

Mt. Asama

At 555 m, Mt. Asama's summit is the highest point in Ise-Shima National Park. The soil here contains serpentinite, stunting the growth of coastal species of plants and trees. The open landscape gives visitors an uninterrupted 360-degree view of Ise Bay, the islands of Toba Bay, and the Pacific. Enjoy these vistas while taking a hot footbath at the nearby viewpoint. Along a fifteen-minute walking route near the summit, one can view plants such as jingu-tsutsuji (*Rhododendron sanctum*), a variety of azalea. It is also possible to go to the viewpoint by car, or by hiking along a trail which is accessible from Asama Station.

Next, visit Kongoshoji, a Buddhist temple near the top of Mt. Asama founded in the ninth century. There are various points of cultural interest here, including an arched red bridge surrounded by a lily pond. People come to the temple's Okunoin (Inner Sanctuary) cemetery to pray for deceased ancestors. In accordance with tradition in the Ise-Shima area, people erect *sotoba* here, tall wooden grave tablets. These line the approach to Okunoin—some are as much as eight meters tall.