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Akita Komagatake Mountain

A well-known mountain for its hundreds of Alpine plant varieties.

Height: 1,637.1 m

- Location: Semboku City
- Trek Length: 10.6 km
- Trek Altitude: 327.1 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Akita Komagatake Mountain, Kunimi Hot Spring



grade →

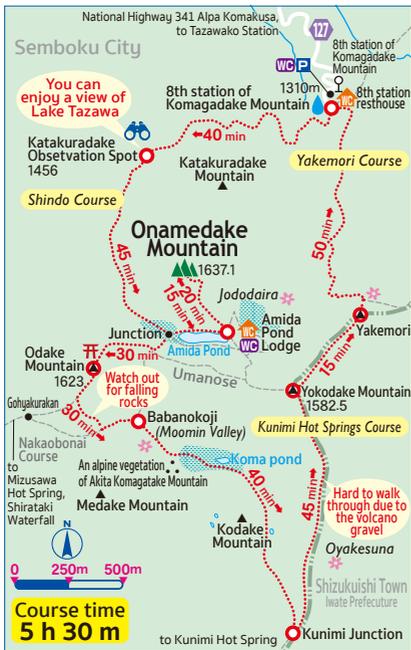
Physical Strength 2



Skill level B



- 1 Geum pentapetalum of Moomin Valley
- 2 Large community of Viola crassa



Mooming Valley at Akita Komagatake Mountain, where in late June, I brought my friend here to wow her with the picturesque scenery of its flower garden.

Departing from the 8th station, we climbed through Yaeimori, Yokodake Mountain, and Oyakesuna, which were filled with violet crassa and dicentra penegrina blossoms, blooming regally. Turning right at the junction, we found a flower garden filled with avens and others, to which she was of course overjoyed to find. It was so beautiful that we wished we could live there. Although we were distracted by alpine plants along the way, we cautiously climbed up the steep slopes of Odake Mountain, avoiding any fallen stones. Upon looking back at Kodake Mountain and the trails we had just passed, we once again marveled at the incredible scenery of Amida Pond. As we descended from Onamedake Mountain to Katakuradake Mountain, we could see Lake Tazawa right below us.

Akita Komagatake Mountain is the place to go for fully enjoying a wide range of alpine plants blooming in large quantities.

ACCESS

The trekking course begins at the 8th station which can be reached through the Akita Prefectural Road 127 (Komagatake Line) from Lake Tazawa. You need to take a bus from Alpa Komakusa during the times when the road is closed to vehicles. It takes about an hour by bus from JR Tazawako Station to the trekking starting point.

20

Climbing from Akita Komagatake Mountain to Mt. Nyuto

Height: 1,637.1 m / 1,478.0 m

Trek along a ridge weaved between the clouds, all while overlooking a great view.

- Location: Semboku City
- Trek Length: 15.4 km
- Trek Altitude: 327.1 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Akita Komagatake Mountain



grade

Physical Strength

3



Skill level

B



- 1 Mt. Nyuto
- 2 Akita Komagatake Mountain viewed on the way to Mt. Nyuto



In early October, I climbed down Akita Komagatake Mountain to Kuroyu Hot Spring through Mt. Nyuto, with its mountain ridges that peek through the clouds.

It was a peak season for autumn leaves, which saw bamboo green and ranges of red and maple orange creeping into dark green pine—it formed a natural patchwork that was truly beautiful.

As I was traveling to Mt. Zarumori from Mt. Yumori, I enjoyed a magnificent view of Onamedake Mountain and Zarumori Forest, speckled red and green like Christmas trees. I then stopped by Senshogahara, watching out for the slippery trail.

The closer I approached the cliff, the higher I was up the mountain. Finally, I reached the amazing view from the summit of Mt. Nyuto. Completely surrounded by beautiful scenery, I could see Ojiromori, a lagoon floating in the clouds, Mt. Moriyoshi, as well as a swamp just below our sight. I then made my way to Kuroyu Hot Spring to soak in its natural hot springs, and relieved my exhaustion from 15km of climbing down.

