

## **Other Sightseeing Spots: Discovering the Foothills of the Alps**

Climbing Japan's second tallest mountain or the other ten peaks over 3,000 meters is certainly one of the most obvious attractions of the Minami Alps, but there is more to see in the foothills.

### **Terraced Rice Fields**

Rice is an important part of the Japanese diet, but most of the country is covered in mountains and hills. Rice farmers around Japan overcome this challenge with terraced rice fields (*tanada*), such as those still being farmed in the Nakano area outside the city of Minami Alps. The fields look like rounded steps, and are especially photogenic when green with newly planted shoots during the spring, or golden with fully ripened rice in the autumn.

### **Enjoying Seasonal Colors**

In early April, Midai Minami Park, the Tokushima weir, Myoryoji Temple, and Ikoi no Sakura Cherry Blossom Lane are ideal places to enjoy the blooming of cherry blossoms against the backdrop of the mountains. The peak of the short blooming period shifts slightly each year, but taking time out to enjoy the blooms follows the Japanese tradition of *hanami*, or cherry blossom viewing.

During the autumn there are many spots to take in the vivid foliage. The road to the Minami Alps Ashiyasu Alpen Museum offers excellent views of the autumn colors on the mountain slopes, while Lake Minami-Inagako reflects the red and gold leaves. The autumn foliage season lasts longer than the cherry blossoms, with trees high in the mountains changing color first, then slowly progressing down the slopes.

### **Pick Your Own Snack**

For fruit lovers, the peak season starts in early summer and continues until September, with fresh cherries, peaches, plums, and more. Grapes and persimmons are available in autumn, and kiwifruit grows throughout the winter. During the summer a few farms offer fruit-picking, a fun activity for visitors of all ages.