

## **Lake Kussharo and the Surrounding Landscape**

Lake Kussharo is the largest caldera lake in Japan. It was formed long ago by multiple volcanic eruptions. The Wakoto Peninsula juts out into the lake; among the tallest peaks visible on the horizon are Mt. Oakan and Mt. Meakan to the southwest, and Mt. Shari to the northeast

### *Fauna and flora*

Japanese stone pine is an alpine shrub that usually grows at altitudes of 2000–3000 meters, but here flourishes at much lower altitudes. Japanese bush warblers inhabit this area in great numbers, and Siberian chipmunks can sometimes be seen in the undergrowth.

### *Seasonal sights*

This is a popular platform from which to view the “sea of clouds.” This natural phenomenon occurs when clouds gather and hang close to the surface of the lake, obscuring it from view while simultaneously revealing the surrounding mountains. Maple leaves brighten the landscape in fall, and in winter, ice-encrusted trees are a striking feature.

### *The Mt. Mokoto trails*

Mt. Mokoto (1000 m) is the highest point on the Lake Kussharo caldera rim. The 2-kilometer Skyline Trail to the summit passes through dense sections of Japanese stone pine before reaching clearings with scenic views. The Skyline Trail joins a series of other trails to form an 8-kilometer loop course.