

## Masumizu Highlands

### Mt. Daisen

Mt. Daisen, at an elevation of 1729 m, is the highest mountain in the Chugoku Region of western Honshu. Renowned for its spectacular volcanic landscapes, the mountain and its surroundings were designated a national park in February of 1936. Mt. Daisen was once an active volcano, and its current form was shaped by volcanic activity between one million and twenty thousand years ago. The northeastern side of the mountain contains its oldest features, including the caldera wall on Mt. Senjo Peak. Later periods of volcanic activity produced lava domes like Misen Peak. In between these geological periods, volcanic activity and the passage of time gave rise to other important landscape features, including the Masumizu Highlands and Kagamiganaru at the foot of the mountain, as well as the rugged scenery on the steep slopes around the highest peaks. Viewed from the west, Mt. Daisen's outline resembles the smooth, symmetrical lines of Mt. Fuji, Japan's highest peak, giving rise to the alternate names Hoki (an old name for this region) Fuji, or Izumo Fuji. When viewed from the north or south, however, the mountain's outline is rocky and uneven.

### Mt. Daisen's Ecosystems

The central slopes of Mt. Daisen are home to one of western Japan's largest beech forests, while the high slopes around the summit support unique colonies of dwarf Japanese yew trees (*Taxus cuspidate* var. *nana*). The mountain is habitat for many species of birds and insects, as well as rare alpine plants like the Daisen ashibosuge sedge (*Carex scita* var. *parvisquama*) that grows only on Mt. Daisen. There are many species of flowers and butterflies during the spring, summer, and autumn seasons at the Masumizu Highlands, at an elevation of 700–800 m.