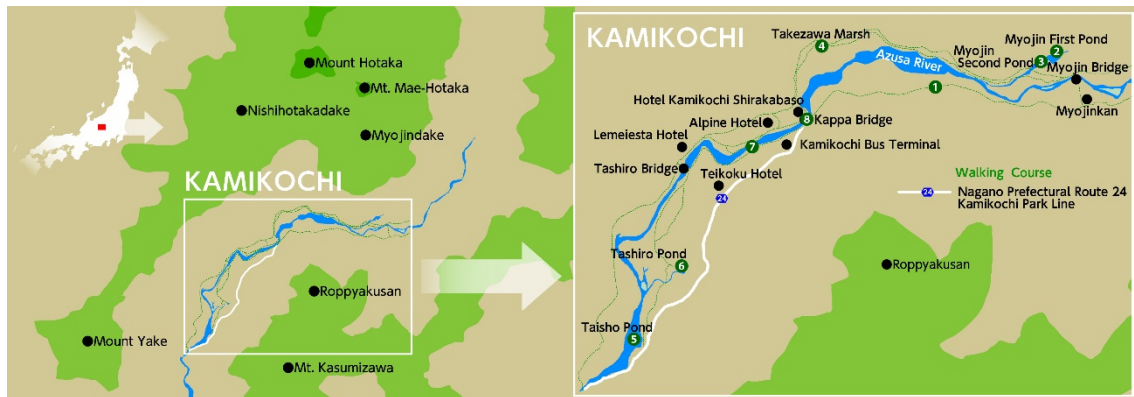


# Kamikochi



Video: [https://youtu.be/G97bNm\\_I-Wg](https://youtu.be/G97bNm_I-Wg)

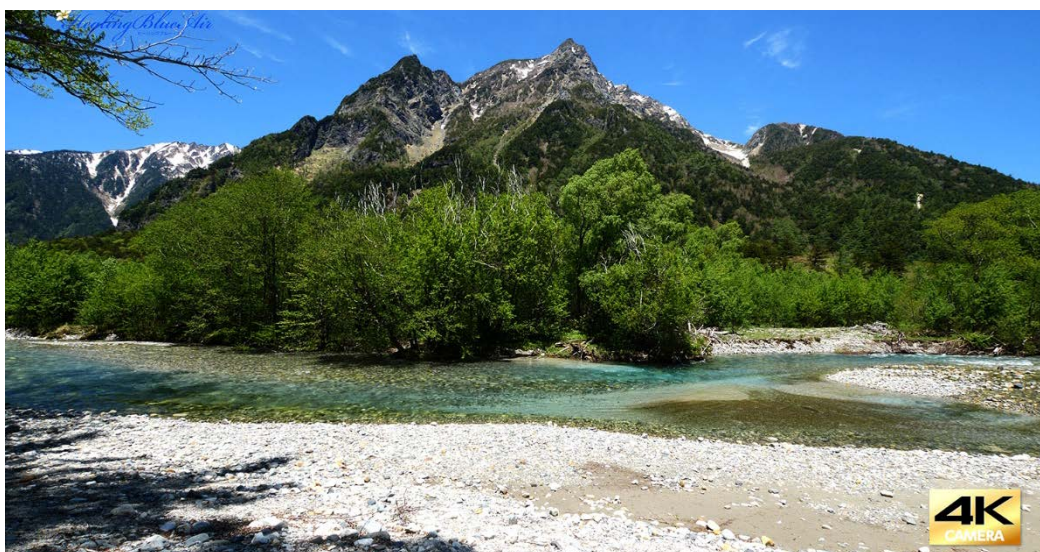


## Kamikochi

Kamikochi is a scenic district in the upper reaches of River Azusa in the city of Matsumoto in western Nagano Prefecture. Overlooked by the 3,000 meter-class Hotaka Mountain Range, it is a plateau situated at a height of about 1,500 meters, with a width of about 1 km and a length of about 10 km. It is said that there are no other such expansive plateaus located at such a height in the rest of Japan. Centering on River Azusa, Kamikochi has lots of distinctive ponds, wetlands, and other attractions that, together with the mountains towering on all four sides, create some beautiful scenery. It is also well known as Japan's first mountain resort. As someone whose job is to take videos, I had always wanted to visit the area. So in early summer, with coolness still in the air, I left Tokyo on a JR train, changed to the private Kamikochi Line and then a bus, and in about four and a half hours reached Kamikochi.

