

Wilson's Stump

This hollow, cavernous stump is all that remains of a massive Japanese cedar tree that was cut down in the sixteenth century. The tree is estimated to have been between 2,000 and 3,000 years old at the time. Its stump has a circumference of 13.8 meters, and its 16-square-meter interior is roughly the size of a small hotel room. It is believed to be the oldest stump on Yakushima.

One theory says the tree was felled on the orders of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598), one of three warlords who helped to reunite Japan after the civil war that preceded the founding of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868). During his campaigns in the Kyushu region, Hideyoshi had subdued Yakushima's ruling Shimadzu family. He decided to use wood from each of his conquered provinces to build a Great Buddha Hall in Kyoto that would rival that of Todaiji Temple in Nara. Construction began in 1588, and records show that a senior Shimadzu retainer visited the island on Hideyoshi's behalf to conduct a survey of usable timber. For generations, the great cedars of Yakushima's interior mountains had been considered sacred and were left uncut, but the high-quality wood—valued for its unusual durability and high resin content—was ideal for Hideyoshi's project.

Little was known of the great stump until British botanist Dr. Ernest Henry Wilson (1876–1930) came across it in 1914. Wilson was on an expedition for the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, collecting plant samples and taking photos of the island's forests. One of his pictures captured the stump's immense size in comparison to members of his expedition. When Wilson published his findings in *The Conifers and Taxads of Japan* (1916), he drew the world's attention to Yakushima's forests and the remarkable stump that now bears his name.

Inside Wilson's Stump are a spring and a small shrine called Tamashiro Jinja. It is dedicated to three deities, including the one that is believed to inhabit the stump. The exterior of the stump is covered with moss and numerous epiphytes (plants that grow on other plants), including orangebark stewartia, pale pink azaleas (*sakuratsutsuji*), and a species of laurel called *inugashi*. Three younger cedars, thought to have sprouted from seeds produced by the tree before it was cut, have grown up around the stump.

At one time, there were many more species of epiphytes and shrubs living on and around Wilson's Stump, but heavy traffic from hikers has killed off most of them. The area is in the process of regenerating, so hikers are asked to remain on the path that leads between the rest area and the stump. Entering the stump is permitted, but please do not attempt to climb it or enter the undergrowth surrounding it.

From Wilson's Stump, the Okabu-hodo Mountain Trail continues **west** toward the Jomonsugi Cedar (1.9 km, approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes) and then on to the Miyanoura-hodo Mountain Trail and Mt. Miyanoura (7.5 km, approximately 7 hours). Heading **east** leads to the Arakawa Trail Entrance (8.7 km, approximately 3 hours).

The closest flush toilet is at the Okabu-hodo Mountain Trail Entrance (0.6 km, approximately 25 minutes east). A permanent disposable-toilet booth is available near the Daiosugi Cedar (1.1 km, approximately 1 hour), and a tent-style disposable-toilet booth is set up nearby from March to November.