

The Primeval Forest of Okinoshima

The public is not permitted to visit Okinoshima, so it is difficult to get a sense of the natural setting of Okitsu-miya Shrine and the ancient ritual sites. As the whole island is considered sacred and worshipped as a dwelling place of the *kami* (deities), local taboos forbid removing any item from the island, including stones, twigs, or even leaves. The only visitors are the Shinto priests who worship here and the occasional fishermen who help to preserve the shrine building. For these reasons, the forests covering the island are also virtually untouched, and form a valuable sanctuary for local birdlife and insects. In recognition of its primeval forest, the entire island is designated a Natural Monument of Japan. To appreciate the unspoiled nature of the island, visit the Uminomichi Munakatakan Museum to see photos and videos taken on Okinoshima.