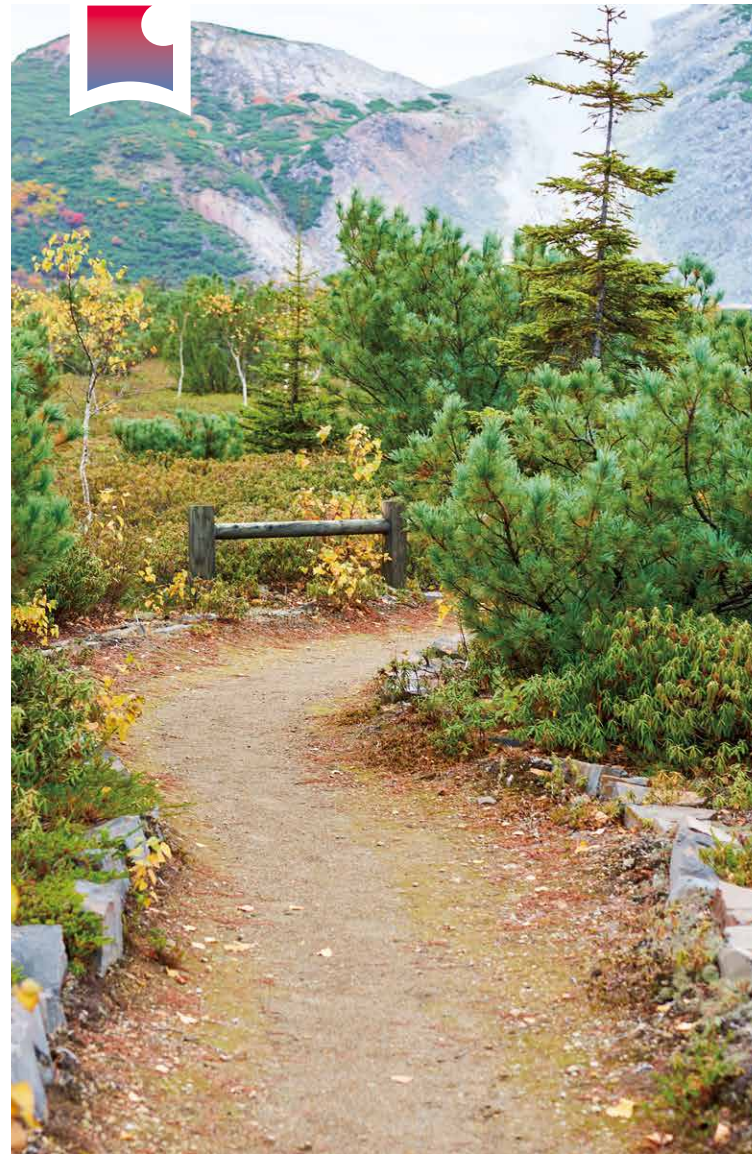




Akan-Mashu National Park

Trail Guide

National
Parks
of Japan



Published by:
Akan-Mashu National Park Administrative Office
Ministry of the Environment

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The Ainu design on this guide is certified by the
General Corporate Judicial Person Akan Aynu Konsarun (Oct. 2020)



Learn more about Akan-Mashu National Park
<https://www.japan.travel/national-parks/parks/akan-mashu/>

Oct. 2020

Welcome to Akan-Mashu National Park

Akan-Mashu National Park covers around 914 square kilometers of volcanic terrain. The landscape is the result of major eruptions some hundreds of thousands of years ago, and features active volcanoes, diverse fauna and flora, and Japan's largest caldera lake. Explore the park on one of the many walking and hiking trails introduced in this booklet.

The trails vary in length and difficulty, from short nature walks suitable for families, to challenging mountain climbs for experienced hikers, where climbers are afforded prime views of the vast caldera lakes.

The first stop for any visitor to the park should be one of the visitor centers. Staff at the Kawayu Eco-museum Center, the Akankohan Eco-museum Center, and the Wakoto Field House can recommend the best hike for you and provide any necessary information you might need, including the latest news on bear sightings. For safety reasons, anyone planning to go on a hike must write their name and intended route in the ledger at the trailhead.

We hope you enjoy your time in Hokkaido's great outdoors.



Akan-Mashu National Park

This historical National Park retains ancient, untouched natural scenery.

This park stands out for its stunning natural scenery, created by the interplay between forest and lakes, in particular the three Chishima Volcanic Belt-formed caldera lakes of Akan, Kussharo and Mashu. It is divided into two areas, one centered around Lake Mashu and Lake Kussharo, and one around Lake Akan. You can explore the natural landscape while hiking, fishing, and canoeing as well as taking a bath in the hot springs of Akanko Onsen and Kawayu Onsen.



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Before You Go

Your safety and the decisions you make while hiking the trails are your responsibility.

You must understand that there are hazards and risks of accidents when in nature. You should only enter the wilds after thorough preparation, including that of your physical condition, and with the understanding that you take full responsibility for any accidents that may happen. With bad weather, the risks of landslides or falling rocks, trees, and branches increase, so please be ready to change or cancel your plans when necessary.

- Choose an appropriate course for your physical ability, condition, and outfitting.
- Mountain weather is prone to variability, so make sure to gather as much information as possible in advance. Also, be sure to bring rain gear.
- The mountains of Hokkaido can see sudden temperature drops below even 1,000 meters, so bring cold-weather gear even in summer.
- There are no drinking water supplies on the hiking trails, so you must bring your own drinking water.
- There are no toilets on the hiking trails. Bring a portable toilet. Keep in mind that there are no stalls for portable toilets, either.
- Be sure to write your information in the Hiker Register located at the trailhead.
- Do not deviate from the trails.
- Take your trash home with you.
- Do not approach or feed any wild animals.
- When driving on forest roads, it's best to use a high-clearance 4WD. Be aware that forest roads can be closed according to season or road conditions.

Dangerous Animal Information

Brown Bears: Carry a bear bell and bear spray. It's important to avoid meeting brown bears. Bears tend to avoid humans, so try to announce your presence by making noise in order to ward them off.

Ticks/Mites & Biting flies: Wear long sleeves and long pants, and try to avoid baring skin. Also, bring insect repellent.




Hornets: Avoid wearing black or very dark clothing. If a swarm approaches, wrap a white towel around your head and neck, and back up slowly to escape the area.

Red Foxes: To avoid echinococcosis (from tapeworms spread by foxes), do not drink any un-boiled water from rivers, etc.

About this guide

The Ministry of the Environment has created this map to introduce the regularly accessible walking trails within Akan-Mashu National Park. Each trail and facility is owned and maintained by different organizations, so they are not all the property or responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment. Every trail and facility is available for use based on the understanding that users accept full responsibility for their actions and understand the risk of accidents, and that no organizations are obligated to accept any responsibility for accidents that may happen when using these trails or facilities.

Course Grading:

Grade		Grade 1 Walking	Grade 2 Light hiking	Grade 3 Day-long hiking
				
Intended hiker		· For those wanting to enjoy an easy walk through nature for about an hour · For those with little or no hiking experience	· For those who want to enjoy mountain hiking for about a half-day · For those with some mountain hiking experience	· For those wanting to enjoy a day-long mountain hike · For those with mountain hiking and long-distance hiking experience
Trail Condition	Time (not including travel time to starting point)	Around 1 hour (60 minutes) or less	Around 3 hours (180 minutes) or less	Around 3-6 hours (180-360 minutes)
	Distance	Around 2 km	Around 2-6 km	Around 6 to 15 km
	Elevation gain	Sea level to around 200 m	Around 200-300 m	Around 300-1,000 m
Clothing		· Hat · Comfortable clothes · Athletic shoes	· Hat · Hiking clothes · Hiking boots	
What to bring		Backpack · Trash bags · Water bottle · Map · Rain Gear		
		—	· Provisions · Cold weather gear	· Provisions · Cold weather gear · Headlamp · Portable toilet · Compass

This trail grading system is used only inside the Akan-Mashu National Park.

Legend:

-  Hut
-  Accommodation
-  Picnic Spot / Bench
-  View Point / Scenic Spot
-  Campground
-  Car Park
-  Bus / Bus Stop
-  Toilet
-  Visitor Center
-  Information
-  Onsen
-  Alpine Flowers
-  Trailhead
-  Distance Marker

1 Bokke Walking Trail



The Bokke Walking Trail stretches from Marimo-no-Sato Pier on the shore of Lake Akan to the Akankohan Eco-museum Center. The wide, forested path offers an introduction to Akan-Mashu National Park and takes about 45 minutes to walk. Along the trail you can see views of the lake, diverse plant life, and volcanic pools of bubbling mud.

The bubbling mud pools, known as bokke, are one of the highlights of the trail. They are the result of steam and volcanic gases escaping through vents in the earth's surface. Their name comes from the Ainu word pofuke, meaning "to bubble up." The trail offers good views of these steamy pools from the lakeshore.

The Bokke Walking Trail merges with the Forest Trail, which runs through a mixed coniferous and deciduous forest and leads to the Akankohan Eco-museum Center and Akankohan Parking lot. Panels along the trail describe the types of wildlife and trees seen along the way, including Sakhalin Spruce, Sakhalin Fir, Yezo Spruce, and Katsura. The Forest Trail takes about 20 minutes, but this can vary according to fitness level.

Distance	approx. 1.5 km Total	Time	[Total] 45 min
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Grade1

Easy walk for 1-2 hours.
Let's go with comfortable clothes.

Access

From Kushiro/Kushiro Airport (By car)

- Kushiro City Center → National Route 240 (1 hr 20 min) → Akankohan Eco-museum Center
- Kushiro Airport → National Route 240 (1 hr) → Akankohan Eco-museum Center

From Abashiri/Memanbetsu Airport (By car)

- Abashiri City Center → National Route 240 (1.5 hr) → Akankohan Eco-museum Center
- Memanbetsu Airport → National Route 240 (1 hr) → Akankohan Eco-museum Center

Cautions

- The bubbling mud is very hot around 100°C. It is very dangerous, so you should never go inside the fence.



