

## **Yoshida**

Ties are close in the tiny township of Yoshida, a community of some 90 households on the north-northwest coast of Yakushima. Squid and mackerel are this township's two main marine products, while *ponkan* tangerines, *tankan* oranges, kumquats, and guava, as well as root crops such as white turmeric (zedoary), taro, and yams, are cultivated on steep slopes that ascend straight from the sea. Mt. Yoshida, part of the range of lower summits along Yakushima's perimeter, rises to 1,165 meters and commands excellent views of the surrounding waters. Indeed, its geography made Yoshida an advantageous base of operations for the Taira clan after its 1185 defeat in an epic battle for control of Japan. Now, as then, the mountain is venerated as the dwelling place of Amaterasu Omikami, the supreme deity in the Shinto cosmology. Scenic Yoshida is also known for its huge granite boulders—photogenic remnants of the powerful geologic forces that shaped Yakushima 14 million years ago. A visit to them on a clear day in the late afternoon affords the added pleasure of a gorgeous sunset.