

# National Parks of Japan





# National Parks

The National Parks, occupying 5.6% of the country's total land, plays a crucial role in protecting the Japan's wealthy ecosystems -- forests, wetlands, seashores and coral reefs and wildlife therein ... and preserving them for future generations. The National Parks also aims at providing opportunities for the experience, enjoyment and better understanding of the country's natural environment by visitors.

Please visit Japan's National Parks with this brochure as a travel guide.

While being advanced in science and industry, Japan is a country of scenic landscapes. To represent the Japan's natural beauty and the seasonal contrasts, 32 sites from Hokkaido in north to Okinawa and Ogasawara Islands in south, are designated as the National Parks.

#### National Park unit name

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu        | 17 Myoko-Togakushi renzan |
| 2 Shiretoko                      | 18 Hakusan                |
| 3 Akan                           | 19 Minami Alps            |
| 4 Kushiroshitsugen               | 20 Ise-Shima              |
| 5 Daisetsuzan                    | 21 Yoshino-Kumano         |
| 6 Shikotsu-Toya                  | 22 San'in-kaigan          |
| 7 Towada-Hachimantai             | 23 Setonaikai             |
| 8 Sanriku Fukko (reconstruction) | 24 Daisen-Okii            |
| 9 Bandai-Asahi                   | 25 Ashizuri-Uwakai        |
| 10 Nikko                         | 26 Saikai                 |
| 11 Oze                           | 27 Unzen-Amakusa          |
| 12 Joshin'etsukogen              | 28 Aso-Kuju               |
| 13 Chichibu-Tama-Kai             | 29 Kirishima-Kinkowan     |
| 14 Ogasawara                     | 30 Yakushima              |
| 15 Fuji-Hakone-Izu               | 31 Keramashoto            |
| 16 Chubusangaku                  | 32 Iriomote-Ishigaki      |

A Scenic Country, Japan

Solitary mountain peaks, covered with snow

all year round, soar into the air,

while islands of various sizes are scattered on a spring sea gleaming like a mirror.

Forests and lakes turn to brilliant shades of autumn color like a piece of brocade...

a variety of natural views are displayed in all four seasons everywhere in the country, which capture hearts of many people.

Kamikochi (Chubu-Sangaku NP) (Photo by Toshitaka Morita)



# Winter

*In the world of all white*



Mt. Asahidake rising fumes in the snow  
(Daisetsusan NP) (1)



Hoar frost on Japanese alpine snow-  
firs (Towada-Hachimantai NP) (2)



Hoar frost covered trees on Mt. Unzen-myoken-dake (Unzen-Amakusa NP) (3)



A messenger of winter: the Steller's sea eagle (Shiretoko NP) (4)  
Surging ice floe, with Kunashiri Island in the distance (Shiretoko NP) (5)



## COLUMN

### Migratory birds —a sign of the changing seasons

Since ancient times, Japanese have sensed the beginning of a new season by bird migration. In late fall, mallard and swans fly from the north, spend winter in Japan and return to the north in spring. Other species, such as swallows and gray-faced-buzzard eagles, migrate from the south in early spring, and nurture juveniles in summer. Snipes and plovers visit the country both in spring and fall on the way to their final destinations. The National Parks play a vital role as habitats of these migratory birds and other wildlife.



Whooper swans over  
Kussharo Lake (Akan NP)

(Photo by Toshitaka Morita)



# Spring

*Soft sunlight, Budding of trees and flowers*

Japanese hill cherry blossoms showcasing the spring color of Yoshino (Yoshino-Kumano NP) (1)



Asian skunk cabbage in Oze Marsh (Oze NP) (2)  
Wild azaleas and the Kuju Mountain Range (Aso-Kuju NP) (3)



A cape in a sea mist, Okino-shima Island (Daisen-Oki NP) (4)

## COLUMN

### Cherry blossom front

In late March, when cherry trees begin blooming in southern Kyushu and Shikoku, Japanese people start caring about 'Cherry blossom front', which forecasts expected dates for cherry blossoms. For the following a month and half, cherry blossom front moves slowly up to the north in the Japanese archipelago. People are anxious to view the gorgeous full blooming and are fascinated with the transient nature of flowers dying in a few days and a beauty in the way of falling petals.





