

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 equipment. 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.

Matsubara (Pine Grove) Recreation Forest Access Map



Access

By public transport:

- 0 minutes on foot from the "Kehi no Matsubara" bus stop
- 0 minutes on foot from "Matsubara Kaigan" (Kehi no Matsubara Beach) bus stop
- JR Tsuruga Station → ("Matsubara Line" community bus: about 12 minutes) → "Kehi no Matsubara" bus stop
- JR Tsuruga Station → (Gurutto Tsuruga Shuyu bus (Tsuruga round trip bus): about 15 minutes) → "Matsubara Kaigan" (Kehi no Matsubara Beach) bus stop

By car:

- Hokuriku Expressway Tsuruga IC → public road: about 10 minutes → Matsubara (Pine Grove) Recreation Forest

Matsubara (Pine Grove) Recreation Forest

Address : Matsushima Town, Tsuruga City, Fukui Prefecture

Management office contact details:
Fukui District Forest Office
FAX : 0776-27-3574

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



MATSUBARA (Pine Grove) Recreation Forest



Matsubara—a splendid contrast between white sand beaches and green pine trees



Climate, flora and fauna

The forest is in the warm temperate zone and has a Sea of Japan climate with many cloudy and snowy days during the winter.

Unlike other pine groves, Japanese red pines constitute approximately 60% of the grove. Japanese black pines grow along the coast, while Japanese red pines grow on the inland side of the grove.



Kuromatsu (Japanese black pine (Pinus thunbergii))

Attractions

The Matsubara (Pine Grove) Recreation Forest is used by locals throughout the year for recreational walks.

A walking trail starts next to the parking lot, and visitors can relax and stroll through the grove on a flat footpath. A bathing beach opens in the summer and the Floating Lanterns and Fireworks Show held every August is one of the biggest events in the prefecture.

Pines over 230 years old in the grove have been withering in recent years due to damage from Matsunozaisenchu (pine wood nematode (Bursaphelenchus xylophilus (Steiner et Bhrner) Nickle) and changing forest conditions. In order to ensure that the valuable pine grove is passed on to future generations, interested locals gathered and formulated the "100-Year Scheme for Kehi no Matsubara" in 2013. The general public (tourists can also participate) and elementary, junior high and high school students participate in conservation activities, including pine-needle raking,* intended to preserve Kehi no Matsubara. The forest also hosts educational activities on the forest environment, such as nature observation sessions.

* Pine trees grow in soil with few nutrients, but fallen pine needles gradually increase the amount of nutrients in the soil. Pine needles that fall onto the ground are therefore raked and removed, revealing the sand beneath, to optimize the environment for the sound growth of pines.



Seaside footpath

Geographical / topographical features

Kehi no Matsubara is renowned for the impressive contrast between its white sand beaches and green pine trees and green Kuromatsu (Japanese black pine (Pinus thunbergii)) and Akamatsu (Japanese red pine (Pinus densiflora)) trees. It is a flat pine forest facing Tsuruga Bay, extending about 1 km from east to west and 0.4 km from north to south, popular among tourists and locals for its scenic beauty. It also serves a useful role in the daily lives of the local community by protecting the city from brine damage.



Kehi no Matsubara protecting Tsuruga City from brine damage

Historical / cultural features

Kehi no Matsubara is counted with Niji no Matsubara (Saga Prefecture) and Miho no Matsubara (Shizuoka Prefecture) as one of Japan's three greatest pine groves. It has been selected as one of Japan's top 100 white sand beaches with green pine trees and one of Japan's 100 best pine groves, in addition to being designated as Wakasa Wan Quasi-national Park.

There is a legend about Kehi no Matsubara. Long ago, in the time of Emperor Shomu, foreign invaders attacked. The land of Tsuruga suddenly trembled and thousands of pine trees appeared along the beach in just one night. A flock of white herons—messenger birds of Kehi Jingu Shrine—perched on the pine trees, resembling flags fluttering in the wind. The enemy, believing they were the flags of an army of tens of thousands of men, retreated in terror. (This legend is engraved on the stone monument under the title "The Legend of the Overnight Pine Grove" standing at the end of the parking lot.)



Kehi no Matsubara being cared for by local people

Information

- Elevation(m) 2–5
- Area (ha) 32.45
- Entrance fee Free
- Operating seasons Accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- Operation hours by staff Seasonal tourist information center in the parking lot
* Operating hours and season: 10:00 a.m.–3:00p.m. April through November. No staff present during July and August. No telephone.
- Accommodation options [Outside the forest] 13 Japanese hotels and guest houses in the vicinity
- Car parking capacity / parking charges Free parking for 50 vehicles
* However, parking fees are required when the bathing beach opens (from around July 10 through around August 20).
(Ordinary vehicle: 1,000 yen, microbus: 2,000 yen, large bus: 3,000 yen)