

【Higashi-Tateyama Tenkū Course】

The Higashi-Tateyama Tenkū Course is an easy walking trail. It begins and ends at the resort town of Hoppo Onsen, where a 6-minute gondola ride takes hikers to the 2,030-meter-high summit of Mt. Higashidate. The walking portion of the course begins at the summit and ends with a trip down the mountain on the Takamagahara Summer Lift gondola. The course has a change in elevation of about 520 meters and requires an estimated 75 minutes to complete.

Mt. Higashidate was one of the venues for the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics, and its slopes still attract many skiers and snowboarders. In the summer, however, the green slopes are transformed into an outdoor botanical garden covering 100,000 square meters. The garden shelters some 500 species of alpine plants, many of which bloom between June and September. From the small blossoms of the yellow buttercup (*R. japonicus*) to the purple flutes of Japanese cobra lilies (*Arisaema nikoense* f. *kubotae*), the flowers create a rich tableau that can be seen while passing overhead in the gondola and from up close on well-marked paths.

The summit also has a viewing platform from which hikers can enjoy clear vistas of almost the entire Shiga Highlands area, including the Northern Japanese Alps and all five of the key peaks of northern Nagano, known collectively as the Hokushin-Gogaku.