

Nature and History

One of only two active volcanoes in the Chugoku region, Mt. Sanbe last erupted about 4,000 years ago. Several peaks surround the basin, and the volcano is the source of many excellent volcanic hot springs, including the popular Sanbe Onsen. Mt. Sanbe features in ancient Japanese mythology. The eighth-century *Izumo no Kuni Fudoki* describes a “Land-Pulling Myth” in which a native god who believed his kingdom to be too small used Mt. Sanbe and Mt. Daisen as stakes to anchor some extra pieces of land he pulled in from offshore.

The grasslands of Mt. Sanbe are maintained by an annual burning, called *hi-ire*, that encourages the sprouting of new grass. Mt. Sanbe’s landscapes change dramatically with the seasons, making the mountain an interesting place to visit throughout the year. Visitors especially enjoy the thousands of rabbit-ear irises (*Iris laevigata*) that bloom at Himenogaike Pond at the northern foot of Mt. Sanbe in early summer. At the Sanbe Azukihara Buried Forest Park is a miraculously preserved ancient forest, still standing, frozen in time at the moment it was buried underground during Mt. Sanbe’s last eruption over 4,000 years ago.

Activities

A variety of trails on Mt. Sanbe provide hiking options for hikers of every level, from beginners to advanced mountain climbers. Snowshoeing is a popular activity on the lower slopes in winter. The north side of the mountain features campgrounds and picnic sites with great views of the peak, as well as the Shimane Nature Museum of Mt. Sanbe, where visitors can learn more about the region’s wildlife and ecology. On the south side is Sanbe Onsen, a hot spring that boasts one of the highest outputs of gushing water in western Japan. Restaurants serve up local specialties such as Sanbe soba noodles and Sanbe beef, which diners can savor while enjoying a view of Mt. Sanbe on the west side. Vineyards spreading across the landscape on the east side offer yet another unique vista. Here visitors can stock up on locally produced wines, then ride a lift that whisks them up the mountain for a breathtaking panorama of the surrounding area. Adventurous travelers can challenge themselves with river kayaking and shower climbing, which involves clambering up waterfalls and mountain streams.