

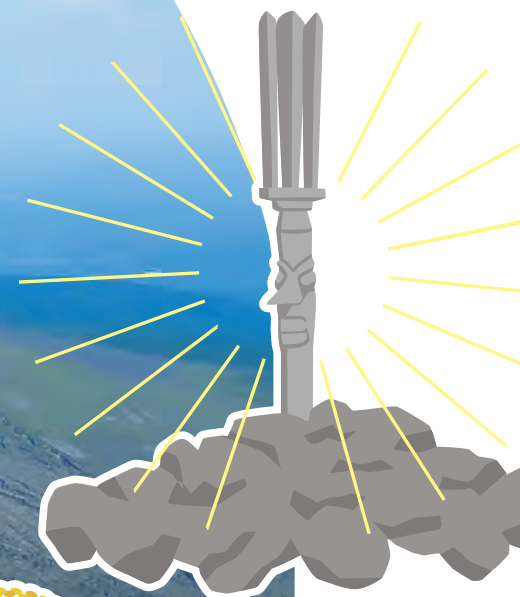


# A Storybook of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park



Kirishima Area

~ A narrative to be shared with the local community  
to enhance Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park's  
remarkable beauty and appeal ~



Ministry of Environment Regional Environment Office in Kyushu  
Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park Office

08.2025

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# About This Book

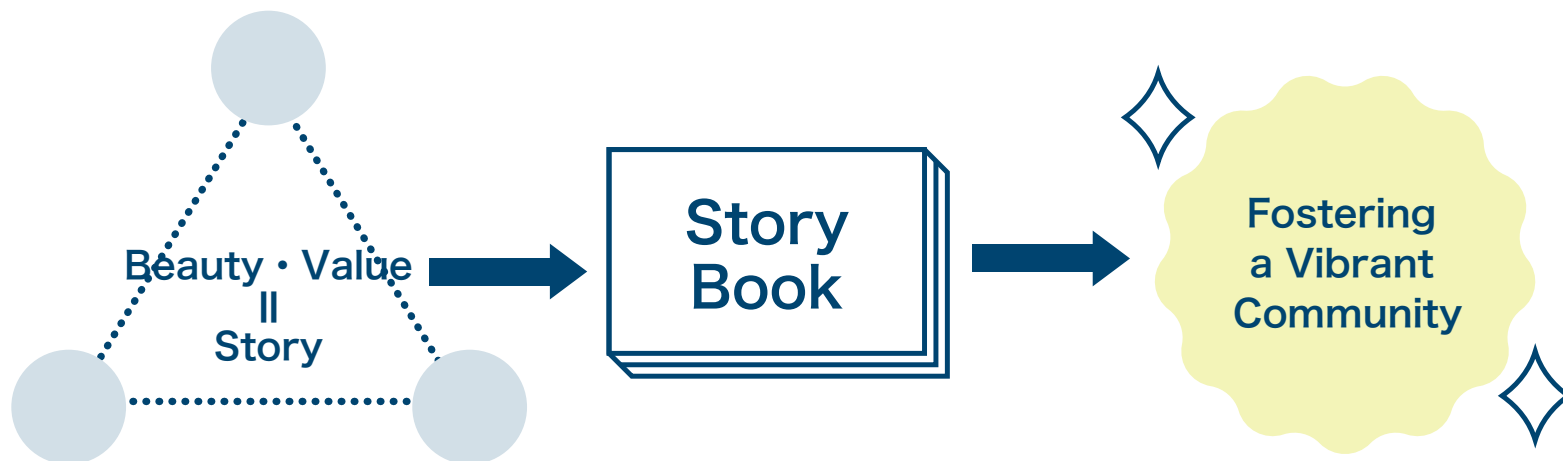
P02

As of March 2025, there are 35 national parks across Japan. These parks represent the country's most iconic landscapes and are designated to protect and utilize outstanding natural scenery that Japan can proudly showcase on a global scale. National parks worldwide are cherished and frequently visited, making them highly appealing destinations for international visitors to Japan.

Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park is one of Japan's first national parks. In addition to its breathtaking scenery, the park's rich appeal is shaped by the stories of its formation, including the culture and history nurtured by the diverse flora, fauna, and natural environment that flourish there. The brand value of national parks is enhanced when the scenic spots, history, and culture scattered throughout the park are interconnected as a cohesive story.

The conservation and management of national parks require collaboration with diverse stakeholders from local communities, each with unique perspectives. We created this storybook to share our journey with you and invite you to contribute your own unique perspectives and experiences.

We hope this storybook helps you discover and appreciate the unique beauty and significance of the Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park, serving as a gateway to understanding its remarkable heritage.



# Sharing the National Park Story with Local Community

Through the collective efforts of stakeholders sharing the National Park story, we expect that Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park's unique appeal and value will be acknowledged internationally and domestically, creating a lively and thriving Area.

Here, we offer examples of how to communicate the story effectively. We hope you find these useful and will join us in spreading the National Park story across the community.

## To All the Tour Guides and Interpreters



We hope this storybook will be utilized to offer visitors unique experiences that align with the story of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park. Additionally, we encourage efforts to communicate the value of these regional resources to support their preservation.

### Example

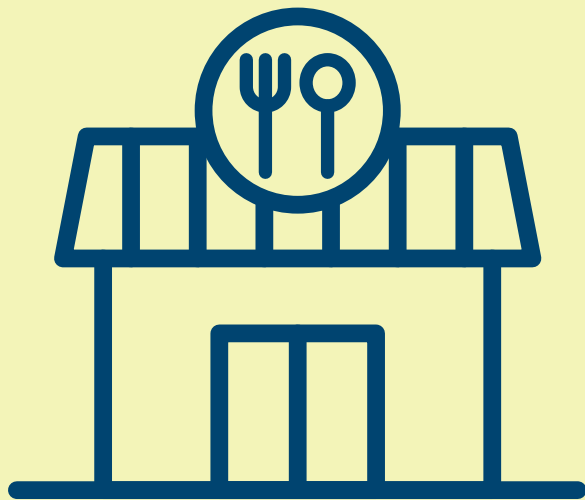
- Incorporate the "story" into guided narratives, exhibits, brochures, websites, and other materials.
- Use "The Experience We Want Visitors to Have" as a reference when designing the tour.

### Expected Outcomes

When visitors engage with the Area's unique story, their tours and activities become more meaningful and personal. This deeper connection helps them appreciate the area's distinct beauty and value, often transforming them into loyal enthusiasts who return again and again.



## To All Restaurants



Use the story as a tool when offering visitors the unique local cuisine nurtured by Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park.

### Example

- Incorporate the "story" into the products and menu.
- Incorporate the "story" when the employee explains/introduces the ingredients to restaurants.

### Expected Outcomes

By offering locally grown ingredients and dishes along with their stories, it meets the visitors' desire to taste something unique to the area, while also enhancing their satisfaction by allowing them to experience the local food culture developed over time.

## To all Accommodation Operators



Use the story as a tool to convey the charm and stories of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park to visitors.

### Example

- Incorporate the "story" in the menu for meals, brochures, and decorations.
- Incorporate the "Showcase Places and Activities to Discover" as a reference when guiding visitors on sightseeing courses at the front desk or similar locations.

### Expected Outcomes

By experiencing local food culture, visitors not only enjoy greater satisfaction but also discover a deeper connection to the Area's heritage. When accommodations showcase these culinary traditions, they become gateways for guests to immerse themselves in local culture, creating a more meaningful and enriching travel experience.

## To all the Souvenir Shop Staff



Use the story as a tool to develop the products that allow visitors to take home the story of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park.

### Example

- Incorporate the "story" when developing products or designing packaging.
- Incorporate the "story" into conversations with customers.

