

Amami Gunto National Park

The national park was established in 2017 and spans the Amami island group, part of the Ryukyu Islands. The islands were once connected to Japan and Eurasia, finally separating approximately two million years ago.

The islands have a varied topography, with distinctive coral-encircled coastlines, mountains, subtropical evergreen broadleaf forests, flatlands, and unusual rock formations. Each island of the Amami chain has a distinct culture that incorporates elements from both Okinawa and Kyushu, but they are linked by one common thread: a lifestyle that is inextricably intertwined with the natural environment.

Okinoerabu Island

This coralline island is approximately 20 kilometers long and distinctly flat, with the exception of Mt. Oyama (246 m). The northern coast is characterized by coral formations and cliffs, while the southern side is home to sandy beaches. The culture of Okinoerabu shows stronger Okinawan influences than the cultures of the larger islands in the Amami group. Agriculture is a mainstay of the economy; major crops include sweet potatoes, sugar cane, and the pure white, ornamental trumpet lily (*erabuyuri*).

Fucha Spray Cave

Formed from a coral reef that was thrust out of the water and then eroded by powerful waves, Fucha is a 30-meter-wide spray cave. When strong waves strike, spray shoots forcefully into the air from the opening in the rock. Sea turtles can be spotted swimming nearby, and humpback whales spend the winter off the coast from January to March.

Shoryudo Caves

There are several limestone caves for visitors to explore on the island, but the largest and most accessible is Shoryudo, located about 10 minutes by car from the town of China (pronounced “cheena”). A series of stalactite-studded caverns extend over 3,500 meters, and are regarded as some of the finest limestone caves in Japan. The caves remain pleasantly cool even during Okinoerabu’s warm summers.

Tamina Point

Locally known as Tamina Misaki, these 40-meter cliffs at the island’s northwest tip were formed by an upthrust coral reef. The sheer cliffs offer clear views of the waves crashing over the rocks below, and are surrounded by lush green grasslands. A

lighthouse serves as the lone reminder of a human presence here. Tamina Point is also an ideal spot to watch the sunset over the East China Sea.