

Hirauchi

Situated halfway along Yakushima's southern coast, sunny Hirauchi is the fifth-largest township on the island, with some 330 households. Its sought-after shoreside hot springs appear in records from as early as 1599. The thermal pools emerge twice each day for a few hours at low tide. Another local claim to fame is the cultivation of *ponkan* tangerines. The original tree introduced from Taiwan in 1924 still produces fruit today.

Archaeological digs show that Hirauchi was settled as early as 6,000 years ago, and its citizens are proud of its history. On the second Saturday and Sunday of each month, as many as 1,500 vintage household and farming tools and other folkcraft items donated by residents are exhibited at the former Hachiman Middle School—a good opportunity to learn about life on the island.