

Japan

A Botanical Treasure Trove

A Greentours Itinerary

Days 1 & 2 To Tokyo

We'll depart in the afternoon and after an overnight flight will arrive into Tokyo the next afternoon and head straight to our hotel to recover from the journey.

Days 3 & 4 Mount Fuji: Mitso-toge & Lake Kawaguchi

We'll head west out of the gleaming super-modern cityscape of Tokyo and after only ninety minutes or so we'll be by the shores of beautiful Lake Kawaguchi. The lake is famed as one of the best spots to view incomparable Mount Fuji, however a sighting of this perfect volcanic peak is by no means guaranteed as cloud often shrouds its upper slopes. No matter, we'll have plenty of exciting botanizing to do!

The striking pink foamy heads of *Spiraea japonica* form a framework in which to admire *Clematis tosaensis*, *Rosa fujisanensis*, and the white sprays of *Hydrangea hirta*. *Deutzia crenata*, *Cornus kousa* and the spectacular *Magnolia kobus* all shower the woodlands with white blooms and under them are the striking *Hosta sieboldiana*. There's *Pourthiaea villosa* with sprays of white blooms and popular *Hydrangea paniculata*. Populating the forest understory are *Paris verticillata*, *Polygonatum odoratum* var. *pluriflorum* and *Pyrola japonica*.

Two special slipper orchids are found here. There's the big blousy *Cypripedium macranthos* with huge pink pouches and the altogether more refined spotty *Cypripedium yatabeanum*. Other orchids include *Cephalanthera longibracteata*, *Galearis cyclochila*, *Liparis kumokiri* and delicate *Neottia acuminata*. Not to be outdone, some classy shrubs weigh in with some beautiful blooms notably *Weigela maximowiczii* with creamy yellow flowers, glorious yellow *Daphne jezoensis*, lovely white *Diabelia spathulata*, and the often brilliant-coloured blooms of *Chaenomeles japonica*.

From the lake there are memorable views of Mount Fuji. Woodlands around the lake, as in Japan generally, have an amazing variety of trees – here are *Acer argutum*, *Acer diabolicum*, *Acer distylum*, *Carpinus japonica*, *Clethra barbinervis*, *Styrax obassia*, *Neillia incisa*, *Neillia tanakae*, and lovely *Hamamelis japonica* too. Under them the elegant cobra lily *Arisaema ovale* var. *sadoense* holds forth its green and white striped spathes. Both *Actaea asiatica* and *Actaea japonica* send forth wands of white foamy blooms whilst more delicate are *Dichocarpum stoloniferum*, a kind of anemone, and *Maianthemum japonicum*. Higher up we'll encounter lots of

ericaceous shrubbery with *Enkianthus campanulatus*, *Enkianthus cernuus* and *Enkianthus nudipes* making quite a show with plum-coloured *Rhododendron kroniae* and fabulous princess-pink *Rhododendron wadanum*. Woodland and meadow here are home to many other fine plants such as *Actinidia polygama*, *Potentilla rosulifera*, *Rodgersia podophylla*, *Vincetoxicum ascyrifolium*, *Viola acuminata* and *Viola biflora*, whilst in damp flushes are *Thalictrum tuberiferum*, the strange spikes of *Comanthosphace japonica*, and the maroon and butterscotch marsh helleborine *Epipactis thunbergii*.

Day 5

Mount Nyukasa

In the morning it'll take just an hour and a half to reach Nagano Prefecture and the beautiful snow-capped Japanese Alps. A cable car takes us up on to the higher slopes of Mount Nugasa where we'll be able to spend the whole day botanizing. We'll find the *Primula japonica* with its classical tiered whorls of vari-coloured blooms growing amongst architectural *Rodgersia podophylla*. On the slopes we can see both orange-red and pinkish forms of floriferous *Rhododendron molle* subsp. *japonicum*. Wooded areas have a rich flora with species such as *Convallaria majalis* var. *manshurica*, *Geranium eriostemon* var. *reinii*, *Iris sanguinea* and *Pyrola asarifolia* subsp. *incarnata*. We'll find our first *Hemerocallis middendorffii* var. *esculenta* as well as *Trientalis europaea* and lovely clumps of pale blue *Gentiana zollingeri*.

