



Natural Allure of
Mt. Takao



FACING: Tim Miller and his German friend Nicola Bernhorster enjoying a weekend hike through the mountain's verdant setting.

LEFT: Abhijeet Kadam and Rahul Sapkal, from India, visit Yakuoin Temple.

BOTTOM: Cable car running up Mt. Takao. The gradient is 31.8 degrees at its steepest point, making it the steepest slope in Japan with a cable car.

Located fifty minutes from the heart of Tokyo, Mt. Takao is covered by a beautiful forest that lets visitors enjoy both Japan's subtropical and temperate natural features. From the summit there is a panoramic view of Tokyo."

This is how the first French language tourist guidebook on Japan, *MICHELIN Voyager Pratique Japon*, describes Mt. Takao, which is located in Hachioji City west of central Tokyo. Released in March 2007, this guidebook bestowed a three-star rating on Mt. Takao—equivalent to that for famous locations in Kyoto and Nara. Thanks to the resulting "Michelin effect," this 599 meter-high mountain is bustling with visitors.

"The natural beauty of Mt. Takao is close enough to the heart of Tokyo to be a way to escape the metropolis, and I hear that you can see Mt. Fuji on a clear day, so I think I'll come again," said British hiker Tim Miller at the summit. Mt. Takao offers a range of hiking trails, and a cable car reaches halfway up the mountain making it possible for casual hikers to have fun as well. A November visit when the autumnal colors are in full force is a superb opportunity to take in the beauty of Japanese fall foliage.

But Mt. Takao's charm goes beyond its natural

features. Atop this mountain visitors will also find the historic Yakuoin Temple, built more than 1,200 years ago.

"If you make a reservation, at Yakuoin Temple you can try *shojin ryori* (Buddhist vegetarian cuisine) or experience *shakyo* (copying of sutras). So there are aspects beyond Mt. Takao's nature that we would like visitors to enjoy," said Hitoshi Takeuchi of the Hachioji City Tourism Department.

If getting away from the din of Tokyo sounds enticing you might pay a visit to Mt. Takao to enjoy a verdant and entirely different side of Tokyo, one that changes with the seasons and offers unique cultural experiences waiting to be discovered.

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