

Hakusan National Park

Hakusan National Park extends across the four prefectures of Gifu, Fukui, Toyama, and Ishikawa, centering on the 2,702-meter Mt. Haku (Hakusan). A dormant volcano that last erupted in 1659, the mountain has been an object of religious worship since distant antiquity and is considered one of the three great sacred peaks of Japan, along with Mt. Fuji and Mt. Tate (also Tateyama, in Toyama Prefecture). Mt. Haku can be climbed from the Shirakawa-go side of the park. The path to the peak is known as the Hirase Trail and starts from the Oshirakawa Dam, which can be reached by car throughout summer and in autumn until late October. The trail passes through a natural beech and oak forest and over the adjacent Mt. Okura on its way to the summit, which can be reached in about four hours.

Next to the Oshirakawa Dam is the emerald-green Lake Hakusui, where visitors can take a break in one of the unmanned lakeside lodges or stay the night at the adjacent campsite. The landscape, which attracts admirers especially in early summer and during autumn foliage season in October, can also be viewed from the Oshirakawa open-air hot spring bath. A few minutes downhill along the road toward Shirakawa-go is Shiramizu Falls, where water plummets 72 meters down a cliff into the Oshira River. The falls were the main tourist attraction in Shirakawa-go before the area became famous for its traditional gassho-style farmhouses.