



Yuri Yosumi on a trek in the woods
Photo: Courtesy of Shinichi Yajima/Yuri Yosumi

Enjoying Hiking in the Mountains

Yuri Yosumi writes books, guides and essays about hiking, and as an “outdoor style creator” has helped to popularize hiking in Japan, especially among women. We asked Yosumi about the pleasures of mountain hikes and the beauty of Japanese mountains.

KUMIKO SATO

“I like taking pictures, I like looking at plants, and I like drinking coffee in small mountain huts.

I think it’s good that there is something for everyone when it comes to reasons for mountain hiking or ways of enjoying nature,” says so-called outdoor style creator Yuri Yosumi. While producing outdoor clothing and gear for women, Yosumi works to spread the allure of casual trekking in a Japan where the main goal of mountain climbing used to be just reaching the summit.

Yosumi came to realize how amazing mountains truly are in 2003, when she visited Kamikochi in Nagano Prefecture, a

place overflowing with nature. She was moved by the incredible beauty of the grand Hotaka Mountain Range and the emerald green Azusa River. During that trip, she walked about an hour along a flat trekking course, but she came to think that she wanted to go even further along the trail. Yosumi, who wasn’t confident in her own strength and was afraid of heights, little by little gained experience in mountain hiking, and even went trekking in various mountains not just in Japan but in other countries, too.

As she was doing so, she came to a crossroads while trekking in New Zealand in 2004. Trying to decide how to change her clothes

in a mountain hut, she met a European woman who, standing beside her, quickly changed her clothes while still wearing her travel skirt. Yosumi thought that a skirt might solve what she had felt were inconveniences before, so upon returning to Japan, she ordered skirts from an overseas company and did some research. She learned that skirts were also functional, allowing for easy footwork. So she took her idea to a company making outdoor clothing, and in 2009 her Mountain Skirt was

Admiring Mt. Yarigatake from a neighboring mountain ridge
Photo: Courtesy of Yuri Yosumi





With a women's hiking group
Photo: Courtesy of randonnee/Ei-Publishing Co.,Ltd.

commercialized. In Japan, there wasn't really any fashionable outdoor clothing for women, and there weren't any mountain hiking skirts being made. Yosumi's Mountain Skirt allowed women to stay fashionable even while doing outdoor activities, and it immediately became popular with young women. Mountain hiking really took off with young women. Yosumi showed us the cover of a Japanese outdoor magazine that featured photos of her smartly hiking on a mountain while wearing the Mountain Skirt.

Since then, Yosumi has been producing a variety of clothing and other outdoor products. The clothing that she produces is quite colorful. This comes from her distinct sensibilities as she is also an instructor for kimono wearing. Yosumi tells us, "There are rules for kimono based on the changing

seasons, taking the beauty of nature - flowers and landscapes, for example - and expressing it through color-matching and patterns. Japanese mountains have a diverse assortment of flora, and there is a wide variety of color from the fresh greenery and autumn leaves. When you hike in the mountains you can understand why Japanese people have greatly valued a sensibility that admires nature."

Yosumi tells us that the mountain that she felt this the most at was Mt. Daimonji in Kyoto. Mt. Daimonji, famous for ceremonial fires set ablaze to send off ancestral spirits in summer, is a low mountain of only 465 meters in height. You can look out over the city when climbing and get a sense of how Kyoto seems to be protected by the mountains. After descending, you can once again experience the culture of Kyoto that has co-existed with nature in the gardens that use Mt. Daimonji as a backdrop, in the traditional Japanese sweets that resemble seasonal flowers, and more.

Yosumi has climbed quite a few mountains, but she doesn't force herself to take on difficult mountains. "I didn't go to climb Mt. Yarigatake (elevation of 3,180 meters), a mountain that many

hikers dream of climbing, but instead I went to see it. Of course, there are some sights that can only be seen from the summit, but I saw many beautiful sights of Mt. Yarigatake, including the mountain's shadow cast upon a neighboring mountain ridge in the evening, the sight of the mountain reflecting upon a mirror-like pond, and the moon-lit summit," says Yosumi.

Enjoying a leisurely hike
Photo: Courtesy of randonnee/
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Ten years have passed since there was a boom in mountain hiking among young women, and it is now becoming deeply rooted in Japanese culture. Many elderly women and men who had given up on mountain hiking due to concerns about physical strength are attending Yosumi's public talks. At these events, she talks about the enjoyment to be had from walking in the mountains in one's own way while leisurely communing with nature. **17**

