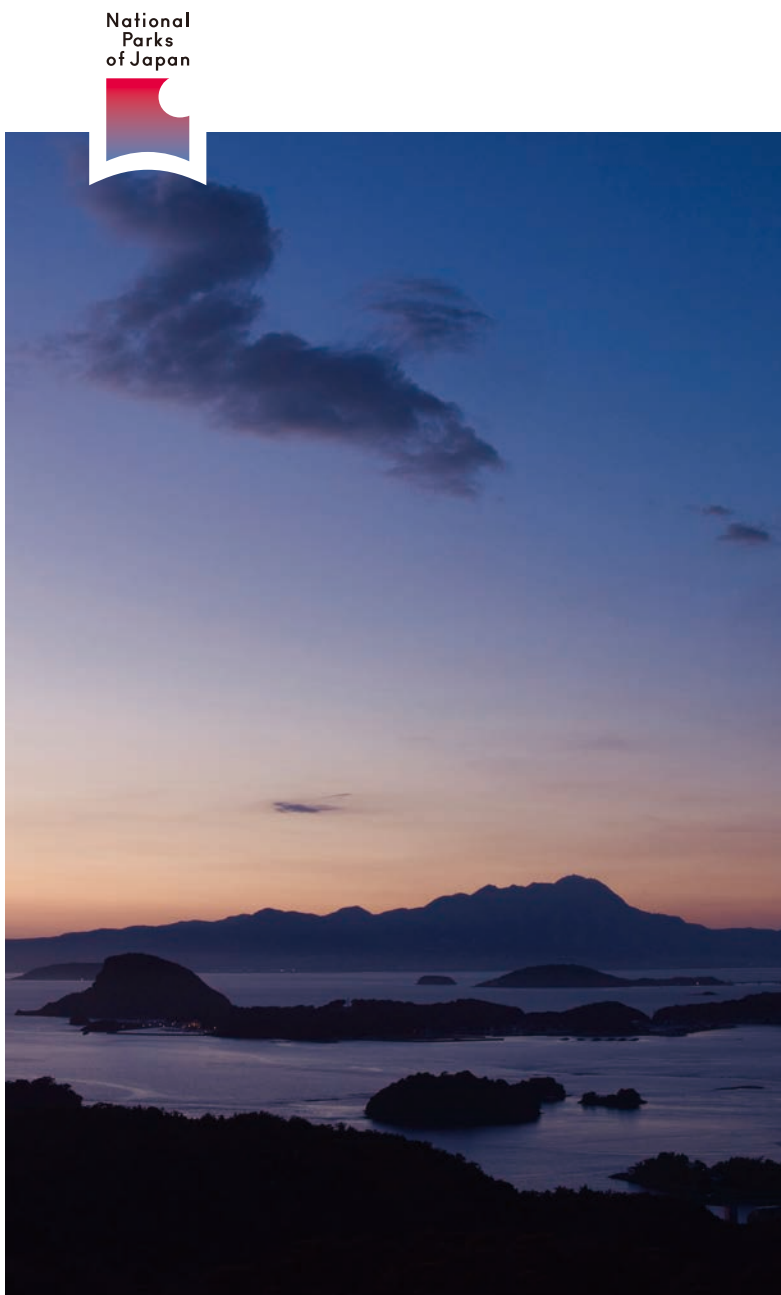


Unzen-Amakusa National Park



National Parks of Japan



A national park is designated by the Japanese government as a natural landscape that represents Japan based on the Natural Parks Act. Thirty-five national parks are designated from Hokkaido in the north down to Okinawa and the Ogasawara Islands in the south, and more than 300 million people visit them every year. These national parks are full of precious treasures such as wild animals and plants, history and culture in addition to the scenic beauty. Japan's national parks are characterized by various environments such as forests, farmlands and villages. While some areas lie almost untouched, the local history and culture derived from nature and its interaction with people's lives can be appreciated in other areas. Come visit our national parks to fully enjoy the beautiful nature of Japan that shows off various sceneries in each season.

