



[Special Feature]

The Tomorrow of Mt. Fuji

Passing a World Treasure on to the Next Generation

To hand down Mt. Fuji, a treasure of the world, to future generations, Yamanashi Prefecture has been taking a wide range of measures. Since the mountain's inscription as a World Cultural Heritage site in 2013, the prefecture has also worked sincerely on the "homework" assigned by ICOMOS (UNESCO's advisory body), including visitor control and environmental impact. In this issue, we present a major feature on the initiatives under way to make the "tomorrow" of Mt. Fuji secure. The categories covered are as follows.

Faith & Culture / Infrastructure Development / Volcanic Disaster Preparedness / Industry / Tourism Promotion

[Volcanic Disaster Preparedness]

Preparing Properly for an Eruption of Mt. Fuji

"We plan to continue this experiment until the building collapses." The words of the official in charge may sound alarming, but this is an important experiment unlike any other in the world. In the mountains of Fujikawaguchiko Town, 30 centimeters* of volcanic ash has been piled on the roof of a wooden building to evaluate its structural safety. The results will be used to create standards that will help residents judge the right timing for evacuation should Mt. Fuji ever erupt.

*Since February 20 this year, based on input from an expert review panel, safety at 20 centimeters has also been verified.

Toward Prefecture-Specific Guidelines Suited to Local Conditions

When people hear of an eruption of Mt. Fuji, their first worry tends to be pyroclastic flows or lava flows. What is often overlooked, however, is the ashfall that accompanies an eruption. Major impacts are expected on daily life in general, including transportation and communications.

The prefecture is therefore studying the effects of ashfall on buildings in order to create a "Building Evacuation Judgment Standard" — a benchmark for determining whether it is safe to remain indoors.

Depending on the scale of the eruption, ashfall of 32 to 64 centimeters is forecast around the Fuji Five Lakes. With that much ash, the basic principle is to shelter indoors, at home or in a sturdy building.

However, many wooden houses built under the old seismic standards remain in this area. No data existed on how much accumulated volcanic ash such older buildings can withstand, or on their risk of collapse. To verify this, the current ashfall experiment — the first of its kind in Japan — is being conducted.

Here Is the Experiment

A single-story wooden house built in 1976 was relocated to the experiment site. The ash piled on the roof is volcanic ash that fell from Sakurajima in Kagoshima. In January this year, a crane was used to deposit 30 centimeters of ash on the roof.

To study how this load affects the building, sensors have been attached to the beams and pillars for continuous measurement. When officials visited the site about three months after the experiment began, some beams had cracked and were sagging.

Where in the building do effects appear, what kind of effects, and how long until collapse? As this is a first-of-its-kind experiment, every piece of data obtained is valuable.



Putting the Results to Use

In March 2025, the Cabinet Office formulated the "Guidelines for Wide-Area Ashfall Countermeasures in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area." The review panel was chaired by Toshitsugu Fujii, Director of the Mount Fuji Research Institute and Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo.

The guidelines point out that "with 30 centimeters or more of ashfall during rain, some wooden houses will collapse."

Standards suited to the characteristics of each region are needed to judge whether residents can stay at home and continue sheltering there.

For this reason, one major aim of the experiment is to obtain the data needed to draw up an "evacuation flowchart."

The results so far show that 30 centimeters of volcanic ash is dangerous, and that evacuation becomes necessary at around 20 centimeters. Based on such concrete experimental data, and weighing conditions such as the age of a house against the amount of ashfall, the prefecture is developing guidelines for judging "when to leave."

Volcanic Ash Trivia (1)



Touching volcanic ash (with permission), you find it grittier than river or beach sand — it looks like it would hurt if it got in your eyes. Its texture is quite different from beach sand, whose grains have been rounded by the time they accumulate on the shore.

Volcanic Ash Trivia (2)



Unlike snow, volcanic ash piled on a roof does not melt. For the same volume, it weighs roughly four to six times as much as snow. Removing it by hand, the way snow is cleared from roofs, is heavy, difficult work, so damage may be prolonged.

[Impacts by Ashfall Amount]

Ashfall of 30 cm or more: possible collapse of wooden houses (during rain)

Ashfall of 3 cm or more: road traffic and supply of goods impeded

Ashfall of trace amounts or more: lifeline impacts; suspension of rail and air services

Debris flows after ashfall: possible from 1 cm or more during rain; major damage from 10 cm or more

Prepared for "What If": First Evacuation Shelters Installed

What if you encountered a sudden eruption while on the mountain? Prepared for just such a "what if," shelters to protect climbers from falling volcanic rocks have been installed for the first time on the Yamanashi-side descending trail of Mt. Fuji. At the foot of the mountain, a plan to make use of medical containers is also under consideration. These are new forms of preparedness we want as many people as possible to know about.



Mt. Fuji, whose majestic form captivates us, is still an active volcano. To prepare for the event of an eruption, two shelters to protect climbers from volcanic rocks and rockfall were installed last December on the Yamanashi-side descending trail — a first.

While mountain huts dot the ascending trail, the descending trail has had few places to take cover, and securing emergency refuge there had long been an issue. The new shelters are a first step toward filling that "safety gap."