### Expected Outcomes

When visitors purchase souvenirs and local specialties linked to the story, they are prompted to recall their experiences in the Area. This could lead to continued purchases through online services, mail order, or other means. Additionally, those who receive the souvenirs may become new visitors themselves.

## To All the Transportation Operators



Use the story as a tool to share the beauty and story of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park with visitors.

### Example

- Incorporate the "story" into the announcements on board planes, cars/buses, and ships.
- Use the "story" as a tool when creating brochures and other materials.

### Expected Outcomes

As visitors discover the Area's story throughout their journey, they develop a deeper appreciation for the area. These meaningful encounters create lasting memories that visitors can reflect upon and cherish long after returning home.

## To All School Staff



Use the story as a tool to help the local children and students rediscover the beauty and value of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park.

### Example

- Use the "story" as teaching material during integrated activities or inquiry-based learning sessions.
- Use "Showcase Places and Activities to Discover" as a tool when choosing field trip destinations.

### Expected Outcomes

It is expected that by learning the Area's story, children and students who will shape its future will develop a stronger sense of attachment and pride in their community.



## To All the Government Employees



Use the story as a tool to promote Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park in various ways, both within the Area and beyond.

### Example

- Use the "story" when introducing the value and beauty of the Area
- Use the "story" when creating policies for resource conservation.

### Expected Outcomes

It is expected that not only will the beauty and value of the Area be understood by people inside and outside the area, but the story will also serve as a guideline for the conservation and utilization of each resource.

# KIRISHIMA-KINKOWAN NATIONAL PARK

## What is the Purpose of National Parks?

Our purpose is to preserve Japan's natural landscapes while promoting their use, contributing to the public's health, recreation, and education, as well as supporting biodiversity conservation.

The Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park is divided into the Kirishima, Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay, Ibusuki, and Sata Areas.

The Kirishima Area features a spectacular volcanic landscape formed by more than 20 volcanoes of varying sizes. This dramatic terrain showcases nature's power through its diverse features - from crater lakes and steaming fumaroles to vast plateaus and therapeutic hot springs. The Kirishima Mountain Range holds deep cultural significance as a sacred site, which is legendary in Japanese mythology as the place where the sun goddess Amaterasu's grandson (Ninigi no Mikoto) descended to Earth. There are high-quality hot springs scattered throughout the foothills, with Kirishima Onsen Area being a notable hub of these natural thermal waters. In the Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area, the active volcano Sakurajima dominates the landscape, creating a remarkable setting where the sea meets volcanic terrain. Local communities have adapted to life in close proximity to this active volcano, creating a unique coexistence between nature and human settlement. Heading south, you'll find two notable features: Mt. Kaimon, located in Ibusuki Area, nicknamed 'Satsuma Fuji,' rises as a landmark on the Satsuma Peninsula, while Sata Area includes Cape Sata on the Ōsumi Peninsula, marks mainland Japan's southernmost point, its subtropical plants creating a tropical feel.

Volcanoes that continue to erupt not only bring "disasters" but also nurture a variety of hot springs and food culture, providing countless blessings to people's lives.

Land, sea, and people  
coexisting with active volcanoes

Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park  
Designation: 03.16.1934

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

Extend Across Kagoshima and Miyazaki Prefecture



Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park features active volcanoes and enormous caldera formations created by large-scale eruptions in the past. These dramatic geological features emerged from tectonic plate activity, where one plate slides beneath eastern Kyushu. A remarkable chain of calderas—the Kakuto, Kobayashi, Aira, and Ata—stretches in a north-south alignment across southern Kyushu, telling the story of the Area's volcanic history.

The Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area showcases remarkable volcanic features, with the Sakurajima volcano rising from the southern edge of the Aira Caldera, while the Ata Caldera lies further south. The Aira Caldera, now a scenic inland bay, was formed by an enormous volcanic eruption and subsequent collapse. This maritime caldera stands as one of Japan's most spectacular geological formations, where land meets the sea in a dramatic fashion. As its name suggests, Sakurajima (the jima of Sakurajima means “island”) was once an island. Although once separate, a lava flow from the 1914 Taisho eruption has attached it to the Osumi Peninsula, making it part of the mainland. ※Saigo Takamori, who lived during the late Edo and Meiji periods, would have viewed a different landscape of Sakurajima than the one we see today.

The volcanic landscape of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park is constantly evolving, offering visitors a rare glimpse of Earth's raw power in action. Here, you can not only contemplate our planet's ancient geological history but also witness and experience these dynamic natural forces firsthand—a unique feature that makes this Area truly extraordinary.

※Saigo Takamori : A Japanese samurai, politician, and military leader during the late Edo and early Meiji periods. Born in the Satsuma domain (now Kagoshima Prefecture). He is still widely respected in Japan as a hero due to his loyalty, integrity, and commitment to his principles.

Sakurajima and Kinkowan Bay



The diverse landscapes of mountains and seas created by the caldera clusters

Eruption of Mt. Shinmoedake



Cape Sata





Sakurajima, Kagoshima's iconic active volcano, looms over Kinkowan Bay, just 4 kilometers from downtown Kagoshima city, home to 600,000 people. Despite its frequent eruptions, 3,500 residents live on the volcano. The ever-present volcanic risks significantly influence their daily lives. Residents regularly check ashfall forecasts and stay alert for potential eruptions, with weather reports often including wind direction to help them prepare. This adaptation to living alongside an active volcano stands as one of the most striking examples of human resilience and coexistence with nature.

Local residents have built their livelihoods around the volcano, harnessing its benefits for farming, fishing, and tourism while respecting its powerful presence. While ashfall is a major threat to agricultural products, it sometimes gives birth to unique local products. The "Sakurajima Daikon," which thrives in volcanic ash soil, is a prime example. The warm and humid climate is ideal for producing fermented foods; in Fukuyama, Kirishima city (outside of the national park), a landscape of rows of jars used for fermenting and aging black vinegar stretches out, creating the scene of a "tsubo-batake (jar field)." Additionally, the water filtered by the mountains supports the shochu culture of southern Kyushu and produces high-quality tea leaves.

One of the greatest gifts of the volcanoes is the hot springs that emerge throughout the Area. In addition to the diverse hot springs with various types of mineral water in the Kirishima Onsen area and Ibusuki Onsen, where visitors can experience the geothermal "sand baths," there are also hot springs where historical figures such as Saigo Takamori and 〰Sakamoto Ryoma once enjoyed bathing during the Bakumatsu period. Additionally, Kirishima is the birthplace of the hot spring culture known as "family baths," where small groups can enjoy private hot spring facilities. Furthermore, there are villages where each household is equipped with a "natural steam stove (sume)," utilizing heat from the earth.

Living close to the volcano is one of the key factors shaping the unique food and hot spring cultures of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park.

