

Mt. Oakan

Overview

Mt. Oakan is a 1,370 m mountain to the east of Lake Akan. From the trailhead, it is approximately three hours and thirty minutes to the summit. The mountaintop offers panoramic views of the twin lakes Penketo and Panketo, as well as of Lake Akan. On a clear day, Lake Kussharo, the Shiretoko Mountain Range, and the Daisetsuzan Volcanic Group can be seen in the distance.

In the Ainu language, Mt. Oakan is called Pinneshiri, which means “male mountain.” The Ainu people believe that it is the husband of Mt. Meakan.

Plant Life

Visitors can observe alpine plants growing at different altitudes on this active volcano. From mossy rocks to a forest of conifer trees, various flora can be seen all along the trail. Plants such as creeping dogwood, a white flower that blooms in June and July, and tsubameomoto (*Clintonia udensis* Trautv. et C.A. Mey.), a perennial herb that produces white flowers and dark-blue berries, cover the forest floor. There are also clusters of Erman's birch, and naturally-formed tunnels of creeping pine. Around the summit the creeping pines become less prevalent, but brightly colored alpine flowers such as black crowberries, cowberries, pincushion plants, and ukon-utsugi (*Macrodiervilla middendorffiana* (Carrière) Nakai) bloom in profusion.

Hiking Routes

The starting point for climbing Mt. Oakan is located at the Takiguchi Waterfall, five kilometers east of Lake Akan. From the trailhead to the summit and back is approximately seven to eight hours. Along the trail, it is possible to spot various animals such as squirrels, Yezo shika deer, and red foxes. Warning: brown bears also inhabit this area.