Contact List

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Unzen-Amakusa National Park Website
<https://www.env.go.jp/en/nature/nps/park/unzen/index.html>



Cover photo : Mt. Unzen viewed from Mt. Sengan in Amakusa-Matsushima.

For Safe Travel
Please download the application below in order to get information about warnings for earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunami and so on.
*Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=jpo.co.rcsc.safety7tips.android>
*iPhone: <https://itunes.apple.com/jp/app/safety7tips/id65833714?mt=8>



Supported by Japan Tourism Agency (<https://www.jnto.go.jp/safety-tips/eng/app.html>)



Publisher: Ministry of the Environment
Year published: 2025

* Please note that the highlights & guide map's purpose is to show an overview of the designated area; therefore, a margin of error shall be allowed.

Characteristics

"Charismatic Scenery of Land and Waters"
Woven with Mt. Unzen where the Steam Drifts
and the Archipelagic Region of Amakusa

This park was designated as Japan's very first national park in 1934 (Unzen National Park), and then the Amakusa area was added in 1956 (Unzen-Amakusa National Park). The feature of this park is the amazing views of waters and mountains comprised of the volcanic scenery of Mt. Unzen (Mt. Onsen) with drifting hot spring steam and the marine scenery with the archipelagic region of Amakusa. The Unzen area is a mountainous area of the Shimabara Peninsula, consisting of more than 20 mountains centering on Mt. Unzen. Surrounded on three sides by the sea, various panoramic views can be appreciated. Volcanic activities can be witnessed in various places, including "Hot Springs of Hell (Unzen Jigoku)" which is the origin of the name of the mountain. Mt. Unzen was originally written as "Mt. Onsen" which means "Mt. Hot Springs" in Japanese. The Amakusa area is an archipelago consisting of 120 islands of various sizes. A variety of coastal features, such as the distinctive embayment of the submergent coast, land-tied islands, sea cliffs and corals in the sea can be seen. Both areas have many historical sites including those regarding the history of early Christianity in Japan and it is the region where the "Shimabara-Amakusa Rebellion" (1637-1638) occurred. The area is also one of the first regions in Japan where foreign cultures initially arrived.

In recent years, with both centered in the national park, the Shimabara Peninsula has been designated as the "Shimabara Peninsula Geopark" where visitors can enjoy learning about the origins and features of the region; and in Amakusa the "Umi-ni-Ukabu Museum Amakusa" conducts academic research and collects and disseminates information on the natural environment of Amakusa.

[Date of Designation] March 16, 1934
[Relevant Prefectures] Nagasaki Pref., Kumamoto Pref., Kagoshima Pref. [Area] 28,335 ha



Mt. Unzen (Shimabara Peninsula) and islands of Amakusa-Matsushima Seen from Mt. Jiramerudake

History Legendary Giant

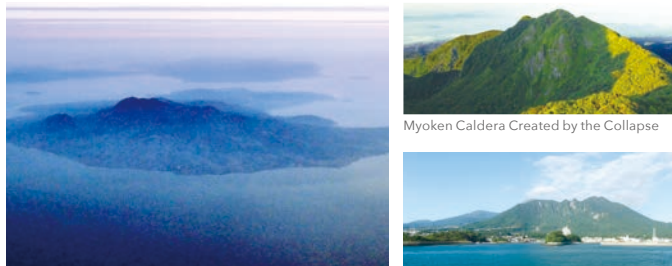
-History-

The Shimabara Peninsula, with Mt. Unzen in the center, was a volcanic island until about 400,000 years ago. Approximately 4.3 million years ago, a volcanic island was formed by the eruptions of underwater volcanoes in Hayasaki, close to Amakusa at the southern tip of the peninsula. It repeatedly erupted afterwards and became a large island like Nishinoshima Island of the Ogasawara Archipelago. Approximately 500,000 years ago, Mt. Unzen (Unzen volcano) was formed, and eruptions started. By 400,000 years or so ago the area became a peninsula when volcanic material flowed down and connected the volcano to the mainland of Kyushu.

