

Buckwheat Fields on the Sarugaku Plateau

The Sarugaku Plateau was developed for farming in the 1960s under a national agricultural development project. Farmers grow buckwheat, the main ingredient of soba noodles, in its 40 hectares of fields. In late August and early September the fields are blanketed with delicate white buckwheat flowers.

Rice has long been the staple of the Japanese diet, but it can be difficult to grow in some northern regions such as Fukushima Prefecture, where summers were cooler. Alternative grains that were more resistant to the cold replaced rice, and one of these was buckwheat. Shimogo has a plentiful supply of the fresh, clean water essential for making top-quality soba. Many restaurants in the area serve local soba dishes.

Late summer is the most popular time when the fields are in full bloom, but the peaceful pastoral landscape of Sarugaku offers attractive photo opportunities at any time of year. After the soba is harvested in October, the stalks remaining in the fields turn a vivid red.

Note: Anyone is welcome to stop and enjoy the view from the side of the road, but please note that the buckwheat fields are private property, so visitors should not enter. Be careful of the electric fences, which protect the fields from local wildlife such as monkeys and bears.