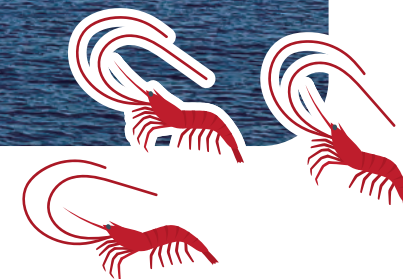
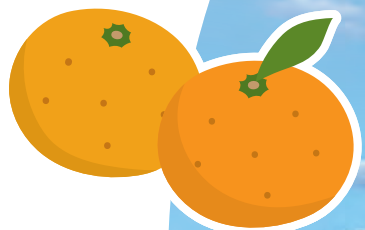


# A Storybook of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park

Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area

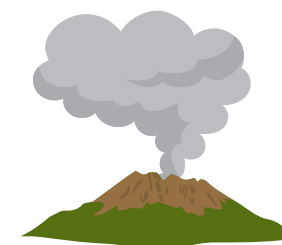
~ A narrative to be shared with the local community  
to enhance Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park's  
remarkable beauty and appeal ~



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

08.2025

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# About This Book

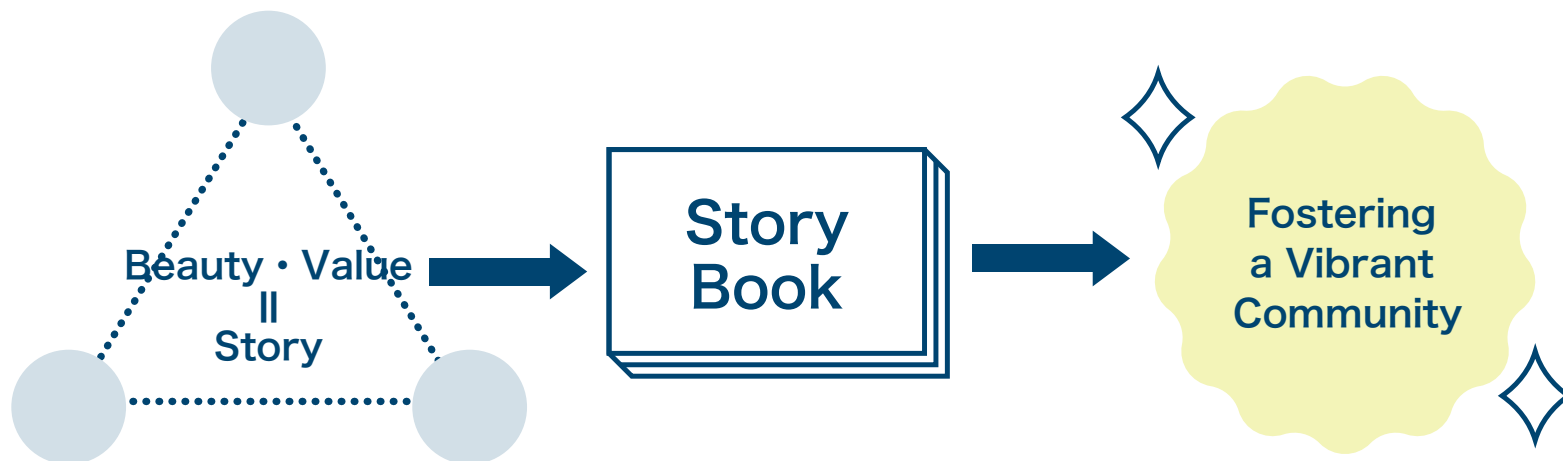
P02

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 region.

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

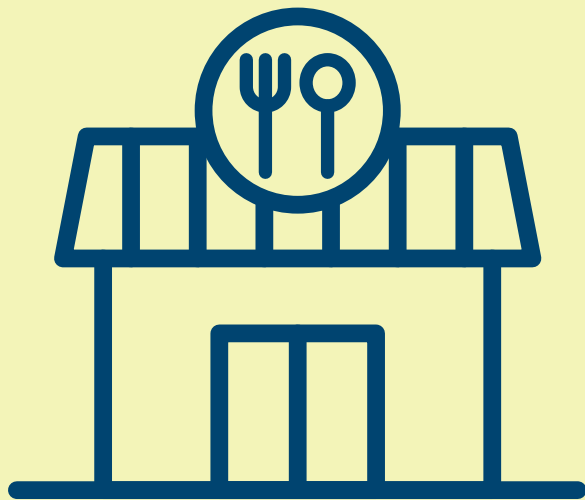
- Incorporate the "story" into guided narratives, exhibits, brochures, websites, and other materials.
- Use "The Experience We Want Visitors to Have" as a reference when designing the tour.

### Expected Outcomes

When visitors engage with the region'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 region'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 region. 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 region'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 region'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 region and beyond.

### Example

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

### Expected Outcomes

It is expected that not only will the beauty and value of the region 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 region'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 region 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

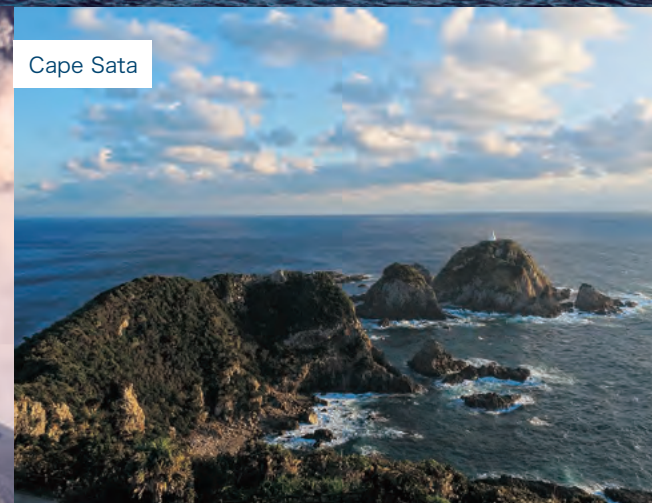


The diverse landscapes of mountains and seas created by the caldera clusters

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 region. 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



