

Stories to Experience

Nature and National Parks of Japan

National Parks of Japan,

Where we can encounter living and culture supported by great nature

In Japan, with a background of a variety of terrains and a wide range of climatic zones, diverse plants, and wildlife growing, and inhabiting, thereby adapting to the environment have been supporting people's living and culture. In National Parks of Japan, you can experience the finest nature and unique culture created by the "connection" of these elements.

People and Living

Wildlife

Plants

Climate

Terrain

Ecosystem

Natural Conditions

Beliefs nurtured by Natural blessings and threats

Disasters

Feeling of fear and reverence for natural phenomena caused by the terrain or climate

Blessings

Feeling of appreciation to animals and plants nurtured by fertile soil and abundant water

Japan is a country of fire and water.

The number of volcanoes

In the world: 1,552 mountains

In Japan: 111 mountains

While Japan's land area accounts for 0.25% of the total area of the world, the volcanoes in Japan accounts for 7% of the volcanoes in the world.

Rainfall

In Japan: 1.728 mm / year

World average: 880 mm / year

Source: National Catalogue of The Active Volcanoes in Japan (the 4th edition) by Japan Meteorological Agency / Annual Rainfall (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism)

Diverse environment Supported by climatic zones

Ranging from the subarctic zone to the subtropical zone

Subarctic zone

Cold-temperature zone

Warm-temperature zone

Subtropical zone

Sea with drift-ice masses

In the subarctic zone

Forests in the temperature zone

With a variety of changes over the four seasons

Sea of coral reefs

In the subtropical zone

Source: The Japan Forestry Association

“Forests and Forestry in Japan: Textbook for Learning about Forests”

Japan, where people and nature cohabit, with rich biodiversity

Comparison with the U.K. and New Zealand, as an island country situated at a latitude similar to Japan, with the area almost the same as that of Japan.

Land area

Japan

378,000km²

Latitude of Tokyo: 35 degrees 40 minutes north latitude

The U.K.

243,000km²

Latitude of London: 51 degrees 30 minutes north latitude

New Zealand

268,000km²

Latitude of Wellington: 42 degrees 41 minutes south latitude

Population density

Japan: 335 people / km²

U.K. : 271 people / km²

New Zealand: 18 people / km²

Number of mammal species

Japan: Endemic species: 48 species, Total number of species: 107 species

U.K. : Endemic species: 0 species, Total number of species: 42 species

New Zealand: Endemic species: 3 species, Total number of Species: 3 species

Number of bird species

Japan: Endemic species: 10 species, Total number of species: 542 species

U.K. : Endemic species: 1 species, Total number of species: 542 species

New Zealand: Endemic species: 56 species, Total number of species: 295 species

Number of plant species

Japan: Endemic species: 1,800 species, Total number of species: 5,300 species *

Approximate number

U.K. : Endemic species: 160 species, Total number of species: 1,623 species

New Zealand: Endemic species: 1,654 species, Total number of species: 2,089 species

Source: Statistics by Teikoku-Shoin Co., Ltd. : World - Area and Population (Area and Population Density [for 2017]) / National Museum of Nature and Science (Permanent Exhibits of Japan Gallery [Nature of the Japanese Islands])

P3-4

Stories to Experience

-National Parks of Japan-

Diverse natural environments are condensed in the land of Japan. Also, as the land of Japan extends north and south, a variety of climatic zones from the subarctic zone to the subtropical zone exist in one country. The temperature zone regions, which account for the largest area of Japan, have four distinct seasons with various changes of nature in each season. Through the course of adapting to this environment, plants, wildlife, and people's living and culture have become rich in diversity. National Parks of Japan serves as a place to experience the great nature formed by the connections of natural environments and the distinctive culture in each region.

Diverse environment supported by the climatic zones

From the subarctic zone to the subtropical zone

Japan is situated to the east of the Eurasia Continent, and the land (terrestrial) area is just about 380,000 km². However, it stretches over 3,000 km from the north to the south like a bow, including a wide range of climatic zones from the subarctic zone, the cold-temperature zone, the warm-temperature zone to the subtropical zone.

It leads to the rich diversity in natural phenomena, plants, and animals. For example, while a sea area off the coast of Hokkaido in the subarctic zone is covered with drift-ice masses in winter, coral reefs spread in a sea area of the Islands southwest of Japan in the subtropical zone in the same season. By utilizing this environment, it is not impossible to enjoy a drift-ice cruising or walking on drift-ice masses in Shiretoko (eastern end of Hokkaido) in the morning in winter, then fly to Okinawa to enjoy scuba diving on the same day. It can be done only in Japan.

The temperature zone regions (cold-temperature zone and warm-temperature zone) as the most extensive climatic area in Japan have four distinct seasons, which bring the changes of nature in each season, such as cherry blossoms in spring and colored leaves in autumn. These changes are caused by the changes in the seasonal winds (monsoons), which affect the climate.

In summer, it becomes hot and humid due to the winds from the southern sea; however, in winter, it is dry and cold by the winds from the northwestern continent. It has a rainy season before summer, typhoons from summer to autumn, a long rainy period in autumn, and also in winter, cold, moist air from the Sea of Japan brings heavy snowfalls in the areas facing the Sea of Japan.

Japan with rich biodiversity

Within the Japan's land area of as small as 380,000 km², approximately 5,000 species of plants, approximately 100 species of mammals, and approximately 550 species of birds inhabit. For example, compared to the U.K. and New Zealand, which have almost the same land area as Japan, the number of species is much greater in Japan than in these countries. Furthermore, the ratio of endemic species in Japan is higher, and it is considered that many small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles, and approximately one-third of plants are of endemic species. The world's biggest amphibian with a record size of the total length of 148 cm and a weight of 30 kg is a Japanese giant salamander, which is a species endemic to Japan. Also, the so-called "living fossil," whose present form of the body is almost unchanged from a 30-million-year-old fossil, inhabits in Japan.

The reasons why Japan has become rich in biodiversity to such an extent are Japan's extensive climatic zones and the abundant rainfall and snow (water). Also, it is considered that the repeated cycle of connection and isolation from the continent due to rising and declining sea levels has an influence on the biodiversity.

Right: Daisen-Oki National Park, Mt. Daisen and cherry blossoms

Left (clockwise from the upper right photo): Shiretoko National Park, Sea kayaking on drift-ice masses

Keramashoto National Park, Scuba diving

Daisen-Oki National Park, Japanese giant salamander

Towada-Hachimantai National Park, Tsutanuma Pond and autumn leaves in the sunrise glow

P5-6

Japan is a country of fire and water.

The Japanese archipelago is situated on the plate boundaries and has many active volcanoes. It has the two volcanic belts running from the center of the mainland, with one into the northeastern part and another into the southwestern part, and with a range of 111 active volcanoes. While Japan's land area accounts for 0.25% of the total area of the world, the volcanoes in Japan account for as much as 7% of the volcanoes in the world, and it can be said that Japan is "a country of fire."

Uplifting and eruptions of volcanoes not only form various terrains but also deliver a great amount of ejecta on the land surface and form plain lands. Also, volcanic ashes after weathering become the soil foundation, which is essential to the production of agricultural products. As the porous inner parts of volcanic bodies permeate a great amount of water, and form subsoil water layers, spring water and underground water can be utilized at the foot of mountains. Also, people can enjoy water heated by geothermal energy, water containing various volcano-derived components, and hot springs. These are just some examples among many blessings from fire (volcanic eruptions).

The annual average rainfall in Japan is approximately two times as much as the world average. Furthermore, as the water quality is excellent for drinking water, it can be said that Japan is truly blessed with water.

Rain fell onto mountains becomes spring water containing mountain nutrients, and then flow down the rivers into the seas. Seawater evaporates and changes into clouds, then falls as rain. With such rich water environments and moderate temperatures suitable for agriculture, rice production has spread across Japan. Furthermore, rice production has led to rice culture and *sake* brewing, supporting the basis of the living of Japanese people. Japan is exactly “a country of water” where “water” has nurtured the country’s abundance.

Snowfall in Japan is also one of the greatest in the world. Several cities in Japan are ranked in the top 10 cities with the heaviest snow in the world, and Aomori City has the world’s highest annual snowfall of over 7 meters. The snow quality called “*Japow* (a coined word by combining Japan and powder snow)” attracts winter sports lovers all around the world.

Natural blessings and threats
have nurtured the beliefs

On the other hand, fire and water can cause disasters. Typhoons, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, *tsunami* (seismic sea waves), flooding of rivers, landslides, and other disasters taking people’s lives and properties have struck Japan over the years, resulting in severe damages. Against these natural threats, the Japanese people have chosen to keep on living while receiving natural blessings in their local regions by using their wisdom and ingenuity suitable for the regions. As a result, customs, culture, and beliefs unique to each region have been created.

Natural blessings and *Sato-yama* / *Sato-umi*

Sato-yama refers to rice paddies, streams, grasslands, and other spaces where people live and gather close to plants, flowers, birds, insects, and other diverse living things. The reason why Japan has many amphibian species is because of the

rich waterfront environments, including the existence of rice paddies.

Sato-umi refers to a coastal area with outstanding fishery resource productivity and rich biodiversity, which have supported local culture and exchanges as well as fisheries and the distribution of products.

Sato-yama / Sato-umi is an area which is located midway between the settlement of people and nature. And also a place where people and nature literally coexist, with diverse natural environments created through human interaction, resulting in biodiversity and many blessings.

Right: Ise-Shima National Park, *ama* (female divers) fishery

Left: Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park, Sakurajima Lava Nagisa Park

P7-8

National Parks of Japan show what Japan is like,
and provide tips for coexistence.

National Parks of Japan where nature and people' s living coexist in harmony

It is the best place to truly experience “the evidence that people have coexisted in harmony with nature.” You can experience first-hand the superb nature and the very essence of Japanese culture that is still thriving there.

