Fujisan and Religious Beliefs

Fujisan is the tallest mountain in Japan and is a sacred place to the Japanese people. It has been an object of worship since ancient times, and has had a large influence on the way that Japanese people view nature.
Long ago, when Fujisan was a place of frequent volcanic activity, people would look up at its peak from the foothills and worship it from afar. As the eruptions subsided, it became a center for the "Shugen-do" sect, which combined traditional Japanese mountain worship with the non-native religion of Buddhism. Many Shugen-do believers came to worship as they climbed Fujisan towards its peak. Years later, ordinary persons called "Doja" would come to be guided to the mountain's peak by the Shugen-do practitioners. Beginning from the 17th century, the Fujisan worship known as "Fuji-ko" began to grow in popularity, and large numbers of Fuji-ko worshippers made pilgrimages to sacred sites located among the foothills. "Oshi" Lodging Houses and other facilities to support the climbers were also created.
At the present during the summer climbing season, the mountain sees large numbers of visitors who climb to its peak, with some worshipping the "Goraiko" sunrise and performing the ritual "Ohachimeguri" walk around the crater rim.



Collection of Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha Shrine

Fuji Mandala
Painted on Silk

Painted in the 16th century, this painting depicts Sengen Taisha Shrine and Doja worshippers purifying themselves with spring water as they ascend the mountain.

Fujisan and Art

With both magnificence and great beauty, Fujisan has been a source of artistic inspiration not only for Japanese persons, but also for artists from other countries. It has inspired the creation of countless works of art, and has been the subject of paintings, literature, poems, and theater.
It is featured in classical works such as "Man-yoshu", which was compiled in the 8th century and is the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry, and "Taketori Monogatari" (The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter), the oldest prose narrative in Japan, as well as in haiku poems and Chinese verse.
In the 19th century, Ukiyo-e woodblock prints depicting Fujisan became popular, with well-known examples including "Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji" by Katsushika Hokusai and "Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido" by Utagawa Hiroshige. These were exported overseas, and had a large impact on western artists such as Van Gogh and Monet. The value of Fujisan as a source of artistic inspiration has not faded in recent times, and the mountain has been portrayed in the folding-screen painting "Gunjo Fuji" (Fujisan Dyed Ultramarine) by Yokoyama Taikan, as well as in literary works by Natsume Soseki and Dazai Osamu.



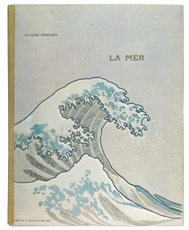
Yamanashi Prefectural Museum

"A Mild Breeze on a Fine Day"
from *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji*, Katsushika Hokusai

This Ukiyo-e woodblock print depicts Fujisan as seen from various places, and was an influence on artists overseas as well as in Japan.

Influence of Fujisan on Artwork Overseas

The images of Fujisan in early 19th-century Ukiyo-e prints have also influenced artists overseas.
The "Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji" series of woodblock prints depicting Fujisan became popular in Europe, and it is said that impressionist painters such as Claude Monet and Van Gogh were influenced by the color expressions of Ukiyo-e prints.
When musician Claude Debussy composed the symphonic poem "La Mer", he is reported to have hung a reproduction of "Great Wave off Kanagawa" in the room for inspiration. The "Great Wave" was featured on the cover of the first edition of the "La Mer" score when it was later published.
Printmaker Henri Rivière also created a series of lithographs titled "36 Views of the Eiffel Tower", inspired by the "Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji".



