

Lake Tokura

The shores of Lake Tokura draw visitors throughout the year for festivals, camping, dining, and relaxation. The lake itself offers further leisure opportunities, such as canoeing and sailing. It is both a popular recreational area and a historically significant site in Obanazawa.

Tokura is a reservoir that stores enough water to irrigate 230 hectares of rice paddies. The project was promoted by local businessman Takamiya Tsunetaro. Construction began in 1919 and was completed in 1921 through the efforts of approximately 70,000 workers from neighboring communities. The Hanagasa Odori, Yamagata Prefecture's signature festival dance, developed from the rhythmic movements of the workers as they built the embankment. A monument commemorating the origins of the dance stands on the shore, as does a statue of Takamiya.

Tokura is ideal for canoeing, and the strong winds also make sailing possible. The center of the lake offers a panoramic view of the tree-covered shore, which reflects off the water's surface. A stroll or bike ride along the path around the reservoir (2.7 kilometers) gives visitors the opportunity to enjoy the seasonal beauty of the area and relax at popular lakeside locations.

The lakeside Restaurant Tokurako specializes in *yukifuri* wagyu, Obanazawa's premium beef. Sun Village maintains extensive campgrounds, with free-use spaces for tents, rentable lots for RVs, and cabins. An onsite administration building has a café and shop, and cooking grills and other camping equipment are available for rent. Sports fans can hop on a BMX bike or skateboard at the pump track, a circular course with banks and curves designed for all ability levels. Near the campgrounds, Asahi Glass Studio sells intricate glass artworks and chances for visitors to try glassmaking themselves.

In winter during the Snowland event, visitors can go sledding, ride snowmobiles, and enjoy other seasonal outdoor activities on the lake's snowy shores. It is also the best time to soak in the warm waters of Hanagasa no Yu, a lakeside hot-spring spa open to day visitors. Cherry trees bloom along the shore in spring, and the Lake Tokura Festival during the Golden Week holiday in early May features a marathon, a fishing tournament, and other events.