After that, horizontal faults (Chijiwa Fault and others) that vertically divided the Shimabara Peninsula into three regions were formed. The central part continued to drop downward in relation to adjacent portions in the north and the south (Unzen Graben). This structure resulted in the subsequent eruptions concentrated in the graben (depression).

Horizontally aligned hot springs, Obama Onsen, Unzen Onsen (Jigoku Onsen), and Shimabara Onsen, were also formed as part of the eruptions in the graben. Steep, magnificent Mt. Unzen was formed while repeatedly going through a cycle of volcanic eruptions. First, highly viscous magma erupted forming a lava dome, and then the dome eventually collapsed due to its own weight during an earthquake and the like.

At least three eruptions were recorded since the dawn of



Mt. Unzen, Towering Shimabara Peninsula (front), and Amakusa Islands (back)



Miyakei Caldera Created by the Collapse of Mt. Mayuyama



Kujubushima Islands Created by the Collapse of Mt. Mayuyama

history. A section collapse of Mt. Mayuyama, triggered by the eruption of Mt. Fugen during the Edo Period in 1792, killed 15,000 people; however, it afterwards resulted in abundant spring water, good fishing grounds and ports in the area.

Eruptions of Mt. Fugen during the period from 1990 to 1995 caused devastating damage due to pyroclastic flows and debris. The highest peak, Mt. Heisei-Shinzan (altitude of 1,483m), was created afterwards due to these continuous eruptions.

The Shimabara Peninsula was designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2009 as a park to learn and appreciate both disasters and blessings of such volcanoes. On the other hand, the Amakusa area is believed to have been formed by the uplift of strata formed between about 100 million (Cretaceous Period of the Mesozoic Era) and 47 million (Tertiary Period of the Cenozoic Era) years ago. Fossils of marine life such as bivalves as well as fossils of dinosaurs have been discovered on the islands of Goshoura. These islands, also called "The Islands of Dinosaurs" and "The Islands of Fossils," is also the area where in 2020 the "Umi-ni-Ukabu Museum Amakusa" began its operations.

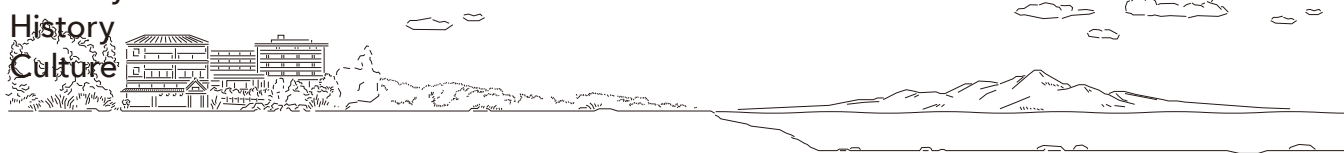


- Legendary Giant -

The legend of a giant named "Misogoro" remains in the folktales of the Shimabara Peninsula and on the other side of the coast, the northern coast of Amakusa. It is a folktale about a giant who loves miso and forms the land while helping farmers and fishermen. It is assumed that originally the name "Misogoro" derived from "Mizou (unprecedented) or Muso (unrivaled) and Goryo (spirit)," which became "Misogoro" or "Musougoro" over time. Thus, Misogoro means "an unprecedented or unrivaled spirit," which implies "the incarnation of Mt. Unzen." Further, "help" of Misogoro also signifies various blessings brought by the eruption of Mt. Unzen.

