

Guide Map of the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest

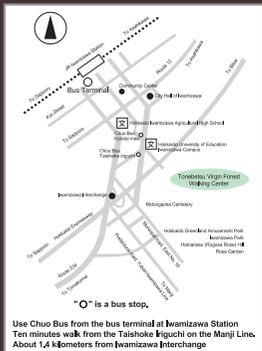


HOKKAIDO TONEBETSU GUIDE MAP

Transportation Information



- ① 40 minutes via expressway (tot) by car from Sapporo
- ② 80 minutes via expressway (tot) by car from Asahikawa
- ③ 60 minutes by car from Chitose



Use Chuo Bus from the bus terminal at Iwamizawa Station
Ten minutes walk from the Taishoke Kijochi on the Manji Line.
About 1.4 kilometers from Iwamizawa Interchange

Published by Iwamizawa City
Inquiries to Tonebetsu Virgin Forest Walking Center

The Story of the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest

The Tonebetsu Virgin Forest is located on the eastern edge of the vast Ishikari Plain. From this national forest, spreading out over 400 hectares overlooking the suburbs of Ishikari City, visitors can enjoy taking in distant views of the Yubari and Mashike mountain ranges. This is apparently one of the best natural recreational forests with a primitive environment remaining.

In April 1972, the forest was renamed Tonebetsu Recreation Forest from Tonebetsu National Forest and became an object of study for academics in the field of forest ecology. Finally, the entire area was designated as a protected forest for headwaters conservation and for public health. It is also a wildlife sanctuary where more than 100 species of natural broad-leaved trees and more than 350 different understory plants grow. More than 40 species of wild birds can be observed throughout the year.

Hoping that the excellent natural environment of this primeval forest would be preserved for future generations, it was named Tonebetsu Virgin Forest. Walking trails have been developed to allow as many people as possible to enjoy nature to the fullest. The Walking Center was established for activity purposes.



The History of the Taisho Pond

Taisho Pond, located on the upper Minami Tonebetsu River in Iwamizawa City, was completed in 1914 to provide water for agriculture.

Taisho Pond has been functioning as a water reservoir for about a century and underwent a significant renovation in 1974. Although a part of the levee caved in in 2010, a replacement was completed in 2023, giving the pond its current shape. Taisho Pond is a valuable asset to the community as a scenic pond.



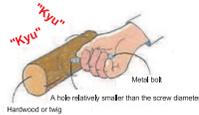
The Functions of the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest

The Tonebetsu Virgin Forest is a vibrant habitat for many birds, insects, grasses, flowers, and trees. Its rich natural environment helps clean the air, absorb our carbon dioxide emissions, helping to prevent global warming. It also produces clean water necessary for the agricultural products we eat.

This virgin forest also allows visitors to experience fresh greenery in spring, the lively colors of summer, tinted colorful leaves in autumn, and snowflakes on the branches like blooming snow flowers during winter. This is a place of relaxation throughout the four seasons where many people can enjoy good health and peace of mind.

Hints to enjoy yourself in the forest

Make a Birdcall



A birdcall is a tool that enables one to make a sound similar to the chirping of wild birds, attracting them and drawing them near. It is easy to make with a piece of well-dried wood or a twig and a metal bolt. Choose as hard a piece of wood as possible, and make a hole relatively smaller than the diameter of the bolt's screw. The squeaking sound "kyukyu" when the bolt is screwed into the hole or loosened resembles a store-bought bird call.

Trace Animal Footprints (Animal tracking)



In winter, you can see various animal tracks in the snow. If you put on snowshoes and follow those footprints, they may lead to an encounter with the animal which left them. This is a great way to get a feel for the variety of animals in the forest.

Look for Wild Creatures



Miyamakarasu-ogeha (Papilio maackii / swallowtail butterfly family) / Miyama-kuwagata (Lucanus maculiformis / Miyama stag beetle) / Ezo-oka-garu (Rana piria / Ezo brown frog)

If you take a close look at the plants, trees, and ground, you will find small insects and other creatures. During the flower blooming season, butterflies with brightly colored wings come to feed on nectar. If you get up nice and early, you can come to the woods to observe trees with sap flowing from them, such as maple and Mizunara (a variety of Mongolian oak) trees.

Find Animal Marks

As many wild birds live in the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest, you can also find traces of wild birds' eating habits. In addition to observing wild birds, how about bird-watching to look see how they live? Their nests are made to be undetectable by outsiders. Still, as the leaves fall in autumn, it becomes easier for outsiders to find nests made of twigs and grass between the branches of trees.