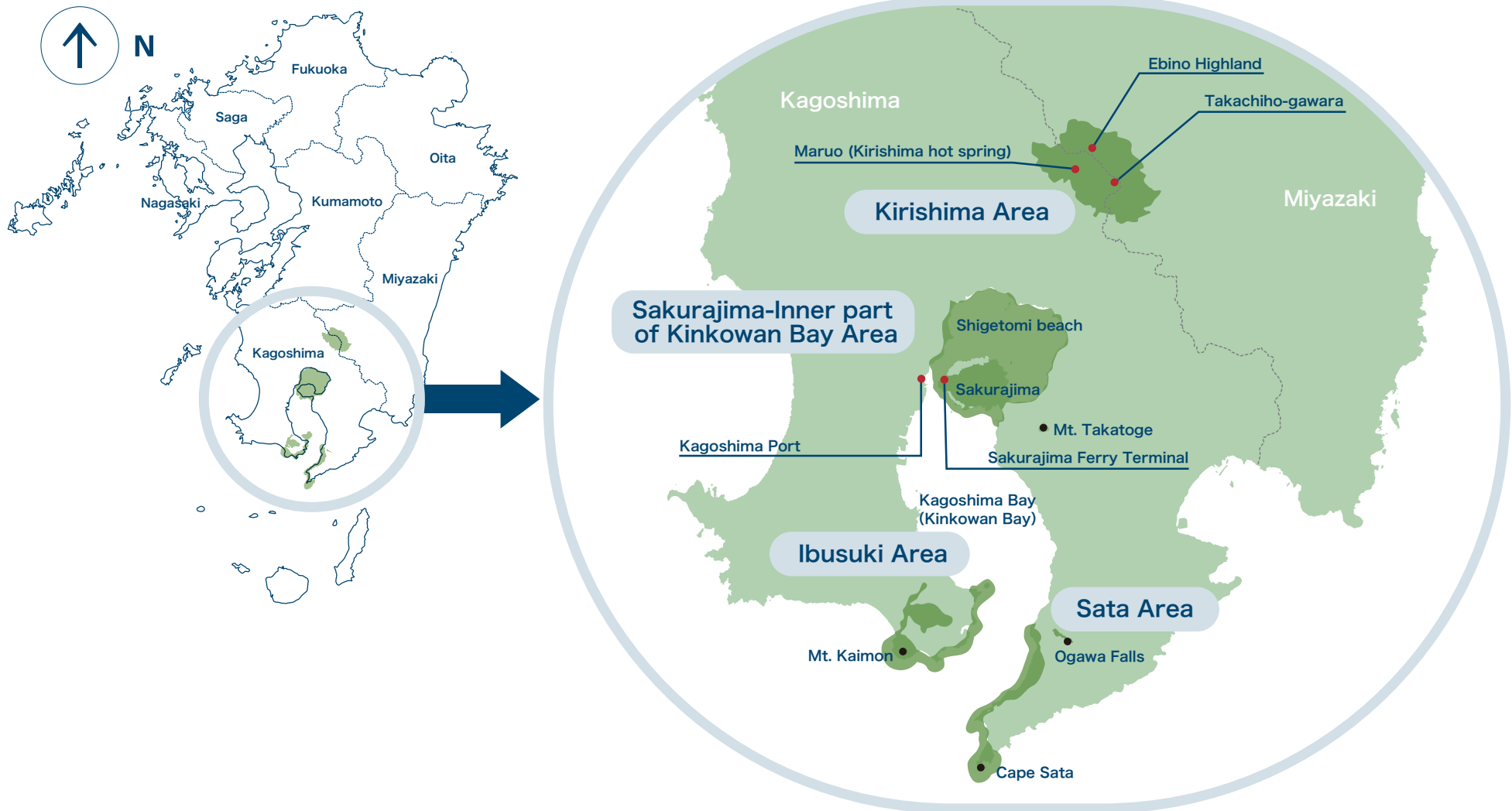
Ibusuki Steam Sand Bath

© K.P.V.B



Sakurajima from  
Shiroyama Observatory

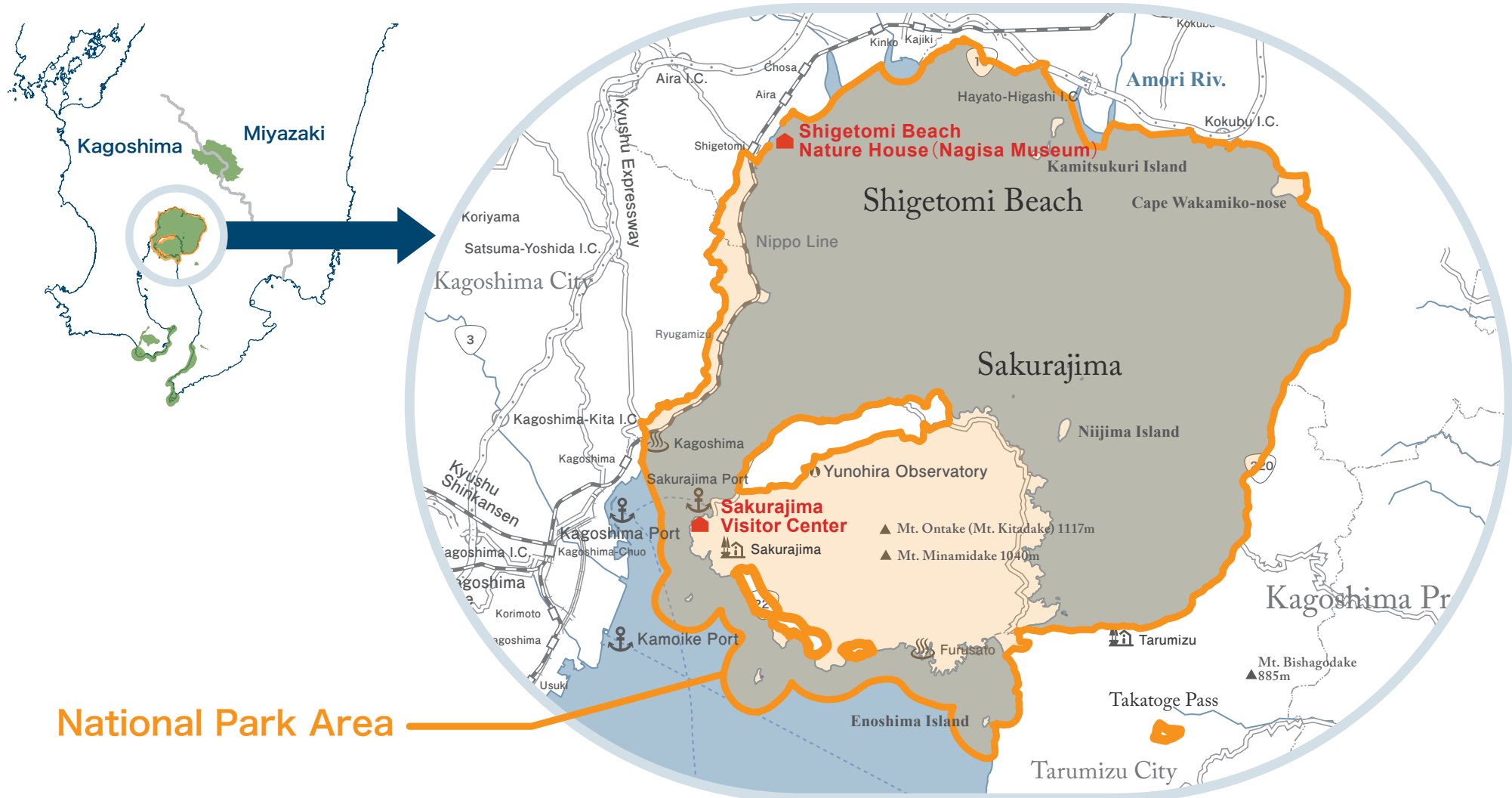
**The Rare Proximity of Volcanoes  
and  
Human Life in the World**