Cover of the first edition of the published score of *La Mer* by Claude Debussy, 1905
(Reprinted from Claude Achille Debussy: *La Mer*, François Lesure)



Katsushika Hokusai, "Fujimigahara in Owari Province" from *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji*, 1823-1835
Yamanashi Prefectural Museum



Katsushika Hokusai, "Great Wave off Kanagawa" from *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji*, 1823-1835
Yamanashi Prefectural Museum

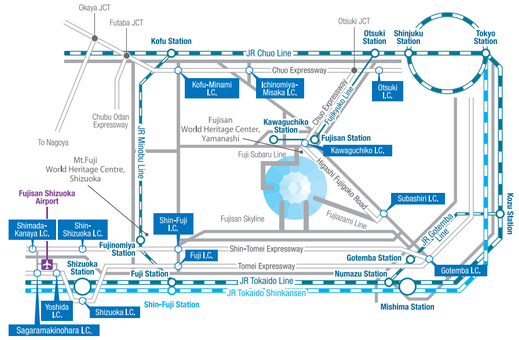


Henri Riviere, "Frontispice" from *Les Trente-six Vues de la Tour Eiffel*, 1888-1902
Private collection

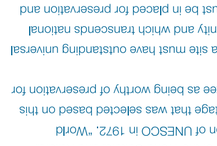


Henri Riviere, "Du Quai de Passy, par la Pluie" from *Les Trente-six Vues de la Tour Eiffel*, 1888-1902
Private collection

Access Map



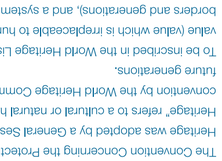
Expressway



Chuo Expressway



JR Tokaido Shinkansen



JR Chuo Line



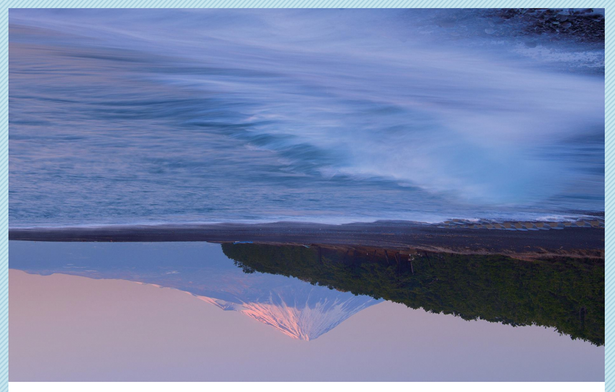
Expressway bus

What is a World Heritage?

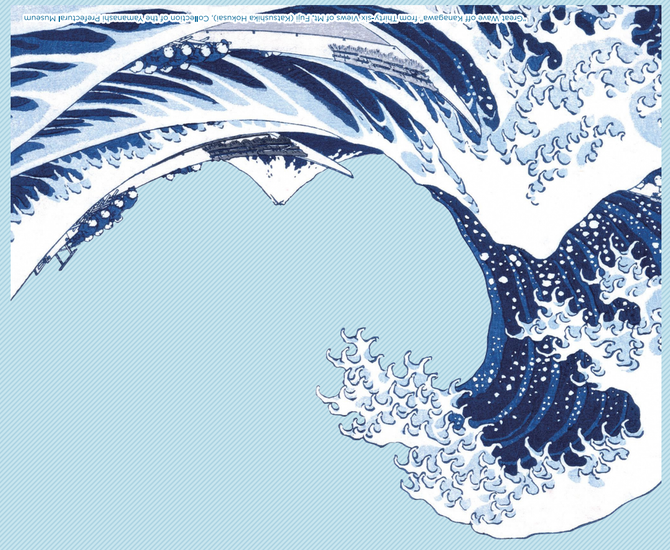
The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by a General Session of UNESCO in 1972. "World Heritage" refers to a cultural or natural heritage that was selected based on this convention by the World Heritage Committee as being worthy of preservation for future generations.
To be inscribed in the World Heritage List, a site must have outstanding universal value (value which is irreplaceable to humanity and which transcends national borders and generations), and a system must be in placed for preservation and management of the site for the future.

