

【Iwasugeyama Tozan Course】

The Iwasugeyama Tozan Course is an advanced mountain trail that starts from either the Takamagahara bus stop or the Hoppo Gondala Lift bus stop; hikers can take a ski lift from either site to the trailhead on Mt. Higashidate. The trail follows the ridgeline before steeply ascending to the summit of Mt. Iwasuge (2,295 m), then descends to the Ichinose bus stop. The course covers a distance of 18.5 kilometers, with an elevation change of 700 meters, and can be completed in approximately six and a half hours.

Mt. Iwasuge is listed in *Nihon nihyaku-meizan* (“Two Hundred Mountains of Japan”), a book compiled in tribute to writer and mountaineer Kyūya Fukada (1903–1971), who in 1964 published the popular and critically acclaimed volume, *One Hundred Mountains of Japan* (translated in 2014). Mt. Iwasuge is also the only mountain in the Shiga Highlands where a type of religious asceticism called Shugendō continues to be practiced. Shugendō incorporates aspects of Buddhism, Shinto, and folk religions, and mountains are viewed as sacred places within Shugendō beliefs. Its practitioners, called *yamabushi*, perform physically challenging ascetic rigors such as completing extremely long mountain hikes, standing under freezing waterfalls, and hanging off cliffs.