

## JAPAN'S MOST SPECTACULAR NATIONAL PARKS

When you think of Japan it is often the gigantic megacity of Tokyo that springs to mind along with its bustling technology fuelled society that is so impressive for its ingenuity and innovation. Another well-known image and indeed symbol of Japan is the iconic Mt. Fuji that beautifully rises gracefully towards the heavens. In any case, in comparison with the wide variety of attractions on show, Japan's national parks often fall somewhat under the radar of visitors to its shores. Natural wonders abound however and the plethora of incredible sights will leave you astounded at the scenic beauty before your eyes.

Whether you enjoy secret shrines, natural hot springs, towering peaks, or colorful spring blooms, there's a lot to take in when you visit Japan's national parks. The country's national park system was first established in 1931, and today, it has 34 distinct preserves, each one offering something unique, compelling, and generally free for all to visit without the need for permits. And while you could spend a lifetime exploring all of the splendidly whimsical islands and cities, we suggest you start with this list.

**Akan-Mashu National Park** is located in eastern Hokkaido. The park is well known for its three beautiful lakes: Lake Akan, Lake Mashu and Lake Kussharo. Lake Mashu is of particular fame. Although often covered by mysterious fog, its waters are some of the clearest in the world. The Park is composed of two separate parts. The smaller, western portion contains Lake Akan with the lakeside hot spring resort of Akanko Onsen. The larger, eastern part contains Lake Mashu, Lake Kussharo Mt. Io (Sulfur Mountain) and centrally located Kawayu Onsen hot spring.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/spot/1861/>

**Towada-Hachimantai National Park** is located in the mountainous interior of the northern Tohoku Region, stretching across Aomori, Akita and Iwate Prefectures. The national park has a wealth of attractive forests, mountains, hiking trails and rustic hot springs, and is one of Japan's best spots for autumn colors during the month of October. Towada-Hachimantai National Park is made up of two separate areas: the northern area around Lake Towada and Mt. Hakkoda, and the southern Hachimantai area. The two areas are located around 50 kilometres apart from each other and offer similarly attractive landscapes and activities.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/tohoku/aomori/lake-towada-and-around/>

**Daisetsuzan National Park:** The indigenous Ainu know Daisetsuzan as Kamuy Mintara —the playground of the gods—and it's vast enough for that at 2,267 square kilometres. The scenery here is wild and spectacular, a trekker's delight that includes expansive valleys, natural hot springs, rivers, and wildflowers, not to mention the fauna. There are several hot spring resorts from which to start your explorations. Plenty of options for water sports are available in the warmer months.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/spot/650/>

**Nikko National Park** is situated northeast of Tokyo in a mountainous region shaped by long ages of volcanic activity. The area is known for its dense broadleaf woodlands of beech, maple and oak. Large numbers of sightseers from all over Japan and abroad come here to enjoy the spectacular cool fire of fall foliage. You can see waterfalls, lakes and marshlands, and along the way you may encounter endemic wildlife such as the Japanese macaque and Japanese deer. The park is also home to some of the country's most renowned shrines, including Nikko Toshogu Shrine.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/kanto/tochigi/nikko-area/>

**Chubu Sangaku National Park:** The Chubu Sangaku National Park, also known as the Northern Japan Alps, encompasses a set of high mountain ranges known for their beautiful natural scenery and alpine vistas. The park includes popular outdoor getaways such as Kamikochi and the Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route, as well as several famous ski resorts and hot spring towns.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/spot/1420/>

**Shikotsu-Toya National Park** is located in southwestern Hokkaido. There are five parts to Shikotsu-Toya National Park, each featuring various attractions. The most famous two park areas are its namesake lakes, Toya and Shikotsu. The hot spring towns of Noboribetsu and Jozankei are also popular. Mt-Yotei, a perfectly shaped volcano near Niseko, is the fifth distinct park area. Shikotsu-Toya provides you with the opportunity to experience one of Japan's leading volcanic landscapes. The heart of the park is also close to both central Sapporo and New Chitose Airport, putting extraordinary encounters with the great outdoors within easy reach.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/hokkaido/hokkaido/niseko-and-nearby-ski-resorts/>

**Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park** : With Mt. Fuji located at its north end, Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park consists of various volcanic landforms and hot springs where major tectonic plates squeeze together, stretching to diverse coastlines and islands, making it a comprehensive representation of many of the natural wonders of Japan. Fuji Hakone Izu consists of several extremely popular outdoor spots within easy reach of Tokyo: Mount Fuji, Hakone, the Izu Peninsula and the Izu Islands. The park offers a wide variety of outdoor attractions including mountain climbing, hot springs and beaches. Its value as a source of Japanese religious and aesthetic consciousness has been widely recognized and was designated as a World Cultural Heritage Site in June, 2013. Located close to the Tokyo area, Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park has the most visitors of any national park in Japan.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/world-heritage/fujisan-sacred-place-and-source-of-artistic-inspiration/>

**Setonaikai National Park:** The Setonaikai National Park covers a large portion of the Seto Inland Sea, stretching nearly 400 kilometers from the Naruto Whirlpools to Miyajima and beyond. The park includes hundreds of islands such as Naoshima, Shodoshima, Inujima, Ogijima and Megijima, as well as other attractions like the Shimanami Kaido.

[https://www.japan.travel/en/japan-magazine/2102\\_kagawa/](https://www.japan.travel/en/japan-magazine/2102_kagawa/)

**Yambaru National Park:** Yambaru National Park covers the northern part of the Okinawa Main Island. The area is only sparsely populated and covered mostly by densely forested mountains and hills and a pretty coastline. The Yambaru forests are home to a variety of wildlife, including the Yanbaru Kuina, a small, nearly-flightless bird only found in the Yanbaru region. <https://www.japan.travel/en/spot/527/>

**Ise Shima National Park:** The Ise Shima National Park encompasses the Shima Peninsula, a coastal resort area in central Japan known for its rugged shore and a history of pearl cultivation. At the western edge of the park lie the Ise Jingu Grand Shrines, the most important and sacred Shinto shrines. <https://www.japan.travel/en/destinations/tokai/mie/toba-and-shima/>

There's no denying it; Japan is abundant with natural wonders that would enchant any traveller. To learn more about the rest of the national parks in Japan, the Japan National Tourism Organization has a comprehensive website detailing the full extent of the country's fantastic National Park system. Please visit

<https://www.env.go.jp/en/nature/enjoy-project/contents/index.html>

or

<https://www.japan.travel/national-parks/>

**About Japan National Tourism Organization:**

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) was founded in 1964 with the mission of enticing foreign travelers to Japan. Affiliated with the Japan Tourism Agency of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, JNTO has effectively functioned as the Japanese government bureau of tourism. It has a total of 21 tourism-promotion-oriented offices across the world, and a large network of suppliers for tourism and event services in Japan. The Japan Convention Bureau (JCB), within JNTO, gathers professionals dedicated to attracting international conferences and incentive tours to Japan, located in 6 strategic offices.

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