2 Mt. Hakuto Nature Trail



This trail is easily accessible from Akanko Onsen. From Akankohan National Ski Area, it is a relatively easy 1.5-hour hike from the bottom of the ski field to the Mt. Hakuto Observatory (800 m). In spring and summer, the ski field turns into a vast meadow of wildflowers. In autumn, the leaves of the trees along the trail turn an array of fiery colors.

The trail passes a stream fed with water from a natural hot spring, as well as bubbling mud pools known as bokke. Bokke are the result of geothermal activity, and there are several of them scattered throughout the Lake Akan area. The pools bubble and gurgle, and are usually heard before they are seen.

About 800 meters up the mountain, there is an observatory with views of Lake Akan, Mt. Oakan, and Mt. Meakan. Despite the altitude, the ground temperature around the observatory is relatively warm. This is because of geothermal activity, which prevents snow from building up on the ground around the observatory in winter and enables moss to grow.

Distance	approx. 1.9 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 1.5 hr [Descent] 40 min
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Grade2

Light mountain hiking for about half a day.
Do you have appropriate equipment?

Access

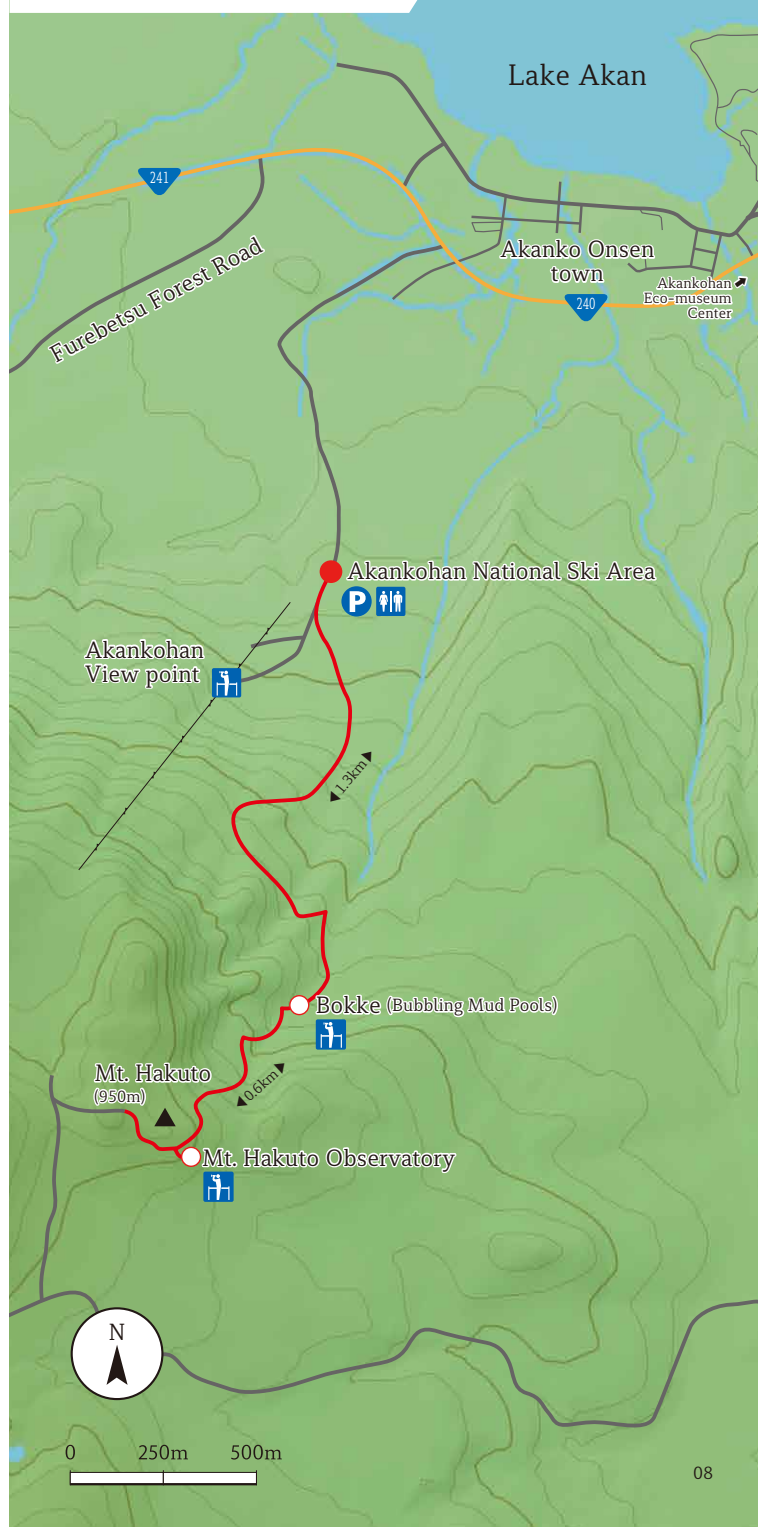
From Akankohan Eco-museum Center (By Car)

● Mt. Hakuto Nature Trailhead
Akankohan Eco-museum Center →
National Route 241 · Turn left to the Ski Area (5 min) →
Akankohan National Ski Area

Parking: Akankohan National Ski Area Parking Approx. 50 cars

Cautions

- The ground temperature around the observatory is warm due to geothermal activity, and this allows moss to grow. Aside from safety reasons, please stay on the trail in order to protect the moss.
- The ski lift is available only in winter for Skiers.



Did you know?

Mt. Meakan and Mt. Oakan: an old married couple

According to Japanese folklore, Mt. Meakan^{p15} and Mt. Oakan^{p11} are considered to be a married couple. This is often the case with two prominent mountains within the same area in Japan.

It is generally believed the larger mountain of a pair is the wife. Mt. Meakan (1,499 m) has 10 peaks and is taller than Mt. Oakan, and is called Machineshiri (“woman mountain”) in the Ainu language. Mt. Oakan (1,370 m), is smaller and has only one peak, and is called Pinneshiri (“man mountain”). The main peak of Mt. Meakan was formed between 3,000 and 7,000 years ago, while Mt. Oakan’s current shape was formed around 2,500 years ago.

One of the best places to view Meakan is from the western shore of Lake Onneto, where there is an observation deck. Oakan can be seen from the town of Akanko Onsen, and there are fine views from the shores of Lake Akan. The mountain is easy to recognize because of its symmetrical, cone-like shape.



Front: Mt. Oakan, Behind: Mt. Meakan
View from Sogakudai Observatory



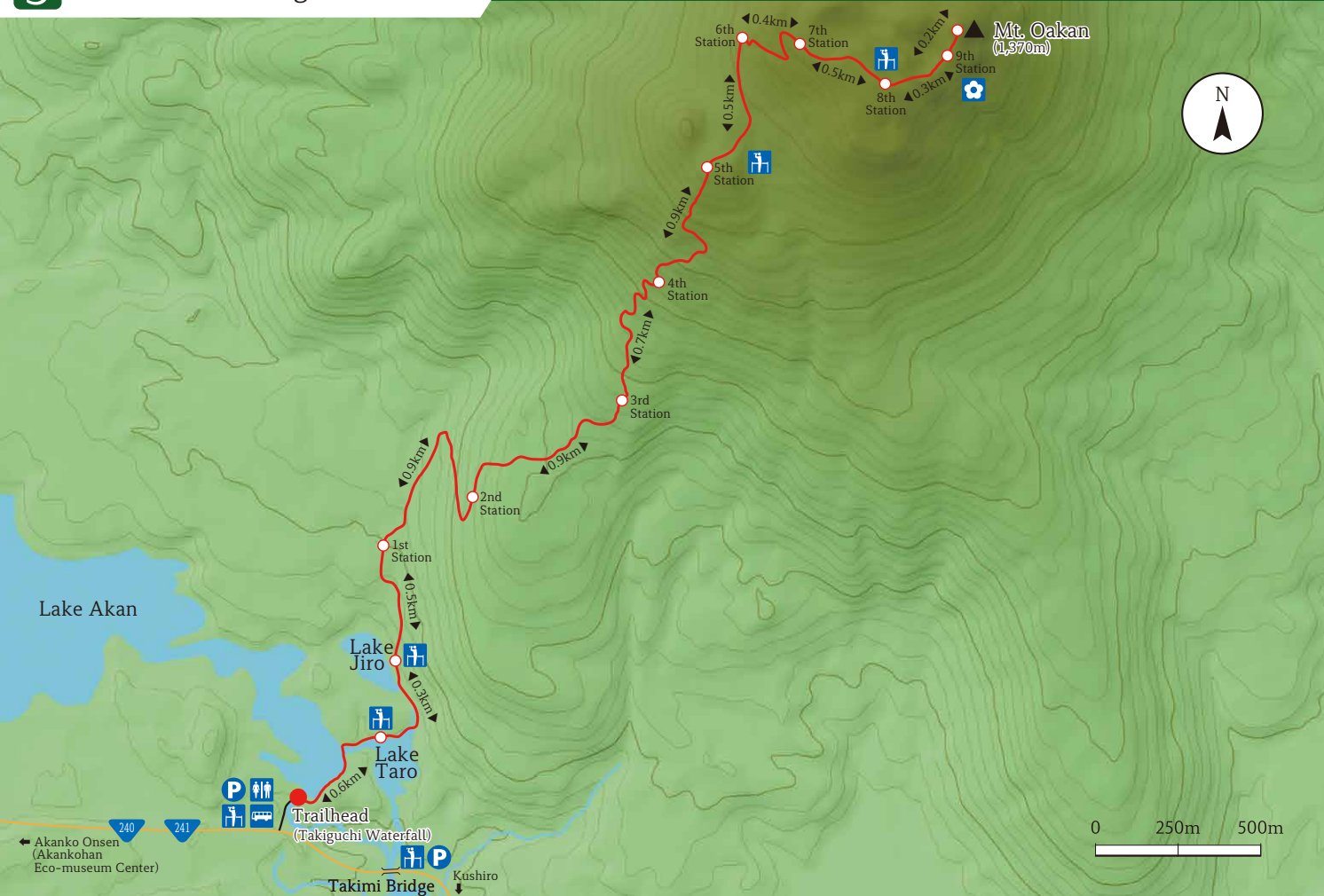
Did you know?

