

Fuji-Hakone National Park

I've been collecting National Parks since the onset of my entrance into the hobby, but for some reason I'm still a little amazed whenever I happen upon a *foreign* National Park cover. The box below is one I recently came across. It's from the Fuji-Hakone National Park...as in *Mount Fuji!* This is a national park that lies in the equivalent of four different Japanese counties, all near Tokyo, so it's especially popular with visitors from the nation's capital. It consists of Mount Fuji, Fuji Five Lakes, Hakone, the Izu Peninsula, and the Izu Islands. Nearby cities include Odawara, Fuji, and Numazu.

And it has a lot to offer! Explore nature by trekking through Owakudani, the bubbling steaming valley, or Sengokuhara, the marshland. Visit Komagatake, one of the Hakone volcanic cones, for a breathtaking panorama view of Mount Fuji and Lake Ashinoko. Enjoy art at museums including The Hakone Open-air Museum, MOA Museum of Art, Hakone Glass Forest, and Narukawa Art Museum. But, it's premier attraction, hands down, is Mt. Fuji, rising above the clouds, the symbol of Japan. For some 2,000 years, at least, Mt. Fuji has provided a spiritual basis for the Japanese. This 12,380 ft high, dormant volcano (the highest peak in Japan) is world renowned for its symmetry and serenity. Through many eruptions, Mt. Fuji has formed its beautiful shape, having five dammed lakes at its north foot field. Located between Yamanashi and Shizuoka, it offers snow-covered tranquility in winter and vitality and energy in summer--seasonal changes glorify this national treasure.

Hakone is a large-scale double formed volcano, with a clearly remaining central cone and somma. Lake Ashinoko is an atrio (crater floor) lake. The Hakone area, itself, has a lot of hot springs. The Amagi mountain range, situated in the central part of Izu Peninsula, is covered with luxuriant primeval forests, and affords wonderful views. There are many hot springs along the seacoast, and both transportation and accommodations are easy to access. The Seven Isles of Izu lie off Izu Peninsula. They have subtropical characteristics and Oshima Island and Hachijo-jima Island can be reached from Tokyo by either ship or plane. And, best of all, the park has a number of hotels, inns, hostels and, guest houses and lots of hiking trails.

Boy! Talk about a great vacation destination! This one has my vote!

