

Komitake-Jinja Shrine

Komitake-jinja Shrine is tucked away behind the restaurants and souvenir stores surrounding the fifth station terminus of the Fuji-Subaru Line. This small plateau is actually the peak of Mt. Komitake, an ancient mountain that was all but engulfed by the lava flows that created Mt. Fuji, beginning 14,000 years ago. Komitake-jinja enshrines Iwanaga-hime, the older sister of the goddess Konohanasakuya-hime, who is enshrined at the various Sengen shrines around the mountain.

The area around the fifth station is known as the “garden of the *tengu*.” *Tengu* are fierce, part-avian mythical beings of great mystical power associated with remote peaks. A pair of them serve as the attendants of the shrine and officially open the mountain each summer. According to legend, they gifted the shrine with the enormous axe that lies on its precincts. Visitors are welcome to try lifting it, but apart from the occasional sumo wrestler, very few succeed.

The Middle Shrine

An illustrated guidebook for Fujiko pilgrims from 1847, *Fujisan shinkei no zu* (The true sights of Mt. Fuji in pictures), includes Komitake-jinja as a key stop in the network of pilgrimage sites on Mt. Fuji’s northern slope. The fifth station is where the Yoshida Trail leading to the peak crosses the Ochudo (“Middle”) Trail, which once ran around the mountain, so Fujiko pilgrims called Komitake-jinja the “middle shrine” (*nakanomiya*). The shrine played an important role in “authenticating” their visit: Pilgrims could purchase woodblock-printed certificates and numbered hiking sticks, and could even have their clothing stamped there.