

# Yakushima National Park

National Parks of Japan



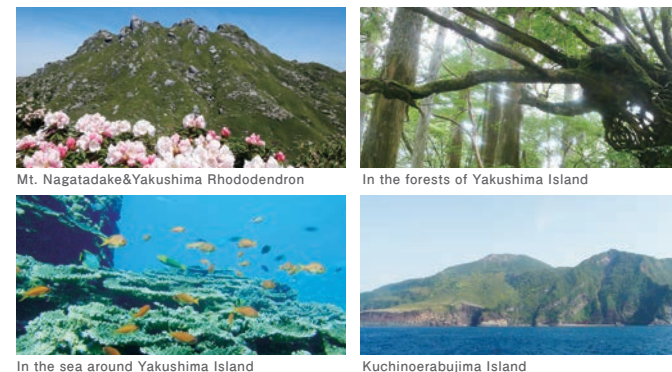
A national park is designated by the Japanese government as a natural landscape that represents Japan based on the National Parks Act. Thirty-four national parks are designated from Hokkaido in the north down to Okinawa and the Ogasawara Islands in the south, and more than 300 million people visit them every year. These national parks are full of precious treasures such as wild animals and plants, history and culture in addition to the scenic beauty. Japan's national parks are characterized by various environments such as forests, farmlands, villages, etc. While some are untouched, the local history and culture derived from nature and people's lives can be appreciated. Come visit our national parks to fully enjoy the beautiful nature of Japan that shows off various sceneries in each season.

## Characteristics

Japan's Finest Mountain with Giant Trees over a Thousand Years Old on a Volcanic Island Blessed with the Heat of the Earth and Raging Waves

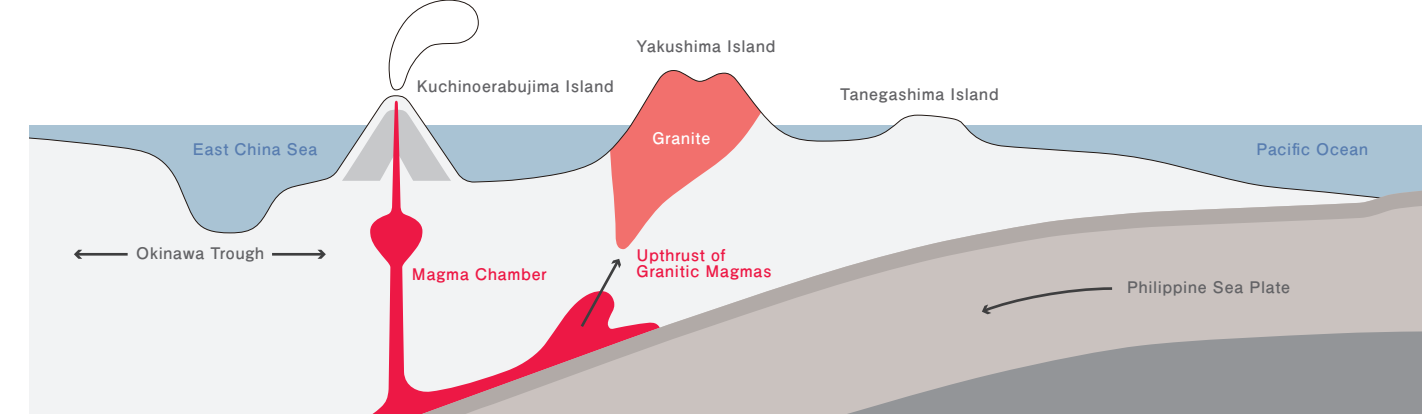
Yakushima Island and Kuchinoerabujima Island in the Yakushima National Park are islands situated in the rich sea area with the Kuroshio Current. Although these two islands are only 12 km apart, they were formed by totally different mountain formation processes. This results in radically different landscapes. The topography of Yakushima Island is steep with Kyushu's highest mountains standing tall. It has a distinctive landscape with natural forests of giant trees such as ancient Japanese cedar trees of over 1,000 years old. This "natural beauty" has been recognized as a remarkable universal value of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Meanwhile, Kuchinoerabujima Island is the largest active volcanic island among the Satsunan Islands. The eastern part of the island reveals a volcanic landscape, and natural coastal scenery remains in the coastal area including sea cliffs and caves formed by rough waves. Although it is a volcanic island, it is covered with vegetation, and there are also animals different from those of Yakushima Island including *Pteropus dasymallus dasymallus* (a species of Ryukyu flying-fox).

