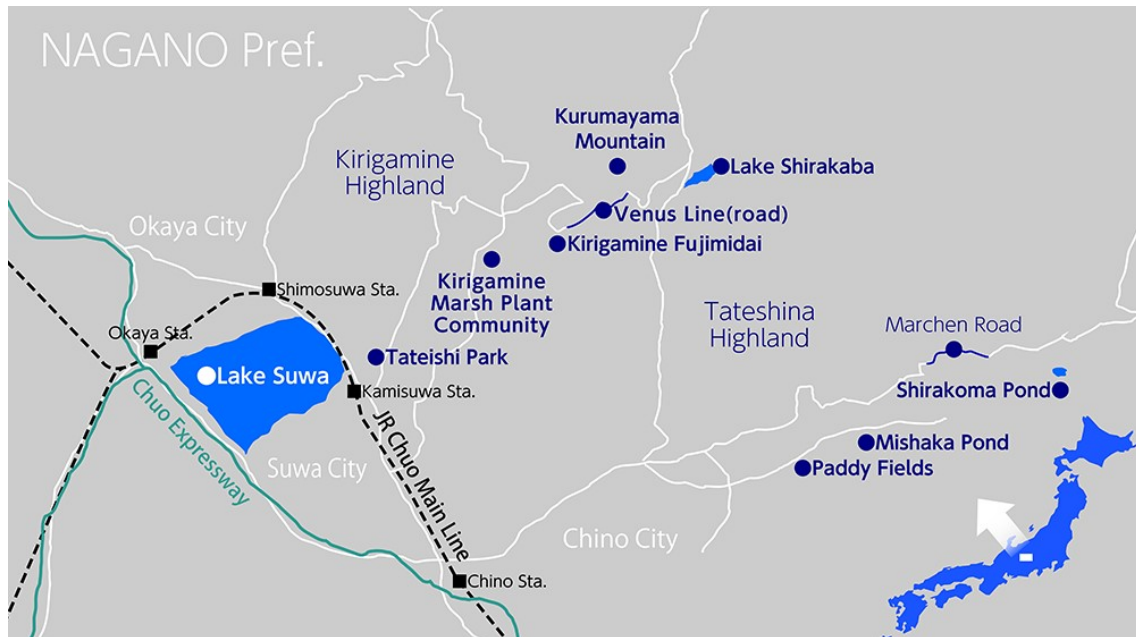


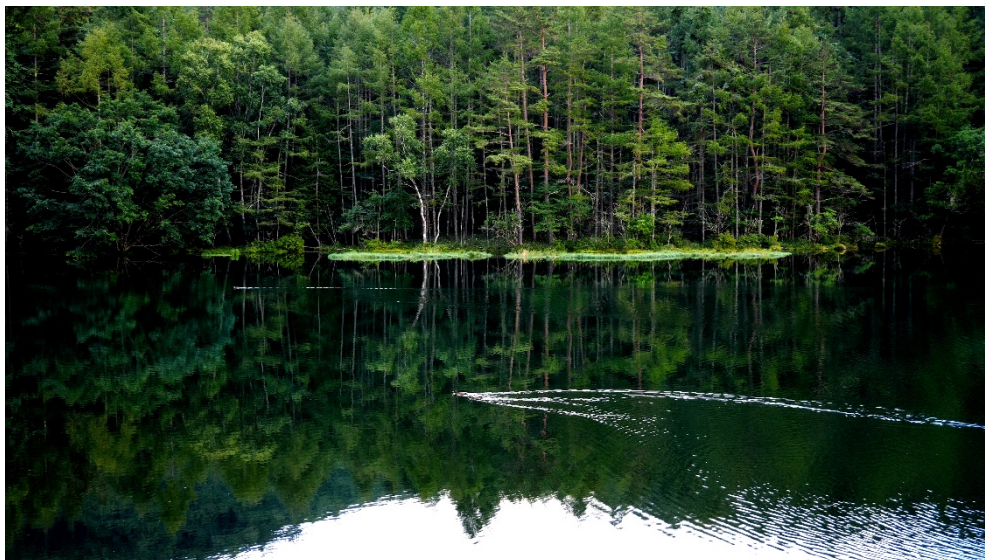
The Abundant Fresh Air of Tateshina and Kirigamine Highland



Located almost in the center of Nagano Prefecture, Tateshina and Kirigamine Highland boast numerous attractive and extremely varied spots. One of Japan's leading summer retreats, Tateshina is well known as a scenic place and has many hotels and other facilities. The adjacent Kirigamine, meanwhile, is rich in natural beauty, such as highland and ponds, and attracts many visitors.

Mishaka Pond

Video: <https://youtu.be/mhP4fSYs7Qo>



Although Mishaka Pond is an artificial tarn completed in 1933 and built to provide irrigation for farming, first-time visitors are moved by its mystic atmosphere. The trees encircling the pond and the ripples from two ducks paddling across the tranquil surface of the water seem to combine to create a picture painted by nature. The name of the pond originates in a legend about deer being shot for offering to the god deified at Suwa Grand Shrine. Over time, it became the foremost tourist spot in Tateshina.