National Parks of Japan embraces not only the splendid natural landscapes but also people who live there. People have cohabited in harmony with nature in a way unique to each region, which has been carried on for generations, and these distinctive cultures and beliefs are still thriving there. People' s living itself, which has been established there by struggling with harsh nature over an extended period of time, is also an important resource of National Parks of Japan.

Nature in Japan, which has been harsh and severe but has brought diverse blessings. The evidence of people coexisting in harmony with nature, which has been shaped for millennia.

National Parks of Japan will make each and every visitor get and feel a sense of how to keep living flexibly, graciously, but wisely in the bustling world with rapidly changing values.

Aso-Kuju National Park, Five Peaks of Mt. Aso viewed from the outer rim of the volcanic crater

Aso-Kuju National Park, *Noyaki* (controlled burn)

Towada-Hachimantai National Park, Tamagawa Onsen (hot spring)

National Parks of Japan

Story Compilation

This Story Compilation has been created so that people engaging in National Parks across Japan can think, share, and spread the charms and values that are found in the nature of Japan and in the National Parks representing the country's nature, and also that are unique to each National Park.

We would like to think that collaborate not only with national park rangers but also with

local people and related businesses so that visitors to the national park can experience the story in National Parks of Japan.

To this end, it is essential to reflect and improve the quality of values and charms described here in the products, services, information, and space creations for people who actually visit National Parks. As the first step, people concerned in each National Park share the contents of this Story Compilation, develop and implement the practical methods to actually utilize this Story Compilation, and upgrade based on the responses from visitors. By constantly repeating these works, we believe that the values and charms preserved by the National Parks of Japan will be recognized by people around the world as people's lifestyles in harmony with nature in each region will be carried on and lead to the revitalization of local communities.

We would appreciate it if this Story Compilation is shared and utilized by National Park rangers and people concerned in each region.

Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park, *Rhododendron kiusianum* along the mountain peak of Mt. Karakuni

P9-10

How to Check this Story Compilation

Overall Story Page

A page showing the basic information and the overall information on each National Park

National Park Name

Basic information of the park

Overall message of the park

Explanations of the overall message of the park

Icons

A photograph to express the overall message of the park

Explanations on (6)

Individual Story Page

A page to introduce the messages of each National Park in the form of the story based on the elements that represent the park

Individual stories with characteristic descriptions to clearly convey the overall message of the park

Photographs to visually explain the individual messages

Descriptions to connection the photographs (10) to the individual stories

Roles of icons

Icons represent the elements included in the overall message and individual stories for each park.

Fire: Element related to a volcano

Water: Element related to water, such as rivers, lakes, and oceans

Land: Element related to phenomena that occur on the land surface, such as ground uplifting, icefalls, and whole surface freezing

Climate: Element related to climate and weather, such as rainfall, snowfall, temperature, and seawater temperature

Living things: Element related to living things, such as wildlife and plants

Living: Element related to agricultural, forestry and fishery industries, local industries, local practices, etc.

Food: Element related to local dishes, processing and using of seasonal food ingredients, food preparation, etc.

Culture: Element related to traditional entertainment, traditional crafts, ceremonies, and festivals, etc.

Belief: Element related to festivals, temples, and shrines

Enjoyment: Element related to experiences, activities, etc.

Connection Page

A page with a simple schematic diagram to show typical connections between natural elements of each National Park and people's living and culture

Title to represent the connections

Descriptions on the connections

Schematic diagram showing the connections

Explanations on the geographical features (brown)

Explanations on the climate (blue)

Explanations on the plants (green)

Explanations on the wildlife (yellow)

Explanations of people's living and culture (red)

Calendar of Japan's Nature and Living in National Parks of Japan

A page showing the highlights of changes of nature in Japan, festivals and ceremonies for the eight National Parks.

A page of meaning

A map showing the location of the eight National Parks in Japan

A graph showing the monthly climatological normal for the highest temperature and the lowest temperature

A graph showing the monthly climatological normal for the rainfall and the heaviest snowfall

Changes in natural landscape

The natural changes related to plants and wildlife

Information related to people' s living and culture

Start of blooming of cherry blossoms

Period of autumn leaves

P11-12

01

Akan-Mashu National Park

Date of Designation: December 4, 1934, Area: 91.413 ha, Hokkaido

Three calderas and lakes,

And the primeval forests, which make us feel the existence of Kamuy (deity)

Akan-Mashu National Park has three caldera landforms, Kussharo Caldera, Mashu Caldera, and Akan Caldera, and each caldera has unique lakes. The park features diverse terrains formed by volcanic activities, and concentration of habitats of unique biota enjoying the benefits of geothermal energy, lending the park the atmosphere to be boasted to the world.

This is also one of the places where primeval nature remains the most in Japan. In late autumn, whooper swans fly over to Lake Kussharo from Siberia. Thanks to the hot spring gushing out from the bottom of the lake, a part of the lake are not frozen over, and it serves as a place for whooper swans to take nutrients and rest their wings in the wintertime.

Lake Akan is home to a colony of beautiful spherical Marimo moss balls that aren' t found anywhere else in the world. Kokanee native to Lake Akan, a type of sockeye salmon, used to swim up and down the sea and river, but then was trapped into the

lake by the volcanic eruption and became a fresh-water fish.

In this region, as the Ainu culture has been preserved and valued, visitors can experience the lifestyle and culture of Ainu, who has lived in symbiosis with nature, at “Akanko Ainu Kotan” village and “Kussharo Kotan” village.

Mt. MeAkan spewing volcanic smoke

It is called “Machineshiri (Female Mountain)” in the Ainu language. The main peak, Pommachineshiri, is 1,499 m above sea level. Mt. Akanfuji, in the back, is 1,476 m above sea level.

P13-14

01

Akan-Mashu National Park

Three calderas and lakes showing the energy of still-active earth

If we try to know how this magnificent landscape centered on the three calderas and lakes was produced, we need to go back to some hundreds of thousands of years ago. The landscape was created as a result of craters formed by volcanic activities a long time ago, and water collected there over a long period of time. Volcanic activities continue actively even at present around there. Among them, Atusa-Nupuri (Mt. Iwosan) is very powerful with fumes of gas, constantly gushing from more than 1,500 vents.

Kokanees and other fish in Lake Akan receive benefits from the volcanoes. As the hot springs gushing out from the lake contain a large amount of nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen, a huge amount of planktons grown by these nutrients become the feed for kokanees and various fish. Then, these fish become the feeds for other animals inhabiting around there.

In the summer, visitors are captivated by the sea of clouds over Lake Mashu and Lake Kussharo. The scenery is the natural art created by fogs. The sea of clouds is formed by the fogs generated by warm air flowing from the Pacific Ocean arrive

in the inland and caught in the calderas. The deep fogs moisture the forests, flow like water in a river and finally return to the ocean. In the background of the splendid landscape, there is a story of water circulation.

The three calderas and lakes serve as a home to various living things and bring changes in the sceneries. It is a place where you can think and feel the dynamism of the earth through the volcanoes and the circulation of water.

Lake Kussharo

Japan's largest caldera lake. The lake water area is approximately 80 km². In the winter, the lake freezes over, and "Omiwatari (god's footsteps) phenomenon", a raised line of cracked ice, occurs.

Sea of clouds over Lake Mashu

This is observed when sea fogs formed in the Pacific Ocean and off the coast of Kushiro are sent to the inland by the southern wind and flow into Lake Mashu.

Lake Akan

It is located in the center of the Akan Caldera. It is known as the habitat of "Marimo (moss balls) of Lake Akan", a National Special Natural Monument, and the origin of kokanees.

Atosa-nupuri (Mt. Io)

In the past, sulfur mining was conducted. The mountain has more than 1,500 vents, both large and small, from which white fumes of gas are constantly gushing. Atousa-nupuri means "naked mountain" in the Ainu language.

The natural view of the Ainu and the existence of Kamuy

The Ainu people who have lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering consider nature as the existence that gives blessings, and at the same time as the existence beyond their control.

The form of Ainu belief based on this concept maintains harmony with nature, as a matter of course. Mountains, rivers, fires, winds, and other things from the

natural world are Kamuy (deity) or the incarnation, and sometimes Kamuy appears in the form of the animal and even becomes precious food.

The Ainu people have lived in harmony with the great nature by paying the greatest respect to existence.

In “Lake Akanko Ainu Kotan (settlement)” on the western side of the National Park, you can encounter these elements of Ainu culture. Traditional dance performances, clothes, patterns, and lifestyle. Each and every element is filled with deep reverence for nature. Also, Kussharo Kotan (settlement) along the southern coast of Lake Kussharo has the Ainu Folklore Museum.

This place is where you can experience the Ainu’s perspective on values in the lifestyle of seeking harmony with nature serves as a special place to learn many lessons for modern humankind who tend to be isolated from the preciousness and reverence in nature.

Once again, you turn your eyes to the world around you from a perspective of one living thing. You calmly review the existence of humankind as a part of nature. Such a calm and reflective experience are one of the charms offered by Akan-Mashu National Park.

Marimo Festival

An event to promote the protection of *Marimo*, conducted at Lake Akan in early October every year. Ainu ceremonies are conducted in the dugout canoes floating on the lake.

Mt. Mashu and Lake Mashu

Mt. Mashu is “Kamui-nupuri (mountain of deity)” in the Ainu language. Lake Mashu, with the world-top-class clarity, is called “Kamui-to (lake of deity)”.

Black woodpecker

The biggest woodpecker in Japan. It is said that the Ainu people came up with the

idea of making boats inspired by the shape of the hole bored by a black woodpecker. It is called “chip-ta-chikap-kamuy (deity of bird that engraves boats)” in the Ainu language.

Yezo deer

The biggest among the Japanese deer subspecies. It is called “yuk” (prey) in the Ainu language. The Ainu people used to eat the deer often.

P15-16

01

Akan-Mashu National Park

Akan-Mashu National Park: Connection between people and nature

Marimo and the Ainu culture

Natured by the subarctic climate and calderas

This place has been nurturing the unique ecosystem by entwining the elements such as geothermal energy and spring water with caldera lakes formed by volcanic activities and deep coniferous forests. The Ainu culture has been nurtured in such a unique and rich nature.

