

Section 2

Kanto & Western Japan National Parks

Nikko National Park (Fukushima pref., Tochigi pref., Gunma pref.)

Ise Shima National Park (Mie pref.)

Daisen-Oki National Park (Tottori pref., Shimane pref., Okayama pref.)

One of the unique aspects of Japan's National Parks lie in the magnificent and amazing shrines and temples located within the Parks. It is no secret that the majority of visitors build their itineraries to visit the shrines and are unaware that they are within a National Park.

There is so much to experience and see within the Parks, and foreign visitors who have traveled a long distance would find that the gratification of their trip would be enhanced by including a visit to the Park in the vicinity of their original destination.

Nikko National Park (Fukushima pref., Tochigi pref., Gunma pref.)



Senjogahara

Geographical Characteristics

The Nikko, Kinugawa River, and Kuriyama areas have several volcanoes including stratovolcanoes such as Mt. Nantai, Mt. Nyoho, and Mt. Akanagi, as well as lava domes and small volcanoes, collectively referred to as the 'Nikko Volcano Group'. Mountainsides and bases of this Nikko Volcano Group possess various geographical and geological features, such as; lakes, wetlands, and waterfalls, that were formed by volcanic activity.

Visitor Centers

Nikko Area

- Nikko Yumoto Visitor Center (access location with Google Map)
- Nikko Natural Science Museum (access location with Google Map)
- Akanuma Nature Information Center (access location with Google Map)

Shiobara Onsen Area

- Shiobara Onsen (hot springs) Visitor Center (access location with Google Map)

Nasu Area

- Nasu Kogen Visitor Center (access location with Google Map)
- Nasu Heisei-no-Mori Field Center (access location with Google Map)

For further details of facilities within Nikko National Park, visit; [Facilities](#)

Winter Experiences

The area surrounding Nikko National Park has for centuries, served as a sanctuary of the Japanese Court, the Imperial Family and the Japanese people. Nikko is a must-see destination for both domestic and international tourists. However, few visitors travel beyond the shrines and temples, to experience the various natural locations, and internationally historic locations within this park.

• Snowshoe Walking – Nasu Heisei-no-Mori

Guided tours take visitors through this untouched forest. 90 years ago, since the Nasu Heisei-no-Mori Forest was designated as a retreat for the Imperial Family, it has remained in its natural form. Visitors can observe how a grassland gradually evolved into woodland, and witness the abundant variety of fauna and flora. You can enjoy locating animal footprints in the fresh powder snow until seasonal limited.

Cycling on Mount Nasu

Enjoy a scenic and thrilling cycling experience on a snowy road lined with large beech trees. Feel free to join as access can be made to the cycling road via a gondola. Fat tire bikes are stable on snow, and easy to maneuver if you know how to ride a bicycle. Take this chance to have fun while taking in the grandeur of the Nasu mountain range and the Kanto Plain.



Snow Cycling

- **Climbing & Hiking**

There is no better way to enjoy a visit to the national park as climbing and hiking. Mountains and routes are detailed in the website of National Parks by the Ministry of Environment. Don't forget snowshoes are essential for winter hiking. For further details, visit; [Recommended Courses](#)

Early Spring Experiences

Nikko, Okunikko, and Nasu are filled with such a variety of places to visit, and experiences to be had. The easy access from Tokyo makes the area an ideal location to visit just for a day's trip to get away and leave the stress of hectic city life behind. Slow relaxing walks in forests that are just coming back to life from the winter, or enjoy an exhilarating river cruise ride down Kinugawa River, or explore the back streets of Nishimachi discover the amazing shops and cafes.



Lake Chuzenji and Kegonotaki Waterfall

- **British Embassy Villa Memorial Park**

The beauty, serenity and resemblance to his native Scotland had attracted British diplomat Ernest Satow to this area where he built a summer resort. Following his example, this area which overlooks Lake Chuzenji quickly became an international summer resort area. The original resort has been restored, and there is an English afternoon-tea service (upon reservation) provided.

