

## **Lake Toya**

Though slightly smaller than its nearby “partner,” Lake Shikotsu, the equally beautiful Lake Toya is the older of the two caldera lakes. Lake Toya was formed by a volcanic eruption some 110,000 years ago. Later volcanic activity created its most distinctive feature—a group of small islands in its center, collectively called Nakajima (central islands), which is now one of the most popular tourist destinations in the area. From the hot spring hotels on the south shore visitors have a magnificent view of Lake Toya, Nakajima, and majestic Mount Yotei in the background. Also on the south side is Mount Usu, a volcano that became active only around 20,000 years ago, but has erupted eight times in the past 350 years, including once during this century (2000). One of its eruptions, occurring just over 100 years ago, created the southern shore’s hot springs that are now so enticing to visitors. Indeed, Lake Toya and its gorgeous surroundings are a perfect example of how volcanoes can create a beautifully diverse, endlessly appealing landscape.