They are located near the seventh and eighth stations of the descending trail, embedded into the mountainside by cutting into slopes at bends in the trail. Each is made of reinforced concrete, 2 meters high, 2.5 meters wide and 5.4 meters deep. If people line up closely without luggage, each shelter can hold up to 135 evacuees. Construction cost about 38 million yen per shelter, funded by the trail fee collected from climbers.

Two more shelters are to be added this fiscal year, with a total of 13 planned by fiscal 2031. Littering and using the shelters as toilets are strictly prohibited. For the sake of future climbers, please observe good manners and treat them with care.

Medical Containers Also Under Consideration

Containers offer excellent airtightness and cleanliness, so when fitted with medical equipment they can serve as treatment rooms. They have in fact been used at disaster sites.

The prefecture is also studying whether, in the event of a Mt. Fuji eruption, they could be used to transport hospitalized patients at the foot of the mountain who need continued treatment.

Volcanic Disaster Specialists: Experts Bridging Government and Residents

In fiscal 2020 the prefecture established a Volcanic Disaster Countermeasures Office and became the first in Japan to hire "volcanic disaster specialists." Because volcanic disasters involve many complex phenomena occurring at once, experts are needed to handle countermeasures. When the time comes, they convey specialized knowledge in plain language and act as a bridge among residents, government, and researchers.

Currently serving in this post is Misa Furuya (photo). She studied the eruption history of Mt. Fuji in graduate school and joined the prefectural government in fiscal 2023. She is drafting a range of measures in preparation for an eruption of Mt. Fuji.

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[Infrastructure Development]

The Future of the Fifth Station, Transformed by Infrastructure

Thirteen years have passed since World Heritage inscription. To carry the value of Mt. Fuji into the future, the prefecture is now working on redeveloping the fifth station, introducing the next-generation mobility system "Fuji Tram," and newly installing power and telecommunications infrastructure.

From a Climbers' "Starting Point" to a "Stay-and-Explore Base" Where Value Can Be Rediscovered

Halfway up Mt. Fuji, at an altitude of about 2,300 meters, the fifth station sits at the end of the Fuji Subaru Line. Here stand Fujisan Komitake Shrine, founded in 937 (Johei 7), along with commercial facilities and parking lots. Many climbers set out from here for the summit.

Lively discussions about this fifth station are now under way. The trigger was the "homework" assigned by ICOMOS, UNESCO's advisory body, at the time of World Cultural Heritage inscription in 2013: the "improvement of the design of various facilities." The prefecture's baseline survey also brought issues to light: many of the areas with the best views overlap with parking lots and walkways, leaving too little space to savor the scenery at leisure; and the value at the heart of the World Cultural Heritage listing — Mt. Fuji as an "object of worship and wellspring of art" — is not being fully conveyed to visitors. The prefecture is now hearing the issues and hopes of shrines, shops, climbers and others in their respective positions, and studying improvements together with those involved.

The aim is a fifth station that is not just a place to pass through, but one where people stop and feel the sanctity and beauty of Mt. Fuji. Out of dialogue across positions and generations, a new landscape is beginning to take shape.

Connecting the Mountain's Arteries: Power, Telecommunications, and the Fuji Tram

Enhancing the fifth station's functions and making it a more attractive hub requires better power and telecommunications infrastructure. Even today the fifth station has no grid electricity; it relies on private generators running on heavy oil and light oil hauled up from the foot of the mountain. Communications are also unstable, leaving concerns for climber rescue and safety.

What the prefecture is considering is running power lines and optical fiber up to the fifth station. This fiscal year, basic design work is under way to determine costs and construction timelines.

If realized, the benefits would be wide-ranging. Beyond serving as a daily power source for commercial facilities and first-aid stations, generation no longer dependent on heavy and light oil is expected to reduce environmental impact. Improved communications networks would also greatly aid the transmission of disaster information and speed up rescue operations.

Financially underpinning this plan is the next-generation mobility system under consideration: the "Fuji Tram." Running on rubber tires and combining the advantages of both trains and buses, this new vehicle would allow infrastructure costs to be recovered over the long term through fare revenue. A basic operation plan covering timetables, vehicles and profitability is now being drawn up. Beyond easing overtourism on Mt. Fuji and serving disaster-prevention and environmental goals, a future connection to the Linear Chuo Shinkansen is also in view.

Construction Begins on a New "Gateway" to Mt. Fuji

That Linear Chuo Shinkansen's Yamanashi Prefecture Station (provisional name) held its groundbreaking ceremony in March this year, and construction is finally beginning. Completion is slated for the end of 2031. With a Fuji Tram boarding point directly connected, the Linear station will become, for tourists, the true "gateway to Mt. Fuji."

Power and telecommunications, next-generation mobility, and the Linear Chuo Shinkansen linking to the foot of the mountain — new arteries connecting Mt. Fuji to the future are now surely beginning to pulse.

[Faith & Culture]

Reviving the Old Roads: The "Trails from the Foothills" Buried in History Begin to Move Again

Now that climbs starting from the fifth station are the norm, the "old pilgrimage trails" leading up from the foothills are drawing renewed attention. Deeply tied to the history of Mt. Fuji worship, the redevelopment of these old roads is an attempt to find new forms of climbing and to take a fresh look at the historical and cultural value of Mt. Fuji.