Dealing with injuries

In case you are bleeding from a cut, etc.

- If the wound is contaminated with dirt or sand, rinse it thoroughly with clean water as soon as possible.
- If you are bleeding heavily, stop the bleeding by applying pressure with clean gauze or cloth.
- Check for broken bones, and hold the wound above the level of the heart.
- Use plastic or rubber gloves to avoid direct contact with the blood.



In case of broken bones or fractures

- If you are bleeding, attend to it first.
- Do not move the injured body part too much.
- Use ice or cold compresses to relieve the pain and swelling.
- If possible, a splint should be applied above and below the bone to fix the fractured part.
- In the case of a broken arm, support it with a triangular bandage or sling. You can improvise with sticks, boards, umbrellas, cardboard, or such, for the splints.

How to enjoy winter in the forest

In the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest, you can enjoy a variety of activities in winter.

Walking with snowshoes



With snowshoes, you can enjoy observing nature, animals and searching for animal tracks in the virgin forest in winter on foot.

Cross-country skiing



For those who have experience of walking in the forest, cross-country skiing on the walking trails is added fun.

Playing in the snow



At the Multi-purpose Site or the Below the Levee Garden, you can enjoy igloo building, snowball fights, snow tubing, and snow camping.

Precautions

Rules in the forest

- Take care of plants and animals.
- Do not smoke or play with fire.
- Do not ride bicycles or motorcycles in the park.
- Do not venture off walking paths.
- Beware of dangerous insects and plants such as ticks, bees, and Asian poison ivy.
- Beware of wild bears and foxes.
- Refrain from going near the pond at night.
- Use the facilities considerately.
- Stay away from wild birds during their nesting season.



Rules in the camping ground

- Fill out the visitors' list.
- Use fire only in designated areas.
- Please take any ash leftover from any fire or BBQs with you.
- Do not make fire on windy days.
- Be sure to take food scraps home.
- Do not set up tents or other camping equipment outside of designated areas.



Rules of the Play-Park playground

- Please apply in advance to use facilities or join in activities at the Play-Park playground.
- Please enjoy yourself only in the designated activity areas.
- Users are responsible for any injuries sustained in the Play-Park playground.



Activity program information is offered at the Walking Center.

Tonebetsu Virgin Forest Walking Center



As a general information center for visitors to the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest, it provides information on its flora and fauna and various observation events. This center is free of charge for anyone as a place for study and breaks while walking.

Address: 73-2, Midorigaoka, Iwamizawa City

Opening hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

(Summer: April 21st to October 31st)

Closed: Mondays

(Tuesday, if Monday falls on a public holiday)

Phone number: 0126-32-2488

Facilities

- Information Desk
- Lobby
- Study Section
- Resting Section
- Toilet



Attention!

Brown bears

Most brown bears avoid humans. Accidents occur when brown bears are unaware of human presence and encounter them at close range. For this reason, keep signaling to alert brown bears to your presence from a long distance. Speak loudly, clap your hands, or make noise with a bell or whistle. Please refrain from walking alone in the forest, and go in a group of several people to ensure that brown bears can quickly notice your presence through the sound of movement and conversation. Check the bulletin board at the Walking Center and the city's website for information on the appearance of brown bears.



Ticks - Do not expose your skin.

Ticks are often found in bamboo thickets. Try to avoid exposing your skin to them by wearing long sleeves and long pants. Once they get on your body, they will crawl around for a while. As the ticks will not sting you immediately, it is better to check for them periodically with other members of your party.

Garbage

Leftover bento lunch boxes and snacks can attract brown bears looking for food. Once a brown bear develops a taste for human food, there is a risk that it will come to garbage dumps and enter human habitats. Be sure to take your garbage home with you, not only for yourself but also for the other people who will use the site later.



Hornets are dangerous

The hornet is the most aggressive and dangerous of bees. It's said that they become aggressive when seeing black colors, so wear light-colored clothes if possible. It is hazardous to approach a hive, so leave the area immediately upon discovering one. When hornets are flying around, do not make sudden movements or try to brush them off with your hands. They may think they are being attacked and will attack you.



Do not drink untreated water

Foxes transmit a parasite through their feces called Echinococcus. Do not drink raw water or eat berries near or on the ground.



Highlights

The Tonebetsu Virgin Forest is a rich green space that combines the Tonebetsu Natural Park which features Taisho Pond, about three kilometers southeast of the city center, and the Tonebetsu Recreation Forest. The scenic changes in four seasons are lovely, and it is loved by local citizens as a place for relaxation.