World Heritage Site Fujisan

Fujisan is an active volcano which, at 3,776 meters, is the highest peak in Japan. At the 37th World Heritage Committee Meeting held in June 2013, Fujisan was inscribed in the World Heritage List as "Fujisan – Sacred Place and Source of Artistic Inspiration". Reasons for its inscription include the large influence of Fujisan on the Japanese people's view of nature and on Japanese culture as an "object of worship" and a "source of artistic inspiration".
Once feared for its repeated eruptions, Fujisan has become an intimate part of the Japanese people, manifesting in the creation of the Fuji-ko pilgrimage association and the appearance of Fujisan in Ukiyo-e woodblock prints. One large characteristic that distinguishes Fujisan is the way in which people and nature coexist through the realms of religious belief and art. Comprising 25 locations related to this history and culture, the Fujisan site was recognized by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee as a treasure of the world that should be preserved for future generations.



WORLD HERITAGE
FUJISAN
Sacred Place and Source of Artistic Inspiration



"Great Wave off Kanagawa" from *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji* (Katsushika Hokusai). Collection of the Yamanashi Prefectural Museum

Published by Fujisan World Cultural Heritage Council

Yamanashi Prefecture; Fujiyoshida City, Minobu Town, Nishikatsura Town, Oshino Village, Yamanakako Village, Narusawa Village, Fujikawaguchiko Town, Fujiyoshida City and Two Other Villages Organization for the Protection of the Prefectural Estates Given by the Imperial Family, Narusawa and Fujikawaguchiko Organization for the Protection of Prefectural Estates Given by the Imperial Family
Shizuoka Prefecture; Shizuoka City, Numazu City, Mishima City, Fujinomiya City, Fuji City, Gotemba City, Susono City, Shimizu Town, Nagaizumi Town, Oyama Town

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Passing Fujisan on to the Future

Yamanashi Prefecture and Shizuoka Prefecture are working together with related municipalities and organizations to carry out activities that will allow people to learn about the wondrous nature of Fujisan and develop the spirit needed to protect its natural beauty.
We hope that people not only in Japan but from countries around the world will help to protect Fujisan as a World Heritage.

ふじさんを世界遺産に
富士山を
世界遺産に

~11TH CENTURY

Age of Eruptions

– Origins of Fujisan worship –

In ancient times, villages and ceremonial sites were created among the foothills in places providing the best views of Fujisan. During the 8th and 9th centuries, people believed that the repeated eruptions represented the anger of the god of fire, Asama no Okami. To placate this god, the custom of "Yohai" (worship from afar) was created, with people looking up at and worshipping Fujisan from the foothills, and many places of worship were built (1-6 **Kitaguchi Hongu Fuji Sengen-jinja Shrine,** 3 **Yamamiya Sengen-jinja Shrine**). Repeated large-scale eruptions of Fujisan occurred beginning from the year 800. It is believed that shrines worshipping Asama no Okami such as 2 **Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha Shrine,** 7 **Kawaguchi Asama-jinja Shrine,** and 8 **Fuji Omuro Sengen-jinja Shrine** were constructed in the foothills to pacify the mountain.



Man-yoshu

This is the oldest existing collection of poems in Japan. In it, the poet Yamabe no Akahito describes the beauty of Fujisan. "When from Tago shore / We rowed far out and turned to look, / Pure white it was, / The towering cone of Fuji / Gleaming under fallen snow!" (Tago: a coastal area near Yui-Kanbara in Shimizu District, Shizuoka Prefecture)

***Taketori Monogatari* (The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter)**

This is the oldest example of narrative literature in Japan. In it, the Japanese emperor takes the elixir of immortality which he received from Princess Kaguya and burns it on the highest mountain in Japan, inadvertently making the mountain immortal (*fushi* in Japanese, later becoming *fuji*).



***Shotoku Taishi Eden* (1069)**

This series of hanging scrolls depicts the life of Prince Shotoku, who ruled Japan around the 6th century. One scene shows the prince riding his beloved steed on the slopes of Fujisan.

