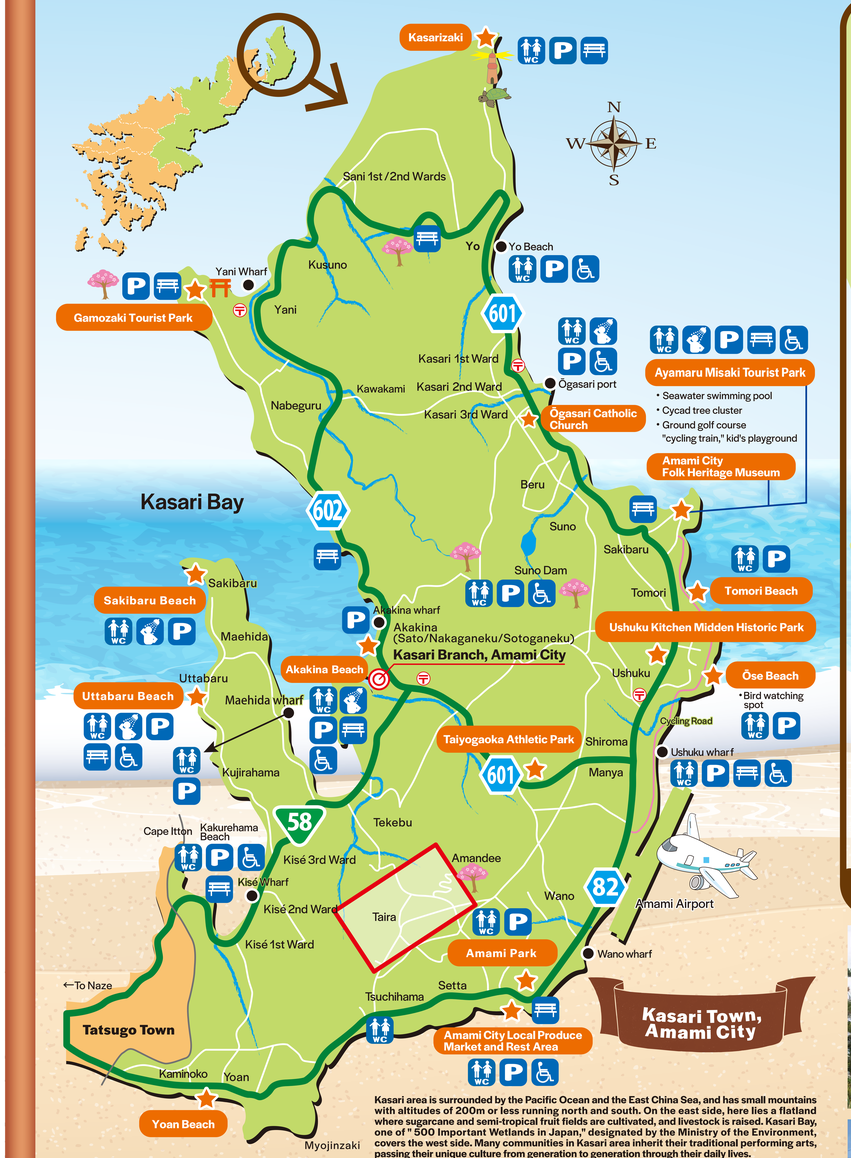
# Kasari Area, Amami City Tale of Taira Community




Kasari area is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea, and has small mountains with altitudes of 200m or less running north and south. On the east side, here lies a flatland where sugarcane and semi-tropical fruit fields are cultivated, and livestock is raised. Kasari Bay, one of " 500 Important Wetlands in Japan," designated by the Ministry of the Environment, covers the west side. Many communities in Kasari area inherit their traditional performing arts, passing their unique culture from generation to generation through their daily lives.

※ The scale below is presented as an approximate guideline.

0Km 1Km 2Km 3Km 4Km 5Km

**Legend**

- Toilet
- Shower
- Parking area
- Rest area
- Barrier-free toilet
- Kasari Branch, Amami City
- Major Sightseeing Spots and Facilities

Amami City HP

**Administration: Amami City**

## Taira (*Tera* or *Terya* in local dialect)

While many communities face the ocean in Kasari area, Taira Community is an inland community. The community grows Amami brand fruits, including mangoes. The community is proud of its delicious spring water from Sauzun River shared not only among the community residents but also with people in the neighboring communities.

**1 Water Reservoir**

Taira Community is situated on a 30m high plateau. A water reservoir on a 10m high concrete stand is a landmark in the community. *Terya* (Taira) was famous for its *Terya muzi* (Taira water). People have collected water from *Sauzingo* spring at the bottom of the valley since 1960.

**2 Taira Catholic Church**

Chohachi Nakamura from mainland Nagasaki was engaged in his missionary work between 1898 and 1923. The church, built in December 1954, has been the venue for the community's ceremonial occasions. The last wedding at the church was, however, held in 1957. Like the one in Tekebu Community, it is a small but pretty church.

**3 Taira Graveyard**

Taira graveyard is situated on the plateau on the east side of the community, featuring tombstones from the late Edo period to the Meiji period (late 1850's to early 1900's). The tombstones are made of valuable stones, including Ishikawa and Kaijiki stones from mainland Kagoshima as well as local coral stones and Setta stone. It is considered, like other graveyards on the island, that these tombstones illustrate social status of the deceased and their families.

**4 Residence on Lowered Land**

As a way to counter the frequent typhoon attacks every year, many places in Amami Oshima island have windbreaker forests. In places with strong wind, people lower the land to build houses, avoiding direct gusts of wind. Taira Community is one of the most representative examples of such cases. The lowered land is surrounded by raised ground preserved by bamboo fences.

**5 Taabachiyama Mountain (Mountain of *Tenson Korin* Myth)**

Taabachiyama Mountain is considered to be *Amanjee* where the descent on the earth by the creators took place. The myth says two creators, female Amamiko and male Shinireku, came to Amami from heaven. On Setta side, Amamiko Shrine is located at the bottom of the mountain. The locals make prayers at the top of the mountain to the New Year sunrise for peace and prosperity in their households.

**6 *Sauzingo***

People from Taira and Tekebu communities used to collect water from this spring in the valley. The water was well-known for its outstanding taste, and visitors to *Terya* often took the water home. The spot was also a venue for *Ko-oresi* (celebration of a new born). It is an indispensable *Iyungo* spring for community residents.
It is one of 100 well-conserved waters designated by the Ministry of the Environment.

**7 Water deity**

Situated in the valley, *Sauzingo* spring is a good source of drinking water. The spot is also known as a sacred place with a water deity enshrined. People fear this place, believing a mysterious *Amore unagu*, a nymph, appears here. There used to be an *Amore unagu* stone that had a concave part, similar to a footstep.

**8 Deity residence site**

At the bottom of the water reservoir above *Sauzingo*, there is a deity residence site. Two deity pathways through the community lead to the site, one from Taabachiyama Mountain and the other from the south. Taira Community is full of sacred elements, including the *Tenson Korin* myth, deity paths, the deity residence, and Amamiko Shrine, combined with Ryukyu (Okinawa) customs.