

World Natural Heritage

Amami-Oshima Island,
Tokunoshima Island,
Northern Part of
Okinawa Island
and Iriomote Island

Amami

Natural heritage

Natural Heritage Sites are the areas with landforms, ecosystems, or biodiversity and so on of outstanding universal value for conservation, appreciation, and academic purposes.
(Example: Yakushima, Grand Canyon, Iguazu Falls, etc.)

Cultural heritage

Cultural Heritage Sites consist of Monuments, groups of buildings, and archeological sites with outstanding universal value that are important in history, art, and academic purposes.
(Example: Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution, Himeji Castle, the Giza Pyramid Complex, etc.)

Mixed heritage

Mixed Heritage Sites that meet both natural and cultural heritage requirements.
(Example: Machu Picchu, Tasmanian Wilderness, etc.)

What are World Heritage Sites?

World Heritage sites are natural areas, monuments and so on registered under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention) as invaluable assets common to all humanity and treasures to be passed on to posterity.
There are three types of sites: cultural, natural, and mixed.

Did You Know?

Conditions for Registration as a World Natural Heritage Site

A site must meet the three conditions below to be registered as a World Natural Heritage site.

- 1 Meet at least one of the four evaluation criteria.
 - Natural Beauty**
A site must contain superlative natural phenomena or exceptional natural beauty.
 - Geomorphology and Geology**
A site must be an outstanding representative of the major stages of geology and geomorphology exhibiting earth's history and record of life.
 - Ecosystems**
A site must be an outstanding representative of significant on-going biological processes in evolution.
 - Biodiversity**
A site must contain the most important natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those endangered of the world.
- 2 The sites must possess an adequate size as a World Heritage site and maintain the original natural status without any impact from development and other factors.
- 3 Sufficient efforts are being made to protect the sites so that their value as World Heritage sites can be maintained in the future.

Japan has four World Natural Heritage sites besides Amami.

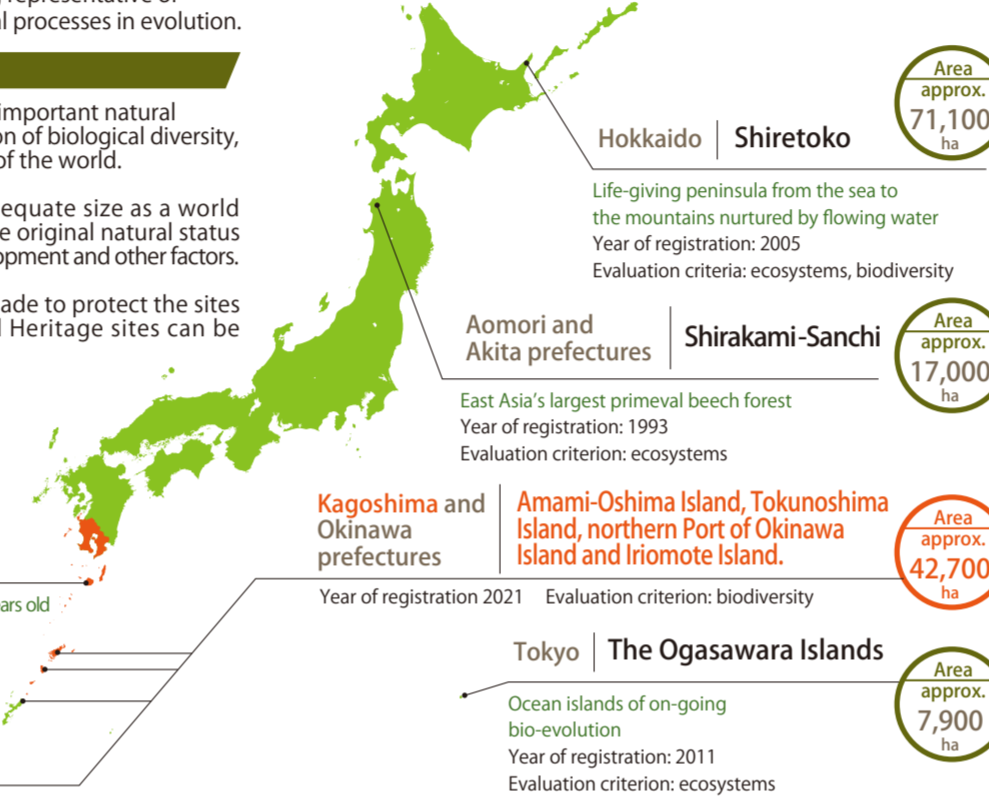
Kagoshima Prefecture | **Yakushima**
Area approx. 10,700 ha
Yakusugi trees and forest over 1,000 years old
Year of registration: 1993
Evaluation criteria: natural beauty, ecosystems