Image: TNM Image Archives
Hata no Chitei Shotoku Taishi Eden, scroll 3 (part)
Collection of the Tokyo National Museum

12TH~ CENTURY

Shugen-do priests and the Fujisan ascent

– Popularization of Fujisan worship –

Volcanic activity on Fujisan subsided in the 12th century. Fujisan became a place for mountain worship, and practitioners of the Shugen-do Buddhist faith began climbing to the peak to gain spiritual power from the gods of the mountain. (1-1 **Mountaintop worship sites**) One among them was the ascetic Buddhist priest Matsudai, who is said to have climbed Fujisan numerous times as part of his spiritual practices. It is said that Matsudai constructed Dainichi Temple at the peak and Fujisan Kobo Temple (now 4 **Murayama Sengen-jinja Shrine**) at Murayama in the southern foothills, both of which became centers for the religious training of many priests. Beginning from the 14th century, ordinary believers called "Doja" came to make worship ascents of the mountain, guided by the Shugen-do priests. A number of ascending routes starting from the Sengen-jinja shrines (5 **Suyama Sengen-jinja Shrine,** 6 **Fuji Sengen-jinja Shrine, and others**) were constructed (1-2 **Omiya-Murayama Ascending Route,** 1-3 **Suyama Ascending Route,** 1-4 **Subashiri Ascending Route,** 1-5 **Yoshida Ascending Route**), and villages were built to accommodate the Doja at each of the route starting points.



Collection of Seikenji Temple

Fujisan and Miho Seikenji Temple

This ink painting portrays Fujisan, 25 **Mihonomatsubara pine tree grove,** and Seikenji Temple (located in Shimizu District, Shizuoka Prefecture).



Kitaguchi Hongu Fuji Sengen-jinja Shrine (1-6)

This shrine originated as a place to worship Asama no Okami from afar. With the expansion of the Fuji-ko faith, it subsequently grew as the starting point for the Yoshida Ascending Route.



Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha Shrine (2)

This shrine is the headquarters for the Sengen-jinja shrines in all parts of Japan. Initially built to worship Asama no Okami and pacify the erupting volcano, it was moved to its current location in the year 806.



Yamamiya Sengen-jinja Shrine (3)

This shrine is the predecessor of Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha Shrine. In place of the usual main shrine building, a facility for worshipping Fujisan from afar was built, and was used to offer prayers to ward off the fires of Fujisan.



Kawaguchi Asama-jinja Shrine (7)

This Sengen-jinja shrine is said to have been built following an eruption in the late 9th century. The region of Kawaguchi prospered as a post station on the Misaka Road, a route built by the government to connect the capital and the Kofu Basin.



Fuji Omuro Sengen-jinja Shrine (8)

This is thought to be the earliest Sengen shrine built on Fujisan. It consisted of a main shrine that was a center for Shugen-do and Fuji-ko worshippers, located at the 2nd station on the Yoshida Ascending Route, and an auxiliary shrine on the shores of Lake Kawaguchiko.



Mountaintop worship sites (1-1)

When the worship-ascents of the Shugen-do adherents began, sites of worship were constructed along the rim of the crater at the mountain's peak. Worshippers also performed the "Ohachimeguri" walk to the eight ridges around the crater, thought to represent the eight petals of the lotus flower that symbolizes Buddhist paradise.



Murayama Sengen-jinja Shrine (4)

This shrine was the starting point of the Shugen-do faith that originated with the Buddhist priest Matsudai. This ascending route that started from Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha Shrine and passed through Murayama Sengen-jinja Shrine on the way to the peak was used by large numbers of Shugen-do adherents.



Omiya-Murayama Ascending Route (1-2)
(present Fujinomiya Ascending Route)



Suyama Sengen-jinja Shrine (5)

This shrine was the starting point for the Suyama Ascending Route, which suffered major damage during the Hoei Eruption (1707).



Suyama Ascending Route (1-3)
(present Gotemba Ascending Route)



Fuji Sengen-jinja Shrine (6)
(Subashiri Sengen-jinja Shrine)

This shrine is said to have been built in 807 following the Enryaku Eruption. The Subashiri Ascending Route was used for pilgrimages by Fuji-ko adherents.



Subashiri Ascending Route (1-4)



Yoshida Ascending Route (1-5)

Beginning from Kitaguchi Hongu Fuji Sengen-jinja Shrine, this remains the only ascending route that allows climbers to walk all the way from the foothills to the peak.