The Old Trails and Pilgrimage Routes, Once Again

At 3,776 meters, Mt. Fuji is Japan's highest peak. With its overwhelming form and repeated eruptions, it has been an "object of worship" commanding people's awe since ancient times. The journey from the foothills to the summit was called *tohai* — worship-ascent — not mere leisure but a practice of faith, purifying body and mind while stepping into a sacred realm.

From the modern era onward, however, the development of transportation networks and the wave of tourism rapidly transformed the way people climb. In particular, after the Fuji Subaru Line opened in 1964 and cars could easily reach the fifth station, the number of people walking up from the foothills plummeted. As a result, climbers became concentrated above the fifth station, and congestion and burdens on the natural environment have become problems. At the same time, the fading of Mt. Fuji's historical and cultural value, and of the spirituality that dwells there, has become a major concern.

Against this backdrop, what is now quietly drawing attention is the reappraisal and redevelopment of the "old climbing trails" leading from the foothills to the fifth station, and of the pilgrimage routes spreading across the mountain's base.



Climbing as a Practice of Faith, Supported by the Oshi

Tracing the history of Mt. Fuji worship, until the Heian period the mainstream was *yohai* — venerating the mountain from afar. People who feared the repeatedly erupting mountain as a "raging deity" built Sengen shrines across the foothills to appease its anger, offering prayers at these places of distant worship. From the late Heian into the Kamakura period, as volcanic activity subsided, the mountain became tied to esoteric Buddhism and turned into a "mountain of shugen" where ascetic monks secluded themselves in training for months at a time. From the late Muromachi period, commoners began making worship-ascents alongside the ascetics, and in the Edo period the practice spread explosively through Fuji-ko, lay religious associations of common people.

Supporting these ascents behind the scenes were the people known as oshi. The oshi not only provided climbers with lodging and meals; they offered prayers, taught doctrine, and stood as religious figures between the gods and the people. It is said that in the clear waterways drawn into the oshi's houses, climbers washed away the grime of travel and the impurities of the secular world, purifying themselves before ascending the mountain.



The Old Roads Need Work — and Teahouses Are Coming Back

The foothill trails that once bustled with Fuji-ko pilgrims lost their vitality as road construction changed the flow of climbers, and many were forgotten. Surveys by the prefecture and related municipalities are now under way, but the trails' current condition can hardly be called good.

For example, the Funatsuguchi Trail — said to have served as a route of faith since the Kamakura period, and traveled by shared buses in the Showa era — is now blocked by numerous fallen trees and is not in a condition for ordinary climbers to walk safely. On the Shojiguchi Trail, which runs from the southern shore of Lake Shoji through the Aokigahara forest, erosion of the path and fallen trees become conspicuous at higher elevations.

Even so, moves to revive these historic roads have begun. On the Yoshidaguchi Trail, venerable teahouses that had closed — Nakanochaya and Daimonjiya — have reopened for business and become new resting places for climbers walking up from the foothills.

That said, restoring the old trails and pilgrimage routes will take more than hard infrastructure such as clearing fallen trees. Parking at the trailheads, toilets along the way, route signage and other facilities must be improved, and many hurdles remain in building a system to receive visitors, from waste problems accompanying increased use to

consideration for neighboring residents.

The fading "oshi culture" of the Fuji foothills is another major challenge for preservation. The surviving oshi houses are exploring new forms of continuity suited to the times, such as welcoming inbound visitors drawn to the spirituality of Mt. Fuji in place of the dwindling Fuji-ko.

Let's Rediscover Together the Many Ways to Enjoy Climbing Mt. Fuji

Looking ahead, the prefecture is preparing a digest edition of its research reports on the old trails. A concept for simulated experiences of the old roads using VR and AR technology is also under study.

The value of Mt. Fuji does not lie only in Japan's highest altitude or the sunrise from the summit. Walking the forests at its foot, reflecting on the stories of faith of those who once trod these paths, and becoming one with magnificent nature — it is in that very process that the universal value recognized by the world lives on. The redevelopment of the old trails and pilgrimage routes is a project for rediscovering the rich and varied ways of enjoying a Mt. Fuji climb.



Shinsen Kondate: The Old Oshi Cuisine for Eating to Purify Oneself



Kawaguchi district in Fujikawaguchiko Town flourished as a sacred center of Mt. Fuji worship, with as many as 140 oshi at its peak. Its history, unlike that of Fujiyoshida, which prospered in the Edo period, is said to date back to the late Heian period, but it was swallowed by the tides of time and fell into steady decline.

Then one man, prompted by a chance encounter with a copy of the "Kawaguchiko Town Chronicle," set out to dig up and revive the history sleeping in his hometown: Shinsuke Togawa, a descendant of the oshi, who runs the restaurant "Toge no Chaya" in the town. In 2012, as part of his activities, he took on the challenge of recreating the "oshi cuisine" once served to those making pilgrimages to Mt. Fuji.

Guided by Edo-period documents and old manuscripts, the morning and evening meals were brought back to life. Called shinsen kondate — the "menu of divine offerings" — this was a kind of pre-ascent ritual: eating the same dishes offered to the gods in order to purify oneself.

