

How to enjoy the forests



Features of Amami's forests

Amami's forests are home to many animals and plants that can only be found there, which is the major reason for nomination to be inscribed as a World Heritage property.

There are two types of the forests: the forests covering the ridges of mountainous islands, called "high islands", such as Amami-Oshima and Tokunoshima Islands; and the forests on flat islands made of uplifted coral reefs, called "low islands", such as Kikai, Okinoerabu and Yoron Islands.

Forests in high islands



Thick forests in the high islands are home to large fern plants such as flying spider-monkey tree ferns, and you can enjoy the atmosphere of subtropical forests. The observatories on Mt. Yuwandake and Mt. Yui in Amami-Oshima Island offer a panoramic view of their crowns.

Many of the creatures of Amami cannot be seen easily, however, certified guides would help you discover them to fully enjoy Amami's forests.



Tokunoshima spiny rat



Mt.Yuwandake (Amami-Oshima Is.)

Forests in low islands



Forests in the low islands can be easily accessed via the access roads by rental cars, etc. You can enjoy the landscapes of the islands from Hyakunodai in Kikai Island, walking trails on Mt. Oyama in Okinoerabu Island, and hills around the Yoron Castle Ruins in Yoron Island.



Kikai Is.



Yoron Is.

To protect nature of Amami

Thanks to the wonderful nature and culture, the Amami Islands were designated as the Amamigunto National Park in 2017. Please respect the following rules in the National Park and enjoy nature of Amami.

(See P2 for the National Park zone)

Manners in the National Park

- ❗ Do not litter.
- ❗ Do not pick flowers and plants.
- ❗ Do not feed wild animals.
- ❗ Do not catch insects nor animals.
- ❗ Do not smoke while walking nor litter cigarette butts.
- ❗ Do not bring alien species (clean the mud off your shoes before visiting the islands).
- ❗ When taking pictures of animals, do not approach them more than necessary. Do not disclose the location of rare species without good reason.



Ukeyuri lily

Just "observe" the wildlife

Many of the rare animals and plants in the Amami Islands are protected by laws and ordinances. You will be subject to the penalties if you catch/take them.

If you see people catching rare animals or taking plants, please contact one of the following organizations immediately.

Amami Wildlife Conservation Center, Ministry of the Environment
Tel: 0997-55-8620

Naze Public Health Center Tel: 0997-52-5411 or municipal offices
(see P38)

Areas that require special attention for protection

■ Kinsakubaru Forest, Amami-Oshima Island

For Kinsakubaru in Amami-Oshima Island, rules are established for visitors, in order to reduce impact on the natural environment, to reduce the crowd, and to ensure the safety. To visit Kinsakubaru, you must be accompanied by an "Amami Islands Certified Eco-Tour Guide." Please note that the number of tours is limited.

Contact the Certified Guides:

http://www.amami.or.jp/guide/category/guide/eco_amamioshima/ (Japanese text only)



Kinsakubaru Forest

■ Mt. Oyama, Uke Island

When visiting Mt. Oyama in Uke Island, you must submit a visitor application in accordance with the ordinances of Setouchi Town to protect the natural environment. Also it is obligated to be accompanied by a Designated Custodian.

Submit the application to:

Museum and Cultural Properties Unit, Social Education Division, Setouchi Town Board of Education Tel: 0997-72-3799

Get the application form (Setouchi Town website):

<http://www.town.setouchi.lg.jp/joho/cho/kurashi/koseki/shinsesho/documents/nyuzanshinseisyo.pdf> (Japanese text only)



■ Yamakubiri Forest Road, Tokunoshima Island

Access to the Yamakubiri Forest Road in Tokunoshima Island is restricted by the ordinances of Tokunoshima Town to protect the natural environment. If you wish to observe wild animals at night, please make a reservation to participate in night tours organized by the Amami Islands Certified Eco-Tour Guides.

Contact the Certified Guides:

http://www.amami.or.jp/guide/category/guide/eco_tokunoshima/ (Japanese text only)



For study purpose, submit the application to:

Forestry and Fishery Division, Tokunoshima Town Tel: 0997-82-1111

What you need to know when trekking/hiking

Do not enter dirt roads with no reason

There are many narrow dirt roads in Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island, with danger of run off the road. Grass and trees often stick out and may damage your vehicle. Therefore most rental car companies prohibit driving on dirt roads.



