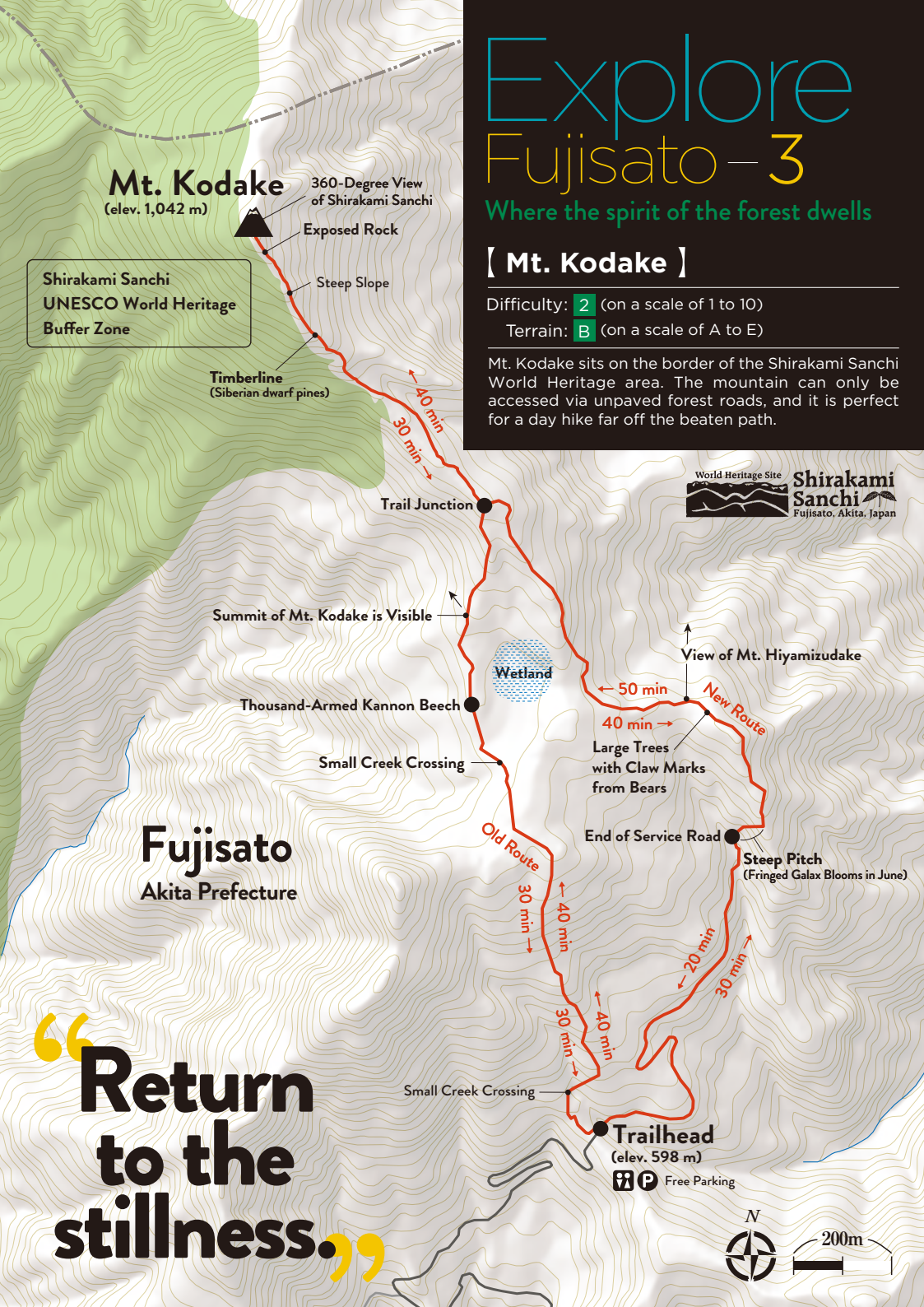




A Long, Bumpy Drive to the Trailhead

The route to the trailhead starts at the Shirakami Sanchi World Heritage Conservation Center in Fujisato. It takes around 10 minutes by car to get from the conservation center to the Subaru Camping Ground to the north. From there, it is a 90-minute drive up 20 kilometers of rough, unpaved backcountry roads to the trailhead of Mt. Kodake. The road is uneven and rocky in places, and vehicles with two-wheel drive or low clearance may not be able to make the journey. Cell phone service drops out (until the summit), adding to the sense that you are far from civilization. Please be aware that this road is blocked between November and May due to heavy snowfall, and it is not possible to access the trailhead during these months.



Explore Fujisato - 3

Where the spirit of the forest dwells

[Mt. Kodake]

Difficulty: **2** (on a scale of 1 to 10)
Terrain: **B** (on a scale of A to E)

Mt. Kodake sits on the border of the Shirakami Sanchi World Heritage area. The mountain can only be accessed via unpaved forest roads, and it is perfect for a day hike far off the beaten path.



Shirakami's Water

At Kasuge River, Get Your Feet Wet

The waters of Kasuge River are so clear that you can see straight to the bottom. Standing in the riverbed, you may get the urge to jump in and splash around. The Akita-Shirakami Guides Association offers a river walk group tour, and individual tours with private guides are also available.

Water from Shirakami Sanchi is even sold as bottled drinking water. The crystal-clear mountain water is filtered by the beech trees and is said to taste slightly sweet.



Subari Dam

An Important Water Source

Subari Dam, completed in 1970, spans the Kasuge River to the south of Lake Subari. The forested slopes surrounding the dam are known for their beauty, and wildlife can sometimes be spotted among the trees.