The morning meal comprises six dishes in all, including zoni soup, Kawaguchi's traditional dish "memaki" (simmered mackerel rolls), and a "hira" plate of simmered eggplant and kanpyo gourd, plus a "jyuzume" box of water pepper and myoga ginger. The evening meal offers seven dishes, including clear soup, ayu sweetfish simmered tosa-style, carp sashimi, and simmered rock tripe and lotus root. The recreated oshi cuisine has also been served at the annual grand festival of Kawaguchi Asama Shrine.

It is an attempt to tether the fading culture of the oshi to the present through "food." "I hope it becomes a gateway to interest in Kawaguchi's traditions and culture," says Togawa. The recreated meals carry into our era the spirit of the oshi, who once welcomed pilgrims gathering from across the country.

Zoni: lotus root, greens, matsutake broth, carrot, pine nuts

Sekihan (red rice)

Hira: simmered eggplant, kanpyo gourd

Sake: amazake (originally doburoku)

Nishime: mackerel memaki

Jyuzume: white melon, myoga ginger, water pepper

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[Tourism Promotion]

The 2026 Climbing Season Opens July 1 — Observe the Climbing Rules Again This Year



2026 Climbing Regulations: Yoshida Trail

To protect Mt. Fuji's natural environment and climbers' safety, the prefecture has tightened climbing regulations in stages. The rules, substantially revised in fiscal 2025, continue largely unchanged in fiscal 2026. Ahead of the climbing season from July 1 to September 10 (planned), let's review the key points.

Preventing Wrong Turns Before They Happen

Starting this year, an alert about "taking the wrong trail" is displayed at the time of booking. On the Yoshida Trail, every year a number of climbers mistakenly descend toward the Subashiri trailhead on the Shizuoka side partway down. Guides, audio guidance devices and signboards are posted at the fork, but on the descent people tend to pick up speed and miss the signs. So images of the fork and points of caution are now shown when booking. The aim is to make climbers aware of the easily mistaken spot in advance and reduce judgment errors on site.

The Passage Reservation System and the Pledge to Follow the Rules

The passage reservation system accepts same-day bookings; changes are possible up to the day before, and cancellations until the day after payment. Availability is shown on the date-selection calendar with circle, triangle and X marks. The daily cap is 4,000 climbers (excluding mountain-hut guests), but last year there was not a single day on which the gate closed because the cap was reached. There is no need to panic when booking.

An equipment check to discourage poorly equipped climbs, and a pledge to follow rules such as "stay on the trail" and "carry out all your trash," were also built into the reservation

system from last year. The passage fee remains 4,000 yen this year and is used for climbing safety measures on Mt. Fuji.

The Gate Closes at 2 p.m.; No Passage at Night

From last year, the closing time of the fifth-station gate was moved up from 4 p.m. to 2 p.m. Passage is prohibited from 2 p.m. until 3 a.m. the following morning. This is to prevent dangerous "bullet climbing" — pushing through to the summit overnight without staying at a mountain hut.

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Mt. Fuji Tourism from Here On

There is more to Mt. Fuji tourism than climbing. Encounter history and culture at the World Heritage Center, feel the breath of the primeval forest walking through Aokigahara, and gaze at the mountain's majestic form from scenic spots. Here are the topics that will color Mt. Fuji tourism going forward.

TOPICS 1: The World Heritage Center Evolves Further

The Yamanashi Prefectural Fujisan World Heritage Center, marking its 10th anniversary, will be renewed this fiscal year. Comprising a North Hall and South Hall, the center welcomed about 430,000 visitors last fiscal year alone (roughly 35% from overseas) and serves as a hub for communicating the value of Mt. Fuji.

The renewal has two pillars. The first is enriching the South Hall exhibits. Digital signage will be newly installed in the hall, which conveys the mountain's universal value in faith, the arts and more, with the latest research findings and area highlights continuously updated and presented in multiple languages. Alongside the already popular VR corner, where visitors don goggles to relive the "journey of Fuji worship," it looks set to become a new centerpiece of the South Hall.

The second pillar is turning the North Hall into a base for the "Mt. Fuji Rangers." As a place to learn about nature conservation and safe climbing, a safety consultation desk and displays of necessary climbing equipment will be newly established, allowing visitors to receive climbing advice directly from the rangers. Popular existing exhibits, including the large-screen Mt. Fuji guidance theater, will continue as they are. Completion is expected this autumn.

TOPICS 2: The Appeal of the Aokigahara Forest Area Spreads

Aokigahara Jukai spreads over lava from the Mt. Fuji eruption of about 1,200 years ago. The vigorous life force of the primeval forest, the mystic traces of Fuji worship, the food culture rooted in the region — to share these many-sided attractions with the world, passionate members led by nature guides came together last September to launch the "Jukai Mirai Kaigi" (Sea-of-Trees Future Council).

Last fiscal year the council held study sessions aimed at training guides and creating new tours, and ran monitor tours combining "nature, culture and food" on three courses (the Three Lakes course, Lake Shoji course and Lake Sai course). This fiscal year, fieldwork programs for elementary and junior high school students from inside and outside the prefecture are under consideration.

A particular focus is developing the inbound market. Sales channels will be strengthened mainly toward the U.K., U.S. and Australia, where interest in "adventure tourism" —

experiencing nature on foot — runs high.

At a time when the concentration of tourists at popular spots is an issue, promoting the appeal of the forest and its surrounding areas also helps disperse tourism across the region. A new style of tourism unique to Aokigahara, weaving together nature, culture and food, looks set to take root.

