

Kayauchi Banta

The view from Kayauchi Banta is one of the most iconic panoramas in Okinawa. The observation point stands on the edge of a sheer 80-meter cliff overlooking the entire western coast of Kunigami: a long, gentle arc with forested mountains inland and coral reefs offshore that stretches all the way to the Motobu Peninsula to the south. The unobstructed view west across the East China Sea makes sunset at Kayauchi Banta a spectacular sight.

The “Backtracking Path”

A few steps back from the lookout and to the left is a road that threads through a narrow cleft in the mountain. Before the coastal road was built, this was the only route connecting the people of nearby Ginama to the arable land to the north. In those days, the cleft was only wide enough for one person to pass through, so if two people traveling opposite ways met in the middle, one would have to backtrack out. As a result, it became known as the “backtracking path,” or *modoru michi*. This limited its use and left Ginama isolated and impoverished.

In 1912, a new principal arrived at Hedo Elementary School to the north. He was immediately puzzled by the high rate of absenteeism, and upon learning of the “backtracking path,” rallied local residents to widen the road so that students could get to school more easily. By November 1913, the cleft had been expanded enough to allow two-way traffic, bringing once-isolated communities closer. In subsequent decades, dynamite was used to widen the path still further, creating the space for the road that passes through today.