

Jododaira's Four Seasons

Spring

Snow still covers the ground when the Bandai-Azuma Skyline opens in early April. Visitors to Jododaira at this time of year can snowshoe and join backcountry ski tours as well as drive along the Skyline between snowbanks that rise up to 3 meters tall.

In May, broad-leaved trees begin to bud and flowers start to bloom. The delicate pink blossoms of Japanese alpine cherry brighten the fringes of the Jododaira Wetlands, Okenuma Pond, and the Ubagahara Wetlands. The electric pinks of azalea blossoms appear throughout Jododaira, and yellow flowers of tussock cottongrass spring up in the wetland areas, turning fluffy and white in June.

Summer

Many of Jododaira's most vibrant subalpine plants flower during the rainy season in early summer. The wet weather typically lasts from mid-June to late July, and the flowers that bloom around this time include the pink fringed galax, arctic starflower, native rhododendron species (Nemoto rhododendron and Hakusan rhododendron) and light purple *miyamarindo* flowers. From the end of the rainy season to August, flowers such as the white-petaled grass-of-Parnassus and yellow *nebari no giran* (*Aletris foliata* (Maxim.) Bureau et Franch) bloom.

Temperatures rise and the air becomes somewhat less humid with the end of the rainy weather. Many visitors come to Jododaira in this season to escape the soaring temperatures and humidity of most lowland urban areas. On average, temperatures in the wetlands are typically around 10–15°C cooler than in nearby towns and cities.

Summer is an excellent time to visit Jododaira for stargazing, when visitors can see astronomical phenomena like the Perseids meteor shower. The area has very low light pollution, and the Milky Way is often visible to the naked eye. The Jododaira Astronomical Observatory offers night viewing programs every Wednesday and Saturday from May to October. Occasionally, special events are held during eclipses and meteor showers.

Fall

The forested slopes of the mountains around Jododaira begin to change color in mid-September, and autumn flowers bloom across the wetlands. The native purple-petaled *ezorindo*, of the Gentian family, and bright yellow *miyama-akinokirinso*, a native type of herbaceous woundwort, bloom through September.

October is the peak time for viewing fall foliage along the Bandai-Azuma Skyline. The mountainsides burst with bright red, orange, and gold hues, which contrast with the dark green shades of pines and firs. Tsubakuro Valley, Tenpukyo, and Tengu no Niwa are popular viewpoints for seeing fall foliage along the Skyline. Temperatures drop significantly from this time of year, so it is recommended to dress warmly.

Winter

Winter is a quiet time of year at Jododaira. The Bandai-Azuma Skyline is closed from mid-November to early April because of snow and strong winds. Birds and animals such as stoats (short-tailed weasels), wild rabbits, and spotted nutcrackers have the Jododaira area all to themselves. Each is able to survive the harsh winter: Stoats live off wild mice and rabbits or birds; the spotted nutcracker survives on stored pine cones; and wild rabbits' fur coats turn from brown to white, allowing them to forage for food camouflaged against the snow.