No mobile phone network

There is no mobile phone network in some parts of the mountains. You might not be able to call for help in case of emergency, so please be careful.



Go to the toilet in advance

There is no toilet or parking lot in most parts of the mountains. For long-distance hiking, please bring a human waste kit.



Enjoy safely with a guide

For your safety and for protection of the natural environment, we recommend you to enjoy nature with an eco-tour guide. You cannot enter some areas without a certified guide (see P19).



Who are the Amami Islands Certified Eco-Tour Guides ?

They have completed the certification course on the nature and culture of Amami Islands, guide techniques, safety management and environmental protection. They are able to offer a safe, high-quality experience to visitors.

List of certified guides:

<http://www.amami.or.jp/guide/ecotourguide/>
(Japanese text only)



Please walk with a guide to enjoy Amami's forests safely. If you get lost in the mountain where there's no mobile phone network, you won't be able to get out again.



What you need to know when driving at night

Be careful of animals jumping out

Animals such as the Amami rabbit are often hit by cars in Amami-Oshima and Tokunoshima Islands. Please drive slowly at night and pay special attention on roads in and around forests.



Amami Ishikawa's frog

Avoid driving at night

You might run over precious creatures such as the Ryukyu long-haired rat, Amami woodcock, Anderson's crocodile newt, and Amami Ishikawa's frog in addition to the Amami rabbit on dark roads. Please avoid driving at night.

What is the Amami rabbit?

It is an endemic species only found in Amami-Oshima and Tokunoshima Islands. It is exceptionally rare animal with primitive appearance such as shorter ears, legs and tail compared to common rabbits. It is sometimes called a living fossil.



If you find an injured or dead Amami rabbit

Please contact immediately below.

Amami Wildlife Conservation Center,
Ministry of the Environment: 0997-55-8620

Places that require special attention

Traffic accidents with animals often occur in the following places.

- Straight roads where you can drive fast
- Sharp curves with poor visibility
- Cut-roads where animals cannot escape



There are road markings and warning signs in places where accidents happen frequently, so please pay extra attention!

Pay special attention if you see these road markings and warning signs



Ryukyu long-haired rat warning (Tokunoshima Is.)



Amami rabbit warning (Amami-Oshima Is.)



Amami woodcock warning (Tokunoshima Is.)



"Beware of Amami rabbit" marked on road (Amami-Oshima Is.)

How to enjoy mangrove forests and the sea



Mangrove forest in Sumiyo Town (Amami-Oshima Is.)

Amazing view spreading from rivers to the sea



The mangrove forest which spreads at the mouth of Sumiyo River and Yakugachi River in Amami-Oshima Island is the second largest in Japan. Many corals also inhabit around the Amami Islands, and you can see the sea sparkling in the color of emerald from the heights.

Visit to mangrove forests by canoe



The mangrove forests can be seen from observatories, but also you can participate in the canoe tour and see them more closely. It offers an exquisite experience of looking mangrove forests from the sea level while enjoying the scent of the sea.

Enjoy the sea on the beach and in the water



At low tide, tide pools appear on the coast, and there you can see various creatures such as shellfish, crabs and fish. Snorkeling or diving to enjoy the underwater world is also a precious experience.

Many other activities such as surfing, SUP and whale watching, are available to enjoy Amami's sea. The tidal currents can be fast and dangerous in some places, so enjoy safely by participating in tours, etc.



Whale watching is popular in winter season

The tidal currents can be fast and dangerous in some places, so enjoy safely by participating in tours, etc.



What you need to know when visiting mangrove forests, using canoes and observing sea turtles

When you are in mangrove forests

You can observe wildlife closely from the canoe. Do not try to walk and step on mangroves, or surprise animals by speaking loudly. The mangrove forest in Sumiyo Town, Amami City, is designated as a special protection zone in the National Park. Using power boats and catching/taking animals and plants are completely prohibited. When canoeing, do not forget to bring a hat and a drink to protect yourself from the strong sun.