ACCESS Departing from Lake Tazawa, go through the Akita Prefectural Road (Komagatake Line) to the 8th Station, from which climbing route starts. You are required to take a bus running for climbers from Alpa Komakusa while the street is closed to vehicles, which takes approx. an hour from JR Tazawako Station. *As the trekking route terminal and starting point are different, you need to take a regular-route bus from Nyuto Hot Springs Village to Alpa Komakusa when returning.

21

Wagadake Mountain

The main peak of Waga Mountain Range, which contains the largest number of preserved primeval forests in the prefecture.

Height: 1,439.4 m

- Location: Daisen City / Semboku City
- Trek Length: 17.3 km
- Trek Altitude: 1,072.4 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Okannari / Kitakawafune



grade → Physical Strength **4** Skill level **B**



1



2

- 1 Trekking from Yakushidake Mountain toward the farther summit
- 2 Great view from the summit

When I think of Wagadake Mountain, based on my past experiences, I think of its many yellow day lilies, its dynamic long ridgeline, and its clear mountain stream.

An early morning in late June. I departed Kanrosui water stream, obscured in the fog. I was in search of day lilies, but was surprised to find fern and other alpine plants much larger than those I'd seen at other mountains - I felt as if I'd slipped back into the Jurassic period. I wandered through the many broad leaf trees - such as beech trees - and happened to run into a small patch of day lilies shortly after the demolished trail at Kurakata.



I wandered through the many broad leaf trees - such as beech trees - and happened to run into a small patch of day lilies shortly after the demolished trail at Kurakata.

There was still a long way to go along the ridge to reach the summit of Wagadake Mountain, even if I had already arrived at the top of Yakushidake Mountain, which felt unchanged since ancient times. A deep layer of snow remained, and it was very quiet. There were also rich veratrum viride blossoms blooming all over the slope. I ended up needing to trek through an untouched bamboo bush - not sure if this was a lucky or unlucky thing. I was about a week too early for seeing the day lilies in full bloom, so I'd like to come back again next year.

ACCESS Drive to Daisen City Ota Town Koganari District through the Regional Road 50 from Semboku City Jindai District along the National Route 46. Go along the Magi Trail for about 7 km by way of Magi District. You need to drive around 50 min. from JR Kakunodate Station to the trekking start.

22

Mahirudake Mountain

A refreshing course along the ridge of Ou Mountain Range, also known as the backbone of the Tohoku region.

Height: 1,059.4 m

- Location: Misato Town
- Trek Length: 6.7 km
- Trek Altitude: 153.4 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Mahirudake Mountain



grade

Physical Strength 2



Skill level B



1



2

- 1 Trekking along Ou Mountain Range
- 2 The summit is close by



Visiting here made me realize that this was indeed, the magnificent mountain that everyone always raves about.

The relatively new Minekoshi Trail is the shortest and the easiest. I first climbed up Kitanomatadake Mountain, which had a great view, but was in bad condition - good thing there was the existing rope. Afterward, I overlooked Yokote Basin and Mt. Chokai, which made me feel I was walking on clouds, even though I had just started ascending. Then, I found myself actually walking over the border between Akita and Iwate, and along the Ou Mountain Range, which I used to color on maps in school. I, as well as others, was deeply moved by this mountain.

I was able to see pteridophyllums before they were fell out of season! Their pretty white blossoms yielded good color coordination with the leaves, which were ferns, and appeared like lace artwork. The scenic view from Miwa Shrine's Rear Hall included a view of the town and rice paddies, which interrupted me from descending immediately.

ACCESS

Move through the Regional Road 50 from Semboku City Jindai District along the National Route 46 toward Ichijogi Park in Misato Town Senhata District. Go forward the Minekoshi Trail for about 10 km along the Omata Stream from the intersection in the pasture in aiming for the trekking start.

23

Mt. Toko

A holy mountain, where the ancient Buddhist priest Zezan was believed to have performed his religious training.