TOPICS 3: Koyodai, Toward Greater Use

Koyodai is a scenic viewpoint in Narusawa Village. From its 1,165-meter summit a 360-degree panorama unfolds, taking in not only Mt. Fuji and the Aokigahara forest but Lake Motosu and Lake Sai as well. In the autumn-foliage season of early November in particular, it offers picture-perfect views — a spot known to those in the know.

A plan to make Koyodai a new tourism hub is now in motion. Ideas raised in a "sounding survey" of private operators include building accommodations at Koyodai, creating a visitor hub along National Route 139 (the Fuji Panorama Line), and linking the foot of the hill to Koyodai by ropeway. The Narusawa Area Development Committee is currently in dialogue with local towns, villages and stakeholders, on the premise of harmony with the community and consideration for the natural environment.



[Industry]

A Book That Brings You Close to the Textile Landscape Nurtured at the Foot of Mt. Fuji



resources and is one of Japan's leading textile production areas, with a history of more than 1,000 years. The region's greatest strength is that specialized artisans handle each process and complement one another's work, achieving sophisticated small-lot, multi-variety production. Even today, more than 200 textile-related businesses are concentrated here.

The promotional book newly published by Yamanashi Prefecture, "LOOMSCAPE – YAMANASHI TEXTILE BOOK –," was created to share the history and appeal of the Gunnai textile region with audiences in Japan and abroad. The title joins "LOOM" and "SCAPE," carrying the wish to deliver the landscape of the land where the textiles are born and the lives of its people.

Open the book and you are struck by its novel layout, with colorful fabric swatches affixed directly to the pages. Yarn-dyeing ("sakizome"), in which threads are dyed before weaving; "high density," weaving fine warp and weft tightly together to produce fineness and luster; and "multi-variety," excelling at difficult textiles and meeting diverse needs — the book lets you experience these hallmarks of Gunnai textiles not only with your eyes but with your fingertips.

The book is being distributed to global collection brands and designers, with the aim of sparking new inspiration for creators' work and business and opening doors to collaboration with Gunnai textiles. Copies are also available at the Yamanashi Prefectural Library and the Yamanashi Design Center — do come into contact with the textile landscape that the foot of Mt. Fuji has nurtured.

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Welcome to Yamanashi, Home of Beautiful Mt. Fuji



KOSE's Plant Starts Operating in July

The "Minami-Alps Plant" of major cosmetics maker KOSÉ Holdings (head office: Chuo-ku, Tokyo), completed this February and now preparing for operation, will at last begin operating in July. An advanced production base using pristine water and Yamanashi-made "green hydrogen" is being born. The positive image of World Heritage Mt. Fuji is, we hear, attracting

investment not only from within Japan but from overseas as well.



A "Local Production for Local Consumption Model Plant" Is Born

The new plant was built on a vast 33,800-tsubo (about 11-hectare) site in Yagoshima, Minami-Alps City. It will manufacture a wide variety of skincare products.

During construction, the plant used "Shin Yamanashi Power Furusato Hydro Plan," CO2-free electricity from prefectural hydroelectric power stations. It is said to be the first in Japan to use a 100% CO2-free power supply from the construction stage.

Furthermore, once operating, the plant will use prefecture-made green hydrogen produced by the "Yamanashi Model P2G System" at Komekurayama (Kofu City) as fuel for its thermal energy.

Pristine "water," CO2-free "hydropower," and green "hydrogen" — three clean elements are all in place.

As a "local production for local consumption model plant" that makes maximum use of locally generated energy, an initiative leading the cosmetics industry will be realized here in Yamanashi. The Site Search Was a Search for "Water Sources"

Construction of the new plant began in 2024. According to KOSE, selecting the site was nothing less than a search for a "water source." While surveying famous waters across the country, the company had in fact considered building at another location in Yamanashi more than a decade ago, only to give up. Even so, "we could never forget Yamanashi's beautiful nature and abundant water resources," the company recalls. And so it decided to build its plant in Yamanashi — a "land chosen by heaven, a land of famous waters," home to Mt. Fuji and the Southern Alps and Japan's top producer of mineral water. It is one example of how the "blessings of Mt. Fuji" extend across the entire prefecture.



The new plant will not simply use clean water. It will also work on "water resource circulation," including more efficient water use, wastewater reuse, and rainwater utilization.

Hopes Rise for Local Employment

The workforce is planned at about 300. With business expansion in view, the company states that the plant's specifications can accommodate second-phase and subsequent construction.

Ultimately the plant is expected to produce up to 50 million cosmetic items, raising hopes for further contributions to local employment.

