

Value of Heritage Forest

The Yambaru Forest

The Yambaru forest is a unique ecosystem: a fertile, rain-watered forest at a subtropical latitude where, in most other places around the world, deserts are more common. At just 0.1 percent of Japan's area, it accounts for a disproportionate share of the country's biodiversity; more than half of Japan's bird species are found in the forest for at least part of the year, as are a quarter of the country's frog species. In fact, after millions of years of isolation from both Japan and the Asian continent, Yambaru is home to countless rare and endangered birds, insects, reptiles, and amphibians found nowhere else on Earth. Local communities have tended and shaped the forest for centuries, and its resources have enriched the entire island of Okinawa. As you enjoy the forest, please help us preserve it for future generations by staying on the trail and not taking any insects, plants or animals home with you.

Features of the Mount Yonaha Trail

The Mount Yonaha Trail

Distance: About 3 kilometers from trail entrance to 9th station marker and back

Total time: 3-4 hours

Difficulty: Easy (some slippery places; two places where side trails may lead hikers astray; be wary of *habu* vipers in dense foliage off the trail)

Sights: Tree lizards, Asian taro, flying spider-monkey fern

The trail up Mount Yonaha is a 2-meter wide former logging road. The hike is fairly easy, although parts can be slippery. The mountain is 503 meters high, but visitors must turn back at the ninth station marker, as the peak is a special protected area under strict conservation protocols, and entry is forbidden. A leisurely round trip takes three to four hours.

The first part of the hike is lined with dramatic ferns and Asian taro with leaves up to a meter long. The chorus of birds and insects changes with the season, and a local guide can help you spot tree lizards and other timid inhabitants.

The shallow pond about an hour up is an abandoned rice paddy, in summer inhabited by frogs, newts, and dragonflies. Beyond this, the flora becomes denser with Yambaru's distinctive evergreen *itajii* trees. With luck, you might even see an Okinawa woodpecker.

Part of seed-collecting mat

Please wipe your feet!

The Yambaru ecosystem is highly vulnerable to invasive species, including plants and fungi whose seeds or spores can arrive unnoticed on the sole of a visitor's shoe. Please help us protect the forest by wiping your shoes thoroughly on the mat provided.

back side

Thank You for Visiting!

You have just visited some of the places and seen the flora and fauna that the people of Yambaru have tended for centuries. As a final reminder, please do not take anything home from the forest with you but photos and memories. Thank you for helping to preserve Mount Yonaha for future generations.