[Date of Designation] March 16, 2012 [Relevant Prefecture] Kagoshima Pref. [Area] 24,566 ha



## Terrain Geological Features

Yakushima Island is believed to have been formed from granite made from a solidified magma chamber on the bottom of the ocean uplifted quicker than the speed of weathering erosion. This results in a unique scenery of unusually-shaped granite rocks and gigantic rocks shaped by weathering and erosion appearing throughout the summit area. In addition, Yakushima Island has a large amount of rainfall because it is impacted by being an independent peak and by the Kuroshio Current. Therefore, there are many rivers and waterfalls on the island, as well as deep valleys formed by river erosion. On the other hand, Kuchinoerabujima Island is an active volcanic island and is considered to be formed of 10 volcanoes assembled together. The western part of the island is an old volcano, but the eastern part is a new volcano, presenting dynamic volcanic landscapes, unlike Yakushima Island. In addition, most of the coastal area has remained as natural coast, and a distinctive scenery of sharp cliffs and caves can be seen.



## Conservation Efforts

**- Promoting Use of Portable Toilets -**  
In recent years, the number of visitors to the mountains of Yakushima Island has increased, and human waste management of the mountains has become a big issue. As a result, the use of portable toilets where climbers bring back their own waste has been promoted in the mountainous areas of Yakushima Island. Your understanding and cooperation with the "No waste left behind in the World Natural Heritage Site" campaign will be greatly appreciated.

**- Protecting Sea Turtles and Promoting Proper Sightseeing Use of Nagatahama -**  
Nagatahama (beach) has been registered with the Ramsar Convention as a valuable nesting ground for the Loggerhead Sea Turtles. Rules with consideration for the life of sea turtles have been established, and the use of beaches based on these rules has been promoted by local residents. Your understanding and cooperation with conservation efforts for regional resources will be greatly appreciated.

**- Efforts for Adaptive Management -**  
Conservation of the Yakushima Natural World Heritage Site of UNESCO requires a proper balance between the volatile, complex ecosystems and conservation and use that change from time to time. In order to leave this World Heritage Site in better condition for future generations, proper adaptive management is necessary. This adaptive management includes formulating and executing measures based on the uncertainty of the future, verifying the effect, reviewing the plans, strengthening and modifying our intervention, all with the goal of preservation for the future while meeting the needs of the present. Therefore, an adaptive management system based on scientific knowledge and objective data has been established in Yakushima Island.



## Contact List

**Kyusyu Regional Environment Office**  
4F, Kumamoto Regional Joint Government Building B,  
Kasuga 2-10-1, Nishi Ward, Kumamoto City,  
Kumamoto Prefecture  
860-0047  
TEL: 096-322-2412 FAX: 096-322-2447  
URL: <http://kyushu.env.go.jp>

**Yakushima Ranger Office**  
Anbomaetake 2739-343, Yakushima Town, Kumage County,  
Kagoshima Prefecture  
891-4311  
TEL: 0997-46-2992 FAX: 0997-46-2977

**Yakushima National Park Website**  
<https://www.env.go.jp/en/nature/nps/park/yakushima/index.html>  
**Active-Ranger Diary**  
[http://kyushu.env.go.jp/about\\_activ.html](http://kyushu.env.go.jp/about_activ.html)



**For Safe Travel**  
Please download below application in order to get information about warning for earthquake, volcanoes, tsunami and so on.

\*Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ipio.co.rcsc:safety/tips.android>  
\*iPhone: <https://itunes.apple.com/jp/app/safety-tips/id858331744?mt=8>



Supported by Japan Tourism Agency (<https://www.jta.go.jp/safety-tips/eng/app.html>)