Scenery of Land and Waters

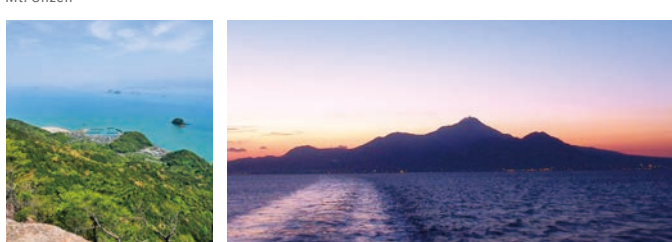
History Culture



Mt. Unzen is surrounded by the sea on three sides, and a variety of panoramic views can be enjoyed from trails and roads. In addition, an elegantly curved silhouette viewed from the sea is captivating. The archipelago of Amakusa features a contrast of calm ocean and rugged cliffs. The eastern coastline of Kamishima Island is also called the "Kankai Alps," meaning "Mountains with beautiful views of the ocean," due to the mountainous landscape of sharp ridgelines approaching close to the sea. The Shimabara and Amakusa areas are adjacent to the East China Sea on the western side and to the Ariake Sea on the eastern side, which is an access route to various locations in Kyushu. Diverse foreign cultures arrived early here and flourished in both areas since ancient times. The Shimabara Peninsula is supposedly one of the first regions where rice farming was introduced in Japan (in the late Jomon period, sometime during the first millennium BCE). Relevant relics can be found in various places throughout the area. Buddhism also came from the continent, and Gyokki, a prominent Buddhist monk, founded the Unzenzan Manmyoji Temple on Mt. Unzen in 701. It was referred to as the "Three



Ariake Sea and Amakusa Islands Viewed from Mt. Unzen



Kankai Alps

Silhouette of Mt. Unzen Seen from the Ariake Sea



Shimabara Somen Noodles



Manmyoji Temple



Unzen Onsen Town

Wild Animals and Plants Ecosystem

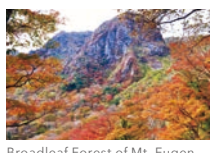
The following three vegetation zones can be seen in the Unzen area: deciduous broadleaf forest zone above an altitude of 950m (the westernmost point on the mainland), laurel forest zone below an altitude of 600m, and mixed forest zone in the range of 600 to 950m in altitude. The area of Mt. Fugen with an average of 1000m in altitude displays gorgeous autumn leaves and is designated as a Natural Monument of Japan called "the Autumn Foliage Forest of Mt. Fugen."

Mt. Heisei-Shinzan, created by the eruption of Mt. Fugen early in the Heisei Period (early to mid-1990s), is also a National Monument of Japan although it is still a young mountain with sparse vegetation.

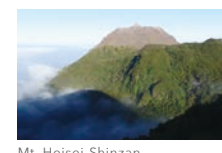
In the Unzen Jigoku where the volcanic gases spurt from underground, the following distribution of vegetation can be observed. Starting from hot spring algae growing in the hot crater lake heated by volcanic gases containing hydrogen sulfide, there are *Fimbristylis dichotoma subsp. Podocarpa* (a typical solfatara plant), the Japanese silver grass, *Enkianthus cernuus* (*Siebold et Zucc.*) *Makino f. cernuus* (a deciduous bush with white raceme flowers), and the Japanese red pine, respectively.

In addition, a sphagnum wetland spread in the primeval swamp that was supposedly created as the fuming of the "Jigoku" (hot spring) weakened. The Japanese iris and the Japanese azalea inhabit the swamp.

This area has an extensive variety of wild birds. Many Blue-and-white Flycatchers, Narcissus Flycatchers, and Lesser Cuckoos



Broadleaf Forest of Mt. Fugen



Mt. Heisei-Shinzan



Unzen Jigoku



Enkianthus cernuus (Siebold et Zucc.) Makino f. cernuus



Blue-and-white Flycatcher

come during the summer, and beautiful bird songs fill the mountains.