Mihonomatsubara pine tree grove (25)

The beautiful view of Fujisan from this place has been an influence on many artists. It appears in numerous collections of Japanese poems beginning with the *Man-yoshu*, and is also the scene of the Noh play "Hagoromo" (Feather Robe) and the subject of many Ukiyo-e prints.



"Oshi" Lodging Houses (9,10)
(former house of the Togawa family and house of the Osano family)

These facilities provided meals and accommodation to Doja and Fuji-ko adherents when they made worship-ascents.
* The house of the Osano family (10) is closed to the public.



Oshino Hakkai springs (13~20)

These eight springs are fed by the spring water of Fujisan. Worshipped by people since ancient times, these eight springs together were honored with the title "the eight lakes at the base of Fujisan". They consist of Wakuike Pond, Nigoriike Pond, Kagamiike Pond, Choshiike Pond, Shobuike Pond, Sokonashi-ke Pond, Okamaike Pond, and Deguchiike Pond.



Funatsu lava tree molds (21)

Among the lave tree molds formed when flowing lava engulfed a tree, the ones which resemble a human womb are called "Otainai". One religious practice of the Fuji-ko adherents was the "Otainaimeguri" pilgrimage to these sites.
* The inside of the main cave of Yoshida lava tree molds (22) is not open to the public.



Yoshida lava tree molds (22)



Hitoana Fuji-ko Iseki (23)

This lava tunnel is said to be where the goddess of Fujisan resides. It became a holy site to the Fuji-ko faith as an important place in the religious training of Hasegawa Kakugyo.



Shiraito no Taki waterfalls (24)

This famous waterfall gushes out spring water from the volcanic stratum of Fujisan. It is said to be where Hasegawa Kakugyo purified his body before entering Hitoana, and became a site of pilgrimages by Fuji-ko adherents.



Lake Saiko (1-7)



Lake Shojiko (1-8)



Lake Motosuko (1-9)



Lake Yamanakako (11)



Lake Kawaguchiko (12)

The Fuji Five Lakes are composed of Lake Saiko, Lake Shojiko, Lake Motosuko, Lake Yamanakako, and Lake Kawaguchiko.
Part of the Fuji-ko faith was the "Uchihakkaimeguri" pilgrimage to bathe in the eight lakes at the base of Fujisan, which include the Fuji Five Lakes.

Kofu City
Minobu Town
Nishikatsura Town
Fujikawaguchiko Town
Narusawa Village
Oshino Village
Fujiyoshida City
Yamanakako Village
Oyama Town
Gotemba City
Fujinomiya City
Fuji City
Susono City
Numazu City
Nagaizumi Town
Shizuoka City
Mishima City
Hakone Town
Shimizu Town
Odawara Station
Chuo Expressway
Chuo Line
Fujikyuko Line
Minobu Line
Gotemba Line
Shin-Tomei Expressway
Tomei Expressway
Tokaido Line
Tokaido Shinkansen
Higashifuji-goko Road
KOFU STATION
FUJISAN STATION
GOTEMBA STATION
FUJINOMIYA STATION
FUJI STATION
SHIN-FUJI STATION
MISHIMA STATION
N

Component Parts	An Areas that has outstanding universal value.
Constituent Elements	Constituent Elements are cultural properties such as ascending routes and lakes located in the Fujisan Mountain Area.
Buffer zone	An area established around a property in order to effectively conserve the property.
Management zone	An area established outside a property and its buffer zone.

