Mt. Meakan

Overview

Mt. Meakan is a 1,499 m mountain southwest of Lake Akan. Climbing to the summit takes approximately two hours and thirty minutes from the Meakan Onsen trailhead, two hours and fifty minutes from the Onneto trailhead, and three hours and thirty minutes from the Akanko Onsen trailhead. The mountaintop offers a 360-degree panorama of the rugged terrain and steaming volcanic crater.

In the Ainu language, Mt. Meakan is called Machineshiri, which means “female mountain.” It is considered to be the wife of Mt. Oakan. Meakan, a composite volcano that has been active for approximately 20,000 years, has repeatedly erupted, creating the mountain’s ten summits. The highest peak, Ponmachineshiri, was formed approximately 4,000 years ago, while Mt. Akanfuji is a parasite volcano that is about 2,000 years old.

Plant Life

Near the summit, alpine plants grow on the scree-covered slopes. Meakan-fusuma (*Arenaria merckioides Maxim*.), a perennial herb with white flowers, and Meakan-kinbai (*Potentilla miyabei Makino*), a perennial herb with yellow flowers, bloom from June to July. A vast forest of Sakhalin spruce covers the foothills around Meakan Onsen. Due to the constant volcanic activity, the soil is low in nutrients and the smell of sulfuric gases lingers in the air.

Hiking Routes

The mountain has three main hiking routes. The Meakan Onsen Course is the most popular trail. It follows a zigzag path past an area of creeping pines, then climbs a steep gravel slope and passes Akanuma (Red Swamp) and Aonuma (Blue Swamp). The Onneto Course starts from the Onneto campground. This steep, winding trail offers views of Mt. Akanfuji and Lake Onneto. It passes through fumes from the smoking crater before reaching the summit. The Akankohan Course follows a path from Akanko Onsen through the Sakhalin spruce forest, a creeping pine zone, and an alpine flower garden before following a ridge to the summit.

Important: Mt. Meakan is an active volcano with a Volcanic Alert Level system. For your safety, check the current eruption alert level before climbing the mountain.