

Japan's Forests with Breathtaking Views: Selections from the Tourist Destinations in National Forest

Forests have provided both mankind – and indeed all living things – with safety, sustenance and security for an eternity. The lush greenery and gentle breeze of the forest is surely enough to rekindle nature's vigor in any soul.

With more than 70% of Japan landmass covered in abundant greenery, the Forestry Agency is working to create "Recreation Forests" to inspire as many as possible to rediscover the wonder of nature. The best forests to visit have been carefully selected and compiled as "Japan's Forests with Breathtaking Views."

Know before You Visit: General rules for visitors

- 1 Help protect wild animals and plants. When you bring your pets, please mind your manners and give consideration to the surrounding environment.
- 2 Damaging trees or stealing any forest product is penalized by law. Even collecting plants covering the ground of forest are prohibited within protection forests designated by law.
- 3 Do not enter the area beyond walking trails, or public squares. Please follow the rules for each Recreation Forest such as no camping outside the designated area.
- 4 Do not enter the area with 'No Entry' or 'Keep Out' sign.
- 5 When making a stop for rest or any other purposes, please look around and confirm that the area is safe without any risk of being hit by falling branches or rocks.
- 6 Enjoy mountaineering on your own responsibility. Please ensure that you submit your plan for mountaineering to a police station in the area as well as to your family members, your friends or colleagues after checking out climate and other necessary information for mountaineering and fully being equipped. Please also fill in 'The Name List of Climbers and Visitors', which is placed at the mountain entrance.
- 7 Do not enter forests under bad weather conditions.
- 8 Do not dispose of any leftover food in the forest. Please take your garbage home with you.
- 9 Smoking is permitted only in special areas. Make sure to extinguish any fires, e.g. after smoking cigarettes.
- 10 Mountain paths are potentially dangerous to walk. Do not use smartphone while walking. When taking photos, please remain fully aware of your surroundings and do not bother other visitors in any way.
- 11 If you wish to use an unmanned aerial vehicle (drone), you need to submit prior written notice to District Forest Office. Please contact the nearest Regional Forest Office or District Forest Office of national forest beforehand.

Enkatsura Recreation Forest Access Map



Access

By public transport:

● Sapporo Station → (Ltd. Exp. Super Hokuto: about 210 minutes) → Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto Station (Hakodate Bus: about 100 minutes) → get off at the Toriyama bus stop → about 115 minutes on foot (9.1 km)

By car:

● Sapporo Station → Hokkaido Expressway (Otoshibe IC exit: about 190 minutes) → public road (about 80 minutes) → Enkatsura Recreation Forest
● Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto Station → public road (about 100 minutes) → Enkatsura Recreation Forest

Enkatsura Recreation Forest

Address: Tomioka, Otohe Town, Nishi County, Hokkaido Prefecture

Management office contact details:
Hiyama District Forest Office
FAX: 64-0139-2749

Otohe Town Association for Conservation of Giant "Enkatsura" Trees

National Forest Planning Division,
Forestry Agency, MAFF

The Official Recreation Forests Website of the Forestry Agency
http://www.rinya.maff.go.jp/e/national_forest/recreation_forest/index.html



Recreation
Forests of JAPAN

| HOKKAIDO |

ENKATSURA

Recreation Forest



Recreation Forests
Forestry Agency

Enkatsura trees are believed to be the home of a god of marriage. Touch one and make a wish to find a good match!

Enkatsura Recreation Forest Map



Climate, flora and fauna

The Enkatsura Recreation Forest is located in the Sea of Japan climate zone. Due to the effect of the Tsushima Current, the climate is rather warm with a relatively small temperature difference compared to other areas in Hokkaido, but strong seasonal winds blow from the northeast in the winter.

The forest is a combination of a natural forest mainly consisting of Buna (Japanese beech (*Fagus crenata* Blume)) and Itaya Kaede (Acer pictum Thunb. subsp. dissectum (Wesm.) H. Ohashi) and a planted forest mainly consisting of Todomatsu (Todo fir (*Abies sachalinensis*)) and Karamatsu (Japanese larch (*Larix kaempferi*)). Wild animals, including Higuma (Ezo brown bears (*Ursus arctos*)) and Kitakitsune (Ezo red fox (*Vulpes vulpes schrencki*)), live in the forest, and plants, such as Oobaku Yuri (*Cardiocrinum cordatum* (Thunb.) Makino var. *glehnii* (F. Schmidt) H. Hara) and Kurumabaso (sweetscented bedstraw (*Galium odoratum* (L.) Scop.)), can be seen along footpaths.



Walking trail surrounded by Buna (Japanese beech (*Fagus crenata* Blume)) and Mizunara (Japanese oak *mizu-nara* (*Quercus crispata* Blume))

Attractions

The Enkatsura trees have been treasured by local people based on a belief that they house a god of marriage, and bring good matches to those who touch them. Six couples have held wedding ceremonies in front of the Enkatsura trees to date.

There are footpaths in the vicinity of the Enkatsura trees, and the approximately 1 km "Enkatsura Course" offers an enjoyable walk for people of all ages.

The Enkatsura Mori Mori Festival, held on September 23 every year, attracts a large number of visitors from within and outside Hokkaido.



Woodchip-covered footpath

Geographical / topographical features

The Enkatsura Recreation Forest is located in a montane region on the west side of Oshima Peninsula in southwestern Hokkaido. It ranges in elevation from 150 to 370 m. The coast around Hiyama was the earliest area to be developed in Hokkaido, and as such it has a large number of historic shrines and temples as well as cultural properties designated by the national government and the Hokkaido prefectural government.

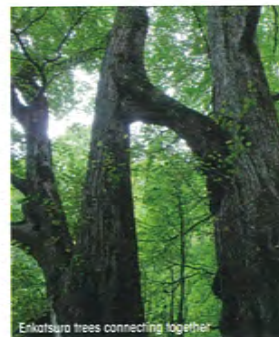
The area faces the Sea of Japan. The coastline offers varied landscapes where precipitous cliffs and unusually shaped rocks and stones harmonize beautifully with the blue ocean. The coastal area, with its superb views of islands including Okushiri Island, Matsumae-Oshima Island, and Matsumae-Kojima Island in the far distance, has been designated a notable scenic area in southern Hokkaido as Hiyama Prefectural Natural Park.



Enkatsura trees with new leaves

Historical / cultural features

Two approximately 500-year-old "Enkatsura" trees (*katsura* trees (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum* Siebold et Zucc. ex Hoffm. et Schult.) stand about 40 m tall, with trunk diameters of up to 6.1 m, at the foot of the montane area. Because they are "connected trees"—their branches intertwine 7 m above the ground—they are treasured by local people as matchmakers. According to legend, in the Meiji period (the latter half of the 19th century to early 20th century), a brawny fisherman tried to cut down the trees, but when he raised his axe, he suddenly lost his strength and was unable to do so. The Forestry Agency selects giant, over 100-year-old trees that have grown without human intervention in mountainous areas in national forests nationwide for inclusion in its 100 Giants of the Forest list. The Enkatsura trees were included on this list in 2000.



Enkatsura trees connecting together

Information

• Elevation(m)	150–370
• Area (ha)	182.13
• Entrance fee	Free
• Opening seasons	Accessible 24 hours a day. During the winter (November through April), the road to the forest is closed to traffic about 1 km before the parking lot.
• Accommodation options	[Outside the forest] "Kourinsou" and Wheelchair-Accessible Hotel "Asunaro"
• Car parking capacity / parking charges	Free parking for approximately 20 vehicles