## 1. Mt. Myojin

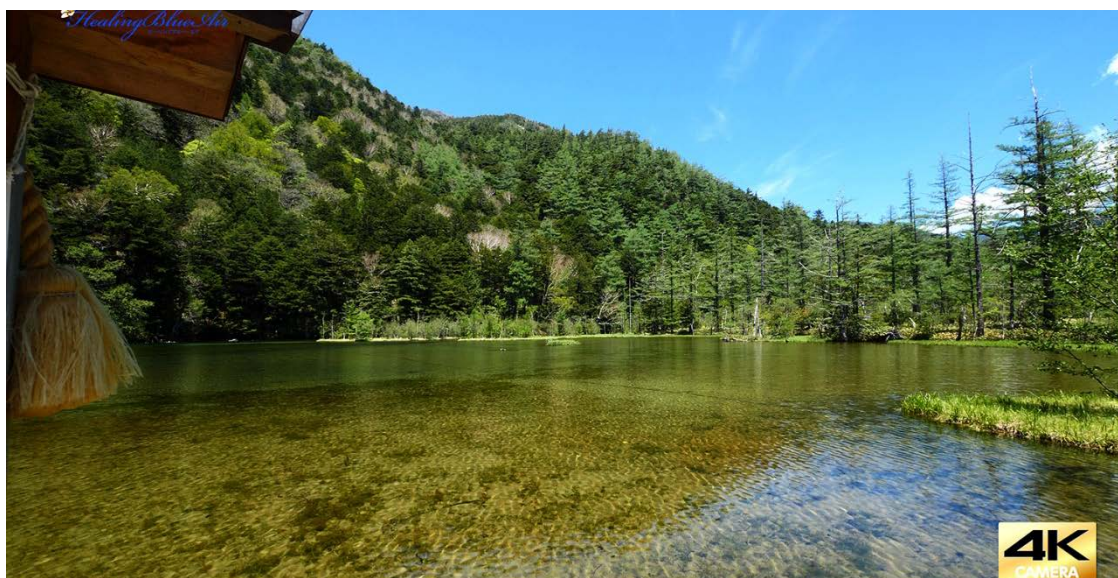
Video: <https://youtu.be/HvvRYxroLgs>



Alighting the bus at Kamikochi Bus Terminal, I walked alongside River Azusa toward Kappa Bridge. All of a sudden, some stunning scenery came into view. It was the Hotaka Mountain Range, shown in the photo at the top of this article. This is Kamikochi, I thought! Gazing at this grand view, I proceeded toward Myojin, about 3 km away. Along the way, Mt. Myojin appeared over the river. Apparently in the past, when people spoke about Kamikochi, they were talking about Mt. Myojin. The peak, which reaches a height of 2,931 meters, is pointed, like the tip of a sword. The mountain was so awe-inspiring, people used to worship it. Against the bright blue sky, Mt. Myojin seems to possess a piercing mightiness.

## 2. Myojin Pond

Video: [https://youtu.be/\\_QwxWZxC8JY](https://youtu.be/_QwxWZxC8JY)



At the foot of Mt. Myojin there is Myojin Pond, which actually consists of two ponds, Ichinoike and Ninoike. These ponds were created by the accumulation of spring water from Mt. Myojin; they are also known as the Mirror Ponds. They are situated in the precincts of Hotaka Shrine Okumiya, which is said to be the guardian deity of Kamikochi and where numerous sacred rituals take place. It is a tranquil scene. The occasional quivering of the water due to the wind is indeed somewhat celestial.

