

The Four Seasons of Ome

Ome is located in the Okutama Mountains to the far west of Tokyo. The area has a subtropical climate of warm summers and cool winters, with light snowfall limited to the upper reaches of the mountains.

Spring

The Japanese plum tree (*ume*) heralds spring, blooming across Ome Plum Park in late February, before the cherry blossoms. Spring is mild, and ideal for hiking in the mountains and exploring the sights. Azaleas bloom throughout Ome in late April and early May. Shiofune Kannon Temple to the east of Ome is famous for its azalea gardens.

Summer

The hot summer weather is perfect for fishing and water sports on the Tama River, and for exploring Mitake Gorge. The summit of Mt. Mitake is usually several degrees cooler than downtown Tokyo, providing a refreshing summer escape. Hydrangeas bloom in June, when the rainy season brings misty conditions to the mountains. Between July and September, a large colony of *renge shoma*, or false anemone, blooms in the hills near the summit of the mountain. Performances of Daidai Kagura, a form of Shinto dance, are held at Mitake Musashi Shrine at the summit of Mt. Mitake from June through November.

Fall

Autumn brings pleasant conditions for hiking and other outdoor activities. Visitors come to Mitake Gorge to admire the fall foliage. Japanese maples and ginkgo trees are among the most colorful trees at this time of year, and there are impressive specimens in the gardens of the Yoshikawa Eiji Museum and the Gyokudo Art Museum.

Winter

January is the sunniest month of the year in Ome, with brisk and invigorating weather. The winter sky is usually clear, so visitors can see all the way to Tokyo's city center from mountain vantage points. Shrines and temples in the area are busy with visitors praying for good fortune for the year ahead. Snow is uncommon in the valley, but hikers in the mountains should be prepared for snowy conditions and dress appropriately.