**The Owakudani Trail**

Steam and gases heated by underground magma rise constantly into the air in Owakudani, the epicenter of volcanic activity in Hakone. The valley is famous for its otherworldly landscape, where acidic, sulfurous steam has turned lava into soft white clay, and for its signature “black eggs,” boiled in and steamed over sulfurous water. One convenient way to get to Owakudani from here is by walking the Owakudani Trail, which can be completed in less than 90 minutes.

 Leaving the Visitor Center, the trail climbs gently past the Ubako ropeway station. The first significant site of interest along the way is Funami Iwa, a mound that is actually a giant rock, swept to its current location by the debris flow of a volcanic eruption some 3,000 years ago. The name translates to “boat-watching rock”—a reminder that Lake Ashi and the boats traveling on it were once visible from this spot.

 Continuing further uphill, the trail enters a thick forest where common trees such as hinoki cypresses stand next to oaks, beeches, which in Hakone grow mainly at altitudes higher than 800 meters, and *himeshara* (Tall stewartia) trees with their smooth light brown trunks. The vegetation grows thinner as the trail rises. Most of the trees near the bottom of Owakudani died due to the increase of sulfur dioxide in the air recorded after the latest eruption of the Hakone volcano in 2015. The trail ends next to a building that houses the Hakone Geo Museum and a shop selling “black eggs.”