Kagoshima and Okinawa prefectures | **Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, northern part of Okinawa Island and Iriomote Island.**
Area approx. 42,700 ha
Year of registration 2021
Evaluation criterion: biodiversity

Tokyo | **The Ogasawara Islands**
Area approx. 7,900 ha
Ocean islands of on-going bio-evolution
Year of registration: 2011
Evaluation criterion: ecosystems

Registration of Amami as the World Natural Heritage Site

Kagoshima Prefecture has two World Natural Heritage sites
Amami Island group's Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island are habitats for the endangered animals and plants, such as Amami rabbit. The Amami Archipelago is an important region for the conservation of biodiversity, represented by globally rare endemic species, backed by unique biological evolution that reflects the formation of the islands.
In July 2021, along with the northern part of Okinawa Island and Iriomote Island, the area was registered as a World Natural Heritage site in recognition of its biodiversity.
As such, Kagoshima Prefecture became the only prefecture in Japan with two World Natural Heritage sites, including Yakushima.



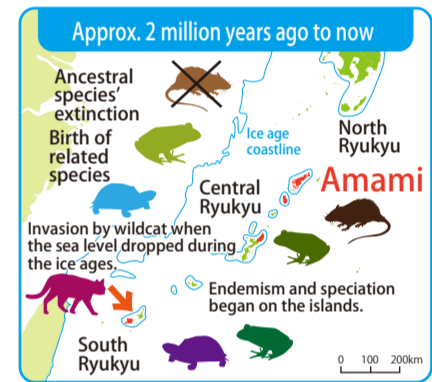
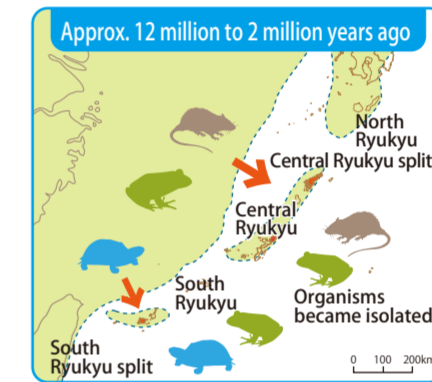
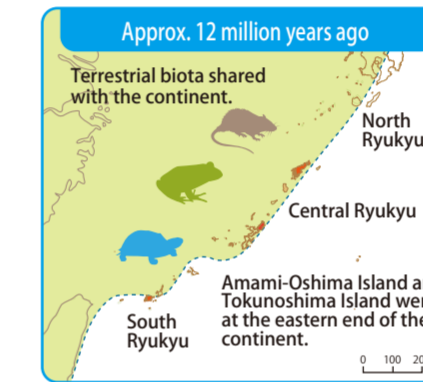
Registered, July 2021.

After Ten Million Years

Geological History and Endemic Species

Rare species survive on Amami Oshima and Tokunoshima

The Amami Island group was once connected to the Eurasian continent and the Japanese mainland by land, but it was separated from the continent into the islands we know today about two million years ago. Some of the species separated from the continent became extinct, but the rest were able to survive on Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island by adapting to the changing environment and due to a lack of natural predators. In this way, species that were originally widely distributed in the surrounding areas but have survived only in specific areas due to environmental changes and so on are called "relict endemic species."
[Examples: Amami rabbit, Ryukyu long-tailed rat, etc.]
After detaching from the continent, Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island became what they are today by attaching to and separating from nearby islands, and natural life forms became isolated on each island and differentiated into divergent species.
Such species that were one but evolved into different species in various areas are called "new endemic species." [Examples: Ryukyu spiny rat, Banded ground gecko, etc.]

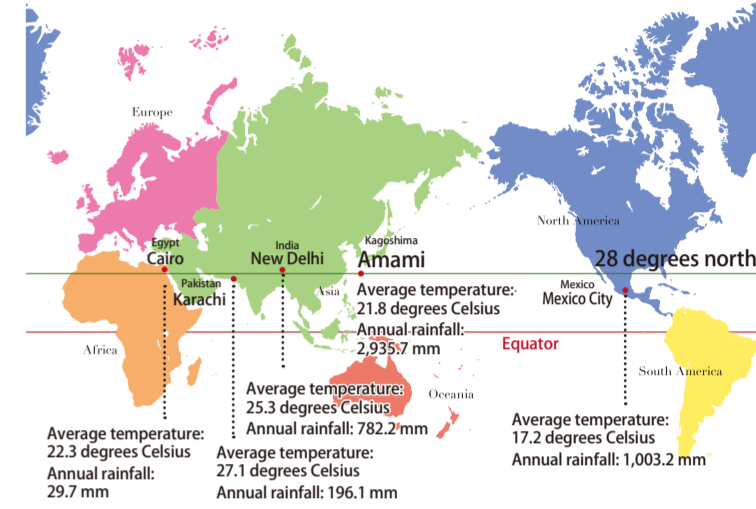


Unique Climate

Subtropical Oceanic Climate

Amami's unique environment

The Amami Island group has a subtropical climate with hot summers and relatively mild winters. Many of the world's subtropical regions are arid deserts and such, but the warm Kuroshio current flowing near the archipelago and monsoons [seasonal winds] bring rain, supporting the development of evergreen board-leaved forest, and providing habitats for a large variety of species.



