

Daisetsuzan to Akan-Mashu

9 Day Hiking Tour



Experience Hokkaido's varied hiking and unique wildlife. This tour takes place among high alpine plateaus, steaming active volcanoes, clear caldera lakes and alpine wetlands home to the Hokkaido Brown Bear.

[**View Departure Dates & Prices**](#)

[**View Gallery**](#)

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About the Tour

Start	Finish	Grading	Season
Asahikawa	Abashiri	Advanced Hiking	Jun to Sep

About Daisetsuzan & Akan-Mashu National Parks

Daisetsuzan National Park is the second largest national park in Japan, it covers over 2,300 square kilometres (570,000 acres) making it larger than Tokyo! The mountains that form the backbone of the park are volcanos, some still active, and include Hokkaido's highest peaks. The rocky volcanic soil combined with harsh alpine environment creates a landscape like no other.

Established along with the Daisetsuzan National Park in 1934, the Akan-Mashu National Park is home to active volcanos and large caldera lakes surrounded by ancient forest. The area is also renowned for its onsen hot springs thanks to volcanic activity. Each hot spring has different qualities giving you even more reason to jump in for a soak.

Tour highlights

- Discover the varied and breathtaking landscapes of Hokkaido's oldest national parks.
- Traverse the "playground of the gods" from Mt. Asahidake to Mt. Kurodake.
- Explore the alpine ponds of Daisetsu Kogen, a habitat for Brown Bears.
- Climb Mt. Meakan, an active volcano that is home to unique plant life.
- Take in the views of natural lakes, Lake Shikaribetsu, Lake Mashu and Lake Kussharo.

What is the hiking like on this tour?

This is our most challenging hiking tour. On paper, the daily average 9 km / 5.5 mi doesn't seem much, but that misses the 600 m / 200 ft average elevation gain and the fact that Hokkaido's mountain trails are "rugged" to put it mildly. If you are looking for your next Japanese hike after completing the popular Kumano Kodo or Nakasendo walks, you may be in for a shock!

Expect to make knee-straining steps on large rocks, clamber over exposed roots and slip and slide on loose gravel, snow or mud. We will spend time hiking in the alpine, where we are exposed to the full brunt of Hokkaido's mountain weather – which is an experience in its own right. This is the perfect tour for hikers with experience in the alpine – think European Alps, New Zealand or the Rockies. We have time limits on some days, which means we need everyone in the group to be able to keep a steady pace all day long.

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Itinerary at a glance

Day	Activities	Km	Miles	Meals ¹
1	Meet in Asahikawa, Hike Sugatami Loop & Tennyogahara Marshland Trail	5.2	3.2	D ▾
2	Hike to Mt. Asahidake & Mt. Kurodake	12.5	7.8	B, L, D ▾
3	Hike amongst the Daisetsu Kogen alpine ponds	6.4	4.0	B, D ▾
4	Hike up Mt. Hakuunzan	8.4	5.2	B, L, D ▾
5	Rest day at Akan Onsen	–	–	B, D ▾
6	Hike up Mt. Meakan	10.4	6.5	B, D ▾
7	Hike up Mt. Mokoto and the Tsusujigahara Trail	6.4	4.0	B, L, D ▾
8	Hike up Mt. Nishibetsu and Mt. Mashu	14.2	8.8	B, D ▾
9	Farewells in Abashiri	0	0	B ▾

Accommodation

Day	Type	Location	Ensuite Toilet	Ensuite Shower	Onsen	Laundry
1	Hotel ▾	Asahidake Onsen	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Hotel ▾	Souunkyo Onsen	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Ryokan ▾ ²	Nukabira Onsen			✓	✓
4	Ryokan ▾	Nukabira Onsen			✓	✓
5	Hotel ▾	Lake Akan	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Ryokan ▾	Kawayu Onsen	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Ryokan ▾	Kawayu Onsen	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Ryokan ▾	Lake Noto	✓		✓	✓

We may change the facility options if our preferred accommodation is unavailable.

