



# Mt Fuji & Around Tokyo

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## Why Go?

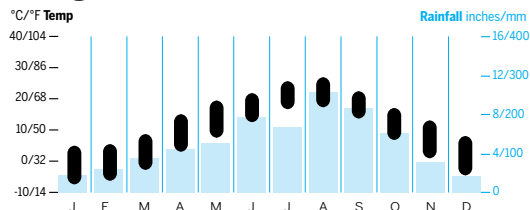
With ancient sanctuaries, hot springs, mountains and beaches, the region surrounding Tokyo is a natural foil for the dizzying capital. Really, you couldn't design it any better if you tried.

Authentic country ryokan, regional cuisines and cedar-lined trails are all within two hours of central Tokyo, as well as the symbol of Japan itself, alluring Mt Fuji. There's history here too, including an old medieval capital and ports that were among the first to open to the West. These are, for better or for worse, well-visited places and you'll find transport and communication to be a comparative breeze.

The Izu Islands and World Heritage-listed Ogasawara, island chains that trickle some 1000km south from Tokyo, are the exception. Though they're technically still part of the capital, you'll find many Tokyoites are only vaguely familiar with them – so much the better for those looking for total escape.

## When to Go

### Kawaguchi-ko



#### Apr & May

Experience the flush of spring in the mountains north and west of Tokyo.

#### Jul & Aug

The official season for Mt Fuji climbing and beach-hopping around the Izu Peninsula.

#### Sep–Nov

Pleasant temperatures and fewer crowds, save when the autumn leaves blaze red.

## MT FUJI AREA

Mt Fuji (富士山周辺; Fuji-san; 3776m), Japan's highest and most famous peak, is obviously this region's natural draw. In addition to climbing Fuji-san, visitors can hunt for precious views of the sacred volcano, and get outdoorsy around the Fuji Five Lakes (Fuji go-ko) with plenty of camping, hiking and lake activities.

### Tours

**Discover Japan Tours** GUIDED TOUR  
(www.discover-japan-tours.com/en) Reputable tour company running guided group tours of Mt Fuji from Tokyo (¥10,000 per person for groups of two or more), specialising in less frequented routes. Private tours also available.

**Fujiyama Guides** GUIDED TOUR  
(☎0555-23-7554; www.fujiyamaguides.com) Delve into the rich history of the mountain with a three-day pilgrim tour; price depends on group size (private tour/per person for two ¥116,000/¥61,000). It also offers two-day off-season guided climbs of Mt Fuji (June to October, weather permitting; private tour/per person for two ¥65,000/36,000).

### Information

All of the following have English-speaking staff and brochures on climbing and sights.

**Fuji-Yoshida Tourist Information Center**  
(☎0555-22-7000; ☀9am-5pm) Inside Fujisan (Mt Fuji) Station. Has all the info on climbing, and brochures and maps of the area.

**Kawaguchi-ko Tourist Information Center**  
(☎0555-72-6700; ☀8.30am-5.30pm Sun-Fri, until 7pm Sat) At Kawaguchi-ko Station, with maps and brochures.

**Shin-Fuji Station Tourist Information Center**  
(☎0545-64-2430; ☀8.45am-5.30pm) On the 1st floor of the *shinkansen* (bullet train) station in Tokyo.

### Getting There & Away

The Mt Fuji area is most easily reached from Tokyo by bus or train. The two main towns on the north side of the mountain, Fuji-Yoshida and Kawaguchi-ko, are the principal gateways. It's also possible to bus in straight from Tokyo to the Kawaguchi-ko Fifth Station on the mountain during the official climbing season.

Coming from Western Japan (Kyoto, Osaka), you can take an overnight bus to Kawaguchi-ko.

### BUS

Frequent Keiō Dentetsu (p152) and Fujiyū Express (p153) buses (¥1700, one hour and 50 minutes) operate directly to Kawaguchi-ko Station, and Fujisan Station in Fuji-Yoshida, from the **Shinjuku Highway Bus Terminal** (☎03-5376-2222).

Coming from Western Japan, the overnight bus departs from Osaka's Higashi-Umeda Subway Station (¥8500, 10.15pm) via Kyoto Station (¥8000, 11.18pm) to Kawaguchi-ko Station (arrives 8.32am).

### TRAIN

JR Chūō line trains go from Shinjuku to Ōtsuki (*tokkyū* ¥2980, one hour; *futsū* ¥1280, 1½ hours), where you transfer to the Fuji Kyūko line for Fujisan Station (¥990, 45 minutes) and Kawaguchi-ko (¥1110, 50 minutes).

## Mt Fuji

## 富士山

Of all the iconic images of Japan, Mt Fuji is the real deal. Admiration for the mountain appears in Japan's earliest recorded literature, dating from the 8th century. Back then the now dormant volcano was prone to spewing smoke, making it all the more revered. Mt Fuji continues to captivate both Japanese and international visitors; in 2012, some 318,000 people climbed it. It's currently under consideration to become a World Heritage Listed Site.

The Japanese proverb 'He who climbs Mount Fuji once is a wise man, he who climbs it twice is a fool' remains as valid as ever. While reaching the top brings a great sense of achievement (particularly at sunrise), be aware it's a grueling climb and one that's not known for its beautiful scenery or being at one with nature. It's often packed with trekkers, and its barren apocalyptic-looking landscape is worlds away from Fuji's beauty that's viewed from afar.

At the summit, the crater has circumference of 4km. As expected, views are spectacular, but be prepared for it to be clouded over. The highest point (3776m) is on the opposite side of the crater, and there's a post office if you want to send a postcard back home.

**Mt Fuji Climbing Guide** (www.mountfujiguide.com) and **Climbing Mt Fuji** (www.17.plala.or.jp/climb\_fujiyama/index.html) are both excellent online resources with all the info climbers need. The *Climbing Mt Fuji* brochure, available at the Fuji-Yoshida Tourist Information Center, is also worth picking up.