

Ponds of Jododaira

Jododaira's hiking trails lead to ponds surrounded by subalpine plants that flower from spring to fall. Some of the ponds are volcanic craters where groundwater and rainwater collect. Others are striking for their crystal clear or blue-hued waters. Each has its own appeal and all are within walking distance (10 minutes to 2 hours) of the Jododaira Visitor Center.

Kamanuma Pond

Wildflowers draw visitors to Kamanuma (1,760 m) in spring, summer, and fall. The rare native *Azuma hoshikusa* (*Eriocaulon takae*) flowers in August and September, each thin stem topped with a tiny star-like bud. The pink fringed galax blossoms in June, and the purple *ezo-oyamarindo* (*Gentiana triflora* var. *japonica* f. *montana*) from August to September. Banks of leafy *kobai keiso* (*Veratrum stamineum* var. *gladrum*) hug the western and southern edges of the pond, producing stalks of white flowers between June and July once every several years.

The curved shape of the pond, which resembles the blade of a sickle (*kama*), gives the pond its name. It is approximately 1,000 meters in diameter and 6 meters deep, and is flanked by the Sugadaira and Ubagahara Wetlands, with Mt. Issaikyo to the north. The pond can be reached via a 5-kilometer loop trail from the Jododaira Visitor Center (2 hours round-trip).

Goshikinuma Pond (The Witch's Eye)

The mesmerizing colors of this polychromatic pond within the crater of a volcano have earned it the nickname "The Witch's Eye." The pond appears to change color from dark blue to striking sapphire rimmed with emerald depending on the weather and time of day. The summit of Mt. Issaikyo (1,949 m), a one-hour-and-20-minute trek from the Jododaira Visitor Center, commands a view of the pond surrounded by low alpine shrubs and conifers. A further 20-minute walk leads to the crater rim overlooking the pond. Goshikinuma is approximately 300 meters in diameter and 9 meters deep.

Okenuma Pond

Okenuma (1,595 m) fills the crater of an ancient stratovolcano and is surrounded by a thick deciduous forest. It has a diameter of around 150 meters and a depth of 13 meters. The pond's deep blue color contrasts with the surrounding greenery in spring and

summer, and colorful foliage in autumn. Light-pink clusters of the rare Nemoto rhododendron, native to the region, bloom along the trail to Okenuma from June to July.

The pond can be reached in 10 minutes from the Jododaira Visitor Center. A further 10 minutes along the trail is Usagidaira, where there is a campground and a mountain lodge.