# Summer

*The glow of  
seas and mountains,  
The song of life  
in praise of the earth*



The bountiful clear ocean in Kerama Blue.  
(Keramashoto NP) (1)



A flower carpet spreading over near the summit of  
Mt. Hakuba-dake, the Japan Northern Alps  
(Chubusangaku NP) (2)



The summer of the archipelagic sea (Setonaikai NP) (3)

Islands of Yaeyama in the coral sea (Iriomote-Ishigaki NP) (5)



A flower garden on a major ridge of Asahi Mountain Range (Bandai-Asahi NP) (6)

(Photo 1 by Seiji Miyazato; 2: Tsuyoshi Takahashi; 3, 4 & 5: Toshitaka Morita; 6: Shinichi Satake)

## *Four Seasons in the National Parks*

Kushiro River, flowing through the wetlands (Kushiroshitsugen NP) (4)



### COLUMN

#### A mountain high paradise —The garden of wildflowers

Summer is the season for mountain hiking. The mountains in north of central Japan offer an amusement for hikers to spot fields of wildflowers. As climbing a mountain trail patiently, where trees become sparse, hikers will find the garden of colorful alpine flowers spreading like a carpet. Alpine plants are adapted to harsh alpine environments such as low temperatures, strong wind and prolonged periods of snow pack. Most species bloom all at once in the short summer. The lovely and healthy life forms determined to survive in such severity is a remarkable view, etched into hiker's memories.



Komakusa (*Dicenta* sp.)



# Fall

*Clear mountain streams,  
Colorful meadows and forests*

Mt. Asahidake, seen from mire pools in autumn color (Taisetsusan NP) (1)



Autumn sunset at Setonaikai Inland Sea (Setonaikai NP) (2)



Togakushi mountain range seen from Kagami Pond (Myoko-Togakushi renzan NP)



Kusa-momiji (Grass autumn color) and Japanese larch trees (Nikko NP) (3)

Autumn leaves and Ryuzuno-taki Fall (Nikko NP) (4)



## COLUMN

### Seeking for the autumn color

Japan is said to have the most splendid autumn leaves because of its abundant and diverse deciduous broad-leaved forests. In fall, a variety of deciduous species, such as maple, Katsura tree and mountain ash, turn red or yellow with delicately varied shades of color, which covers the mountain surface. The vividness of autumn color is different every year even at a same location because it depends on temperature variability and moisture conditions. Japanese people go out in the fields and mountains seeking for the view of autumn leaves, which has been a popular activity since 1000 years ago. Towada Lake, Oirase Stream and Oku-nikko, and other famous spots are crowded by viewers most during autumn leaf seasons.





## Experience the Japan's natural beauty

The National Parks contain the Japan's most scenic mountains and seas. While the Parks feature both preserving almost intact ecosystems and offering the enjoyment of accessible scenic delicate sites nearby residential areas. Whether you head out on foot to the mountains, immerse yourself in the wilderness of deep woods and hidden steams, seek for a grandeur scenery, or enjoy wildlife viewing, Japan's finest views will be revealed. Use information services and guides available in the visitor centers and other park facilities for your full enjoyment.



1	
2	3
4	

- 1 Trekking in wetlands (Oze NP)
- 2 Diving with a dolphin (Ogasawara NP)
- 3 Bird-watching (Joshiin'etsukogen NP)
- 4 Sea-kayaking (Iriomote-Ishigaki NP)



### National Park guide Visitor Centers

Visitor centers are the park facilities introducing special qualities of natural objects and processes in the park, to assist visitors to understand better and enjoy the park. Park visitors can learn about the park's scenic views and wildlife from the presentation of replicas, posters, diorama and videos. Real-time wildlife information, such as about blooming flowers and bear sightings, and information on the best hiking trails are also available. Use these free visitor centers to plan your activities and destinations in the National Parks.