Open from: **April – November** Contact: Nikko Natural Science Museum Phone: 0288-55-0880



British Embassy Villa - Lake Chuzenji

- **Kinugawa River Cruise**

Hop on an ancient Japanese-style wooden boat paddled by a boatman and cruise down the Kinugawa River. This river is famous for the unusually shaped rock formations. The surrounding scenery changes according to the season; light green leaves in the spring, to the beautiful reds of autumn.

Available: All year

Contact: Kinukougengkaiatsu Co., Ltd.

Phone: 0288-77-0531



Kinugawa River Cruise

Ise-Shima National Park (Mie pref.)



Yokoyama Observatory

Geographical Characteristics

Ise-Shima National Park reaches out toward the sea, with a peninsula extending southward from the mainland, with its coastal area facing the Pacific Ocean. The southern horseshoe formation surrounds Ago Bay, reflecting a landscape of a ria coastline with numerous inlets. The surrounding coastline of Ise-Shima has roughly 60 small and large islands.

Visitor Centers

Ago Town Area

- Yokoyama Visitor Center (access location with [Google Map](#))

Toba Area

- Toba Visitor Center (access location with [Google Map](#))

For further details of facilities within Ise-Shima National Park, visit; [Facilities](#)

Winter Experiences

At the heart of Ise-Shima National Park is Ise Jingu (Ise Grand Shrine). The seat of national Japanese religion and spirituality. It is one of the most significant shrines in Japan, visited, in addition to; members of the Imperial Family, Prime Ministers, and millions of Japanese every year. Winter is the ideal time to visit this highly popular pilgrimage and tourist location, and experience the surrounding nature and leisure.



Ise Grand Shrine

Hiking, Cycling & Driving

There is no better way to enjoy a visit to the national park as climbing and hiking. Mountains and routes are detailed in the website of National Parks by the Ministry of Environment. Don't forget to bring appropriate footwear & gear.

For further details, visit; [Recommended Courses](#)

Early Spring Experiences

Ise-Shima has a rich cultural and traditional history. Well known for the unique fishing tradition where 'Ama', or female divers skin dive to collect shellfish and seaweed. Learn of how the park's rich natural environment nurtured pearl cultivation.

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- **Interact with Female 'Ama' Divers**

Osatsucho, Toba City has the highest population of Ama female divers in Japan. Amakoya, is the hut where the divers rest, is open to allow interaction with these amazing women.

Available: All year Contact: Ama Hut HACHIMAN E-mail: info@amakoya.com or visit; <http://www.amakoya.com/English%20page.htm>



Visiting Ama Divers

- **Walking Around ‘Shima Province’**

Take a stroll around a fishing village located within Ise-Shima National Park and observe how the local people live. Small shops can be found that specialize in dried fish, as well as building in which ‘katsuobushi’ (dried and moked bonito) is made. Katsuobushi is one of the fundamental ingredients in making ‘dashi’, a basic soup stock, used in a wide array of dishes in home-cooking as well as professional Japanese cuisine.

Available: All year Contact: Shima Nature School E-mail: webmaster@shima-sg.com
or visit; www.shima-sg.com



Katsuobushi Tour

- **Sea Kayak & Deserted Island Tour**

Observe workers in pearl farms from a kayak in the placid Ago Bay. One of the characteristics of Ise-Shima National Park is how the local people coexist with nature can be observed. On route, land on one of the over 60 uninhabited islands and take a break to enjoy the surroundings. At low tide, various marine life forms can be observed.