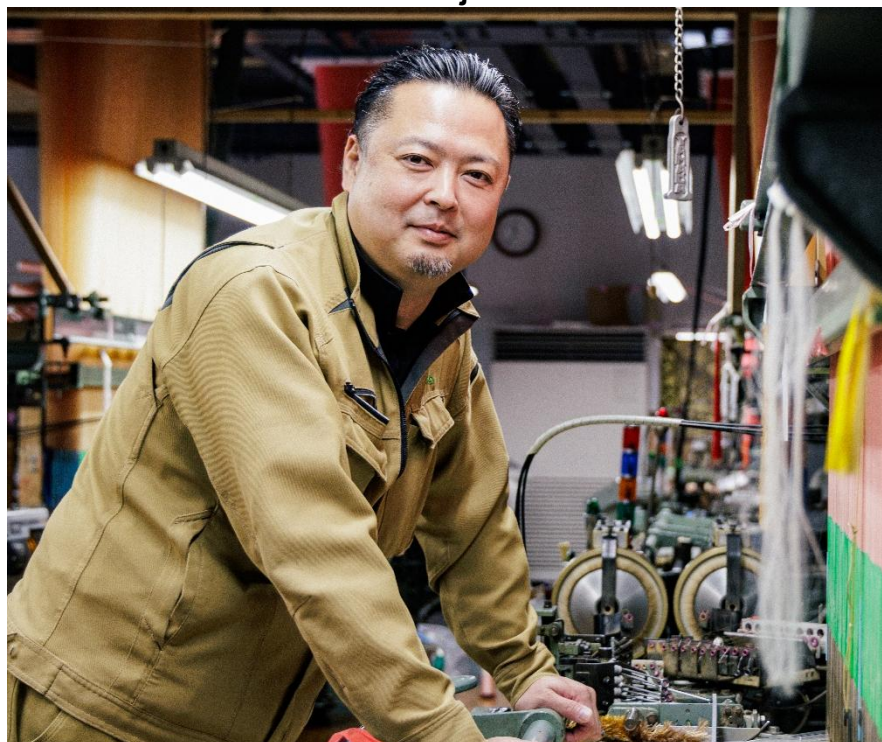
Captivated by Pristine Water

Kazutoshi Kobayashi, Representative Director, Chairman and Group CEO, KOSE Holdings

Guided by the conviction that "searching for a plant site means searching for a water source," we examined candidate locations across the country, and the beauty of Yamanashi — blessed with rich nature, Mt. Fuji foremost among it, and with pristine water resources — left a deep impression on me. The desire to build a plant in Yamanashi never faded, and after more than ten years we have at last celebrated the completion of our long-hoped-for Minami-Alps Plant. The skincare cosmetics we plan to produce here, such as SEKKISEI and DECORTE, depend on water above all. I expect the image of the beautiful nature and clear waters of "Yamanashi, home of Mt. Fuji" to further elevate the value of the cosmetics we make and to bring color and richness to the lives of people around the world. As operations begin this July, we aim to pass Yamanashi's abundant water and greenery on to the next generation and to be a plant long loved by the people of the prefecture.

[Serial] Interviews with Citizens Striving for the Future: Yamanashi Kenjin

The Weaver at the Foot of Mt. Fuji



Representative Director and President, Hikari Orimono Co., Ltd.

Takuya Kagami

The history of weaving in Yamanashi goes back more than 1,000 years. The Heian-period text "Engishiki" is said to record textiles being paid as tribute from Yamanashi. In Fujiyoshida, snowmelt from Mt. Fuji wells up from the earth, providing unmatched conditions for dyeing thread. Yet even this leading textile region now struggles with a shortage of successors. Amid all this, one weaver has launched an original brand and is drawing attention.

The textiles of Fujiyoshida, a production area said to boast more than 1,000 years of history, are characterized by multi-variety production and yarn-dyeing. Through the long, harsh winters of the farming off-season at the foot of Mt. Fuji, farm families made their living at the loom. The phrase "half farmer, half weaver" tells the story of life in this land just as it was. Hikari Orimono mainly produces kinran-donsu brocade fabrics used for hina-doll costumes, Japanese accessories, stage costumes and more.

HISTORY

1981: Born in Fujiyoshida City

2001: Entered the weaving world at age 20

2009: Began a joint development project with students

2012: Launched the original brand "kichijitsu"

2020: Became Representative Director and President of Hikari Orimono

"Clack, clack, clack, clack."

Fujiyoshida City sits on the northern foot of Mt. Fuji. This town, where the powerful sound of machinery rings out, is one of Japan's leading textile centers, producing fabrics of every kind: high-grade garment cloth, necktie fabric, linings, interior textiles and more. Born into a family that has run a weaving house since before the war, Takuya Kagami grew up surrounded by that sound from early childhood.

Hikari Orimono, the company Kagami heads, produces kinran-donsu — the brocade used for hina-doll costumes, Japanese accessories and hanging scrolls. It has long supported the beauty of Japanese tradition from behind the scenes. Yet however high its craftsmanship, the name Hikari Orimono almost never appeared in public. Such is the fate of a production region dominated by OEM work — manufacturing products for other companies' brands on commission — that the very name recognition of the textile region itself remained low.

A Turning Point: Stepping onto the Stage

Then one day, a turning point arrived.

It began with an encounter with a single student: an industry-academia collaboration project with Tokyo Zokei University that started in 2009. It was a forum where young successors who had taken over the family business but lacked specialized knowledge could exchange information with students studying textiles, with matched pairs going on to develop products together.



The student who came to Kagami was Aya Inoue. Her proposals were, as you might expect of a student, always unconventional. But Kagami responded carefully to every wild request. He had promised the textile designer Masaru Suzuki, who supervised the program: "A weaver never says no to what a student proposes. The moment you say it can't be done, the challenge is over."

