
Outdoor Activities

“Shiretoko” carries a meaning close to “the end of the earth” in Ainu, the language of the indigenous people of Japan’s northern territories. The peninsula is mountainous and densely forested with a volcanic coastline of massive coastal bluffs and rock formations. It was likely this dramatic landscape that influenced the Ainu in their naming of the region. Visitors to Rausu can explore the rugged terrain of Shiretoko on hikes and guided excursions.

Exploring the Shiretoko Peninsula

Visitors can board tour boats that skirt the rocky coastline or whale-watching vessels that head into the deep waters of the Nemuro Strait, where whales and dolphins can be spotted almost all year round. There are hiking trails through forests and trekking paths to volcano summits. In winter, experienced divers can explore the marine environment beneath the drift ice.

Home to Ainu gods

The peninsula is home to three kamuy, or deities, from Ainu mythology: brown bears, Blakiston’s fish owls, and killer whales. These animals helped feed and protect communities and were revered for the important role they played in sustaining Ainu livelihoods. They can be seen on observation tours.