

Japan's Forests with Breathtaking Views: Selections from the Tourist Destinations in National Forest

Forests have provided both mankind – and indeed all living things – with safety, sustenance and security for an eternity. The lush greenery and gentle breeze of the forest is surely enough to rekindle nature's vigor in any soul.

With more than 70% of Japan landmass covered in abundant greenery, the Forestry Agency is working to create "Recreation Forests" to inspire as many as possible to rediscover the wonder of nature. The best forests to visit have been carefully selected and compiled as "Japan's Forests with Breathtaking Views."

Know before You Visit: General rules for visitors

- 1 Help protect wild animals and plants. When you bring your pets, please mind your manners and give consideration to the surrounding environment.
- 2 Damaging trees or stealing any forest product is penalized by law. Even collecting plants covering the ground of forest are prohibited within protection forests designated by law.
- 3 Do not enter the area beyond walking trails, or public squares. Please follow the rules for each Recreation Forest such as no camping outside the designated area.
- 4 Do not enter the area with "No Entry" or "Keep Out" sign.
- 5 When making a stop for rest or any other purposes, please look around and confirm that the area is safe without any risk of being hit by falling branches or rocks.
- 6 Enjoy mountaineering on your own responsibility. Please ensure that you submit your plan for mountaineering to a police station in the area as well as to your family members, your friends or colleagues after checking out climate and other necessary information for mountaineering and fully being equipped. Please also fill in "the Name List of Climbers and Visitors", which is placed at the mountain entrance.
- 7 Do not enter forests under bad weather conditions.
- 8 Do not dispose of any leftover food in the forest. Please take your garbage home with you.
- 9 Smoking is permitted only in special areas. Make sure to extinguish any fires, e.g. after smoking cigarettes.
- 10 Mountain paths are potentially dangerous to walk. Do not use smartphone while walking. When taking photos, please remain fully aware of your surroundings and do not bother other visitors in any way.
- 11 If you wish to use an unmanned aerial vehicle (drone), you need to submit prior written notice to District Forest Office. Please contact the nearest Regional Forest Office or District Forest Office of national forest beforehand.

Poroto Recreation Forest Access Map



Access

By public transport:

- Biei Station → Shirogane Hot Spring (Dohoku Bus, about 35 minutes)
- Shirogane Hot Spring → National Shirogane Campsite (10 minutes on foot)
- Asahikawa Station → Biei Station (JR Furano Line [Asahikawa-Furano route], about 40 minutes)
- Asahikawa Airport → Biei Station (Furano Bus [Lavender Bus route], about 15 minutes)

By car:

- Biei Station (21 km / 25 minutes) → Shirogane Hot Spring
- Asahikawa Airport → Biei Station (12 km / 15 minutes) → Shirogane Hot Spring (21 km / 25 minutes)

Shirogane Recreation Forest

Address : Shirogane, Biei Town, Kamikawa County, Hokkaido Prefecture

Management office contact details:
Kamikawa Chubu District Forest Office
FAX : 0166-61-0690

Shirogane Recreation Forest Management Committee

(Economic and Culture Promotion Division, Biei Municipal Office)
FAX : 0166-92-4414

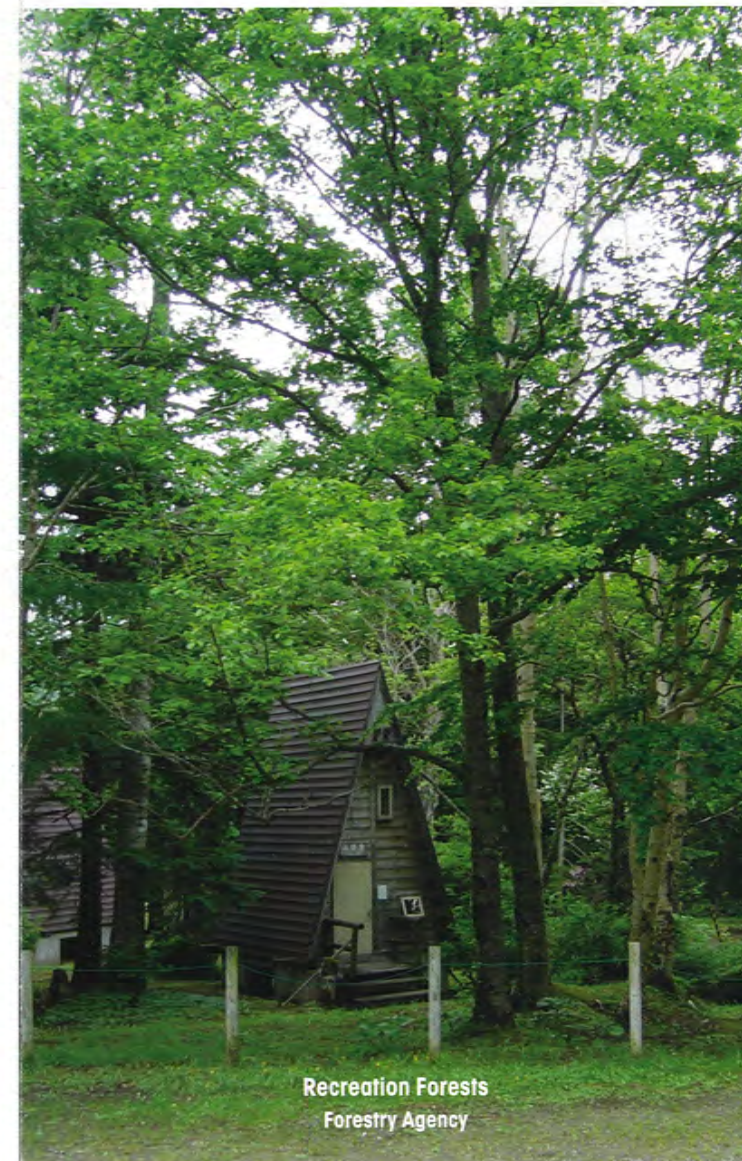
National Forest Planning Division, Forestry Agency, MAFF