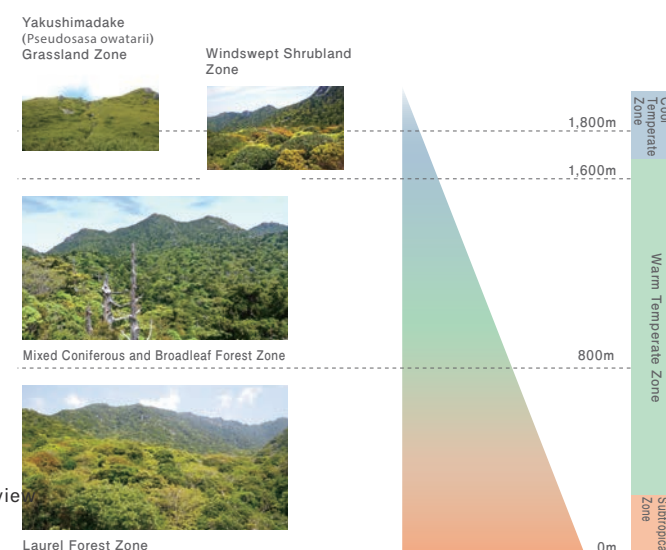
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\* Please note that the highlights & guide map's purpose is to show an overview of the designated area; therefore, a margin of error shall be allowed.

## Wild Animals and Plants

### - Vertical Plant Distribution -

Yakushima Island has mountains exceeding 1,800 m in altitude, and the climate of the summit area is similar to that of Sapporo Hokkaido. Thus, vegetation ranging from subtropical to cool temperate can be found depending on the altitude in Yakushima Island. Subtropical plants such as the Chinese Banyan inhabit the low altitude area, and laurel forests mainly consisting of *Castanopsis* inhabit up to an altitude of 800 m or so. As the altitude further increases, mixed coniferous and broadleaf forests inhabit up to the altitude of 1,600 m. When the altitude exceeds 1,600 m, windswept shrublands can be found, and fields of Yakushimadake (*Pseudotsuga owatarii*; small hardy bamboo which is endemic to Yakushima) covers the vicinity of the summit above an altitude of 1,800 m. When such different vegetation is distributed by altitude, it is called a vertical plant distribution. The "ecosystem" of Yakushima Island with successive vertical plant distributions has been recognized as an extraordinary universal value of the World Heritage Site.



### - Natural Forests of Giant Trees -

The Japanese cedar naturally grows only in Japan, and the place where a natural Japanese cedar forest inhabits is limited even in Japan. In particular, the Japanese cedar generally has a life span of about 500 years; however, Yakushima Island is the only place in Japan where Japanese cedar trees live beyond 1,000 years. Natural forests that grow "Yakusugi" are globally invaluable. Yakusugi (meaning Yakushima's cedar) refers to Japanese cedars of over 1,000 years of age that grow in Yakushima Island.



(*Blume*) *Blume* (a species of orchid) grow naturally in Kuchinoerabujima Island.

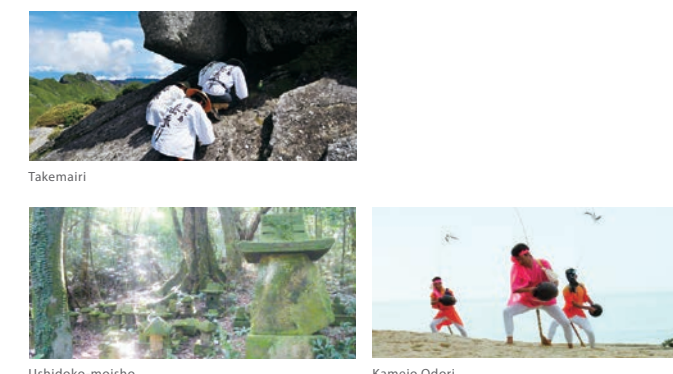
### - Animals -

Fauna of Yakushima Island is not much different from that of Honshu (the main island), but Yakushima Island is the southernmost limit of distribution of many species. In addition, endemic subspecies and endemic species can also be found since it was separated from the mainland of Kyushu about 15,000 years ago. It has been confirmed that there are 16 species of mammals such as Yakushika (*Cervus nippon yakushimae*; a subspecies of Sika deer) and the Yakushima Macaque, 167 species of birds, 15 species of reptiles, and 8 species of amphibians. Yakushima Island is the major nesting ground for the Loggerhead Sea Turtles, and the number of sea turtles returning for nesting is said to account for about half of the annual total number of returns in Japan. Meanwhile, different fauna from that of Yakushima Island can be seen in the Kuchinoerabujima Island. It has been confirmed that there are 12 species of mammals including *Pteropus dasymallus dasymallus*, 48 species of birds, and 5 species of reptiles including the black-banded sea krait. In addition, a variety of marine life inhabit the waters around Yakushima Island and Kuchinoerabujima Island, and approximately 1,000 species of fish and over 700 species of shellfish have been identified.



