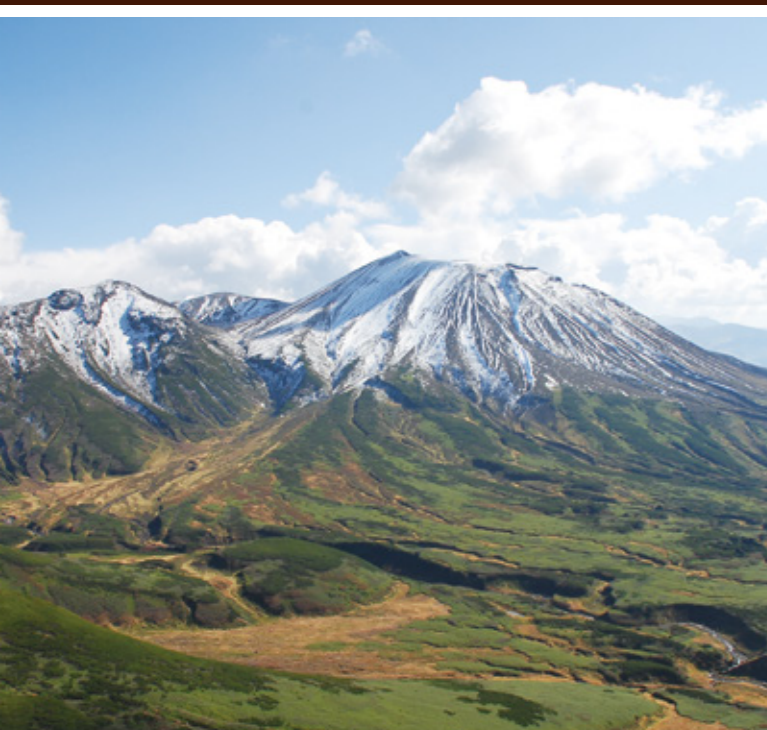


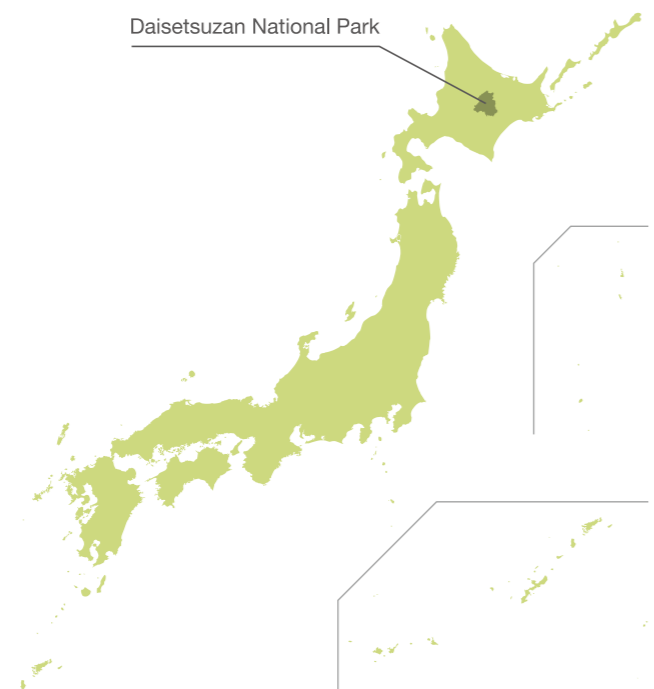
Daisetsuzan National Park



What are National Parks?

National parks are natural scenic sites that represent the best that Japan has to offer and have been officially designated by the government pursuant to the Natural Parks Act. From Hokkaido Prefecture in the north to Okinawa Prefecture and the Ogasawara Islands in the south, a total of thirty-two sites have been officially designated national parks, which are visited by over three hundred million people each year. The national parks are not only best known for spectacular natural scenery but also a treasury of wild-life, history, culture, and many other fascinating attractions. Additionally, while Japan's national parks are characterized by the diversified environment of forests, farmlands and villages, retaining a nearly intact nature, visitors can learn about the regional history and culture created by nature and the life of the people.