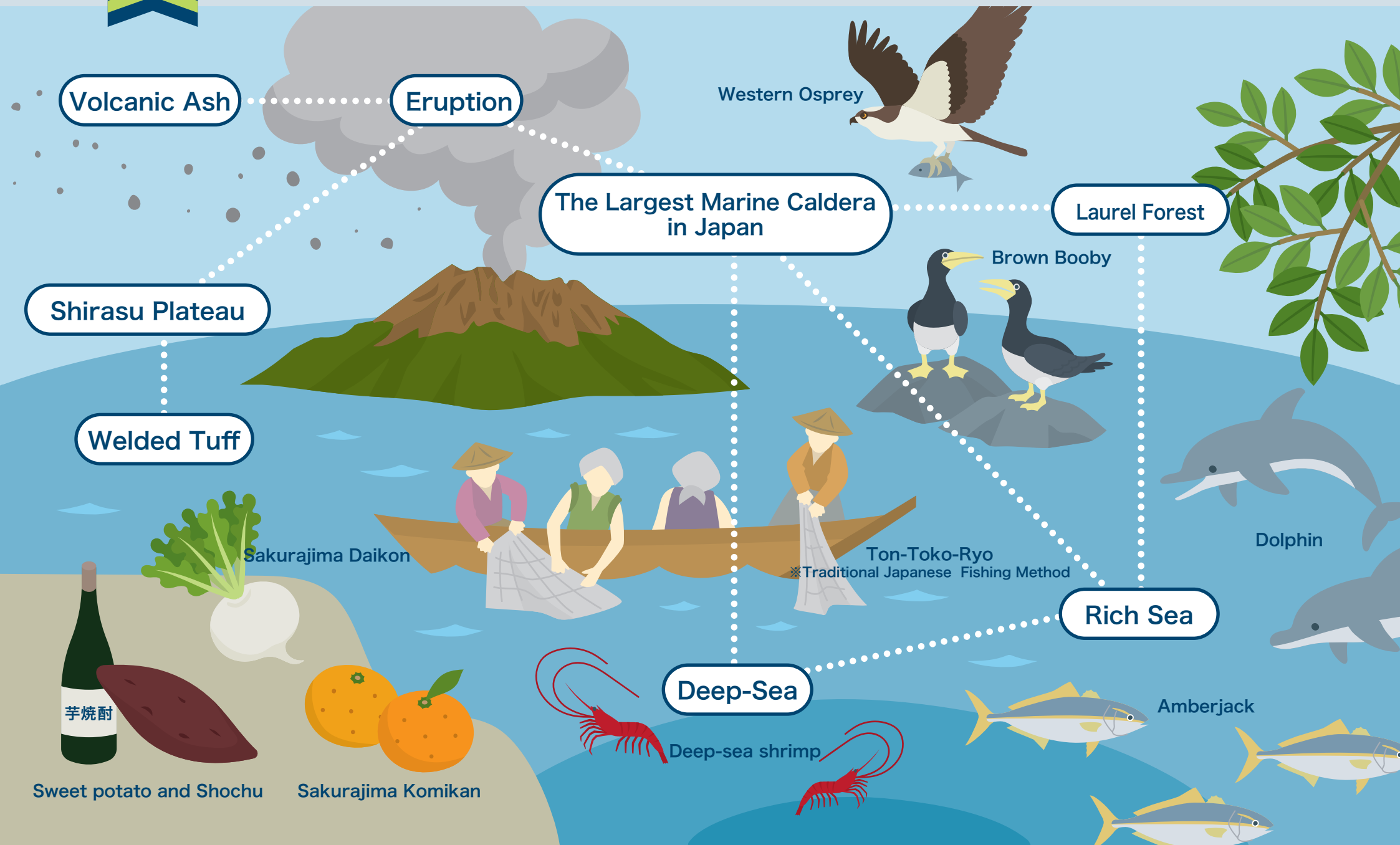




# Map of Kirishima-Kinkowan National Park

## -Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area Detailed Map-





A distinctive relationship that captures the region's essential character

Ancient volcanic eruptions enriched the surrounding waters, fostering a fertile ecosystem that now forms the foundation of the region's vibrant food culture.