Days 6 – 8

Hakuba & Oyomi Bog

Travelling to Hakuba Village we'll stop en route to see native habitats with fine populations of *Rhododendron japonicum*, *Hemerocallis middendorffii* var. *esculenta* and *Lilium japonicum* in palest shades of pink.

Deepest blue *Iris laevigata* is found with another blue Iris, *Iris sanguinea*, growing alongside a board walk through the lovely Oyomi Bog. A cable car takes us above this sublime habitat and into Hakuba-jiri's famous snowy valley which hosts *Anemone flaccida* and the bright pink *Primula jesoana* var. *jesoana* which has yellow centres to the flowers. This majestic mountain scene is home to beautiful and delicate *Schizocodon soldanelloides* which forms little mats topped by small umbels of bright pink blooms. We'll have our first meeting with the *Glaucidium palmatum* here and the whorled blue heads of *Lagotis glauca* look great with the mountainous backdrops. We may be lucky to still see early flowering *Lysichiton camtschaticensis* putting on a show!

In the woodlands below we can find the diminutive *Anemonoides pseudoaltaica* and the elegant white-flowered *Paris japonica*. Tall *Senecio pierotii* and the rather spectacular tall pink orchid *Neolindleya camtschatica* flower amid the pink-flowered shrub *Weigela hortensis* and the cherry *Prunus grayana* which has sprays of white

blooms. *Acers* are typically diverse with *micranthum*, *nipponicum*, *rufinerve*, *tschonoskii* var. *macrophyllum*, *ukurunduense* and *matsumurae* all inhabiting Hakuba's woodlands. There's also large-leaved *Betula maximowicziana*, floriferous *Cornus controversa* and equally pretty *Viburnum furcatum*. Stands of *Fagus crenata* have the saprophytic 'indian pipes' of *Monotropastrum humile* emerging through the leaf litter and in these darker woods we can also find *Maianthemum yesoense* and wine-red *Trillium apetalon* blooming in the shade. Some of the *Magnolia salicifolia* trees have to be seen to be believed so covered in white blooms are they. Gorgeous *Diphylleia grayi* has almost translucent umbels of white blooms and there's also the pretty pink and white orchid *Galearis camtschatica* and gorgeous yellow red-spotted toad-lily *Tricyrtis latifolia* to enjoy!

Days 9 - 12

Oze National Park: Numayama Toge Pass & Ozegahara Marsh

Ozegahara is a lovely place, where pools and bogs have woodland and the mountain framing it, the whole traversed by a winding boardwalk from which we can see some of the bogs most famous plants, notably *Iris laevigata* and the elegant aroid *Lysichiton camtschaticense* which forms large colonies here. *Rhododendron albrechtii*, smothered in pink blooms, lines woodland paths that lead down to the bogs, *Anemone stolonifera* and *Anemone flaccida* are here too. Amongst the white tufts of *Eriophorum gracile* we'll find Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* as well as the yellow monkey flower *Erythranthe sessilifolia*, these joined by two larger yellow *Ranunculaceae*, *Trollius shianensis* and *Caltha palustris* var. *nipponica*. These bogs have a rich flora. *Menyanthes trifoliata*'s starry white and pink blooms dominate open ponds. The impressive white drumsticks of *Allium ochotense* emerge clear of *Myrica gale*, *Vaccinium vitis-idaea*, bilberry-like *Vaccinium yatabei* and *Rhododendron pentandrum*. Both *Drosera anglica* and *Drosera rotundifolia* are frequent in the sphagnum.