The dam holds approximately 39.5 million cubic meters of water ready for use in irrigation and as an emergency reserve. In addition, the flow through the dam powers a hydroelectric generator that generates almost 28 million gigawatt-hours annually.

The water level in Lake Subari dropped after Japanese beech trees on the mountains around the dam were cut down in the 1980s. This highlighted how important the water-retaining beech forests are for regulating the area's water table and preventing natural disasters like floods, droughts, and landslides.

Subari Dam is a 15-minute drive from the center of Fujisato.

Return to the stillness.

Climbing Mt. Kodake

Mt. Kodake lies on the eastern border of the Shirakami Sanchi World Natural Heritage site. Shirakami Sanchi is a protected park, and prior permission is needed to enter its core zone and buffer zone. From the summit of Mt. Kodake (elev. 1,042 m), climbers can gaze upon the untouched wilderness of Shirakami Sanchi to the west and feel themselves transported to a world that exists outside the reach of human influence.

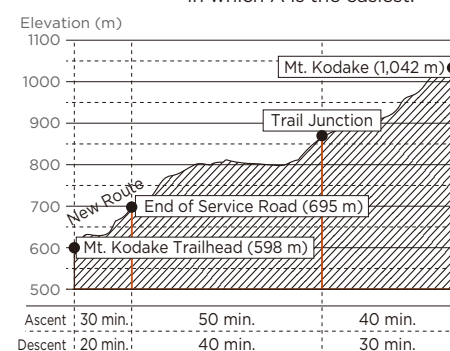
The trailhead to Mt. Kodake is secluded, reachable only by a 90-minute drive on unpaved roads. However, the trails that lead to Mt. Kodake's summit are not just for experts—beginners with some basic hiking equipment will have no trouble summiting the mountain.

There are two routes to take from the trailhead to the top: the Old Route and the New Route. Both routes are approximately 2.4 kilometers long, are similar in difficulty, and reach the summit in approximately 2 hours. The Old Route and New Route merge about 40 minutes from the summit, and from this point, hikers will pass through a beech forest and traverse a ridge. From this ridge, hikers have a 360-degree view of Shirakami Sanchi, including views of Mt. Fujisato Komagatake to the east, as well as Mt. Iwaki in neighboring Aomori Prefecture.

