

【Magatama no Oka Course】

The Magatama no Oka Course is an easy nature trail that makes a 2.8-kilometer loop from the Shinshū University Institute of Nature Education to Magatama Hill and back. The course takes approximately two hours and has an elevation change of 165 meters.

The name of the course refers to comma-shaped relics (*magatama*) made of stone, glass, or jade that date back to the final millennium of the Jōmon period (14,000–350 BCE). The beads were both personal decorations and ceremonial objects, and a variety of theories exist to explain their curved shape, which may have represented animal teeth, unborn fetuses, or the moon. The hill at the turnaround point of the course resembles a *magatama* when seen from above.

Magatama also feature in Japanese mythology and iconography. In the *Kojiki*, the eighth-century chronicle that describes the mythical creation of the Japanese archipelago, *magatama* are used to lure the angry goddess Amaterasu out of a cave and bring light back into the world. One of those beads is said to survive today as part of the imperial regalia. It is known as the *yasakani no magatama*, and only the emperor and certain temple priests are allowed to see it.