¹ B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

² Ryokan is a traditional Japanese inn.

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Travel style

This hiking tour is a series of day hikes; either return, loop or traverse routes. We always come back to our van at the end of the day and transfer to our accommodation. This means your overnight luggage can stay in the van and you can experience the best of the Daisetsuzan and Akan-Mashu's hiking with just a light day pack! Even on Day 2, the longest day where we traverse the roof of Hokkaido from Asahidake Onsen to Sounkyo, your luggage will be transferred by van, ready to meet you at the end of the day's hiking.

Adverse weather

While we try to organise everything, mother nature is out of our control. If the weather is too bad to safely hike, such as a typhoon or sudden storm, we will travel to the next inn in our support vehicle. Along the way we will still stop at local restaurants and visit indoor facilities, so you can still experience the charm of the area while travelling safely and comfortably.

What's included

- 8 nights accommodation on a twin share basis
- 8 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 8 dinners
- Cable car one way trips on the Asahidake Ropeway (Day 1 & 2)
- Cable car one way trip on the Kurodake Ropeway
- All transport as described in the itinerary
- English speaking local guide(s)

What's not included

- Airfare
- 5 lunches
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses
- Drinks with included meals

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When do you run this tour?

We run this tour from late June to September, and anytime during these months is great for hiking! Spring arrives in Daisetsuzan in late June to early July, which is the prime time to see alpine flowers in full bloom, the meadows coming alive with carpets of colour. While summer arrives in Daisetsuzan in August, by which time most of the snow has melted away, it comes a little earlier at the lower altitudes of Akan-Mashu National Park. You can expect summer in this eastern region to peak around July. During September, the mountains see a change in colour with leaves ablaze with yellows, oranges, and reds. The first snowfall usually occurs just before October on Mt. Asahidake which marks the coming end of the autumn hiking season.

Why hike in Hokkaido?

Diverse trails

Our mountains nationwide are covered with hiking trails which date back to Shugendo culture, Japan's ancient mountain asceticism. The trails were built over the years to reach the most prominent and sacred peaks. Information about these trails, however, remains untranslated to a great extent, especially so in rural areas. Together with our experienced local guides, you'll hit the road less travelled and explore hiking trails which date back centuries!

Flora & fauna

Hokkaido has evolved in its own unique way for millennia which has given rise to its unique flora and fauna. In the last ice age, Hokkaido was separated from mainland Japan but retained its connection with the Russian island of Sakhalin. Due to this, there are many species found only here within Japan, including brown bears, squirrels and chipmunks. Hiking in Hokkaido provides plenty of opportunities to spot these unique species.

Culture

There's no better way to experience Japanese culture than hiking with a local guide. Bathe in natural hot springs, savour the fantastic fresh seafood, local vegetables, fruit and even ice cream. And to complete your day as a Japanese adventurer, fall into a well earned sleep in futon bedding on tatami floors. It doesn't get any more Japanese than this!

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How to book this tour?

We will send you a link to our online sign up form, where we ask for the travel information of all the members travelling with you.

Once we receive this, we will send you a payment link for your tour deposit, which is JPY 50,000 per person. **We will confirm your booking upon receipt of your deposit payment.**

The deposit is treated as a part of the tour price. Payment of the balance will be reminded by email, which is generally 5 weeks prior to the tour departure date.

We accept payment via **Wise** or **Flywire**. We will send you payment links for both options, and you must use one of the payment links provided by us.

Wise payments are available in Japanese Yen only and require you to have a Wise account (Wise-to-Wise transfer only). You must pay any currency exchange or transfer fees yourself.

Flywire payments allow credit card payment or domestic bank transfer converted to your home currency. Credit card payments via Flywire incur an additional service charge of 1.5%, while domestic bank transfers via Flywire do not incur this service charge.

By paying for a deposit or full amount, you confirm that you have read, understand and agree to these [Terms and Conditions](#).