1 Fujisan Mountain Area
- 1-1 Mountaintop worship sites
- 1-2 Omiya-Murayama Ascending Route (present Fujinomiya Ascending Route)
- 1-3 Suyama Ascending Route (present Gotemba Ascending Route)
- 1-4 Subashiri Ascending Route
- 1-5 Yoshida Ascending Route
- 1-6 Kitaguchi Hongu Fuji Sengen-jinja Shrine
- 1-7 Lake Saiko
- 1-8 Lake Shojiko
- 1-9 Lake Motosuko

2 Fujisan Hongu Sengen Taisha Shrine
3 Yamamiya Sengen-jinja Shrine
4 Murayama Sengen-jinja Shrine
5 Suyama Sengen-jinja Shrine
6 Fuji Sengen-jinja Shrine (Subashiri Sengen-jinja Shrine)
7 Kawaguchi Asama-jinja Shrine
8 Fuji Omuro Sengen-jinja Shrine
9 "Oshi" Lodging House (former house of the Togawa Family)
10 "Oshi" Lodging House (house of the Osano Family)
11 Lake Yamanakako
12 Lake Kawaguchiko
13 Oshino Hakkai springs (Deguchiike Pond)
14 Oshino Hakkai springs (Okamaike Pond)
15 Oshino Hakkai springs (Sokonashiike Pond)
16 Oshino Hakkai springs (Choshiike Pond)
17 Oshino Hakkai springs (Wakuike Pond)
18 Oshino Hakkai springs (Nigoriike Pond)
19 Oshino Hakkai springs (Kagamiike Pond)
20 Oshino Hakkai springs (Shobuike Pond)
21 Funatsu lava tree molds
22 Yoshida lava tree molds
23 Hitoana Fuji-ko Iseki
24 Shiraito no Taki waterfalls
25 Mihonomatsubara pine tree grove

Go here for details about the Component Parts.

17~19TH CENTURY

Fuji-ko and holy site pilgrimages

– Flourishing of Fujisan worship –

The "Fuji-ko" faith of Fujisan worship originated in the 17th century with Hasegawa Kakugyo, a priest who trained at Fujisan. A new religious practice emerged, with Fuji-ko adherents worshipping Fujisan as they made pilgrimages to the places where Kakugyo had trained, including 23 **Hitoana Fuji-ko Iseki,** 24 **Shiraito no Taki waterfalls,** 1-7 **Lake Saiko,** 1-8 **Lake Shojiko,** 1-9 **Lake Motosuko,** 11 **Lake Yamanakako,** 12 **Lake Kawaguchiko,** 13–20 **Oshino Hakkai springs,** 21 **Funatsu lava tree molds, and** 22 **Yoshida lava tree molds.**
In the 18th century, the Fuji-ko faith spread explosively among the general population. The pilgrimage routes to the various spiritual sites became roads that connected the Sengen-jinja shrines in the foothills and other famous sites and historical ruins which became Component Parts of the Fujisan World Heritage, and these roads were travelled by large numbers of Doja. 9 10 **"Oshi" Lodging Houses** were built at the starting points of the worship-ascents to house the "Oshi" who guided and took care of the Doja.



Map of pilgrimage routes to Fujisan in the mid 19th century

The Fujisan pilgrimage routes were not a series of single paths, but rather a number of different routes created according to the purpose of travel. This map shows the many mid-19th century pilgrimage routes that were constructed as the Fuji-ko faith flourished.



***Tokaido Fifty-Three Stations, Hara: Fuji in the Morning* (Utagawa Hiroshige)**

This series of Ukiyo-e prints shows the 53 post towns along the Tokaido Route, and depict the beauty of Fujisan as seen from different places in Japan.

Collection of Shizuoka City
Tokaido Hiroshige Museum of Art

19TH~ CENTURY

Diversification of Fujisan ascents

– Modernization and Fujisan worship –



"Goraiko" sunrise seen from the peak
© PREC Institute Inc.

Beginning from the late 19th century, as railways and automobile roads were constructed in the area around Fujisan and ascents beginning from the fifth station became popular, motivations for climbing Fujisan diversified to include sightseeing and other purposes. However the religious faith in Fujisan is still carried on, with many climbers worshipping the "Goraiko" sunrise at the peak and performing the ritual "Ohachimeguri" walk around the crater rim.



Collection of the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art

***Gunjo Fuji* (Yokoyama Taikan)**

This folding screen painting presents the brilliant contrast of the deep blue mountain slopes and snowcap.