#### Essential Resources of the Region

Diverse Marine Ecosystem

Farming of Yellowtail and Amberjack

Deep-Sea Shrimp Fishing

Left: Sakurajima and Kinkowan Bay

Middle: Brown Booby

Right: Amberjack





## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area Story ①

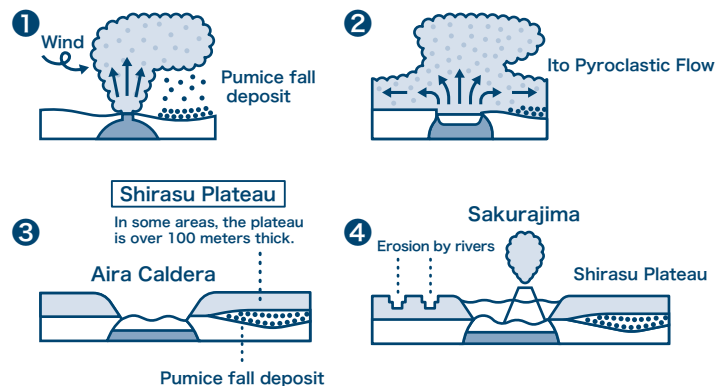
The northern part of Kinkowan Bay, the innermost section of the bay, was formed when the land subsided due to a massive eruption about 30,000 years ago, allowing the sea to flood in. This area is a highly diverse marine environment, featuring deep waters over 200 meters, cliffs extending into the sea, kelp forests that support underwater ecosystems, and tidal flats that shift with the changing tides. The steep cliffs surrounding the inner part of Kinkowan Bay are part of the caldera wall, the outer rim of the collapsed land. These cliffs are home to laurel forests, and the abundant nutrients from these forests flow into Kinkowan Bay via rivers and underground water sources.

The diverse marine environment and nutrients from the forests create habitats for many living creatures. It is said that about 1,000 species of fish live in Kinkowan Bay. As a result, animals that feed on fish, such as dolphins, ospreys, and shearwaters, can thrive here. Of course, humans also eat a lot of fish from Kinkowan Bay. The bay is one of Japan's leading production areas for farmed yellowtail and amberjack. The calm and deep inner bay is ideal for yellowtail

farming, while the relatively warm seawater in winter makes it suitable for amberjack farming. Additionally, the "Tontokoryo," which catches deep-sea shrimp (such as the common threadtail shrimp and the Japanese sweet shrimp), is a traditional method passed down since the Edo period and is unique to Kinkowan Bay in Japan.

The seas created by volcanic activity support the region's food culture.

### Eruption of the Aira Caldera



The view of the laurel forest and Kinkowan Bay from the Terayama Park Observatory

## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area

# Recommended Places and Activities 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 landscape from various viewpoints and truly understand that the inner part of Kinkowan Bay was formed by the collapse of the land, creating a caldera. → ①

●Encourage visitors to reflect on how the nutrients flowing from the evergreen broadleaf forests spreading across the caldera wall contributed to the richness of Kinkowan Bay. → ① ④

●Visitors are encouraged to experience the diversity of the marine environment, such as tidal flats, seaweed beds, and coral reefs. → ② ④ ⑥

●Encourage visitors to look for wildlife such as dolphins, ospreys, and brown boobies, which rely on fish for sustenance, and experience how the sea's richness influences the local ecosystem. → ② ④

●Encourage visitors to enjoy the various kinds of seafood from Kinkowan Bay and experience the depth of its deep sea and the richness of the ocean. → ③



## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area

# Recommended Places and Activities to Truly Feel the Story ①

### Showcase Places and Activities to Discover

1

Visit Terayama Park Observatory to enjoy panoramic views of the coastline and forested landscape



Visitors can overlook the caldera walls surrounding the sea and observe how the land's collapse shaped the inner part of Kinkowan Bay. Additionally, they can enjoy a panoramic view of the laurel forests, tidal flats, and rivers flowing into Kinkowan Bay, all of which contribute to the richness of the sea.

2

Observe the wildlife in the tidal flats of the Shigetomi Beach



With a professional guide, visitors can observe the creatures living in the tidal flats, gaining a glimpse of Kinkōwan's diverse environments, the richness of its wildlife, and the connection between nature and humans.

## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area

# Recommended Places and Activities to Truly Feel the Story ①

3

### Enjoy Local Cuisine: Deep-Sea Shrimp, Amberjack and Yellowtail



© Jun Ohtomi (Professor, Faculty of Fisheries, Kagoshima University)

In the surrounding area, visitors can enjoy seafood caught in the Kinkowan Bay at local sushi restaurants, izakayas, and dining that focus on using local ingredients.

4

### Outdoor Adventure: Experience Sea kayaking in Sakurajima



©Kagoshima Kayaks

When visitors venture out into the sea by sea kayak, they can see unique volcanic landscapes, such as lava flowing into the sea and coral reefs, as well as hot springs emerging from the seabed. If you're lucky, you may also spot wild dolphins.



## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area

### Recommended Places and Activities to Truly Feel the Story ①

5

Experience feeding the farmed amberjack  
in Kinkowan Bay's aquaculture facilities



Visitors can board a fishing boat at the Tarumizu City Fishermen's Cooperative to experience feeding farmed amberjack at a floating fish farm off the coast of Kinkowan Bay. Additionally, they can take part in fish processing activities, learning how to prepare and cook amberjack dishes, and experience the entire journey from sea to table.

6

Explore marine life at the aquarium,  
experiencing the ocean's wonders up close



Visitors can observe marine life inhabiting the waters around Kinkowan Bay and the mainland of Kagoshima Prefecture. The exhibits also feature the rich seabeds, including coral and seaweed, along with the creatures that live there.

A distinctive relationship that captures the region's essential character

## Volcanic soil land, has nurtured the region's distinctive food and culture

Essential Resources of the Region

Shirasu Plateau

Sweet Potato Shochu

Left: Sakurajima Komikan  
Middle: Sakurajima Daikon  
Right: Sweet Potato Shochu



©Kagoshima City





## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area Story ②

Sakurajima is an active volcano, and it may seem unsuitable for agriculture. However, the world's largest Sakurajima Daikon (White Radish) and the world's smallest Sakurajima Komikan (Orange) are produced at the foot of Sakurajima, which erupts daily. The landslides from past eruptions carried debris, created a gentle fan-shaped terrain at the base of mountain. This "alluvial fan" benefits from ample sunlight and excellent drainage, making it ideal for cultivating crops such as radishes, small oranges, and loquats. As a result, the volcanic characteristics of the region have led to the creation of unique local products.

