



Day Trips from Tokyo

Mt Fuji p178

Follow the pilgrim trail up Japan's most famous peak for a sunrise to beat all others, or admire views of the perfect snowcapped cone from below.

Nikkō p180

Take in the grandeur of old Edo at the spectacular shrines and temples of Nikkō, in the wooded mountains north of Tokyo.

Hakone p184

A centuries-old hot-spring resort in the mist-shrouded hills southwest of Tokyo, Hakone offers scenery straight out of a woodblock painting and plenty of onsen.

Kamakura p187

An ancient feudal capital, seaside Kamakura is packed with temples and shrines, plus the Daibutsu (Big Buddha) statue.



TOP SIGHT MT FUJI

Catching a glimpse of Mt Fuji (富士山; 3776m), Japan's highest and most famous peak, will take your breath away. Climbing it and watching the sunrise from the summit is one of Japan's superlative experiences (though it's often cloudy). The official climbing season runs from 1 July to 31 August.

Climbing

The Japanese proverb 'He who climbs Mt 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, it's a gruelling climb not known for its beautiful scenery or for being at one with nature.

The mountain is divided into 10 'stations' from base (First Station) to summit (Tenth). From the base station is the original pilgrim trail, but these days most climbers start from the halfway point at one of the four Fifth Stations. The **Kawaguchi-ko Trail** is by far and away the most popular route. It's accessed from Fuji Subaru Line Fifth Station (aka Kawaguchi-ko Fifth Station), and has the most modern facilities and is easiest to reach from Tokyo.

Allow five to six hours to reach the top (though some climb it in half the time) and about three hours to descend, plus 1½ hours for circling the crater at the top.

Know Before You Go

Mt Fuji is a serious mountain, high enough for altitude sickness, and on the summit it can go from sunny and warm to wet, windy and cold remarkably quickly. Even if conditions are fine, you can count on it being close to freezing in the morning, even in summer. Also be aware that visibility can rapidly disappear with a blanket of mist rolling in suddenly.

At a minimum, bring clothing appropriate for cold and wet weather, including a hat and gloves. Also bring at least two litres of water (you can buy more on the mountain during the climbing season), as well as a map, snacks and cash for other necessities, such as toilets (¥200). If you're climbing at night, bring a torch (flashlight) or headlamp, and spare batteries.

When to Go

To time your arrival for dawn you can either start up in the afternoon, stay overnight in a mountain hut and continue early in the morning, or climb the whole way at night. You do not want to arrive on the top too long before dawn, as it will be very cold and windy, even at the height of summer.

It's a very busy mountain during the two-month climbing season. To avoid the worst of the crush head up on a weekday, or start earlier during the day.

Authorities strongly caution against climbing outside the regular season, when the weather is highly unpredictable and first-aid stations on the mountain are closed. Outside of the climbing season, check weather conditions carefully before setting out, bring appropriate equipment, do not climb alone, and be prepared to retreat at any time. A guide will be invaluable. Once snow or ice is on the mountain, Fuji becomes a very serious and dangerous undertaking and should only be attempted by those with winter mountaineering equipment and plenty of experience. Off-season climbers should register with the local police department; fill out the form at the Kawaguchi-ko Tourist Information Centers.

GETTING THERE

During the climbing season, **Keiō Dentetsu Bus** (☎03-5376-2222; www.highwaybus.com) runs direct buses (¥2700, 2½ hours; reservations necessary) from the Shinjuku Bus Station to Fuji Subaru Line Fifth Station (aka Kawaguchi-ko Fifth Station).