So, why not visit the national parks to enjoy the seasonal changes and the beauty of the natural wonders that Japan has to offer?



Contact list

Hokkaido Regional Environment Office

Sapporo No.1 Regional Joint Government Bldg., North 8 West 2 Kita-ku, Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture 060-0808
Tel: 011-299-1950 Fax: 011-736-1234
http://hokkaido.env.go.jp/

Kamikawa Ranger Office

98-4 Chuo-cho, Kamikawa-cho, Kamikawa-gun, Hokkaido Prefecture 078-1741
Tel: 01658-2-2574 Fax: 01658-2-2681

Higashikawa Ranger Office

1-13-15 Higashi machi, Higashikawa-cho, Kamikawa-gun, Hokkaido Prefecture 071-1423
Tel: 0166-82-2527 Fax: 0166-82-5086

Kamishihoro Ranger Office

235-33 Aza Kamishihoro Higashi 3-sen, Kamishihoro-cho, Kato-gun, Hokkaido Prefecture 080-1408
Tel: 01564-2-3337 Fax: 01564-2-2933

Daisetsuzan National Park Liaison Council website

(Follow us on Facebook for latest info)
http://daisetsuzan.or.jp

Daisetsuzan National Park website

http://www.env.go.jp/park/daisetsu/index.html



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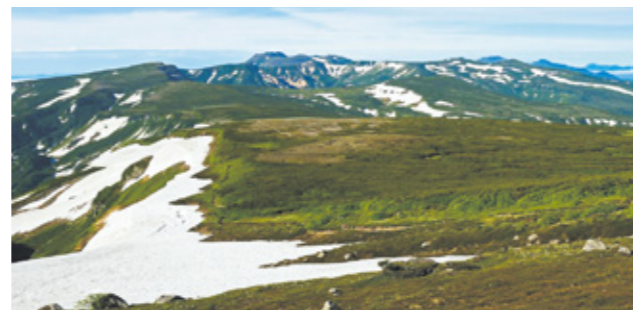


*Please note that the map of must-see sights is created to indicate the outline of a designated area and there are variations.

Characteristics

The imposing roof in the heart of Hokkaido

- "Kamuimintara": Playground of the Gods-



Date of Designation : December 4, 1934 Area : 226,764 ha
Related Prefecture : Hokkaido

Extending across central Hokkaido, Daisetsuzan National Park is the largest mountainous park in Japan. Daisetsuzan is part of a chain of mountains with the main peak, Mt. Asahi-dake, as the highest mountain in Hokkaido encompasses the headwaters of the Ishikari-gawa and Tokachi-gawa Rivers and is also known as the "Roof of Hokkaido."

The national park can be broadly divided into three areas: the Omote-Daisetsu area, Tokachi-dake Mountain Range area, and the Higashi-Taisetsu area. The Omote-Daisetsu area is a highlight of the national park that encompasses Daisetsuzan Volcanic Group centered on Mt. Asahi-dake and the landscape created by the grand mountain-top plateau situated in a southern direction, and the presence of the large mountain and deep gorges are simply mind-blowing. The Tokachi-dake Mountain Range area is a volcanic group with the volcanically active Mt. Tokachi-dake in the center with the spectacular sights of a chain of mountains interweaving ridge lines and valleys overlooking the far arable lands and forests from the direction of Biei and Kamifurano town at the base of the mountains. The Higashi-Taisetsu area lies on the Tokachi-gawa River basin and is situated deep in the mountains surrounded by Mt. Nipesotsu, the mountains and deep forests of Higashi-Taisetsu, Lake Shikaribetsu, Lake Nukabira, Tokachimitsumata caldera, and many other distinctive features. Abundant natural hot springs gush from the foot of the mountain, making it the best sightseeing base for those who visit from home and abroad.

