**Mt. Mokoto Profile**

Mt. Mokoto is the highest peak on the outer rim of Lake Kussharo, Japan’s largest caldera lake. The mountain’s 1000-meter summit offers sweeping views of the lake and the surrounding volcanic terrain. Five trails form a loop course that takes in the summit and much of the mountainside. You have the option to hike the Skyline Trail as a single trail or the entire loop course. The main trailhead for both courses begins at Highland Koshimizu 725, an observatory and small café with a large parking area at an altitude of 725 meters.

*Skyline Trail*

The Skyline Trail is suitable for most ages and fitness levels. The ascent takes around an hour, and the return journey down the same path takes around 45 minutes. Japanese stone pines, alpine dwarf pines that are quite unusual at altitudes of 2,000 meters and lower, flank the narrow track that winds up the mountain from the trailhead.

Occasional breaks in this dense corridor of hardy trees offer open views of the surrounding area. Halfway along the trail, the pines give way to Erman’s birch trees. Past a thicket of these trees is Byobuiwa (“Folding Screen Rock”), a sheer wall of stone that somewhat resembles a folding screen. Around 800 meters from Byobuiwa is a plateau where hikers can take a break before making the short final ascent.

Siberian chipmunks sometimes appear around the trailhead area, and the distinctive call of the Japanese bush warbler may be heard. Alpine plants flourish along the trail, decorating the mountain with splashes of seasonal color. For safety reasons, hikers are asked to write their name and intended route in the ledger at the trailhead.

***Mt. Mokoto Loop Trail***

Four trails combine with the Skyline Trail to form an approximately 8-kilometer circuit. After reaching the summit on the Skyline Trail, hikers follow the Mountaineering Trail (1 km), which links up with the Ginreisui Trail (2 km). There is a bio-toilet at the Ginreisui trailhead, as well as a natural spring where water gushes from the ground. The Ginreisui Trail then connects with a section of the Sakhalin Fir Trail (500 m). These three trails wind through a forest before linking up with the Bogakudai Trail (2.5 km). The Bogakudai section is relatively flat, and Mt. Shari can be seen at various points along the trail, if the weather permits.

The most practical way to hike the circuit is by starting and ending at Highland Koshimizu 725. There are several other entry points along the course, however, including one at the Ginreisui trailhead, which is accessible by car. The circuit is a challenging trek that should only be attempted by experienced hikers.