Paddy Fields of Chino

Video: : <https://youtu.be/3mTzzrnC31I>



Leaving Mishaka Pond and going down the highland, I came to an expanse of vivid greenery. Orderly paddy fields stretch out into the distance, looking just like a well-designed building. When seen from above, they appear extremely beautiful.

Kurumayama

Video: <https://youtu.be/gN1AxvORJ8I>



At 1,925 meters, Kurumayama mountain is the highest peak of Kirigamine. In winter it is a crowded ski slope, and in summer also you can use the lift to go to the top and enjoy hiking and other activities. The 360-degree panorama from the summit is truly magnificent. Down below, Lake Shirakaba looks like a puddle of water formed between the mountains.

Venus Line

Video: <https://youtu.be/DEO5nC6NPlg>



Venus Line is a 76-km tourist route stretching from Tateshina to Kirigamine. Apparently it was a toll road at first, but now it is toll-free. Since there are no utility poles or other eyesores in the vicinity, Venus Line offers really wonderful views as it winds across the highland. Seen from above, it appears even more beautiful. The cars look just like dinky toys.

Shirakoma Pond

Video: https://youtu.be/Wbx3Qxc_cLM



Driving along Marchen Road in the direction of the Yatsugatake mountains to the north of Tateshina, I came to a large carpark. A few minutes' walk through the forest at the side of this carpark brought me to Shirakoma Pond with its impressively still surface. Shirakoma Pond is the largest tarn in Japan located at a height of 2,000 meters or more. There are hotels and other facilities catering to the many sightseers who visit.

Lake Shirakaba

Video: https://youtu.be/Pg0_j96WCmc



Like Mishaka Pond, Lake Shirakaba, which can be seen from the summit of Kurumayama, is an artificial lake. Because the water flowing from the Yatsugatake mountains is very cold and therefore not suitable for irrigation, several artificial ponds were built to warm the water and use it for farming. Lake Shirakaba has boating and other tourist facilities and is popular with visitors.

Kirigamine Marshland

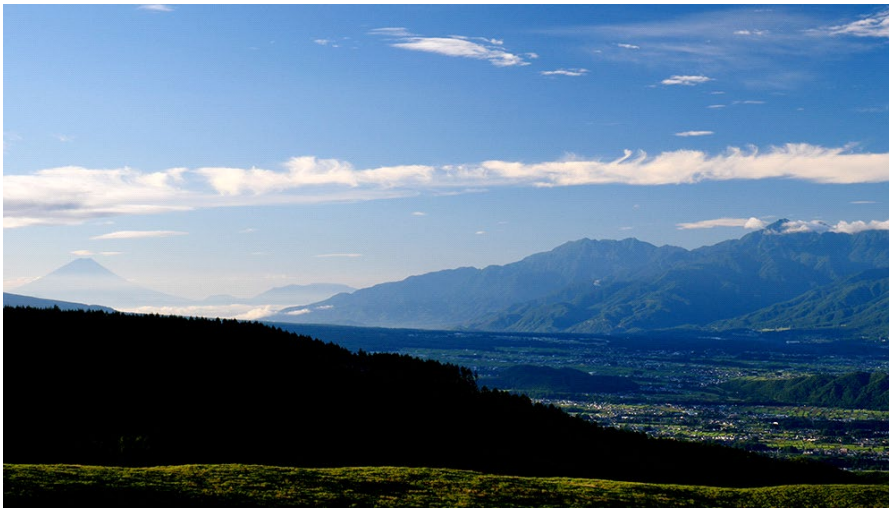
Video: <https://youtu.be/uQORCtseoXw>



Kirigamine Marshland, which has been designated by the state as a natural monument, covers a vast area of 133 ha at the foot of Kurumayama. The grassland is said to have a history of 10,000 years and is the habitat of diverse vegetation. Entry is prohibited, but viewed from Venus Line, the mystical beauty of the grassland is impressive.

Kirigamine Fujimidai Lookout

Video: <https://youtu.be/5zKnwYFLMbU>



Located along Venus Line, Kirigamine Fujimidai Lookout has a large carpark and drive-in facility. From one corner of the carpark, Mount Fuji can be seen in the distance. After the pleasant drive on Venus Line, I took a break here and enjoyed the splendid view for a while.

Lake Suwa

Video: <https://youtu.be/IHICJOD3TnI>



After leaving Tateshina and Kirigamine Highland, I headed in the direction of Lake Suwa. Climbing the hill on the eastern side of Lake Suwa, I came to Tateishi Park, which offers a splendid view of the lake. Rising 934 meters above sea level, this scenic spot has been selected as one of the 100 best night views in Japan. Maybe because of a breeze, the changes on the surface of the water were beautiful.

Postscript

Nagano Prefecture has a host of scenic spots. Even in the small area of Tateshina and Kirigamine, the number of picturesque places is amazing. And befitting a highland district, the series of crisp impressions reconfirmed to me that this is the perfect time of the year to visit. From Tokyo, it is only two hours away by train. This area is a precious oasis where one get away from the city and enjoy some really fresh air.

Photos and text: Arata Matsumoto, Sharata and Advise, Inc. (<http://www.sharata.net/>)

(Sharata supplies 4K videos of outstanding scenery in Japan so that as many people as possible can enjoy it.)