

Mt. Koshikidake

Mt. Koshikidake is a 1,301-meter stratovolcano that formed at roughly the same time as Mt. Karakunidake, 17,000 years ago. It is named after a kind of rice steamer called a *koshiki*, which has a flat top like the mountain's unusually flat summit.

Panoramic Park Views

The trail around the crater rim takes an hour to walk and offers a true 360-degree panorama of the area. Mt. Ebinodake and Lake Rokkannon-miike lie to the southwest, while Mt. Ioyama and Mt. Karakunidake rise to the south. The city of Ebino can be seen to the north, while Mt. Kurinodake lies to the west. On a clear day, the Sakurajima volcano in Kagoshima Bay can be seen in the distance to the south-southwest, framed by the nearer peaks.

A Hidden Wetland at the Peak

What makes Mt. Koshikidake unique is the interior of its crater, which contains southern Kyushu's only wetland pond. The descent into the interior takes only 10 minutes, although care should be taken as the slope is steep. The dense layer of Japanese pines just inside the crater's rim soon gives way to a meadow of silver grass punctuated with clumps of Miyama-Kirishima azaleas (*Rhododendron kiusianum*), which bloom reddish-pink in spring, as well as other flowering plants. The silver grass is a rich green in summer, but blossoms in shimmering seed heads in late autumn.

At the center of the meadow is the pond itself. Here, visitors can see plants that prefer a wetland environment, like *mimikaki-gusa* (*Utricularia bifida*), which is an insect-eating plant in the bladderwort family, and *kobagi-boshi* (*Hosta sieboldii*), a plant in the asparagus family with delicate, bell-shaped purple flowers. *Haru-rindo* gentians, with their bluish-purple blossoms, also thrive in the crater's damp, sunny interior, although on cloudy days their petals are closed.