

## **Mt. Kitadake**

### **Pride of the park**

Mt. Kitadake is the second tallest mountain in Japan after Mt. Fuji. Viewed from the north or south, the 3,193-meter peak culminates in a magnificent pyramid-shaped summit. The Kitadake Buttress, a 600-meter cliff on the mountain's eastern flank, is the highest rock wall in Japan, making it a magnet for climbers. While Kitadake may be some 580 meters shorter than Fuji, it has the higher timberline, a remarkable 2,700 meters, and the upper reaches of the mountain are distinguished by an abundance of flora. The flowers in Kitadake's celebrated alpine meadows are at their most colorful in July and August.

The summit offers splendid views of Mt. Fuji to the southeast and Mt. Ainodake to the south—Japan's tallest and third tallest peaks—as well as Mt. Senjogatake to the northwest and Mt. Kaikomagatake to the north, all in a single panorama. Since Kitadake is rising some 3 millimeters per year

due to tectonic uplift, it should catch up with Mt. Fuji in about 200,000 years!

Traditionally, climbers of Kitadake start the trek at the Hirogawara trailhead (elevation 1,550 m). The faster route along the Okanbasawa stream has been shut since 2022 when a bridge washed away, leaving only the longer route through the forest. At Shirane-oike Hut (2,200 m), visitors can choose among three routes to the summit, including the challenging option of going directly up a gully that remains covered with snow well into July.