Through trial and error — and inspired by the good-luck charms that high school girls of the day carried — a product called the "omamori pokke" (charm pouch) was born. A pop design springing out of the subdued, traditional Japanese feel of kinran-donsu brocade. This led to the launch of the new brand "kichijitsu." The brand, whose name comes from the idea that "every day is an auspicious day," went on to score a major hit with its "GOSHUIN series" featuring auspicious motifs such as Mt. Fuji and pine-bamboo-plum. It was the moment a weaving house once hidden in the shadow of wholesalers came to own a brand sought out by name.



Giving Children the Sound

The sound of the looms, once part of everyday life, is disappearing from the town.

Three years ago, Kagami built a spacious hall accommodating 60 people on the second floor of his relocated office. He accepts local elementary, junior high and high school students on free social-study visits and shows them around the factory. It has become a precious place where factory tours and workshops are possible.

"To be honest, I've never been good at speaking in front of people. But I figured it had to be me."

Local children getting to know this industry, touching the cloth, hearing the town's traditional sound — he believes this is what leads to the future.

The industry's reality is far from easy. Even now, after weathering COVID-19, weaving houses keep closing as artisans age. Introducing a new machine requires an investment of more than 10 million yen per unit. Areas once dense with weaving houses have turned residential, and city ordinances and noise complaints have left not a few mills unable to operate at night. Training an artisan takes at least three years, and there is neither a school for systematic study nor a certification system.

Capital investment and human resource development — the invisible costs keep mounting. Kagami keeps searching for what he can do to protect the future of the weaving houses. That is because there are textiles that can only be made in this place. It is said that even using the same thread and the same dyes in another region, the depth of color and the texture come out different. Unless you go out of your way to say "this was dyed with the water of Mt. Fuji," the difference may be too slight to see. But the difference is certainly there.

"Search the whole world — the only place where textiles are woven at the foot of Mt. Fuji is right here."

Clack, clack, clack, clack, clack, clack.

At the foot of majestic Mt. Fuji, the sound of weaving tradition rings out today and tomorrow, together with the pride of the weaving houses.



FUREAI SQUARE

PHOTO SPACE

Why not have a photo you took appear in FUREAI? We look forward to your very best shot!



The magic red liquid: Gibberellin treatment, a world-class technique invented in Yamanashi. Dip a cluster of grape buds into this red liquid and — presto! — they turn into seedless grapes.



Takenoko-man and the bamboo-grove boss: We bought fresh bamboo shoots at "Takenoko Matsuri," the big event in Nanbu Town. They were delicious even without removing the bitterness.



Keep going!: While driving, we came across the "Challenge Fuji Five Lakes Ultramarathon" circling the lakes. We couldn't help but be drawn in by the runners' determined strides.



Joy for body and soul: "Tsukihareru," an old-house cafe run by a winery in Minami-Alps City. I was soothed by the beautiful terraced rice fields seen from the veranda and a spice curry loaded with vegetables.



What will the next exhibition be?: My family looks forward to every special exhibition at the Prefectural Museum (Fuefuki City). My mother, 65 or older, gets in free, and I use an annual passport for a good deal too.



A sacred spot for supporters: "Vent CAFÉ" of our own Ventforet Kofu has opened in the south of Kofu City. The cafe latte comes with Vent-kun's adorable face! The curry is recommended too.

The People on the Cover



Canoeing on Lake Shoji — junior and senior high schoolers practice together: On Lake Shoji, with its grand view of Mt. Fuji, Ami Kasahara, a second-year student at Kawaguchiko High School (left in the cover photo), and Ruito Suda, a third-year student at Katsuyama Junior High School in Fujikawaguchiko Town, were working their paddles. It was a joint practice of three schools, also including Fuji Gakuen High School. Kawaguchiko High School is a powerhouse that has produced Olympians. They practiced cheerfully, but with serious eyes.

Q&A SPACE

This corner answers your questions about prefectural government. This issue's questions are as follows.



Norio Tahara, Design Promotion Supervisor, Yamanashi Design Center

Q: What is Yamanashi's "cultural terroir"?

It refers to the unique value created when the rich regional resources rooted in Yamanashi's nature, history, industry and people's daily lives overlap with the culture, climate and people's aspirations behind them. We have now produced a booklet compiling Yamanashi's "cultural terroir."

Q: What is "terroir" in the first place?

It derives from a French word meaning "land," and refers to the characteristics of a growing area — its geography, topography and climate — that influence the taste and character of wine, coffee, tea and the like.



Q: What does the booklet contain?

The title is "What Is Yamanashi? — A Cultural Terroir Woven from History, Climate and Human Endeavor." It organizes the climatic features, historical qualities and human cultural endeavors that nurtured Yamanashi's industry and culture from the past to the present under four keywords — "Abundance," "Clarity," "Pioneering" and "Co-creation" — and frames them as the essence of Yamanashi.



Q: Tell us about the production process.

A draft based on document research and expert hearings was discussed in workshops attended by a cumulative total of more than 100 people, including prefectural staff, local creators and outside specialists, who contributed a wide range of opinions. The Yamanashi Design Center compiled the results.



[Inquiries] Yamanashi Design Center TEL 055-223-1796

Bringing You the "Now": Yamanashi Policy News

POLICY NEWS YAMANASHI

01 Roadside Station Fujikawa Renewed: A Base for Promoting Regional Appeal [Brand Power]

Roadside Station Fujikawa reopened on April 25 after renovation.