Height: 594.0 m

- Location: Yurihonjo City
- Trek Length: 5.6 km
- Trek Altitude: 457.0 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Iwamenezawa



grade →

Physical Strength 2



Skill level B



1



2

- 1 Early spring view of Mt. Toko
- 2 Steep ramp

Mt. Toko was said to have been founded by the Buddhist priest Zezan, a.k.a. Akata's Great Statue of Buddha, in 1775 to conduct his religious training.

Before climbing, I offered my prayer to the 11-Faced Kannon Bodhisattva at Chokoku Temple, which is about 9 m tall.

Each station of this mountain is named with Buddhism-related terms, such as the Stone Statue of Sainokawara for the 1st station, Toriinodai for the 2nd, Shimizusenryu Waterfalls for the 3rd, and Yakushinyorai Buddha of Healing for the 4th. At Bishamonten, the 5th station, Buddhist priest Zazen, - a Guardian God of Buddhism - conducted an ascetic training when he was 24, during which he was only allowed to eat grass from the mountain. Past here, I challenged a steep ramp, where I focused on climbing and didn't allow any distractions, until the abrupt appearance of a serow surprised me. I turned right at the junction of Buttozan at 7th station, and found myself stopping to graze along dogtooth violets, growing along the ridge.



There was an embankment at the summit, which was built by Zezan to protect himself from the strong winds of the west. I overlooked below upon an earthly world.

ACCESS

Get on the National Route 105 from the Nihonkai Tohoku Express Highway Ouchi JCT, and go through the Regional Road 69 to reach Futamata District, which can be also reached through National Route 107, Regional Roads 49 and 69. Proceed along the Arasawaza River after turning right on the Takinoue Trail.

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Mt. Yashio

Also known as the “Soothing Forest”, which offers a great view of Mt. Chokai from its observation spot.

Height: 713.3 m

- Location: Yurihonjo City
- Trek Length: 5.6 km
- Trek Altitude: 358.3 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Yashima



grade →

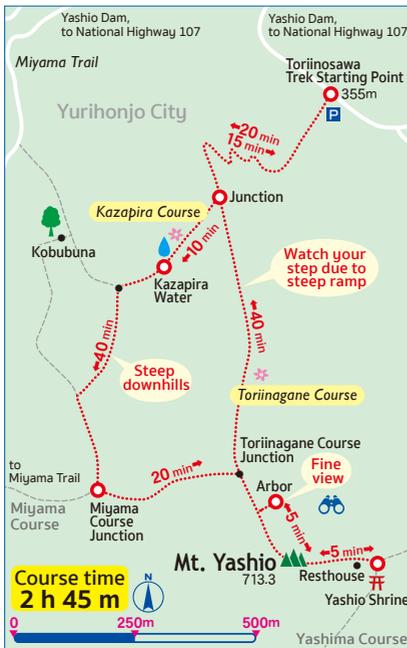
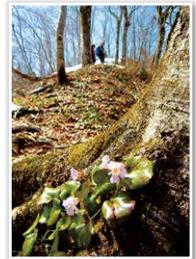
Physical Strength 2



Skill level B



- 1 Yashio Dam reservoir and Kizakura cherry trees
- 2 Mt. Chokai overlooking from the summit



Hearing that Mt. Yashio is the best place to see a snow-covered Mt. Chokai, I visited there in late April when there would still be leftover snow. I managed to reach Kazapira through looking for routes along the way, since the trekking course still had snow on it.

While climbing, I discovered lovely flowers, like pink frills along the course, which turned out to be shortias. I've never seen so many shortias blooming at once, and was so delighted that I took many photos of them many times, which relieved my exhaustion from making my way along the harsh course.

Locals informed me that I could find not only shortia here, but also lush green beech trees. I fully enjoyed viewing the dynamic and splendid Mt. Chokai from the observation spot. As here is called a soothing mountain, this mountain appeals to everyone with its appearance, spring flowers, beech forest, and beautiful autumn foliage.

ACCESS

Get on the Regional Road 32 shortly after Yurihonjo City Tateai District along the National Route 107. Drive forward approx. 3km along the paved street from Yashio Dam. Driving from the Tateai T-Junction to Yashio Dam takes about 30 min.