Ecosystems

While most of the mountains situated within Daisetsuzan National Park are as high as around 2,000 m above sea level, due to the area's high latitudes, the park is noted for its harsh alpine environment comparable to the mountains of the main island reaching as high as 3,000 m, exhibiting a splendid distribution of the alpine belt. The mountaintops retain a number of snowy gorges and snow patches even in the middle of the summer, and the area is filled with colorful alpine flora creating splendid alpine meadows. The submontane area is populated by the subarctic coniferous forest mainly of the Yezo spruce (*Picea jezoensis*) and Todo fir (*Abies sachalinensis*), and the stunning forest landscape is considered an essential element of this area. The natural environment preserving abundant wildlife makes for an ideal habitat for large mammals including brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and Yezo sika deer (*Cervus nippon yezoensis*), as well as the Japanese pika (*Ochotona hyperborea yezoensis*) that is said to survive the glacial age, alpine butterfly such as Eversmann's Parnassian (*Parnassius eversmanni daisetsuzanus*), and many other rare wildlife such as black woodpeckers (*Dryocopus martius*) and Blakiston's fish owl (*Ketupa blakistoni*).

As just described, Daisetsuzan, a habitat for rare flora and fauna, not only has been designated as a special natural monument of Japan in an alpine belt but also the entire stretch, including the headwaters of the Tokachi-gawa River, is designated Wilderness Area.



Communities of alpine flora



Japanese pika (*Ochotona hyperborea yezoensis*)



Mt. Tomuraushi viewed over Numa-no-hara Marsh

Flora

Noted for its vast area, Daisetsuzan hosts diverse vegetation, thanks to its geographical features and harsh weather conditions. While the foot of the mountain is a vast forest zone consisting of needleleaf and broadleaf trees, as the elevation increases, the appearance changes with a coniferous forest and Erman's birch forest, and further, it changes to the forest limit and creeping pine zone. The communities of alpine flora growing near the mountain-top are home to nearly 250 species, which account for 40% of the alpine flora found in Japan. Most of the species are also rare species, such as the Yezooyamanorindou (*Gentiana triflora* var. *japonica* subvar. *montana*) and *Hosobauruppousu* (*Lagotis yezoensis*) indigenous to Daisetsuzan, and the *Fishiririndou* (*Gentiana jamesii*), whose distribution is limited. The appearance of colorful alpine flora indeed creates the landscape called "Kamuimintara" by the Ainu, meaning the Playground of the Gods. In addition, a distinctive topography of high moors spreads across the marshland in the plateau region, making a habitat for flora unique to the marshlands and dwarf Japanese spruce (*Picea glehnii*).



Blue mountain heath (*Phyllodoce caerulea*)



Communities of *Aleutian avens*, etc. (*Geum pentapetalum*)



Hosobauruppousu (*Lagotis yezoensis*)



Yezooyamanorindou (*Gentiana triflora* var. *japonica* subvar. *montana*)



Daisetsuhinaotagiri (*Hypericum yojiroanum*)



Chonosukesou (*Dryas octopetala* var. *asiatica*)

Topography, Geology, and Landscape

Daisetsuzan National Park is composed of mountains, including Daisetsuzan Volcanic Group forming the Ohachi caldera; the Tokachi-dake Mountain Range with the active volcano, Mt. Tokachi-dake, as the highest peak; the Shikaribetsu Volcanic Group in the vicinity of the Lake Shikaribetsu; and the Ishikari Mountain Range consisting of the old stratification in the Hidaka system. The park is home to three volcanically active mountains: Mt. Asahi-dake (at 2,291 m), Mt. Tokachi-dake (at 2,077 m), and Mt. Maruyama in the Higashi-Taisetsu area (at 1,692 m); Mt. Tokachi-dake in particular has erupted regularly in recent years.

