ASO-KUJU National Park

Welcome to the earth’s volcanic theater!

Experience the wondrous stories spun by the majestic volcanoes at Aso-Kuju National Park, the earth’s volcanic theater. And take home powerful, unforgettable memories that will warm your heart.

www.env.go.jp/park/aso
What a wonderful world

A magnificent natural panorama.
A place where people live peacefully surrounded by nature’s abundance.
Stand here and you will never see volcanos in the same way again.
Witness the miracles they have wrought and impressive vistas that resonate to your very core.
Volcanos are mountains uplifted by the power of the heavens.
Clear spring water and hot springs, beautiful meadows and mountains,
a unique way of life and an ages-old culture.
Enter a spectacular world created by volcanos.
Night and day

Liquid the same rich color as emerald green eyes bubbles up from the depths of the crater. White fumes of smoke soar into the blue skies and diffuse into the clouds far above. The volcano is evidence that the earth is alive. Deep growsis from the bowels of the earth will resound day and night, day after day, year after year, for eons into the future. Long after humankind is no more.

Mount Aso comprises a central volcanic cone that rises out of its immense caldera that extends approximately 25 kilometers north-south and 18 kilometers east-west, the surrounding crater basin, and the crater's outer rim. Steam and smoke issue from Nakadate Crater, the central volcanic cone. The crater's interior can be viewed from the rim when it is not active. The Kuju Mountain Range is a volcanic group encircling the lava dome. The surrounding, expansive plateau was created from volcanic ash and debris. Visitors can experience both the rugged, evolving landscape and the gentle grasslands at the same time.

Fire

Volcano

Top left: The dissolved minerals from the volcanic rock turn the water in the crater a beautiful emerald green.

Bottom left: The virgin forest growing in the volcanic soil of Kuju Kuro-dake is famous for its autumn foliage.

Top right: The remote hot springs of Hokkei in Bopatsuru are only accessible on foot.
The Kuju Mountain Range stands at an elevation of 1,763 meters. The Kuju mountain chain stretches to the west, and to the east are Mt. Taisei and the Taisei Mountain Range. In between lies Bogatsuru Marsh. The area has long been popular with mountain climbers and tourists alike, especially in the early summer when the Kyushu azaleas bloom, and in the fall when the autumn foliage creates a rich brocade. The trails from Chojabaru on the Yamanami Highway to Mt. Taisei and Mount Kuju, and from Makinoto Pass to Kuju and beyond, are regularly maintained. Numerous other trails also meander through the Kuju mountains.
Standing in the middle of the grasslands as dawn breaks,
you can watch the glimmering stars fade away.
The rays of the rising sun
illuminate the ridgeline of the Aso and Kuju mountains in bold relief.
The Japanese silver grass that stood silently in the dead of night begins to sway
in time with the invigorating tune of the early morning breeze.
The grasslands are the cradle of life.
Pristine waters spring forth to nurture and shelter the flora and fauna.
These grasslands are a gift from the distant past, sustained by both volcanoes and people.
May the swaying silver grass entice you to dance in the wind.

Volcanic plateaus, created from
volcanic ash and other debris, surround
Mount Aso and the Kuju Mountain Range. The plateaus’ grasslands are
actively maintained to prevent tree
growth through mowing, burn-offs in
the spring, grazing and other methods.
This ensures that globe thistle, viola
orientalis, beardless iris, and many
other rare plants thrive in this vital
ecosystem.

Softly,
as in a morning sunrise

Top: Horse trek the grasslands of the Aso-Kuju mountains.
Bottom: Take in the expanse of the outer rim of the Aso crater and the
Kuju Mountain Range by cycling around the grasslands.
Countless springs are scattered around Mount Aso and the Kuju Mountain Range. A high concentration of springs can be found in the Aso and Kongo Valleys within the caldera, at the southern foot of Mount Kuju, and in areas around the towns of Taketa and Oguni. Springs also flow in several locations on the southern, western and northern slopes of the Aso crater’s outer rim. Rain and snow on the mountains seep into the earth and accumulate underground, where the water is filtered through volcanic ash and rock before it returns to the surface to sustain human lifestyles as well as the abundant plant and animal life of Aso-Kuju.

Walk under a soft patchwork of sunlight filtering through the broadleaf trees of the forests. The murmur of flowing water mingles with the sound of gentle breezes in the trees and the chirping of small birds. This forest has a deep, ultramarine pond steadily fed by pristine spring water filtered through the volcano. The water that flows unceasingly from its depths becomes a brook that will gently nourish the forest for eternity.

Dike pond at the foot of the Kuju Kuro-dake mountains

Top left: About 120 tons of water per minute flow from Takezaki spring in Minami Aso.
Bottom left: Experience Nabegataki falls both from the front and behind.
Top right: Most Aso-Kuju spring water is delicious and drinkable.

Agua de beber
Feels like home

While roasting skewered dengaku delicacies over the hearth, the proprietress of the hot-spring inn taught us how our ancestors chose to live with nature and accept its sometimes harsh whims. Here you can relax and feel at home, thanks to the unique local culture that has been preserved for thousands of years. Time flows at its own slow pace, with people enjoying peaceful lives enriched by the blessings of nature.

Climate

The local people have learned to live with the volcanoes. They have endured harsh acts of nature countless times, yet have used the distinctive characteristics of the land to their advantage to develop a culture unique to Aso-Kuju. The people have enjoyed a peaceful and abundant life almost unchanged for centuries, cooking with geothermal energy and pure spring water, relaxing in the hot springs, raising cattle and horses on the grasslands, picking edible wild plants in the mountains, and fishing in the rivers. The unhurried lifestyle of Aso-Kuju, with people living in harmony with Mother Nature, has a special power to warm the hearts of visitors.
Aso-Kuju National Park is ablaze with Kyushu azaleas in the spring, beautiful autumnal colors in the fall, and snow in the winter. The stunning scenery enthralls sightseers and mountain hikers alike. The region has a unique topography born of volcanic activity and is a treasure house of flora, fauna, and culture. The magnificent volcanic plateau presents a powerful, rugged landscape. Tree growth is controlled to preserve its beautiful grasslands, which are a natural habitat for globe thistle, viola orientalis, beardless iris, and other rare plants. The Aso area preserves unique time-honored customs, such as a fire-swinging ritual in a prayer for an abundant harvest.

The Seasons

Top left: Echinops setosus, a rare plant found in the Tadewara Marsh, blooms with spherical azure flowers in August and September. Top right: In spring the grasslands are burned in a practice dating back over a millennium to prevent trees from growing in the grasslands. Middle left: From late May through mid-June, Kyushu azaleas carpet the Aso-Kuju volcanoes in majestic purple. Middle right: Even in balmy Kyushu, hoar frost can be seen at the peak of Mount Tsukuba in Beping, Oita Prefecture. The peak is accessible by ropeway. Bottom left: Ropes are attached to torches and swung around in the traditional Hituri Shinto ritual at Aso shrine. Bottom right: Aso-Kuju is famous for its autumnal foliage. The mountainsides are ablaze with reds and yellows, and the plateau comes aglow with Japanese silver grass.

Access

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<tr>
<th>Haneda Airport</th>
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<td>JR Yufuin Station: Fukuoka (Kumage Bus Center)</td>
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Note: The access routes given are only suggestions. For details, please inquire at the transportation companies mentioned or refer to their websites. All times are estimates.

Inquiries:

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