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Mt. Chokai (Hokodate Course)

An incomparable mountain, with this course starting from the highest point of the Chokai Blue Line vehicle road.

Height: 2,236.0 m

- Location: Nikaho City
- Trek Length: 18.2 km
- Trek Altitude: 1,076.0 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Kosagawa / Mt. Chokai



grade → Physical Strength **4** Skill level **C**

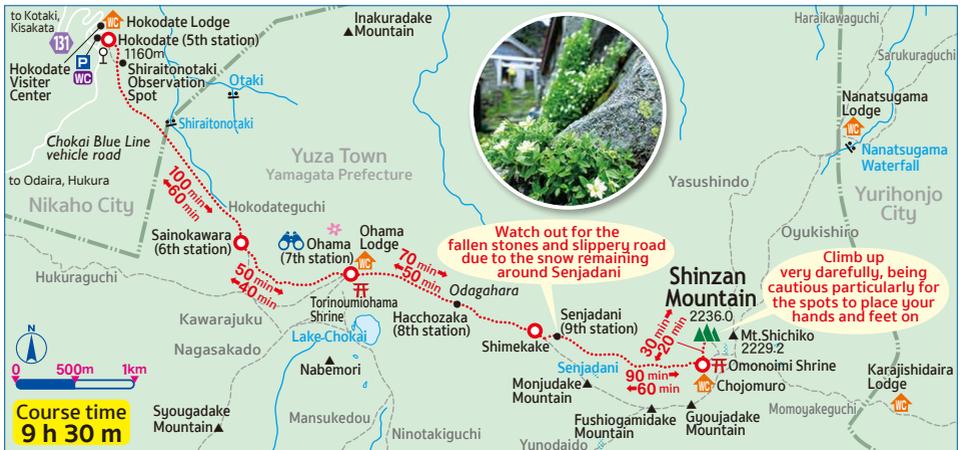


- 1 Senja Gorge, where sunlight is blocked along the outer line
- 2 Accumulated lava at the summit of Shinzan Mountain

“The incomparable Mt. Chokai”, sings The Citizens’ Song of Akita. As these words imply, this mountain is so deeply loved by everyone that we feel like taking photos of it no matter where we are, whether it is in residential areas or from other mountains in Tohoku.

The Hokodate Course is filled with views unique to mountains in the prefecture, including the V-shaped Naso Gorge, the mystical Lake Chokai and Haccho Slope, as well as Mt. Shichiko and Shinzan Mountain, both of which can be seen from the course. These wonderful features increased my appreciation for being surrounded by the beautiful, dynamic, sacred, and almighty nature.

The abundance of alpine flowers appearing along the persistently craggy trail relieved my exhaustion. That being said, Mt. Chokai in the summer is rampant with beautiful flowers, such as geum pentapela, day lilies, mangndiophyta, and penstemons.



ACCESS Take the Regional Road 58 from Nihonkai Express Highway Kisakata IC by way of the Kotaki District to get on the Akita Prefectural Road 131 that is well-known as Chokai Blue Line. Its 5th station, Hokodate serves as the trekking start which takes around 40 min. by car from JR Kisakata Station.

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Mt. Chokai (Haraikawa Course)

A dynamic valley covered with snow, and a wide range of alpine plants along this long and persistent trekking course.

Height: 2,229.2 m

- Location: Yurihonjo City
- Trek Length: 11.6 km
- Trek Altitude: 1,044.2 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Mt. Chokai



grade →

Physical Strength 3



Skill level C



- 1 Trekking from Ryugahara Marshland
- 2 Shinzan Mountain viewed from Mt. Shichiko

From Ryugahara Marsh, I looked at Mt. Chokai in the distance, and realized how far and how tall it was. But one step at a time would lead me closer to the top of the mountain.