## Culture

In Yakushima Island, an area of village is called "Sato." A mountainous area within villagers' sight, where people believe they may encounter gods, is called "Maedake (front mountain)." Then, a mountainous area beyond villagers' sight, which is a god's domain, is called "Okudake (back mountain)." "Takemairi" is a community event based on the deep connection between the community and nature. Takemairi is an event to pray for the prosperity and peace for the village and for a big catch of fish and a good harvest by visiting stone shrines in the mountaintop of Okudake or Maedake. This still has been practiced in almost all villages in Yakushima Island, and each village has different mountains to worship, times, and customs. There are many old stone pagodas dedicated at the time of Takemairi remained in "Ushidoko-moisho" of Miyanoura Village. In addition, there is a folk art called "Kamejo Odori (turtle women's dance)" in Nagata Village. Nagata-hama, which is famous as the sea turtle's nesting ground, is situated in Nagata Village. Movement of the dance is thought to be mimicking sea turtles landing on the beach, laying eggs, and returning to the sea. This dance still has been passed down for generations to pray for the prosperity of the village and well-being of those who have left the village for a journey. Thus, a unique culture closely related to the nature of the island has been created and still thriving on the island.



## National Parks Etiquette

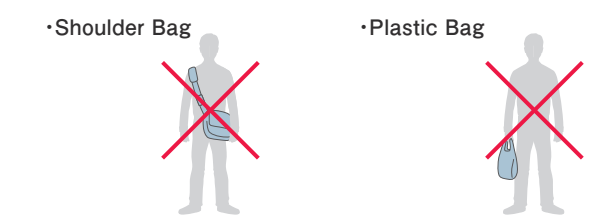
Please keep in mind the importance of nature and observe the following while staying in the national park so that everyone can enjoy.

- Do not litter.
- Do not catch/capture any wildlife.
- Do not pick plants.
- No smoking is permitted while walking.
- Do not feed any wildlife.
- Bonfires shall be built within the designated area only.

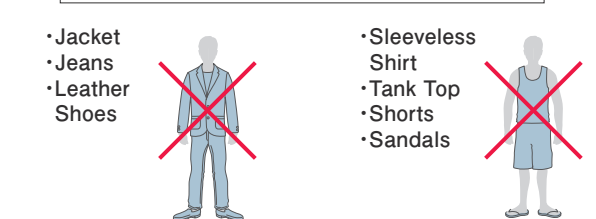
### Are you prepared appropriately?

The trails of Yakushima Island are long, and there are also some dangerous places. Further, the weather of the mountain changes suddenly. Thorough preparation is necessary in order to enjoy climbing safely.

### Examples of Obviously Insufficient Equipment



### Casual Clothing Like You See in a Town



... are definitely inadequate!  
Do not climb the mountain in such light clothing since it is extremely dangerous!



## Yakushima Island



Mt. Miyanouradake



Mt. Mochimudake



Yakushima Rhododendron

Jomon Sugi

The greatest attraction of Yakushima Island is the mountains. More than 39 mountains, which exceed 1,000 m in altitude lie next to each other. These mountains include Kyushu's highest peak, Mt. Miyanoura with an altitude of 1,936 m, and Yakushima Island proudly presents top eight highest mountains in the Kyushu region. In addition, some of the mountains that can be seen from villages are also in the range of 1,000 m in altitude, such as Mt. Mochimudake (altitude of 940 m). Especially, mountainous areas above 1,600 m in altitude get decorated with profusely blooming flowers from April to June. These flowers include the Japanese Pieris and the Yakushima Rhododendron, which bloom like they are chasing seasons. Another charm of Yakushima Island is the majestic forest landscape with thriving giant trees. Distinctive forests of Yakushima consist of Jomon Sugi which is known as the iconic Yakusugi (the supertree Japanese cedar tree). The forests cover the areas ranging between 1,000 m and 1,400 m in altitude.

