【**Akaishiyama Tozan Course**】

The Akaishiyama Tozan Course is an advanced mountain trail that starts from either the Takamagahara bus stop or the Hoppo Gondala Lift bus stop; hikers can take a ski lift from either site to the trailhead on Mt. Higashidate.

Hikers can follow the trail along the ridgeline to the summit of Mt. Akaishi (2,108 m) before descending to О̄numa Pond and finishing at the Shimizuguchi bus stop. The course covers 11.5 kilometers with an elevation change of 549 meters and requires an estimated five hours to complete.

The viewpoint at the top of Mt. Akaishi straddles the prefectural border between Nagano and Gunma. Standing at the summit, hikers can look west, to Nagano’s popular ski slopes, or southeast, to Gunma’s famous Kusatsu Onsen hot springs. Under certain weather conditions, a sea of clouds may settle below the peak, completely obscuring the land below with a softly undulating blanket of white.

The name *akaishi* means “red rock,” and at places near the summit where vegetation is sparse, some of the rocks do indeed have a reddish-yellow tint. This is due to the presence of iron pyrite in the soil. As precipitation makes its way down the mountainside to О̄numa Pond, it leeches minerals out of the soil, including copper sulfate, which is responsible for the water’s intense cobalt-blue color.