The rock cliffs on both banks of Souunkyo Gorge and Tenninkyo Gorge are marked by a number of joints arranged in a regular pattern and appear like a series of polygonal pillars standing next to each other. This is a scene created by a phenomenon called columnar jointing, which is created by the cooling of the pyroclastic flow deposits emitted during eruption and slowly becoming stones and rocks resulting in regularly patterned joints, as well as by erosion by rivers that carve off stones and rocks. In addition, there is a topography called a caldera, which is a distinctive landform from volcanic activity, and in recent years, it has been revealed that the basin in Tokachi-Mitsumata, extending over 10 km in diameter, was a caldera basin formed as a result of a major explosion of the volcano approximately one million years ago.

Also, there is a phenomenon that often occurs in a polar zone because Daisetsuzan lies on the alpine belt situated in a cold region. Permafrost is a geologic phenomenon where the soil, rocks, and stones deep underground are frozen all year long, and there is a wide distribution of permafrost at the higher elevations of 2,000 m and more, except for the low areas around Tokachi-Mitsumata.



Volcanic activity



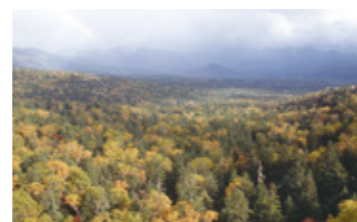
Columnar joints (Tenninkyo Gorge)



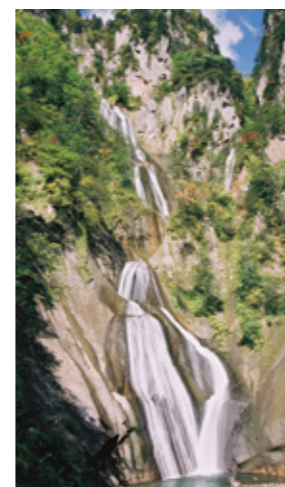
Ohachidaira Crater



Permafrost



The Sea of Trees in Tokachi-Mitsumata

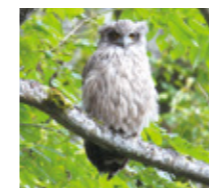


Hagoromo-no-Taki (Plumage Falls) [Photo:Higashikawa Tourism Association]

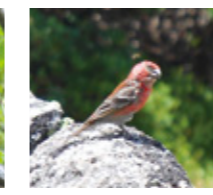
Fauna

Marked by its diverse environmental conditions, Daisetsuzan boasts a rich biodiversity that is proportional to the greatness of magnitude. The vast forests of Daisetsuzan are abundantly populated by mammals including brown bears (*Ursus arctos*), Yezo sika deer (*Cervus nippon yezoensis*), Yezo stoat (*Mustela erminea orientalis*) and Hokkaido squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris orientis*), and birds including Blakiston's fish owls (*Ketupa blakistoni*); listed as one of the special natural monuments of Japan, and black woodpeckers (*Dryocopus martius*), in addition to the rare Eurasian three-toed woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*). As for fish, salmonid fish, the Dolly varden (*Salvelinus malma*), makes its habitat and its subspecies only found in the Lake Shikaribetsu is called the Miyabe charr (*Salvelinus malma miyabei*). The alpine belt is home to the pine grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*) and spotted nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*).

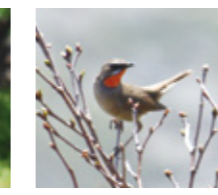
There are a number of wildlife species that can only be found in a limited area in Daisetsuzan. Such as Japanese pika (*Ochotona hyperborea yezoensis*); only found in a cold rocky stretch of Hokkaido, and the Eversmann's Parnassian (*Parnassius eversmanni daisetsuzanus*) and Freija's Fritillary (*Clossiana freija*); the alpine butterfly species that only inhabit in Daisetsuzan, these fauna are called relict species that they traveled from a continent during the glacial age and then as a result of warming temperatures, they were left over only in a cold alpine.