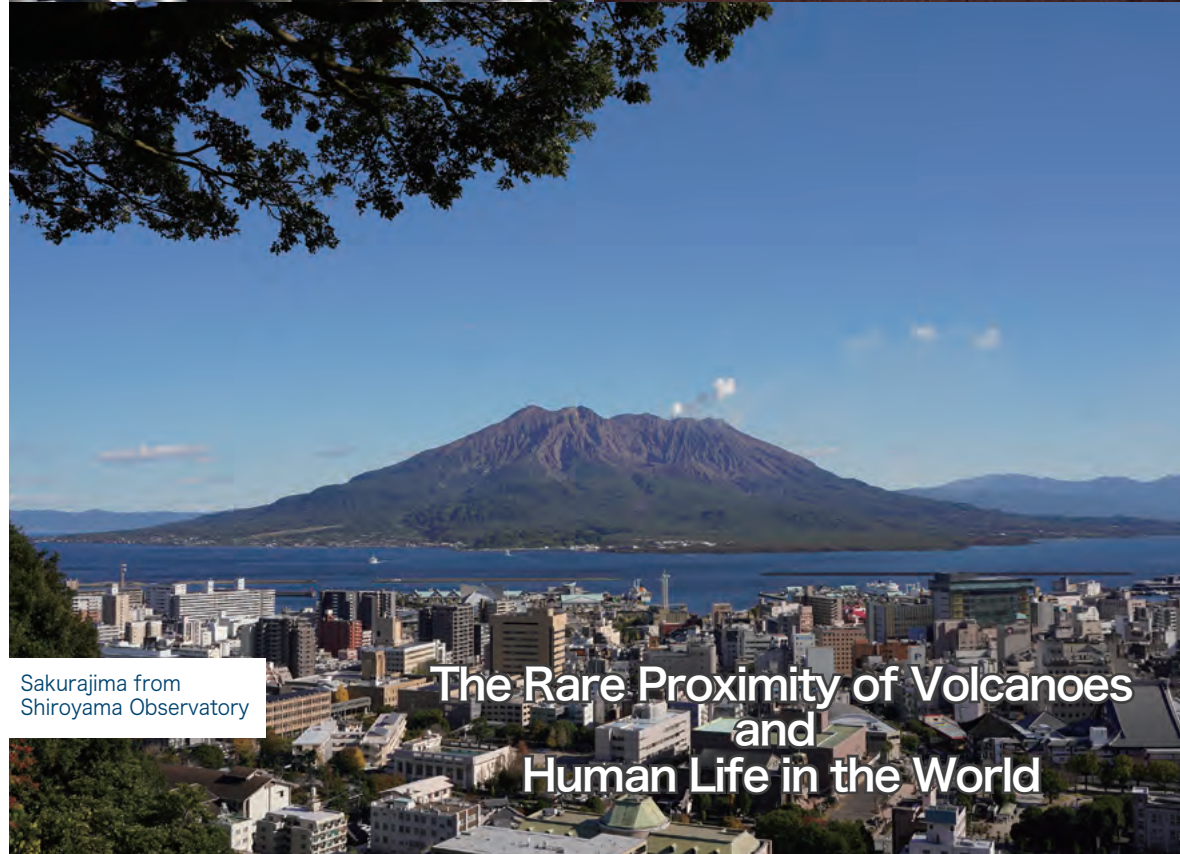


Black Vinegar Jar Field



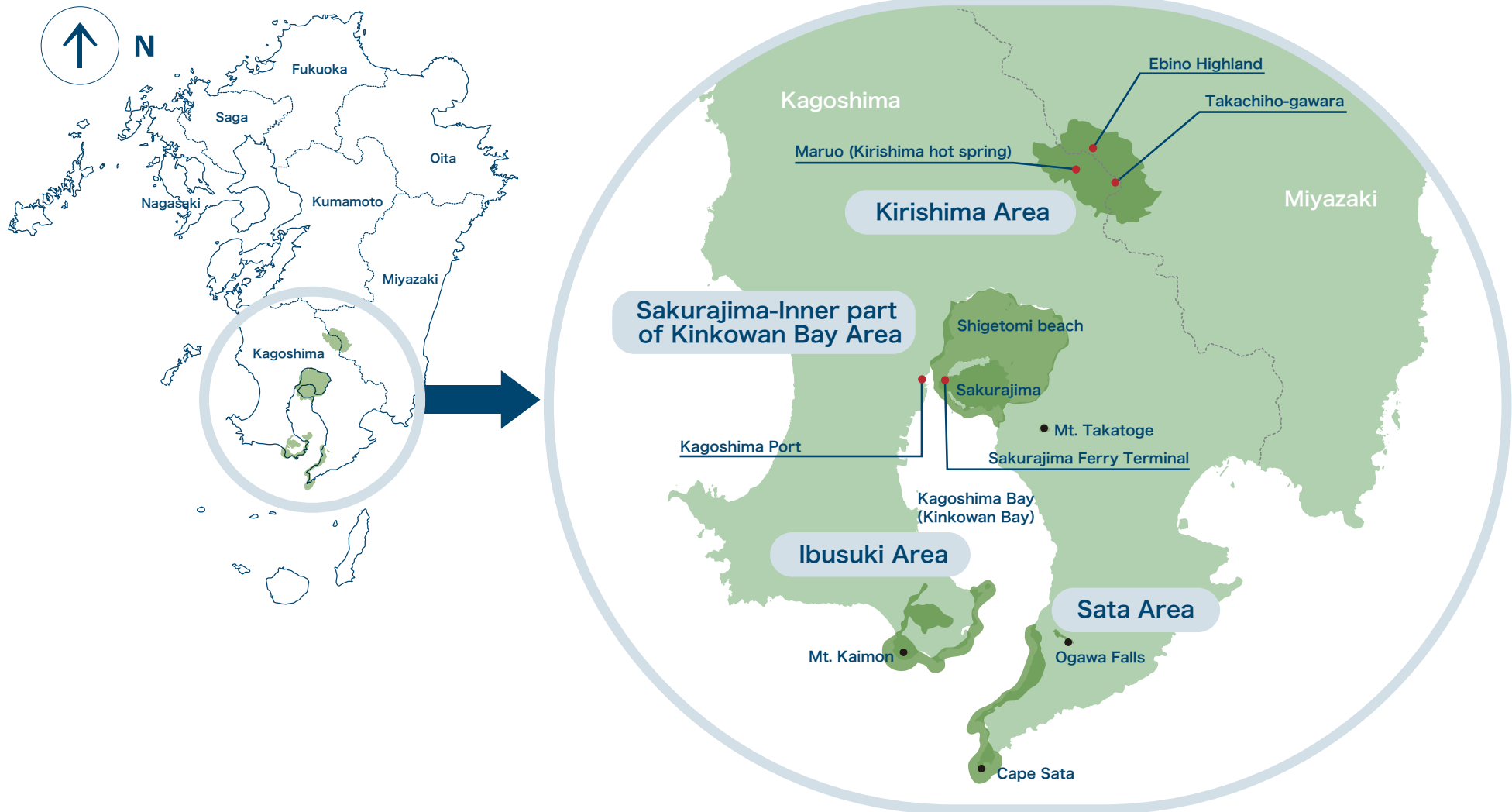
Ibusuki Steam Sand Bath

© K.P.V.B



Sakurajima from  
Shiroyama Observatory

**The Rare Proximity of Volcanoes  
and  
Human Life in the World**

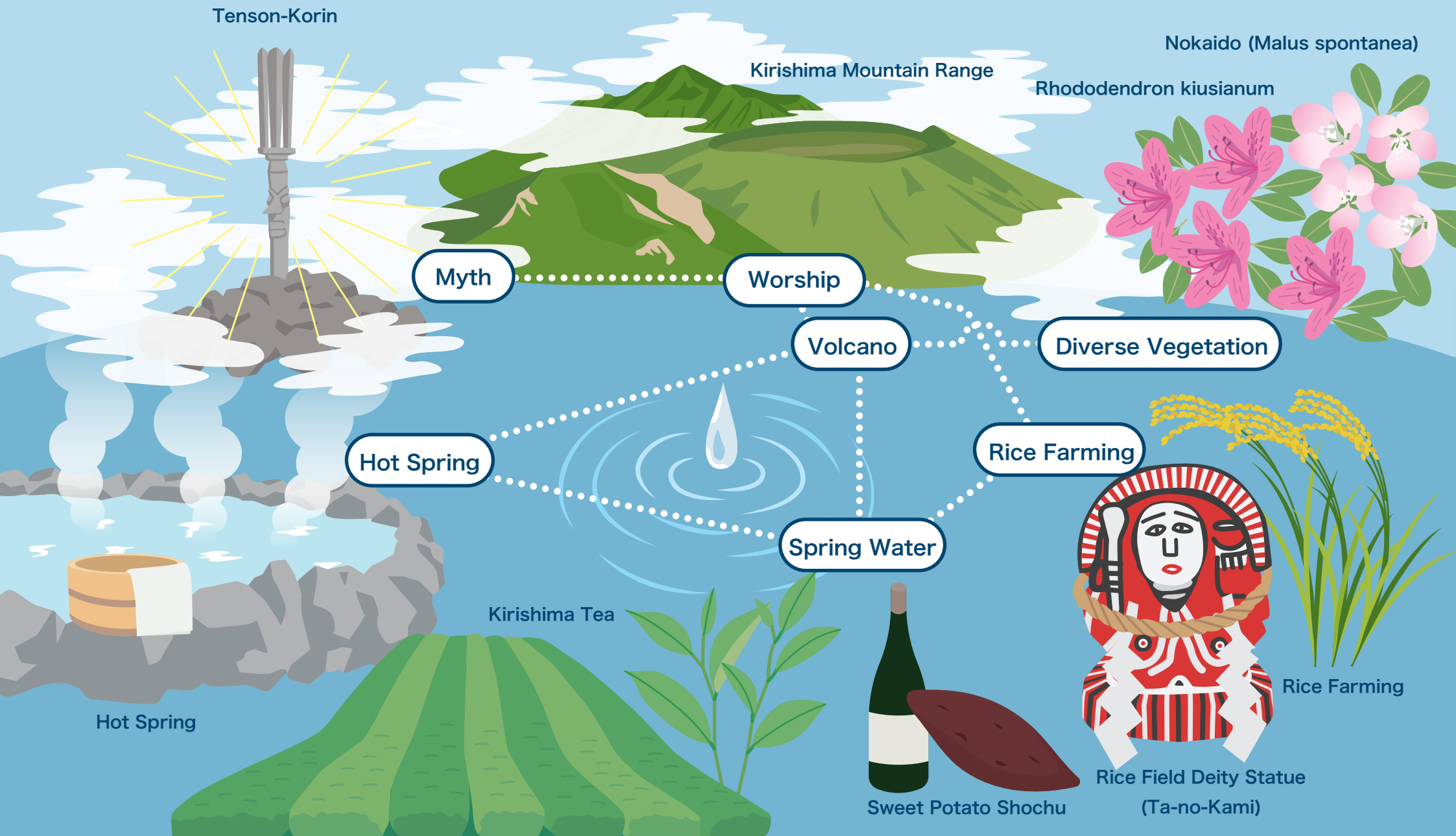




# Map of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park

## -Kirishima Area Detailed Map-







Tenson-korin-Gojinkasai  
(Tenson-Korin Fire Festival I)

A distinctive relationship that captures the Area's essential character

The awe and reverence for volcanoes fostered spiritual beliefs that helped preserve Japan's abundant nature and breathtaking landscapes. These beliefs later laid the foundation for the country's first national park

#### Essential Resources of the Area

※1

Tenson-Korin

Kagura

Mountain Worship Practice

※2

Kirishima-Rokusya-gogen

One of Japan's First National Parks

※1 : Japanese Mythology: The Descent of The Heavenly Grandson

※2 : Six Shrines located along the border between Miyazaki and Kagoshima Prefecture

Amanosakahoko  
A spear that appears in  
Japanese medieval



Sano Kagura

Photo by Miyazaki Prefecture  
Tourism Association



## Kirishima Area Story ①

The Kirishima Area, part of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park, stands as one of Japan's pioneering national parks, which was established in 1934. This volcanic landscape features about 20 diverse volcanoes spanning different geological ages, from ancient to actively erupting peaks. The dramatic scenery commands spectacular views encompassing Sakurajima volcano, Kinkowan Bay, Mt. Kaimon, and as far as Yakushima Island, earning the park international recognition for its natural beauty.

While feared for its eruptions, Kirishima Mountain Range has also been regarded as a source of blessings. It has been worshiped as a sacred site, as the legendary setting for Tenson-Korin, a myth passed down in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, and a place for mountain self-disciplined training.