Mizubasho (*Lychnis camtschaticensis* / Asian skunk cabbage) and Zazenou (*Symlocarpus renifolius* / Eastern skunk cabbage)

Around the Taisho Pond or Kinshi Pond, there is a colony of Asian skunk cabbage. Mizubasho is a perennial plant with flowers 10 to 30 centimeters in height. It grows on wetlands or waterfronts. Its other name in Japanese is "Hebi-no Makura," which stands for the pillow of a snake. Zazenou is a perennial plant too, and its flowers are 20 to 40 centimeters tall. As soon as the snow melts, it pops up out of the ground. Its dark purple flower (actually a big leaf to protect stamen on the flower study) blooms in April or May. It looks like the legendary Buddhist monk "Daruma" in Japanese. Hence the name is Darumasou.



Shinanoki (*Tilia japonica* / Japanese lime/ Linden family) and Oba Bodajyu (*Tilia maximowicziana* / A variety of Japanese lime)

While walking around the virgin forest, it's easy to find Shinanoki or Oba Bodajyu. They bloom around July, and they have a sweet aromatic scent. Honey can be extracted from the flowers.



The fruits and leaves of Konara (*Quercus serrata* / A variety of oak)

The Konara is a deciduous tree that can grow up to 20 meters tall with a trunk one meter in diameter. Its habitat is sunny places on mountains or in fields. Their yellowish-green flowers bloom in May or June, and the acorns ripen from September to October. The Konara is smaller than the Mizunara (a variety of Mongolian oak; "ko" stands for "small" in Japanese). Konara grow only in the south of the Sorachi district, so it is a rare tree near the northern limit of its distribution.



The fruits and leaves of Kashiwa (*Quercus dentata* / Daimyo oak)

Kashiwa can grow up to 25 meters tall, with a trunk 90 centimeters in diameter. The leaves don't fall on the ground in fall or winter. They fall off when the new leaves come out in spring. This is a unique point in the flora world. In Tonebetsu Virgin Forest, Kashiwa trees can be found. The yellowish-green flowers bloom in May or June. Since Kashiwa trees often grow along the coast, we recognize this place must have been on the coast long ago.



Todomatsu (*Abies sachalinensis* / Sakhalin fir) and its artificial forest

A part of Tonebetsu Virgin Forest is the artificial forest of Todomatsu. This aims for sustainable use for multiple purposes such as building materials, packing materials, or other different materials.



Wild birds seen in the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest

This forest is usually called the Forest of Kibitaki (*Ficedula narsiscina* / *Narcissus flycatcher*), a bird sometimes referred to by the moniker "fairy of the forest." As well as the Kibitaki, many kinds of wild birds like the Yamagata (*Sittiparus varius* / Varied tit) and Oakagera (*Dendrocoptes leucotis* / White-backed woodpecker) inhabit the forest.

Oakagera (*Dendrocoptes leucotis* / White-backed woodpecker)



The Oakagera is a relatively larger member of the woodpecker family. It is characterized by its dynamic motion as it powerfully pecks at trees. This is a non-migratory bird, present at the park year round. It is slightly larger than the Akagera (Great spotted woodpecker, and its voice is higher pitched.

Oshidori (*Aix galericulata* / Mandarin duck)



The Oshidori is a migratory bird, and it arrives at the park in late April. It is wonderful to see them paddling gracefully in pairs on water. The reflection of their beautiful appearance on the surface of the water is elegant. They sometimes eat acorns at the edge of the pond.

Kibitaki (*Ficedula narsiscina* / *Narcissus flycatcher*)



The kibitaki is a symbolic bird in summer in Tonebetsu Virgin Forest. As it can be seen sporadically in the forest, some call it the Forest of Kibitaki as a nickname. A male Kibitaki's feathers have a beautiful contrast of black and yellow. The female has subdued olive feathers.

Kosamebitaki (*Muscicapa daurica* / Asian brown flycatcher)



The Kosamebitaki is a small bird and is not much to look at. From spring to summer, visitors can observe them as they catch tiny flies. Its round, black eyes are beautiful.

Yamagata (*Sittiparus varius* / Varied tit)



Yamagata is said to be the most beautiful member of the tit family. The chestnut-colored feathers on its chest look pretty. This is a non-migratory species, roughly the size of a sparrow.