Subarctic climate

Due to the influence of the subarctic climate, this place is very cold, but at the same time, it creates beautiful phenomena such as diamond dust, frost flowers, and frost covered trees.

Volcanoes (caldera landforms)

The still continuing volcanic activities of Chishima Volcanic Zone have formed the unique landform where three caldera landforms are in close proximity. A caldera is a landform of a huge crater created by volcanic activity.

Soil formation by volcanoes

Coniferous forests

The dense coniferous forests of Yezo spruce and Sakhalin fir, etc. has greatly influenced the ecosystem of Akan-Mashu National Park. Such an extensive coverage of Sakhalin spruce favoring the volcano-originated soil is significantly affected by the volcanic activities.

Rain and snow on the coniferous forests go down with rich minerals and flow into there.

Caldera Lake

A caldera lake is formed as water is accumulated in a caldera, which is made by volcanic activities. With hot springs gushing out from the bottom of a caldera lake, a caldera lake contains rich nutrients from hot springs.

Subsidence and collapse occur due to volcanic activities.

It becomes a hot spring after being heated by the geothermal energy.

Hot spring

The heat of hot spring is utilized for wintering.

Rich feeds are made for mammals and bird species.

Wildlife

The forests are home to brown bears, red foxes, raccoon dogs, Yezo deer, and other mammal species, and bird species such as black woodpeckers and white-tailed eagles, and other many living things. In the caldera lakes, Sakhalin taimen as the rare species, kokanee, and other fish species inhabit.

Creation of the existence of many kamuy (deities)

Ainu

The Ainu people's lifestyle in harmony with nature, in which the natural world is respected as kamuy (deity) and the blessings of kamuy are appreciated, represents the significance of the benefits.

Carrying on of the legend to interpret a crater as a spear thrust

Succeeding of the tradition by the establishment of Ainu Kotan (settlement) on the
waterside

Whooper swans

Kokanees

Marimo

Marimo of Lake Akan designated as the National Special Natural Monument. *Marimo*, with such a beautiful spherical shape, cannot be observed anywhere else in the world. Although the reasons are not fully identified, it is said that the shape is formed as a result of the mutual influence of rare conditions such as lake water flow, underwater landform, and wind.

Marimo Festival

P17-18

02

Towada-Hachimantai National Park

Date of Designation: February 1, 1936

Area: 85,534 ha

Aomori, Akita and Iwate Prefecture

Relationship between Secluded Mountains and People in Beech Areas

An Asiatic black bear is walking slowly in the forest. Something jumped out of a bush behind it like a kemari ball like a football -it is the bear's cubs. The bear family sometimes stops walking and is seemingly looking for something -beechnuts.

Enough to easily imagine such a scene, there are rich cool-temperature broad-leaved deciduous forests in Towada-Hachimantai National Park. Such an amount of remaining natural forests is rare worldwide, not only in Japan.

Beeches begin to turn color, and bears are preparing for a long hibernation. During such time, people come to this area to reach hot steams rising from here and there. Their destinations are hot springs. There are a lot of hot springs only in the national park, and a lot of people visit there. Toji (Hot spring therapy) culture has taken root in this area and continued over the years.

People feel like speaking in a quiet voice, not to block the sounds of nature during their stay. They also feel like being "invited as a guest" to the great nature.

Beeches

Beeches can be said as a leading player of vegetation in Towada-Hachimantai National Park. They can thrive in areas at an altitude of about 1,000 meters or lower across the national park. In May and June, the areas are covered with green leaves. Around October, the leaves turn yellow, covering the areas with bright yellow color.

P19-20

02

Towada-Hachimantai National Park

Rich Forests where Animals, Plants, and People Coexist

Animals and plants are major actors in Towada-Hachimantai National Park. The park consists of diverse forests such as mainly forest of beeches (forming the world's greatest clusters), deciduous broadleaf forests (including Japanese oak and Katsura tree), and forests of Maries' Fir (adapted to heavy snow environment). Moreover, the areas around the Hakkoda Mountains, Mt. Iwate, and Mt. Akita-Komagatake are above timberline and are wild mountain landscapes with cute flowers of alpine plants.

Towada-Hakkoda area includes Lake Towada, Oirase Gorge, and Hakkoda Mountains. Hachimantai area consists of Mt. Iwate, Mt. Hachimantai, and Mt. Akita-Komagatake, and has lakes, ponds, and high altitude wetlands formed by volcanic phenomena and cool temperate. Animals live prosperously in such diverse environment.

In the forest, there are not only mammals such as Asiatic black bears, Japanese serows, Japanese martens, and flying squirrels, but also amphibians such as forest green tree frogs and Japanese black salamanders, and valuable birds such as mountain hawk-eagles.

As the area is situated in deep mountains, people are not allowed to enter it has been difficult for people to get close to the natural forest, and no large scale development was conducted. In the neighboring area, trees had been cut down to be used as firewood or charcoal mainly from the latter half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. But currently, the natural environment has been naturally restored, and secondary beech forests are now being created.

In recent years, the less artificially developed area attracts people to enjoy abundant nature. More people are beginning to come to enjoy the beech forest through summer hike, winter snowshoes and skiing, and canoe activities near water, in a manner that does not impact on the environment.

If you carefully try to listen to the sounds of the deep forest, you can be aware of the full presence of various creatures.

Forest Green Tree frog

A forest frog lives on Japan's main island and Sado Island. The frog lays white foamy clusters of eggs on the branches of trees spreading near water around June and July. It habitats in a water environment such as beech forests.

Summit of Mt. Hachimantai

A volcanic plateau formed by several craters. Even in mid-summer, it is cool at a degree of 15° C at the summit. There are walking trails and viewpoints around Hachiman Pond, the largest lake in the Hachimantai area.

Japanese Serow

Japanese serow belongs to a family Bovidae, not Cervidae, and therefore horns are not dropped out of the serow's head. It lives in the forest area of the national

park. The species, Japanese serow, was designated as a special natural treasure.

Juhyo (Snow Monsters) of Hakkoda Mountains

In Maries' Fir forests spreading around the peaks of Hakkoda Mountains, snow or other substances attach to trees and frozen trees are formed in the winter season, creating a fantastic scenery.

Toji Culture in Tohoku

In the Tohoku area, toji (Hot spring therapy) culture has continued for over 300 years. Toji places were discovered by hunters who used to work in the mountains, and some of the places were popular for high-status people such as domain lords to cure their sicknesses. But, the toji places became popular among common people in modern times, and nowadays, a variety of people come to the mountain areas in Tohoku to experience high-quality hot spring water from all over the world.

The toji had been performed with effective use of the agricultural off-season for various purposes such as Shogatsu Toji (New Year toji), Kan-no-yu (Winter toji), Haru Toji (Spring toji), Tauemae-no-yu (Toji before rice planting) and Doro-otoshi-no-yu (Toji for bodies cooled by rice planting work). It healed tired bodies after hard agricultural work as well as generated people's energy for work. Such toji culture used to be found anywhere in Japan, but now the culture clearly exists only in the areas of Towada-Hachimantai National Park.

Toji accommodations are slightly different from other common hot spring hotels. Since people stay at toji accommodations for long term for the purpose of curing their bodies, they get used to only have simple accommodation and kitchen facilities, and shops selling food for self-catering. The toji accommodations now have the same facilities as other common hotels, but people take a hot bath with a view of beautiful mountains and "do nothing" here in toji accommodations. People can spend special hours in toji places away from busy days.

This toji style of "staying like living" is very fresh to modern tourists who often move from place to place. Actually, more people are coming to experience toji

culture. A new period of toji seems to be beginning soon for people to refresh their bodies during their stay.

Sukayu Onsen

A hot spring accommodation that has been open to the public for nearly 300 years. The area is cool even in summer as located on the western side of the Hakkoda Mountains at a high altitude of about 900 meters, but in winter, the area is covered with snow, and the snowfall may reach five meters.

Tamagawa Hot Spring

This hot spring was discovered by a local hunter in the late 1680s. Seki Naoemon, who cured of his chronic skin disease by hot spring, had begun the full-scale development of the hot spring in 1929.

Fukenoyu Onsen

An isolated accommodation located at an altitude of 1,100 meters in the back of the Hachimantai Aspite Line. Famous non-roof outdoor bathes are scattered about the land with steam rising.

Nyuto-Onsen

Seven hot springs, scattered at the base of Mt. Nyuto in Towada-Hachimantai National Park, are called "a cluster of hot springs." The above photo shows a scene of Tsurunoyu Onsen, where which has the longest history among the seven hot springs and used to serve as a hot spring cure place for Akita clan.

P21-22

02

Towada-Hachimantai National Park

Towada-Hachimantai National Park Relationship between People and Nature

Volcanoes and plenty of snow

have created a beautiful lake landscape and beech forest

The diverse volcanic terrains and heavy snow formed woodlands where are difficult for people to enter, and therefore rich forests are preserved here. The beautiful forest and water serve as food for animals, and plenty of hot springs serve as places to heal people.

Cool-temperate Zone

A cool-temperate zone means an area closest to the subarctic climate among temperate zones. Towada Hachimantai area also has a large amount of snowfall and snow meltwater turns to abundant subsoil water, leading to maintenance of the world's greatest beech forest.

Meltwater enriches forests

Beech Forest

In the area between 200 and 1,000m above sea level, there are vast broad-leaved deciduous forests, mainly consisting of beeches. The forests serve as precious food for animals and allow tourists to enjoy beautiful colored leaves.

Supplying abundant food

Animals

There is plenty of food in the beech forest, and it serves as a habitat of large mammals such as Asiatic black bears, and Japanese serows which prefer to eat beeches. Also, snowmelt creates many beautiful mountain streams, and rare amphibians such as green forest frogs live in the area.