When using canoes, sea kayaks and SUP

Follow the instructions of your guide and enjoy safely. The Amami Islands are home to precious animals and plants, so do not try to land with no reason. Always wear a life jacket and wear appropriate clothes and equipment according to the water/air temperature. It is dangerous to use canoes, sea kayaks and SUP in case of increased water level, strong wind, high waves and other bad conditions.



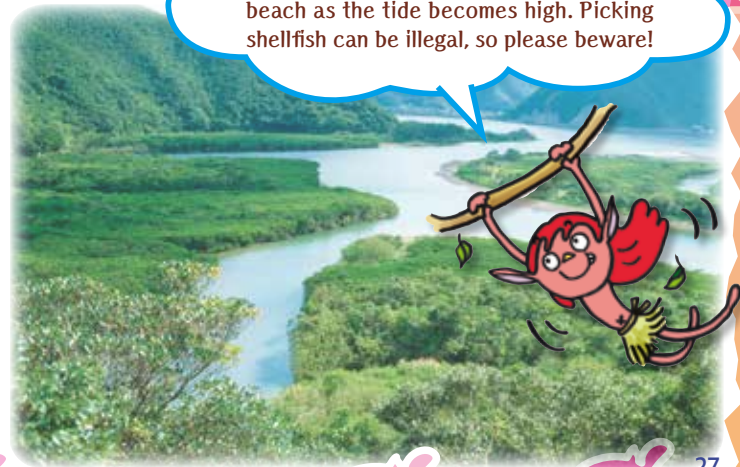
When observing sea turtles

Loggerhead sea turtles and green sea turtles come on land to lay eggs from May to August. If you drive into the beach, you might crush the eggs and baby turtles, so please beware. Hatched baby turtles may also fall into wheel ruts without being able to get out. If you want to observe turtles during the egg-laying period, you must bring a red light or a light with a red cellophane, and observe quietly.



A sea turtle laying eggs on the beach

Be careful when playing on reefs, because you may not come back to the beach as the tide becomes high. Picking shellfish can be illegal, so please beware!



What you need to know when sea bathing, diving and snorkeling



Observe the sea carefully

The condition of the sea may change rapidly. Come out of the sea if the wind is becoming strong or if the wave is becoming rough.

Tidal currents are fast in Amami

The tidal currents around the coastlines of the Amami Islands are fast, even in places where swimming is allowed. Some places are fishing spots for local fishermen, so do not take fish nor shellfish.

Be careful of rip currents!

Strong currents from the shore to the open sea (rip currents) may occur and drift you away, making it difficult to go back to the shore. In this case, calm down and move parallel to the shore until there is no more current, and go back to the shore slowly.

Do not go to the sea alone

When you enter the sea, always stay with one or more people. If you are alone, you will have trouble in the case of emergency.

If you drink alcohol

Never enter the sea after drinking alcohol. Do not drink if you want to enter the sea.

Corals are treasures

Corals are animals and can be broken easily if you touch. Be careful not to touch them, and not to break or harm them with swim fins.



Before diving and snorkeling,
you need to practice.
Always wear something that floats.
In case of emergency,
call 118 (Japan Coast Guard)!



« What to wear and bring »

At the sea



Cap

Long-sleeve clothes

The sunshine is strong, so protect yourself from sunburn.

Gloves

You might touch thorny corals or dangerous creatures with venom.

Water shoes or sneakers

Not to step on dangerous things.

Life jacket

Always wear something that floats.

At the mountains



Towel

Wrap around your neck not to be stung by black flies and bees.

Long boots, trekking shoes

To avoid Habu vipers and sliding. Do not wear sandals because it is very dangerous.

Hat, long-sleeved clothes, long trousers, gloves

To protect yourself from venomous insects and injuries.

Must-haves for sea and mountains

First-aid kit

- Alcohol disinfectant
- Cotton
- Gauze
- Antibiotic ointment
- Medical tape
- Adhesive plasters
- Tweezer, etc.



Poison remover



Water bottle

Hat



Insect repellent



Mobile phone

What you need to know when visiting villages

Life deeply connected to nature



In the Amami Islands, people have developed their living space centered on the villages, with the sea in front and mountains in the back. They have been engaging in agriculture and fishing since ancient times. As nature brings not only abundant blessings

but also disasters such as typhoons, people in Amami treated the nature with awe and respect while believing in the gods of sea and of mountains.

