

## **The Lake Nojiri and Shinanomachi Area**

Near the town of Shinanomachi, the Amatomi Trail meanders between Mt. Kurohime and Mt. Myoko and traces the banks of Lake Nojiri before gently ascending Mt. Madarao. From the summit, hikers can look back on this stretch of the trail.

Lake Nojiri was likely formed when part of Mt. Kurohime collapsed and dammed a river some 70,000 years ago. The lake was historically an important source of water for agriculture, and part of the trail follows a canal that was built for this purpose in 1670. Shortly after is the Nojiriko Naumann Elephant Museum, which displays fossils unearthed from the lake's western shores. The trail then passes by the dig site where there have been ongoing discoveries of fossils that are up to 40,000 years old.

As the trail follows the shoreline south, it passes a cluster of 250-odd properties that belong to members of the Nojiri Lake Association, also called the International Village. The Association was founded by foreign missionaries who came here for recreation in the 1920s. It remains a

popular spot for water sports and casual restaurants. The trail continues on to the wooded Elephant's Path, which overlooks the lake's zigzag shoreline. Its name refers to the area's paleontological discoveries.

The easternmost section of the Amatori Trail follows a historic trading route, the Iiyama Road, to the base of Mt. Madarao. The Amatori Trail concludes at the top of Mt. Madarao, where another long trail, the Shinetsu Trail, begins. It is also possible to begin the Amatori Trail from Mt. Madarao.