The Siberian dwarf pines that grow near the summit are an alpine species that is normally found only at elevations of 2,000 meters or more. In fact, this is the lowest elevation that such pines can be found growing natively anywhere in Honshu. Seeing the dwarf pines covering the landscape gives the sense of having climbed quite high in just a few hours.

Route Profile

About 2 hours from trailhead to summit. Terrain level B on a scale of A to E, in which A is the easiest.



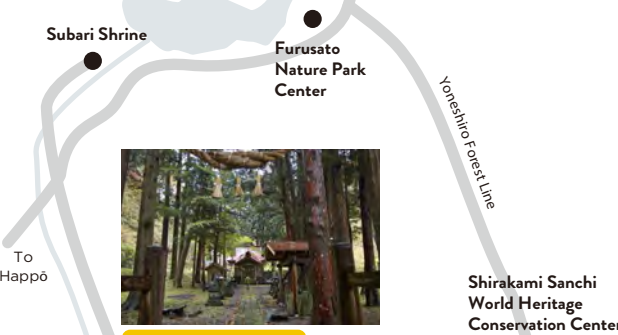
Trail times are approximate; they represent the average hiking speed of an adult on a clear day. For an explanation of difficulty and terrain rankings, search online for the words "Akita's Mountains Are Here to Climb!"

Blooming Season

Month	Flora
May	Japanese Beech (blossoms and spring leaves), Willow-leaf Magnolia, Trailing Arbutus (<i>Epigaea asiatica</i>), Korean Mountain Ash, Ghost Pipe (<i>Monotropastrum humile</i>), Spicebush, Lingonberry, <i>Gaultheria adenothrix</i> , Japanese Fairy Bells (<i>Disporum smilacinum</i>), Japanese Whitebark Magnolia
June	Japanese Horse Chestnut, <i>Rhododendron brachycarpum</i> , Fringed Galax, Japanese Wood Poppy, Japanese Fairy Bells (<i>Disporum smilacinum</i>), Small Twistedstalk, Japanese Alpine Cherry, Wood Sorrel, Albrecht's Azalea
July	<i>Rhododendron multiflorum</i> , Ghost Pipe (<i>Monotropastrum humile</i>), <i>Rhododendron brachycarpum</i> , Climbing Hydrangea, Terrestrial Orchid (<i>Yuania japonica</i>), <i>Mitchella undulata</i>
August	<i>Elliottia paniculata</i> , <i>Elliottia bracteata</i> , Panicke Hydrangea, Terrestrial Orchid (<i>Ephippianthus sachalinensis</i>), Japanese Clethra
September	Marsh Grass of Parnassus, Rattlesnake Plantain (<i>Goodyera foliosa</i>), East Asian Glandrod
October	Early Yellow Foliage (elev. ≥ 800 m), Late Yellow Foliage (elev. ≤ 800 m)



Rhododendron multiflorum



Subari Shrine

A Humble yet Venerable Shrine

Subari Shrine, located next to Subari Dam, is a small shrine thought to have existed for over a millennium.

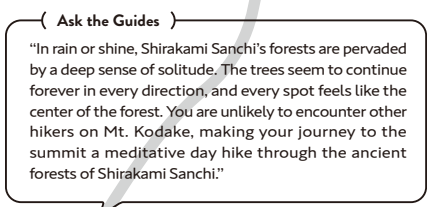
Local legend credits the shrine's founding to Ennin (794-864), a renowned Tendai Buddhist monk. Ennin is said to have enshrined a statue of the Wisdom King Fudō Myō-ō, a Buddhist deity who is often found near waterfalls. Legend also claims that the deity sometimes bathes in Fudō Falls nearby.

A few minutes' walk west of the shrine, Fudō Falls is a secluded plunge waterfall some 30 meters high. It is sometimes referred to as Urami no Taki, meaning "the rear-view waterfall," because one can look out from behind the falling water at the surrounding verdant cliffs.

