

Shiobara Nature Study Path: Lake Ōnuma Loop

Distance: 2~3 km

Duration: 60 to 105 minutes (loop)

Nearest Bus Stops:

- No direct bus service. Arayu Onsen Shine and Ōnuma Park, the two trailheads for the loop path, are both approximately 20 minutes from the Shiobara Onsen Bus Terminal by taxi. There are parking lots at both locations.

Trail Overview:

In 1958, the Shiobara Nature Study Path was the first trail to be designated a Nature Study Path by the Japanese government. The full 8-kilometer hiking trail connects Shiobara Onsen Visitor Center to Arayu Onsen Shrine. The final part of the trail, Lake Ōnuma Loop, runs from Arayu Onsen Shrine around Lake Ōnuma and back.

Highlights:

Arayu Fujiyama (on the Arayu-Fuji Route)

The Fujiyama lava dome (1,184 m) was formed when lava erupted from fractures in the side of Mount Maeguro (1,678 m) about 6,500 years ago. At the summit is an old forest of Japanese oak and Japanese beech with an undergrowth of ferns.

Yoshinuma Wetlands (on the Yoshinuma Route)

The Yoshinuma area is a grassy wetland surrounded by gentle mountain slopes. A wheelchair-accessible wooden walkway (0.8 km) circles the marsh. Protected plants and animals can be found throughout this area and to protect these species, straying from the designated path is prohibited.

Lake Ōnuma

The wetland preserve known as Lake Ōnuma consists of two sections: a marsh and a lake. The area is home to rare wildlife such as the scarlet dwarf dragonfly, the smallest dragonfly in Japan, whose body is only 2 centimeters long. Forest green tree frogs, a protected species, also live in the nearby forest. They lay their eggs in foamy masses that hang from tree branches over the lake. When the eggs hatch, the tadpoles drop into the water below. A 1.8-kilometer wheelchair-accessible boardwalk encircles both the lake and marsh.