Kamikochi Visitor Center (Chubusangaku NP)



## Enjoy hot spring spas



Japan is a volcanic country, with hot springs all over the country. It has been a traditional recreation for the general public to bathe in hot springs out in the countryside, where they can enjoy scenic views and visit historical and cultural objects, temples and shrines. In old hot spring towns, rich nature and culture are preserved. The National Parks featuring volcanoes offer various types of hot springs and ways of the enjoyment. You can enjoy outdoor bathing while viewing snow, streams, oceans, and so on. Tourists may select their destinations depending on minerals dissolved in spring waters. Local foods and delicacy add more pleasure to the visitor's enjoyment of hot springs.

1	2
	3
4	5

- 1 An outdoor bath of Nyuto Hot Spring, famous for its white spring (Towada-Hachimantai NP)
- 2 Seseki Hot Spring, an underwater hot spring looking out at the Kunashiri Island (Shiretoko NP)
- 3 A hot spring lodge surrounded by autumn leaves (Towada-Hachimantai NP)
- 4 Fumes from Unzen Hot Spring (Unzen-Amakusa NP)
- 5 Monkeys bathing in a hot spring, Jigokudani-yaen-kouen (Joshiin'etsukogen NP)





### 1. Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu

24,166ha

The Japan's nothernmost national park, consisting of two islands and an expanse of wetlands. A variety of scenery, from mountains to wetlands, are truly enjoyable.

### 2. Shiretoko

38,636ha

Contains primeval ecosystems with diverse wildlife, remaining in Shiretoko Peninsula. In winter a portion of coastline is covered with drifting ice. Inscribed on the World Natural Heritage List on July 2005.

### 3. Akan

90,481ha

A park of forests, lakes and volcanoes. Boasts a majestic view of three crater lakes including Akan Lake, known for spherical moss, Marimo, and surrounding coniferous forests.

### 4. Kushiroshitsugen

28,788ha

The Japan's largest wetland complex. Supports about 200 plant species and some rare species, including Japanese crane and Sakhalin taimen. Canoe touring is popular.

### 5. Daisetsusan

226,764ha

The Japan's largest national park, featuring Taisetsu Mountains, and wetlands and alpine plant communities at over 2000m elevations. A stunning view of autumn leaves.

### 6. Shikotsu-Toya

99,473ha

Consists of two crater lakes and active volcanic mountains. With popular hot spring resorts, such as Noboribetsu, the park offers a host of vacation options.

### 7. Towada-Hachimantai

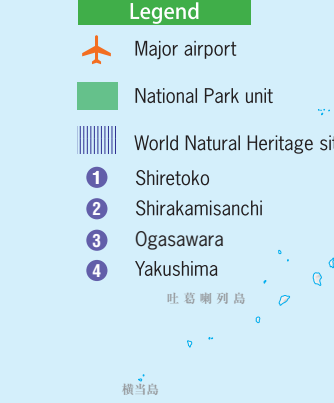
85,551ha

Encompasses from a Japan's most picturesque mountain stream view, vast open space of broad-leaved trees, to a plateau, Hachimantai. The park also features old several therapeutic hot spring resorts.

### 8. Sanriku Fukko (reconstruction)

28,537ha

This park extends for 250 km from Kabushima in Aomori prefecture to Oshika Peninsula in Miyagi prefecture. Its northern part is a coastline composed of uninterrupted dynamic cliffs, while its southern part forms a delicately-rugged coastline. The park offers a breeding place for black-tailed gulls, petrels, etc. It was reorganized on 24 May 2013 as a contribution to the recovery of the Sanriku area which was severely damaged by the Great East Japan Earthquake.



### 9. Bandai-Asahi

186,389ha

Mt. Dewa-sanzan, famous for mountain worship, Asahi-lide Mountain Range, Mt. Bandai, and numerous lakes - the majestic views of mountains, forests and lakes adorn the park.

### 10. Nikko

114,908ha

A park that combines a thousand faces, including the historical structures of Nikko Toshogu Shrine and the lakeside summer resort, Chuzenji Temple

### 11. Oze

37,200ha

Enjoy the typical wetland scenery of Ozegahara and the summit of Mt. Tashiro, the Marie's firs and beeches of Higuchigatake and Aizukomagatake, and the forests of Erman's birch.