Ask the Guides

"The Siberian dwarf pines near the summit of Mt. Kodake mark the mountain's timberline. In June and July, you can see other high-altitude plants, such as lingonberry and trailing arbutus. In spring, the beeches leaf out and decorate the mountain with their new greenery."

Kōko Kamata, Akita-Shirakami Guides Association



Furusato Nature Park Center

All about the Shirakami Sanchi Area

Renovated in 2020, the Furusato Nature Park Center is a small regional museum located between Lake Subari and the Subari Camping Ground. The museum introduces the wildlife and history of the area through its various exhibits, which include a large topographic diorama of Shirakami Sanchi and short videos on topics such as the local ecology and the role that the forest plays in water management.

There is a lounge overlooking the lake, a small play area for children, individual workstations for teleworking or reading, and a hot water dispenser for making tea or coffee. Free Wi-Fi is available, and there are public toilet facilities.

Minami-Kasenai, Kasuge, Fujisato-machi (within the Subari Camping Ground)
Tel. 0185-79-2518
Open: 9:00 to 17:00 (closed from mid-November to mid-April)
*Entry is free

Scenic Viewpoints Immerse Yourself in Shirakami Sanchi

The first scenic viewpoint along the Old Route is located just past a sign and bench and can be reached by crossing two streams and walking along the trail flanked by towering beeches. In early spring—when there is still snow around the bases of the beeches—thaw circles form around the trunks as the trees gather and radiate warmth from the sun. (See picture.) From this point, hikers can get their first glimpse of the summit of Mt. Kodake.

After the New and Old Routes converge, there are two sets of steep steps. The second viewpoint is about 50 meters from the top. Tall trees are unable to grow at elevations higher than this point, which is called the "timberline." At this viewpoint, hikers are rewarded with a stunning panoramic view of the Shirakami Sanchi area, including Mt. Fujisato Komagatake and Mt. Iwaki.



Mindset — 1 Choosing Your Route

The first step of climbing Mt. Kodake is selecting your route to the top. The Old Route begins near the parking area, and the New Route starts just a bit farther ahead. Both routes are somewhat steep at the beginning, but the New Route levels out into a more leisurely and gentle hike compared to the Old Route. The only other physically demanding part of the hike is the two sets of steps just beyond where the Old and New Routes converge.

Whether taking the Old Route or the New, remember that there is no need to rush. You'll get the most from your hike if you slow down and enjoy the natural world around you.

Getting to the Top



Tools — 2 Equipment

Because this is a day hike, only basic items are necessary, such as water, high-energy snacks, a map, a towel, a headlamp, a portable battery (for charging phones), a hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, rainwear, and sunglasses (for snow glare). Some of these items can be purchased from Mori no Eki, a rest stop located just next door to the Shirakami Sanchi World Heritage Conservation Center.



Backpack

A 20-liter backpack (with a rain cover) should suffice for the day. If your backpack is relatively new, it is a good idea to practice wearing it for a day or two to break it in.



Footwear

You may have to cross a small creek during your hike, so a lightweight pair of high-cut hiking boots is the best choice of footwear. You might also consider treating your boots with water-repellent spray before setting out.



Clothing

Even on a hot summer day, a t-shirt will not keep you warm high on the mountain, where temperatures are much cooler. Be sure to bring a light fleece. When packing raingear, consider that a waterproof jacket and pants will keep you warmer than a simple rain poncho.



Binoculars

A small, lightweight pair of 8 x 21 binoculars is ideal for birdwatching during your hike. If you like to bring your SLR camera when hiking, a telephoto long-range lens might also come in handy.



Magnifying Glass/Loupe

Looking at plants and insects up close with a magnifying glass will give you a new appreciation for the intricacies of nature.

