

Mt. Kinugasa Hiking Trail

This path leads to the top of Mt. Kinugasa (870 m). This easy walk has been popular with visitors to the area for more than a hundred years as the most accessible hike from Unzen Onsen Town. At the end of the nineteenth century, the first groups of Westerners vacationing in Unzen often climbed this hill to watch the sunset over Tachibana Bay. They did this so often that it was eventually nicknamed “Sunset Hill.” At the time, this hill was used for grazing sheep, and was mostly covered with bamboo, shrubs, and grasses. These low-lying plants did not get in the way of the excellent view from the top, but after World War II sheep were no longer grazed here, and forest reclaimed the old pastures. Today, the forest on Mt. Kinugasa is home to countless songbirds and native plants. At the top, an observation deck brings you above the forest canopy to a beautiful 360-degree view of the surrounding region—hot springs and volcanic mountains to the east and the shining bay to the west.

Geological and Cultural History

Mt. Kinugasa was formed 250,000 years ago during one of Unzen’s many periods of volcanic activity. At the foot of Mt. Kinugasa is Shirakumo Pond. The pond was likely created in the Edo period (1603–1867), and near the shore is an ancient stone washbasin, along with Japanese cypress and cedar trees. Both the washbasin and trees have sacred associations, suggesting that the area was once a space for religious gatherings.