What is the minimum group size for this tour?

This is a mixed group tour and **we accept bookings for this tour from one person up**. However, our scheduled group tours require a minimum number of bookings for us to guarantee the departure of the tour, and to offer the tour at the price quoted. **The minimum number of booked guests to guarantee this tour is four people.**

If you book with less than four people, we will hold your place on the tour and wait for another group to join the tour. If the number of guests has not reached the minimum number by 60 days prior to departure, we will give you the option to cancel or to upgrade to a private departure.

If you choose to cancel, we will refund the amount in Japanese Yen that you have paid us. You're welcome to check with us at any time about the status of bookings.

Please be advised that we will not be liable to compensate for any inconvenience or incidental expenses that might have incurred to you, including airline tickets.

Single Supplement

Our tours are priced on a twin share basis. Those travelling by themselves will need to pay an additional supplement for use of a single room. If you are happy to share a room with another guest – of the same gender – then let us know at the time of booking. If we match you with another solo traveller then we can discount the single supplement for both of you.

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Travel Insurance

All guests joining our tours are required to have travel insurance. Please make sure you have a valid travel insurance, covering the kind of activities you are undertaking during our tour, cancellations, loss of personal belongings, and any unforeseen circumstances while travelling.

Travel to the Meeting Point

We will meet at Asahikawa Station at 9:30 am on the first day. We recommend that you arrive in Asahikawa the day before departure to easily meet your group on the tour's first day. If you are flying into Asahikawa Airport (AKJ) from Tokyo Haneda on the first day, please make sure you reserve an early morning flight that arrives at Asahikawa between 8:30am and 9:30am. This allows us to pick you up from the airport on the day.

An alternative to flight is rail (Japan Railway, abbr. JR). Trains travel every 30-60 mins between Sapporo and Asahikawa. Upon booking, please let us know your travel plans to Asahikawa, and we will confirm in detail where and what time we will meet on the first day.

You can search train timetables in English on [Japan Transit Planner website](#).

Tour map

To view the route on Google My Maps, [click here](#).



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Day-to-Day Itinerary

Day 1 – Meet in Asahikawa, Hike Sugatami Loop & Tennyogahara Marshland Trail

Your group will meet at Asahikawa Station at 9:30 am. Once everyone is together, we'll spend some time getting to know each other and the programme for our upcoming adventure on the road to Mt. Asahidake.



Enroute we'll make a shopping stop to buy lunch to enjoy later on the trail. We will then get stuck into hiking with our warm-up day today. We'll take the ropeway from the Asahidake Visitor Centre up to Sugatami

Station at 1,600 m / 5,249 ft. From here, we will enjoy the Sugatami Loop, an easygoing course that will take us around volcanic crater ponds dotted around the mountain. We'll also have a chance to get close to Mt. Asahidake's steaming fumaroles.

We'll descend the mountain back to the Visitor Centre via the Tennyogahara Marshland Trail. The trail begins above the treeline, descending through bamboo grasses and mixed birch and fir forests. We'll pass some beautiful open marshes along the way. This hike is a great warm-up and will give you a good idea of the trail conditions we can expect on later hikes on this tour.

Once we return to the visitor centre, we'll have a short briefing before we head to our accommodation in Asahidake Onsen, situated at 1,100 m / 3,600 ft above sea level. We stay the night here in the crisp mountain air enjoying the natural hot springs fed by Mt Asahidake.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Descent	Accommodation
D	5.2 km 3.2 mi	+ 70 m + 230 ft	- 570 m - 1870 ft	Hotel in Asahidake Onsen

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Day 2 – Hike from Mt. Asahidake to Mt. Kurodake

Asahidake Onsen is a popular entry point to Daisetsuzan National Park. The park is Japan's second largest and one of the oldest, first designated as a National Park in 1934. While Daisetsuzan is typically known as the Roof of Hokkaido, in the Ainu world, it is known as *kamuy-mintar*, meaning "the playground of the Gods".