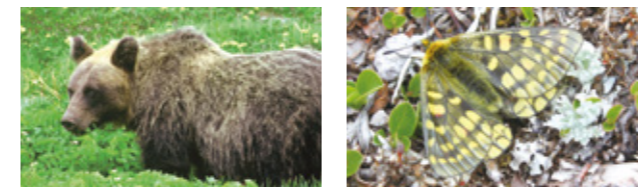
Blakiston's fish owl (*Ketupa blakistoni*)



Pine grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*)



Siberian rubythroat (*Luscinia calliope*)



Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*)



Eversmann's Parnassian (*Parnassius eversmanni daisetsuzanus*)

Culture

Tradition of the Ainu Culture

Every year, when the summer comes around, the Souunkyo Onsen Fire Festival is held in the Souunkyo Onsen. This festival gives visitors some of the exposure to the Ainu's traditional ceremony called the fukuro owl ritual, a folk dance that the Ainu dance along to traditional tunes and other aspects of the Ainu culture that was descended and handed down by the people of Ainu who are the indigenous inhabitants of Hokkaido through centuries. Other highlights of this festival are the fire taiko drums that echo throughout the gorge and fireworks display.



Souunkyo Onsen Fire Festival [Photo:Souunkyo Tourism Association]

Inheritances from the Pioneer Days

In parallel with National Route 273 extending north to south from the town area in Kamishihoro to the Nukabira Gensenkyo through the hilly forest region in Tokachi-Mitsumata, there are a number of concrete arch bridges from the former National Railway Shihoro Line that went defunct in 1987. These elevated railway bridges are remnants that pass down the pioneering history of Higashi-Taisetsu as the Heritage of Industrial Modernization. Above all, the Taushubetsu River Bridge spanning the Taushubetsu River sinks to the lake bed from around June to October in times of rising water from the Lake Nukabira, which is a dam lake. It is called a fairy lake as the water lowers from around January revealing the bridge from the frozen surface of the lake. These bridges became the designated Hokkaido Heritages in October 2001 as "The Former National Railroad and Concrete Arch Bridge on the Shihoro Line."



Taushubetsu River Bridge

Efforts

Park Volunteer Activity

In Daisetsuzan National Park, park volunteers support wide-ranging projects promoted by the Ministry of the Environment, including nature commentary activities, clean-up/beautification activities, prevention and extermination of invasive species, prevention and patrol of poaching, and illegal digging of rare flora and fauna, as well as maintenance and repair of mountain trails and signs.

Collaborative maintenance and management activities of mountain trails

Daisetsuzan National Park has been facing the problems of erosion and the scouring of mountain trails and the devastation of vegetation by trampling from climbers and flowing water. To preserve the sustainable natural environment and to promote utilization of the vast mountainous area, concerned administrative authorities, mountaineering clubs and other mountaineering groups, volunteers, and a wide range of relevant parties work in concert to promote the preparation of the system for maintenance and management activities of mountain trails.



Park volunteer activity (Restoration of vegetation in marshlands)

Volunteers engage in collaborative maintenance and management activities of mountain trails.

The regulation of private cars

During the foliage season from early September to early October, Daisetsuzan National Park aims to ease traffic congestion and protect the natural environment from exhaust fumes caused by the use of private cars by implementing traffic regulations to the private cars traveling to Daisetsu Kogen Onsen and Ginsendai. During the period of traffic regulations, visitors can take a shuttle bus to reach these destinations.

Park etiquette

In order for everyone to have a pleasant experience, the visitors to the national parks are advised to respect nature and observe the following:

- Do not throw away any trash.
- Do not pick wildflowers and plants.
- Do not feed or approach wild animals.
- Do not catch animals.
- No smoking while walking.
- Bonfires / recreational fires are only permitted in designated areas.

