

Mt. Kasagatake

Mt. Kasagatake is on the Gifu Prefecture side of Chubusangaku National Park, and rises to 2,898 meters. Its shape resembles a conical hat called a *kasa* in Japanese, hence the name. The first recorded climb to the summit of the mountain was in 1683 by Enku (1632–1695), a Buddhist priest famous for carving thousands of wooden statues of the Buddha. Legend says he used these statues to comfort people he met on his many pilgrimages who were grieving, dying, or suffering from hunger or natural disasters. Some were also given in exchange for lodging.

Enku was followed years later by Banryu Shonin (1786–1840), another Buddhist priest who reached the summit of Kasagatake in 1823. British missionary Walter Weston (1860–1940) was the first person from outside Japan to make the climb, in 1894, and his ascent helped spark the beginning of recreational mountaineering in Japan.

Today, many climbers follow the Kasa-shindo Trail from Shin-Hotaka Onsen, which takes just over nine hours to the top. A lodge located directly below the summit provides food and accommodation to climbers who choose to stay overnight and descend the following day. The Kuriyadani Valley Trail also leads to the summit, but it can be difficult and should be attempted only by experienced mountaineers.

Mt. Kasagatake was formed by volcanic activity over 63 million years ago, and successive eruptions have left multiple layers of volcanic rock in its caldera. An exposed cross-section of these rock layers remains near the summit. In spring, the melting snowdrifts just below the peak can be seen from Gifu Prefecture, and farmers use their changing shape as a guide to help them determine when to begin planting rice.