

# Aso-Kuju National Park



A national park is designated by the Japanese government as a natural landscape that represents Japan based on the Natural Parks Act.

Thirty-four national parks are designated from Hokkaido in the north down to Okinawa and the Ogasawara Islands in the south, and more than 300 million people visit them every year.

These national parks are full of precious treasures such as wild animals and plants, history and culture in addition to the scenic beauty. Japan's national parks are characterized by various environments such as forests, farmlands, villages, etc. While some are untouched, the local history and culture derived from nature and people's lives can be appreciated.

Come visit our national parks to fully enjoy the beautiful nature of Japan that shows off various sceneries in each season.



## Characteristics

### Pleasant Scents of Grasslands and the Vitality of Volcanoes The Majestic Land with Ebullient Wind

The Aso-Kuju National Park was established in 1934. The major features of this park are Mt. Aso standing tall in the massive caldera, a group of volcanoes stretching in its north such as Kuju Mountain Range, and majestic and gentle grasslands spreading around them. In the vicinity of Mt. Aso in the south of the park, a series of magnificent and breathtaking scenery including a fuming crater of Mt. Nakadake, a beautiful volcanic cone of Komezuka, vast Kusaseringahama Beach, surrounding crater basins, and a somma can be appreciated. In addition, solfataric phenomena can be found all over the central region of the park. Other highlights are distinctive views of volcanoes scattered around, extensive grasslands such as Kuju Highland and Handa Highland, and academically valuable moors such as Tadewara Moor and Bogatsuru Moor.

In the north of the park, Mt. Tsurumi and Mt. Yufudake, from which hot springs such as Beppu and Yufuin are originated, boast their splendid shapes. Views from Beppu Bay and Yufuin Basin to Kuju Mountain Range can be appreciated from the mountain ridge.

[Date of Designation] December 4, 1934  
[Related Prefecture] Kumamoto Pref., Oita Pref. [Area] 72,678 ha



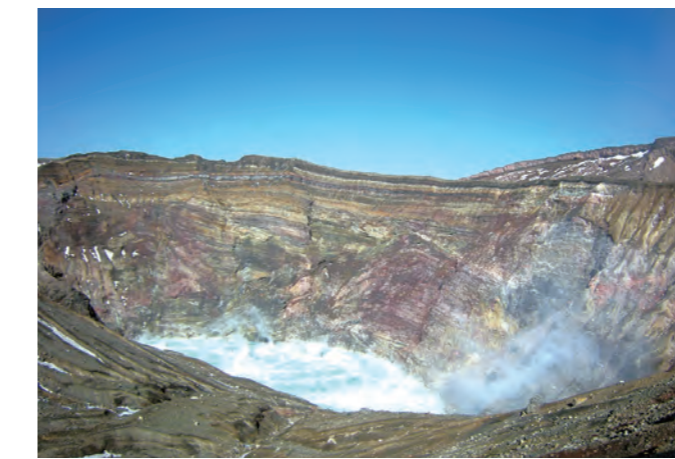
View of Mt. Aso-Takadake from Kuju Mountain Range



## Terrain Geological Features Landscape

Mt. Aso has the world's largest caldera with a size of approximately 25 km from south to north and approximately 18 km from east to west. It is comprised of the central volcanic cone including Mt. Takadake, the highest mountain with an altitude of 1,592 m, and the five peaks of Mt. Aso as well as its surrounding crater basins and somma. The vicinity of the crater has a harsh landscape; however, as it moves farther away from the crater rim, it becomes gentle with grasslands where various plants grow. Meanwhile, the Kuju Mountain Range presents variable scenery as a Tholoide-style volcanic landform (bell-shaped volcano) including the highest one, Mt. Nakadake with an altitude of 1,791 m and other mountains. Magnificent grassy scenery of volcanic highlands formed with volcanic ash is displayed in their south and north. In addition, there are many natural depressions turned into wetlands by abundant of spring water and rain water.

Such contrast between volcanoes and grasslands is one of the major charms to attract visitors to this park.



