

FEATURES

Japan's Healing Forests <Part 1>



From top:

A 400-year-old Japanese Beech tree — the symbol of the Shirakami-Sanchi Mountains

A pilgrimage route leading to three sacred sites known as Kumano Sanzan. The model in the photograph is wearing attire typical of upper-class ladies during the medieval period, often worn while traveling. (Kumano Kodo)

Yonjusanman Falls can be seen on the 'Mankitsu Course' (Kikuchi Gorge)

Shikoku no Michi (Shikoku Karst Tengu Highland Natural Recreational Forest)

Japan is one of the most forested countries in the world, with approximately 70 percent of its land area covered by forest. There are many rich and diverse forests that have been nurtured over a long period of time. In Japan, the practice of relaxing in such a forest, away from the busy daily life, is called “*shinrin-yoku*” (forest bathing)*, and overseas it is also known as “*shinrin-yoku*” as the Japanese term implies. Actually, forest bathing has scientifically proven the relaxing effects. This issue of *Highlighting Japan* introduces readers to forest bathing based on scientific knowledge and some of Japan's most famous forests, including the Akasawa Natural Recreation Forest in Nagano Prefecture, the birthplace of forest bathing, the Shirakami Sanchi Mountain Range, and the ancient pilgrimage routes of Kumano Kodo, as well as various initiatives that utilize forests.

* The Japanese term for “*shinrin-yoku*” is forest bathing. *Shinrin* means ‘forest’ and *Yoku* means ‘bath.’ *Shinrin-Yoku* literally means forest bathing, or ‘taking in the forest atmosphere’ for therapeutic results.