Many wild ducks also come to Suwanoike Pond in winter. The representative flowers of Mt. Unzen are Miyamakirishima (Rhododendron kiusianum; a species of azalea) that colors the mountains pink in May and the Kousa Dogwood that colors the mountains white in June.

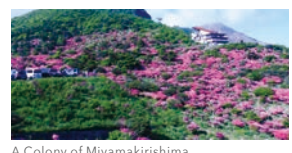
Miyamakirishima is a species of azalea endemic to volcanoes in Kyushu. Since horses and cows do not eat them due to their toxicity, the azalea forms beautiful communities in the former grazing grasslands (Ikenohara, Nita Pass, and Hobaru) and the current grazing land in Tashirobaru.

Both Unzen and Amakusa areas have many agricultural-related landscapes, and magnificent panoramic views of waters and mountains including rice terraces and terraced fields.

The land area of Amakusa features seaside plants such as *Crinum asiaticum* var. *japonicum* (a perennial lily with white flowers) as well as rare plants such as *Myoporum bontioides* (a shrub with white to pale pinkish flowers spotted with purple). There are also nesting grounds for Loggerhead Sea Turtles.

The underwater views present colorful corals influenced by the Tushima Warm Current and schools of vividly colored subtropical fishes.

Shimoshima Island is located on the migratory route of wild birds in the westernmost part of Japan. Migratory birds such as the Chinese Sparrowhawk, the Hooded Crane, and the White-naped Crane can be observed in Mt. Rokuroji.



A Colony of Miyamakirishima (Nita Pass)



A Community of the Kousa Dogwood in the Northern Slope of Mt. Unzen



Grazing Black Cattle



Rice Terraces of Minami-Shimabara



Crinum asiaticum var. japonicum



Sapphire Devil Damselfish and Blackskiffle Grouper

Conservation Efforts



-Unzen Area -

For everyone's safe use of the park, the Ministry of the Environment has been conducting checks and repairs on trails and park paths.

In addition, various activities such as the beautification and cleanup of main spots and roadside areas of the park, nature observation, and the eradication of invasive alien species are conducted with the cooperation of the locally-led "Association to Beautify Unzen (Unzen local office of the Nature Parks Foundation)" and "Park Volunteers" registered with the Ministry of the Environment.

- Amakusa Area -

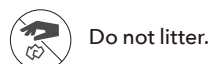
To ensure that the national park is accessible to everyone, we carry out cleaning and weeding activities at Mt. Sengan and Mt. Takabuto on Amakusa-Kamishima Island, and in various locations along the west coast of Amakusa-Shimoshima Island. We also conduct basic research and data collection to protect loggerhead sea turtles, as well as activities to preserve their nesting grounds.



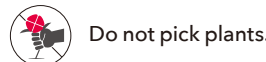
Cleanup of Nita Pass (park volunteers)

National Parks Etiquette

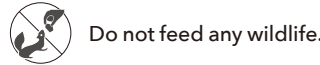
Please keep in mind the importance of nature and observe the following while staying in the national park so that everyone can enjoy.



Do not litter.



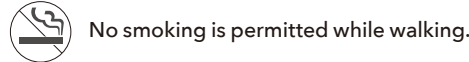
Do not pick plants.



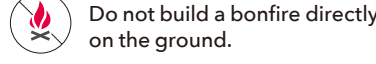
Do not feed any wildlife.



Do not catch/capture any wildlife.



No smoking is permitted while walking.



Do not build a bonfire directly on the ground.



Divers must not disturb commercial fishermen.

Many species of corals and tropical fish inhabit the sea of Amakusa area, and it is designated as a marine park for its beauty.

However, the same sea is also the place where local fishermen have been making a living by various types of fishing since ancient times.

When diving, be sure to report to the local fishery association to avoid accidents, to obey the instructions, and also not to disturb the commercial fishery.

Do not collect marine life.

