

Some of the cats are neutered so as to help control the population, and vaccinations and medical help are available. There's a cat information and education centre, opened in 2014, and in 2010 a museum park was opened dedicated to the former mining industry. A problem more recently is that it's suspected the village may be being used by people who want to abandon their cats, as the population seems to be increasing more than expected. In 2019 there were nearly 300 cats, 50 more than two years earlier. But all in all, things seem to be going well, and certainly the cats now have a much enhanced quality of life.

[Wikipedia](#) | [Edition CNN](#) (March 2019) | [Times of India](#) (Sept. 2019)





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