

Things to Know Before Hiking in Daisetsuzan

Navigation and accident prevention

Hiking trails that lead to remote and isolated areas of Daisetsuzan have minimal signage and route markers. This is to preserve the pristine natural environment of the park. Take the following precautions to prevent accidents and to avoid losing your way:

- Carry topographical maps and compasses for navigating the trails, especially if you are planning to do a multi-day traverse.
- Refer to the Daisetsuzan Mountaineering Grade System for what to expect on each trail.
- Fill out a hiking registration form with your itinerary at the trailhead.
- Exercise caution when traversing snow-covered areas.
- Avoid hiking in fog, which can be difficult to navigate.

In case of an accident, dial 110. Mountain insurance is recommended to cover any emergency rescue expenses.

Water

Sources of water are limited on the trails. Always heat or filter water from streams or snowmelt before drinking to prevent contracting the echinococcus virus, a pathogen that spreads from red-fox feces.

Weather and climate

Snow is common throughout much of the year in Daisetsuzan. The best time to hike is in the summer season from mid-July to mid-September, when snow typically does not fall at higher elevations. When hiking above the tree line, be prepared for sudden weather changes and harsh conditions. Temperatures drop drastically after sunset and on cloudy days, making hypothermia a risk even in summer. Autumn arrives in Daisetsuzan earlier than any other part of Japan, with the leaves changing color in early September. The first snowfall is usually observed around mid-September. Whatever season you choose to hike in, observe the following points to stay safe:

- Dress appropriately. Carry warm clothes and rain gear.
- Wear sturdy, waterproof hiking boots and gaiters, as you may need to traverse snow.

- Take shelter in a hut or in your tent in case of heavy rain.
- Expect strong winds on exposed peaks and ridges. Make sure your tent is firmly secured.
- Ensure you have a sufficient supply of food and water.
- Wait for fog to lift if visibility becomes poor.

Avoiding bear encounters

Daisetsuzan is home to a large population of brown bears. Take precautions to avoid encounters with them:

- Carry a bear bell. Make noises by clapping or blowing a whistle, especially when near streams or in areas with low visibility.
- Carry bear spray. Use it only if a bear charges or tries to attack you.
- Do not leave food scraps on the ground or cook food with strong odors.
- Do not cook food that requires disposing of leftover water, such as pasta. Bears have an acute sense of smell and are attracted to residual food odors.
- After cooking, wipe your utensils with paper towels and take them with you.
- Keep food waste in an airtight bag or container.
- Do not bring pets.
- If you encounter a bear, do not run or turn your back on it. Stay calm and retreat slowly.

Camping

Camping can damage the natural environment. Minimize the impact of camping by taking the following steps:

- Only camp in designated areas.
- Do not light a campfire.
- Do not trample vegetation when setting up a tent.
- Take your trash with you.

Preventing damage to trails and wildlife

Daisetsuzan is a habitat for diverse wildlife and vegetation. Take the following precautions to minimize your impact on the natural environment:

- Cover trekking poles with protective caps.

- Do not leave designated trails, even if they are muddy or covered in snow. Wear gaiters to safely traverse mud and snow on trails.
- Do not pick flowers or take plants or stones with you.
- Do not feed wild animals.

Portable toilets

Very few campgrounds in Daisetsuzan are equipped with toilets, and human excrement can adversely affect the environment. Hikers are requested to carry portable toilets, which are available for purchase near trailheads. After your hike, you may dispose of the portable toilet bags in designated trash bins near the trailhead. Please note that not all trailheads have these trash bins, and you may have to take the bag with you.