I offered a prayer at Haraikawa Shrine. In the past, this is where people used to replace their worn-out shoes, traditionally made from woven rice straw, with new ones. I climbed up the mountain - covered in snow in spite of it being summer - without stopping. I was healed by the primula nipponica and nephrophyllidium blooming at the sixth station, Sainokawara and the seventh station, Oda. I turned to Oyukishiro at the junction after Nanatsugama. Trekking along a snowy trail in high temperatures was cooling and comforting. I finally got to Mt. Shichiko and Shinzan Mountain after ascending Sharizaka cautiously. I was glad to stand at the summit I could only gaze at from Ryugahara Marsh. I imagined people in the past visiting here for their religious training while enjoying this scenic beauty.

I descended toward Yasushindo. I was happy to see fully-blooming alpine plants, including arenaria merckioides var. chokaiensis, penstemons, and mountain harebells, which made me feel like I was traveling abroad. On my way back, I rested and cooled down in the snowy valley, which was like a natural air conditioner.

ACCESS Drive to the Regional Road 58 (Kisakata Yashima Line) through either of the following 2 routes: starting Nihonkai Tohoku Express Highway Honjo IC, take the National Route 108 and Regional Road 32 by way of Yashima Town ; or take the Regional Road 32 from the Nikaho IC by way of Hanadate Ranch Park. It takes approx. 30 min. by car from Yurihonjo Railway Yashima Station to the climbing start, Haraikawa which is situated at the 5th station.

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Koshiki Mountain

During the Edo period, feudal lords looked up at Okoshiki and Mekoshiki on their way to Edo, the capital city at that time.

Height: 981.3 m

- Location: Yurihonjo City
- Trek Length: 8.6 km
- Trek Altitude: 301.3 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Matsunuki Ridge



grade → Physical Strength **3**

Skill level **C**



- 1 A challenge for climbing Okoshiki Mountain after going through Mekoshiki Mountain
- 2 Eboshiwa Rock symbolizing Okoshiki Mountain

After hearing that the trail between Meisho Swamp and Danjo Col is no longer used, I climbed up Mekoshiki and Okoshiki during the best

season for autumn foliage, all the way down to the prefectural border between Akita and Yamagata, and instead took the Yashima Trail. It runs between the Koshiki Trail and Koshiki Ridge, as well as a tall katsura tree standing in Yamagata Prefecture.

During the Edo period, feudal lords passed through Yashima Trail when traveling between Edo, the capital city, and their fiefs. I felt as if I'd slipped through time to the Edo period, imagining the feudal lords and samurai warriors from back then, who walked along these beech and katsura trees.



After the rough Mekoshiki, I was descending Okoshiki, from which I noticed that Mekoshiki looked like a lady wearing a yellow and orange hood. I also caught a sight of Meisho Swamp, with its nested rocky islands. I was excited to see the stately-looking Eboshi Rock, standing right in front of me from the summit.

I totally agree with my trekking instructor, who describes this mountain as small, but with its own charm.

ACCESS Take the National Route 108 to Yurihonjo City Chokai Town Kamijinego District, and move forward Koshiki Trail by way of Akakura District, which is about 6km away from the trail start. Go forward another 4 km or so to reach the trekking starting point.

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Mt. Kamuro

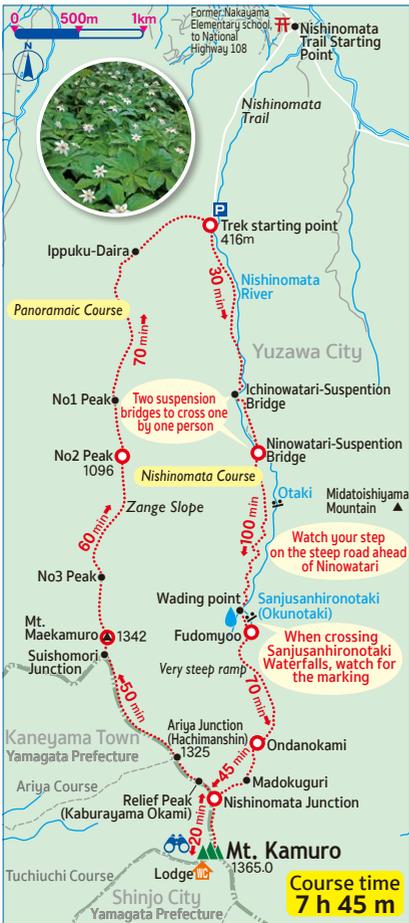
Also known as the “Little Alps of Tohoku”, where you can feel like an ascetic monk.

