

## Urauchi Walking Course: Getting into the Zone

This hiking trail leads into the heart of Iriomote's World Heritage zone and culminates in a pair of waterfalls, Mariyudu and Kanbire. Located about 30 minutes' walk from here, Mariyudu Falls derives its name from the way the water drops into a 130-meter-wide circular (*mari*) basin where it pools (*yudo*). Consisting of two tiers with a combined drop of 16 meters, Mariyudu is officially classified as one of Japan's top 100 waterfalls.

From Mariyudu, it takes another 15 minutes to reach Kanbire Falls, a 200-meter-long series of shallow rocky terraces over which the water cascades. Kanbire means "seat of the gods" because according to legend it is where the gods assembled to discuss the running of the island. The rock is dotted with natural potholes, which are frequented by the oriental river prawn (*Macrobrachium nipponense*) with its unusually elongated second pair of limbs.

Animals and plants to watch for en route include the vividly colored Sakishima grass lizard, which can grow to over 20 centimeters in length, and the Okinawa oak (*Quercus miyagii*), which produces the biggest acorns in Japan. There is a small chance of glimpsing in the treetops the Ryukyu ruddy kingfisher, with its distinctive bright red bill, red legs, and rust red body.