

## **Akankohan Eco-museum Center**

### *About the Akankohan Eco-museum Center*

Akan-Mashu National Park covers 91,413 hectares (914.13 sq km) and is split into the Mashu area in the east, encompassing Lake Kussharo and Lake Mashu, and the Akan area concentrated around Lake Akan in the west. The Akankohan Eco-museum Center, located south of Lake Akan, introduces visitors to the rich ecosystems of this part of the park—deep primary-growth forests, spectacular calderas and caldera lakes, marshes, as well as unusual flora and fauna. The interactive exhibits, detailed displays, and maps provide information about the area's volcanoes, wildlife, and plant life.

### *Bokke Nature Trail*

The Bokke Nature Trail runs for 1.5 kilometers and links the Akankohan Eco-museum Center to Marimo-no-Sato Pier on Lake Akan. Several bubbling mud volcanoes can be seen from sections of the trail. These mud pools are called *bokke*, which means “to boil over” in the Ainu language. The path also leads through a forest of Sakhalin spruce, Sakhalin fir, and other conifers, and broadleaf trees such as Katsura and *mizunara* oak. The trail is relatively flat and there are no steep slopes, so it is an easy walk for people of all ages and fitness levels. Japanese deer, Eurasian red squirrels, and other wildlife can often be seen along the trail.

### *Forest Trail*

The Forest Trail is a loop trail through the forest behind the ecomuseum that takes around 30 minutes to complete at a leisurely pace. This trail connects to the Bokke Nature Trail via a flight of wooden steps. Before the steps, there is an observation plaza that offers views of Lake Akan and Mt. Oakan.

### *Akankohan Eco-museum Boardwalk*

This boardwalk leads through the wetland area behind the ecomuseum. Asian skunk

cabbage blooms in the marshland along the boardwalk from late April to mid-May, heralding the arrival of spring. The boardwalk also passes among trees such as Manchurian ash and speckled alders.

### *Activity Zone*

The ecomuseum's main exhibit space, the Activity Zone, introduces the Akan area's wilderness through interactive exhibits that stimulate the senses of sight, sound, and touch. An aerial map stretches across the floor, illustrating the scale of the park and its lakes and forests. Visitors can touch plants on display as well as listen to recordings of the calls of insects.

### *Information Zone*

The Information Zone inside the entrance of the museum provides crucial information and announcements about volcanic activity and brown bear sightings in the park. Visitors should always check this area for the latest park updates and take the necessary precautions before setting out on any of the nature trails. Information about the intensity of volcanic activity on Mt. Meakan and any measures that visitors should take is presented in a simple chart with varying levels. These range from "potential for increased activity" to "evacuate." Notice boards in this zone also indicate closed or restricted trails.

### *Aquarium*

An aquarium in the Activity Zone houses some of Lake Akan's rare marine life: *marimo* algae balls, kokanee salmon, and Sakhalin taimen. *Marimo* are a protected species, and Lake Akan is one of a few places in the world where these large, green algae spheres grow naturally. Kokanee salmon and Sakhalin taimen are both members of the salmon family. Sakhalin taimen is a critically endangered species, and the aquarium at the ecomuseum is one of few places where the species can be seen up close.

### *Lounge*

The ecomuseum has a comfortable lounge for rest and relaxation. The lounge offers an expansive view of the forest behind the ecomuseum and is furnished with comfortable sofas, an open fireplace for chilly days, and wood carvings of animals. Visitors may bring their own food and drink to consume in the lounge.

### *Craft and Exhibition Zone*

The Craft and Exhibition Zone displays traditional artwork and local crafts, has exhibits on local conservation projects, and videos about Akan-Mashu National Park. On occasion, the ecomuseum offers craft activities for children. It has plenty to keep visitors occupied, and is a particularly good spot to spend time when bad weather affects outdoor activities.

### *Equipment Rentals*

Seasonal outdoor gear may be rented at the reception desk of the ecomuseum for treks along the Bokke Nature Trail or through other parts of the Akan area. A pair of long boots, snowshoes, or cross-country skis, popular for winter recreation, costs ¥500 for a two-hour period or ¥1000 yen for a full day. (Note: Equipment rentals are limited by availability.)