

Introduction to Mt. Mitake

Mt. Mitake (929 m) has a long history as a center of spiritual belief. The sacred mountain has attracted pilgrims for thousands of years and is now also popular with hikers and sightseers. The heavily forested mountain is part of the Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park, which covers parts of Saitama, Nagano, and Yamanashi prefectures, and Tokyo. At the summit, Musashi Mitake Shrine venerates the mountain and its associated deities.

Shukubo lodgings

A small community lives near the mountain summit, including the priests of Musashi Mitake Shrine and their families, who run pilgrim lodges (*shukubo*). These lodges provide an opportunity to experience simple, traditional hospitality, and some offer experiences such as *takigyo* waterfall meditation.

Hiking on Mt. Mitake

There are several hiking trails on Mt. Mitake of varying difficulty. A number of these routes start at the base of the steps leading to Musashi Mitake Shrine. The Rock Garden trail is the most popular. The 1.5-kilometer trail loops through the valley past Ayahiro Falls and Nanayo Falls. Hiking routes range from 30 minutes to 2 hours and are signposted in English. Hiking maps are available at the Mitake Visitor Center on the mountain.

Flora and fauna

Mt. Mitake is home to a diverse range of plant and animal life, including cherry blossoms in spring and *renge shoma* (false anemone) flowers in summer. Visitors who stay overnight might spot the nocturnal *musasabi*, a giant flying squirrel. The mountain is also home to deer, wild boar, and Japanese serow. Visitors can hike to the top of Mt. Mitake from the foot of the mountain in about 60 minutes, or take a cable car, which reaches Mitakesan Station in 6 minutes.