Height: 1,365.0 m

- Location: Yuzawa City
- Trek Length: 13.0 km
- Trek Altitude: 949.0m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Ugokawai / Akinomiya / Mt. Kamuro / Onikobe Ridge



grade → Physical Strength **4** Skill level **C**



1 Taking a rest at the summit
2 A lodge just below the summit

Mt. Kamuro has been also called a little version of the Alps Mountain Range, and was opened to the public as a sacred place for ascetic monks. I climbed up the Nishinomata course, which used to be a road approaching the temple, and down the Panoramic Course.

Shortly after the start, I faced a swinging suspension bridge, but I successfully made it through since I'm not afraid of heights. I then proceeded along the mountain stream, where I found its condition very difficult to walk through. The next suspension bridge leaned to the left, which made me nervous to pass. Even after that, I had to climb up a fragile slope and across another suspension bridge, which had a very steep ramp following right after it. All of these difficulties made me feel like an ascetic monk.

After Ontanokami, I was amazed. Clusters of paris japonica and a tunnel of lush green trees - I knew I would have to return next year. I felt so refreshed to trek along this ridge; just for a moment, I'd forgotten the monk-like hardships I'd just endured.

While descending along the Panoramic Course, I had no trouble walking through until Mt. Maekamuro. But after that, tall bamboo bushes disrupted my footsteps, which made even my return a severe religious training.

ACCESS Get on the National Route 108 after leaving the Yuzawa Yokote Express Highway Ogachi Komachi IC to reach Yakunai District by way of the former Nakayama Elementary School building in Akinomiya District. Go through the Oyakunai and Nishinomata Trails to the end, which also begins the trail for climbing. It takes approx. 30 min. by car to reach here from JR Yokobori Station.

29

Mt. Higashi Chokai

The eldest daughter of the three mountain sisters, alongside Mt. Chokai and Mt. Kamuro, all of which are known for their beauty.

Height: 777.3 m

- Location: Yuzawa City
- Trek Length: 8.8 km
- Trek Altitude: 603.3 m
- Topographical Map (1/25,000): Inaniwa / Yuzawa



grade →

Physical Strength 2



Skill level A



1



2

- 1 Mt. Higashi Chokai in early spring
- 2 Catching a sight of Mt. Koshiki

The beautiful Mt. Higashi Chokai, resembling Mt. Chokai, considered auspicious for its height of 777 m (since the number 7 is considered lucky in Japan).

I took a trail running nearby Ninotorii Shrine Gate, which was traced by caterpillars. While trekking, I noticed a surveillance camera placed in preparation for bear appearances. I found myself walking the well - maintained trail shortly after finding the Forestry Public Corporation sign, and the higher I climbed up the steep, zig-zagging slope, the further my eyes wandered to gaze at the rice paddies on the southern side. There is a road right behind Fukuda Shrine that visitors are allowed to drive up to. I caught a sight of the deformed ridge of Mt. Koshi just as I was about to arrive at Mt. Higashi Chokai Shrine Rear Hall, where Sugae Masumi, a travel writer, also visited in 1814. Here, he composed a poem depicting a bird resting on the frozen river and the mountain spirit Oshikohone, as this mountain was then called Mt. Oshikohone. At the top of the mountain, I saw a panoramic view of Yuzawa City and rice paddies. The one thing that disappointed me was being unable to reach here by car.



ACCESS

Get on the Motorway Fruits Line after leaving the Yuzawa Yokote Express Highway Sukawa IC and drive through the trail starting from Tabata District for about 1 km. The reservoir near the Ninotorii Shrine Gate serves as parking at the trekking start.