

Ikemeguri Nature Trail: Niko Panorama Observation Deck

The Ikemeguri Nature Trail is a two-hour ramble around the three crater lakes nearest to the Eco-Museum Center. The trail is mostly shady, with only gentle ups and downs, and offers views of lakes, the surrounding Kirishima mountains, and local flora and fauna.

The First Two Lakes

Niko means “two lakes,” and the Niko Panorama Observation Deck is where the first two lakes on the trail can be seen in full for the first time: Lake Byakushiike, at a slightly lower elevation to the northwest, and the larger, bluer Lake Rokkannon-miike to the northeast.

Byakushiike is a shallow crater lake about 250 meters across. Usually just one meter deep, it used to freeze over in winter, and was even used as an ice-skating rink. Because of rising temperatures due to climate change, however, it no longer freezes over even in the coldest months.

Rising beyond Rokkannon-miike is the flat-topped Mt. Koshikidake. Farther to the southeast, what appears to be two separate peaks when viewed from the Ebino Kogen Highlands Observation Deck is revealed as the partly collapsed crater of Mt. Karakunidake. Enjoyment of this gradually shifting perspective is one of the attractions of a stroll through the park.

Volcanic History Living in the Pines

The forest of red pines in this area looks artificially arranged, but is actually the result of all the trees springing up together when the nearby volcanic activity died down enough for them to survive. Scientists have used the rings of the pines to determine that this happened sometime during the 1920s.

From here, the Ikemeguri Nature Trail continues east around Rokkannon-miike, then down to the south around Lake Fudoike and back to the Eco-Museum Center. Depending on the strength and direction of the fumes from Mt. Ioyama to the southeast, visitors may be asked to double back at Fudoike to avoid exposure.