Vital visitor centers

Be sure to head to one of the area’s visitor centers^{p41} before setting out on any of the hiking trails. The three main centers—the Kawayu Eco-museum Center, the Akankohan Eco-museum Center, and the Wakoto Field House—offer information on the local wildlife and terrain and provide updates on any bear sightings. At the Akankohan Eco-museum Center, you can obtain the latest information regarding volcanic eruptions, and hiking gear rentals and equipment are available at the Kawayu Eco-museum Center.

Akan-Mashu National Park encompasses areas of rough wilderness, and the possibility of volcanic eruptions, bear sightings, and other dangers are real. Staff at the visitor centers can provide the latest information on potential risks and advice for staying safe.

The Kawayu Eco-museum Center is on the Mashu side of the park, west of Kawayu Onsen. The Akankohan Eco-museum Center is on the eastern side of the Akanko Onsen area. Information and advice on hiking the Wakoto Nature Trail is available at the Wakoto Field House.



Mt. Oakan Profile

Mt. Oakan (1,370 m), standing to the east of Lake Akan, is popular with hikers for its sweeping views of the Akan Caldera and the lakes formed within it.

The indigenous people of Japan, the Ainu, called Mt. Oakan “Pinneshiri,” meaning “male mountain.” In Japan, mountains are sometimes considered either male or female depending on their shape. Mt. Oakan is conical with a single peak. Mt. Meakan, (“Machineshiri” in the Ainu language), to the southwest, has two distinct peaks and is considered female.

There is only one trail leading to the summit of Mt. Oakan. It is more difficult than the trails on Mt. Meakan, so hiking experience and a good level of fitness are essential.

Plants & Flowers



Alpine Azalea
Loiseleuria procumbens
(Blooming period : June-Aug.)



Pincushion Plant
Diapensia lapponica
(Blooming period : June-Aug.)



Crowberry
Empetrum nigrum
(Blooming period : June-July)



Japanese Alpine Cherry
Prunus nipponica
(Blooming period : June-July)



Common Bluebead Lily
Clintonia udensis
(Blooming period : May-June)



Ezo Primula
Primula jesoana
(Blooming period : May-June)

3 Mt. Oakan Hiking Trail



The single trail to the summit of Mt. Oakan is challenging but rewarding. The trailhead is at Takiguchi Waterfall, at the eastern end of Lake Akan, just off National Route 240. The initial section of the trail is gentle, starting with a scenic path around the eastern shore of Lake Akan, and then passes by Lake Taro and Lake Jiro. This section takes 40 minutes and is a pleasant walk. The trail then climbs steeply through a mixed deciduous and coniferous forest before leveling out around the Fifth Station, where alpine plants and flowers grow in abundance. There are ruins of a Japanese army weather station around the Eighth Station, and from there it is another 20 minutes to the summit.

Distance	approx. 6.7 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 3 hr 20 min [Descent] 2 hr 20 min
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Grade3

Full-day mountain hiking or long-distance hiking.
Pay attention to the weather! Are you fully equipped?

Access

- Mt. Oakan Trailhead
[By car]
Akankohan Eco-museum Center → National Route 240 (for Kushiro) (5 min) → Takiguchi Waterfall

Parking: Oakan Trailhead Parking Approx. 10 Cars
Takimi Bridge Parking Space 20 Cars, 2 Buses

[By Akan Bus (Akan Line)]
Akanko Onsen → Mt. Oakan Trailhead (Takiguchi)

Cautions

- Brown bears are common in this area. Please check the latest bear sighting information at the Akankohan Eco-museum Center before you go, and make sure to take the necessary precautions.
- This hiking trail is in an area designated as a Special Protection Zone by the Natural Parks law. It is forbidden by law to break any tree branches or to pick any flowers or plants.

Highlights Takiguchi Waterfall

The Takiguchi Waterfall is about five minutes by car from the Akankohan Eco-museum Center. The waterfall is at the foot of the Mt. Oakan Trail. Lake Akan is long, with small islands dotting the lake's surface that resemble a miniature garden, located just past its narrow inlets. The waters of the lake flow into the waterfall, and then into the Akan River. Products of eruptions by Mt. Oakan, the small islands of Kamenoko and Jukyuretto seem almost man made.



Highlights Lake Taro



Lake Taro was formed in an eruption of Mt. Oakan. It is approximately a ten-minute hike from the Mt. Oakan Trailhead located at the Takiguchi Waterfall. The lake is connected to

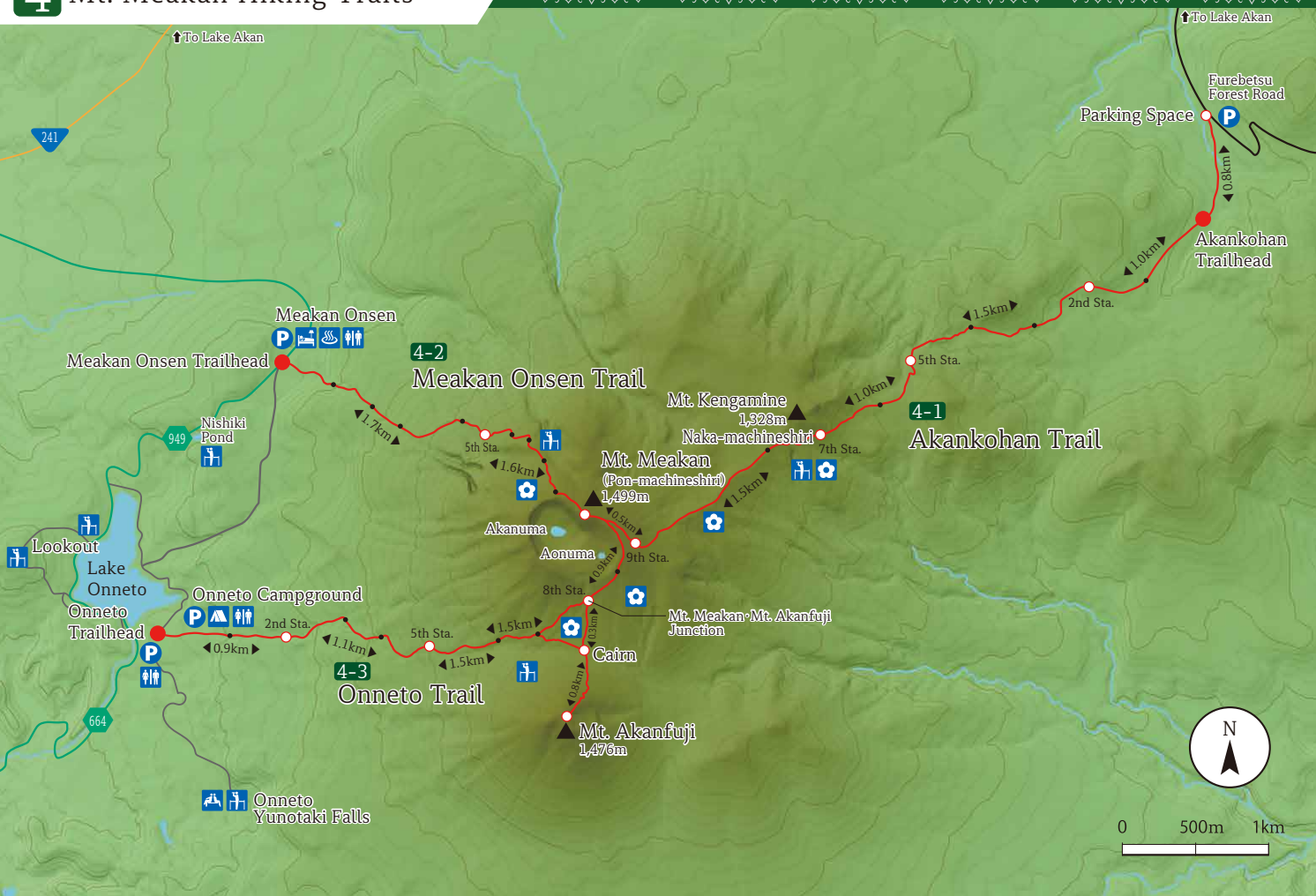
Lake Akan by a river, and shares very similar water quality with its larger neighbor. In spring, the purple-flowered Ezo Primula blooms, and in autumn, the surrounding forest is transformed when the foliage turns fiery red and orange. Depending on the season, White-tailed Eagles and Whooper Swans can also be spotted around the lake.

Highlights Lake Jiro

Lake Jiro is approximately a fifteen-minute hike from the Mt. Oakan Trailhead. It is five minutes on foot past Lake Taro. Like Lake Taro, Lake Jiro was the result of an eruption of Mt.



Oakan. But unlike Lake Taro, Lake Jiro has no inflowing or outflowing rivers. As a result, the lake has few waves and is very placid. The still surface of the lake mirrors the surrounding forest and sky above, a scene particularly beautiful in autumn when the leaves change color.