### 3. Dakesawa Wetlands

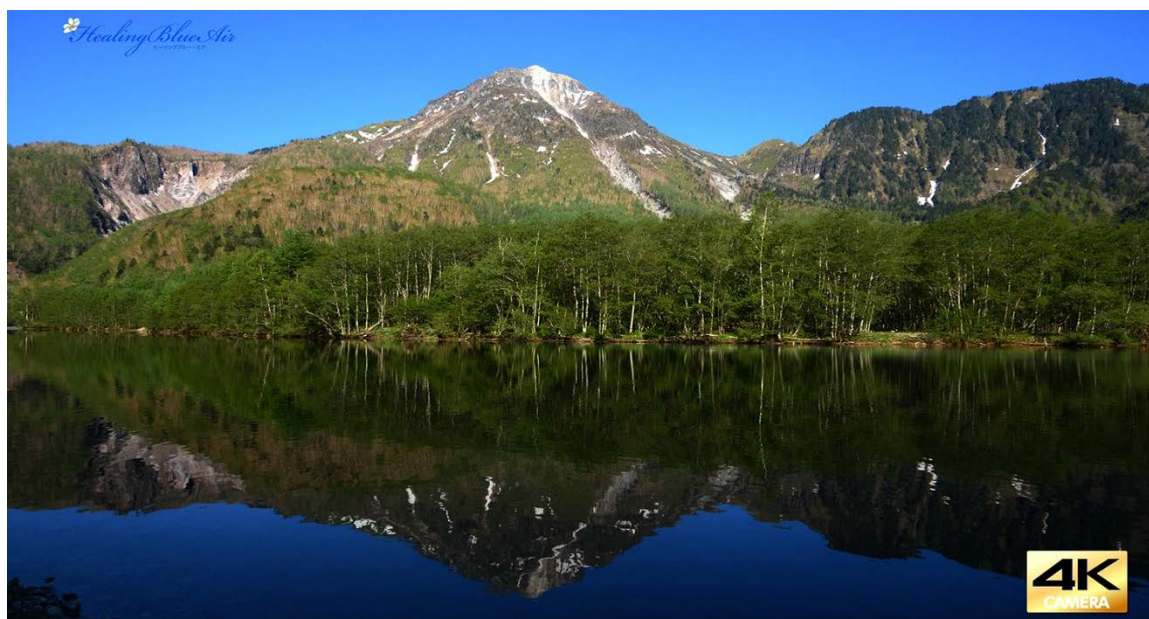
Video: <https://youtu.be/KEeKEQiNrj8>



Leaving Myojin Pond, I headed south alongside River Azusa. The Kamikochi walking course has few ups and downs and is very easy to follow. On the way, passing through the Dakesawa Wetlands, wood decks have been installed here and there, so you can enjoy the scenery at each spot. And you can enjoy the sound of the streams and the singing of the birds as you continue your walk.

#### 4. Taisho Pond, Mt. Hotaka, Mt. Yake

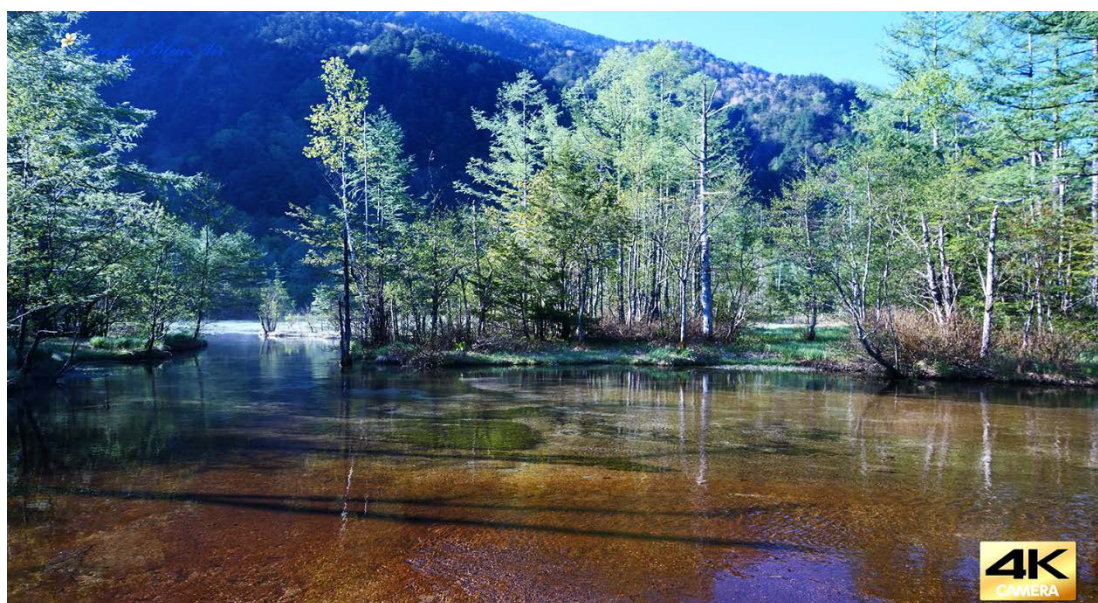
Video: <https://youtu.be/fBaf5gpyeIU>



The next morning, leaving the hotel near Kappa Bridge where I had stayed overnight, I headed toward Taisho Pond, about 3.5 km away. Since it was early morning, there were few people around, and I could feel the freshness of nature. Taisho Pond was formed when, long ago, the nearby Mt. Yake erupted, and the flow of lava blocked River Azusa. Mt. Yake's reflection on the surface of the water is beautiful, but beware, it is still an active volcano! To the north you can see the Hotaka Mountain Range.