Spring comes late and fall comes early in the mountains of Daisetsu. The climbing season begins from late June and ends in early October as the mountaintops have a number of snowy gorges and snow patches even in the middle of the summer and the first snow settles on the mountains around mid-September. In order for everyone to have a pleasant experience, visitors to the national parks are advised to be mindful of respecting the nature and observe the following:

- Do not approach brown bears (*Ursus arctos*).
- Do keep in mind the harsh natural environment in Daisetsuzan.
- When mountain climbing, be sure to submit notifications in advance.
- Please do not leave the mountain trails and footpaths.
- Be sure to place a protective cap on stocks while climbing.
- Do not forget to bring disposable portable toilets.

Map of Must-see sights

1 Asahidake Onsen (hot springs)

It is a hot-spring district at an elevation of about 1,050 m spreading across the foot of Mt. Asahi-dake. Along with the Soukyo Onsen, it is the mountaineering base in the Omote-Daisetsu area. During the winter, it is one of the popular skiing spots, enjoying the longest ski season in Japan (From November to early May).



2 Mt. Asahi-dake

After taking a ropeway from the Asahidake Onsen and getting off at Sugatami Station, the sight ahead is the crater of Mt. Asahi-dake spewing a great deal of smoke. There is a trail that travels by way of Sugatami Pond and leads to the mountaintop of Mt. Asahi-dake, the highest peak in Hokkaido, in two and a half hours.



3 Bogakudai Observatory

The Bogakudai Observatory can be easily accessible via a roadway connecting Shirogane Onsen and is a vista point facing the Mt. Tokachi-dake emitting volcanic fumes. A stretch of the gravel ground is a large habitat for the Pennellianthus frutescens.