### 12. Joshin'etsukogen

148,194ha

Consist of highlands and its surrounding chain of mountains sitting on a continental divide. This park is characterized by Mt. Tanigawa famous for the lofty cliff and Mt. Asama, the very active volcano, as well as highlands as represented by Shiga Kogen. This park has several ski resorts and hot springs, it has attracted a lot of tourists for recreation and leisure.

### 13. Chichibu-Tama-Kai

126,259ha

The old stratum mountains are home to natural forests of beech, Japanese hemlock and veitch fir, Located in the headwater of Tokyo, bounty forests and streams provide a recreational groud for urban communities.

### 14. Ogasawara

6,629ha

Subtropical oceanic islands of over 30 islands are scattered in the 1000km south of Tokyo. Humpback whales migrate to the surrounding ocean. The islands support many endemic species such as Ogasawara fruit bat. Inscribed on the World Natural Heritage List on June 2011.

### 15. Fuji-Hakone-Izu

121,695ha

Mt. Fuji, a World Cultural Heritage site inscribed in June 2013, rises high in a vast stretch of forests and several lakes. The Hakone area features several volcanoes, volcanic vents and lakes. Izu Peninsula offers scenic mountains, seashores, and a chain of characteristic islands in the ocean, Izu-shichito.

### 16. Chubu-Sangaku

174,323ha

One of the most prominent mountain parks. Encompasses a number of precipitous 3000m peaks. Kamikochi highland and Mt. Tateyama attract many tourists seeking for magnificent mountain views.

### 17. Myoko-Togakushi renzan

39,772ha

Consist of concentrated chain of volcanos such as Mt. Myoko and Mt. Izuna and non-volcanic mountains such as Mt. Amakazari. Lake Nojiri, dammed lake, is famous for fossil excavation of Palaeoloxodon naumanni. The park also has interesting cultural sites such as Togakushi Shrine famous for Japanese Amanoiwato myth.

### 18. Hakusan

49,900ha

Consists of a sacred mountain, Mt. Hakusan, and its foot. Because of rich alpine plants, the area has a long history of plant research. Broad-leaved trees, mainly beech, are distributed.

### 19. Minami Alps

35,752ha

A mountain park with a series of 3000m mountains, covered with thick coniferous forests while alpine plants on their tops. It is a paradise for mountaineers willing to a long walk.

### 20. Ise-Shima

55,544ha

Comprised of an elegantly displayed coastline with numerous inlets and outlets, Shima Peninsula, and a symbol of the Japan's ancient religion and culture, Ise Shrine. The mountain behind the shrine has been protected as a sacred forest.

### 21. Yoshino-Kumano

61,406ha

Consists of forested mountains and Kumano Valley in the middle of Kii Peninsula and its shorelines. The area is famous for Mt. Yoshino with cherry blossoms and historic sites; Ohmine Mountain Range, a training ground for Shugen-do (Japanese esoteric Buddhism) practitioners; and Mt. Kumano-sanzan.

### 22. San'inkaigan

8,783ha

This 75-km shoreline park in the Kinki and Chugoku districts offers a spectacular view of intricate shorelines with caves and surrounding clear ocean water. Distinctive plant species are found in a desert-like view of Tottori Sand Dune.

### 23. Setonaikai

66,934ha

About 3000 islands, small and large, spread over the Seto Inland Sea. Human life and natural beauty are peacefully blended to create this park's view.

### 24. Daisen-Oki

35,353ha

Mt. Daisen, a highest mountain in the Chugoku district; Oki Islands of large to small 180 islands; the Shimane Peninsula known for Izumo Taisha Shrine; and Mt. Sanbe and Mt. Hiruzen - all are the components of the Daisen-Oki National Park.

