

Ikenoyu Hot Spring

Warm, mineral-rich groundwater bubbles up to the surface here, on the eastern shore of Lake Kussharo. This public spring is free and open 24 hours a day. Bathing is mixed-gender, and swimwear is optional. Simple changing huts are located beside the bath.

Ikenoyu is one of several natural hot springs on the shore of Lake Kussharo, including Sunayu and Kotannoyu. Ikenoyu feeds a natural pool that is connected to the lake. The mineral-rich water is slightly alkaline, making it feel silky, and is believed to ease muscle pain and help in the healing of cuts and bruises. Depending on the time of year, the water may also contain nutrient-rich algae.

The view from the hot spring is of Nakajima (“central island”) and the western mountains of the Kussharo Caldera. Bathers may enjoy watching the sun set as it dips behind the mountains on the opposite side of the lake and generates colorful skies.

For centuries, Ikenoyu played an essential role in the daily lives of the local Ainu who lived around the lake. Ainu came here not only to bathe but also to use the warm water for soaking Manchurian elm bark. They extracted fiber from the inner bark for making the thread they used to weave their kimono-like outer tunics. Garments made in this way are displayed at the Kussharo Kotan Ainu Museum, approximately 4 kilometers south along the old road between Ikenoyu and Kussharo Kotan.