High Priest Shōkū, who practiced ascetic training in the Kirishima mountains and systematized the Kirishima mountain faith, established the temple-shrines known as Kirishima Rokusha Gongen, including Kirishima Jingu Shrine and Kirishima Higashi Shrine. Kirishima Jingu Shrine enshrines Ninigi-no-Mikoto (Grandson of Amaterasu, The God Who Brings Abundant Prosperity to Heaven and Earth), who, according to the Divine Descent myth, landed on Mt. Takachihonomine. Ninigi-no-Mikoto was the grandson of Amaterasu Ōmikami (the Sun Goddess and ancestral deity of the Imperial Family) and the great-grandfather of Emperor Jimmu, who is considered Japan's first emperor.

The shrine is said to have originated with a shrine building constructed around the 6th century between Mt. Takachihonomine and the Ohachi Crater. After being destroyed by volcanic eruptions, it was rebuilt near Takachiho-gawara but again destroyed by eruptions before being relocated to its current location. Despite repeated destruction by eruptions, the norito (words chanted to God in Shinto rituals) at Kirishima Jingu Shrine include requests to 'keep volcanic eruptions as small as possible' but never pray for 'eruptions to stop completely.' This, too, symbolizes people's reverence for the volcano.

Additionally, gratitude towards the deities who bestow natural blessings upon

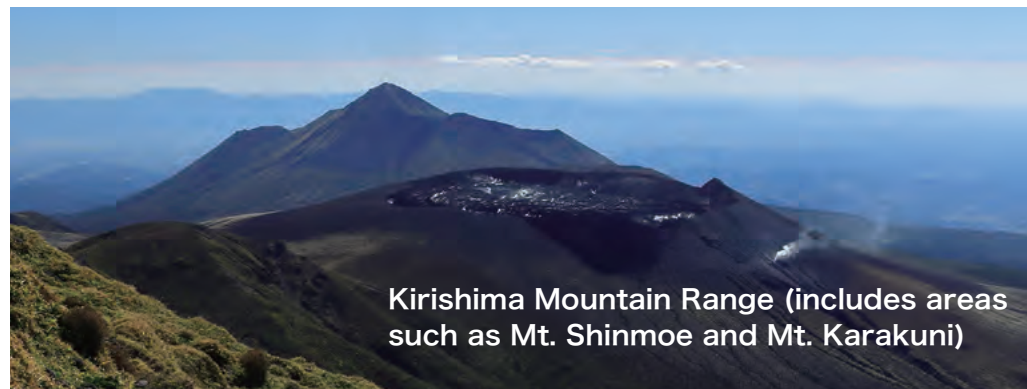
people is believed to be connected to spiritual beliefs. While rice cultivation rituals are performed throughout Japan, according to mythology, Ninigi-no-Mikoto is said to have first cultivated rice. Near Kirishima Jingu Shrine, there is Sanada no Osada, which is considered Japan's oldest rice paddy.

These myths and traditional beliefs have brought festivals and cultural practices such as the Tenson-korin Gojinkasai (Festival of the Descent of the God of Grandson), Sano Kagura, and Haraikawa Kagura to the Area.

There is also storytelling at sites such as Miike Lake and Sano Shrine, one of the Six Shrines Gongen, that recounts the birth and childhood of Emperor Jinmu (the first emperor of Japan).

The entire Kirishima Mountain Range has maintained its rich natural environment as a sacred place connecting the divine and human worlds and has been used as a site for Shugendō (mountain ascetic practice). Today, this rich natural environment is protected as a national park, continuing to provide benefits to people.