We make our way into this sacred location by cable car to Sugatami Station at 1,600m/5,250ft, then start climbing to the summit of Mt. Asahidake. At 2,291 m (7,516 ft) this is the highest you can get in Hokkaido. Our journey continues on the outer ring of the majestic Ohachidaira volcanic caldera, which was formed by an eruption about 30,000 years ago.

In the afternoon, we set foot on the summit of Mt. Hokkai (2,149m/7,065ft) and Mt. Kurodake (1,984 m / 6,510 ft) before descending into Sounkyo Gorge with the help of a chair lift followed by another cable car. Sounkyo Gorge is a picturesque onsen village nestled between the mountains and the cliffs, making it a popular destination for onsen, hiking and skiing. It will be our welcome home for the night.

Alternate Route: This entire hike is exposed to the weather. Depending on the conditions and group dynamics, we may change the traverse hike to a loop hike, returning via Nakadake Onsen after summiting Mt. Asahidake. This hike still takes you to the outer rim of Ohachidaira Caldera but lets us drop down to a lower elevation sooner, so that we avoid spending the whole day on the exposed caldera rim. The distance and the duration are similar to the traverse and we will transfer by van to Sounkyo.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, L, D	12.5 km 7.8 mi	+ 1080 m + 3543 ft	Hotel in Sounkyo Onsen

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Day 3 – Hike amongst the Daisetsu Kogen alpine ponds

Today we will have an early breakfast before we drive over to Kogen Onsen which is 1 hour away from Sounkyo.

Daisetsu Kogen serves as a trailhead for the popular Kogen Numa (alpine ponds) hiking trail. This area is far from civilization and home to a great number of native Brown Bears, (*higuma* in Japanese) which are occasionally spotted by hikers in early summer.



After arriving we have a briefing at the Higuma Information Centre about bear activity and the latest sightings before we hit the trail. Situated between 1,230 m - 1,460 m (4,035 ft - 4,790 ft) above sea level, Kogen Numa provides opportunities to observe alpine flora and over a dozen alpine ponds of various sizes scattered along the trail.

Once we return from our hike, we board our van to transfer to Nukabira Onsen, a hot spring village situated by Lake Nukabira. We will stay overnight at a historical hotel that has been renovated into a modern Japanese-style inn and is run by a friendly local family.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, D	6.4 km 4.0 mi	+ 290 m + 951 ft	Ryokan in Nukabira Onsen

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Day 4 – Hike up Mt. Hakuunzan

We'll kick the day off with a drive along Lake Shikaribetsu on a road only open during the snowless months from April to October. After approximately 30 mins, we'll arrive at the start of the trail to Mt. Hakuunzan on the shore of Lake Shikaribetsu, a naturally formed lake and the highest large lake in Hokkaido.



We will take a loop walk taking in the summits of Mt. Tenbou (1,174 m / 3,852 ft) and Mt. Hakuunzan (1,186 m / 3,890 ft) and before returning along the lakeshore.

From the summits there's a stunning view of Lake Shikaribetsu and if we are lucky, a chance to spot the Northern Pika in their rocky dwellings. We'll eat lunch on the trail, enjoying tasty rice balls made by our hosts at Nukabira Onsen. Enroute we will also pass Shinonome Lake, a small but beautiful alpine lake nestled in the mountain's highlands. The full day of hiking takes about 6 hours to complete.

After our hike, we'll return to our base at Nukabira Onsen, where we'll have the chance to enjoy their wonderful hot springs once more.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, L, D	8.4 km 5.2 mi	+ 740 m + 2430 ft	Ryokan in Nukabira Onsen

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Day 5 – Rest day at Akan Onsen

This morning we will have a lazy start then check out of our accommodation and drive 2.5 hours to Lake Akan, a scenic caldera lake in the Akan-Mashu National Park. Once arriving, we will stop into the Akankohan Visitor Centre and enjoy a short forest hike to *bokke*, a bubbling mud pool that hints at the regions volcanic power.