Mt. Meakan and Mt. Akanfuji Profile

Mt. Meakan (1,499 m) is the tallest and most iconic volcano in Akan-Mashu National Park. There are three hiking trails to the summit, and each is divided into 10 stages with waypoints called “stations.” All three routes pass through forests, fields of alpine plants, and moonlike volcanic landscapes. The summit offers panoramic views of Lake Akan and the surrounding mountains when the weather is clear. From the summit, there is a trail to neighboring Mt. Akanfuji that takes 2.5 hours round-trip. The parasitic cone of Akan Fuji (1,476 m) offers a view of Mt. Meakan from a completely different angle.

Plants & Flowers



Meakan Cinquefoil
Potentilla miyabei
(Blooming period : June-July)
Endemic to Hokkaido



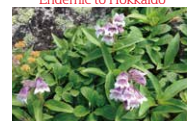
Meakan Sandwort
Arenaria merckiioides
(Blooming period : June-July)
Endemic to Hokkaido



Lingonberry
Vaccinium vitis-idaea
(Blooming period : June-Aug.)



Milky Way Rhododendron
Rhododendron diversipilosum
(Blooming period : June-July)



Shrubby Beardtongue
Penstemon frutescens
(Blooming period : June-Aug.)



Crowberry
Empetrum nigrum
(Blooming period : June-July)

4 Mt. Meakan Hiking Trails

4-1 Akankohan Trail

The Akankohan Trail is the longest but gentlest route. It begins at the Furebetsu Forest Road and takes three to four hours to the summit. This route offers excellent views of the Naka-machineshiri Crater, Lake Akan, and Mt. Oakan. Above the tree line, you will pass the Naka-machineshiri Crater rim before the trail merges with the Onneto trails.



Distance	approx. 6.3 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 3.5 hr [Descent] 2 hr 35 min
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Grade3

Full-day mountain hiking or long-distance hiking.
Pay attention to the weather! Are you fully equipped?

4-2 Meakan Onsen Trail

The Meakan Onsen Trail is the steepest but shortest of the three Mt. Meakan trails. The trailhead is near the Meakan Onsen parking lot. The path ascends through a Sakhalin Spruce forest, then steepens after the Second Station. Lake Onneto is visible from the Fifth Station and, if the weather is clear, the Daisetsuzan mountain range can also be seen. After the Eighth Station, the trail winds steeply upward over rugged volcanic terrain, then levels out along the crater rim.



Distance	approx. 3.3 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 2.5 hr [Descent] 1 hr 40 min
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Grade3

Full-day mountain hiking or long-distance hiking.
Pay attention to the weather! Are you fully equipped?

4-3 Onneto Trail

The Onneto Trail is slightly longer than the Meakan Onsen Trail. It begins at the Onneto Campground parking lot and gradually ascends through a mossy forest.



Around the Eighth Station, the path forks. You can continue to Mt. Meakan or take a side trip to the peak of Mt. Akanfuji (1hr 10min round-trip). The final stretch of the trail to Mt. Meakan offers views of the Pon-machineshiri Crater, but it is steep and slippery, so caution is advised.

Distance	approx. 4.4 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 2 hr 50 min [Descent] 2 hr
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Grade3

Full-day mountain hiking or long-distance hiking.
Pay attention to the weather! Are you fully equipped?

Access

From Akankohan Eco-museum Center (By car)

- Meakan Onsen Trailhead
Akankohan Eco-museum Center →
National Route 241 / Prefectural Route 949 (40 min) → Meakan Onsen
- Onneto Trailhead
Akankohan Eco-museum Center →
National Route 241 / Prefectural Route 949 (40 min) →
Meakan Onsen (5 min) → Onneto Campground
- Akankohan Trailhead
Akankohan Eco-museum Center → Furebetsu Forest Road (25 min) →
Akankohan Trailhead

Parking: Meakan Onsen Parking Approx. 60 Cars
Onneto Campground Parking Approx. 80 Cars
Akankohan Trailhead Parking Space Approx. 4 Cars
* Space is limited, so please Park in an orderly fashion.

Cautions

- **Make sure to check volcanic activity before hiking.**
- **The area near the crater is still volcanically active. If the Japan Meteorological Agency announces an eruption warning, entry to the mountain area will be restricted.**
- This hiking trail is in an area designated as a Special Protection Zone by the Natural Parks law. It is forbidden by law to break any tree branches or to pick any flowers or plants.



5 Lake Onneto Walking Trails

Lake Onneto, in the westernmost region of the Akan-Mashu National Park, is believed to have formed when an eruption from Mt. Meakan blocked the flow of the upstream section of the Rawan River.

In the Ainu language, Onneto means "old, large" (onne) and "lake" (to). Known as one of Hokkaido's "Three Mysterious Lakes," on sunny days the lake appears as a mixture of cobalt blue and emerald green.



5 Lake Onneto Walking Trails

There are four walking trails around Lake Onneto, covering the lakeside and the base of Mt. Meakan. The trails highlight different points of interest in the area: diverse forests, a geothermal waterfall, a hike to a lookout with views of Mt. Meakan and Lake Onneto, and a stroll along the lakeshore.



5-1 Onneto Meakan Onsen Trail

This trail stretches from Meakan Onsen to Lake Onneto, and takes about 50 minutes from start to finish. It merges with the Onneto East Bank Trail, which follows the lakeshore. From Meakan Onsen, the path winds through a forest of Sakhalin Spruce, one of very few species that can grow in the nutrient-deficient volcanic soil at the base of Mt. Meakan. As the path leads away from Meakan Onsen and closer to the lake, hardwoods and other conifers come into view alongside the Sakhalin Spruces. As the soil becomes more nutrient rich, the ratio of broad-leaved trees increases, and ferns, mosses, and mushrooms can be seen on the forest floor.

Distance	approx. 2.4 km one-way	Time	50 min one-way
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Grade1 Easy walk for 1-2 hours.
Let's go with comfortable clothes.

5-2 Onneto East Bank Trail

This trail runs along the eastern shore of Lake Onneto and offers views of the lake as it passes through a mixed forest of moss-covered trees. There is a spot on the trail where the rust-colored waters of Nishiki Pond flow into Lake Onneto, contrasting with the lake's brilliant blue. In May, white-flowing Asian Skunk Cabbage can be seen along the path. It takes 40 minutes to walk the trail from start to finish.



Distance	approx. 1.9 km one-way	Time	40 min one-way
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Grade1 Easy walk for 1-2 hours.
Let's go with comfortable clothes.

5-3 Onneto Lookout Trail

The Onneto Lookout Trail winds through a rugged forest of broad-leaved trees and conifers. Wild birds and squirrels are visible along the trail. After 800 meters, there is a rest area with views of Lake Onneto, Mt. Meakan, and Mt. Akanfuji. The walk takes a total of 40 minutes.



Distance	approx. 2.3 km one-way	Time	40 min one-way
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Grade2 Light mountain hiking for about half a day.
Do you have appropriate equipment?

5-4 Onneto Yunotaki Falls Trail

The main draw of this trail is the trickling waterfall known as Onneto Yunotaki Falls, which is fed with geothermal water from a natural spring. At the source, the temperature of the water is about 40°C, but it becomes tepid as it trickles over the rocks, stained black from manganese oxide, and down into the pool at the bottom.



Yunotaki Falls is one of a handful of places in the world where manganese oxide, a rare earth mineral used to make iron and dry cell batteries, occurs naturally above ground; manganese ore is normally found deep beneath the sea floor. The manganese oxide at Yunotaki Falls is the result of a rare combination of minerals from the hot spring, manganese-oxidizing bacteria, and filamentous algae. The falls were designated a National Natural Monument in 2000.

The path to the falls starts at Onneto Campground and follows a wide, flat, forest road. Wildlife such as birds, squirrels, and deer may be encountered along the way. The round-trip walk takes about one hour and 20 minutes.

Distance	approx. 1.4 km one-way	Time	30 min one-way
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Grade1 Easy walk for 1-2 hours.
Let's go with comfortable clothes.

Access

From Akankohan Eco-museum Center (By car)

● Akankohan Eco-museum Center → National Route 241 / Prefectural Route 949 (45 min) → Meakan Onsen and Other Parking nearby Lake Onneto

Parking: Meakan Onsen Parking	Approx. 60 Cars
Onneto Yunotaki Falls Trailhead Parking	Approx. 30 Cars
Onneto Campground Parking	Approx. 80 Cars

Did you know?

The Calderas of Akan-Mashu National Park

Akan-Mashu National Park has been shaped by volcanic activity over hundreds of thousands of years and comprises three large calderas (vast craters formed when a volcano collapses): Akan Caldera in the southwest, Kussharo Caldera in the north, and Mashu Caldera in the northeast. Each caldera contains a namesake body of water; these are, respectively, Lake Akan, Lake Kussharo, and Lake Mashu.

Akan Caldera formed over 150,000 years ago and contains several volcanoes, including Mt. Oakan, Mt. Meakan, and Mt. Fuppushi. There are approximately 10 lakes of varying sizes within Akan Caldera, many of which were formed when these volcanoes erupted. Lake Akan, the largest crater lake in the caldera, covers 13 square kilometers.

Mt. Hakuto and the summit of Mt. Meakan offer panoramic views of Lake Akan, and several smaller lakes are visible from the summit of Mt. Oakan. Visit the southern shore of Lake Akan to see bubbling bokke (mud pools), another reminder of volcanic activity in the area.

Kussharo Caldera was created by a massive volcanic eruption that took place approximately 100,000–130,000 years ago. Lake Kussharo is Japan's largest caldera lake, covering 80 square kilometers.

For panoramic views of Lake Kussharo and the surrounding volcanic terrain, hike to the top of Mt. Mokoto. Enjoy lakeside views from the Wakoto Nature Trail on the Wakoto Peninsula. This trail loops the peninsula and passes Oyakotsu Jigoku, a spot on the lakeshore where hot water bubbles at the waterline and steam escapes from between rocks.

