The National Park Profile

The Japanese Islands—70% of the land is covered by forests and blessed with diverse biota from subarctic to subtropical zones. National park areas represent Japan’s rich and beautiful nature. National Parks in Japan, founded in 1911, have a history of over 70 years. Presently, from Hokkaido to Ryukyu Islands, 29 areas have been designated national parks nationwide, amounting to 5% of land area of the country. National parks contain the nation’s representative natural environments, and comprise the framework for preserving natural environments and biodiversity of Japan.

National Parks in Hokkaido

1. Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu
   Designated on September 20, 1976 / Land Area: 24,166 ha
   The northernmost national park in Japan. Comprised of three areas: isolated peak Rishiri Island on the ocean, Rebun Island with endemic plants, and the magnificent Sarobetsu wetland extending from the mouth of Sarobetsu River. Its dynamic scenery and biota are its prominent features.

2. Shiretoko
   Designated on January 1994 / Land Area: 38,632 ha
   The park area extends from the center to the tip of Shiretoko Peninsula. There are almost no human settlements, and thus pristine ecosystems in which sea and land have remained virtually untouched. It is the habitat of large wild animals such as the Brown Bear, the Steller’s Sea Eagle, and the Northern Sea Lion. The area was designated a World Heritage Site in 2005.

3. Akan
   Designated on December 4, 1994 / Land Area: 90,481 ha
   One of the most historical national parks in Japan. Primeval forests of Sakhalin Fir and Ezo Spruce, and lakes of various sizes shaped by volcanic activities are the core of its scenery. It is a park that lets you feel the immensity of nature typical of Hokkaido. There are some volcanoes that are still active and hot springs at various places.

4. Kushiro-Shitsugen
   Designated on July 20, 1997 / Land Area: 26,861 ha
   A relatively new national park, designated in 1997. Kushiro Shitsugen is the largest wetland in the country, expanding around the Kushiro River basin (with plants such as the sedge), it is a precious habitat for wild, endangered species such as the Red-crowned Crane and rare Japanese Heron (Hirundo erythrocephala). It was included in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance in 1985.

5. Daisetuzan
   Designated on December 6, 1994 / Land Area: 226,764 ha
   With a total area 226,000 ha, it is the largest national park in Japan. A chain of 2000m-class mountains, it is known as the “roof of Hokkaido.” There are expansive clusters of alpine plants on the mountains. It is a highly primeval park, and home to various wild animals including the Brown Bear.

6. Shikotsu-Toya
   Designated on May 16, 1949 / Land Area: 99,479 ha
   Principle attractions are the scenery created by calderas lakes and volcanoes, which continue to be very active. The park encompasses highly natural forests. Being close to the Hokkaido metropolitan area, it is popular as a recreational field due to its high accessibility.