

Dear JASV,

Hi again! This is Mara writing from Hirakata, Osaka! Summer has now passed and fall is here in Japan! I am quite excited to go see the *momiji* in Kyoto and travel for my fall break. Let me tell you about my hike up Mount Fuji in July!



Summer was hot, rainy, humid, and difficult for me. I worked two jobs and I travelled a little bit with friends and to see friends. My semester ended in May and all my friends returned to their countries. One friend, Daralynn from Colorado studying astronomy, stayed until July and we hiked Mount Fuji together! We hiked the Yoshida Trail since it was the only trail open so early in July.

To hike Mount Fuji, you have to pay a fee and, if you want to, you can even spend the night in a hut overnight. The cost of the hike depends on what you need to buy. There is a ¥4000 (\$25) entrance fee, but if you buy snacks, hiking gear, a walking stick, etc then the price will increase. I spent \$50 on food, the hiking stick, stamps, and the entrance fee as a total! Also note that, you can only enter the trail from sunrise until around 2pm so that nobody gets stuck in the middle of the night hiking. We started at the Fifth Station and went to the Ninth Station at the top. We bought walking sticks to have stamped as we climbed to the top which is a really cool souvenir.



I have been hiking for my entire life, so for me it was not hard. I did not even struggle with altitude sickness but Daralynn did struggle going up. There were a lot of people on the trail and so many were struggling to breathe and continue on. Most of the way the path did hairpin turns (also called zig zags) up to the top. At the end, the path was really steep and mainly volcanic rock.

It took us a total of 16 hours to go up and back down for 4.2 miles (6.8 kilometers). The elevation gain was 2,336 feet (1,370 meters) and the top Mount Fuji is 12,389 feet (3,776 meters). There were lots of Japanese people and tourists hiking with us! Around 200,000-300,000 people climb Mount Fuji every year and the trails are only open from July to September due to safety concerns. I am extremely lucky, especially because I came down the volcano safely. Some people get hurt or are unable to come down on their own. There's actually a big issue in Japan about restricting hikers of Mount Fuji more. It is quite expensive to go on rescue missions up the volcano, so many Japanese people are thinking of reforms.



The last thing I would like to say about Mount Fuji is that it is a very important cultural and historical site for Japanese people. In Shintoism and Buddhism, Mount Fuji is considered a holy site, so over hundreds of years many people have gone on a pilgrimage to the top. There's even a temple and shrine at the top of Mount Fuji! Many poems, paintings, and even *kimonos* depict Mount Fuji over the course of Japanese history. So this very recognizable volcano of Japan is very important to Japan.

I am so lucky and happy that I was able to hike Mount Fuji and see it in its glory. If you want to hike Mount Fuji, remember it is quite difficult and to bring the correct gear!

Sincerely,
Mara Surovell