We'll make two longish walks (one is 11km and the other 7km) into the wooded mountains that rise above the bogs. Staying the nights in simple mountain refuge accommodation. This is an exceptional area for flora. No less than three species of *Trillium* inhabit this wonderland, pink *Trillium smallii*, vinous *Trillium apetalon* and the lovely white *Trillium tschonoskii*. Both *Paris tetraphylla* and *Paris verticillata* bloom in the shade whereas areas where the sunlight penetrates the woodland floor have drifts of *Caulophyllum robustum* and *Streptopus streptopoides* var. *japonicus* with delicate hanging white flowers. Mossy dells have *Gentiana thunbergii* var. *minor* and the delicate *Coptis trifolia* as well as the equally delicate little *Helonias orientalis*, a strange member of the lily family with little pink stars for flowers. Tall *Cardiocrinum cordatum* var. *glehnii* draws the eye, but underneath it we can find both *Chrysosplenium fauriei* f. *ferruginiflorum* and *Chrysosplenium grayanum*, lots of *Tiarella polyphylla*, and the elegant brown-striped *Arisaema japonicum*. Meadows are in places coloured pink and white by *Filipendula camtschatica*, and there's tall

blue spikes of *Veronicastrum sibiricum*, as well as both *Geum macrophyllum* and *Geum pentapetalum*. Violets are a particularly diverse and well-differentiated in Eastern Asia and so here we'll come across palest lilac *Viola arcuata*, bright yellow *Viola brevistipulata*, diminutive *Viola hultenii*, and two more typical (to European eyes anyway!) species - *Viola langsdorfii* subsp. *sachalinensis* and *Viola selkirkii*.

Lovely *Cerasus nipponica* var. *nipponica* should be blooming alongside *Viburnum furcatum*, and under these are the pink urns of *Epigaea asiatica*, and the even more classically urn-shaped *Asarum heterotropoides* flowers nestling at the base of their elegant heart-shaped leaves. *Euonymus macropterus* won't have the wonderful hanging fruits that give it its name. It is one of many superb woody species we'll encounter during our exploration of this national park. On high ground there's *Betula platyphylla* subsp. *mandshurica* and *Betula schmidtii*, *Tsuga diversifolia*, *Abies mariesii* and *Picea jezoensis* subsp. *hondoensis*. Lower there's *Ilex sugerokii* var. *brevipedunculata*, *Lindera sericea*, *Malus toringo*, *Oplopanax japonicus*, *Pinus parviflora*, *Rhamnus japonica*, *Aesculus turbinata*, *Fraxinus lanuginosa*, *Sorbus commixta*, *Thuja standishii*, *Tilia japonica* and yet more *Acers* – new will be *japonicum* and *miyabei* f. *shibatae*

On Day 12 we'll have left the mountain by lunchtime and on the way to Minamiaizu Town in Fukushima Prefecture we will visit a natural wetland and a nature park where fabulous pink *Lilium rubellum*, a rare endemic, has been protected. As well as fine shows of this elegant lily we'll find plenty else to keep us interested. Palest pink *Rhododendron brachycarpum* blooms round the edge of the wetland and in this wet-dry interface are *Trientalis europaea* and *Maianthemum dilatatum*, whilst out in the wetland are tall white *Veratrum stamineum*, blue *Iris setosa*, the almost gladiolus-like deep-pink orchid *Eleorchis japonica* and the fabulous *Pogonia japonica*.

Day 13

Oguninuma Wetland and to the West Coast

Today we'll visit the Oguninuma Wetland where there's a huge colony of *Hemerocallis middendorffi* making a spectacular show. Later in the afternoon we head to Murakami City in Niigata Prefecture and spend the night there.