Rare Species Inhabiting Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island

The combined area of Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island is only 0.26% of the whole area of Japan. However, the islands are home to various flora and fauna, including rare species found nowhere else in the world. About 90% of amphibians and 60% of terrestrial mammals and reptiles found on Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island are endemic to the islands.



Amami rabbit



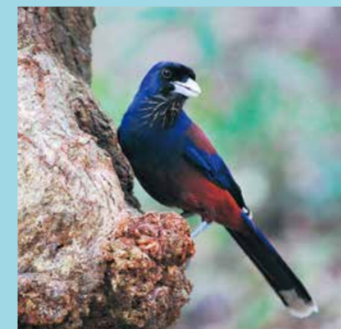
Ryukyu long-haired rat



Amami spiny rat



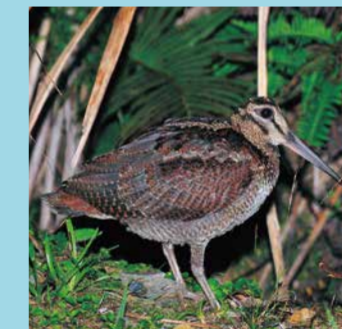
Tokunoshima spiny rat



Lidth's jay



Ryukyu robin



Amami woodcock



Amami Ishikawa's frog



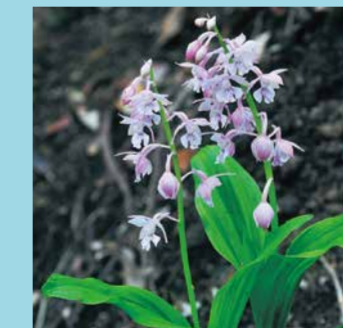
Amami tip-nosed frog



Banded ground gecko



Ceylon blue glassy tiger



Calanthe amamiana



Rhododendron latoucheae var. amamiense

Tour the Amami Island Group

Amami World Heritage Trail

Let's Make New Encounters & Discoveries!

14 areas, 51 courses / Total extension approx. 550 km

Amami's Treasures Become World Treasures

Etiquettes and Reminder!
We need each individual to be mindful and behave appropriately.

For nature's sake!

Rules have been established for the use of areas such as Kinsakubaru (Amami-Oshima Island) and Yamakubiri Forest Road (Tokunoshima Island) to preserve important nature conservation areas. We ask for your understanding and cooperation with the rules.
● Those who wish to enjoy nature must be accompanied by an Amami Islands certified eco-tour guide (fee-charging). Please reserve in advance so that the guide can adjust the schedule to ease congestion and ensure safety.
● Those who wish to gain access for research, education, or filming purposes must apply in advance. Please call the Naze Forest Office (0997-52-4531) for Kinsakubaru, and the Tokushima Town Hall (0997-82-1111) for the Yamakubiri Forest Road.
*Some areas have a limit on the number of visitors. Please note that you may not gain access to the areas if you exceed the limit.

For enjoying nature!

- Please do not catch animals and insects or pick plants. Many of Amami Island group's rare flora and fauna are protected by law. You will be penalized if you catch or pick them. Please observe or photograph the animals and plants and enjoy them in your memories and photographs.
- Please drive slowly
Various creatures come out onto the roads at night. Many traffic accidents have involved Amami rabbits and other animals in recent years. If you are driving, please do so at a reduced speed.

- Please beware of habu (snakes) and other dangerous creatures.
Habu, a highly venomous species of snakes, inhabit Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island. Please watch your step and pay attention above your head as they often lurk in grassy areas, on tree branches, and riversides. To avoid being stung by bees, gnats, and ticks, wear long sleeves and trousers and use insect repellent.
- Do not bring in alien species
Invasive alien species may eat flora and fauna indigenous to the Amami Island group or take away their habitats. Do not bring in

Amami World Heritage Trail is a long nature trail that connects eight inhabited islands in the Amami Island group between Kyushu and Okinawa. They include the World Natural Heritage sites Amami-Oshima Island and Tokunoshima Island, Kakeroma Island with beautiful Indian coral trees, Uke Island with rare insects and flowers, Yoro Island with old coral walls, Kikai Island, one of the world's fastest rising coral islands, Okinoerabu Island with flowers and limestone caves, and Yoron Island with beautiful white sandy beaches and Yoron-blue sea. You can experience nature unique to the Amami Island group and the culture nurtured there on the eight unique islands.



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