Trees seen in the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest

About 100 species of broad-leaved trees, including the Mizunara (*Quercus crispula* / Mongolian oak family), the Asada (*Ostrya japonica* / Japanese hop-hornbeam / Birch family), the Shinanoki (*Tilia japonica* / Japanese lime / Linden family), and the Ezo-taya (*Acer pictum* subsp. mono / Maple family) grow here. Visitors can enjoy forest bathing from spring to autumn.

Asada (*Ostrya japonica* / Japanese hop-hornbeam)



The Asada belongs to the birch family. Its woody texture is fine-grained, moderately hard, and highly durable. The wood is usually used for flooring materials and its texture is similar to cherry wood. It is also used for building materials, furniture, and everyday life tools. However, the level of use of this wood is low.

Akaitaya (*Acer pictum* subsp. / Japanese maple)



The Akaitaya's leaves are palm-shaped with narrow spaces between the fingers-like parts. Its wood is used for building materials, musical instruments, and more. As the color of its new leaves in spring is red, it's called "Harumomiji," which stands for "tinted leaves in spring." In autumn, the leaves turn from green into vivid yellow, and it's outstanding in its beauty.

Ichii (*Taxus cuspidata* / Japanese yew)



The ichii bears red berries in autumn. Because of its slow growth, the woody texture is fine-grained and hard. The wood is used for house nameplates, ink-stone boxes, marquetry, building materials, and carving materials for Buddhist statues. It's also used, somewhat rarely for trees, to make pencils.

Inuenju (*Maackia amurensis* / Amur maackia)



The Inuenju's bark is dark brown. Its wood is hard and is used for house pillars, furniture, utensils, musical instruments, and sculptures. The dried flowers and buds are used as herbal medicine, with hemostatic (blood thickening) properties.

Todomatsu (*Abies sachalinensis* / Sakhalin fir)



The wood is relatively light and soft and is mainly used for building materials, furniture, pulp, packing materials, and disposable chopsticks. The sap has a number of uses, such as an ingredient of essential oils.

Wild plants seen in the Tonebetsu Virgin Forest

This virgin forest is home to valuable wild plants such as the Hitorishizuka (a variety of Chloranthaceae), the Ezo-engoaku (a type of poppy), and the Enreisou (a sort of trillium). From early spring to early autumn, the forest is resplendent with a variety of wild plants.

Ezo-engoaku (*Corydalis fumariifolia* subsp. *azurea* / A variety of poppy)



The Ezo-engoaku's flowers bloom in early spring, decorating the boardwalks in the virgin forest. It comes in a variety of colors, such as sky blue, blue, purple, and white. Also, the leaf is basically oval in shape, but other variations can be found.

Hitorishizuka (*Chloranthus quadrifidus* / A variety of Chloranthaceae)



"Hitor" means alone in Japanese, while "Shizuka" is the name of a famous woman in Japanese history who has the legendary story of performing a dance. This metaphorical name suggests this plant is like Shizuka, beautifully performing the dance. Its flowers bloom from April to May.

Enreisou (*Trillium smallii* / A variety of trillium)



Each plant has three leaves with rounded corners, but it maintains a relatively diamond shape. The parts which look like the petals are actually calyxes, and the color is purple-tinged with brown.

Nirinsou (*Anemone flaccida* / Windflower)



