

## **Mushiroze: Rare Granite Formations**

Massive slabs of granite make up this distinctive stretch of coast along the island's northwest tip. The rock was formed more than 60 million years ago, approximately 10 kilometers underground. Tectonic shifts broke up the granite and gradually pushed the slabs to the surface, where they cracked further as they cooled. Over the millennia, wind and waves have continued to shape the rock into unusual formations, including one known as "Candle Rock." The rocky landscape at Mushiroze differs markedly from most of the island's coast, which is surrounded by coral reefs.

### **Walk or Climb**

Mushiroze's striking tableau is part of Amamigunto National Park, which stretches across much of the Amami Islands. Around 200 meters of walkways allow visitors easy access from the parking lot to the rock formations, and the rocks are ideal for climbing around. The varied height of the rocks offers many different perspectives of the massive formations, the sea, and the mountains that rise just behind the shoreline. Visitors should take special care on days when high tides and strong winds buffet the coast.

### **What's in the Name?**

This area's name comes from the rocks' resemblance to the woven straw mats called *mushiro*.

### **Flora and fauna**

Mushiroze is a popular fishing spot, with numerous places for enthusiasts to cast their lines. Sea turtles swim in the waters all year round, and humpback whales are sometimes spotted off the coast during the winter months. The shrubland around Mushiroze is rich in flora. The pink flowers of the Japanese hawthorn (*sharinbai*), have been used for centuries by Amami dyers in preparing silk for weaving the kimono fabric known as *oshima tsumugi*. *Adan*, a species of pandanus or fragrant screw pine, is plentiful. Its leaves are used to weave baskets and traditional *zori* sandals.

### **Getting There**

Mushiroze is approximately 15 minutes by car from Tokunoshima Airport. The walk around the site takes about 15 minutes, but this is a good place for picnicking or, perhaps, just sitting on a rock and taking in the spectacular scenery at a more leisurely pace. There are public toilets at the car park, but no shops or restaurants nearby.