Such life deeply connected to nature gave birth to the traditional village-scenery with houses surrounded by coral stone walls and/or windbreaks of banyan and common garcinia trees, "the paths of gods", as well as community water points called *Kurago* (underground river). Traditional festivals and folk songs to pray for abundant blessings of nature, also remain today.



Traditional event "Sangachi-Sannichi" (Yoron Is.)

Respect the life of local people

Villages are daily living places for Amami people. If you would like to visit there, please understand and respect their lifestyle and traditions. Always pay them respect, with gratitude for being among them.

Slow down the car around villages

Villages are located just around the roads. Slow down the car around the villages and keep a sufficient distance from other cars.

Be careful where you park

Some places are private or managed by the villages, so ask local people before parking. Many roads are narrow, so it is dangerous to park on the roadside.

Do not be too nosy

Respect the privacy of local people. You must not enter private houses and farms.



Hachigatsu Dance, harvest festival held in August (Amami-Oshima Is.)

In villages you may find elders who say they have seen me!



Yui Harvest Festival (Amami-Oshima Is.)



Dangerous creatures

~ Forest ~

Be careful of venomous snakes (Habu vipers)!

Venomous Habu vipers live in Amami-Oshima, Kakeroma, Uke, Yoro and Tokunoshima Islands. They are usually resting in the shade of plants and trees during the day and become active at night. In summer they are also seen on a cool riverside. Habu vipers do not hibernate, so be careful even in winter season.



Habu viper

Not to be bitten

To protect yourself from Habu vipers, walk in the middle of the road, and do not enter the bushes casually. At night, always carry an electric torch. If you find a Habu viper, stay at least 1.5 m away. Some Habu vipers are more than 2m long and can attack what is within 1 m, its half body length.

If you are bitten

Keep calm and do the following.

- Seek help from the people near you and rest.
- Suck out the poison.
- To delay the poison from spreading in the body, use a towel to tie the area that is closest to the heart from the wound.
- Call ambulance(119), go to a hospital and receive medical help.

Habu vipers are often in places where rats and other small animals (their prey) live, such as graveyards, coral stone walls, tree holes, underfloor spaces, bushes and tree branches.



Tree holes



Under floor of house



Graveyard



Be careful of bees, black flies and caterpillars too!

To protect yourself, wear long-sleeved clothes, long trousers and hats. Avoid black clothes that tend to attract bees and black flies. You can get a black flies repellent at a drug store.

If you are stung by a bee, you may experience symptoms such as breathing and swallowing difficulties, hoarse voice, losing physical strength and losing consciousness. In such cases, go to hospital immediately.

If you are stung by a black fly, you will experience severe itching sensation, as well as severe pain and swelling that lead to walking difficulties in some cases. If your symptoms are severe, go to hospital.

Be careful of Japanese wax trees too: they may cause rashes if you touch them.

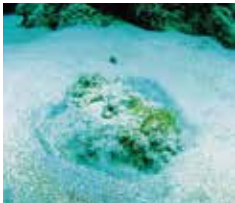


Japanese wax tree

Dangerous creatures

~ Sea ~

Here are some of the dangerous sea creatures in the Amami Islands. There are many other dangerous creatures, so do not touch creatures carelessly if you do not know them well.



Stonefish

The stonefish is about 40 cm long and lives in shallow seas. Since it resembles a rock in its color and shape, it is difficult to recognize when it stays still in sand or mud. The long sharp spines on the back contain strong venom and can pierce through beach sandals.



Crown-of-thorns starfish

This large starfish is about 60 cm wide and covered with spines. The sharp spines on the body contain venom and can sting you with a little touch, causing severe pain and swelling. The symptoms may also aggravate by anaphylactic shock.



Habu jellyfish (*Chironex yamaguchi*)

This jellyfish is often seen in swimming areas, particularly near beaches and inlets with calm waves, and artificial beaches. Its tentacles spit out venomous stingers when provoked, causing severe pain and hives. In serious cases, the heart may stop in about five minutes.

