

IN PRAISE OF MOUNTAINS

Japan is a country of mountains. More than 70% of the archipelago is covered with mountains big and small. The highest is Mount Fuji, which has an elevation of 3,776 meters, but there are twenty more mountains in Japan higher than 3,000 meters. Volcanic activity is one factor that has led Japanese people to regard the mountains with reverence, even as objects of faith. Another factor is their sheer beauty, most being covered with forests through which clear rivers run and where wild animals roam free. With improvements in transportation links, the long pilgrimages of yore to sacred mountains for those living in the cities can now be made in no time, and hiking or “bathing” in the forests and mountains are activities that continue to grow in popularity. In this issue, we look at some of the ways in which Japanese people interact with the mountains that surround them.