Mashu Caldera is the youngest of the three craters, having formed approximately 7,000 years ago. Lake Mashu (19 sq km) fills the caldera to its brim and is one of the world's most transparent lakes.

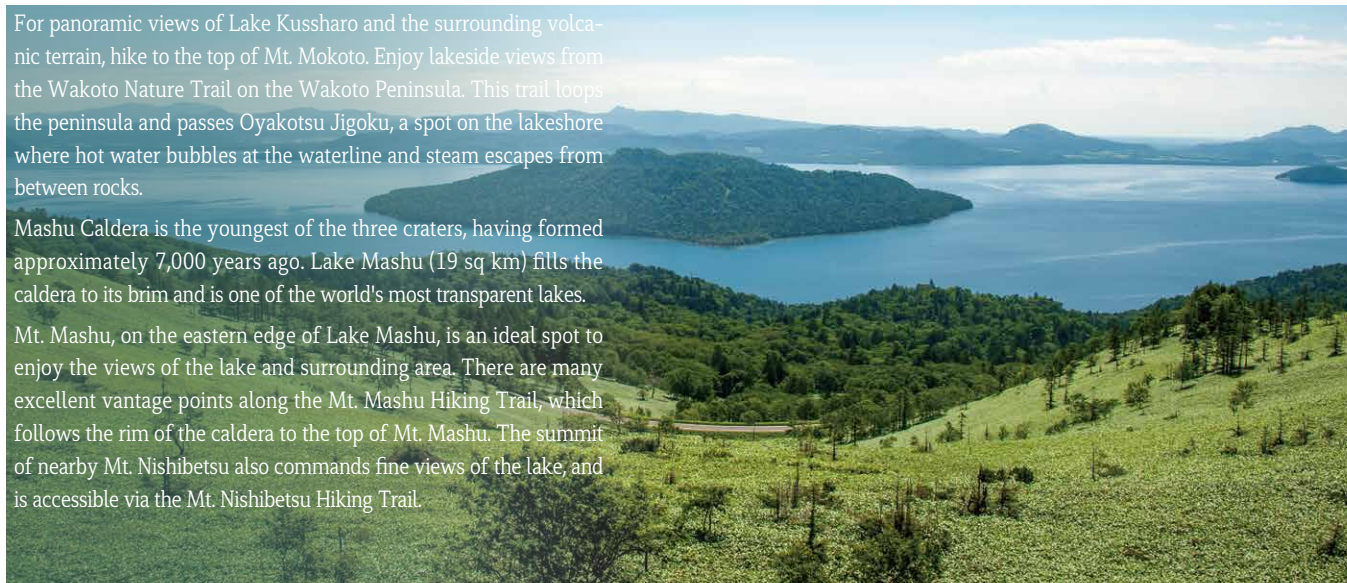
Mt. Mashu, on the eastern edge of Lake Mashu, is an ideal spot to enjoy the views of the lake and surrounding area. There are many excellent vantage points along the Mt. Mashu Hiking Trail, which follows the rim of the caldera to the top of Mt. Mashu. The summit of nearby Mt. Nishibetsu also commands fine views of the lake, and is accessible via the Mt. Nishibetsu Hiking Trail.

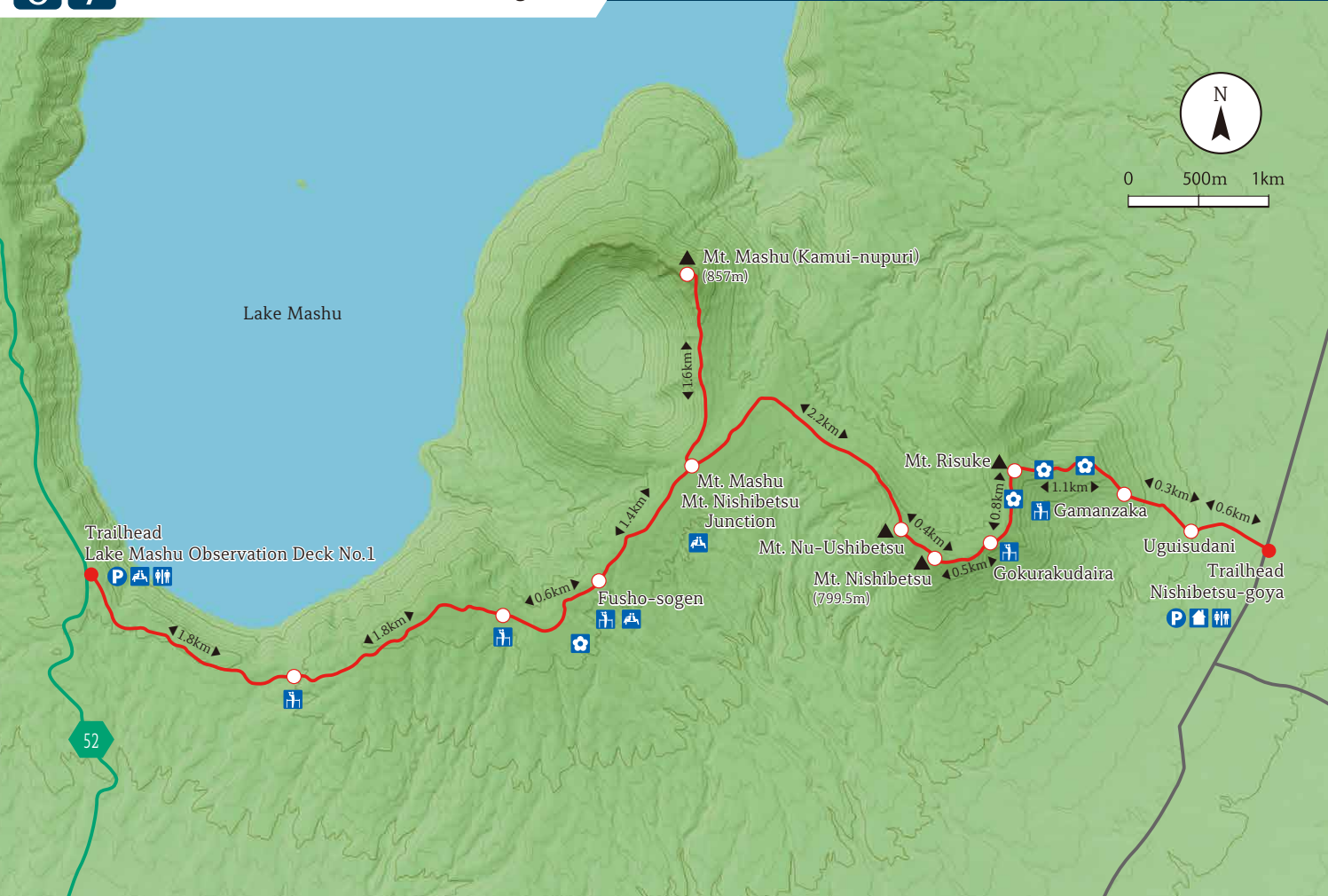


Mashu Caldera



Akan Caldera





Mt. Mashu and Mt. Nishibetsu Profile

Mt. Mashu is located on the eastern edge of Lake Mashu, one of the world's clearest lakes. From the mountain's 857-meter summit, you can view this spectacular caldera lake and the surrounding volcanic terrain, including Mt. Shari, a 1,547-meter peak located halfway between Lake Mashu and Shiretoko National Park. A fork in the trail—located at the beginning of the ascent to Mt. Mashu's summit—leads east to Mt. Nishibetsu. Determined hikers can scale both mountains in one trek.

Mt. Nishibetsu is a low mountain of 799.5 meters, but from its peak you can see Lake Mashu and Mt. Mashu, as well as a sweeping view of the Konsen Plateau, Mt. Meakan, the Shiretoko Mountain Range, and Kunashiri island. Even though there is a steep slope called Gamanzaka it's relatively easy to climb, and you can enjoy a number of alpine plants in summer.

Plants & Flowers



Marsh Grass of Parnassus
Parnassia palustris
(Blooming period : Aug.-Sept.)



Hodgson's Ragwort
Ligularia hodgsonii
(Blooming period : Aug.-Sept.)



Woolly Geranium
Geranium erianthum
(Blooming period : June-Aug.)



Japanese Tousewort
Pedicularis japonica
(Blooming period : June-Aug.)



Kamchatka Rhododendron
Therodion camtschaticum
(Blooming period : July-Aug.)



Wild Flag Iris
Iris setosa
(Blooming period : June-Aug.)

6 Mt. Mashu Hiking Trail



The Mt. Mashu Hiking Trail follows the caldera rim and overlooks Lake Mashu, a striking, deep-blue caldera lake, before rising steeply to the 857-meter summit. The trail affords multiple views of Lake Mashu and its clear waters, as well as the dramatic terrain that makes up Akan-Mashu National Park.

A separate path that can be picked up 1.6 kilometers from the summit of Mt. Mashu leads to Mt. Nishibetsu, offering serious hikers the opportunity to scale both mountains in one trek. Be aware there are no toilet facilities anywhere on this route, and from mid to late summer, mountain ticks and horseflies make long sleeves and pants a necessity.

Distance	approx. 7.2 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 2.5 hr [Descent] 2 hr
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Grade3

Full-day mountain hiking or long-distance hiking.
Pay attention to the weather! Are you fully equipped?

Access

From Kawayu Eco-museum Center (By car)

● Kawayu Eco-museum Center → Prefectural Route 52 (approx. 30 min) → Lake Mashu Observation Deck No.1

Cautions

- There are often very strong winds near the peak. Please check the weather and proceed with caution as you climb.
- Some areas on the hiking trails near the crater are off-limits. There is a risk of falling, so please do not enter these areas.
- This hiking trail is in an area designated as a Special Protection Zone by the Natural Parks law. It is forbidden by law to break any tree branches or to pick any flowers or plants.

