

【Asahiyama Tozan Course】

The Asahiyama Tozan Course is an easy walking trail that begins and ends at the Sun Valley Parking Lot, from where hikers climb to the peak of Mt. Asahi (1,524 m). The view from the peak takes in the surrounding hot spring villages, Ichi Marsh, Biwa Pond, the Northern Japanese Alps, and all five of the key peaks of northern Nagano (collectively known as the Hokushin-Gogaku).

A tall Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), a species not native to the area, stands at the mountain summit. This tree was planted by Prince Chichibu (1902–1953), sometimes called “the sporting prince” for his love of skiing and other athletic pursuits. In 1928, when he traveled to the area soon after getting married, the prince planted the tree as a wish that his marriage, like the tree, would grow and flourish over time.

On the return, the trail goes past Ichi Marsh, a popular spot for photos. In June, red Japanese azalea blossoms abound, while in October the mountain’s autumn foliage is reflected on the marsh water’s surface. Past the marsh, the trail splits: a direct route leads back to the parking lot, and a longer path winds through the Biwa wetlands for hikers who want to see more of the Shiga Highlands’ alpine flora. The full route takes about two hours, and the shorter version takes about 90 minutes.