

## **Hakusan National Park**

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### **Hakusan Tourism Association**

#### **Hakusan National Park**

#### **Climbing Information**

Mt. Hakusan is one of the three most sacred mountains in Japan, along with Mt. Fuji and Mt. Tateyama. The mountain towers high above the surrounding peaks and is covered in bright white snow throughout the winter and into early summer, hence its name, which means “white mountain.”

Mt. Hakusan has a long history that dates back over 100 million years, to a time when the area was inhabited by dinosaurs and covered in lakes and waterways. The mountains visible today were formed by volcanic eruptions around 400,000 years ago.

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According to legend, the first person to successfully climb the peak was the Buddhist priest Taicho (682–767), who made the ascent in 717. Taicho is an important figure in Shugendo, an ascetic religion that combines precepts of Buddhism, Shinto and mountain worship. The religious connection to the mountain is still alive today: Hakusan Shirayama-Hime Okumiya Shrine sits at the top of Gozengamine (2,702 m), the highest of Hakusan's three peaks.

Mt. Hakusan is the jewel of Hakusan National Park, which extends into Ishikawa, Fukui, Gifu, and Toyama prefectures. A wide range of ecosystems thrive here. Visitors who climb the mountain will pass through forests of Japanese beech (*buna*) and Erman's birch (*dakekanba*). Higher up, the trees thin out and give way to alpine meadows that are dotted with colorful flowers throughout the summer. Many mammals, birds, and amphibians call the park home; these include golden eagles, foxes, and Asiatic black bears. Mt. Hakusan was designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1980.