※Kirishima Mountain Range : a general term used to refer to the volcanic group in the Kirishima Area.



Kirishima Mountain Range (includes areas such as Mt. Shinmoe and Mt. Karakuni)

## Kirishima Area Recommended Places and Experiences to Truly Feel the Story ①

### The Experience We Want Visitors to Have

What visitors are invited to discover and experience through activities and encounters at the destination

- Encourage visitors to take in the magnificent volcanic landscape and reflect on the time when this area was first designated as one of Japan's national parks. → ①
- Encourage visitors to visit the former site of Kirishima Jingu Shrine, which tells a compelling story of persistent faith. The shrine was repeatedly relocated due to volcanic eruptions while maintaining its sacred status through generations. → ②
- Encourage visitors to experience the living heritage of this sacred land by visiting sites connected to the Tenson-Korin, watching traditional Kagura dances, and participating in local festivals - all of the area's rich mythological and spiritual traditions. → ③
- Encourage visitors to visit the several sacred shrines of Kirishima Rokusha Gongen and take a moment to envision the mountain ascetics who once practiced their spiritual disciplines among these ancient forests. → ④



## Kirishima Area Recommended Places and Experiences to Truly Feel the Story ①

### Showcase Places and Activities to Discover

1

#### Enjoy the view from the observatory



Visitors can enjoy views of Mt. Karakuni, Koshikidake, Byakushi Pond, and Rokukannon from the observation decks of Mt Shiratori and Ebino Highland. Kinkowan Bay and Sakurajima can be seen in the distance from the Mt. Karakuni summit.

2

#### Visit Takachiho-gawara



Visitors can get a close-up view of Ohachi Crater and Mt. Nakadake at the site of the old Kirishima Jingu Shrine (the former shrine location). This location also serves as the sacred ground for the Tenson-korin Gojinkasai (Festival of God of Ground Sun Descends to Earth)

## Kirishima Area Recommended Places and Experiences to Truly Feel the Story ①

3

### Visit Sanada no Osada: The Oldest Paddy Field in Japan



Visitors can visit the site, which is believed to be the rice field where Ninigi no Mikoto first cultivated rice. In June, the Otaue Festival (Rice Planting Festival) of Kirishima Jingu Shrine is held here.

4

### Visit Rokusya gongen



Visitors can visit the serene temple grounds of Kirishima Jingu Shrine, Kirishima Higashi Shrine, Sano Shrine, Higashi Kirishima Jingu Shrine, and Kirishima Mine Shrine, all set against Kirishima Mountain Range.





A distinctive relationship that captures the Area's essential character

The abundant water that falls on and is  
filtered by Kirishima Mountain Range  
nourishes the Area's agriculture and culture

#### Essential Resources of the Area

Spring Water

Kirishima Tea

※ Rice Field Deity Statue

Hot Springs

Sweet Potatoes

Sweet Potatoe Shochu

Rice Farming

※ Also called Ta-no-Kami. It is believed among Japanese farmers to bring a good harvest

Left: Rice field deity statue  
Middle: Tea farm (Kirishima tea)  
Right: Kirishima hot spring





## Kirishima Area Story ②

Kirishima Mountain Range is said to be named after how it appears from a distance - like an island floating in the mist. The area frequently experiences dense fog and is one of Japan's Areas with particularly high rainfall. Especially in summer, moist winds from the Pacific Ocean and East China Sea blow against the Kirishima Mountain Range, bringing heavy rain to its mountainous areas. Most of this water becomes groundwater, emerging as abundant springs in the surrounding foothills." or shorter that still has the entire message " "Kirishima Mountain Range, named for appearing like an island in mist, experiences frequent fog and heavy rainfall. Summer winds from surrounding seas bring substantial precipitation, which filters through the ground to feed numerous springs in the foothills.

When underground water is heated by magma or steam and rises to the surface, it forms hot springs. The area around Kirishima Mountain Range and its surroundings are scattered throughout hot spring resorts. The mineral content of the hot springs varies depending on the location where the water emerges, making the Area beloved for its diverse and abundant spring qualities.

The Shirasu layer and volcanic ash soil, formed by ejecta from Kirishima and its surrounding volcanoes, filter the rain that falls on Kirishima Mountain Range over many years. This process enriches the groundwater with a high concentration of silica, also known as silicon dioxide. Mineral-rich natural water is widely used for drinking and other purposes. In addition, it is said that over 90% of the domestic water in the Kirishima Area comes from spring water or groundwater. This abundant water is also used in agriculture, livestock farming, and freshwater fish farming, supporting the local community.

The Shirasu plateau covering the Area provides ideal conditions for sweet potato farming. Combined with abundant natural spring water, this enables sweet potato shochu production. Additionally, the area's temperature variations due to elevation differences, high humidity, moderate sunlight filtered by fog, nutrient-poor soil, and spring water create perfect conditions for producing products like Kirishima tea.

On the northern side of Kirishima Mountain Range, rice farming flourishes. The abundant water from Kirishima Mountain Range and the temperature variation between day and night created by the basin formed by the Kakuto and Kobayashi calderas provide ideal conditions for rice cultivation.

Volcanic rocks are used to construct stone storage buildings, stone bridges, and Ta-no-Kami (rice field deity statues), playing a key role in supporting the local way of life and culture. The Ta-no-kami, especially those created to pray for a bountiful harvest, symbolize the deep connection between Kirishima Mountain Range and rice farming.



The abundant spring water  
flowing from Kirishima  
Mountain Range

## The Experience We Want Visitors to Have

What visitors are invited to discover and experience  
through activities and encounters at the destination

- Encourage visitors to experience the abundant spring water emerging from the foothills of Kirishima Mountain Range—see it, drink it, and feel how the water nourishes and enriches the Area. → ❶
- Encourage visitors to soak in the hot springs and feel the benefits of the volcano on their skin. → ❷
- Encourage visitors to enjoy the local sweet potato shochu, tea, and rice and experience the gifts from the volcano and the Area's climate. → ❸
- Encourage visitors to visit the Ta-no-Kami standing beside the rice paddies and feel the deep, long-standing connection between Kirishima Mountain Range and rice cultivation. → ❹



## Showcase Places and Activities to Discover

1

## Explore Spring Water Locations



Kirishima Mountain Range Foothill Spring Water Pond  
(Yusui-cho)

Visitors can explore spring water locations to experience the abundant natural waters that nourish the Area.

2

## Relax in an Onsen



© K. P. V. B

Visitors can enjoy different spring qualities depending on the water source at public bathhouses and lodging facilities.

3

### Enjoy Local Tea, Shochu, and Rice



Visitors can tour sake breweries to learn about shochu-making, while roadside stations and souvenir shops sell local tea and rice.

4

### Visit Ta-no-Kami



Visitors can explore the rice fields at the foothills of Kirishima Mountain Range, where they can find scattered Tanokami statues. Observe the varied expressions of each statue.





Rhododendron kiusianum

©K. P. V. B

A distinctive relationship that captures the Area's essential character

The diverse environments created by Kirishima Mountain Range's volcanic activity nurture rich flora and fauna

#### Essential Resources of the Area

Diverse Vegetation  
Due to Large Elevation Differences

Nokaido (*Malus spontanea*)

Rhododendron kiusianum

Corylopsis glabrescens

The Call of a Male Deer

Monotropastrum kirishimense

Plant Development Over Time

Left: Rhododendron kiusianum  
Middle: Corylopsis glabrescens  
Right: Japanese deer





## Kirishima Area Story ③

Kirishima Mountain Range is a volcanic terrain consisting of more than 20 volcanoes of varying sizes. It was formed by repeated volcanic activity along the southern edge of the Kakuto Caldera, which was created by a massive eruption approximately 340,000 years ago. The vast mountainous area shaped by volcanic activity has nurtured diverse flora and fauna.

