

Nibushi Peninsula

The 3-kilometer section of the Mashu Kussharo Trail (MKT) beginning here leads around the forested Nibushi Peninsula and includes a stretch of the sandy lakeshore. Sakhalin fir and broadleaf tree species, including towering katsura, line the trail for much of its length. Sections of the trail offer views across Lake Kussharo. A short loop trail returns to the start point and is especially attractive when leaves are fresh in spring and colorful in fall.

Notable tree species and a frosty phenomenon

The Sakhalin fir is a hardy conifer common throughout Hokkaido. Many of the fir trees on the peninsula bear prominent vertical cracks in their trunks. These frost cracks occur in the depths of winter and are caused by freezing and thawing, especially when temperatures drop below -30° Celsius. Other trees in the forest include Manchurian elm, prickly castor oil tree, Japanese whitebark magnolia, kobus magnolia, and several species of maple.

Window on Ainu culture and customs

Local Ainu utilized many of the plant species found on the Nibushi Peninsula. Ainu communities around Lake Kussharo felled katsura trees to carve dugout boats, which they used for transport and trade. They also softened and worked the bark of the Manchurian elm to produce thread for weaving durable outer garments and harvested the fruit of the crimson glory vine for food.

Habitat for wildlife

The peninsula provides habitat for local wildlife, from birds and Japanese deer to Siberian flying squirrels. The crow-sized black woodpecker lives here too. It chisels deep, elongated holes into tree trunks as it forages.

As brown bears are occasionally sighted along parts of the MKT, visitors are recommended to carry a bell.