

Nita Pass: Gateway to Mount Unzen

This pass is the gateway to the series of still-active volcanic peaks known as Mt. Unzen. They are in the center of the Unzen-Amakusa National Park and have been evolving through violent eruptions since prehistoric times—the most recent eruption beginning in 1990. Follow the walkway to the Unzen Ropeway station and a mountain lookout with panoramic views of the Shimabara Peninsula. The ropeway climbs another 174 meters in altitude to Mt. Myoken, which has the best views of the other peaks. Trailheads for trekking can be found here and at the top of the ropeway. The Kyushu azaleas which spread over much of this area are hardy plants that can grow under difficult environmental conditions and are resistant to volcanic gases. Seasonal highlights include the azalea blossoms in May, vivid forest colors in fall, and rime ice, an unusual winter phenomenon that cloaks the tree branches in glistening frosty jewels.