After arrival, you are free to rest, or explore Lake Akan at your leisure for the remainder of the day!

Lake Akan is home to many Ainu families and artisans, whose workshops and galleries are found along the street at the Lake Akan Ainu Kotan. We highly recommend going for a wander around the Kotan and visiting the Ainu-run shops.



Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, D	1 km 0.6 mi	+ 10 m + 30 ft	Hotel at Lake Akan

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Day 6 – Hike up Mt. Meakan

After breakfast at the hotel, we will drive half an hour to the trailhead of Mt. Meakan. As before, we will stop by a store in the village to shop for lunch.

Mt. Meakan (1,499 m / 4,918 ft) is an iconic mountain in the area, providing spectacular views of steaming vents and a little blue lagoon at the summit.



The loop hike takes you through a diverse landscape, ancient conifer forests, dwarf pine trees and rocky alpine slopes. Hardy alpine flowers make this volcanic environment their home, the colourful patches lifting your spirits as you climb. Some of these flowers are even named after the peak, such as Meakan-fusuma, a type of sandwort. Towards the end of the hike we find ourselves on the shore of Lake Onneto, a tranquil lake nestled in an old-growth forest.

After completing our hike, we will transfer to Kawayu Onsen, a charming hot spring town nestled between Lakes Kussharo and Mashu where we will stay tonight. We'll dine at our accommodation and we highly recommend enjoying Kawayu Onsen's famous hot spring baths to soothe your body after today's hike.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, D	10.4 km 6.5 mi	+ 960 m + 3150 ft	Ryokan in Kawayu Onsen

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Day 7 – Hike up Mt. Mokoto and the Tsusujigahara Trail

After breakfast at our accommodation, we will drive 20 minutes to the trailhead for Mt. Mokoto.

Mt. Mokoto (1,000 m / 3,281 ft) sits on the rim of the Kussharo Caldera and has fantastic views of the lake on a clear day. The trail (4.1 km / 2.6 mi return) climbs gradually, ducking in and out of low shrubs along the ridgeline, giving our legs a chance to recover from yesterday's adventure on Mt Meakan – which we can sometimes see in the distance.



After soaking in the views from the summit, we'll head back the way we came and make our way to a local restaurant where we can enjoy a tasty home-cooked lunch.

With full bellies, we head to Mt. Io, an active volcano with plumes of steam rising from fumaroles. After seeing the activity up close (not too close – those vents are hot!), we will take a flat stroll (2.3 km / 1.4 mi) along the Tsusujigahara Trail back to Kawayu town. The trail takes us through ever changing vegetation that tells the story of how nature is recovering from the most recent eruption – a recovery taking over 400 years.

Back in town we can dip our feet in the neighbourhood foot bath, then return to our accommodation in Kawayu onsen. You can once again soak in the famous hot-spring baths, this time with first hand knowledge of where that hot water is coming from.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, L, D	6.4 km 4.0 mi	+ 291 m + 955 ft	Ryokan in Kawayu Onsen

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Day 8 – Hike up Mt. Nishibetsu and Mt. Mashu

This morning, we will have an early breakfast and pick up something for lunch before we head to the trailhead for our hike today.

The hike starts with a gentle and steady uphill through the forest. We will soon reach the short steep climb over Gaman-zaka (translates as "endurance hill"), which pushes us above the tree line with an open panorama.



The first peak, Mt. Risuke (787 m / 2,582 ft), gives us our first glimpse of Lake Mashu, if the weather is clear. From there, the pleasant ridgeline takes us onto Mt. Nishibetsu (800 m / 2,625 ft), from where we can admire the steep cliffs of the caldera encompassing Lake Mashu, part of the Akan-Mashu National Park. We'll continue to a fork in the road where we take a trail branching off all the way to Mt. Mashu (857 m / 2,810 ft). If the weather is nice, we will enjoy our lunch atop Mt. Mashu, with stunning views of the caldera lake with the same name.

