

## **Lake Shojiko: The “Switzerland of the East”**

Lake Shojiko is by far the smallest of the Fuji Five Lakes. It covers just half a square kilometer, and is so shallow that its volume is only one-tenth that of Lake Saiko. Even so, superb water transparency, the serene atmosphere, and its convoluted shoreline give Lake Shojiko some of the most memorable vistas in the region. The relatively restrained pace of lakeside development has left much of the landscape in its original state, unmarred by artificial structures.

In the evening, the lake’s shores are visited by photographers seeking to capture “Red Fuji” (*akafuji*) in the setting sun, or “Pink Fuji” (*benifuji*) when there is snow on the peak. The nearby Panorama-dai Observation Point offers views that more than justify the challenging hike.

One of Shojiko’s best-known tableaux is known as “Fuji with Child” (*kodakifuji*). Viewed from the north shore, Mt. Fuji seems to embrace the smaller, closer Mt. Omuro like a mother holding her child. In one sense, Omuro really is the “child” of Fuji; it is a cinder cone formed by a lateral eruption from the larger mountain’s lower slopes.

## **An International Destination**

In 1895, Harry Stewart Whitworth, a British man who later naturalized as a Japanese citizen, was so taken by the lake’s beauty that he opened a European-style hotel overlooking the water. Whitworth called the area the “Switzerland of the East,” and his hotel became the first international tourist destination in the Fuji Five Lakes area.

The placid atmosphere of the lake makes it especially popular among fishing enthusiasts. During the spring, the catch is crucian carp, but from autumn onward visitors reel in Japanese smelt, a gourmet favorite.