The Official Recreation Forests Website of the Forestry Agency
http://www.rinya.maff.go.jp/e/national_forest/recreation_forest/index.html



SHIROGANE

Recreation Forest



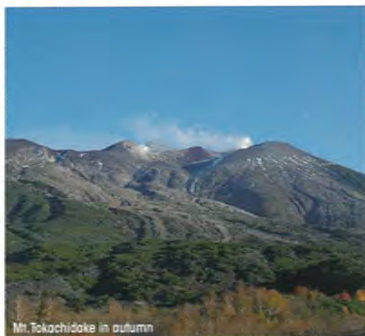
White birch groves and a virgin forest spreading across the base of Mt. Tokachi

Shirogane Recreation Forest Map



Geographical / topographical features

The Tokachidake Mountains form the southern part of the vast Daisetsu Mountain System that rises majestically at the center of Hokkaido. Several eruptions of the main peak, Mt. Tokachi, have been recorded, and the mountain offers distinctive features such as extensive mud flow areas and a large number of volcanic craters. Craters of various sizes (the Ansei Crater, the Showa Crater, and the 62-II Crater) demonstrate this active volcano's history of the eruptions and continue to emit white smoke even today. Combined with the scenery of the mud flow areas, they evoke the powerful forces of the Earth and the grandeur of the natural world.



Mt. Tokachidake in autumn

Historical / cultural features

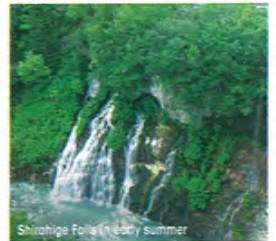
[History of Mt. Tokachi's volcanic eruptions]
Volcanic activity began to be recorded in 1857. In the first eruption, in 1926, a mud flow swept into Shirogane Hot Spring, and a second major eruption the same day resulted in a mud flow down the Biei and Furano Rivers that reached the Kami-Furano Plain. These eruptions were a serious disaster, leaving 144 people dead or missing. Mt. Tokachi has continued to erupt approximately every 30 years.



Shirahige Falls in winter with frozen spray

Climate, flora and fauna

The remains of mud flows caused by volcanic activity can be seen in many parts of the Shirogane Recreation Forest. The surrounding forest, including the Recreation Forest, is distributed between 300 m and 1,000 m in elevation. It is mainly a mixed conifer-broadleaf forest which gradually transitions to a conifer forest at higher elevations. The area at an elevation of approximately 1,300 m and below was unaffected by the mud flow caused by the major eruption in 1926. It has a mixed conifer-broadleaf forest mainly consisting of Ezomatsu (Yezo spruce (*Picea jezoensis*)), Akoezomatsu (Sakhalin spruce (*Picea glehnii*)), and Todomatsu (Todo fir (*Abies sachalinensis*)), which is reminiscent of primitive Hokkaido, the clear stream of the Biei River winding through the forest, and a distinctive birch forest that has developed in the mud flow area. All of these splendid landscapes together offer breathtaking mountain beauty.



Shirahige Falls in early summer

Attractions

The Shirogane Recreation Forest is divided into several zones for the enjoyment of people of all ages, including zones for nature observation and education, forest sports and the exploration of scenic beauty.

Each zone has footpaths for strolling and enjoying the changing seasonal colors of the natural world.

Superb views of the towering, 2,000 m peaks of the Daisetsu Mountains abound, including Mt. Tokachi, Mt. Biei, and Mt. Biei-Fuji. Visitors can trek along the ridgeline from the Mt. Tokachi Observatory.

The forest sports zone provides a place for recreation with a campsite, cabins, a field kitchen and toilets (closed during the winter, from early October through early June).

Three organizations provide mountain/nature guide services in and around the Recreation Forest throughout the year. Their programs are diverse, offering seasonal forest experiences and amazing viewpoints.



National Shirogane Campsite

Information

- Elevation(m) 510-1,000
- Area (ha) 946.10
- Entrance fee Free
- Opening seasons Accessible 24 hours a day from early June through late September
- Accommodation options [Inside the forest] National Shirogane Campsite (early June through September), Bieishizenomura Camping Ground (early July through August), Japanese inns [Outside the forest] Japanese inns and hotels in Shirogane Hot Spring
- Car parking capacity / parking charges Free parking for about 30 vehicles