Sweet Potato Shochu is one of the unique local products created by the volcano. The massive eruption formed by Kinkowan Bay emitted enormous amounts of pumice and volcanic ash, which spread across the southern part of the Kyushu region as pyroclastic flows. These pyroclastic flows covered the ground, with mineral deposits reaching over 100 meters in some areas. Subsequently, river water eroded the soil, forming the "Shirasu Plateau" that now extends across southern Kyushu. This Shirasu Plateau has excellent drainage. However, this very characteristic made it ideal for growing sweet potatoes, which thrive in well-drained soil. As a result, Kagoshima leads the nation in sweet potato production. Furthermore, the rain that falls on the Shirasu Plateau is filtered underground, turning into delicious water.

The abundance of sweet potatoes and delicious water, combined with the warm climate unsuitable for sake brewing, contributed to the development of shochu culture in southern Kyushu. It is said that the essential black and white koji used in modern shochu production were developed in Kagoshima, and Satsuma sweet potato shochu has spread nationwide. While the volcanic activity made rice cultivation difficult, it can be said that the volcano also gave rise to the creation of sweet potato shochu (Imo shochu).



Sakurajima emitting smoke  
as seen from Sengan-en



## 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 fan-based terrain that spreads across the northern foothills of Sakurajima from the Yunohira Observatory. Observe how the varying amounts of lava deposits on the southern slopes reveal the different ages of the craters.

●Encourage visitors to savor Sakurajima Daikon and Sakurajima Komikan, grown in the sunny, well-drained soil, and experience the gifts of the volcano. → ❶ ❷

●Encourage visitors to explore the local culture and lifestyle by sampling various brands of sweet potato shochu and touring distilleries to understand the process of making sweet potato shochu. → ❸

## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area

### Recommended Places and Activities to Truly Feel the Story ②

#### Showcase Places and Activities to Discover

1

#### Taste Sakurajima Daikon



Visitors can purchase processed products such as pickles at local souvenir shops. During the winter harvest season, freshly harvested Sakurajima Daikon is available at roadside stations (Michi no Eki). A recommended way to enjoy it is by cooking it as a simmered dish, as it becomes wonderfully smooth in texture.

2

#### Harvest Sakurajima Komikan and taste it



Harvesting experiences are offered at the orchards on the foothills of Sakurajima, where visitors can also purchase and taste at unmanned stores and roadside stations (Michi no Eki).

## Recommended Places and Activities to Truly Feel the Story ②

3

Visit the sake breweries and learn about the history of shochu



©Aira City

Visitors can discover the history of shochu by touring the distilleries throughout the park and nearby areas, where they can learn about the production process of sweet potato shochu. The on-site shops also offer sweet potato shochu for souvenir purchases.





A distinctive relationship that captures the region's essential character

Life beside an active volcano  
brought a unique everyday life

Essential Resources of the Region

Frequent eruptions, ashfall,  
A lifestyle adapted to these conditions

Kurokami Buried Shrine Gate

Middle: A bag for collecting volcanic ash (Kokuhaibukuro)

Right: Sakurajima Ferry



©Kagoshima City





## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area Story ③

Sakurajima is a composite volcano created by the merger of two peaks: Mt. Kitadake and Mt. Minamidake. It has had several significant eruptions throughout history. The most recent major eruption was the Taisho eruption 110 years ago. The lava that flowed out during this eruption filled the strait southeast of Sakurajima, connecting the island to the Osumi Peninsula. A torii gate buried by volcanic ash and pumice up to 2 meters in a single day remains a lasting memory of the eruption.

Currently, Mt. Minamidake is highly active, with more than 200 eruptions recorded in 2023. Despite Sakurajima's active volcanic activity, approximately 3,500 people live on the island, with evacuation shelters spread throughout the area. Additionally, Sakurajima is only a few kilometers from the city of Kagoshima. Eruptions occur almost daily in front of a major city with a population of several hundred thousand. Smoke rises, and ash falls regularly, leading to the development of a unique lifestyle.

For example, weather forecasts include ash fall predictions based on wind directions over Sakurajima. Each household receives free "katsuhaibag" bags to collect ash. Graves are equipped with roofs to prevent ash accumulation. Road sweeper trucks run to collect the ash. These are just a few examples of the efforts and adaptations in everyday life to coexist with the active volcano.

It may seem difficult, but the people of Kagoshima have accepted this way of life as "normal." Most public bathhouses in Kagoshima city are fed by hot springs, allowing residents to live with the gifts of the volcano in their daily lives. In fact, there are people who say, "I feel at ease when I see Sakurajima," as the volcano, which emits smoke daily, has become a beloved symbol of home for the people living there.



City and Sakurajima  
from Shiroyama  
Observatory

## 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 visit a buried torii gate and experience firsthand the immense amount of volcanic ash and pumice ejected by an eruption in just one day. → ❷

●Encourage visitors to see the rising volcanic smoke and steam from the summit of Sakurajima and feel the active volcano up close. → ❶ ❸ ❹ ❺

●Encourage visitors to observe the ashfall forecasts, ash collection bags, the evacuation shelters on Sakurajima, and the roofs protecting graves from ash, and visitors can closely experience the daily life of people coexisting with an active volcano.

●Visit a public bath and soak in the hot springs, feel the gift of volcanic activity. → ❽



## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area Recommended Places and Activities to Truly Feel the Story ③

### Showcase Places and Activities to Discover

1

#### Participate in a guided tour in Sakurajima



Visitors can learn about Sakurajima's volcanic activity, past disasters, and the ways people have adapted to life on the island through geo guides in the Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark. This offers a unique opportunity to witness the life of Sakurajima, which is deeply connected to the volcano.

2

#### Visit a buried torii gate (Kurokami, Ushinefumoto)



The buried torii gates are preserved in their current state, allowing visitors to experience the immense amount of volcanic ash and pumice that was ejected during the massive eruption in a single day. Photos from that time are displayed next to the torii gates, providing insight into the Taisho Eruption.

3

## Observe Sakurajima from Sakurajima Ferry



©Kagoshima City

The ferry service serves both as public transportation and an evacuation route from the island. During the crossing, passengers can observe ancient lava flows that extend into the sea while gaining a unique perspective on how closely the active volcano coexists with the city.

