

Yakusugi Land Entrance

Yakusugi Land is considered the best place on Yakushima to experience a forest of giant, primeval cedars. The park's 270 hectares had relatively little logging activity during the Edo period (1603–1867)—when many of the island's other cedars were cut down—and the most remote parts have recovered to the degree that they are now considered virgin forest. The park ranges in altitude from 1,000 to 1,300 meters and has five hiking courses. Each route passes among thousand-year-old Japanese cedars (*yakusugi*) as well as the younger *kosugi*, the name given to cedars less than 1,000 years old.

The 30- and 50-minute trails are well-maintained, with wooden boardwalks or stone-paved pathways; these are ideal for beginning hikers, children, or visitors with decreased mobility. The longer 80-, 150-, and 210-minute trails are unpaved forest paths and therefore more challenging. The 210-minute trail connects to a longer route that leads to Mt. Tachu (1,497 m).

Sights along the Trails

All of the trails pass the majestic Sennensugi (“Thousand-year”) and Futagosugi (“Twin”) Cedars. Along the way are several examples of stump regeneration (trees regrown from stumps) and of *domaiboku* (discarded sections of *yakusugi* trees left by loggers). The trails pass beneath the trunks of the Kuguritsuga Hemlock and Kugurisugi Cedar, which arch over the path. Hikers will also cross suspension bridges over the Arakawa River.

An additional highlight of the 80-minute trail is the Tsutsujigawara (“Wild Azalea River”) riverbed, with rushing whitewater and boulders festooned in color when the flowers are in bloom. Hikers who take the 150-minute trail will see the 1,500-year-old Tenchusugi (“Pillar to Heaven”) Cedar and the Hahakosugi (“Mother and Child”) Cedar, actually two 2,600-year-old cedars whose trunks are joined at the base. Those who choose the 210-minute trail are rewarded with little-seen giant cedars and lush green moss in the Tenmon-no-mori Forest, an important research area for the study of forest regeneration.

In addition to cedars, Yakusugi Land has numerous conifers and broadleaf trees, including fir, hemlock, Yakushima *shakunage* rhododendron, sapphireberry, and several species of azaleas.

Continuing On

From the Tenmon-no-mori Forest, hikers can extend their trek by ascending Mt. Tachu, an 8-kilometer roundtrip that takes 6 to 7 hours from this trailhead. The mountain's summit is capped by the distinctive Tenchuseki Rock, a 40-meter pillar of granite that juts from the mountaintop like a colossal spike. Hikers bound for Mt. Tachu should plan to leave here by 7 a.m. The trail becomes extremely

dangerous during heavy rains, which are common in this part of the island.

For visitors unable to reach the mountain itself, Mt. Tachu's peak and Tenchuseki Rock are visible (weather permitting) to the northwest of the parking area.

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 within 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.

Weather conditions on the island can change quickly. 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.

Booths for disposable toilets are located near the fallen Jamonsugi Cedar on the 150- and 210-minute trails, near the Tsutsujigawara riverbed, and in the Tenmon-no-mori Forest. Hikers are advised to carry a disposable-toilet pack for emergencies. Flush toilets are available at Shinsen, the rest area and gift shop near the entrance to Yakusugi Land.