

Amami Oshima's Rich Forests

The subtropical evergreen broadleaf forests of Amami Oshima support a rich diversity of plant and animal life. Many of the island's rare and endemic animals find shelter among the trees, including the Amami rabbit, the endangered yellow-bellied sword-tail newt (*shirikenimori*), the Ryukyu Scops-owl, the Amami jay, the Ryukyu tip-nosed frog, and the Amami Ishikawa's frog.

The Cloud Forest of Mt. Yuwandake

Amami Oshima's tallest peak rises to just under 700 meters, and a leisurely walk to the top takes around 20 minutes. The trail is surrounded by lush subtropical scenery, which is blanketed with a light mist caused by proximity to the sea and the island's warm temperatures. The year-round humidity allows numerous species of epiphytic orchids, which grow attached to trees, to flourish. These include *kumokiriso* (*Liparis kumokiri*), which has flowers that resemble golden foxtails. Other plants that can be seen on the mountain are the endangered *miyabikanaoi*, wild ginger (*Asarum celsum*), and the Yakushima violet (*Heterotropa celsa*).

The start of the trail that leads up Mt. Yuwandake is approximately 45 minutes by car from Mangrove Park.

Riverside Forests

The rivers that flow through the island's mountain valleys create a distinct ecosystem that supports numerous rare plants and animals. The eroded banks and rocks by the rivers are peppered with endemic plants, including the Amami *sumire* violet and the Amami *seishika* rhododendron. Water levels in the rivers change dramatically according to seasonal patterns of rainfall.

The area surrounding the Materiya Falls by the Sumiyo River is a fine example of the island's rich aquatic environment. The clear water of the falls' basin is encircled by rich greenery. The waterfall is a 90-minute drive from Mangrove Park.

The Yakugachi River is just 10 minutes by car from Mangrove Park. Visitors can walk along a 1.5-kilometer stretch of the river, through a forest inhabited by Amami rabbits, Ryukyu wild boar, Amami spiny rats, five species of frog, and seven species of dragonfly, as well as many rare plants.

Mountain Drive

The broad slopes of the old-growth subtropical forests can be appreciated from the Akatsuchiyama Tenbodai observation deck, which is only a 15-minute drive from Mangrove Park and offers a bird's eye view of the island. From there, it is another 30 minutes by car to Yuwandaketenbo Park, which offers a fine view of a long inlet that stretches out into open sea.