4

## View the city and Sakurajima from Shiroyama Observatory



©ken.n.miffy.752

Visitors can fully experience the elevation of the Shirasu Plateau when they hike up Shiroyama, which stands at 107 meters above sea level. From the observatory (outside the national park), they can take panoramic views of the city and Sakurajima and see how a city with hundreds of thousands of residents is next to an active volcano.



## Sakurajima-Inner part of Kinkowan Bay Area

### Recommended Places and Activities to Truly Feel the Story ③

5

#### Soak in the footbath at Sakurajima Lava Nagisa Park



Visitors can feel the volcano's heat from the natural hot springs that emerge from 1,000 meters underground. Thanks to the volcano's geothermal activity, most public bathhouses in Kagoshima City feature natural hot spring water, offering visitors a chance to enjoy one of the volcano's natural benefits.

6

#### View Sakurajima from Yunohira Observation Deck

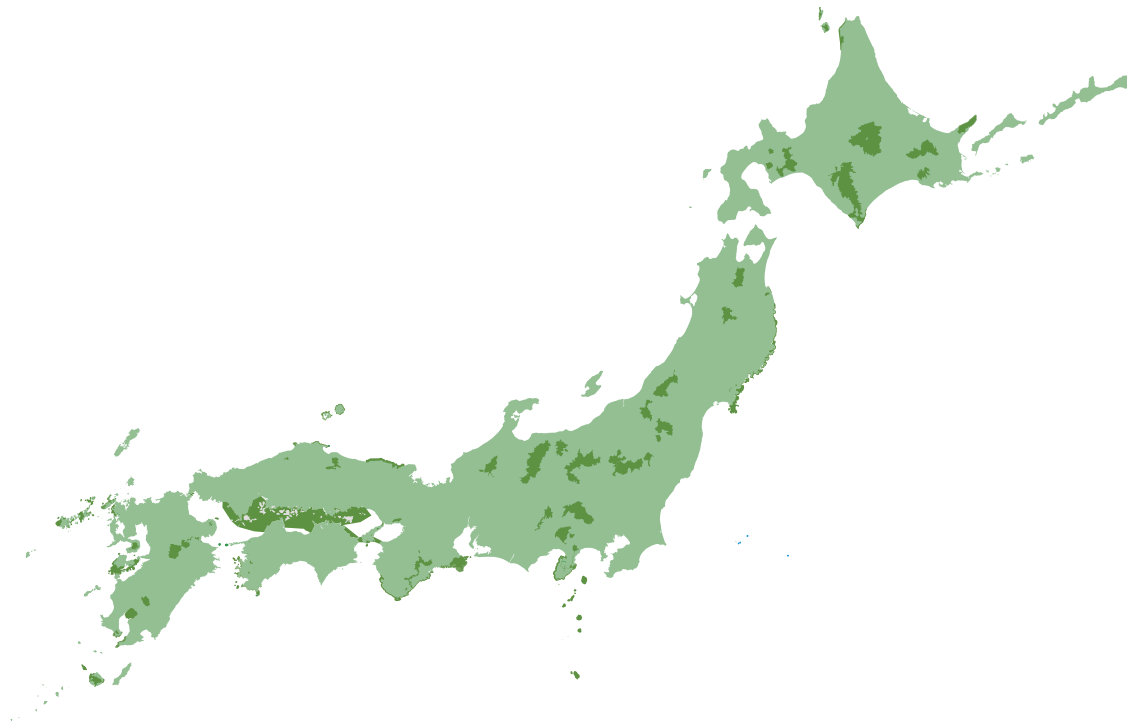


From the observation point closest to the summit of Sakurajima, visitors can get a close-up view of the mountain's slopes and compare the degree of erosion between the North Peak and South Peak.

### 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.

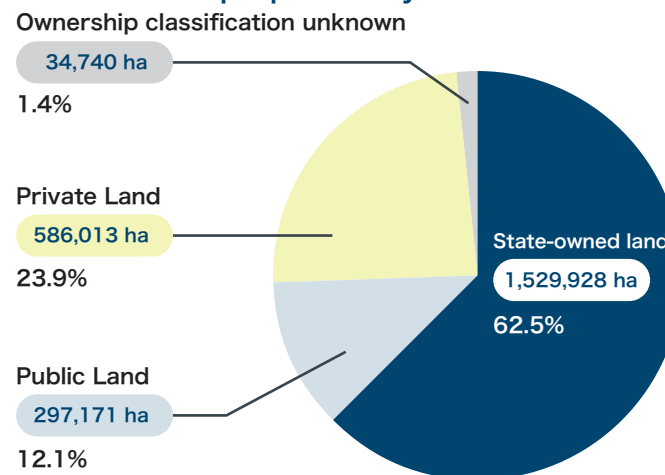
Development is restricted to protect outstanding landscapes. This type of system is called a "Japan's System of Natural Park (Zoning-System)" (Chiiki-sei Kouen). Many foreign visitors may be surprised to see people living within Japan's national parks. However, the lives of rural and fishing communities,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