Risk Management

3 If You Encounter Wasps

Bees and wasps are most active during the summer and autumn months. Hornets, one of the largest and most aggressive varieties of wasp, are especially dangerous. Wear a hat to protect your head, and if a wasp

or hornet does come near you, either back away slowly or stay very still and wait for it to go away. Wasp-repellent spray will help keep stinging insects away, and you might also consider bringing

a "poison-remover" tool, which extracts venom via suction. If you or someone with you has chest pains or trouble breathing after being stung, seek medical attention immediately.



4 If You Meet a Bear



Asian black bears live in the forests of Shirakami Sanchi. These bears spend a lot of time in the treetops. They tend to avoid humans and will usually run away when encountered. If you come across a bear that does not run away, keep your

eyes on the bear and back away slowly, moving sideways if possible. If the bear starts coming toward you, take off your backpack and drop it. If the bear investigates your backpack, use that time to back away. If the bear attacks you, try to hit

its nose or eyes with your hand (or trekking pole), or use bear-repellent spray to deter it. If you are hiking alone, be sure to carry a bear bell or a whistle with you; the noise of the bell can alert bears to your presence and help them avoid you.

5 If You Get Lost

If you find yourself lost, turn around and head back the way you came until you find a place that you recognize. If that fails, head up the mountain to look for the trail; if you go down the mountain, you are likely to

become more lost. As you climb higher up Mt. Kodake, you should be able to get cellphone reception, allowing you to call emergency services. The emergency number in Japan is 110.

If you are lost in the underbrush, climbing a tree may help you spot the trail or landmarks that can be used to reorient yourself. If it is snowing, retracing your footprints can lead you back to the trail.



Details — 6 Forest Succession in Shirakami Sanchi

The beech forest of Shirakami Sanchi has remained untouched by humans for thousands of years. During that time, it has gradually reached a state of natural equilibrium. The trees have all grown to an ideal height—not so tall that fierce winds will topple them, but tall enough to reach the canopy—and the spacing between their trunks is nearly identical. Even the plants and animals that make up the forest's ecosystem have remained consistent. These types of forests are sometimes termed "climax forests" in recognition of the fact that they represent the ultimate result of millennia of undisturbed growth.

Even so, the trees and plants that make up the forest are constantly growing, dying, and growing again. Unlike a coniferous forest, where the trees are evergreen, the Shirakami Sanchi beech forest transforms throughout the seasons.

Mealtime — 7 Trail-Friendly Meal Ideas



"For a hiking meal on a cold day, I like to cook udon hotpot, which can be made with a camping pot and camping stove. The ingredients are udon noodles, fried tofu, raw egg, and powdered soup. Boil the noodles, fried tofu, and powdered soup in the pan, and add the egg last for a hearty, warm meal!"



Miki Nishimura, Akita-Shirakami Guides Association



"I bring a sandwich toaster to make lunch when I'm hiking. I add a little hot water to a container of Jagariko (a fried potato snack) to make crispy mashed potatoes and spread this over bread. Then I add some cheese and vegetables, put it in the sandwich toaster to warm it up, and it's done!"



Junko Tsuji, Akita-Shirakami Guides Association

View from the Summit

Can you see it? On clear days, you can even spot the rest house on top of Mt. Shirakamidake.

Mt. Futatsumori (elev. 1,086 m)

Mt. Ganmoridake (elev. 986 m)

Mt. Masedake (elev. 988 m)

Mt. Shirakamidake (elev. 1,232 m)

Mt. Masugadake (elev. 1,012 m)

Mt. Mukai-shirakamidake (elev. 1,250 m)



Explore Fujisato

[Mt. Kodake]

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<http://www.visitshirakami.com/>

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Tel: 0185-79-3005

Open: March through November: 9:00-17:00
December through February: 10:00-16:00
Closed: March through November: Tuesdays
December through February: Mondays and Tuesdays
(If one of the above days falls on a public holiday, the center will be closed on the following non-holiday.)
Closed for the New Year's holiday December 29 through January 3