Kirishima Mountain Range is home to various plants and insects named after the Area “Kirishima,” including Miyama Kirishima (*Rhododendron kiusianum*, A type of azalea), Kirishima Mizuki (*Corylopsis glabrescens*), Kirishima Ginryoso (*Monotropastrum kirishimense*, also known as a ghost plant), Kirishima Midori Shijimi (a green hairstreak butterfly). The area also hosts the rare Nokaido (*Malus spontanea*), a species found nowhere else.

Wildlife, such as deer, badgers, and wild boars, are commonly spotted. In autumn, the distinctive calls of male deer in Ebino Highland have been recognized by the Ministry of the Environment as one of Japan's 100 Soundscapes.

The warm climate allows evergreen broadleaf forests to cover the low-level lands. Due to Kirishima Mountain Range's significant elevation changes, the vegetation varies with altitude, transitioning from evergreen broadleaf forests at the foothills to deciduous broadleaf forests, coniferous forests, and shrublands in wind-swept high-altitude areas.

The Miyama Kirishima (*Rhododendron kiusianum*), which colors the mountainsides during its blooming season, can typically only be found on active Kyushu volcanoes at 1,000 meters or more altitudes.

Many plants cannot survive in volcanic gases or soils, but the Miyama Kirishima has adapted to such environments, which is why it can maintain large colonies. After the eruption of Mt. Shinmoe in 2011, the surrounding vegetation suffered significant damage, but

the Miyama Kirishima was one of the first plants to sprout, emerging from the gaps in the volcanic ash and pumice that had accumulated.

Furthermore, the Kirishima volcanoes are of various ages, so the vegetation varies from mountain to mountain. The area allows for observation of different stages of vegetation succession, from destroying forests due to volcanic eruptions to forming new forests. In the past, volcanic gases erupted frequently, and in these harsh conditions, susuki (sedge grass) dominated the landscape. It is said that the susuki, with its flower heads tinted in a reddish color, is the origin of the name Ebino.

Cold-climate trees such as beech and Japanese oak can be found in higher elevations of relatively old volcanic areas like Lake Onami-ike and Lake Rokkannon-miike. These trees are thought to be descendants of vegetation that existed during the last ice age (about 20,000 years ago) and survived on these older volcanic formations.



Nokaido (*Malus spontanea*)

## The Experience We Want Visitors to Have

What visitors are invited to discover and experience  
through activities and encounters at the destination

●Encourage visitors to observe the plants and insects named after 'Kirishima' and the local mammals to appreciate the Area's unique biodiversity. → ① ② ③

●Encourage visitors to observe the changes in vegetation due to elevation differences while hiking Kirishima Mountain Range. → ① ② ③

●Encourage visitors to hike and explore mountains from different eruption periods, witnessing how varying stages of volcanic recovery have created distinct forest landscapes. → ② ③

## Showcase Places and Activities to Discover

1

## Enjoy the Miyama Kirishima Flowers



Photo by Atsushi Suda

During the blooming season, visitors can enjoy the sight of Miyama Kirishima flowers covering the mountainsides in vibrant reddish-purple.

2

## Go Hiking

Photo by Miyazaki Prefecture  
Tourism Association

Visitors can hike on diverse trails to peaks like Mt. Karakuni, Mt. Takachihonomine, Mt. Koshiki, Ohachi Crater, and Mt. Ioyama, each with distinct volcanic landscapes.



3

## Explore Lake Onami-ike and Lake Rokkannon-miike



© K. P. V. B

Visitors can walk through beech forests in the higher elevations of relatively older volcanoes.

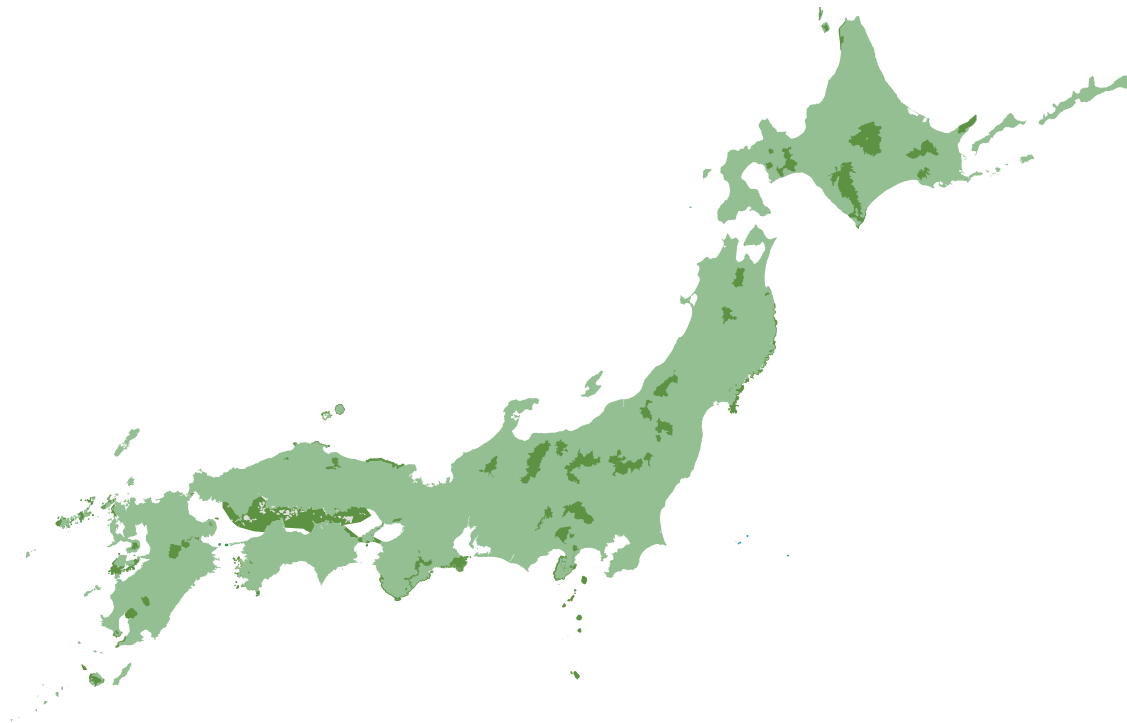
# National Parks of Japan

## (Regulations and Differences with Foreign National Parks)

### 35 Distinct and Diverse National Parks in Japan

※As of March 2025

Stretching approximately 3,000 kilometers from north to south, the Japanese archipelago offers a wide variety of natural landscapes, from snow-covered mountains to colorful coral reefs, highlighting the beauty of nature in every form. Japan's national parks are home to around 7,000 plant species, over 1,000 animal species, and between 70,000 and 100,000 insect species. Along with abundant water, active volcanoes, and untouched nature, Japan's national parks also feature areas where human intervention has helped maintain diverse ecosystems and natural environments, such as satoumi (coastal areas) and satoyama (rural forests), highlighting places where people and nature coexist.





# National Parks of Japan

## (Regulations and Differences with Foreign National Parks)

### 90-years of Preserving Nature: The Story of National Parks

National parks can be found in many countries around the world, with the first-ever designated national park being Yellowstone National Park in the United States, established in 1872. In Japan, a petition to make Nikko a national park was presented to Congress, and as public interest grew, the Natural Park Act was passed in 1931 (Showa 6). Following the enactment of this law, three areas—Seto Inland Sea, Unzen, and Kirishima—were officially designated as Japan's first national parks on March 16, 1934 (Showa 9).

