

Yashima: Dankorei Ridge

The Dankorei observation point overlooks Dan no Ura, a cove that in 1185 was the site of a storied battle between the rival Taira and Minamoto samurai clans. Dankorei literally means “the ridge on which people talk about the past together”—a name said to have been bestowed by a Buddhist nun who visited the ridge in 1897 and was told of its association with the Battle of Yashima. Visitors looking out over Dan no Ura from Dankorei can see several places that appear in stories about the famous engagement. These include the site of the temporary palace of Emperor Antoku (1178–1185), the six-year-old monarch whom the Taira forced to come with them to Yashima after losing Kyoto, the capital, to the Minamoto; Inori Iwa (“prayer rock”), where the Minamoto archers are said to have prayed for divine guidance; and Funakakushi, the small inlet in which the Taira hid their ships in anticipation of a Minamoto naval attack that never occurred. Across from Dan no Ura stands Mt. Goken (literally, “five swords”), a 375-meter mountain that used to have five sharp peaks. These sword-like features collapsed in a 1707 earthquake, leaving the summit rather less spiky.