After returning to the caldera rim trail, we continue for a few more hours on rolling terrain to the carpark. We will drive for an hour to a traditional Japanese inn by Lake Noto.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, D	14.2 km 8.8 mi	+ 840 m + 2760 ft	Ryokan at Lake Noto

Day 9 – Farewells in Abashiri

Our tour finishes in the morning in Abashiri. After breakfast, we will check out of our accommodation. We will drop you off at either JR Abashiri train station or Abashiri Memanbetsu Airport (MMB), depending on your onward travel.

From the train station you can catch a Limited Express train to Sapporo. From the airport you can fly directly to Tokyo Haneda (HND). We will bid our farewells as you set off to your next destination in Japan. Itterashai!

Meals			
B			

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Our recommended reading

[The Hiker's Guide to Weather in Daisetsuzan National Park](#)

[Hiking Safely in Hokkaido](#)

[What to pack for Hokkaido?](#)

[What is a disposable toilet bag?](#)

[A Local's Guide on What to Expect When Staying in Hokkaido](#)

[How to onsen \(like a local!\)](#)

[Vegan & Vegetarian in Hokkaido](#)

[Hokkaido Travel Tips & Common Questions](#)

[The Ainu, from a Hokkaido local's perspective](#)

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Elevation profiles

Day 1 - [Sugatami Loop & Tennyogahara Marshland Trail](#)

Distance - 5.2 km / 3.2 mi Ascent - 70 m / 230 ft



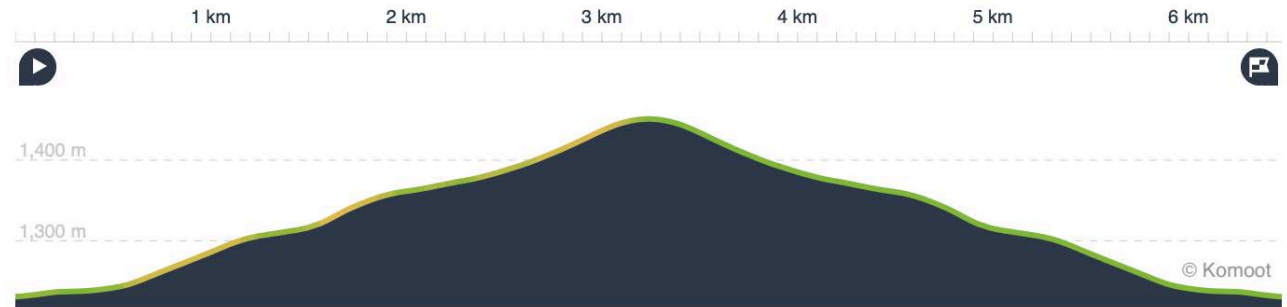
Day 2 - [Mt. Asahidake to Mt. Kurodake](#)

Distance - 12.5 km / 7.8 mi Ascent - 1,080 m / 3,543 ft



Day 3 - [Daisetsu Kogen](#)