Mt. Nakadake Central Crater



Kuju Mountain Range and Its Solfataric Phenomena



Grasslands of Aso



Tadewara Moor



## Conservation Efforts

### - Aso Grassland Restoration -

Aso's grasslands have been maintained by such means as grazing, controlled burns and cropping for many years; however, the size of grasslands is decreasing because of the increase in the number of bushes and forests caused by the labor shortage to raise cows or to carry out controlled burns. Therefore, "Aso Grassland Restoration Committee" is currently leading the grassland restoration of Aso with the cooperation of local residents and organizations.

### - Conservation Efforts for Miyamakirishima of the Kuju Mountain Range -

The large colony of Miyamakirishima (*Rhododendron kiusianum*) used to be a symbolizing landscape of the Kuju Mountain Range; however, shrubs such as the panicle hydrangea thrived, and the decline of the stressed Miyamakirishima colony has been prominent. For that reason, the management plan was revised, and thinning and clearing in each site including the special protection zones for conservation with the cooperation of related parties.



Cutting Grass as a Cooperative Effort



Thinning of Stressed Immature Trees to Conserve Miyamakirishima

## Contact List

**Kyushu Regional Environment Office**  
4F, Kumamoto Regional Joint Government Building B,  
Kasuga 2-10-1, Nishi Ward, Kumamoto City,  
Kumamoto Prefecture  
860-0047  
TEL:096-322-2412 FAX: 096-322-2447

**Aso-Kuju National Park Ranger Office**  
Kurokawa 1180, Aso City, Kumamoto Prefecture  
869-2225  
TEL:0967-34-0254 FAX: 0967-34-2082

**Kuju Ranger Office**  
Tano 260-2, Kokonoe Town, Kusu County,  
Oita Prefecture 879-4911  
879-4911  
TEL:0973-79-2631 FAX: 0973-79-2635

**Aso-Kuju National Park Website**  
<http://www.env.go.jp/en/nature/nps/park/aso/index.html>



## Wild Animals and Plants

Plant communities of unique plants such as Miyamakirishima and the cowberry are formed due to volcanic gases around volcanoes, which is creating the distinctive scenery. In addition, forest growth has been controlled by grazing, controlled burns, cropping, etc. in the grasslands spreading at the bases of the mountains. The dominant species is the Japanese silver grass; however, there are still many endangered rare species such as *Echinops setifer*, *Viola orientalis*, and *Iris Rossii Baker* remained in the area, which make them very important habitats.

Besides these, academically valuable vegetation including communities of *Lobelia sessilifolia* and *Moliniopsis japonica* is growing in the moors such as Tadewara Moor.

As for wildlife unique to this area, there are rare species of butterflies such as *Shijimaeoides divinus* (host plant: *Sophora flavescens*) and *Maculinea teleius* (host plant: *Sanguisorba officinalis*) that eat plants of grasslands. In addition, there are insects such as *Kyushu-Yezo Cicada* (the family *Lyristes japonicus*) in the forest and *Copris ochus* in the grassland.

There are also many grassland birds such as the meadow bunting, the chestnut-eared bunting, the Japanese reed bunting, and the black-browed reed warbler as well as raptors such as the Japanese buzzard and the Japanese Sparrowhawk.

In addition, reptiles such as the grey burrowing snake and *Rhabdophis tigrinus*, and amphibians such as the Japanese giant salamander, the Buchi salamander, and the Kajika frog inhabit this area.



A colony of Miyamakirishima (Mt. Takadake)



Shijimaeoides divinus



Echinops setifer

Viola orientalis



Kyushu-Yezo Cicada (the family Lyristes japonicus)

The ecology of this park is divided into three major areas: the solfataric plateaus emitting volcanic gases, forests spreading at the foot of the mountain, and the grasslands maintained by controlled burns and cropping.

A solfataric plateau has established a unique biota comprised of wildlife adapted to harsh environments, and a forest has various types such as a secondary forest and a natural forest that grow a variety of wildlife. A grassland's vegetation differs depending on the use and management by people. A tall grassland dominated by the Japanese silver grass can be developed by continuous controlled burns and cropping, a short grassland dominated by lawn can be developed by continuous grazing by cows and horses, and each has its own ecosystem to nurture distinctive wildlife.

