

## **Ikemeguri Nature Trail: Lake Rokkannon-miike**

Rokkannon-miike is the largest and deepest of the three lakes on the trail, at 500 meters across and 14 meters deep. Its slightly lopsided shape is due to lava flow from the eruption that created Lake Byakushiike.

### **Autumn Foliage over Cobalt-Blue Waters**

The still waters of the lake are not fed by any river. Its brilliant cobalt blue color is partly because of its depth and partly because of volcanic particles that have accumulated over the millennia. This is even more striking in autumn, when the broadleaf trees that ring the lake, including oaks and maples, turn crimson and gold. The climate allows these deciduous trees to be interspersed with evergreens, creating a rich tapestry of natural color reflected in the deep blue water. Beyond the trees rises Mt. Karakunidake, and the forested interior of its crater is fully visible from this angle.

### **The Bodhisattva of Compassion**

The Buddhist deity Kannon is the bodhisattva of compassion, and “Rokkannon” means “Six Kannon,” one to tend to beings in each of the six states of existence described in Buddhist teachings. The lakeside Rokkannon-do Shrine originally held a full set of these statues, carved by a monk named Shoku. Shoku was inspired to do this by a vision of Yamato Takeru, legendary prince of the Yamato court, who appeared during a lakeside recitation of the Lotus Sutra to praise Shoku’s diligence.

Sometime in the centuries that followed, however, these six statues were replaced with a single sculpture of Bato (“Horse-Headed”) Kannon, guardian of cattle and other livestock important to southern Kyushu’s traditional way of life. Local residents still worship at the shrine, which is now officially known as Toyouke Jinja.