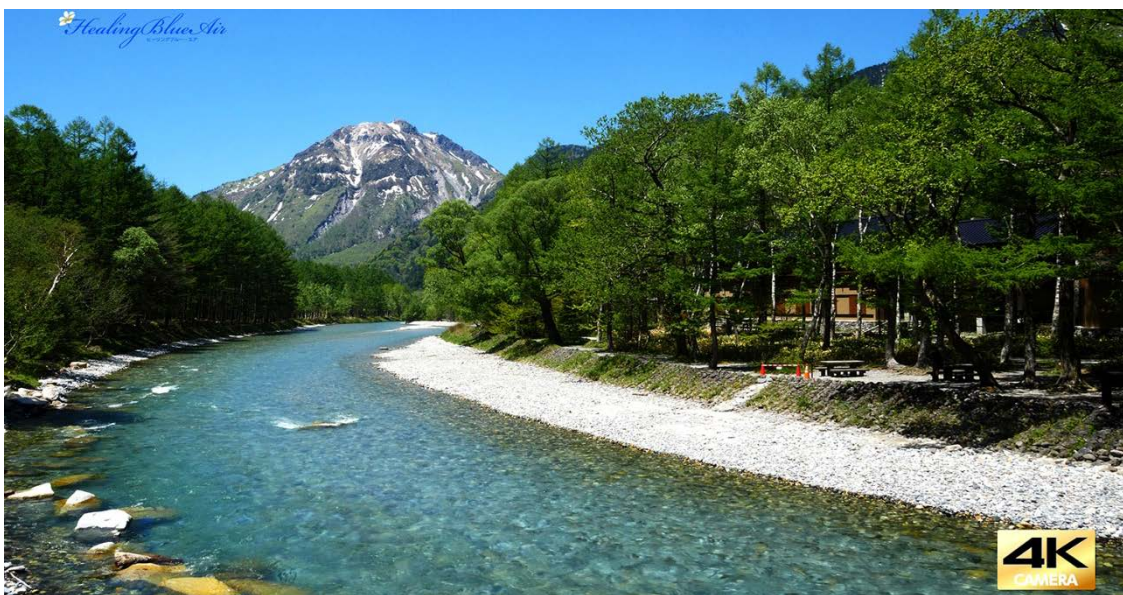
#### 5. Tashiro Pond

Video: <https://youtu.be/ZGBX1XtKCq0>



Following the walking course from Taisho Pond north for about 1 km, I came to a beautiful wetland that looks just like a box garden. This is Tashiro Pond. Like Myojin Pond, Tashiro Pond has an air of tranquility and a mystical atmosphere. The trees and plants that continue to silently inhabit the virgin forest and the quietly flowing water combine to create the beauty of nature.

**6. River Azusa and Mt. Yake** Video: <https://youtu.be/izpbNlMhnoQ>



Going further north along River Azusa, I could see the beautiful flow of the river and the lonesome peak of Mt. Yake (2,455 meters). River Azusa has a lightly cobalt blue color and a pleasant sound, so walking alongside it gives you a very refreshing feeling. You can also see Mt. Hotaka (3,190 meters). The 3 km or so course is just the right distance. This also is one of the attractions of Kamikochi.

## 7. Mt. Hotaka and Kappa Bridge (Postscript)

Video: <https://youtu.be/cIu-nHmkENA>



Many people who visit Kamikochi probably first of all visit Kappa Bridge. Amazed and moved by the superb scenery here, they remain still for a while in stunned silence. Eventually they bring out their cameras and take snaps of the scenery and commemorative photos. About 1.2 million people visit Kamikochi every year. There are several busy hotels, restaurants, and souvenir shops in the vicinity of Kappa Bridge. Apparently Kamikochi, back in 1975, was the first sightseeing spot in Japan to place restrictions on private cars. Kamikochi is tranquil, beautiful, majestic, and mystical. It is Japan's treasure.

Photos and text: Arata Matsumoto, Sharata and Adwise, Inc. (<http://sharata.info/>)  
(Sharata supplies 4K videos of outstanding scenery in Japan so that as many people as possible can enjoy it.)