

Agon Valley

This valley is one of two deep river canyons that separated Agon village from the rest of the island until modern bridges were built. (The other is Shikaura Gorge.) The Agon River runs over 5 kilometers, passing through the village and down this valley, before cascading over the Agon Waterfall and flowing into the sea. In the mid-twentieth century, a factory here processed camphor wood chips for use as a fragrance and insect repellent. It has since closed down, and the forest has reclaimed the site. Today, the area is preserved as part of Japan's National Parks system for its unusual vegetation and abundant animal life. It features groves of Formosa palm, a flowering evergreen that resembles some prehistoric plants, and colorful birds such as the Ryukyu kingfisher.

An Adventurous Commute

About halfway down the road on the left are the overgrown ruins of a concrete aqueduct. Built in the 1960s and 70s, its official purpose was to transport fresh water down the Agon Valley to neighboring villages. Resourceful middle-school students were known to walk along its narrow sides, using it as a precarious shortcut on their long climb up the valley to school.