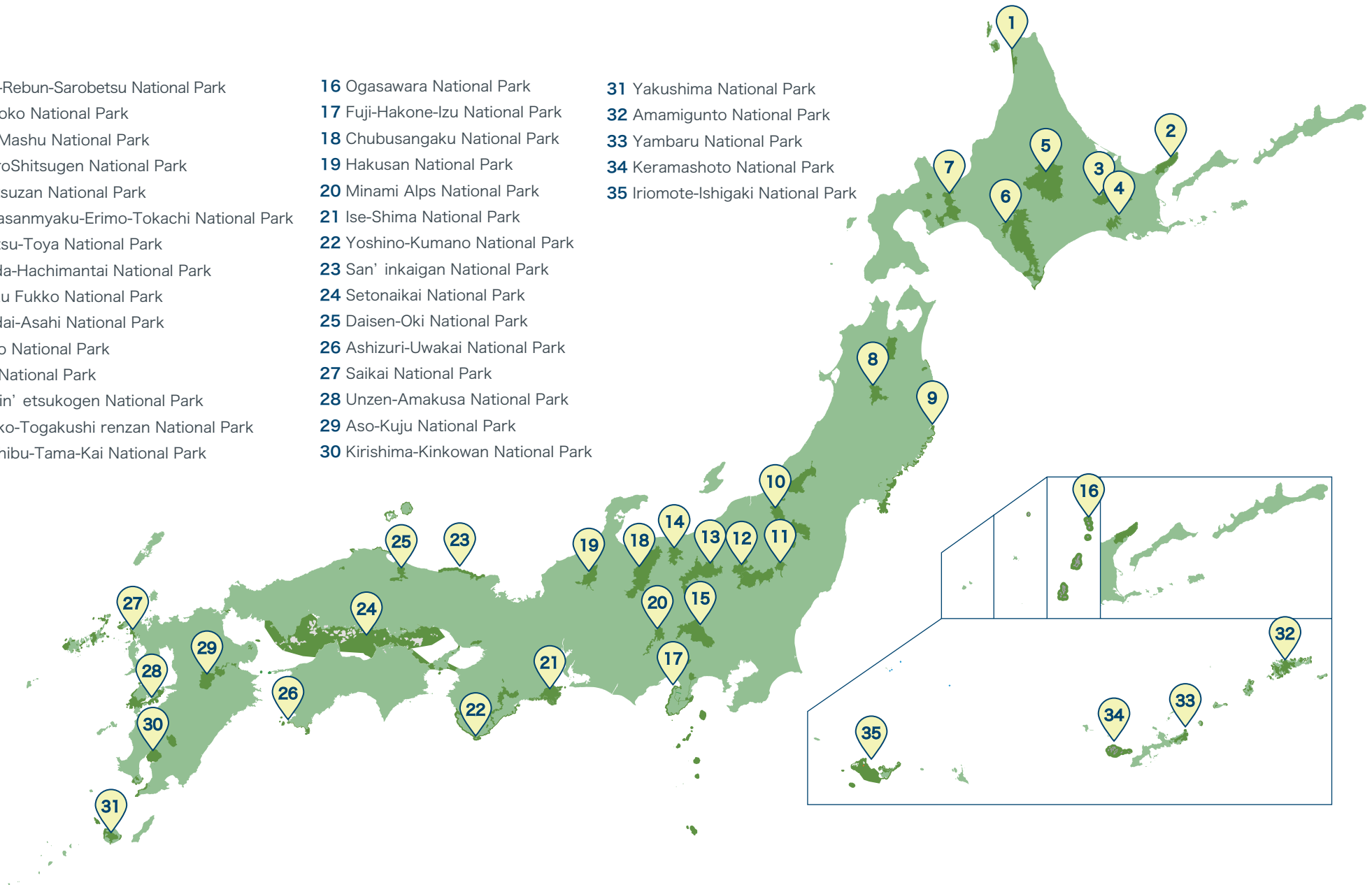


Area proportion by landowner in national parks  
As of March 31 2025  
The majority of state-owned land is national forest under  
the jurisdiction of the Forestry Agency  
Cited from the Ministry of the Environment website  
<https://www.env.go.jp/nature/nationalparks/about/>

- 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 Japan's Future,' formulated in 2016, and the 'National Park Mankitsu 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



