Is the Entrance to the Mythical Ryugu-jo Castle Really in Itoigawa!? Benten-iwa, the Geosite in the Sea, is Full of Sights!

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In the Marine Development Marine Innovation Course, we are planning a snorkeling event at the Benten-iwa Geosite in accordance with the Ministry of Education's program of "strategic promotion of core specialist human resource development in the growing fields."
Benten-iwa Rock, a large rock reef, is one of the Geosites of the Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark. The rock is geologically volcanic, having formed one million years ago in an underwater volcanic eruption in the Fossa Magna's sandstone-mudstone strata which forms Itoigawa's Nou Region where the rock is found today. It is an important habitat for marine life and helped foster the local fishing community and historical shipping industry. Its name, Benten, refers to the Goddess of the Sea who is enshrined at Itsukushima Shrine on the rock along with a dragon-god of shipping. A local legend also suggests that the rock is the entrance to the mythical underwater "Ryugu-jo Castle." In these ways, Benten-iwa Rock proves to be not only geologically interesting, but also a valuable contributor to the marine life necessary for supporting a fishing industry and has even shaped the culture of the local people.
As a Geosite, Benten-iwa Rock contains many points of interest for both tourism and education, useful for regional promotion. Some of these are underwater, so they can only be seen by diving. Snorkeling is an excellent way to allow both researchers and tourists to enjoy these sites using simple equipment. Therefore, we think it is important to consider a course for guiding a snorkeling event.
In this research, we surveyed the underwater sights of the Benten-iwa Rock area through scuba diving with the goal of selecting the best underwater sights and planning a course for use in a snorkeling event. Through the diving survey, we could see the so-called "Entrance to Ryugu-jo Castle," as well as fish, seaweed, and other sights.
Appreciating this underwater Geosite through snorkeling is limited to the summer when the water is warm. However, seaweed changes along with the seasons, so year round inspection is valuable for deeper study. For that reason, we considered an underwater walkway as a means of seeing these sights year round without having to enter the water.

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