Day 14

Niigata's West Coast

The coastline between Murakami City in Niigata Prefecture and Tsuruoka City in Yamagata Prefecture is quite beautiful and offers us a very different selection of plants, many of the species we will see today will be new to us. Foremost amongst them is *Lilium maculatum* whose lovely apricot-orange blooms dot the landscape. The local subspecies of chives, *Allium schoenoprasum* var. *foliosum* is common and we'll also see the succulent *Phedimus aizoon* var. *floribundus* and pretty *Lysimachia mauritiana*, which doesn't sound like it ought to be native here, but it is!

Day 15

Mt. Gassan

Though a mountain of moderate height by Japanese standards, the 1984m high Mount Gas-san's grassy subalpine slopes are for much of the year buried under deep snow, only clearing around the start of June. Here we'll find the odd-looking *Heloniopsis orientalis*, foamy *Thalictrum tuberiferum* and delicate ivory *Primula nipponica*. A cable car takes us up to the subalpine meadows. The absence of trees gives a rather different 'exposed' feel to the landscape. We'll have another chance to enjoy beautiful *Schizocodon soldanelloides* and there's also *Dactylorhiza aristata* and nice clumps of *Potentilla matsumurae*.

Day 16

Via Sendai to Tokyo

After some more local exploration we'll head back to Tokyo with time for a few botanical stops on the way.

Day 17

Departure from Tokyo

or...

Hokkaido Extension

Day 16

Flight to Wakkanai on Hokkaido

Those continuing up to Hokkaido will travel across Honshu with the rest of the group before catching a flight to Wakkanai, a town on the edge of Soya Bay, right at the northernmost tip of Hokkaido.

Day 17

Veneer Nature Flower Garden then by ferry to Rebun-to Island

In the morning we'll visit the renowned Veneer Nature Flower Garden between Lake Kutcharo and the ocean. Meadow plants such as the large yellow daylily *Hemerocallis middendorffii* var. *esculenta* and the bright blue *Iris laevigata* make a spectacular show and other fine plants we can expect include the starflower, *Trientalis europaea*, *Lysimachia thysiflora*, *Thalictrum aquilegifolium* var. *intermedium*, and the spectacular *Veratrum stamineum*. In the afternoon we will then travel by ferry to Rebun Island where we'll still have plenty of time to go out and explore from our hotel.

Days 18 & 19

Rebun-to Island

The northernmost part of Japan's memorably scenic archipelago, the island of Hokkaido, has more in common with Siberia, and at its very northern tip is the remarkable landscapes of Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park, Japan's most northerly national park. This protects two islands and part of the peninsula, an area of spectacular and unique landscapes. The impressive volcanic cone of Rishiri-Fuji dominates the scene from the island of Rebun-to, where we'll be based. We'll spend our time exploring what is known in Japan as the 'Floating Island of Flowers', the island famous for its shows of summer flowers that includes alpine species at unusually low altitudes and a rich array of meadow, bog and forests plants.

Rebun-to is home to the rare *Cypripedium macranthos* var. *rebunense*. They will be on the edge of their flowering period... but we can certainly hope to see a few of their stunning creamy pouches. In the same habitat we will look for *Primula farinosa* subsp. *modesta* var. *matsumurae*. In the shade of the Sakhalin Firs we'll find the orchid *Oreorchis patens*, Ferny-leaved *Pedicularis chamissonis* var. *rebunensis*, and the impressive Cobra Lily *Arisaema serratum*, and hope that the clustered chocolate bells of *Fritillaria camschatcensis* will still be blooming. However it is the colourful meadows that will amaze with stands of yellow *Thermopsis lupinoides*, as its name suggests looking like a yellow lupin, and massed displays of the wonderful Siberian Lily *Lilium pensylvanicum* with their large orange blooms. There are masses of large blue flowered *Geranium erianthum*, the whorled white heads of *Pedicularis schistostegia*, the orchid *Dactylorhiza aristata*, and wonderful golden *Trollius ledebourii* var. *polysepalus* in abundance.

Day 20

To Wakkanai and flight to Tokyo

Day 21

Departure

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