

Ginayama Forest

Along with Myogan Forest to the west, Ginayama Forest stands as a remarkable remnant of the original rainforest that once blanketed this part of the island before widespread clearing and cultivation diminished its expanse. The area's religious significance shielded it from human interference, and some 14 hectares of the forest are now part of the National Parks system. This subtropical rainforest flourishes on topsoil that overlays coarse Ryukyu limestone, providing a habitat for abundant wildlife under a towering canopy of Amami *arakashi*, a variety of Japanese blue oak (*Quercus glauca*).

The Trail

Hiking this trail is a chance to experience the rare ecosystem of an old-growth forest, including the striking presence of large banyan trees, also known as strangler figs. The forest is nourished by a network of springs that permeate the limestone and sometimes surface along the trail, where they provide homes for frogs, insects, and other animals. The overgrown trenches barely recognizable in some areas are remnants of World War II, when the Japanese military built defensive positions here.

Religious Significance

Since ancient times, the indigenous people of Tokunoshima have venerated deities in the natural world. Several sacred places dedicated to the god of water are located in this forest, while others are sacred places associated with “wind tombs,” a practice in which corpses were laid to rest in caves.