### 25. Ashizuri-Uwakai

11,345ha

A marine park in southwestern Shikoku, featuring a delicate scenery with an intricate shoreline pattern and numerous islands in north (Uwa-kai) and contrasting dynamic view in south (Ashizuri), where high bluffs extend along its shoreline. The sea has richly decorated underwater views with abundant coral community.

### 26. Saikai

24,646ha

A marine and islands park in northwestern Kyushu. A chain of over 200 a form this archipelagic sea. The sunset view is especially breathtaking. Also, the Goto archipelago in the East China Sea consists of over 250 islands.

### 27. Unzen-Amakusa

28,279ha

The Unzen area in the center of Shimabara Peninsula hosts summer resorts, known by the famous volcanic activity of Mt. Fugen in 1990 and hot springs. The Amakusa Islands of 120 islands, small and large, is known for its scenic beauty.

### 28. Aso-Kuju

72,678ha

A park of volcanoes and grass fields. Mt. Aso has an extremely large caldera, while Mt. Kuju is a series of dome-shaped volcanoes. The grassy fields on their hillslopes have been maintained by human activities, such as prescribed burning and cattle grazing.

### 29. Kirishima-Kinkowan

36,586ha

A park view is originated volcanic activity. The Kirishima area, which is a collection of over 20 volcanoes, has the scenery of crater lakes and fumaroles phenomena and also offers hot spring resorts. The Kinkowan area consists of Sakurajima located in the southern edge of Aira-caldera, Sata cape with many subtropical plants and Ibusuki district with polygenetic volcano.

### 30. Yakushima

24,566ha

Known for the vertical distribution of vegetation from seashore to Mt. Miyanoura (1,936 m), the highest peak in Kyushu. Primeval natural forests with Yaku cedar trees are distributed. Inscribed on the World natural Heritage List in December of 1993.

### 31. Keramashoto

3,520ha

Kerama Islands is located to 40 km the west of Naha City, consisting of more than 30 small and large islands and a number of rock reefs. The blue of the sea is renowned as "Kerama Blue", and the contrast between the bright blue ocean and the white of the sand beach is fascinating. The rich ecosystems show various coral reefs in the shoals, and humpback whales breeding in the surrounding waters. In fact, Kerama Islands was the first national park that the area was designated as long as 7 km away from the shores for the reason that humpback whales are commonly observed in a wide range of the surrounding ocean.

### 32. Iriomote-Ishigaki

40,654ha

The park encompasses Iriomote and Ishigaki Islands, smaller islands and coral reefs. Subtropical forests blanket 90% of Iriomote, supporting a large number of rare species such as the Iriomote wild cat. The blue coral reef of Ishigaki Island's Shiraho district is the biggest of its kind in the northern hemisphere.

32  
Parks

## The National Park Profiles

### The National Park System

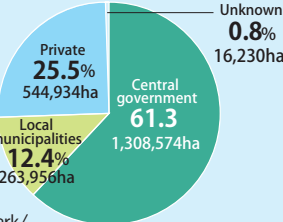
The National Park System aims at protecting the scenery that represents the Japan's natural beauty and leaving them unimpaired for future generations. Within the National Parks, while activities to cause environmental impacts are regulated under the law, the improvement of park facilities, such as trails and visitor centers, and rehabilitation of degraded areas are conducted.

Currently, 32 sites are designated as the National Parks, covering 2.13 million hectares or 5.6% of the country's ground surface. Designation and management of National Parks are administered by the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry's staffs who are called 'rangers' work on field management in each of the National Parks.

Most nationally owned land being national forest, land for national park purposes is limited. For this reason, great importance is placed on partnership with relevant government agencies, local governments and citizens, NGOs, etc. (Each area of National Parks indicates the area of the land.)

National Parks website : <http://www.env.go.jp/park/>

#### Land ownership in the National Park







**Ministry of the Environment**

<http://www.env.go.jp/park>

Godochosha No.5, 1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8975, Japan.  
© Ministry of the Environment 2013

This brochure is printed on recycled paper.

Front cover: Mt. Fuji in spring, seen from the  
shores of Kawaguchi Lake

Back cover: Mt. Taisetsu in autumn color

(Photos by Toshitaka Morita)