

## **Bijodaira**

The Bijodaira area (lit., “Beauty’s Plateau”) is noted for its giant *sugi* (Japanese cedar) trees, some of which are more than 300 years old. The area’s many walking trails allow visitors to explore the surrounding old-growth forest.

Most conspicuous among the cedars is the Bijosugi, one of the two towering specimens that stand outside the Bijodaira cable car station. The tree is associated with several local legends relating to the prohibition of women from entering sacred Mt. Tate, a practice upheld until 1868 when the Meiji Restoration ushered in the modernization of Japan.

In one of these stories, a beautiful princess was separated from her betrothed, who had ascended the mountain for ascetic practice. The princess prayed to the spirits of the tree to be reunited with her beloved. Her wish was granted, and the tree came to be known as Bijosugi, (lit., “the beauty’s tree”), a moniker that was then also given to the surrounding area. In another version of the tale, the lady attempted to follow her lover up the mountain but was turned into a tree by the mountain deity.

Uphill from Tateyama Station, from the Bijosugi tree, four walking courses lead into the forest, passing by a number of other giant Japanese cedars. The shortest trail, a 1-kilometer loop, can be completed in 30 minutes, while the 2- and 2.5-kilometer courses take around one and two hours respectively. Visitors with at least two and a half hours to spare may want to choose the 4-kilometer trail, which leads deep into the primeval beech forest extending across Bijodaira before turning back toward the cable car station. In winter and spring, Bijodaira can be explored on snowshoe tours.