

A History of Volcanic Activity

The Aso-Kuju area has been a site of volcanic activity for over 270,000 years. This has led to the creation of the Aso caldera, one of the largest calderas in the world.

The caldera is thought to have been created by four eruptions. The first three took place between 270,000 and 120,000 years ago, when pyroclastic flows formed plateaus around the active crater site. The fourth eruption 90,000 years ago broadened the plateau, and subsequent landslides, cave-ins, and other geological events hollowed out the landscape, which filled with rainwater and became a giant lake.

The lake eventually drained away through Tateno Gorge, resulting in the caldera we see today. Millennia of geological activity have shaped the terrain and the plant and animal life, and also enriched the soil that now supports the livelihoods of some 50,000 people.

The five peaks of Mt. Aso are Mt. Nekodake, Mt. Takadake, Mt. Nakadake, Mt. Eboshidake and Mt. Kishimadake. Of those, Mt. Nakadake is the only volcano that is still active, with occasional small-scale eruptions occurring. Conditions permitting, visitors can see the emerald-green acid pool in the Nakadake First Crater.