

The Thousand-Yen-Bill View of Mt. Fuji: Okada Koyo's Famous Photograph

The current design of Japan's 1,000-yen bill, as well as the 1984 design of the 5,000-yen bill, features Mt. Fuji seen across a lake framed by forested hillsides. It is an engraved version of a photo called *Kohan no haru* ("Spring by the lake") taken of Lake Motosuko in 1935 by the acclaimed photographer Okada Koyo (1895–1972).

Born in Niigata, Okada was an early pioneer of mountain photography in Japan. He was particularly fond of Mt. Fuji, which he called by the female name "Fujiko," and documenting the mountain and its surroundings became his life's work. His regular visits to the Five Lakes region, roaming the forests and hills in search of new perspectives on his beloved subject, made him a well-known character among local residents and a good friend to many.

The Okada Koyo Art Museum opened in 2004 in the nearby village of Oshino, where Okada first fell in love with the mountain at the age of 21. His photos of the Oshino Hakkai springs with Mt. Fuji in the distance are some of his most highly regarded works.

Tracing Okada's Footsteps

The scene immortalized by Okada's *Kohan no haru* photograph can still be seen today. The viewpoint is a spot northwest of Lake Motosuko, and the 1-kilometer hike from the road takes around 30 minutes. The trail is not an easy one, with some steep climbing required, but the reward is one of the finest views of Mt. Fuji.