7 Mt. Nishibetsu Hiking Trail



The Mt. Nishibetsu Hiking Trail's main draws are panoramic views from the summit of Mt. Nishibetsu (799.5 m) and vast fields of colorful alpine flowers that brighten the mountain's slopes in June and July.

The trail from the Nishibetsu-goya (mountain hut) parking lot to the summit is a challenging ascent for novice hikers. The path is rocky and narrow in places, and the aptly named Gamanzaka ("Tough-it-out Slope"), a very steep section near the start of the ascent, is a definite trial.

For a spectacular and memorable trek, try the hiking trail that links the peaks of Mt. Mashu and Mt. Nishibetsu. Note that transportation will need to be arranged at either end of the trail since this is not a loop course.

Distance	approx. 3.3 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 1.5 hr [Descent] 1 hr
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Grade3

Full-day mountain hiking or long-distance hiking.
Pay attention to the weather! Are you fully equipped?

Access

From Kawayu Eco-museum Center (By car)

● Kawayu Eco-museum Center → National Route 391 / 243 / Prefectural Route 885 / Forest Road (approx. 1 hr 40 min) → Nishibetsu-goya

Cautions

- There are areas along this trail where many rare alpine plants grow. Please stay on the trail to prevent damaging to their habitat.

8 Tsutsujigahara Nature Trail



The Tsutsujigahara Nature Trail is a pleasant hiking course leading through three distinctly different landscapes. It starts in the middle of a verdant forest of towering Sakhalin Spruce and Mongolian Oak before entering a meadow of rare alpine plants, including stubby Japanese Stone Pines and Milky Way Rhododendron. The trail ends at the base of Mt. Io (Atosa-nupuri), an active volcano that vents sulfur from multiple fumaroles (openings in the earth's surface), turning sections of the mountainside bright yellow.

The trail path remains flat for its entire length. There is a wooden viewing platform around 10 minutes from the base of Mt. Io from which the surrounding volcanic terrain can be surveyed.

Milky Way Rhododendron blooms in certain areas along the trail from late June to early July, creating swathes of white blossoms.

Distance	approx. 2.6 km one-way	Time	1 hr one-way
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Grade1

Easy walk for 1-2 hours.
Let's go with comfortable clothes.

Access

From Kushiro/Kushiro Airport (By car)

- Kushiro City Center → National Route 391 (approx. 1 hr 40 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center
- Kushiro Airport → Prefectural Route 53 / National Route 391 (approx. 1.5 hr) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

From Abashiri/Memanbetsu Airport (By car)

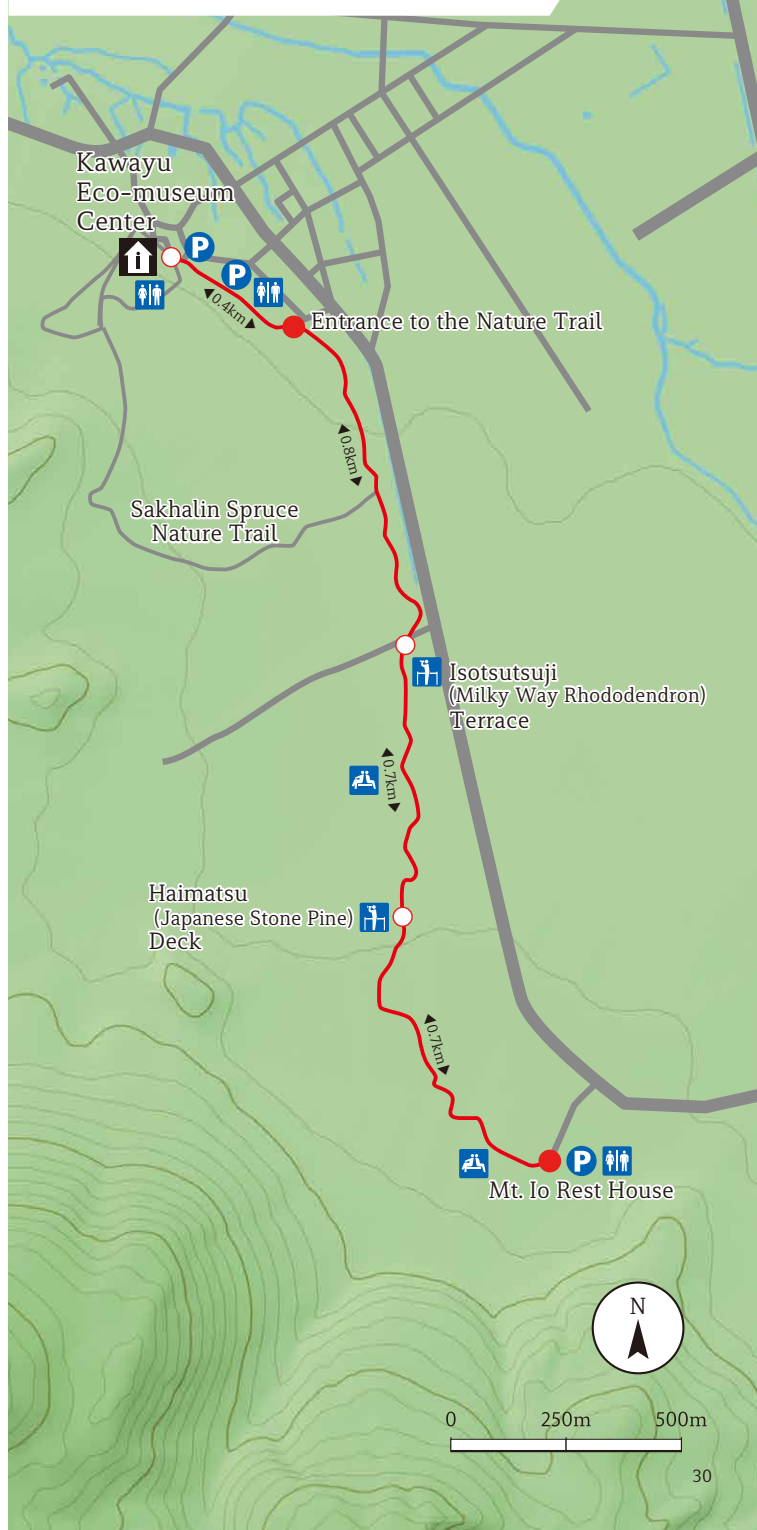
- Abashiri City Center → National Route 244 / 391 (approx. 1 hr 10 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center
- Memanbetsu Airport → National Route 243 / Prefectural Route 52 (approx. 1 hr 50 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

From Nakashibetsu Airport (By car)

- Nakashibetsu Airport → Prefectural Route 13 / National Route 243 / 391 (approx. 1.5 hr) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

Cautions

- Please stay on the walking trail to avoid damaging unique vegetation in the area.
- This nature trail is in an area designated as a Special Protection Zone by the Natural Parks law. It is forbidden by law to break any tree branches or to pick any flowers or plants.





Did you know?

Towering Katsura trees

Look out for Katsura trees while exploring the park. These are deciduous flowering trees native to Japan and China, and sometimes grow as tall as 60 feet.

Katsura stems grow as suckers around the base of an older trunk. As these stems develop into trunks themselves, they form a rough ring around the older tree. Therefore, even if the main trunk breaks, the tree as a whole continues to renew and grow. In spring, the tree's buds are a vivid magenta before turning into green leaves in the summer. The leaves transition to yellow in autumn, when they emit a sweet, distinctive fragrance after falling. The scent is sometimes compared to caramel, cotton candy, and even brown sugar.

Katsura trees are abundant on the Wakoto Peninsula. The trees, along with other interesting flora that grows along the shore of Lake Kussharo, can be seen on the Wakoto Nature Trail ^{p35}.

Did you know?

Healing hot springs

The Akan-Mashu National Park is a hot-spring haven, with multiple sources found throughout the park. There are free footbaths and outdoor baths, as well as hot-spring hotels, in most areas. After a day of hiking or exploring, a dip in one of these mineral-rich baths can help soothe tired muscles.

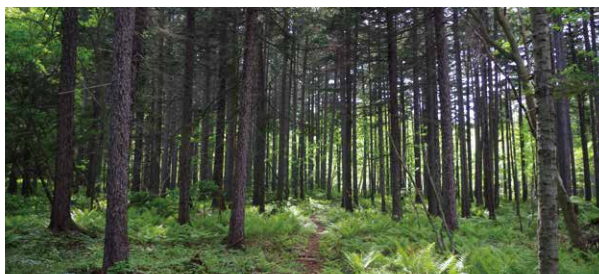
Meakan Onsen is close to the start of the trail that leads up Mt. Meakan ^{p15}. Taking a bath here is a popular way to relax after a hike up the mountain. There is a large outdoor bath at the trailhead of the Wakoto Nature Trail ^{p35}, and a sizable footbath near the Kawayu Eco-museum Center. Ikenoyu and Kotan Onsen are two public outdoor baths on the shore of Lake Kussharo. In winter, Whooper Swans migrate to the area from Siberia and can be sighted from Kotan Onsen.

Customary hot spring etiquette is to bathe without a swimsuit. However, the park's outdoor public baths are for mixed-gender bathing, therefore swimsuits are allowed.



