

## **Yakushima's Forests**

### *Laurel Forest Zone (0–1,000 m)*

Yakushima's mountains consist of the Maedake outer mountains and the Okudake inner mountains. The Maedake mountains, which are closer to the villages, rise to an altitude of approximately 800 meters and are covered mostly with laurel forests, the largest laurel forests in Japan. Evergreen broadleaf trees characterized by glossy, light-reflecting leaves grow in the warm-temperature zone along the coast, including the coasts of Anbo River, Tashiro, and Seibu-rindo Forest Path.

The lower-elevation forests contain Japanese beech, *akagashi* red oak, Japanese chinkapin, and *lithocarpus edulis*; trees of the camphor family, such as camphor and Japanese bay tree; as well as the Japanese distylium of the witch hazel family, the strongest hardwood in Japan. Evergreen *ubame* oak (*Quercus phillyreoides*) and *maruba-nikkei* laurel (*Cinnamomum daphnoides*) grow in coastal areas.

### *Japanese Cedar Forest Zone (800–1,800 m)*

A mix of laurel and Japanese cedar (*sugi*) grows in the Japanese Cedar Forest Zone from around 800 to 1,200 meters above sea level. Conifers such as fir, spruce, and Japanese cypress, as well as the evergreen broadleaf trochodendron, the deciduous broadleaf kalopanax, and Japanese stewartia grow at the cooler climates at higher altitudes. Kalopanax and Japanese stewartia grow in sunlit areas where large trees have fallen. Native vegetation, such as Yakushima pipewort, Yakushima ranunculus, and Yakushima nightshade can be found in the cool-temperature zone at altitudes upward of 1,600 meters.

### *Bamboo Grassland Zone (1,800–2,000 m)*

The Bamboo Grassland Zone, too windy and cold for cedars and tall plants, features dwarf bamboo as well as communities of Yakushima rhododendron, common sweetleaf, and Japanese andromeda. Yakushima thistle, *Wikstroemea kudoii*, *Elliotia*, and many other indigenous plants also grow among the bamboo. In May and June, the area is dotted with bell-shaped Yakushima rhododendrons in pink and white.

## *Where to See the Forests*

### Seibu-rindo Forest Path

The 20-kilometer Seibu-rindo Forest Path is a road open to vehicles that passes through areas with flora ranging from subtropical plants up to species found on mountain summits. The vertical distribution of vegetation on Yakushima was a factor in the

designation of 10,747 hectares of the island as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site. Giant trees found there include Chinese banyan and *ako* (*Ficus superba* var. *japonica*). The Seibu-rindo Forest Path is the only part of the World Heritage site area accessible by car. Evergreen trees line the roadside, and one section, the “green tunnel,” is so named for the canopy effect created by the foliage. In autumn, the mix of green foliage and subtropical flora create a striking landscape of color.

Getting there: By car, about 69 minutes from Anbo Port to the Kurio entrance, 45 minutes from Miyanoura Port to the Nagata entrance, or 61 minutes from Yakushima Airport to the Nagata entrance

### Yakusugi Land

This 270-hectare forest is located at an altitude of around 1,000 meters. It is a landscape of hemlock, fir, and *yakusugi* cedar trees as well as clear, pristine streams; Japanese cedars with unique names; and moss and other vegetation that varies with the elevation. Five trails of different lengths (30, 50, 80, 150, and 210 minutes) accommodate hikers of various levels.

Getting there: By car, about 32 minutes from Anbo Port, 57 minutes from Miyanoura Port, or 42 minutes from Yakushima Airport