

Kyushu Nature Trail

The Kyushu Nature Trail is a 3,000-kilometer hiking path that links the island's seven prefectures. It opened in 1980 after a decade of planning by national and local governments. Like the longer trails of North America and Europe, it can be enjoyed in small sections of just a few kilometers or as an epic trek spanning hundreds.

In Nagasaki Prefecture, the trail spans 212 kilometers from north to south, following the western coast and ending (or beginning) in the Shimabara Peninsula. Following the trail for any length is a great way to enjoy Shimabara as you walk over mountains, through valleys, and along the coast.

Starting from the north, the trail takes you into the Shimabara Peninsula along the Chijiwa Fault and Tachibana Bay. Walking through the village of Chijiwa, you will climb the fault up into a hilly region of pastures covered from spring to summer in flowering azaleas and dogwoods. The trail then leads into the Unzen Mountains, taking you up and over Mt. Kunimi (1,347 m) and down the mountain valleys toward Unzen Onsen Town. If you are lucky, you will pass through Ikenohara Park in spring and get to enjoy the gorgeous pink flowers of the *miyama-kirishima* azaleas. In town, there are many opportunities to learn about the region's nature and history and relax at one of the numerous hot springs.

From Unzen, the trail ascends Mt. Takaiwa (881 m), passing under many torii gates through the quiet forest and emerging at the summit for a beautiful view of the southern peninsula. The trail descends through steep valleys until it reaches Suwanoike Pond. The final section follows a gentle slope and passes through a beautiful rural landscape of terraced potato farms, rice paddies, and more. At last, you arrive along the southwestern coast of the peninsula at Kuchinotsu Port. In the distance are the Amakusa Islands, where the Kyushu Nature Trail continues.