Available: All year Contact: Shima Nature School E-mail: webmaster@shima-sg.com
or visit; www.shima-sg.com



Sea Kayaking

- **Akoya Pearl Farming**

Home to cultured pearls, the regional name of 'Akoya' is the name of the clam which is used in harvesting cultured pearls. Pearls form through a process that starts when an irritant gets into the mollusks at the mantle tissue. In reaction, the mollusks produce nacre, a thick organic liquid which builds on the stable irritant for a period to create the pearl. The pioneer of Japan's cultured pearl industry, Kokichi Mikimoto was born in Toba of Mie Prefecture. Seeing the pearl divers of Ise-Shima unloading their treasures at the shore in his childhood started his fascination with pearls. In 1888, Mikimoto obtained a loan to start his first pearl oyster farm at the Shinmei inlet on Ago Bay. The rest is history.

Try your hand at making accessories using Akoya pearls, while learning of its history. Available: All year
Contact: Pearl Falco Phone: 0596-23-2988 or visit; www.p-falco.com/en/



Making Accessories with Akoya Pearls

Daisen-Oki National Park (Tottori pref., Shimane pref., Okayama pref.)



Geographical Characteristics

Mt. Daisen is the focal point of the park,. The Oki Islands are also an important component of the park. A diverse array of cliffs, deep caves ad sunken cavers, created by volcanic activity.

Visitor Centers

Daisen Area

- Daisen National Park Centre (access location with Google Map)

For further details of facilities within Daisen-Oki National Park, visit; [Facilities](#)

Winter Experiences

Mount Daisen, is an imposing 1,729m volcanic peak. The ascent takes roughly three hours through a maze of steps which can be accomplished at any time of the year, from lush spring to snowy winter. For those who have plans to challenge Mt. Daisen in the winter, note that the submission of a 'climbing permit' is strongly advised prior to making the climb. This 'climbing permit' can be submitted at the Hotel Daisen (link below). There is no cost for the permit, it is a precautionary measure taken by the Japan Mountain Rescue Organization, to ensure that the local division is aware of the climbers' scheduled ascent, descent, number in the party, contact information, etc. In the winter, skiing down the slopes for a rush of excitement, or a more a milder form of snowshoeing in the peaceful scenery is an experience to be had.

Climbing Permit <http://www.hotel-daisen.jp/tozan/todoke.html>

• **Daisen Snowshoe Tour**

The beech forests surrounding Daisenji Temple have changed very little since the temple was officially opened 1300 years ago. This tour provides sights such as the panorama from Mt. Daisen's summit, travel through the snowy fields and snow-encrusted trees. Featuring temples and shrines that only the locals know of. A winter only experience. Contact: Morinokuni Phone: 0859-53-8036 or visit; www.sanin.com/site/page/daisen/institution/morinokuni2/ready/english



Daisen Snowshoe Tour

• **Early Spring Experiences**

From the month of April, a multitude of experiences become available to enjoy. Hikers and climbers will enjoy the lush greenery and vibrant colors of the blooming flowers. There is everything for nature lovers, sport activity enthusiasts, and those who want to absorb a different culture, can find it at Daisen-Oki.



Cherry Blossoms against Mt. Daisen

• **The Japanese Giant Salamander**

The world's largest amphibian, the Japanese Giant Salamander is an endangered species. Observe observation this rare creature in its natural habitat, as well as participate in conservation and field work only possible in the presence of researchers. Take part in this eco tour, where participants can assist the group responsible for the preservation of the Japanese Giant Salamander and its environment.

Available: April – November (except mid-August to mid-September)

Contact: Bushido Phone: 090-9460-2912 or visit; www.bushidojapan.com



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Japanese Giant Salamander

- **Daisen Downhill Cycling**

This route from the midst of Mt. Daisen all the way to the Sea of Japan allows cyclists to enjoy the mountain terrain which opens up to the ocean of the purest blue. The pleasant downhill course travels through scenic winding roads, country lanes and more.

Available: April – November Contact: Morinokuni Phone: 0859-53-8036



Daisen Downhill Cycling

- **Oki Islands**

Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Geopark, in addition to breathtaking scenery, these solitary islands have nurtured a unique culture and way of life.



- **Hiking, Cycling & Driving**

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