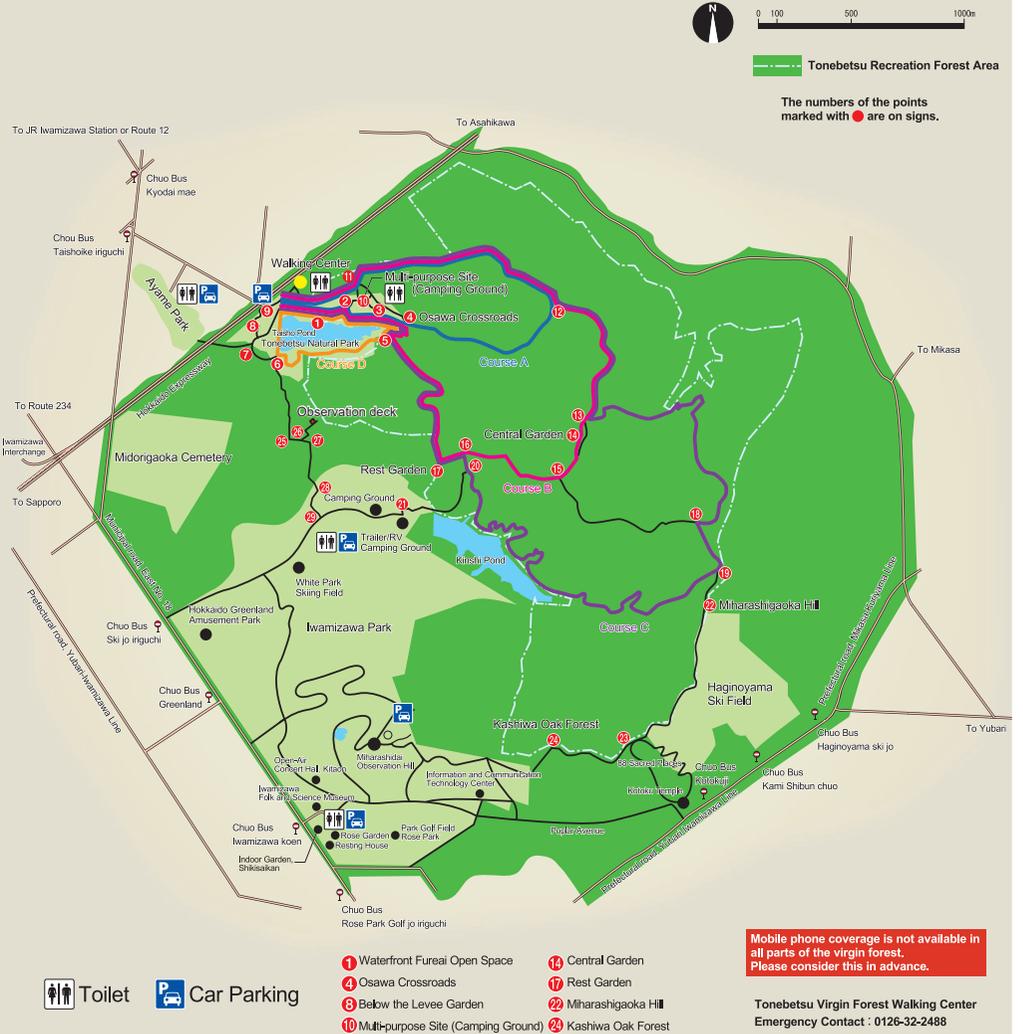
Nirinsou are seen here and there in the virgin forest in spring. When they all bloom together, they look like a gigantic white carpet with a small flower pattern was put on the ground. This vista is breathtaking.

Kariganesou (*Tripora diversicata* / Blue mist spiraee)



These purple-blue flowers bloom from October to September. In the virgin forest, this is often seen in open areas, blooming when almost all other flowers have finished for the year, giving us a happy mind.

Tonebetsu Virgin Forest Map



Mobile phone coverage is not available in all parts of the virgin forest. Please consider this in advance.

Tonebetsu Virgin Forest Walking Center
Emergency Contact : 0126-32-2488

Walking Courses Introduction

Course A - Trees observation course
This course allows people to see typical tree species in the virgin forest like Mizunara, Asada, Shinanoki, Ezo-taya, etc. About 100 broadleaf tree species live along the path under which people can enjoy forest bathing. It has a few inclines and descents and is relaxing and enjoyable for both the elderly and children.

Two hours of walking time is assumed to cover 3.2 kilometers. Calorie consumption is about 420 kcal.

A half-day walk is assumed to cover 5.1 kilometers. Calorie consumption is about 1,290 kcal.

Course B - Bird watching course
This path allows people to see many kinds of wild birds like Kibitaki, Oruri, Yamagata, Oakagera, etc. The course leads through two resting points, the Central Garden and the Rest Garden.

Course C - Nature exploration course
This course enables people to venture into the virgin forest's depths and go around and loop back. You can take in almost all the main scenic and attractive points, such as Miharashigaoka Hill and Kinshi Pond. This course is intended for able-bodied hikers because of its varied terrain, including ridges and stream-crossings.

A full day walk is assumed to cover 4.7 kilometers. Calorie consumption is about 2,050 kcal.

30 minutes walking is assumed to cover 1.7 kilometers. Calorie consumption is about 205 kcal.

Course D - Nature observation and study course
This waterfront course gives people a meander around Taisho Pond while seeing many wild plants like Mizubasho, Nirinsou, and such. This path is in the Tonebetsu Natural Park. It is the closest to the Walking Center, allowing you to explore nature in a short amount of time and with light clothing.

References: wikipedia.jp (2021).

Let's check out flora and fauna to see in the virgin forest!