

## **Yodogawa Trail Entrance**

The Yodogawa Trail Entrance is the start of the most popular route to the mountains of Yakushima's interior. Ten of these peaks exceed 1,800 meters, and among them are the eight highest mountains in the Kyushu region. The tallest is Mt. Miyanoura, with an elevation of 1,936 meters.

From this point, the hike to Mt. Miyanoura is an 8-kilometer, advanced-level route that takes approximately 5 hours one way. Hikers planning to complete the trek in one day should begin by 7 a.m. and start their return by 1 p.m. An alternative is to stay overnight in one of the mountain-hut shelters along the trail.

### Sights along the Trail

**Plant Life:** The Yodogawa area is famous for its high concentration of Yakushima *shakunage*, a species of rhododendron that originates on the island. Yakushima *shakunage* blossoms emerge pink, then turn white before they fall. They bloom from late May to early June. From mid-October to early November, the autumn foliage of Japanese rowans and Yakushima snakebark maples is especially colorful.

**Yodogawa Hut and Tofuiwa Rock:** Yodogawa Hut is a shelter located approximately 1.5 kilometers or 50 minutes from the trailhead. The hut and the trail beyond it lie entirely within Yakushima World Natural Heritage territory. Watch for a view of Tofuiwa Rock, so named because this group of granite boulders resembles a sliced block of tofu. Tofuiwa Rock crowns Mt. Koban (1,711 m, inaccessible to hikers).

**Hananoego Marsh:** This marsh is roughly 4 kilometers (or about 2 hours and 40 minutes) from the trail entrance. Located at an altitude of 1,640 meters, the marsh is home to many alpine plants as well as 1,000-year-old cedars (*yakusugi*) that have been stripped of their bark by the prevailing strong winds. The small shrines (*hokora*) in Hananoego Marsh make it an important crossroads for local residents making pilgrimages to the mountains. Each village has a different pilgrimage destination, and there are more *hokora* located on the peaks of the major mountains.

**Mt. Kuromi:** Rather than hike to Mt. Miyanoura, many day hikers choose a shorter side route that splits off at Kuromi-wakare Junction and ends at Mt. Kuromi (1,831 m). This hike is 5.2 kilometers long and takes approximately 3 hours and 45 minutes one way. Mt. Kuromi's summit gives a panoramic view of Yakushima's other peaks and sometimes even mainland Kagoshima, weather permitting. Mt. Kuromi features many outcroppings of large granite boulders.

**Mt. Miyanoura:** Hikers going to Mt. Miyanoura should take the trail that traverses the slopes of Mt. Nageshi (1,830 m), Mt. Anbo (1,847 m), and Mt. Okina (1,860 m) before coming to Mt. Kurio (1,867 m). Mt. Kurio and Mt. Kuromi are often said to tie for third place among Yakushima's "Three Peaks" (*mitake*); first and second are Mt. Miyanoura and Mt. Nagata (1,886 m), respectively. Mt. Kuromi is the popular choice for third, but Mt. Kurio is actually taller.

#### Continuing On

From Mt. Miyanoura, connecting trails continue toward both Mt. Nagata and toward the Jomonsugi Cedar and Wilson's Stump. Hikers intending to take these routes should plan to stay overnight in a shelter.

#### Cautions

Yakushima macaque monkeys and Yakushima shika deer, as well as many different types of amphibians, insects, and birds inhabit this area. For the protection of plants and wildlife in the national park, hikers should remain on the trail at all times and refrain from feeding animals, polluting water sources, stepping on live moss, or leaving any trash behind. Camping in unauthorized areas, starting fires in the forest, and catching or harming living things are all prohibited by law. In addition, please show respect for the small shrines along the trails.

Weather conditions on the island can change quickly, and in winter, the peaks may be covered in 1 to 2 meters of snow. Watch for falling branches or rocks along the trails. Cellular phone service is largely unavailable, but some areas do get signal, so hikers should carry a phone in case of emergency.

An outhouse is available at Yodogawa Hut. Booths for using disposable toilets are located near Hananoego Marsh and Mt. Okina. Hikers are advised to carry a disposable-toilet pack for emergencies and to use the facilities here at the trail entrance before entering the forest.