The prefecture is advancing the "Flagship Roadside Station Project," positioning roadside stations as bases for promoting local specialties and tourist information and generating flows of people and consumption. Roadside Station Fujikawa is the first of these.

The centerpiece of this renewal is the information corner, produced by major select shop BEAMS. It is a bright, welcoming space introducing the best of "Minami Yamanashi," a new area brand covering the Kyonan region plus Minami-Alps City.

The sales floor has also been enlarged, with plenty of local farm products on display. On weekends and holidays, visitors can also enjoy "Yama-yaki" grilling (reservation required), savoring mountain delicacies such as mushrooms and game meat. Why not make the roadside station your starting point for experiencing the appeal of Minami Yamanashi?



02 A Big Step Toward Lifting the Ban on Grape Exports: Strengthening Cooperation with Vietnam [International Exchange]

Governor Kotaro Nagasaki visited the Socialist Republic of Vietnam from May 7 to 12, meeting with Prime Minister Le Minh Hung of the new Vietnamese government, the Minister of Agriculture and Environment, the Vice Minister of Industry and Trade, and others.

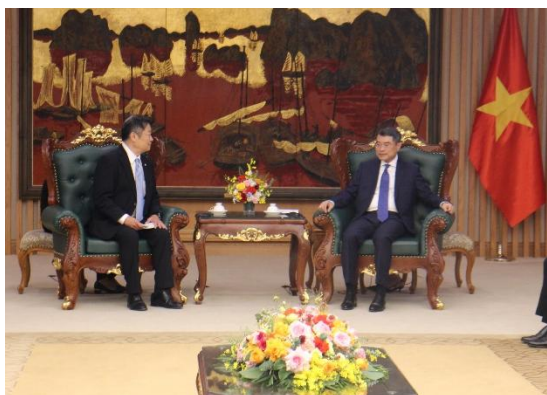
This was the first official visit to the prime minister by a Japanese prefectural governor since the launch of Vietnam's new administration.

In addition to lobbying for the lifting of the ban on exports of prefecture-grown grapes, the visit produced results leading to concrete business development on both the agricultural and industrial fronts, including cooperation in the hydrogen field and the building of cooperative frameworks with local governments.

The prefecture also signed a memorandum on international exchange and cooperation with Tay Ninh Province in the south, where fruit farming is a key economic pillar, as it is in

Yamanashi. Cooperation will advance across a broad range of fields including agriculture, energy, labor and human resources, tourism and culture, and trade and investment.

Through exchange with the world, we aim to realize better lives. We invite everyone to take an interest in international exchange.



Kotaro Dialogue

Toward a Society Where Hard Work Is Rewarded

Today, especially among the young, the feeling that "life doesn't get better no matter how hard I work" is spreading.

Changing this situation requires not stopgap remedies but fundamentally rebuilding the very mechanism by which wages rise.

Through dialogue with many business owners, I have come to share both their genuine desire to raise wages and their strong sense of crisis about talent outflow and the region's future. At the same time, soaring raw material costs and other factors make it hard to take the step of raising wages.

That is precisely why government must act as coordinator. We will first aim to raise the minimum wage, the first gear of wage growth. At the same time, we will generously support more efficient management and human resource development for higher productivity. By raising productivity, generating added value, and returning the fruits to workers as wages, let us together build a virtuous cycle — and a society where hard work is rewarded.

Beware of Investment Trouble via Social Media and Apps

Trouble is occurring in which people met through social media or matching apps solicit investments in financial products and services. Some cases appear to involve impersonation of celebrities and well-known figures. Once you send money, getting it back is difficult. Never transfer money carelessly.

Points for preventing harm

- If you are solicited on social media, be suspicious first.
- Never transfer money to an account in an individual's name.
- Do not deal with companies not registered for financial instruments business.

If in trouble, consult the contacts below.

Yamanashi Prefectural Consumer Affairs Center TEL 055-235-8455

Consumer Hotline TEL 188 ("iyaya") *Nationwide

(You will be directed to the nearest municipal or prefectural consumer consultation desk.)

Reader Present: 3 Winners by Lottery

Answer the Survey and Apply!

Please answer items (1) to (5) below and the survey. Apply by postcard or via the application form.

(1) Postal code (2) Address (3) Name (4) Age (5) Phone number

*One entry per person.

Survey

Q1: Which content in this issue interested you most, and why?

Q2: What is your favorite season for viewing Mt. Fuji, and why?

*Some of the comments received may be introduced in the magazine.

Where to Apply

Public Relations Group, Yamanashi Prefecture, "FUREAI Reader Present" Section

1-6-1 Marunouchi, Kofu 400-8501

Application form: <https://forms.office.com/r/1ZKBzHNpiR>

Deadline: July 31 (Fri), postmarked by that day

Winners will be announced by the shipping of the prize. Personal information may be used for shipping the prize and for notifications from the prefecture.



Prize: "Taberu Jam" packed with fruit pulp — set of 3 varieties

*Product photo is for illustration. Provided by: Vineyard Co., Ltd. 1162-6 Kamikanokawa, Yamanashi City, Yamanashi 405-0018 / TEL 0553-20-1655

FUREAI is also available in English and Chinese.

For "Toward a Delicious Future, Yamanashi," please see the prefectural website.

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