

Descent of the Gods: Mt. Yuwandake

Mt. Yuwandake is Amami-Oshima's tallest mountain, rising 694 meters in the western part of the island. According to legend, Amamiko and Shinireku, the two deities who founded Amami-Oshima, descended from the heavens to this peak, which is still considered sacred by islanders. The mountain is blanketed by a subtropical broadleaf forest. The harsh winds that pummel the area may stunt the trees' growth, but underneath the canopy of chinquapin oak and needlewood trees, the rich forest floor is the habitat for many of the island's endemic plant and animal species, including wild gingers, orchids, mosses, and berries. Bird calls from the trees announce the presence of Amami jays, Amami thrushes, and numerous other wild bird species.

The mountain can be climbed from two sides. The easier route is from the Yamato village side, where a 370-meter-long wooden walkway (mostly stairs) climbs 70 meters from the parking lot to an observation platform not far from the summit. The entire area near the summit is designated a national park special protection zone. Visitors should keep an eye out for the venomous habu viper, particularly on the section of trail that leads to the summit after the walkway ends.