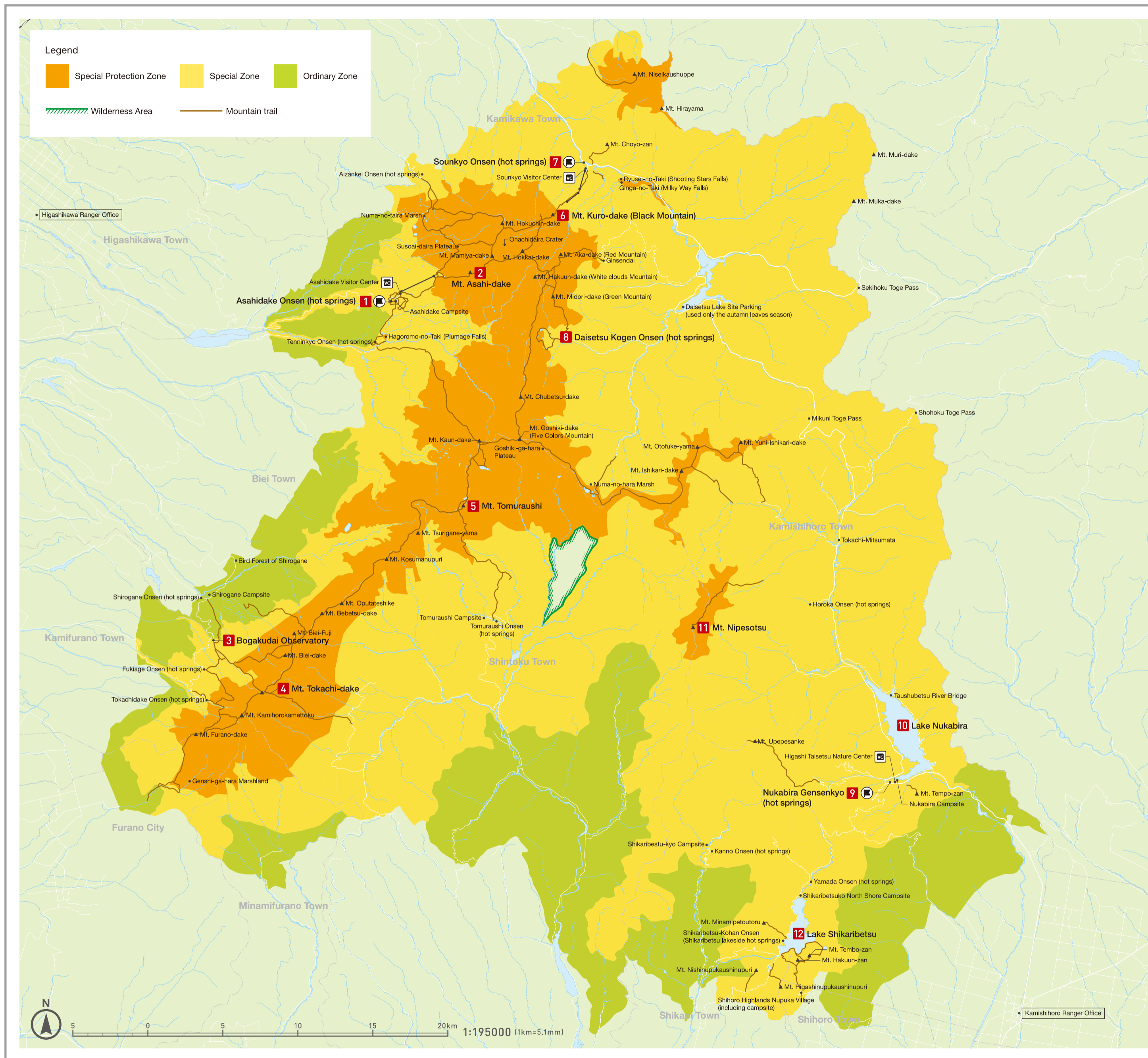
4 Mt. Tokachi-dake

The peripheries of the mountaintop of Mt. Tokachi-dake with ongoing volcanic activity have a number of craters including the Taisho Crater and the Grand Crater. Climbers are advised to keep their eyes on the information on volcanic activity at all times.



5 Mt. Tomuraushi

Situated on the border of Omote-Daisetsu and Higashi-Taisetsu, Mt. Tomuraushi is a mountain with an altitude of 2,141 m that has been honored as Daisetsuzan's Annex. Mountaineering on Mt. Tomuraushi requires careful planning as climbing accidents occur every year.



Information / Facilities Guide



Soukyo Visitor Center
 Soukyo, Kamikawa-cho, Kamikawa-gun,
 Hokkaido Prefecture 078-1701
 TEL: 01658-9-4400
 8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. (June through October)
 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (November through May)
 Closed: Every Monday from November to May
 (Closes on the next weekday if it falls
 on a holiday) and
 December 31- January 5



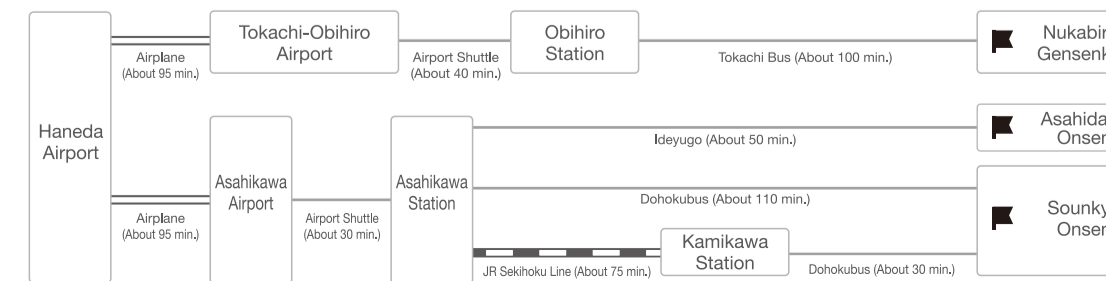
Asahidake Visitor Center
 Asahidake Onsen,
 Higashikawa-cho, Kamikawa-gun,
 Hokkaido Prefecture 071-0372
 TEL: 0166-97-2153
 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Closed: December 31- January 5