Kotan Onsen, Lake Kussharo

9 Sakhalin Spruce Nature Trail



The trailhead for this 60-minute (2.2 km) nature walk through a forest of Sakhalin Spruce is behind the Kawayu Eco-museum Center. Sakhalin Spruce is native to Hokkaido and has reddish bark that resembles that of a redwood species. These trees grow up to 30 meters tall, and some of them in this forest are between 150 and 200 years old, a remarkable age considering the trees grow in nutrient-poor volcanic soil. Their trunks shelter an abundance of wildlife, including the Eurasian Red Squirrel and many birds such as the Great Spotted Woodpecker. Red Foxes inhabit the forest and surrounding farmland.

While walking through the forest, listen to the variety of bird-song and look for the oblong holes that Black Woodpeckers bore into the trunks of the trees. There is an easier trail through the forest (20 min., 0.8 km) that is ideal if you are traveling with small children. Guided tours of the Sakhalin Spruce Nature Trail led by Kawayu Eco-museum Center staff are available as well.

Distance	approx. 2.2 km loop	Time	1 hr loop
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Grade1

Easy walk for 1-2 hours.
Let's go with comfortable clothes.

Access

From Kushiro/Kushiro Airport (By car)

- Kushiro City Center → National Route 391 (approx. 1 hr 40 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center
- Kushiro Airport → Prefectural Route 53 / National Route 391 (approx. 1.5 hr) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

From Abashiri/Memanbetsu Airport (By car)

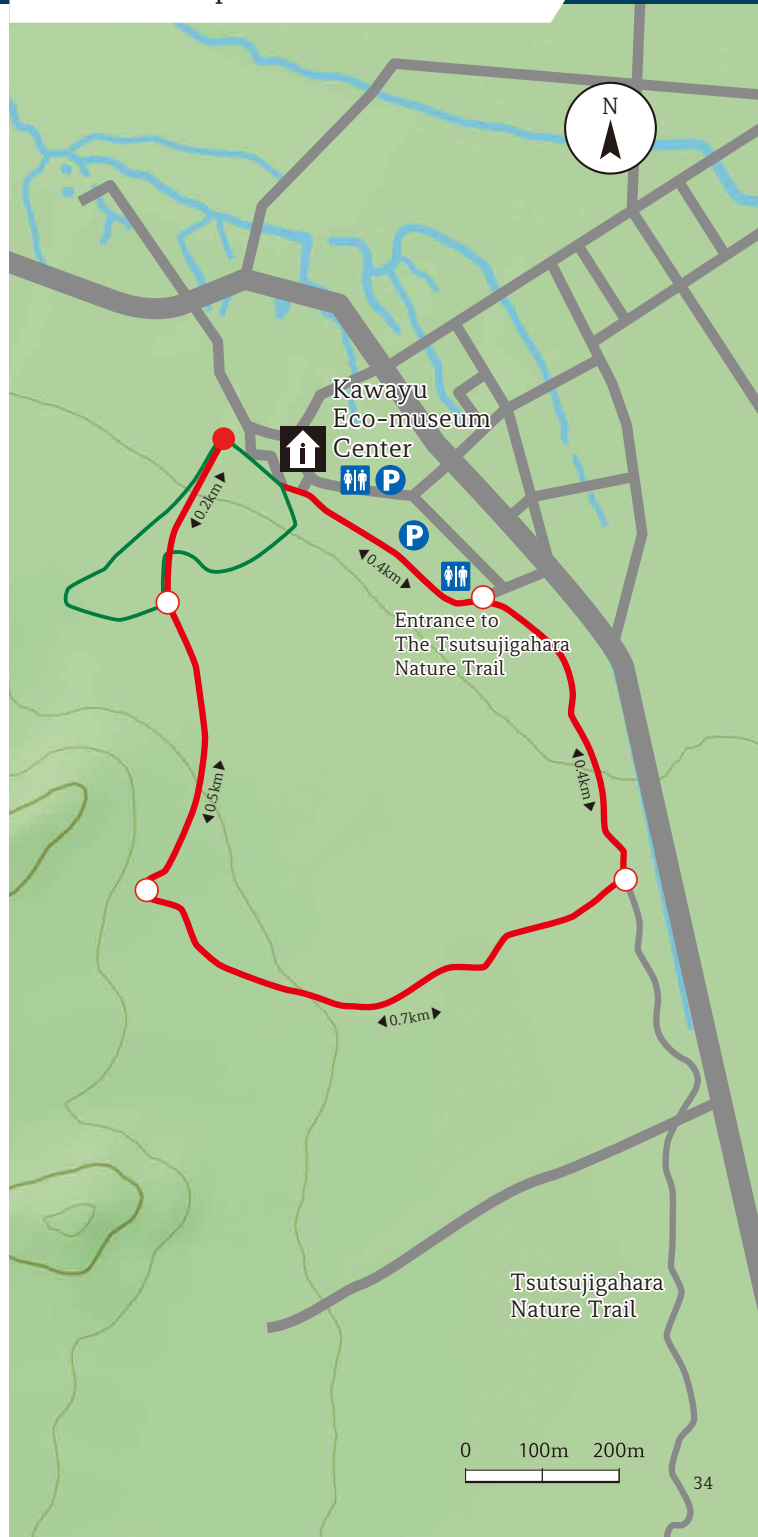
- Abashiri City Center → National Route 244 / 391 (approx. 1 hr 10 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center
- Memanbetsu Airport → National Route 243 / Prefectural Route 52 (approx. 1 hr 50 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

From Nakashibetsu Airport (By car)

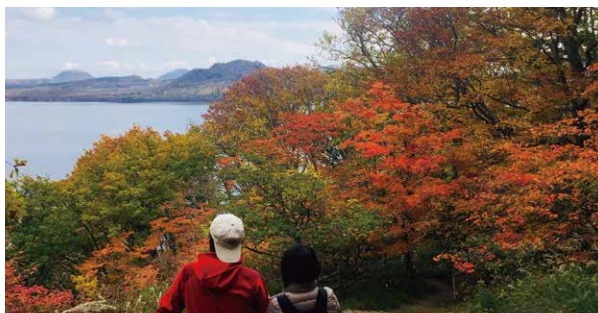
- Nakashibetsu Airport → Prefectural Route 13 / National Route 243 / 391 (approx. 1.5 hr) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

Cautions

- Trees and branches tend to fall in this forest. So please do not stray from the trail for your own safety.



10 Wakoto Nature Trail



The Wakoto Peninsula juts out into Lake Kussharo, the largest caldera lake in Japan. The approximately 2.5 km nature trail winds around the peninsula through a forest of Sakhalin Fir and giant Katsura trees to Oyakotsu Jigoku. This is a rocky cliff that plunges down into the lake, where boiling water bubbles between rocks at the waterline, and steam spouts from cracks in the rock face. The geothermal energy in this area directly affects the surrounding forest ecosystem—cicadas sing in the summer, and Band-legged Ground Crickets are active in the freezing winter thanks to the warm microclimate at ground level, where they live among vegetation.

The Black Woodpecker is another noteworthy inhabitant of the area. Japan's indigenous people, the Ainu, worshipped the Black Woodpecker as "the god of boat craft." Legend suggests the Ainu were inspired to make their traditional canoes after seeing the holes the woodpeckers make in the trunks of trees.

The Wakoto Nature Trail takes around one hour to complete; the path rises and falls, and some sections are quite steep. It is possible to walk either clockwise or counterclockwise around the peninsula, but the clockwise route is easier considering the long staircase near Oyakotsu Jigoku.

Distance	approx. 2.5 km loop	Time	1 hr loop
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Grade1

Easy walk for 1-2 hours.
Let's go with comfortable clothes.

Access

From Kawayu Eco-museum Center (By car)

● Kawayu Eco-museum Center →
Prefectural Route 52 / National Route 243 (approx. 30 min) → Wakoto Peninsula

Cautions

- Please do not jump off from the observation decks on the trail.
- There are fallen or rotten trees and rare vegetation along the trail. Please do not leave the trail and go down to the lake.





Mt. Mokoto Profile

Mt. Mokoto, at 1,000 meters above sea level, is the highest outer rim mountain of Kussharo caldera, and offers the best view of Lake Kussharo, the biggest caldera lake in Japan, along with scenery of the Shiretoko mountains and Sea of Okhotsk far off in the distance.

The well-maintained hiking trails let you enjoy the season's flowers amid the singing of the Japanese Bush Warblers, and the great variations in the different routes are a real attraction. The two main courses are the Skyline Trail and Mountaineering Trail, and when you add the Ginreisui Trail, Sakhalin Fir Trail, and Bogakudai Trail, you can walk a loop all around Mt. Mokoto.

There are two main trailheads on the course, both of which are accessible by car. The first is the Highland Koshimizu 725, the entrance to the Skyline Trail, and the other is Ginreisui, the entrance to the Mountaineering Trail.

Plants & Flowers



Chickweed Wintergreen
Trientalis europaea
(Blooming period : June)



Lingonberry
Vaccinium vitis-idaea
(Blooming period : June-July)



Yellow Weigela
Weigela middendorffiana
(Blooming period : June-July)



Keyflower
Dactylorhiza aristata
(Blooming period : June-July)



Narcissus-flowered Anemone
Anemone narcissiflora
(Blooming period : June)



Japanese Alpine Cherry
Prunus nipponica
(Blooming period : May-June)

11 Mt. Mokoto Hiking Trails

11-1 Skyline Trail

The easiest route to the summit is via the approximately 2-kilometer Skyline Trail that begins at Highland Koshimizu 725, an observatory and small café 725 meters above sea level.



Japanese Stone Pines and Dwarf Bamboo flank sections of the Skyline Trail, and many local birds can be found here, their song enlivening the atmosphere. Siberian Chipmunks can sometimes be sighted at the trailhead, and occasional breaks in the thick vegetation along the trail allow for fantastic views of the surrounding volcanic terrain. Halfway along the trail, the pines give way to Erman's Birch trees. Past a thicket of these trees is Byobuiwa ("Folding Screen Rock"), a sheer wall of stone that somewhat resembles a folding screen. Around 800 meters from Byobuiwa is a plateau where hikers can take a break before making the short final ascent.