The revision of the Natural Park Act in 1957 (Showa 32) created the modern framework for Japan's protected areas, establishing clear categories for national parks, national monuments, and nature parks at both state and prefecture levels. This system implemented comprehensive mechanisms for preserving Japan's scenic landscapes while ensuring their sustainable use. As of March 2025, Japan maintains 35 national parks stretching from Hokkaido in the north to Okinawa and the Ogasawara Islands in the south, attracting millions of visitors annually through careful management and conservation practices.

# National Parks of Japan

## (Regulations and Differences with Foreign National Parks)

### The National Park System of Japan

In many national parks worldwide, following the example set by the United States, the system is designed to preserve vast natural landscapes as government-owned land, protecting pristine and largely untouched environments. This is referred to as a "monument park" (Eizoubutsu Kouen). The boundaries of Japan's national parks are established regardless of land ownership, and many of these parks include areas where people live.

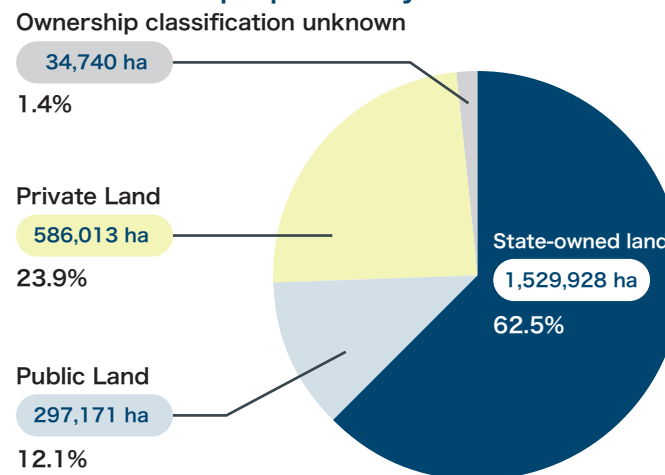
Development is restricted to protect outstanding landscapes. This type of system is called a "Japan's System of Natural Park (Zoning-System)" (Chiiki-sei Kouen). Many foreign visitors may be surprised to see people living within Japan's national parks. However, the lives of rural and fishing communities, which have developed in harmony with nature, are deeply connected to the natural environment.

Additionally, national parks are places where people can deepen their knowledge about nature and provide opportunities to engage with the natural environment for health and recreation.

#### There are 35 national parks across Japan

Japan's national parks instill the "regional nature park system," which designates areas regardless of land ownership and includes many privately owned lands.

Area proportion by landowner in national parks

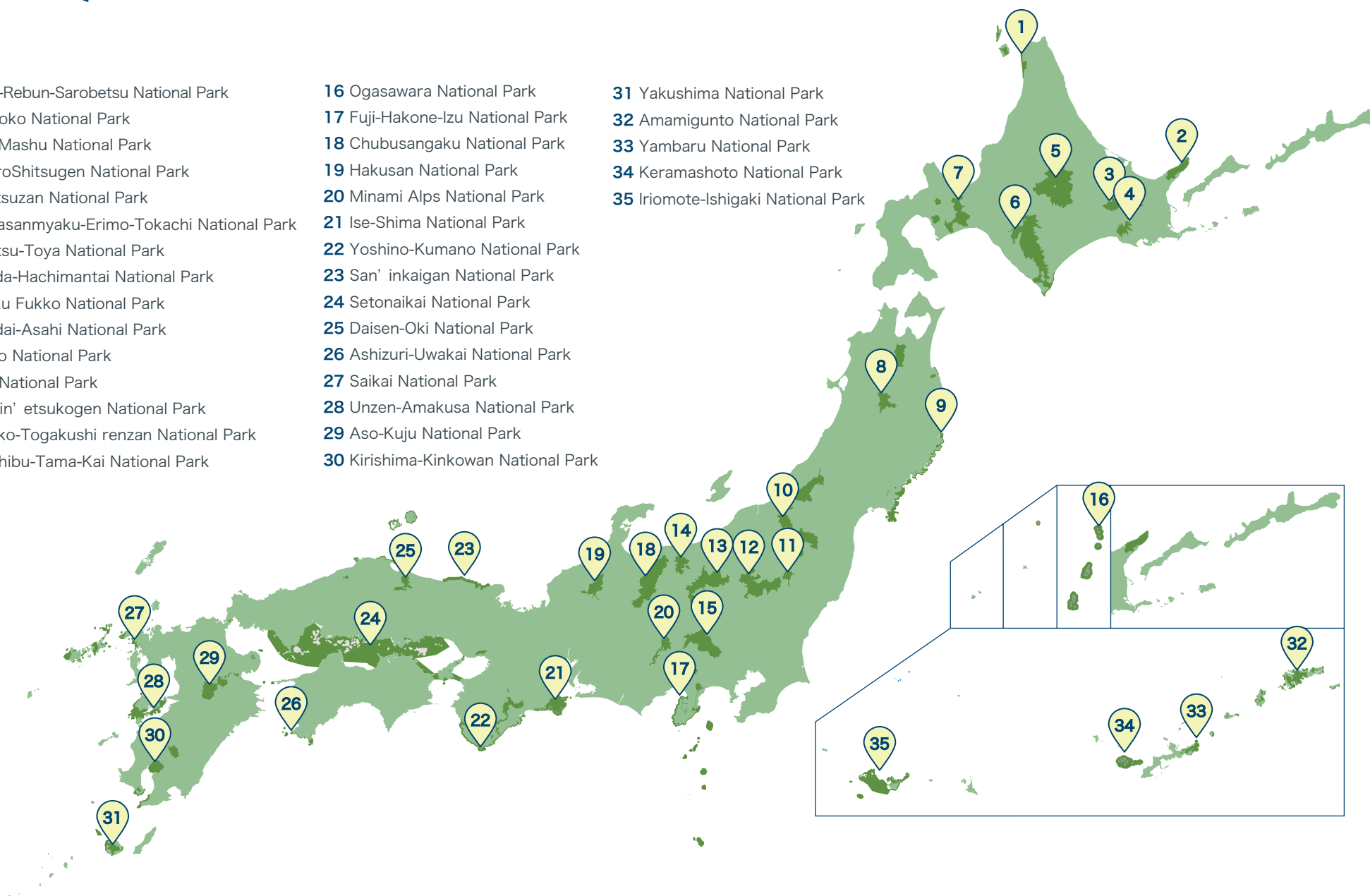


Area proportion by landowner in national parks  
As of March 31 2025  
The majority of state-owned land is national forest under  
the jurisdiction of the Forestry Agency  
Cited from the Ministry of the Environment website  
<https://www.env.go.jp/nature/nationalparks/about/>

- 1 Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park
- 2 Shiretoko National Park
- 3 Akan-Mashu National Park
- 4 Kushiro-Shitsugen National Park
- 5 Daisetsuzan National Park
- 6 Hidakasanmyaku-Erimo-Tokachi National Park
- 7 Shikotsu-Toya National Park
- 8 Towada-Hachimantai National Park
- 9 Sanriku Fukko National Park
- 10 Bandai-Asahi National Park
- 11 Nikko National Park
- 12 Oze National Park
- 13 Joshin'etsukogen National Park
- 14 Myoko-Togakushi renzan National Park
- 15 Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park

- 16 Ogasawara National Park
- 17 Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park
- 18 Chubusangaku National Park
- 19 Hakusan National Park
- 20 Minami Alps National Park
- 21 Ise-Shima National Park
- 22 Yoshino-Kumano National Park
- 23 San'in-kaigan National Park
- 24 Setonaikai National Park
- 25 Daisen-Oki National Park
- 26 Ashizuri-Uwakai National Park
- 27 Saikai National Park
- 28 Unzen-Amakusa National Park
- 29 Aso-Kuju National Park
- 30 Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park

- 31 Yakushima National Park
- 32 Amamigunto National Park
- 33 Yambaru National Park
- 34 Keramashoto National Park
- 35 Iriomote-Ishigaki National Park



### Defining the brand promise of national parks

#### Background and Purpose

National parks were positioned as one of the main pillars of the government's "Tourism Vision to Support Tomorrow's Japan" formulated in 2016, and the "National Park Enjoyment Project" has been advancing. It has been primarily implemented in the first eight parks, including the revised Natural Park Act (effective April 2022), and efforts are being made to expand this approach to all 35 parks.