Higashi Taisetsu Nature Center
 48-2 Aza Nukabira Gensenkyo,
 Kamishiro-cho, Katou-gun,
 Hokkaido Prefecture 080-1403
 TEL: 01564-4-2323
 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Closed: Every Wednesday
 (Closes on the next weekday
 if it falls on a holiday) and
 December 30- January 5

*For detailed information on the hours of operation, please contact the facility.

Access



*Access routes are examples. For more information, please inquire with each transportation facility or check their website.
 *The time required in each section is a rough indication.

6 Mt. Kuro-dake (Black Mountain)

The summit of the Mt. Kuro-dake (Black Mountain) can be reached by taking a ropeway and lift, and by walking for about an hour. The mountaintop affords a panoramic view of the entire Daisetsuzan, commanding Mt. Aka-dake (Red Mountain), Mt. Hakuun-dake (White clouds Mountain), Mt. Hokuchin-dake, and Mt. Ryouun-dake.



7 Soukyo Onsen (hot springs)

Located along a major route connecting Asahikawa with Abashiri and Obihiro, it is the largest hot-spring area in the northern Hokkaido that serves as a major base for tourist attractions around Hokkaido. It is also known as a mountaineering base in the Omote-Daisetsu area.



8 Daisetsu Kogen Onsen (hot springs)

The hiking route that starts from Daisetsu Kogen Onsen to go around marshes is staffed with observation staff for brown bears (*Ursus arctos*). Before setting off, visitors are advised to listen to a lecture to learn about the rules at the Brown Bear Center located at the trailhead.



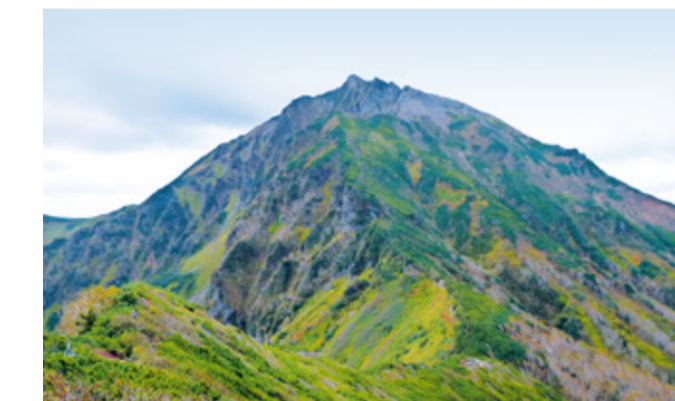
9 10 Nukabira Gensenkyo (hot springs) / Lake Nukabira

The Nukabira Gensenkyo serves as a base for tourist attractions around the Higashi-Taisetsu area and attracts widespread popularity as a natural-flowing hot springs. Lake Nukabira is a manmade lake created by the electrical dam completed in 1956. It is also a place to enjoy the scenes of the lake that has been acclaimed as a place of scenic beauty with the mountains of Higashi-Taisetsu in the backdrop.



11 Mt. Nipesotsu

Set in Higashi-Taisetsu, it is an independent peak standing precipitously at 2,013 m. The rocky stretch of piled-up lava is a habitat for Japanese pika (*Ochotona hyperborea yezoensis*) that sometimes makes an appearance among the rocks.



12 Lake Shikaribetsu

It is the only natural lake found in Daisetsuzan National Park where visitors can enjoy a landscape of lakes exhibiting an outstanding natural beauty surrounded by forests. The Miyabe charr (*Salvelinus malma miyabe*), which is a subspecies of the Dolly varden (*Salvelinus malma*), makes its only habitat in Lake Shikaribetsu, a lake known to be formed by the eruption of a volcano damming a river.