Picture: Okinawa Prefectural Institute of Health and Environment



Picture: Okinawa Prefectural Institute of Health and Environment

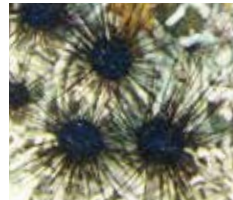
Portuguese man o'war

It looks like a blue bottle with many tentacles hanging down. If you touch the tentacles, you will feel severe pain like an electric shock, and the stung area will become red with hives. The symptoms may also aggravate by anaphylactic shock.



Geography cone

This cone snail, about 10 cm long, is the deadliest among venomous shellfish and has already caused deaths in Amami-Oshima Island. It is found in coral reefs and on beaches. It stretches its mouth as long as the shell and spits out venomous stingers called radula teeth. The stingers can even pierce through gloves and wetsuits.



Long-spined sea urchin

This species of sea urchin lives in shallow coral reefs and rocky places. Its sharp, long spines, about 20–30 cm long, are fragile and can sting the skin with a little touch, remaining in the body and causing severe pain. It is sometimes hidden under corals or rocks.

In case of emergency, go to hospital!

If your symptoms are severe, get treated in hospital. If you have breathing difficulties, etc., do not hesitate to call the ambulance (119) or Japan Coast Guard (118)!

Contact in case of questions or troubles

Municipal offices

Amami City Office	0997-52-1111
Kasari General Office	0997-63-1111
Sumiyo General Office	0997-69-2111
Yamato Village Office	0997-57-2111
Uken Village Office	0997-67-2211
Setouchi Town Office	0997-72-1111
Tatsugo Town Office	0997-62-3111
Kikai Town Office	0997-65-1111
Tokunoshima Town Office	0997-82-1111
Amagi Town Office	0997-85-3111
Isen Town Office	0997-86-3111
Wadomari Town Office	0997-92-1111
China-cho Town Office	0997-93-3111
Yoron Town Office	0997-97-3111

Government/prefecture

Amami Wildlife Conservation Center, Ministry of the Environment	0997-55-8620
Tokunoshima Ranger Station, Ministry of the Environment	0997-85-2919
Naze Forest Office, Kagoshima District Forest Office, Forestry Agency (regarding national forest)	0997-52-4531
Tokunoshima Forest Office, Kagoshima District Forest Office, Forestry Agency (regarding national forest)	0997-82-0027
Nature Conservation Division, Kagoshima Prefecture	099-286-2613
General Affairs and planning Division, Oshima Branch Office, Kagoshima Prefecture (regarding authority of the National Park)	0997-57-7215
Hygiene and Environment Office, Oshima Branch Office, Kagoshima Prefecture (Naze Public Health Center)	0997-52-5411

Japan Coast Guard	118
Police	110
Fire Station (ambulance)	119



Emergency hospitals (open 24 hours)

· Amami-Oshima Island	
Kagoshima Prefectural Oshima Hospital (Amami City)	0997-52-3611
Amami Chuo Hospital (Amami City)	0997-52-6565
Naze Tokushukai Hospital (Amami City)	0997-54-2222
Setouchi Tokushukai Hospital (Setouchi Town)	0997-73-1111
· Kikai Island	
Kikai Tokushukai Hospital (Kikai Town)	0997-65-1100
· Tokunoshima Island	
Tokunoshima Tokushukai Hospital (Tokunoshima Town)	0997-83-1100
Miyagami Hospital (Tokunoshima Town)	0997-82-0002
· Okinoerabu Island	
Okinoerabu Tokushukai Hospital (China-cho Town)	0997-93-3000
· Yoron Island	
Yoron Tokushukai Hospital (Yoron Town)	0997-97-2511

Tourism associations (introduction of local guides, etc.)

· Amami Islands (all areas)	
Amami Archipelago Tourism and Products Association	0997-58-4888
· Amami-Oshima Island	
Amami Tourism & Products Federation	0997-53-3240
Uken Tourism and Product Association	0997-67-2071
Amami Setouchi Tourism Association	0997-72-1199
· Kikai Island	
Kikai Island Tourism and Products Association	0997-65-1202
· Tokunoshima Island	
Tokunoshima Tourism Organisation	0997-81-2010
· Okinoerabu Island	
Okinoerabu Island Tourism Association	0997-84-3540
· Yoron Island	
Yoron Tourism Association	0997-97-5151