

Mt. Shinnyu

The 1,153-meter Mt. Shinnyu is located within Nishi-Chugoku Sanchi Quasi-National Park, east of Sandankyo Gorge. Parts of the mountain's grasslands are burned every April before the spring flowers bud, a practice called *yamayaki*. This controlled burning has been conducted since at least 1749 to create space for growing vegetables, cattle grazing, and pasture, and helps to preserve the grassy landscape and rare plant life, which reappears after every *yamayaki*. In this way, the practice has aided in the coexistence of humans and nature.

Mt. Shinnyu absorbs a large amount of water after the spring *yamayaki* and early-summer rainy season. As summer approaches, the mountain's landscape transforms from burned black into a pastoral green. The ash of the burned grass acts as a fertilizer and exterminates pests, helping to maintain the mountain's distinctive ecosystem. Rare butterflies, flowers, and ancient plants that date back to the Ice Age thrive on Mt. Shinnyu. More than 180 species of wild plants grow on the mountain. Since trees here are burned rather than cut down, the seeds remain in the ground and the trees are able to grow back every year.

The hike up the trail to the peak of Mt. Shinnyu takes about an hour and is suitable even for beginners. Once at the top, hikers are treated to a panoramic view of the Western Chugoku mountains. Soon after sunrise in early summer, lucky hikers can witness the *unkai*, or "sea of clouds," which descends on the peaks in the distance. Visitors in late October to mid-November come to enjoy the fall foliage, while winter brings in cross-country skiers. Campsites are available at the foot of the mountain and are the ideal type of accommodation for early-rising trekkers.