

Forests of Aso

Japan's rich natural history can be appreciated in the Aso Caldera area. Green forests cover over 66,000 hectares, providing ample opportunity for nature observation in both old-growth evergreen broad-leaved forests and newer, afforested area.

Forestry is a flourishing industry in the Aso region. The caldera contains primary forests, as well as forests producing timber for fuel, and conifer (mainly cedar and cypress) plantations. The diverse forests of Aso are home to insects, birds, and animals that feed, among other things, on fallen leaves and trees. This recycles nutrients and contributes directly to the life-cycle of the forest.

Types of tree found in the Aso forests:

- *Sugi* (*Cryptomeria japonica*, Japanese cedar): Dense and strong, the timber is used for structural building purposes.
- *Hinoki* (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*, Japanese cypress): Similar to the Japanese cedar, but less dense and with good preservation characteristics, the timber is often used to build temples, shrines, and other structures.
- *Matsu* (*Pinus*, Japanese pine): A very resinous tree, it does not easily rot. The timber is used for building structural foundation beams.
- *Keyaki* (*Zelkova serrata*, Japanese zelkova): A lightweight wood whose surface is shiny when polished. The timber is often used to make ornamental furniture.
- *Kiri* (*Paulownia tomentosa*, paulownia): A light, soft wood that is easily worked. The timber is often used in interior design.