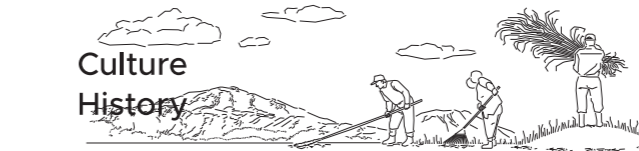


Tall Grasslands for Cropping



Short Grasslands for Grazing

## Culture History



### - Controlled Burns (Noyaki) -

Controlled burns are simultaneously carried out in all grasslands of this park in spring. This is to prevent grasslands from changing to forests and to promote rejuvenation of growth and grazing. This has been conducted for more than 1000 years.

### - Onsen (Hot Springs) -

In this park, there are many hot springs that are blessings of the volcanoes, and they have been appreciated by many locals and tourists since ancient times.



Controlled Burns (in spring)



One of the Major Hot Springs ("Japan's Best Utase-yu" at Sujiyu Onsen)  
Photograph Provided by Kokonoe Town

## National Parks Etiquette

Please keep in mind the importance of nature and observe the following while staying in the national park so that everyone can enjoy.

- Do not litter.
- Do not pick flowers and plants.
- Do not feed any wildlife.
- Do not catch/capture any wildlife.
- No smoking is permitted while walking.
- Bonfires shall be built within the designated area only.

Don't enter grasslands because it could cause diseases in livestock.

Restriction and Alert Updates for the Aso Volcano  
The Aso Volcano Disaster Prevention Council issues temporary restrictions on access to Mt. Aso in the case of risk to the human body from the volcanic gases of Mt. Aso. We strongly recommend you check the latest information prior to the visit.

Restriction and Alert Updates for the Aso Volcano Crater  
<http://www.aso.ne.jp/~volcano/eng/index.html>



**For Safe Travel**  
Please download below application in order to get information about warning for earthquake, volcanoes, tsunami and so on.

\*Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=jp.co.ncsc.safetyTips.android>  
\*iPhone: <https://itunes.apple.com/jp/app/safety-tips/id958351747?mt=8>



Supported by Japan Tourism Agency (<https://www.jnto.go.jp/safety-tips/eng/app.html>)



Publisher: Ministry of the Environment  
Year published: 2018

\* Please note that the highlights & guide map's purpose is to show an overview of the designated area; therefore, a margin of error shall be allowed.



There is a ropeway, and a bird's-eye view of Beppu Bay can be appreciated from its summit. The seasonal scenery can be enjoyed with Miyamakirishima (Rhododendron kiusianum) in spring, lush green forests in summer, colorful leaves in autumn, and hard rime in winter.



Mt. Kurodake is covered with natural forests all the way up to its summit, and many beeches and Ulmus laciniata can be found. Oike Pond, Shiramizu Spring, Kakushimizu are known as exquisite waters.



This is a large and gentle plateau formed by pyroclastic flow deposits. Pastoral scenery with grazing spreads up front and controlled burn is carried out in spring.



It stands tall behind Yufuin and is called "Bungo Fuji" for its spectacular mountain shape. A grassy landscape spreads at the foot of the mountain, maintained by controlled burns, and the highlight of autumn is the colorful autumn leaves covering its mountainside.



This moor extends to the east of the Chojabaru Visitor Center where trails are maintained, and many rare plants can be observed. This moor is registered as a Ramsar Site.



This mountain is popular among hikers and climbers, and clusters of Miyamakirishima can be found all over the mountaintop. It has a view of the entire Bogatsuru Moor, the Ramsar Site.



The natural fumarolic area presents the unique landscape of erupting hot water, steam and mud. A trail is maintained so that the scenery can be enjoyed while feeling the energy of the volcano.



This beautiful gorge is in northwest of the somma with a series of various streams and waterfalls of all sizes. The water temperature of the clear stream is low even in summer, and the cool environment attracts many visitors.



