

(Intro)

Soaring peaks, pristine mountain lakes and streams, snow-blanketed valleys and hot-spring villages tucked deep in the natural landscape...

Welcome to Chubusangaku National Park, the historic heart of the Japanese Alps.

Paths worn by the mountain ascetics who once used these rocky slopes for spiritual training are trod today by hikers reveling in the rugged skylines and breathtaking views. Nature lovers now walk trails created by woodcutters of bygone times. And relaxing in the recuperative waters of the region's many hot springs is as popular now as it was hundreds of years ago. Chubusangaku National Park features a spectacular natural environment where visitors can enjoy magnificent scenery and a wide range of outdoor sports and activities, from hiking, skiing, and cycling to tranquil strolls around picturesque waterfalls.

Kamikochi

Many visitors to Kamikochi are left stunned by their first view of the valley. As you emerge from the forest, the valley entrance opens onto the sight of Mt. Yakedake's active volcanic peak, clouds of steam rising from its bleached summit. Ahead are the calm, clear waters of Taisho Pond, formed when the mountain's most recent eruption, in 1915, dammed the river. The scenery is magnificent in all seasons, but many locals believe that the contrast of lush green foliage, barren rock and snow-cruled valleys in early summer shows Kamikochi at its finest.

Serious hikers start their ascents to the area's highest summits from Kamikochi. But the majority of visitors prefer to walk the gentle trails along the Azusa River, through forests of larch, elm, and a unique member of the willow family called *kesho-yanagi*, or "make-up willow," for the dusting of white powder that appears on young saplings. Wildflowers, butterflies and mammals—including monkeys and black bears—can be spotted in the area, and bird watchers come from far and wide to delight in its many migratory and nonmigratory species.

A great deal of effort goes into protecting Kamikochi. Private cars have been banned from the area since 1996, and only buses and taxis are allowed beyond the tunnel that leads into the park. The number of lodging facilities—which range from elegant hotels to campsites—is restricted, so it is best to reserve accommodation well in advance.

Visitors are asked to cooperate in protecting the area's natural beauty. Due to heavy snowfall in the winter months, transportation to Kamikochi is only available from April 17 to November 15. The peak seasons are around the beginning of May and from late July to October.

Links?

Visitor center

Accommodation

Hiking information

(Box)

You can help preserve Kamikochi

Over a million people visit Kamikochi each year, and we need everyone to help preserve the natural environment. Please be mindful of the following when you visit:

- Wildlife is just that—wild and unpredictable—so keep your distance from the animals, do not feed them, and stay safe.
- Take all the pictures you want, but leave nothing but footprints.
- Staying on the marked trails allows people who come after you to enjoy the same unspoiled natural experience that you have enjoyed.
- Bringing in pets or other alien species can upset the valley's fragile ecosystem.
- Let the sky belong to the birds and the sounds come only from nature. Please leave your drone at home.
- The trails were made for experiencing the natural surroundings on foot. Bicycles are not permitted.

Like you, we think Kamikochi is a very special place. Please help us keep it that way.