Visitors' Guide 1

Omote Daisetsu Area

Omote Daisetsu Area is in the northernmost region of this park, near Mount Asahi. Rope-ways run up to the midpoints of Kurodake and Mount Asahi, and the climbing is relatively easy. Please refer to pages 24-25 on sightseeing in the Souunkyo Gorge and Tenninkyo Gorge. Asahikawa City is the starting point. You can get to the park either by bus, or by combination of train and bus.

Kurodake (1,984m)

From Souunkyo Hot Spring, you can reach the summit by taking the ropeway, and then a ski lift up an elevation of 1,500m. From there, you climb the remaining 480m on foot. The summit offers an impressive view of the central vent of Daisetsuzan. Although the summit is rather narrow, the wide mountain ridge is extending from its head. There is a wide variety of plant species such as the Bleeding Heart (Dicentra spectabilis) across the entire area. The most popular route of trekking Omote Daisetsu area is to start at Kurodake, going around the fringe of Mount Hokuchin along the edge of the Ochihidara crater, then go down through Susaodaira to the Mount Asahi rope-way. Although it involves more ups and downs, you can take another course, by going around the other side of the Ochihidara crater, then passing Mount Asahi and getting to the Mount Asahi rope-way.

Numanodaira

You can reach Numanodaira by climbing up from Azanker Hot Spring, located to the north of Asahi-dake Hot Spring. It is a tranquil wetland expanding about halfway up Mount Abetsu. The marshes are beautiful. From Numanodaira, passing through Tomanokokoshi, you can get to Susaodaira.

From Ginsendai to Mount Akadake (2,078m)

The bus runs from Souunkyo Hot Spring to Ginsendai, situated at the base of Mount Akadake. If you climb Mount Akadake after passing the first and second flower gardens, you can view the mountains of Omote Daisetsu. Many rare plants, such as the Rosier Geranium (Gentiana jamaica) and the Cineren-tipped Loquese (Pedicularis oederi) grew in the area between Mount Akadake and Mount Kizumi, which formed a long time ago.

Mount Asahi (2,291m)

The ropeway runs from Asahidake Hot Spring to Sugatami Station at an elevation of 1,600m. The horseshoe-shaped vent of Mount Asahi, which frequently releases smoke, can be seen straight ahead. This is the starting point for mountaineering in the directions of Mount Asahi and Kurodake. However, for a quick tour, there is a sightseeing trail that goes to Sugatami Pond and the Meoto Pond nearby, with Susaodaira stretching ahead. There is a huge cluster of Alaskan Aven (Siviera pensetales) in Susaodaira, and it is magnificent during the flowering season and in the fall when the leaves change color. There is also a walkway between Sugatami Station and Daisen Station at the base. The path to Mount Asahi is sandy, with little vegetation. After passing Mount Asahi and reaching the Ohchidara crater edge, you can go in any direction around the crater to reach Kurodake.
Kogen Hot Spring and Swamp Tour

There are numerous small lakes and swamps in the forests extending below Takanezawa. A tour of the swamps starting at Kogen Hot Spring is a highly popular trekking route especially during the fall when the leaves are changing color. There is a restriction on private cars during this season, so you should check the road conditions before you go. The bus runs from Sounkyo Gorge to Kogen Hot Spring. Before your departure, make sure to attend an orientation lecture at the Brown Bear Information Center located at the entry point of the walkway. Walkways may be closed when the likelihood of encountering brown bears is high.

Autumn Leaves that Color the Entire Mountain

The leaves change color early in Daisetsuzan, beginning with the alpine zone around mid-September. Tiny plants such as Upright Azaleas (Rhododendron faussi) and Akebono Amanas (Paeonia japonica) turn bright red. The color change descends quickly and eventually enters the forest zone, where trees such as Japanese Firs (Abies firma), Erman’s Birch (Betula ermanii), Miyahara’s Maple (Acer miyabeanum), and the Japanese Judas (Caragana japonica) turn red, orange, and yellow, adorning the entire mountain with a bright bouquet. This sumptuous bouquet of colors occurs just before the snow covers everything. The autumn colors around Kogen Hot Spring are particularly vivid.

Mount Tomuraushi Area

The area between Takanezawa and Mount Tomuraushi, located to the south of the central vent of the volcanoes in Daisetsuzan, is known as Kamui-nintar—a playground of the Gods. This celestial world includes a grand plateau, flower gardens extending as far as the eye can see, and alpine terrains at various spots, among other things. This area requires at least an overnight trip. Visitors may either sleep in the shelters, or bring their own tents. In the Daisetsuzan region, encompassing the Takachiho Mountains and others, there are no well-equipped mountain huts like those in the Japanese Alps. There are a number of huts in the vicinity of Kurodake. There is a manager during the summer at Kurodake and Mount Hidaka shelter. However, the evacuation huts at other locations such as Mount Chubetsu and Hidaka Swamp are unoccupied. Moreover, camping is prohibited at locations other than those designated, so you should plan your mountaineering trip carefully after obtaining the latest information from local visitor centers. The major routes are not difficult during periods without snow, but they are long, and better suited for experienced climbers.

Glacial Remnants in Hokkaido

The cirques (shallow semi-circular valleys created by small-scale glaciers) in the Hidaoka Mountain Range situated to the south of Daisetsuzan are well known glacial structures in Hokkaido. There are various cirque-like geographical features present in Daisetsuzan, which is at a higher elevation than the Hidaoka Mountain Range. Although there are accumulations of materials resembling moraines (unconsolidated glacial debris), there is debate over whether they are actually cirques, and not all researchers agree. This is because the volcanics activity in Daisetsuzan which created the present mountains, is thought to have continued into a warmer period after the last glacial period, when many of the glaciers developed. In addition, explosive vents are also known to form structures similar to cirques.