

Shikaura Gorge

The 157-meter-long Arafuku Bridge spans the Shikaura River where it carved out an impressive gorge from Tokunoshima's limestone plateau over countless millennia. The river originates from Mt. Inutabudake in the island's interior, and eventually flows into the sea 6 kilometers downriver at the fishing port of Shikaura. The sides of Shikaura Gorge rise some 100 meters above the valley floor at their highest point. Constructed in 1995, the bridge offers a rare bird's-eye view of the gorge and the canopy of almost untouched forest.

Escaping Isolation

Before this and two other bridges were built, people living in the area were forced to climb down the steep forested slope and up the other side to reach neighboring communities. Before the introduction of buses, children had to walk for three hours each way to attend school. The bridges have had a huge impact on this part of the island by providing easier access to other areas.

Past Glories

Sitting at the mouth of the river, Shikaura was once a lively port town that thrived on the business of exporting sugarcane. Over time, however, it lost its prominence to other ports, and there is little left to recall its former prosperity.