Serving as a habitat and supplying a drinking water

Lake Towada

It is a caldera lake with a maximum depth of 327 meters and is Japan's third deepest lake. Wainai Sadayuki began to farm kokanee salmon in Meiji Era, and nowadays, kokanee salmon dishes are considered as one of the local dishes.

Volcanic activities create Caldera Lake

Volcanic Terrains

Many active volcanoes still exist, and they formed diverse volcanic terrains, and lakes including a caldera lake, Hakkoda Mountains, and Hachimantai (volcanic plateau). Numerous hot springs were also created by volcanic geothermal phenomena.

Geothermally heated, turning to a hot spring water

Hot Springs

Creating different usage patterns of hot springs

Hot Spring Cure Culture

In this area, with many hot springs, hot spring therapy culture has thrived for long years. The hot springs had been used mainly by local people to cure their bodies during the agricultural off-season, but nowadays, people come to this area on trips from various regions.

Hachimantai

Lake Towada

Forest Green Tree frog

Asiatic Black Bear

Japanese Serow

P23-24

03

Nikko National Park

Date of Designation: December 4, 1934

Area: 114,908 ha

Fukushima, Tochigi and Gunma Prefecture

Miniature garden filled with Japanese history and nature

Nikko National Park was established as one of Japan's first national parks in 1934.

The national park spreads over three prefectures of Fukushima, Tochigi, and Gunma. Most of the park is a mountain area, a part of the Nasu volcanic belt. There are many mountains such as Mt. Nikko-Shirane (2,578 meters), the highest in the northern areas of North Kanto, Mt. Nantai (2,486 meters), having been recognized as a religious mountain from old times, and Mt. Chausu (1,915 meters), still volcanically active.

There are lakes, ponds, falls, and valleys created by volcanic eruptions in the highlands at the base of these mountains, forming beautiful and diverse landscapes for all four seasons. Nikko Toshogu Shrine and other shrines and temples designated as a world heritage are other places of interest.

Nikko National Park welcomes you with a combination of magnificent cultural heritage telling Japan's history to date and diverse natural beauty. It is accessed easily from Tokyo. The park became a regular favorite as a tourist destination where foreign tourists, as well as Japanese tourists, can easily visit and experience "Japan's attractions."

Kegon-no-taki Falls

Water in Lake Chuzenji, stopped formed by eruptions of Mt. Nantai, falls at once along a 97-meter cliff. You can see a spectacular view with a big splash and large sound from observation decks.

P25-26

03

Nikko National Park

"Place filled with various natural wonders of Japan" friendly to first-time visitors with easy access.

Nikko City in Tochigi Prefecture, a center of the park area, can be accessed by car or railway from Tokyo, taking a minimum of about two hours. With only a few steps from there, people can enjoy diverse natural landscapes such as forests, lakes, falls, moors, and volcanoes. Nikko is one of Japan's greatest tourist destinations because people can easily enjoy Japan's high-class nature several

hours away from Tokyo.

Three areas are famous places to enjoy autumn leaves; Lake Chuzenji created by the damming of a river with lava flow out of Mt. Nantai, Kegon-no-taki Falls that waterfalls into the outlet of the lake, and Irohazaka with several endless hairpin curves. In autumn, leaves turn color gradually from the summit of the mountains to the base of the mountains. There are various areas where can be spots to you can enjoy colored leaves, including Kinu River, Shiobara Valley, and Mt. Nasu. When the autumn with beauty like a brocade is over, people can enjoy winter activities such as snowshoe hike and ice falls in a full snowy world of the area.

Seasonal green leaves and flowers are worth seeing. There are many notable flower sites within the park, including Happougahara having about 200 thousand Japanese azaleas bunched at the beginning of summer, and Numappara Moor attracting people by alpine plants such as daylilies and bugbanes. Walking trails are prepared developed in both areas, and people can enjoy hiking easily. Moreover, a variety of activities such as angling, SUP and guided tours are ready for you.

Nikko has a variety of natural environments that allows people to enjoy the beauty of seasonal landscapes. It is not too much to say that Nikko is a place filled with "beautiful Japanese natures."

Mt. Chausu

It is a stratovolcano at an altitude of 1,915 meters, and fumarolic activities are still being observed. People can go up to the ninth station of the mountain by ropeway and have a spectacular view of diverse colors at the summit.

Lake Yunoko

Yukawa River and Lake Yunoko flowing on Senjogahara are sacred grounds for fly fishing, and all anglers wish to do angling there. Rental boats are provided for fishing in Lake Yunoko, and anglers can enjoy lure fishing and bait fishing.

Kinu River

Men and women of all ages can enjoy the beautiful valley and activities such as river cruise and rafting. It is also famous as one of the foremost hot spring areas in the Kanto region.

Ice Falls in Unryu Valley

At Unryu Valley, situated in Nikko City, water cascades down an over 100-meter cliff in five levels. The falls become fully frozen to be ice falls in winter because of a little amount of water.

The place loved across time and space

If asked what a symbol of Nikko is, many people primarily think of Toshogu Shrine. Under the direction of Tokugawa Iemitsu, the third shogun of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the gorgeous shrine full of architectural beauty was built as one of the nation's biggest businesses by master craftsmen gathered by Iemitsu to enshrine his grandfather.

But, Nikko's long history started with the opening of Mt. Futarasan (Mt. Nantai) by Monk Shodo Shonin in the Nara Era. In the Kamakura Era, the area had thrived under the protection of the Kamakura Shogunate and mountain ascetic practices became popular and people continued to pray for the shrine. Nikko Futarasan Jinja Shrine and Nikkozan Rinnoji Temple, designated as a part of the world heritage "Shrines and Temples of Nikko" together with Toshogu Shrine, tell such history nowadays.

In the Meiji Era and early years of Showa Era, this area was popular as a summer refuge for many foreign diplomats posted in Japan. To stay in the cool place, foreign ambassadors and diplomats built summer villas on the side of Lake Chuzenji one after another. Many foreigners visited here and said that "summer of Nikko was like a the lobby of the Foreign Minister's office." Their visits can be said as a pioneer of current inbound efforts. "British Embassy Villa Memorial Park" and "Italian Embassy Villa Memorial Park" are the traces of such history. People can tour exotic former villa buildings and feel the atmosphere of the time.

Other places also attract widespread attention. One place is Shiobara Onsen where became known by the visit of numerous famous writers, and artists including Natsume Soseki and Tanizaki Junichiro. Another is "Nasu Heisei-no-mori Forest", where used to be a part of an imperial villa in Nasu, which later became open to the public.

Nantaisan Tohai Kosha Taisai (Mt. Nantai Worship Climbing Festival)

The festival, rooted in the religion for Mt. Nantai, has started in Nara Era over 1200 years ago and has been continuously held to date. The festival starts at midnight on August 1, and thousands of people try a night climbing to have a view of the rising sun at the summit.

Nasu Heisei-no-mori Forest

A forest connected with the imperial family. The about 560 ha forest used to be a part of an imperial villa in Nasu and became open to the public. People can enjoy both free walking and guided walking tours.

Italian Embassy Villa Memorial Park (Main Residence)

The building was built as an Italian embassy's villa in 1928 and used by successive ambassadors until 1997. It was designed by Antonin Raymond, an architect, and diplomat.

Shiobara Onsen "Yuppo no Sato"

An experience-based hot bathing facility. People can enjoy one of Japan's largest foot bath with a length of 60 meters. In the garden, there are monuments for writers and poets such as Natsume Soseki, Nagatsuka Takashi, and Muro Saisei.

P27-28

03

Nikko National Park

Nikko National Park -Relationship between People and Nature

Cool temperature and volcanic terrains created clear seasonal landscapes and

Japanese cultural heritages

Volcanic activities in Nasu volcanic belt created the landscape of Nikko National Park. The area has a big difference in elevation, creating complex terrains. The area also has climate features such as coolness, high rainfall, and a big difference between cold and warm temperatures. These climate conditions created a wide variety of environments and creatures.

Cool Temperature

It is relatively cool with abundant rainfall throughout a year, and there is a high-temperature difference among seasons, mornings, and nights. It rains a lot in summer. In winter, it is severely cold with less rainfall but a little snowfall. Climate impacts on rough terrains, creating landscapes

Landscape for Four Seasons

A combination of a difference of elevation and diversified terrains brings a variety of vegetation along with the environment, such as broad-leaved deciduous forests, coniferous forests, alpine plants, and moor plant clusters, creating natural environment for all four seasons.

Climate makes plants grow well and brings prosperity for living creatures

Animals

Diverse natural environment such as topography and vegetation enables the habitation of various mainland creatures, including mammals, birds, amphibians, fish, and insects.

Volcanic Terrains

Most part of the park belongs to the Nasu volcanic belt with the peaks of high mountains at an altitude of about 2,000 meters. Various terrains, including volcanic mountains, were created by volcanic eruptions in Nasu, Nikko, and highlands.

Areas with various types of terrains create diverse biofacies

Geological conditions and terrains created by volcanic activities serve as a basis of landscapes

Diverse Landscapes

Volcanic activities formed not only volcanic mountains and highlands but also lakes and falls by damming of the river with lava flow. They also created landscapes with diverse geological conditions and terrains such as moors by flowed and accumulated volcanic ashes and lava flow.

Natural landscapes create a balanced ecology cycle

Falls

Several dammed lakes were produced by the lava flow of eruptions, and there are many falls caused by height difference. Water in Lake Chuzenji, created by Mt. Nantai's eruptions, cascades down a 97-meter cliff, called Kegon-no taki Falls.

Nikko Toshogu Shrine

Many reasons are considered why Tokugawa Ieyasu was enshrined. Nikko was known as a sacred place of ancient mountain worship. Andesite rocks easy to be processed were produced originally by volcanic activities. They were also used to build Toshogu Shrine.

Japanese Macaque

Torrent Frog

P29-30

04

Ise-Shima National Park

Date of Designation: November 20, 1946

Area: 55,544 ha

Mie Prefecture

Ise-Shima National Park

Satoyama and *Satoumi* Created by People's Activities and Nature during the Long History

Ise-Shima National Park, spreading over Shima Peninsula in the center of Mie Prefecture, is categorized into two areas. One is the inland area with Ise Jingu, Japan's most important *jinja* (Shinto shrine) and its abundant backward forests. Another area is the coastal area with a complexly shaped ria coast and archipelago.