## Kuchinoerabujima Island



Rhododendron eriocarpum (Hayatai Nakai)



In the sea of Kuchinoerabu Jima

The charms of Kuchinoerabujima Island are volcanoes and the sea. The eastern part of the island consists of new volcanoes including an active volcano. Volcanic landscapes including a fuming crater and vegetation impacted by volcanic gases can be seen in the mountaintop of Mt. Furudake. In particular, Rhododendron eriocarpum (Hayatai Nakai (a species of azalea) near the summit blooms from June to July, turning the mountaintop into pink. In addition, there are hot springs gushing out throughout the island. It is also fun to visit these hot springs on the "Green Volcanic Island (Kuchinoerabujima Island)" covered with laurel forests and fields of *Pleioblastus linearis Nakai* (a species of bamboo). In addition to the natural sea shores with tide pools and unusually-shaped rocks, the sea is captivating with beautiful marine scenery that allows one to observe subtropical fish and coral communities even in the shallows. There may be restrictions on entry to certain areas depending on the volcanic activity. Please check volcanic activity information such as eruption alerts beforehand.

## 01 | Yakushima Island Seen from Kuchinoerabujima Island | B2



Yakushima Island offers scenery that one can never see on Kuchinoerabujima Island. These two islands are only 12 km apart; however, each allows visitors to experience completely different views of nature.

## 02 | Yumugi Onsen (Hot Spring) | B2



There are four hot springs with each with a distinctive ambience on this volcano, Kuchinoerabujima Island. One of them is Yumugi Onsen, located in Yumugi Village. It is a hidden gem of hot springs on this remote island, and Yunohana (flowers of hot springs), which are hot spring deposits, float on the spring water.

## 03 | Shiratani Unsuikyo Ravine | E2



It is located at an altitude of 600 m to 1,050 m and offers places to appreciate the mountain stream flowing over the ravine made of granite with moss-covered primeval forests. This is one of Yakushima's Natural Recreation Forests of Japan. Mixed coniferous and broadleaf forests along with Yakusugi can be explored.

## 04 | Yakusugi Land | E3



As its name suggests, this is the place where one can observe many Yakusugi (ancient Japanese cedar trees of Yakushima) and is located at an altitude of 1,000 to 1,300 m. This is one of Yakushima's Natural Recreation Forests of Japan. Some old stumps are left in the woods, and visitors can catch a glimpse of old forestry work.

## 05 | Oko-no-Taki Falls | D3



It is a majestic waterfall representing Yakushima Island with an 88-meter drop. In Yakushima Island, rain water flows down all at once over the bedrock. This results in the mesmerizing change in its appearance immediately after the rain.