Distance	approx. 2.0 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 1 hr [Descent] 45 min
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Grade2

Light mountain hiking for about half a day.
Do you have appropriate equipment?

11-2 Mountaineering Trail

This is the shortest course, taking just thirty minutes from the Ginreisui trailhead to the peak of Mt. Mokoto. The trailhead is found by turning at the sign reading "藻琴山登山入口" (Mt. Mokoto trailhead entrance), passing through the deer fence, and following the forest road to the parking lot at the end. A little way down from the parking lot, you'll find a natural spring called Ginreisui. Many hikers stop here to top up their water supplies.



The trail starts out quite steeply as it passes through Erman's Birch woods. The quiet woods, filled with the sunlight filtering through the trees, is a marked difference from the Skyline Trail. When you pass through the Japanese Stone Pine zone and into a plateau, you'll find wide open scenery on the Sea of Okhotsk side. The trail joins the Skyline Trail here, and after you conquer the last slope, the peak finally offers a sweeping panorama view of Lake Kussharo and the caldera.

Distance	approx. 1.0 km one-way	Time	[Ascent] 30 min [Descent] 20 min
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Grade2

Light mountain hiking for about half a day.
Do you have appropriate equipment?

11-3 Mt. Mokoto Loop Trail

Four trails combine with the Skyline Trail to form an approximately 8 km circuit. After reaching the summit on the Skyline Trail, hikers follow the Mountaineering Trail (1 km), which links up with the Ginreisui Trail (2 km). There is a bio-toilet at the Ginreisui trailhead, as well as a natural spring where water gushes from the ground. The Ginreisui Trail then connects with a section of the Sakhalin Fir Trail (400 m). These three trails wind through a forest before linking up with the Bogakudai Trail (2.4 km).



The most practical way to hike the circuit is by starting and ending at Highland Koshimizu 725. There are several other entry points along the course, however, including one at the Ginreisui trailhead, which is accessible by car. The circuit is a challenging trek that should only be attempted by experienced hikers.

Distance	approx. 8.1 km loop	Time	3 hr 40 min loop
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Grade3

Full-day mountain hiking or long-distance hiking.
Pay attention to the weather! Are you fully equipped?



Access

From Kawayu Eco-museum Center (By car)

- Mt. Mokoto Trailhead (Skyline Trail)
Kawayu Eco-museum Center →
National Route 391 / Prefectural Route 102 (approx. 20 min) →
Highland Koshimizu 725
- Mt. Mokoto Trailhead (Mountaineering Trail)
Kawayu Eco-museum Center →
National Route 391 / Prefectural Route 102 / Forest Road (approx. 50 min)
→ Ginreisui

Cautions

- Please be cautious of ticks and mites where bamboo grass grows thick.
- Toilets are open only in summer.
- Please stay on the trail and do not enter areas roped off to protect plant life.

National Park Visitor Center

Start your walk after getting the latest trail information at the National Park Visitor Center.

Kawayu Eco-museum Center



Located in Kawayu in the Mashu area, this facility was built to help visitors think about and experience the connection between people and nature, providing information not only about nature, but the area's history and culture as well. There are extensive walking trails, so be sure to go for a stroll once you've gathered all the information you need.



— Access —

From Kushiro/Kushiro Airport (By car)

- Kushiro City Center → National Route 391 (approx. 1 hr 40 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center
- Kushiro Airport → Prefectural Route 53 / National Route 391 (approx. 1.5 hr) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

From Abashiri/Memanbetsu Airport (By car)

- Abashiri City Center → National Route 244 / 391 (approx. 1 hr 10 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center
- Memanbetsu Airport → National Route 243 / Prefectural Route 52 (approx. 1 hr 50 min) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

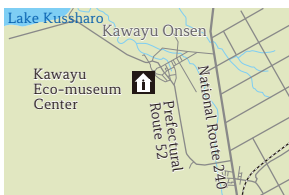
From Nakashibetsu Airport (By car)

- Nakashibetsu Airport → Prefectural Route 13 / National Route 243 / 391 (approx. 1.5 hr) → Kawayu Eco-museum Center

— For Inquiries —

2-2-6 Kawayu Onsen, Teshikaga-cho, Kawakami-gun, Hokkaido
Tel: (015)483-4100
Fax: (015)483-4111

Open:
8:00-17:00 (April to October)
9:00-16:00 (November to March)
Closed on Wednesdays
Closed on Thursday if Wednesday is a national holiday.
Open every day from third week of July through August 31st.
Closed for New Year's Holidays (December 29th - January 3rd).



Kawayu Eco-Museum Center 2F National Park Style Cafe

The cafe has seating for 20, and provide a view of the Sakhalin spruce woods as you enjoy a moment of relaxation with coffee roasted in Teshikaga town and treats like French toast made with local ingredients.



Akankohan Eco-museum Center



Located at the entrance of Akanko Onsen Town in Akan area, this facility exhibit Marimo-Special Natural Monument as well as natural environment in the region. It's a perfect guide to connect visitors with the Akan area, so please do stop by during your trip



— Access —

From Kushiro/Kushiro Airport (By car)

- Kushiro City Center → National Route 240 (1 hr 20 min) → Akankohan Eco-museum Center
- Kushiro Airport → National Route 240 (1 hr) → Akankohan Eco-museum Center

From Abashiri/Memanbetsu Airport (By car)

- Abashiri City Center → National Route 240 (1.5 hr) → Akankohan Eco-museum Center
- Memanbetsu Airport → National Route 240 (1 hr) → Akankohan Eco-museum Center

— For Inquiries —

1-1-1 Akanko Onsen, Akan-cho, Kushiro, Hokkaido
Tel: (0154)67-4100
Fax: (0154)67-2568

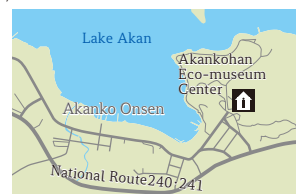
Open:

9:00-17:00

Closed on Tuesdays

Closed on Wednesday if Tuesday is a national holiday.

Closed for New Year's holidays.



Wakoto Field House



Located in Mashu area, Wakoto Field House has panels and displays introducing highlights and wildlife of Wakoto peninsula. Why not stop by for some natural guidance before you walk Wakoto nature trail?



— Access —

From Kawayu Eco-museum Center (By car)

- Kawayu Eco-museum Center → Prefectural Route 52 / National Route 243 (approx. 30 min) → Wakoto Peninsula

— For Inquiries —

Wakoto Kussharo, Teshikaga-cho, Kawakami-gun, Hokkaido
Tel: (015)484-2835

Open:

8:00-17:00

Open every day from late April to the end of October.



Camping in the park

There are four different campgrounds inside the park, each offering a different taste of the natural environment.

Sunayu Campsite (RECamp Sunayu)

Sunayu lets you dig in the sand to make your own outdoor bath! This campground is right next to Sunayu. It's a lakeside campground, so in summer you can enjoy swimming and camping, making it popular for long stays. The lake-view tent sites are divided into sand lots and grass lots, so you can choose the best for your sleep needs.



— For Inquiries —

Biruwa, Teshikaga-cho, Kawakami-gun, Hokkaido

Open: Late June through mid-September

Facilities: Admin office, communal field kitchen, toilets,

Please visit our website for more details including check in/out time and fees.

<https://www.nap-camp.com/hokkaido/13247>

Wakoto Campsite (RECamp Wakoto)

Wakoto campsite is a forest campground divided into three sections with allocated sites, an unallocated site, and day sites (for day trip use), so campers can find the best thing to suit their needs. Allocated sites are all clearly marked and have gravel floors.

The unallocated site is a wide-open lawn where you can pitch your tent wherever you want.



— For Inquiries —

Kussharo Wakoto, Teshikaga-cho, Kawakami-gun, Hokkaido

Open: Early June through October

Facilities: Admin office, communal field kitchen, toilets, hot showers, laundry

Please visit our website for more details including check in/out time and fees.

<https://www.nap-camp.com/hokkaido/14159>

Akan Lakeside Campsite

This campground is at the edge of the Akanko Onsen town, and is quite popular with hikers because of its proximity to Mt. Meakan and Mt. Oakan, two of Japan's most famous mountains. The camp sites are barrier-free, and the ground has flushing toilets and a communal kitchen. There is also a hot spring footbath, which is perfect for resting your tired feet. Set up a tent in the tree-embraced ground and enjoy its slow-paced atmosphere.



— For Inquiries —

Akanko Onsen 5-1, Akan-cho, Kushiro, Hokkaido

Tel : (0154)67-3263

Open: June 1 through end of September

Hours: Check-in 13:00 / Check-out 11:00

Facilities: Admin office, communal field kitchen, outdoor fireplace, hot showers, laundry, footbath, flushing toilets, etc.

Fees: Adults ¥630, children ¥315

Onneto Campground

This campground is next to the mysterious lake of Onneto, called the lake of seven colors for its color-shifting appearance, and is a fantastic natural to space filled with Sakhalin fir trees. The section of Onetto nearest to the campground is a cove that offers a great chance to observe the changing colors. However, be aware that the tent site does not offer lake view.

Please enjoy untouched nature and the sounds of silence.



— For Inquiries —

National Forest, Moashoro Ashoro-cho, Ashoro-gun, Hokkaido

Tel: (0156)25-2141 Ashoro Town Office

Open: June 1 - October 31 (May vary depending on snowfall)

Hours: Check-in/Check-out anytime

Facilities: Admin office, communal field kitchen, outdoor fireplace, toilets

Fees: Adults ¥350, Children (Jr. high school age and under) ¥200

Day use: Adults ¥80, Children (Jr. high school age and under) ¥50