02	03	Oku-Unzen, Tashirobaru, and Makiba-no-Sato, Azuma	D2
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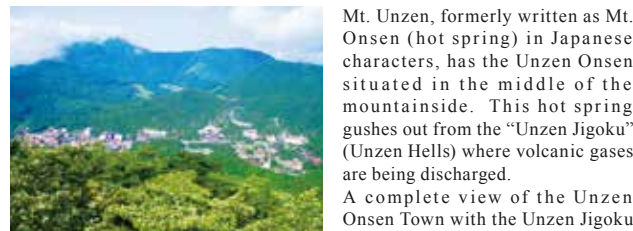
04 | Towering Mt. Mayuyama in Shimabara | E2



05	The Sea and Mt. Unzen Seen from the Vicinity of the Nita Pass	D2
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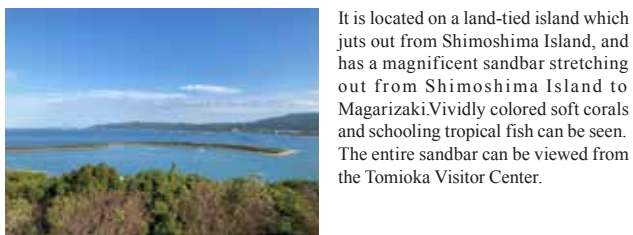


06 | Unzen Jigoku/Unzen Onsen Town | D2

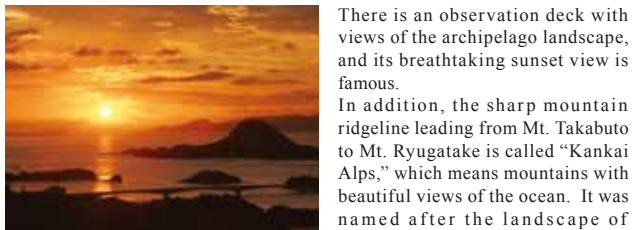


Mt. Takauiwa at the southern tip of Mt. Unzen is the best scenic spot to overlook the townscape of Minami-Shimabara, the Ariake Sea, and the Amakusa Islands. Many folktales of the legendary giant named "Misogoro" who is considered as incarnation of Mt. Unzen remain in this mountain.

09 | Cape Magarizaki | B5



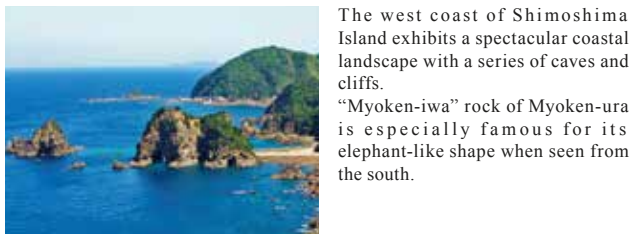
10	Mt. Takabuto – Views from the Observatory –	E5
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11	Mt. Jiromarudake – Views from the Mountaintop Area –	E5
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12 | Myoken-ura | A6



It exhibits a unique marine landscape with dozens of pillar-shaped reefs protruding from the sea of the west coast.

In addition, outstanding underwater landscapes with gentle rock reefs can be found.

14	Sakitsu Catholic Church	B7
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* Designated as an inscribed property of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, "Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region" in June 2018.

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 Kou 2683, Minami Senbonji Town,
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 [TEL] 0957-63-6752

Tomioka Visitor Center | B5
 Honmaru 2245-15, Tomioka-aza, Reihoku Town,
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 863-2507
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 (Photograph Provided by Reihoku Town)

Unzen Suwanoike Visitor Center | C3
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 (Photograph Provided by Amakusa Visitor Center)

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 [TEL] 0969-56-3665
 (Photograph Provided by Amakusa Visitor Center)

	Access	Transportation
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The access route above is an example.
The time required for each section is an estimate only.
Please contact each transportation company or check their websites for more information.



Please contact each responsible ranger office or regional environment office of the Ministry of the Environment for area details.