

Hiking Trails of Mt. Meakan

There are three hiking trails leading up to the summit of Mt. Meakan, each divided into 10 stages. It is possible (and highly recommended) to ascend using one trail and descend using another. A popular choice is to start from Meakan Onsen and come down via the Onneto Trail. This combination features fantastic views of Mt. Meakan's craters, alpine plants, mixed forests, and the clear blue water of Lake Onneto. A viable option for those staying in the town of Akanko Onsen who do not have private transportation is to take the Akankohan Trail, which starts near Lake Akan.

Whichever route you choose, the full hike from start to finish takes from five to eight hours. There is a parking area at Meakan Onsen and a campground at the trailhead for the Onneto Trail.

Meakan Onsen Trail

The Meakan Onsen Trail follows a zigzag path through a Sakhalin spruce forest, then leads up a steep gravel slope. Past the Fifth Station, Lake Onneto comes into view, and on particularly clear days it is possible to see the Daisetsuzan mountain range. After the Ninth Station, it is a short walk to the summit along the crater rim, which offers views of Akanuma (Red Pond) and Aonuma (Blue Pond), acidic ponds within the crater.

Onneto Trail

The Onneto Trail starts from Onneto Campground and leads along a winding path through a mixed coniferous and deciduous forest. Views open up as you enter a Japanese stone pine forest around the Fifth Station, where you can see Lake Onneto behind you. From June to August, flowers grow in the meadow that spreads on the saddle between Mt. Meakan's Pon-machineshiri Crater and Mt. Akanfuji. After the Eighth Station, the land becomes barren, and loose rocks and gravel litter the trail. Be careful not to slip or knock any rocks down the mountain, as these may hit other hikers. Sulfuric fumes billow from the crater at certain points along the trail; it is best to pass these quickly so as to avoid inhaling fumes, which can cause nausea if inhaled in large amounts.

Akankohan Trail

This path starts with an easy ascent through a Sakhalin spruce forest on the Furebetsu Forest Road from the town of Akanko Onsen. At around 1,000 meters, you will reach an area where creeping pines (*Microcachrys tetragona*) grow abundantly. Further up you will pass through an alpine flower meadow near Kengamine, one of Mt. Meakan's several peaks. As you make your way to the crater rim along a rock and gravel ridge, be sure to turn around for impressive views of Lake Akan and Mt. Oakan.