## 06 | Western Area | C3

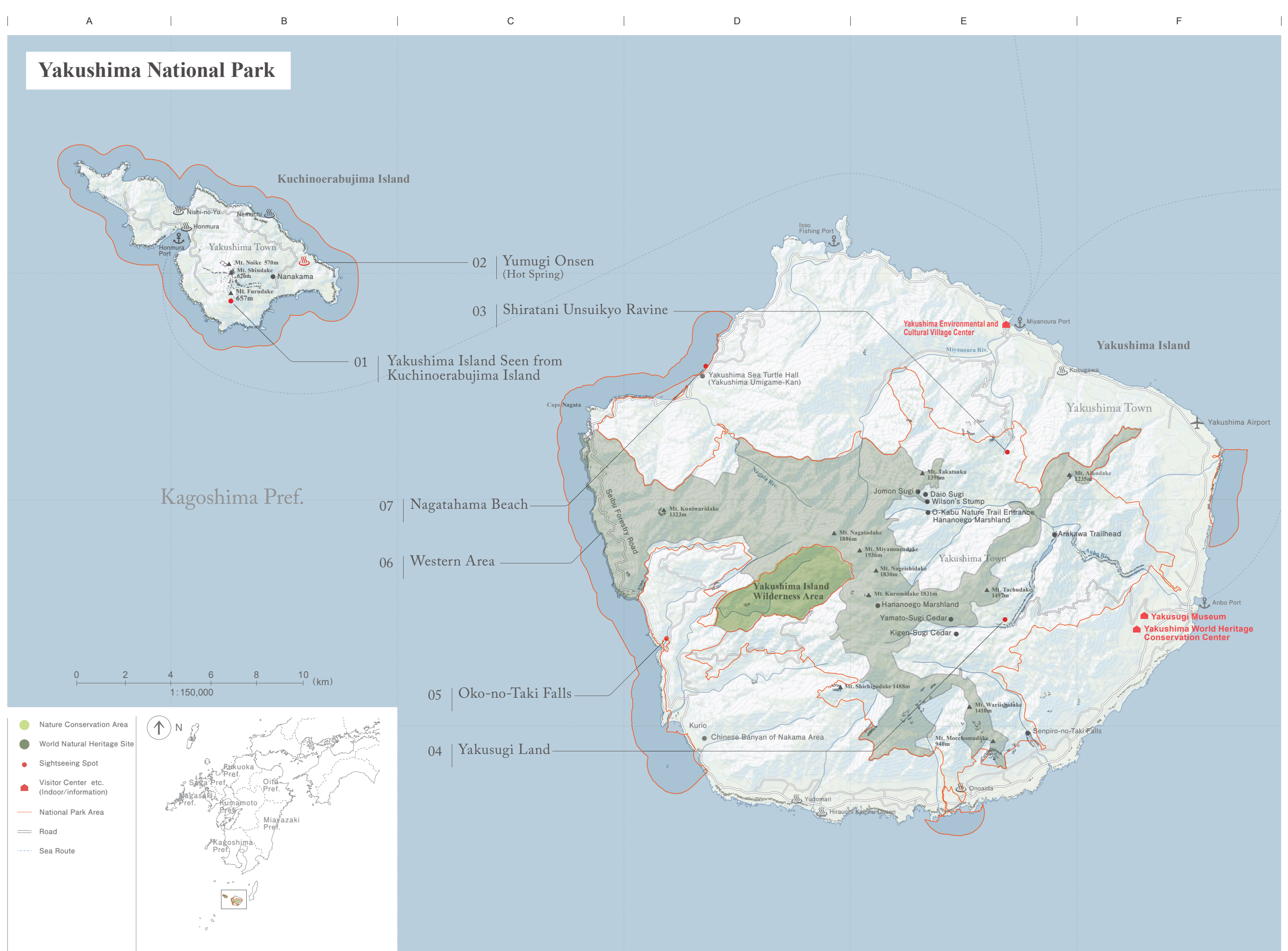


This is a place where visitors can enter the World Natural Heritage Site by car. It consists of a laurel forest boasting one of Japan's largest areas, and a large number of Yakushima Macaques and Yakushika (Sika deer of Yakushima) inhabit this area. Monkeys and Sika deer can be observed within the tunnel of greens.

## 07 | Nagatahama Beach | D2



It is a sandy beach where the largest number of Loggerhead Sea Turtles nest in Japan and is designated as a Ramsar Site. The East China Sea and Kuchinoerabujima Island can be viewed from this largest beach on the island. Visitors can also observe the nesting of sea turtles from May to July.



Please contact each responsible ranger office or regional environment office of the Ministry of the Environment for area details.

### Activity | Eco Tours of the Village



Nature is not the only appeal of Yakushima Island. Both Yakushima Island and Kuchinoerabujima Island offer the charms of village life. Visitors are encouraged to experience the different histories and cultures of each village directly through the help of local residents. **Yakushima Environmental and Cultural Village Center** [TEL] 0997-42-2900

### Information | Facilities

**Yakushima World Heritage Conservation Center** | F3  
Anbomaetake 2739-343, Yakushima Town, Kamagae County, Kagoshima Prefecture 891-4311 [TEL] 0997-46-2992

It is a facility of the Ministry of the Environment introducing the Yakushima World Natural Heritage Site and the Yakushima National Park. A wide range of information including the origin of Yakushima's nature, environmental conservation efforts, and rules on climbing is offered.

**Yakusugi Museum** | F3  
Anboku 2739-343, Yakushima Town, Kamagae County, Kagoshima Prefecture 891-4311 [TEL] 0997-46-3113

It is a museum of Yakushima Town to introduce not only Yakusugi but also the relationship between Yakusugi and people as well as a history of forestry.

\* Please directly contact each facility for details such as the hours of operation, etc.

**Yakushima Environmental and Cultural Village Center** | E2  
Miyanoura 823-1, Yakushima Town, Kamagae County, Kagoshima Prefecture, 891-4205 [TEL] 0997-42-2900

This facility is operated by the Yakushima Environmental and Cultural Foundation as a base to introduce comprehensive information on nature and culture of Yakushima and promote "Yakushima Environmental and Cultural Village Concept."

### Access | Transportation

