

Otaru State Forest

The Forbidden Forest

The cutting down of five tree varieties was officially forbidden in the Kiso region during much of the Edo period (1603–1868). The so-called Five Trees of Kiso—*sawara*, *asunaro*, *koyamaki*, *nezuko* and *hinoki*—are particularly abundant here on Mount Otaru. As a result, this forest was one of many areas where logging was strictly controlled by the Owari domain. (Another name for these protected trees is *chojiboku*, which literally means “stop tree.”)

The forest remained off limits even after the Edo period ended and Japan started to modernize in the late nineteenth century. To the disappointment of the people in the region, who hoped that political change would give them access to the local natural resources, this area was designated an Imperial Forest in 1899. The government took over the management of the forest after World War II, again preventing local inhabitants from assuming control of their own resources.