

Mt. Yamainu

The moss-covered landscape of Mt. Yamainu (997.2 m) is famous in Tokushima although it is largely unknown elsewhere. According to local legend, the name was given because rocks on the summit resembled a *yamainu* (mountain dog) with its mouth open. A great portion of the mountain collapsed in 1701, resulting in its current shape. It is regarded as a sacred mountain in Shugendo, a syncretic religion of mountain asceticism, because of the many large and unusually shaped boulders. Mt. Yamainu is also revered for its connection to Kukai (774-835), the founder of Shingon Buddhism, and is known as a mountain location best used to pray for rain.

Hike

The trailhead is northeast of the Kashiwara rice terraces. It is a good idea to go with a guide or pick up a map from a box at the trailhead because all signage is in Japanese. The hike passes through primeval forest with 88 small Buddhist statues along the trail that comprise a miniature version of the famous Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage.

About 40 minutes into the forest the rocks become completely covered with thick moss. Although the moss can be viewed year-round, it is most green, moist, and fluffy from the rainy season of June into the early summer.

The trail to the east then leads to an observatory rock with a view overlooking the forest and mountains. The steep trail to the summit passes Tokoji Temple, which offers a view all the way to the Pacific Ocean. The trail to the west leads to the top of the mountain and Kumosa Jinja, a shrine is dedicated to the deity of rain.