

Nibuna Mizusawa Cedar Reserve

This 18-hectare protected forest contains around 3,000 Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) trees, known as *sugi*. The cedars are an average of 250 years old, and some stand more than 50 meters tall.

Cedars are fast-growing and have traditionally been an important lumber source in Japan. Billions of cedars were planted in the mid-twentieth century to provide timber for rebuilding after World War II and during the subsequent decades of rapid economic growth. Many of the nation's cedar forests, therefore, are plantation forests of relatively recent date. Nibuna Mizusawa, however, is a prime example of a natural cedar woodland and was designated a protected forest in 1922.

The forest contains the tallest cedar in Akita Prefecture, known as the Kimimachi Cedar. The 250-year-old giant is 58 meters tall, has a circumference of more than 5 meters, and would provide enough wood to build a 182-square-meter house. Its value is estimated at tens of millions of yen.

Nibuna Mizusawa is also home to a tree from which numerous others were bred. In 1962, the 56-meter tall Koibumi Cedar was selected as a superior parent tree by the regional logging industry. Foresters hoping to replicate the Koibumi Cedar's exceptionally straight trunk and resistance to insects collected the tree's seeds and planted them in other areas for commercial timber harvest.

An 800-meter loop trail winds through Nibuna Mizusawa, passing both of these magnificent trees. Caution is advised on the wooden paths, which are slippery after rainfall and have broken boards in some sections. Hikers may also wish to carry bells to avoid encounters with bears who live in the forest.