The inland area includes " *Satoyama* (Human-influenced natural environment)", and the coastal area contains " *Satoumi* (Coastal area with increased biological productivity and biodiversity through human interaction)." The ecosystems have been maintained in both areas with a close connection to people's activities such as agriculture, forestry, and fishery. The concept of co-existence and co-prosperity between people and nature has taken root in the Ise-Shima area. The background includes the existence of Ise-Shima that has been based on this area during long histories.

What is the relationship between the natural environment in *Satoyama* and *Satoumi*, and the history and culture of Ise Jingu? What is also the relationship between community lifestyle and nature in Ise Shima area? Placing a focus on them can clarify the profound attraction of Ise-Shima National Park.

Ago Bay

Seawater flowed into the river and valley on the elevated land when the sea level rose, forming a complex terrain with many capes and bays, called Ria Coast.

P31-32

04

Ise-Shima National Park

Landscape of continuing lifestyle in *Satoyama* and *Satoumi*

Ise-Shima National Park has a rich natural environment such as ria coast. People's activities in such an environment jointly created a unique *Satoumi* landscape.

Nature is connected closely to people's activities, and such spirit can be seen in *Ama* (female diver) fishery that has continued from ancient times, and Ise Jingu 2000 years of traditional culture.

Almost half the *Ama* divers in Japan are currently living in the Ise-Shima area. As the background of such active *Ama* fishery in this area, there remains a traditional spirit of maintaining a sustainable fishery by prohibiting fishing for small abalones, and restricting the number of days. Such respect and appreciation for nature have been handed over to seaweed and pearl farming and deeply connected with local people's religions.

Excellent technologies and wisdom to ensure continued blessings of nature are prominently visible in Siki no Sengu of Ise Jingu held every two decades. Used materials removed from shrine pavilions are reused in the shrine or reused to replace or repair buildings of nationwide shrines. More than 10 thousand Hinoki (Japanese cypress) materials are used for the entire buildings of the shrine. To ensure continued utilization of wood, Hinoki cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtuse*) plantation in *Kyuikirin* (Ise Jingu's own forest) is ongoing under a 200-year plan.

Ise-Shima area has created land and culture while maintaining a close relationship among nature, people's activities, and religions. The concept of sustainability considered as a challenge today originally comes from people's activities. You can see such a landscape in this national park.

Great *Torii* Gate of Ise Jingu and Ujibashi Bridge

Ujibashi Bridge over Isuzugawa River serves as an entrance to the Naiku and is considered to connect our daily lives to the sacred world. The first step to pray at the Naiku is to make a bow in front of the bridge.

Ama Fishery

Ama catches abalones and turban shells by skin diving in *Ama* fishery. There are currently about 2,000 *Ama* divers in Japan. Toba City and Shima City only have about 750 *Ama* divers of the total number, accounting for the largest number of *Ama* divers

in Japan.

Relationship between Sea and Forest that Create Rich Sea Blessings

Shima Province(Toba , Shima) area had dedicated marine products to imperial courts and Ise-jingu Shrine from 2000 years ago. The area had been regarded as important as called "Miketsu-kuni (Country making offerings of food)" in Manyoshu (Collection of myriad leaves). The biggest reason that such high-level status was awarded to the Shima Province is that it has the unique seafloor topography and abundant ocean environment that grow diverse sea creatures such as abalones, turban shells, oysters, tuna, red sea bream, and seaweeds.

Ise Shima waters consist of the quiet inland sea and open sea of the Pacific Ocean with rough waves. The warm Japan Current constantly flows into fishery areas on the open sea and inland sea. Seaweed forests are composed of seaweeds, including *Kajime (Ecklonia cava)* and *Arame (Eisenia bicyclis)*, to be a cradle for sea creatures, spreading along the *Satoumi* of the Shima Peninsula.

These diverse ocean environments unique to the Ise Shima area bring abundant biodiversity. In addition to this, " *Kyuikirin Forest*" of Ise Jingu and nature in *Satoyama* help to foster a rich ocean ecology.

This area has a warm climate affected by the Japan Current and nurtures the evergreen broad-leaved forests. Each time it rains, the organic matter of the hardwood forest creates a nutritious sea by flowing into the sea through the river. Water evaporated from the ocean turns to rain. Every time it rains, mountain nutrients from broad-leaved forests and agricultural land are collected in the river, finally supplying abundant nutrients in the sea.

Abundant marine resources of "Miketsu-kuni" are based on the relationship between sea and forest. You can enjoy delicious seafood dishes in the Ise Shima area while thinking of such a thing.

Shirongo Festival

This traditional festival is held for *Ama* in Sugashima, Toba City, and has several hundreds of history. *Ama* divers make an offering of "Maneki Awabi", which is a pair of "male" and "female" abalones for the shrine and pray for plentiful catches and safety of ships in the fishery.

Seaweed Forest of *Kajime* (*Ecklonia cava*)

The coastal area of the Shima Peninsula is shallow with a large amount of solar radiation. It benefits from the warm Japan Current, and mountain nutrients, forming one of the foremost seaweed areas in Japan.

Abalones

The seaweed bed on the coast and inland sea along with the open ocean serve as a habitat of creatures such as turban shells, and abalones eating the seaweed, and octopus and Ise-ebi (Japanese spiny lobster).

Isuzugawa River

The river pours water containing forest nutrients created by warm Japan Current into the sea. The circulation of water brings blessings to both forests and the sea.

P33-34

04

Ise-Shima National Park

Ise-Shima National Park -Relationship between People and Nature

The status of "Miketsu-kuni" was awarded,
thanks to the evergreen forest and ria coast

The complex terrain by Ria Coast and forests spreading across the peninsula have created abundant sea creatures. The area has been regarded as "Miketsu-kuni" based on the sea full of creatures.

Ria Coast

A coastal terrain created by rising and sinking repeatedly. When sea level rises, seawater flows into a river or valley, forming a complex coastline with capes and bays.

Enjoying beautiful landscapes

People's Activities

Create complex and shallow underwater terrain

Creating shallow areas suitable for skin diving

Evergreen Forest

As the area is warm throughout the year because of the warm Japan Current, there used to be a laurel forest usually seen in warm temperate zones. The area is currently combined with *Satoyama* developed by people.

Providing mountain nutrients to the sea

Full of Sea Creatures

The complex ria coastal terrain and seaweed forest consisting of *ecklonia cava* and *eisenia bicyclis* serve as a cradle, and habitat for plenty of sea creatures including Japanese spiny lobster, turban shells and abalones.

Catching sea creatures to be blessed with the fruits of the sea

Ama Culture

Ama culture, a fishery by skin diving, has taken root in the sea full of marine products from old times. The Ise-Shima area is the area with the most *Ama* divers in Japan.

Blessed with abundant marine products

Miketsu-kuni

Making an offering of food from the sea

Ise jingu Shrine

The shrine with a 2000-year tradition can be said as a hometown of Japanese people's minds, and Amaterasu Omikami (major deity of Shinto religion) is enshrined. *Ama* divers in the Shima Province (Toba, Shima) have made offerings of marine products to imperial courts and Ise-jingu Shrine from early times. Meanwhile, land area's nature, including the Kuikirin of Ise-jingu Shrine, has helped to develop a marine ecosystem.

Japan Current

It is a warm current flowing from the eastern waters of the Philippines along the southern coast of Japan to the eastern area. It rises water temperature, carries tropical sea creatures and has an impact on climate.

Creating seaweeds and sea creatures

The warm current has an impact on the climate

Warm Climate

The area is warm throughout the year due to the Japan Current.

Creating evergreen forests

Evergreen Forest

Abalones

Japanese spiny lobster

Turban Shells

Seaweeds

Kyuikirin Forest

P35-36

05

Daisen-Oki National Park

Date of Designation: February 1, 1936

Are: 35,353 ha (Land), 34,057 ha (Sea)

Tottori, Shimane and Okayama Prefecture

Mountains, islands, and sea that have the origins of Japan and have been conserved with myths and religions

The Daisen-Oki National Park consists of four areas; a mountainous area (around Mt. Daisen, the highest mountain in the Chugoku region, and Mt. Hiruzen, and around Mt. Mitoku), Mt. Sanbe, a coastal area of the Shimane Peninsula, and the Oki Islands. These areas are considered as myths and religions of the origin of the "Kunibiki Shinwa (land dragging myth)" and still have culture and people's activities linked with nature.

The mountainous area consists of various factors, including volcanic terrains, forests, and grassland, and each has unique mountainous landscapes. Among them, Mt. Daisen offers a variety of appearances from different angles, and there remains the largest beech forest in western Japan in areas at elevations of 800-1,300 meters.

Mt. Daisen is known as the oldest sacred mountain in history, and Mt. Mitoku is known as the sacred place for mountain training.

There are places of interest and historic sites related to Japanese myths including the "Kunibiki Shinwa" in each place of the Shimane Peninsula, which is the base of Izumo Oyashiro (Izumo Grand Shrine). The attraction of the Oki Islands is a coastal landscape with scattered islands created by dynamic land activities. How the area was created, its unique island ecosystem and people's activities developed in the area were recognized and designated as a "UNESCO Global Geopark."

Mt. Daisen

It is the highest mountain in the Chugoku region, at an elevation of 1,729 meters. The lava dome is placed on a cone volcano. There are wild landscapes of north cliffs that lead to the summit and south cliffs with a steep escarpment.

P37-38

05

Daisen-Okii National Park

History of nature and people's activities from the time of myths

According to the story "Kunibiki Shinwa" included in the "*Izumono kuni Fudoki*" compiled in the first half of the 8th century, it is said that "Yatsukamizuomizunomikoto" pulled lands with a rope from the main continent and Oki Islands to connect to the Izumo Province, and the stakes to fix the dragging rope became current Mt. Daisen and Mt. Sanbe. The dragged lands and mountains that appear in the story are located in the Daisen-Okii National Park, and the entire area of the Park can be said to be the main scene of the mythological story.

