

Walking Tours of Dewa Sanzan

The Gassan Visitor Center hosts around 40 hiking tours and walks throughout the year. These include firefly walks on summer evenings and educational walks that introduce the flora and fauna of Dewa Sanzan's three mountains, Mt. Haguro (414 m), Mt. Gassan (1,984 m), and Mt. Yudono (1,500 m).

Guided botanical tours of the surrounding forests and marshlands introduce visitors to seasonal plants. In the spring, visitors can look forward to seeing plants such as the Asian fawn lily (*Erythronium japonicum*), Japanese hyacinth (*Heloniopsis orientalis*), giant flowered Japanese wild ginger (*Asarum megacalyx*), windflower (*Anemone flaccida*), and linden arrowwood (*Viburnum dilatatum*).

Visitors can also learn how plants on the Dewa Sanzan mountains have been used by Shugendo ascetics since the late sixth century. Shugendo is an ancient tradition of mountain asceticism that involves rigorous physical practice. Historically, ascetics trained at Dewa Sanzan, living self-sufficiently and relying entirely on the plants that grew on the mountains for food and medicine. They believed that using these plants helped them to harness the power of the mountains.

Conservation walks offer a more hands-on experience. The expert guides who lead these walks help visitors to identify invasive species on the mountain. Invasive species are a threat to the area's native species and can throw off the ecosystem's delicate balance.

The park implements various measures to protect Dewa Sanzan's plant life. The mats placed at the entry points to Midagahara High Moor prevent the introduction of invasive species. Visitors wipe their feet on the mats to remove any seeds that might have been transported on the bottom of their shoes. Visitors are also prohibited from picking or removing plants from the area or deliberately introducing new species.

For more information about the botanical tours, contact Gassan Visitor Center. For tours of Midagahara High Moor, contact Haguro Tourist Association.