

Teshikaga: Natural Beauty and Outdoor Adventure

The landlocked town of Teshikaga in eastern Hokkaido is situated mostly within the bounds of Akan-Mashu National Park, an expansive park of jagged volcanic terrain, huge caldera lakes, and natural beauty. Come to Teshikaga to enjoy mountain hikes through a dramatic landscape, relaxing dips in hot-spring baths, and tasty local cuisine.

The main attractions

Teshikaga's primary draws are its two caldera lakes, Lake Kussharo and Lake Mashu. A caldera lake is formed when a volcano rapidly expels so much magma that the magma chamber collapses, causing the volcano to cave in on itself. This creates a large bowl-like hollow in which rainwater and snowmelt collect.

There are numerous campsites and outdoor hot-spring baths on the Kussharo lakeshore, and in the winter (from around November to March), many people visit the lake to see the whooper swans that migrate here in large numbers from Siberia.

Lake Mashu is known for its extraordinary clarity. As no rivers flow in or out of the lake, the water has an unusual deep-blue hue. There are observation platforms along the rim of the caldera with excellent views of the lake.

Outdoor activities

Most of Teshikaga's mountains have hiking trails. The trails to the summits of Mt. Mashu and Mt. Nishibetsu are suitable for intermediate hikers, whereas the track leading up Mt. Mokoto can be tackled by hikers of most fitness levels. All the trails reveal spectacular vistas. In summer, the slopes of Mt. Nishibetsu are carpeted with bright alpine flowers, and the summit of Mt. Makoto—the highest point on the rim of the caldera that encircles Lake Kussharo—offers all-encompassing views of the lake. Other outdoor options include canoeing on the Kushiro River, horseback riding on the open plains, and fishing in the lakes and rivers.

Relaxing hot springs and tasty local food

The hot springs (*onsen*) in Teshikaga have excellent views from their bathing pools and are prime places to relax. There are plenty of indoor baths, outdoor baths, and footbaths to choose from. The area is also known for its food, particularly Mashu buckwheat soba, a regional specialty.