Miho Shrine, located at the eastern end of the Shimane Peninsula, has passed down its shrine ritual related to the mythological story "Kuniyuzuri Shinwa (a myth on handing over the control of the land)" compiled in the "*Kojiki*" and "*Nihon Shoki* (Japan's oldest chronicles)" as a local event. Meanwhile, Hinomisaki Shrine, located at the western end of the Shimane Peninsula, has enshrined Amaterasu Omikami, a symbol god of sunset. It is said that Izumo Oyashiro (Izumo Grand Shrine) was built by messengers of Amaterasu Omikami when Okuninushi-no-Okami, a main enshrined deity, ceded the land to her. The inner sanctuary, built in Japan's oldest shrine architectural style, was designated as a National Treasure. In every October in the lunar calendar, gods governing other places other than Izumo are away from their places, and so the month is called "Kannazuki (the month of no gods) in the places, " but it is called "Kamiarizuki (the month with gods)" in the Izumo area as gods gathered. All the gods nationwide gathered in the Izumo area, and they had various invisible discussions about building various relationships.

The "God" is very close to local people in this area. Japanese had believed in nature such as mountains and fire since early times and believed that "Gods" existed in the universe. The concept has taken deep root in the way of interacting with nature and lifestyle habits. The Daisen-Okii National Park is a place where visitors can feel the Japanese's philosophy and spirits.

Torch Parade on the mountainside of Daisen

The parade is held as the eve of the "Mt. Daisen Summer Opening Festival" on the first weekend of June every year. About 2,000 people hold torches and parade down an approach to a shrine.

Mt. Sanbe

There are six peaks of mountains, including Mt. Osanbe and Mt. Mesanbe, surrounding a crater. The Muronouchiike Pond is situated in the center, and there are also two lakes at the base of the mountains.

Inner Sanctuary of Izumo Oyashiro (Izumo Grand Shrine)

The shrine was built in the oldest shrine architectural style, called "Taishazukuri," and was designated as a National Treasure. The current building was built in 1744, with a height of 24 meters.

Sunset view from the Shimane Peninsula

From a view from the Yamato region, a central area of ancient Japan's administration, the Izumo region was considered as a place where the sun went down. There still remains a special feeling for the sunset.

Geopark where still has the history of the land from 250 million years ago.

The Oki Islands are situated in the Sea of Japan, 40-80 kilometers north of the Shimane Peninsula.

The land of the Oki Islands has made "various changes" in its appearance at every age, and visitors can feel familiar with the structure of the land from ancient times. For example, visitors can step on rocks that were created about 250 million years ago when the islands of Japan were connected to the Eurasian Continent, in a shrine located in a village. They also can touch the layers about 23 million years ago when the Sea of Japan was a lake. A tour route to see fossils of the times when the area was deep underwater at a visitor center and then go around the island allows visitors to feel the power of the rocks and layers elevated by

volcanic activities, spreading in front of them. The current Oki Islands were created about 10 thousand years ago after being connected to the Shimane Peninsula. Therefore, visitors can observe a unique ecosystem that consists of creatures remaining after coming to the area from the mainland.

The terrains and geology of this area allow visitors to take a glimpse into the formation of the islands of Japan. As the value of such terrains and geology has been recognized worldwide, it was designated as one of the UNESCO Global Geoparks. Land arts created during the long history (including cliffs formed by waves and volcanic rocks, and landscapes with floating big and small islands) are scattered along the coast.

There are unique culture, history and people's activities that cannot be found in the mainland of Japan such as a port lined with boathouses called "Funagoya" that utilizes this area's terrain and rising and falling of the tide in the Sea of Japan, and "Ushi-tsuki" which is a bull sumo battle started to heal the retired emperor Gotoba exiled in the Oki Islands in the Kamakura Era.

Sekiheki (RedCliff)

Brightly colored cliffs of red, yellow, and brown, located on the western coast of Chiburijima Island. It is a crater with a height of around 50-200 meters, created by volcanoes about 6 million years ago.

Funagoya (Boathouses)

Wooden one-story boathouses, across 100 meters lined in Tsuma Bay, Dogo Island, in the Oki Islands. The boathouses show good old landscapes of a fishing village to date.

Ushi-tsuki (Bull Sumo)

Oki's ushi-tsuki has continued for 800 years. Main sumo battles are conducted three times a year. In addition to this, "Ushi-tsuki for Tourists" are also held, and the battle is called a draw with no winner or loser.

Kuniga Coast

The coast is located on the northwest of the Nishinoshima Island, one of the Oki Islands. There are sheer cliffs created by sea waves. There is also a grassland with cattle and horses pastured.

P39-40

05

Daisen-Oki National Park

Daisen-Oki National Park -Relationship between People and Nature

Mountains, islands, and sea connected by myths that have developed the historical perspective of Japanese people

The Daisen-Oki National Park consists of a mountainous area with a chain of volcanoes, the Shimane Peninsula spreading on the Sea of Japan, and the Oki Islands. Myths, religions, and cultures were developed in the mountains, sea, and islands based on the land movement and the origins of Japan.

Mt. Sanbe

Mt. Daisen

Volcanic Terrains

The mountain areas of Mt. Daisen, Mt. Hiruzen and Mt. Sanbe, were created by volcanic activities. They offer diverse landscapes such as wild rock surface at the summit, hillside forests, grassland at the base of the mountains.

overwhelmed by its absolute wildness

Struck (by) feelings of awe by(from) its wildness

Mountain Worship

The area has served as a place for mountain worship, based on vegetation, including volcanic landscapes and beech forests. Serving as a place for worship has

contributed to the conservation of nature.

Respect for volcanoes and forests have preserved nature

Beech Forest

The largest natural beech forest in West Japan stretches about the area at elevations of 800-1,300 meters at Mt. Daisen.

is used as area resource

The landscape has been preserved by people's activities, such as grazing since ancient times at Mt. Sanbe.

Kunibiki Shinwa (Land Dragging Myth)

Once upon a time, a powerful god called Yatsuka-mizuomi-zu-no-mikoto, who governed the Izumo Province, came up with an idea to combine its land with another extra land across the sea in order to expand the area of its small Izumo Province. It is said that the god pulled the extra land with a rope from the Korean Peninsula, Oki Islands, and Hokuiku region while saying "Kuniko, Kuniko, (come here, land,)" resulting in the creation of the current Shimane Peninsula. It is also said that Mt. Daisen and Mt. Sanbe served as stakes to fix the rope, and the edges of the rope were Yumigahama Peninsula and Sono-no-Nagahama Beach.

Shimane Peninsula

Yumigahama Peninsula

Sono-no-Nagahama Beach

Vegetation (Agricultural Products)

The Izumo Plain is the largest rice-producing area in Shimane Prefecture with few plain areas. As the land is fertile, agricultural products, including vegetables, are abundantly produced in the area.

Offerings for Izumo Oyashiro (Izumo Grand Shrine) as Deity's food

Izumo Oyashiro (Izumo Grand Shrine)

It enshrines Okuninushi-no-Okami, a famous deity of relationship. The shrine has 72 shrine rituals held in a year and serves as a symbol of Izumo, a province of myths. In the Shimane Peninsula, there are many shrines and temples such as Miho Shrine and Hinomisaki Shrine, and they are closely related to people's lives.

Oki Islands

The islands turned to be separately isolated when sea level rose.

Island Ecosystem

The island has a unique ecosystem that the northern and southern plants live together. There are animals that are found only in the Oki Islands, such as oki salamanders.

Island Culture

People in the islands developed a method of farming called a stock farm, which effectively uses poor land with few flat areas. The method divides land into several areas to use in turn for producing cattle and horses, pasturing livestock to make soils regain nutrients, cultivating beans to recover the ground, cultivating emergency crops, and cultivating wheat as a staple food.

P41-42

06

Aso-Kuju National Park

Date of Designation: December 4, 1920

Area: 72,678 ha

Kumamoto and Oita Prefectures

Aso-Kuju National Park

Blessings of the volcano

There is a huge depression in the center of the Kyushu region. It is the Aso Caldera, one of the world's largest calderas, stretching 18 kilometers from east

to west and 25 kilometers from north to south. This terrain was created by a huge eruption, but there is no roughness in the current landscape. The area offers rather an idyllic landscape.

People have lived with this caldera from old times. They used grassland areas formed by volcanic ash soils with less nutrients for pasturing. Also, there is water springing up here and there. It is due to the best forest and grassland in the country which has been maintained to store rainwater over the years, and some of the volcanic ejecta have taken a role in storing groundwater. These mineral-rich waters slowly filtered by volcanic layers have been used as agricultural water as well as drinking water.

Inside and outside the Aso Caldera, people have received blessings of such volcano and lived in prosperity from generation to generation. They have maintained a good relationship with the volcano by regarding it as not only a threat but an existence that gives blessings. Visitors can feel such Japan's concept of nature in the area.

Aso Grassland

The area of grassland is about 22,000 ha. Nearly 16,000 ha (about 72 percent) of the area is a native grass field, and it is the largest grassland in Japan.

P43-44

06

Aso-Kuju National Park

Blessings from the world's largest caldera

About 270 thousand years ago, a huge eruption with pyroclastic flows had occurred in the central part of the Kyushu region. It is the moment that the world's largest caldera, Aso Caldera, was created. Since ever, eruptions have continued to occur once every ten thousand years. It is said that the pyroclastic flows covered the whole land of the Kyushu region and expanded beyond the sea and that wind-blown volcanic ashes covered almost all of the islands of Japan.

In contrast with such dynamic emergence, about 50 thousand people live in the Aso

Caldera. It is the only place where people have created a stable community inside the caldera.