It is an open scenic spot where you can look over the five peaks of Mt. Aso that is called "Aso's Reclining Buddha," surrounding extensive grasslands and Asodani (crater basin) down below. A parking lot is available, and it takes approximately ten minutes on foot from there to the scenic spot.



This was formed most recently (approximately 3,000 years ago) in the history of Aso volcanoes, with a fine volcanic cone shape like a turned-over bowl. Its height is about 80 m, and there is a crater depression on the top. (Access is prohibited due to preservation of the vegetation.)



Prior to a visit, please check the "Restriction and Alert Updates for the Aso Volcano Crater" mentioned on the front page. This is a rare active volcano in the world where visitors can look into the crater. You can get near the crater by ropeway or car besides walking.



This is a double crater terrain where a new crater with a diameter of about 400 m was created within the other crater with a diameter of about 1 km. Relaxed tranquil time can be spent in the serene scenery of two ponds and expanding grasslands.



This is one of the water sources of the first-class river "Shirakawa" which runs through Kumamoto City. It is a water source representing a group of springs in the Minamio Village, producing 60 tons of water per minute. It has been selected as the 100 Exquisite and Well-Conserved Waters by the Ministry of the Environment.

Information Facilities



**Aso Grassland Conservation Center**  
Ozato 656, Aso City, Kumamoto Prefecture  
869-2307  
[TEL] 0967-32-0100



**Aso Volcano Museum**  
Akamizu 1930-1, Aso City, Kumamoto Prefecture  
869-2232  
[TEL] 0967-34-2111  
[URL] http://www.asomuse.jp



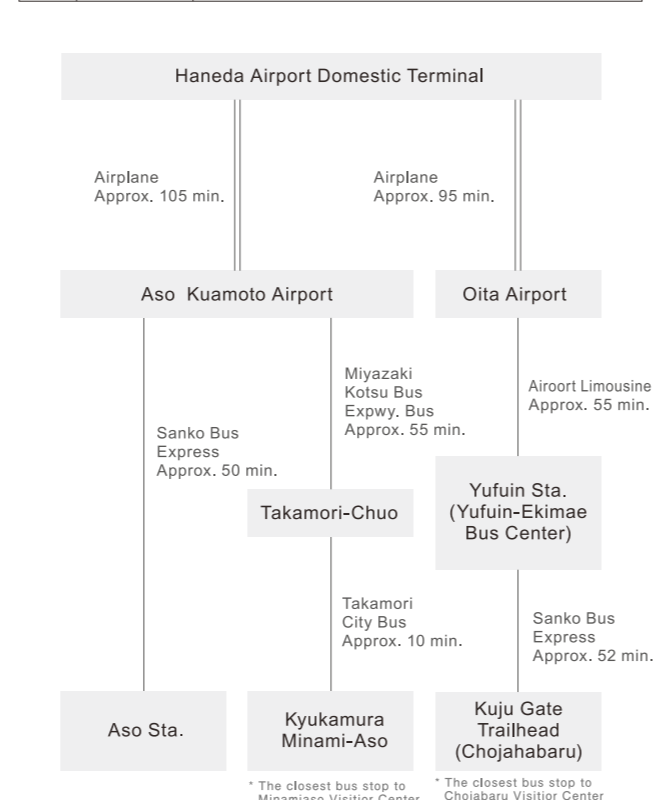
**Minamiaso Visitor Center**  
Takamori 3219, Takamori Town, Aso County, Kumamoto Prefecture  
869-1602  
[TEL] 0967-63-0911  
[URL] http://www.minamiaso-vc.go.jp/



