

Kanamizaki Palm Tunnel and Lookout

Spectacular ocean views await visitors to the Kanami headland lookout at the island's northeastern tip. The most picturesque approach is the walk through the 200-meter tunnel of fern-like palms (actually cycads, called *sotetsu* in Japanese). The winding path under the densely packed fronds of the palms creates a tropical island atmosphere, as well as providing respite from the heat.

Protective palms

Palms have flourished here for at least three centuries since they were first planted to mark the boundaries of local fields and also protect crops from winds blowing in from the ocean.

Wildlife and a caution

Taller visitors may find their heads brushing the many cobwebs that spread across the upper reaches of the arches, though the spiders are harmless. Visitors are advised to stick to the middle of the paths to avoid accidentally stepping on something more dangerous, the highly venomous *habu* viper, which very occasionally appears among the trees. The snake is native to the Ryukyu Islands, and although bites are now extremely rare, caution is advised. Another Ryukyu Islands reptile that may appear is the colorful-tailed and harmless *Baba tokage* (*Plestiodon barbouri*) lizard.

Stunning panorama

At the end of the arch of palms, the Kanami Lookout offers a stunning panorama over the lush greenery of the tunnel and the surrounding land; the waters where the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean meet; and on clear days across to the islands of Yorojima, Ukejima, and Kakeromajima. You can also see the Tonbara Rocks, a popular spot for diving and fishing a few kilometers offshore in the direction of the islands. The rocks are home to a large number of turtles. Whales can be seen in the winter months.

Shoreline and lighthouse

The beach is dotted with black rocks (sandstone and mudstone), and outcroppings of limestone formed around 100 million years ago. Powerful typhoons have washed up huge boulders from the ocean. Take the path near the lookout to descend to the shoreline and the lighthouse. The area around the headland is a haven for hermit crabs that scuttle around with a remarkable variety of shells on their backs. The crabs have a

taste for the fruit of the *adan* trees (fragrant screw pine; *Pandanus odorifer*) and often climb the palm-like trees to feast.

The Kanami Lookout is also accessible via the road to the right of the tunnel.

The Kanami area is part of Amami Gunto National Park, which stretches across the Amami Islands.

Getting there

The tunnel and lookout are a 20 to 25-minute drive from the airport. Free parking is provided for five cars. The path from the carpark to the lookout is a gentle slope manageable for those in wheelchairs or pushing strollers. Toilets are available, and there is a cafe on the headland.