©Aira City

4

Facilities and services that support memorable experience

2

A shared commitment to sustainability

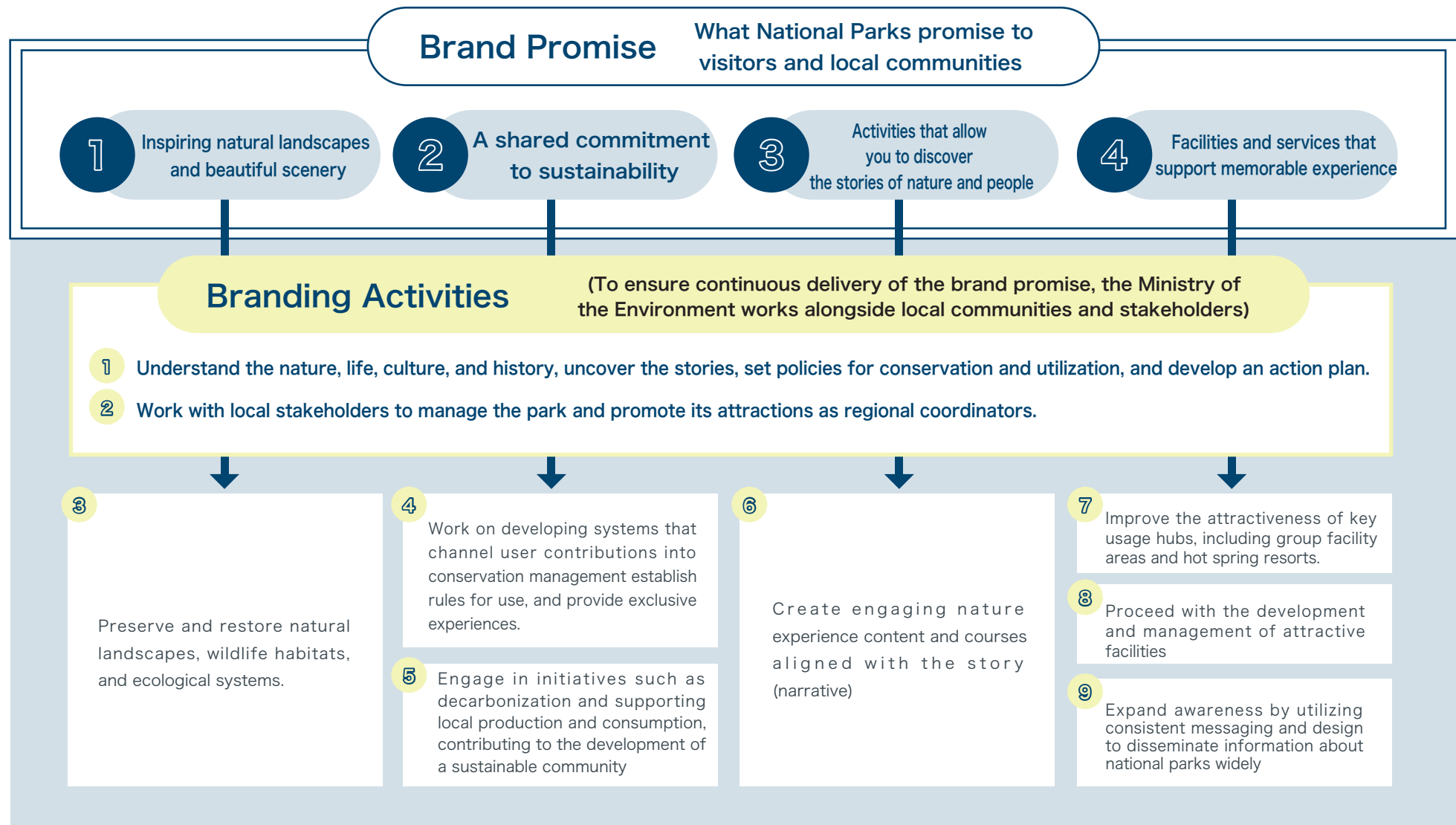


3

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 region.

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 regions. 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!

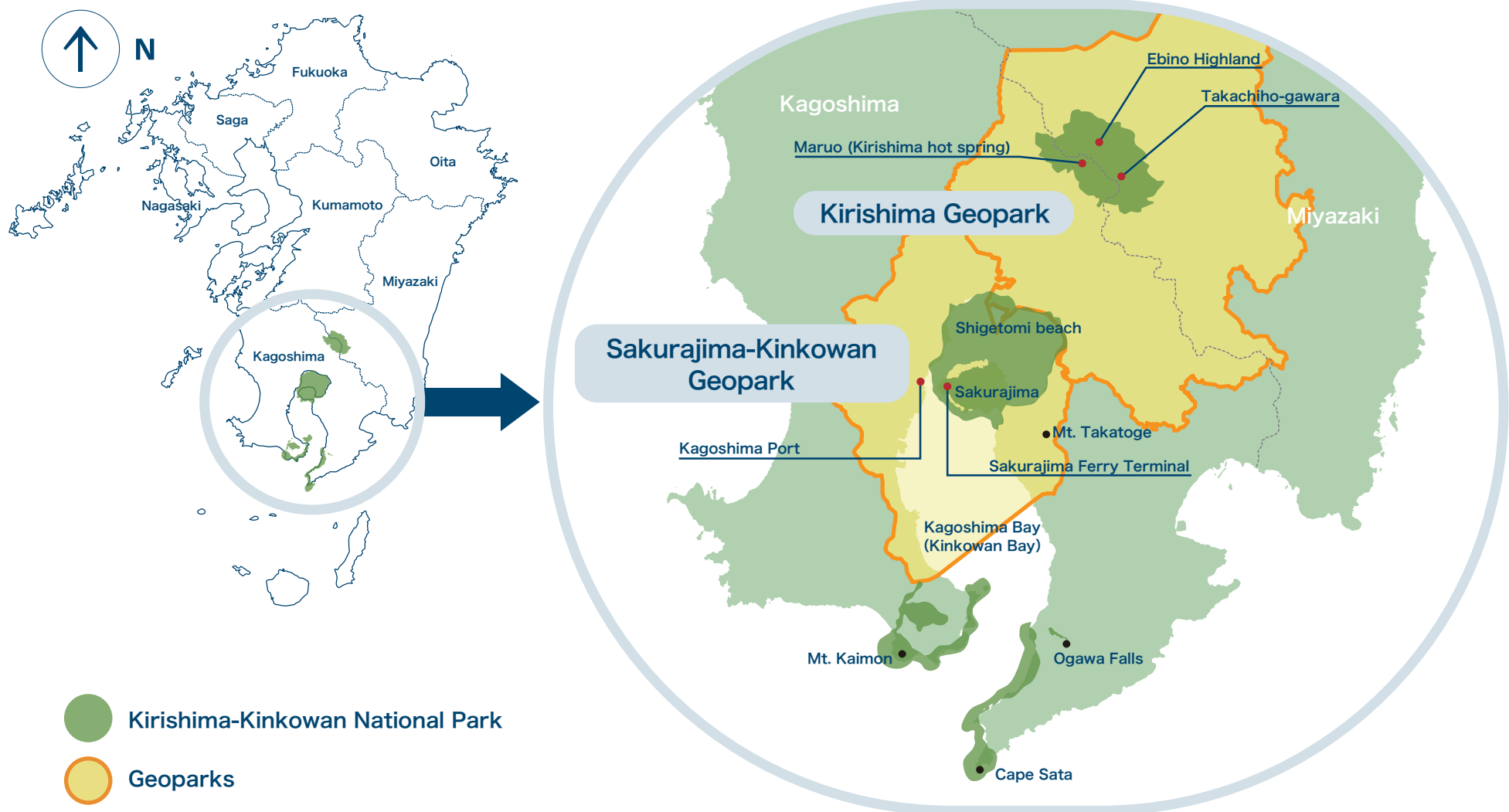
Japan is home to a wide variety of natural landscapes. Its national parks' exceptional natural scenery and nature-based culture are beautiful as tourism resources, drawing significant interest from international visitors. By leveraging these rich natural resources and promoting collaboration between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

## Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark

Kinkowan Bay, formed approximately 30,000 years ago by the eruption of the Aira Caldera, and Sakurajima, an active volcano that emerged around 26,000 years ago and continues to erupt today, are key features of the Sakurajima-Kinkowan Geopark. The volcanic activity, including Sakurajima, has profoundly impacted the landscape, geology, nature, history, culture, industry, and the daily lives of the people in the region.

As a result, the central theme of the Geopark is "The connection between volcano, people, and nature." In a unique example of "coexistence with an active volcano," the people of the area have lived alongside the continuously erupting Sakurajima, adapting and advancing their lives while implementing comprehensive disaster preparedness measures.





### **【Supervisors】**

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Naoyuki Wada (Synergy Marketing Co., Ltd.)

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ken.n.miffy.752 (Photographs provided by Kagoshima Prefecture Tourism Website)  
Kagoshima Kayaks

### **【Date of Production】**

08.2025

### **【Contractor】**

Center for Environmental Studies  
Shibundo Corporation

### **【Publisher】**

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