

About the Minami Alps

“Lofty summits engraved with memories of the ocean floor.

Swathed in deep forest, a chain of massive mountains

that continues to rise even today.”

Minami Alps National Park motto

Minami-Alps National Park covers the southernmost ranges of the Japan Alps (*minami* means “south”). Forming a long, narrow strip that extends roughly 50 kilometers from Mt. Kaikomagatake in the north to Mt.

Tekaridake in the south, it contains three main mountain regions—the Kaikoma and Ho-o Mountains, the Shirane Mountains, and the Akaishi Mountains—collectively known as the Minami Alps. The park straddles three prefectures: Yamanashi, Nagano, and Shizuoka.

The Minami Alps include not only Japan’s second-tallest mountain, Mt. Kitadake—3,193 meters to Mt. Fuji’s 3,776—but more than 10 other peaks over 3,000 meters in height. This rugged landscape was formed one million

years ago when tectonic forces from the east and west rapidly pushed the mountains up and out of the seabed. The Minami Alps are still rising to this day: their rate of uplift, between 3 and 4 millimeters a year, is the fastest of any mountainous region in Japan.

The timberline of the thick, lush forests on these mountains is at 2,700 meters, unusually high for this latitude. This is due to the park's southerly location, its abundant rainfall, and comparatively light snowfall. The topography is highlighted by glacial landforms such as cirques—amphitheater-like hollows at the heads of valleys carved out by glaciers—and dramatic V-shaped valleys caused by river channel erosion. The park is also home to many distinctive species of flora and fauna.