**Park Conservation and Community Involvement**

Daisetsuzan National Park aims to preserve its pristine environment while allowing visitors and park communities to enjoy its beautiful landscapes. Conservation initiatives include volunteer activities, promoting the use of portable toilets, regulating private cars, the creation of a hiking trail grading system, and fundraising.

*Volunteer activities*

Japan’s national parks include private land where people earn their livelihood, unlike parks in the United States or Australia, which are entirely public. Communities living in Daisetsuzan National Park give back by participating in volunteer activities. These activities include trail maintenance, carrying supplies to mountain huts, controlling invasive species such as dwarf bamboo (*Sasa kurilensis*), and patrolling to prevent people from poaching butterflies or collecting alpine plants.

 A primary activity of volunteers is maintaining hiking trails. The trails in Daisetsuzan are made up mainly of loose soil and stones, and are highly susceptible to erosion. Rainfall, runoff from snowmelt, and trampling cause erosion, which can damage delicate vegetation along the trails. Maintenance efforts include setting up barriers like ropes or rock walls to make sure hikers stay on the path in order to prevent trampling.

*Portable toilets*

Few campgrounds in Daisetsuzan are equipped with toilets. Hikers are requested to carry single-use portable toilet bags while hiking, as human excrement and improperly disposed toilet paper can adversely affect the environment. The bags can be purchased and disposed of in designated areas near trailheads.

*Private car regulation*

Private cars are restricted in many areas of the park during the peak autumn season around popular locations such as Kogen Onsen and Ginsendai. This eases congestion and reduces exhaust fumes. Shuttle buses offer transport to many locations at this time of year. Be sure to check services and operating hours in advance.

*Hiking trail grading system*

The Daisetsuzan Grade System was developed in collaboration with university researchers to help with the conservation of the park’s trails. It is used as a guideline to assess a trail’s level of difficulty and the vulnerability of its natural environment. Grade levels determine how much human intervention goes into the management of each trail. Trails at the lower levels are typically more developed, with well-maintained paths and facilities to make them more accessible. Higher-level trails are rugged and overgrown, with limited signage, shelters, or facilities, to help preserve the integrity of the environment.

*Fundraising efforts*

Some councils backed by municipalities in the park encourage visitors to donate funds to help finance conservation efforts, such as trail maintenance and ecological restoration. Visitors can make donations at mountain huts and at the entrance of toilets. The Ministry of the Environment uses donated funds for trail maintenance and wildlife conservation.

*What you can do to prevent damage to the trails and wildlife:*

* Cover your trekking poles with protective caps.
* Stay on designated trails, even if they are blocked by snow or rainwater. Wear gaiters to safely traverse snow and mud on trails.
* Refrain from taking anything from the park, including plants, flowers, stones, etc.
* Carry a portable toilet.
* Take your garbage with you.
* Refrain from feeding wild animals.