

Meakan Onsen (Meakan Hot Spring)

Since ancient times, the Ainu, indigenous people of northern Japan, have bathed in the hot, mineral-rich waters that spring from the western foot of Mt. Meakan. In 1914, the Nonaka family opened the first hot spring hotel in the area, the Nonaka Hot Spring Hotel. More hot spring inns were built around this hotel, and the conglomeration of these inns became known as Meakan Onsen. In 1973, the Ministry of the Environment designated Meakan Onsen one of fifteen National Hot Spring Areas in Hokkaido.

Today, the Nonaka Hot Spring Hotel is the only spa that remains in operation, and is a popular place for hikers to soak after the strenuous climb to the top of Mt. Meakan. Be aware that there are no showers and soap is not provided, but you can rinse yourself off with water from the baths using a bucket. The sulfuric fumes are quite strong, so to avoid the risk of sulfur poisoning it is recommended that you do not soak in the bath for more than 10 to 15 minutes.

Meakan Onsen is located on Onneto Prefectural Route 949, about 4 kilometers from the turnoff from National Route 241.

The trailhead of the popular Meakan Onsen Trail, which leads to the summit of Mt. Meakan, is located about 200 meters down the road from Meakan Onsen. There are parking spaces and public restrooms at the trailhead.

Another forest trail from Meakan Onsen leads from the parking area to Onneto Campground. This walking path is 2.4 kilometers and takes about 50 minutes one way. Along the way, you will pass through old-growth forests of Sakhalin spruce, and you may encounter wildlife such as the large black woodpeckers and the Siberian chipmunk, the only species of chipmunk in Asia.