Distance - 6.4 km / 4.0 mi Ascent - 290 m / 951 ft

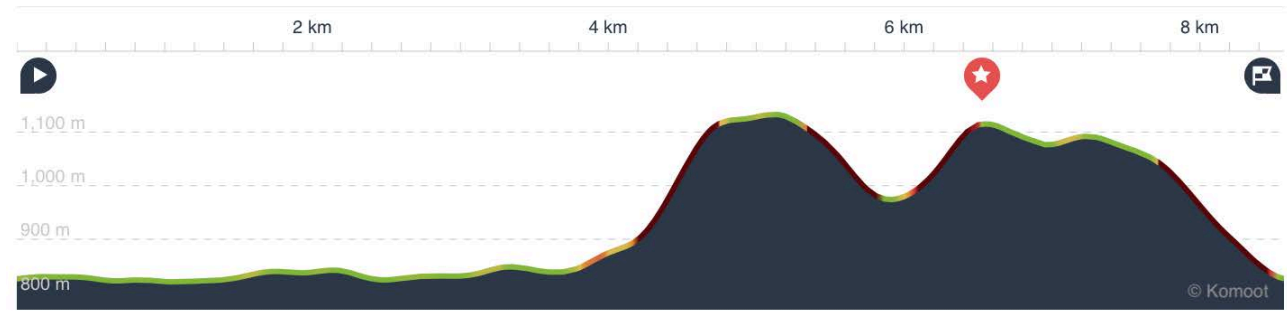


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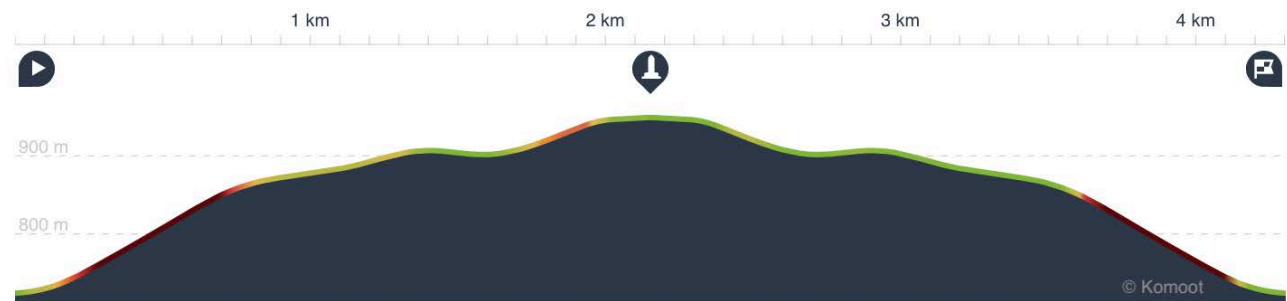
Day 4 - [Mt. Hakuunzan & Mt. Tenbo](#) **Distance** - 8.4 km / 5.2 mi **Ascent** - 740 m / 2,430 ft



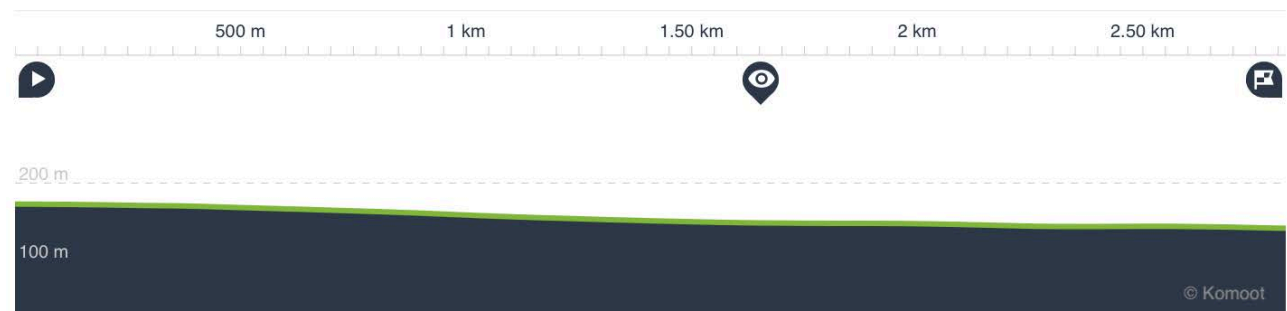
Day 6 - [Mt. Meakan](#) **Distance** - 10.4 km / 6.5 mi **Ascent** - 960 m / 3,150 ft



Day 7 - [Mt. Mokoto](#) **Distance** - 4.1 km / 2.6 mi **Ascent** - 289 m / 948 ft



Day 7 - [Mt. Io to Kawayu Visitor Centre](#) **Distance** - 2.3 km / 1.4 mi **Ascent** - 2 m / 7 ft



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Day 8 - [Mt. Nishibetsu](#)

Distance - 14.2 km / 8.8 mi Ascent - 840 m / 2,760 ft

