



JAPAN INFORMATION  
AND CULTURE CENTER  
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

# TEACHING TUESDAY

## MOUNT FUJI

Mount Fuji (富士山) is the tallest mountain in Japan, standing at 3,776 meters (12,380 feet) and an active stratovolcano, sitting on three tectonic plates. But it is most well known as a UNESCO World Heritage site and the most striking symbol of Japan.

The name “Fuji” predates the kanji, so the meaning and origin of the name is unclear. Mount Fuji was mentioned as far back as the Heian Period (794-1185), and was often celebrated in verse, especially in the “Manyōshū,” Japan’s earliest poetry anthology. The mountain is presented as landscape, as a religious object, and as the source of artistic and aesthetic appreciation; it is often considered the ideal mountain because of its exceptionally symmetrical, and often snow-capped, cone.

Mount Fuji first rose to widespread public fame through artist Hiroshige’s famous ukiyo-e prints, “The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido”. Hiroshige often used the mountain as a backdrop or central figure in his prints, which were readily available to everyone. The prints were even exported to Europe, where Mount Fuji became an enduring symbol of Japan. Currently, it can be seen from most heavily populated areas of the country, even Tokyo, which continues its legacy.

Currently, Mount Fuji sees about 200,000-300,000 visitors a year. It would take about 24 hours to climb the entire mountain, so most people take a bus about half way up and then spend another 5-7 hours hiking. It may be surprising, but the most popular time to climb the mountain is at night. This is because most people want to see amazing sunrise from the top of Mount Fuji. In the Land of the Rising sun, this sunrise view gets its own special name, goraikou (御来光), “the arrival of light”.