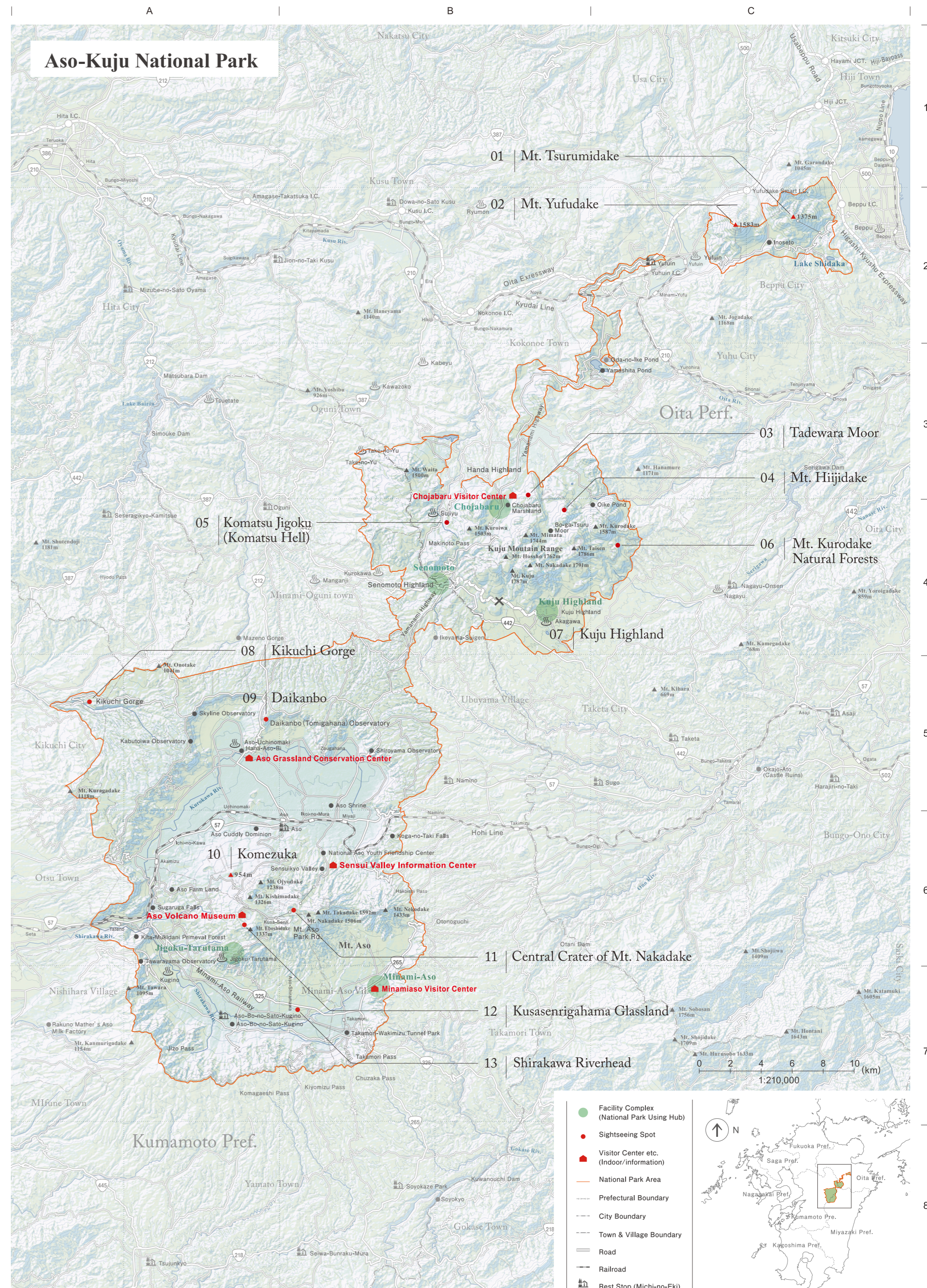
**Chojabaru Visitor Center**  
Tano 255-33, Kokonoe Town, Kusu County, Oita Prefecture  
879-4911  
[TEL] 0973-79-2154  
[URL] http://kyushu.env.go.jp/nature/toyjabaru/

\* Please directly contact each facility for details such as the hours of operation, etc.

Access Transportation



\* The access route above is an example. The time required for each section is an estimate only. Please contact each transportation company or check their websites for more information.



Please contact each responsible ranger office or regional environment office of the Ministry of the Environment for area details.