There are plenty of rice paddies and agricultural lands in the plain areas of the northern and southern parts of the Aso Caldera. They are based on the water that originated from the volcano. There are a "cluster of springs in Minami-Aso district" and "Aso Shrine Monzenmachi water resources" where subsoil water springs and such water had been used as domestic water from old times. Aso's spring water is created as a result of gradual filtration of rainwater on the caldera by volcanic layers, and it turns to be pure water full of minerals. It takes about 50 years for such water to spring up from the earth.

Despite the non-presence of a big river, agriculture has thrived in this area. The reason is that people have worked to improve soils for a long period, by using spring water for irrigation, adding native grass growing on the grassland to the soil as compost, and scattering organisms from cattle and horses on the soil.

People's ingenuity and efforts made the volcano change from a disaster to a blessing.

Aso Daikanbo

It is the highest mountain in the north outer rim of the Aso area. Visitors can have a view of Aso Gogaku (five mountains of Mt. Aso) and the Kuju Mountains. Rice cultivation, suitable for the climate with a high-temperature difference, is conducted in the plain area of the caldera floor.

Shirakawa Headspring

Shirakawa headspring is one of the headsprings of "Shirakawa River," the first-class river flowing in Kumamoto City. Rainwater on the Aso Caldera and subsoil water flow into the area, springing 60 tons of water every minute.

Komezuka

A typical cone-shaped volcano formed about 3,000 years ago. Komezuka has a height of about 80 meters, and its depression at the summit is the trace of eruptions.

For the protection of the plants, people are not allowed to enter the area.

Aso Shrine Hiburi-shinji (Shinto Fire-Swinging Festival)

The shrine ritual is held in the middle of March to pray for abundant cereal crops. The ritual has a story that an agricultural god gets married to a goddess. When lighting a bunchy thatch on the edge of a rope and swinging it around, a fantastic scene is created with fire circles overlapped.

Activities performed to maintain Japan's largest grassland over 1,000 years

The most attractive thing around the Aso Caldera is an idyllic landscape with a broad grassland.

This beautiful grassland has been maintained by people, not naturally created.

It shows that people living in this area tried to make the maximum use of the grassland by various efforts, including securing composts and materials for thatched roofs, as well as pasturing cattle and horses since early times. Thanks to their efforts, unique insects and plants have thrived in the grassland, building a diverse and valuable ecosystem.

But, if people do nothing and leave the area, it will become a forest soon, and the grassland will disappear.

Under such circumstances, controlled burns began to be performed. They are conducted in several parts of the Aso area at the same time between February and March. The fire spreads over the area immediately, and many tourists come to experience such a dynamic landscape every year.

This field burning allows the grassland to be maintained, preventing it from being a forest. People's activities are part of nature in this area. The landscapes and ecosystem are worth being conserved even by burning fields.

It is not protection but conservation. The history that people and nature live

together contributed to the maintenance of this beautiful grassland landscape and abundant farming products, including Akaushi (Japanese brown cattle). The coexistence of Aso's grassland and people has been successful over 1,000 years.

Akaushi (Japanese Brown Cattle)

The cattle eat only grass in the vast grassland throughout the year. The grassland offers many benefits: growing healthy cattle as they can freely walk around the rugged land and saving labor time to deal with feces and urine.

P45-46

06

Aso-Kuju National Park

Aso-Kuju National Park -Relationship between People and Nature

Japan's largest grassland spreading across the caldera created by volcanic activities

A volcanic grassland zone is a treasure that people have preserved for more than 1,000 years. The area has been maintained by people's activities, including mowing grass and pasturing livestock, leading to the conservation of rare creatures at the same time. Visitors can enjoy the beautiful landscape in the area.

Volcanic Terrains

Volcanic activities formed the Aso Caldera, the world's largest caldera. A vast grassland was created at the same time. As volcanic layers were broadly formed, beautiful spring water can be found here and there.

Spring water, filtered on volcanic layers

Rainwater on this area becomes underground, and then it springs on the ground after filtered by layers of the earth, such as volcanic ashes. There is plenty of beautiful spring water here and there, and it has served as domestic water for people from early times, as well as food for animals and plants.

Grass Field

A vast grassland area was created by volcanic ash soils. As a result of it, there still remain rare species, including *viola orientalis*, *echinops setifer*, and *iris rossii baker*. People have maintained the grassland by burning fields and pasturing livestock.

A valuable ecosystem has been maintained

Grassland Ecosystem

The ecosystem includes larva of *shijimiaeoides divinus* (forage: *sophora flavescens*) and larve of *maculinea teleius* (forage: burnet) eating grassland plants for growing, insects eating the feces of pastured cattle such as *copris ochus*, and grassland birds.

Shijimiaeoides Divinus

Copris Ochus

Echinops Setifer

Grassland has been maintained by controlled burns and pasturing livestock

People's Activities

Although the grassland was originally created by volcanic activities, people have continued to maintain the area over 1,000 years. They have prevented the grassland from becoming a forest by mowing grass and pasturing livestock, as well as controlled burns.

Controlled Burn

Pasturing Akaushi (Japanese Brown Cattle)

P47-48

07

Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park

Date of Designation: March 16, 1934

Area: 36,624 ha (Land), 37,855 ha (Sea)

Miyazaki and Kagoshima Prefectures

Collaboration of land, sea, and people near an active volcano

The Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park has categorized into two areas; the Kirishima area and the Kinkowan Bay area. Both areas offer landscapes with different features, created by an active volcano.

In the Kirishima area, there is a chain of more than 20 big and small volcanic mountains. This area offers diverse and varied landscapes, including a Crater Lake, fumarolic activity, highlands, and hot springs. It is called the "Sampling Area of Volcanic Terrains." Kirishima Mountains are regarded as mysterious mountains with a mythological story "Tenson Korin (descent of the deity on the earth)" passed down through generations. Hot springs, including the Kirishima Onsen Village, are scattered at the base of mountains.

Kinkowan Bay area offers unique landscapes created by the sea and volcano, mainly by Mt. Sakurajima, where volcanic plumes are still rising. So, people's lives are very close to the volcano. Mt. Kaimon, located in the Satsuma Peninsula, is called "Satsuma Fuji" and serves as a landmark for people in the area. In the Osumi Peninsula across the sea, Cape Sata-misaki, the southernmost of the peninsula, serves as a habitat for plenty of subtropical plants. Visitors can feel full of the southern atmosphere.

The volcano that still repeats eruptions has brought not only "disasters" but also a creation of diverse hot springs and food culture, and abundant blessings to people's lives.

Mt. Sakurajima with volcanic plumes rising and Kinkowan Bay

A volcano is situated in the center of the park and can be viewed from anywhere in the park. It is still active with eruptions and ash falls, and visitors can feel the intense energy of the earth.

P49-50

07

Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park

Close distance of a volcano and people's lives, which is rare in the world

A symbol of Kagoshima is Mt. Sakurajima, situated around Kinkowan Bay, with volcanic plumes rising. The area is located just four kilometers away from the downtown of a prefectural capital (Kagoshima City) with a population of nearly 600 thousand people. In the Sakurajima, there is a volcano that has erupted repeatedly, and nearly 5,000 people still live. They have to pay attention to ash fall forecasts every day, and such a lifestyle is very rare in the world.

In the area, many people live their lives by agriculture, fishery, and tourism in coexistence with the volcano. Ash falls are a great enemy to farm products but sometimes create local specialty products. One of the products is a "Sakurajima Radish" that grows well in the volcanic ash land. The area's warm and wet climate is suitable for the production of fermented food. The Fukuyama district of Kirishima City, along Kinkowan Bay, offers the scenery of "Tsubo-batake (Pot field)" lined with pots to be used for fermenting and maturing to produce vinegar. Water filtered by mountains became a foundation of Shochu (Liquor) culture in the southern part of the Kyushu region, creating high-quality tea leaves.

The biggest blessing of the volcano is a hot spring springing in various parts of the area. There are Kirishima Onsen Village with diverse spring quality of hot spring water, Ibusuki Onsen offering the experience of "steam sand baths" based on the use of geothermal energy. Also, the hot springs visited by Saigo Takamori and Sakamoto Ryoma, great men who performed at the end of the Edo Period. Kirishima area is the birthplace of "family baths" that a few people can enjoy a private hot spring facility together. There are also villages that each family has a "Natural Steam Oven (Sume)" with the use of steam heat springing out of the ground.

A lifestyle close to the volcano is one of the main factors creating food and hot

spring culture unique to the Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park.

Steam Sand Baths

Ibusuki Onsen, located at the south end of the Satsuma Peninsula, is famous for "steam sand baths," where people lay down in the sand and feel the steam of hot springs on their skins. It is a Toji style that has begun more than 300 years ago in the Edo Period and is still continuing.

Downtown of Kagoshima City and Cherry Blossoms

Ash falls affect people's daily lives around the volcano. The area has taken unique measures against ash falls such as ash fall forecasts, and plastic bags for disposing of volcanic ashes.

Diverse landscapes of mountains and sea created by clusters of calderas

There are active volcanoes and huge clusters of calderas created by the past large-scale eruptions in the Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park. They were formed as a result of plate movements of sinking on the ocean floor at the eastern side of the Kyushu region. The area is lined with Kakuto Caldera, Kobayashi Caldera, Aira Caldera, and Ata Caldera, from south to north on the southern Kyushu region.

In Kinkowan Bay area, for example, there is Mt. Sakurajima in the southern part of Aira Caldera, and there is Ata Caldera in the southern side of Mt. Sakurajima. Aira Caldera is now an inner bay but a huge caldera sunk by eruptions of great volcanoes, forming Japan's largest caldera in the sea. Mt. Sakurajima used to be an "Island" as it is named. But, when a large-scale eruption occurred in 1914, volcanic lavas flowed over the area, finally connecting the island to the Osumi Peninsula. Saigo Takamori, who lived at the end of the Edo Period and the Meiji Era, had a different view of Mt. Sakurajima from what we see now.

Clusters of volcanoes in the Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park have transformed the appearance of the land many times. One of the attractions of this area is that visitors can see and feel the earth's dynamic activities on their skin while

thinking of a long, long history of the land.

