

Summer Activities in Dewa Sanzan

Summer is the only season when all three Dewa Sanzan mountains, Mt. Haguro (414 m), Mt. Gassan (1,984 m), and Mt. Yudono (1,500 m), are accessible. At other times of the year, most trails are closed because of deep snow. Summertime visitors can look forward to experiencing the rich culture and wildlife of Dewa Sanzan in a multitude of ways.

Hiking

The Sankan Sando, the pilgrimage to the three Dewa Sanzan mountains traditionally made by Shugendo ascetics, is especially popular among visitors. This multiday hike usually takes two days, so many people hike only a section of it. Mt. Haguro is an accessible 90-minute hike featuring an ancient cedarwood pagoda, numerous small shrines, and the Sanjin Gosaiden shrine at the summit. Mt. Gassan is a more challenging hike, taking around three hours to ascend. The trail's highlight is Midagahara High Moor, a meadow along the ridgeline at about 1,400 meters.

Walking tours

Gassan Visitor Center offers various tours introducing the local wildlife. Take part in its conservation efforts to protect these species by locating invasive species confirmed on the mountain. Other tours organized by the visitor center include botanical walks in spring (April) and firefly walks on summer evenings (July).

Shugendo training workshops

Visitors can take part in a workshop, organized by the Haguro Tourist Association, to experience a taste of the lifestyles of Shugendo ascetics, or *yamabushi*. Participants undertake a multiday walk to the three Dewa Sanzan mountains, stay in *shukubo* pilgrim lodgings, and eat dishes made with mountain plants. They also wear traditional all-white outfits similar to funerary attire worn by the dead (*shiroshozoku*). This attire symbolizes the pilgrims' journey, from the death of their past to the spiritual rebirth. For more information, contact the Haguro Tourist Association.

Workshops

Throughout the year, Gassan Visitor Center hosts workshops on plant dyeing, basket-making, and wildflower papermaking. A modest fee is charged for all workshops.

Skiing

Mt. Gassan is one of few places in Japan to offer summer skiing. Gassan Ski Resort includes backcountry fields with views of Asahi and Zao mountain ranges and 10 kilometers of slopes

that attract advanced skiers and snowboarders. It is served by a chairlift and a T-bar lift. The ski season begins in early April and ends as late as the end of July.