As part of this, the "National Park Brand Promise" was established in 2023 to strengthen national parks' branding and outline their commitments to visitors and local communities.

This was defined as the "Common Management and Operation Guidelines for All National Parks" and aims to ensure that all stakeholders involved in the management and operation of national parks share a common understanding.

This initiative has been set up to collaborate with all stakeholders in managing and operating national parks.

## Message

"The Nature holds a story"

## Value Proposition

Through exploring the diverse natural landscapes and the rich stories embedded in the local life, culture, and history, you can immerse yourself in unforgettable, exceptional experiences.

## Brand Promise

What National Parks promise to visitors and local communities



1

Inspiring natural landscapes and beautiful scenery

2

A shared commitment to sustainability



4

Facilities and services that support memorable experience

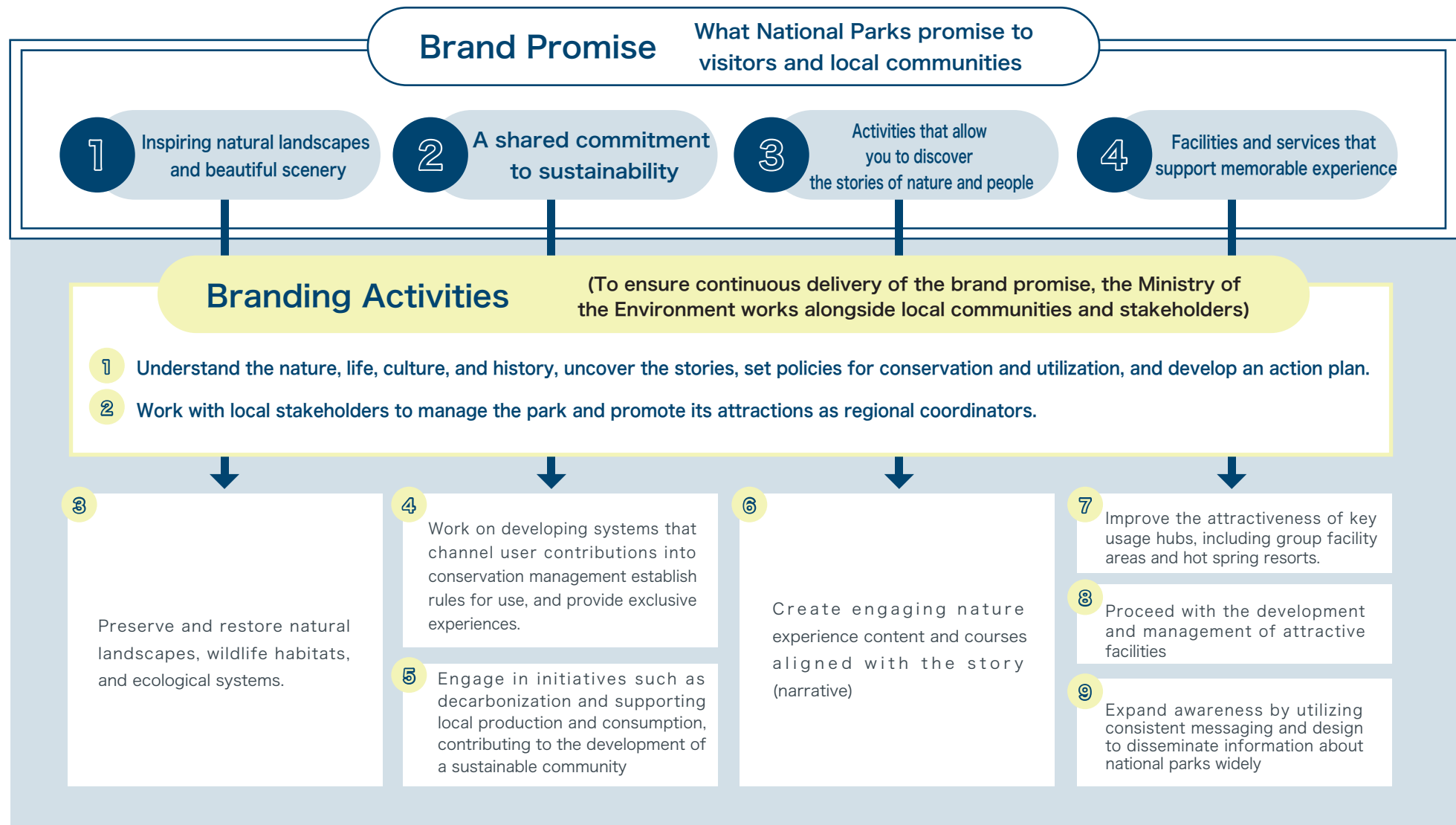


3

Activities that allow you to discover the stories of nature and people



◦ Kagoshima Kyacks





## Principles of Geopark

Geoparks aim to protect scientifically valuable geological features and landscapes, known as "Geological Heritage," while promoting education, tourism, and other activities. Thus, they contribute to the sustainable development of the Area.

Geoparks primarily focus on landforms and geology, but these elements significantly impact the local ecosystem, lifestyles, and culture of those living there. For this reason, Geoparks also include ecosystems, local life, culture, and history as part of their activities.

At the 38th UNESCO General Conference held in November 2015, Global Geoparks were officially recognized as part of UNESCO's International Geoscience and Geoparks Program, becoming a formal UNESCO initiative.

## Various collaborations/partnerships between national parks and parks

National Parks and Geoparks overlap in many Areas. National parks collaborate with Geoparks on multiple initiatives such as "conservation," "facility development," "education and outreach," "program development," and "capacity building."

## Discover new regional attractions through the collaboration between national parks and geoparks!

Japan is home to a wide variety of natural landscapes. Its national parks' exceptional natural scenery and nature-based culture are beautiful as tourism resources, drawing significant interest from international visitors. By leveraging these rich natural resources and promoting collaboration between national parks and geoparks, we aim to enhance and develop ecotourism environmental education and contribute to revitalizing local communities.

## Kirishima Geopark

The Kirishima Geopark is located across Miyazaki and Kagoshima Prefectures in southern Kyushu. Kirishima Mountain Range, an active volcano, towers at the center of the geopark area and continues its volcanic activity. Kirishima Mountain Range comprises over 20 overlapping volcanoes, each with large craters relative to the size of the mountains, some of which hold abundant water within them. Another key feature of Mount Kirishima is the variety of volcanic landscapes, including lava flows, pyroclastic cones, and debris avalanche ridges resulting from mountain collapses. To the north of the area are the Kakuto Caldera and Kobayashi Caldera, which predate the formation of Kirishima Mountain Range, while the southern part of the area borders the Aira Caldera. The vast Shirasu plateaus (pyroclastic plateaus) and the collapsed landscapes resulting from massive eruptions—events not experienced by modern humans—are also defining characteristics of the Area. With its proximity to these volcanic terrains, the Kirishima Geopark is undoubtedly the most suitable place for contemplating "What is a volcano?" and exploring these natural phenomena





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