Mt. Takachiho-no-mine

The second highest mountain among the Kirishima Mountains, and is located in the boundary between Miyazaki Prefecture and Kagoshima Prefecture. Its elevation is 1,574 meters. The photo shows the climbing route of Mt. Ohachi, an active volcano, in the western area. Mt. Shinmoe and Mt. Karakuni are behind the mountain.

Volcano Crater of Mt. Karakuni

It is the highest mountain of the Kirishima Mountains at an elevation of 1,700 meters. The diameter of the volcano crater is 900 meters at a depth of 300 meters. When the weather is fine, visitors can have a view of the Kinkowan Bay, Mt. Sakurajima, Mt. Kaimon, or other areas.

Cape Sata-misaki

It is located in the southernmost area of the Kyushu region. When the weather is fine, visitors can have a view of Yakushima Island and Tanegashima Island. There are many subtropical plants, including Chinese fan palm and cycad.

P51-52

07

Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park

Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park -Relationship between People and Nature

Creatures, and people's lifestyles,

that have continued to survive while adapted to active volcanic activities

The clusters of repeatedly erupting volcanoes formed the current characteristic landscape with the sea and mountains in the Kirishima area and Kinkowan Bay. Unique hot spring and food culture were also created during the time people have faced the existence of the active volcano with volcanic plumes still rising.

Warm Climate

It is not rare to have snow in mountainous areas. But, in plain areas, it is warm with a high average of temperatures throughout the year.

Subtropical forests grow in areas at low elevations

Vegetation (Kyushu Azaleas (Miyamakirishima))

Unique vegetation, which can endure the face of volcanic steam and high temperatures, was created in Kirishima mountain areas at high elevations. Kyushu azaleas that grow in clusters at the summit is a typical example.

Vegetation adapted to the environment that emits volcanic gases

Volcanic and Shirasu Plateau

There are clusters of volcanoes, including Mt. Sakurajima, with volcanic plumes still rising, and clusters of huge calderas. Ash falls and pyroclastic flows, produced by the past great eruptions accumulated on the ground, resulting in the creation of the Shirasu Plateau.

Using blessings of the volcano for people's lives

Producing farm products and fermented food suitable for a warm climate

Lifestyle of people who face the reality of living with volcanic activities

In various parts of the area, there are hot springs with an abundance of hot spring water and diverse spring quality. Blessings of the volcano, including a natural steam oven (sume), are utilized in people's lives. People have actively produced Sakurajima radishes that grow well in the volcanic ash soil, and fermented food that grow well in a warm climate.

Sakurajima Radish

Dolphins

P53-54

08

Keramashoto National Park

Date of Designation: March 5, 2014

Area: 3,520 ha (Land), 90,475 ha (Sea)

Okinawa Prefecture

Retreat in the "Kerama Blue World"

The Kerama Islands, located 30-40 kilometers west of Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture. The islands consist of 30 big and small islands and many rock reefs. The biggest attraction is a beautiful sea called "Kerama Blue." The sea shows different blue colors ranging from clear light blue to deep azure-blue and shines brightly with gradual changes in the blue colors. Such scenery is sure to attract visitors' attention.

The Kerama Blue Sea also serves as a cradle for creatures. Sea turtles freely swim with colorful fish near abundant coral reefs, and humpback whales come to the surrounding sea for breeding in winter and spring.

It is not only marine activities to make visitors enjoy in the Kerama Islands. If taking a step into the islands, visitors can experience a series of diverse landscapes from the sea to the land. They can spend slow-moving time on the island based on the folk culture nurtured by its long history. Visitors can think of who they really are in an unusual place. Such a stay can be realized only in the Kerama Blue world.

A view from the Takatsukiyama Observatory in the Zamami Island

Visitors can have a view of the Kerama Blue Sea spreading in front of them. A wide variety of fish inhabit Japan's foremost coral reef area, and humpback whales also migrate around the area.

P55-56

08

Keramashoto National Park

"Island Time" Inviting you to Retreatment

"Retreat" has an original meaning of "escape or evacuate." As derived from the meaning, the word is also used to represent that people have time separately from busy daily lives, reset their bodies and restart their lives in a positive way. Relaxing time with dramatic and beautiful landscapes in the Kerama Islands attract people to visit for retreatment.

Tokashiki Island, Zamami Island, Aka Island, and Geruma Island respectively have an attractive observation deck where visitors can have a dynamic and attractive ocean view of the Kerama Islands, full of islands. A sunset view from an overlook area is too beautiful to be unaware of the passing of time. Visitors can refresh their minds and bodies only by sitting on the sandy beaches such as Aharen Beach (Tokashiki Island) and Furuzamami Beach (Zamami Island), seeing the Kerama Blue Sea, and enjoying a few minutes of the evening sea and sky with changing appearance.

In Okinawa, people have a habit of gathering family members and friends in the shade of trees, and feeling the evening breeze while enjoying a chat, called "Yuntaku." There are many options about how to stay in the area: walking around the village in the evening of a hot day, joining Yuntaku to have a relaxing island time, lying down on the beach at night, and feeling the starry sky while hearing the sounds of waves. The area is accessed easily from Okinawa's main island (Tomari Port, Naha City) and is another world that can be easily approached.

Takara Residence

Known as the captain's house (Sendosuya) and located in the Geruma Island. It has been placed on the list of the National Important Cultural Property sites, as a building that remains the original style of Okinawa's private houses.

Nishibama Terrace

A three-story observation deck, located in the Nishibama Beach, Aka Island. The first floor is painted with Ryukyu limestones. There are wooden counters and tables

on the second floor and an observation deck on the third floor.

Furuzamami Beach

It is a shallow curved white sandy beach at a length of nearly 1 kilometer, located in the Zamami Island. The area is relatively deep, and so visitors can see fish gathered on the coral reefs near the water's edge.

Aharen Beach

A beach located in the southwestern area of Tokashiki Island. Bathrooms and shower rooms are fully prepared, and visitors can rent parasols and a set of snorkeling equipment.

Sea with coral reefs full of creatures

The sea of the Kerama Islands was registered as a wetland under the Ramsar Convention. The sea is clearest in the world, and many kinds of sea creatures, including fish and corals, inhabit the sea.

During diving and snorkeling, visitors are most likely to encounter sea turtles among all sea creatures. Green turtles and hawksbill turtles live in the Kerama Sea and visitors, can see sea turtles swimming underwater while seated on the kayak or standing on SUP (stand up paddleboard).

At the end of December and the beginning of April each year, visitors are also highly likely to encounter humpback whales coming to the Kerama Sea for breeding. The whale watching that observes dynamic movements of humpback whales on a boat is the main attractive activity in winter. If lucky, visitors may watch humpback whales raising their babies.

The notable thing is that operators of the marine activities work on their businesses with a primary focus on the conservation of creatures. Operators, for example, making efforts to conserve the marine environment by voluntarily conserving corals, performing monitoring surveys, and cleaning up in the sea, in collaboration with local people. The Kerama Blue Sea, full of diverse creatures,

has been maintained by such community-based conservation activities.

Highly transparent sea

In the Kerama Islands, seawater is very clear with a wide variety of fish. Visitors can encounter colorful fish such as damselfishes and butterflyfishes during snorkeling.

Whale Watching

Visitors can see mother and baby whales, as well as male whales, moving dynamically. They see whales from a distant area, not to surprise the mother and baby whales in Kerama.

Green Turtles

Visitors have the highest possibility of encountering sea turtles in the sea of the Kerama Islands. The sea turtles come to eat seaweeds and algae in the shallow waters, and it is a great chance to see them.

Coral Reefs

Two hundred forty-eight types of coral reefs have been discovered in the park. In the islands of Japan, there are several types of corals which form coral reefs, and almost 62 percent of such type of corals live in a park.

P58-59

08

Keramashoto National Park

Keramashoto National Park -Relationship between People and Nature

People living with the abundant sea, created by a subtropical marine climate and submerged coast

The Kerama Islands, surrounded by the world's clearest beautiful sea, were created by tectonic deformations, forming a wide variety of landscapes. The ocean area

serves as a habitat for sixty percent of Japan's coral reefs, and the marine ecosystem has been fully developed.

Subtropical Marine Climate

Although it is warm throughout the year as affected by the warm Japan Current, tall plants are unable to survive because of typhoons and monsoons, and so only small plants live in the area.

The climate is warm throughout the year, and typhoons come in summer.

People's Activities

People's lives have been closely related to the sea from early times, and they have received many benefits, including marine products. There are a lot of shrine rituals that represent the connection between people and the sea.

Marine Products

Coral Stone Walls

Creating an island ecosystem

Creatures living on the island

There are rare creatures, including Kerama deer (subspecies of the Japanese sika deer with small bodies) and *goniuosaurus kuroiwae orientalis*.

Submerged Coast

The coast used to be mountains connected to the north part of Okinawa's main island, but the area was transformed by tectonic rising and sinking, forming the current islands. The transformation is considered to have created diverse landscapes, including complex coastal terrains.

There are a few rivers and farmlands, and so dirt containing organisms is difficult to flow in.

Increasing ocean temperatures

Warm and highly transparent sea

Transparency is maintained by the Japan Current with less nutrients and a small

amount of plankton.

Creating a marine ecosystem

Rich Coral Reefs

Warm, clear, and shallow sea is suitable for the growth of corals, and it allows the corals to spread densely across the area like a table or branch.

Creating a white coral sandy beach

Serving as a habitat for sea creatures

Sea Creatures

Coral reefs with a three-dimensional appearance serve as a habitat for fish and many other sea creatures. Humpback whales stay in the warm sea for the breeding season, and sea turtles lay eggs on the sandy beach created by melted calcareous materials of corals.

Sea Turtles

Corals

Humpback Whales

Utilizing as tourism resources

Tourism Resources

Visitors can enjoy beautiful landscapes and many activities, including snorkeling, scuba diving, and whale watching.

Conserving tourism resources