

## **Kojiri Enchi Park**

The Hakone Visitor Center is located in Kojiri Enchi Park, which offers an accessible overview of the local landscape. A 3-kilometer circuit trail starts across the road from the Center and winds through the 117-hectare park, where you can see all but a few of the more than 2,000 plant and animal species to be found in Hakone. Typical plants in the park include the Japanese bigleaf magnolia (*honoki*), which lives up to its name with leaves up to 40 centimeters long and 20 centimeters wide, and the Fuji cherry (*mamezakura*), which produces small and tasty fruit and is one of the most common cherry trees in Hakone. Among the resident animals are deer, wild boar, and several species of frogs.

Before human intervention, this area was mainly meadows covered with wild silvergrass (*susuki*). In the late 1940s, wood was in high demand for the rebuilding of Japanese cities after the destruction of World War II, and the silvergrass meadows were cleared to make room for planted forests of Japanese cedar and hinoki cypress. This planting effort was initiated by Emperor Showa (1901–1989) himself, who in 1949 visited Hakone with Empress Kojun (1903–2000). Seven trees planted by the imperial couple on that occasion still stand in a corner of Kojiri Enchi.

Kojiri Enchi Park was established in the 1960s and plants brought in from other parts of Hakone now grow on its grounds. Today traces of the area's original, silvergrass-based ecosystem can be seen at Kodomo no Hiroba ("Children's Field"), a gently sloping hillside where children have ample room to play.