

New manners for climbing Mt. Fuji in the age of living with COVID-19

Before climbing

1. **If you are concerned about your health, please carefully consider whether to enter the mountain area. Also, if you are not feeling well or have a fever or other symptoms, do not climb.** [Health management]

If you have an underlying condition, or chronic disease (such as a respiratory or cardiac condition), or health concerns about high altitude climbing, due to your age, or for other reasons, get advice from a medical agency in advance about climbing Mt. Fuji because hypoxia at high altitude aggravates those symptoms and makes wearing a mask impractical. It is also difficult to distinguish symptoms caused by the Covid 19 virus from altitude sickness.

Do not climb the mountain if any of the following apply on the day of climbing or during the 2 week period before the climbing.

- A fever of 37.5°C or higher, or 1°C or higher than the normal body temperature range
- Labored breathing (dyspnea) with tachypnea (breath frequency 24 times or more per minute) when resting
- Severe weariness
- Coughing
- Other indicators of poor health
- Have had contact with a confirmed case or a person who had close contact with a confirmed case
- Have visited countries or regions, where entry restrictions or a post-entry observation period are required by the government, or have had close contact with residents

- Arrived in Japan from or through countries or regions where entry restrictions or a post-entry observation period are required by the government (decisions about measures based on airport quarantine methods, etc. at the time of operation)

If you get infected with COVID-19, even without any symptoms, the condition of

your respiratory organs may worsen rapidly and may put your life in danger. Therefore, those who are concerned about their health or are not feeling well must not climb mountains.

Due to protective measures, rescue operations under the COVID-19 pandemic take longer than usual and are an extra burden on rescue workers. Therefore, climbers must be in perfect physical condition to participate in mountain climbing.

- 2. Plan the mountain climbing with a small number of people; if possible, with members of your household. If a large number of people climb together, they should be divided into small groups.** [Avoid crowded places and close contact]

Check the following points and practice infection control appropriate for the number and profile of companions.

- * These climbing manners are mainly designed to prevent infection with people other than the companions (a party carrying out the mountain climbing or individuals). We ask individuals to take responsibility for infection control among companions.
- It is most desirable when companions are from the same household. In this case, infection control among companions is not mandatory.
- If companions are engaged in a social activity closely (e.g. same workplace, same school or club activities, etc.), take infection control among companions according to regular measures.
- Where a group comprises an unspecified number of people (e.g. mountain climbing tours, etc.), take sufficient infection control among companions, such as wearing masks and hand towels, keeping social distance, hand sanitizing, and prohibiting the sharing of items.

If the number of companions is large, divide them into small groups and carry out activities in each group. In this way, when a person is infected, the spread of the infection among all companions can be suppressed, and the infection can be brought under control within the group.

- When forming groups, it is desirable to secure people in the same group, who usually work or carry out activities closely, are in a family or have other close relationships, or live nearby (people from a low number of infection cases, etc.)
- Maintain social distance with other group members; otherwise, wear masks and use hand towels
- Do not share items with other groups
- In an emergency (danger to one's life or body), accept support from other groups after taking appropriate infection control measures

- It is desirable that the responsible person for each of companion groups is available to cooperate with all groups, by ensuring a communication device or format for communications between groups.

3. **Avoid busy days and hours.** [Avoid crowded places and close contact]

Many people visit Mt. Fuji every year. Especially on weekends and in the Obon summer holiday season, mountain trails near the summit are congested with people coming for the sunrise. When planning your climb, in order to avoid crowded places and close contact while climbing, try to avoid busy days and hours and congested routes, by using Mount Fuji's Congestion Forecast Calendar. Also, consider watching the sunrise from a place other than the summit, such as in front of a mountain lodge or on the trails. You can enjoy the sunrise while avoiding crowds.

Congestion Forecast Calendar (Mt. Fuji Climbing official website. Avoid the crowd and enjoy safe and delightful Mt. Fuji)

http://www.fujisan-climb.jp/info/congestion_info.html

4. **Be sure to book a mountain lodge in advance.** [Avoid crowded places and close contact]

The mountain lodges on Mt. Fuji should be booked in advance. For infection control, the accommodation capacity may be significantly limited, and the services provided at each mountain lodge may be different from usual years. Please be sure to book a mountain lodge in advance if you stay overnight. Also, if you want to watch the sunrise from the summit, make sure to book a mountain lodge to avoid crowded places and close contact around and at the summit.

Staying in a tent is prohibited on Mt. Fuji by the National Park Act.

Mt. Fuji Mountain Lodges information

http://www.fujisan-climb.jp/hospitality/mountain_hut.html

5. **Don't do "Bullet-Climbing" (overnight climbing without taking a rest)**
[Avoid crowded places and close contact / safety management]

"Bullet-climbing", or climbing the mountain for the sunrise without lodging, can easily cause accidents due to loss of strength and concentration from fatigue and lack of sleep, and altitude sickness can be fatal. Also, there is a risk that a concentration of climbers will occur at sunrise, with overcrowding on mountain trails and the summit area.

When you attempt to watch the sunrise at the top, book a mountain lodge in advance and plan reasonably.

6. Check the latest information and make a safe and comfortable climbing plan. [Safety management]

It takes time to climb a mountain while taking into account infection control. Check carefully information on mountain trails and mountain lodges from the Mt. Fuji Climbing official website and each mountain lodge website. Consider your physical condition, strength, and required time for each climbing route to make a feasible plan with more time than otherwise expected.

In making a climbing plan, appoint a responsible person for all companions to respond to follow-ups. The person should know the name, address, and contact details of each participant. Make sure the responsible person can be contacted by participants as well. If you find you are infected with COVID-19 within 2 weeks of descending the mountain, contact the responsible person.

Conditions for mountain climbing often change , so check again the latest information before departure.

Mt. Fuji Climbing official website <http://www.fujisan-climb.jp/>

7. Prepare items for infection control. [Hygiene management]

For infection control during the climb, bring the items listed below. Prepare essential items for the mountain individually and do not share them with anyone other than your companions.

- Masks, hand towels (at least 2 sheets per day, in case they become wet due to rain or fog.)
- Sealed storage bags (for waste, vomit, etc. The bags should be airtight to prevent infection. Commercially available hygienic bags containing coagulant are not transparent and can prevent odor.)
- Portable hand sanitizer*

* Products containing the following are recommended, which are said to disinfect the COVID-19 virus effectively.

a. Alcohol of not less than 70% concentration

b. Benzalkonium chloride solution of not less than 0.05% (Generic name: Inverted soap)

- Head lamp (to notify your location to keep social distance at night.)

* In addition to the above, people who stay at a mountain lodge should observe its instructions and bring necessary items.

During climbing

8. **Keep social distance.** [Avoid crowded places and close contact]

Keep a social distance of at least 2m from people other than your companions. Refrain from having conversations, and when it's difficult to keep the space or when passing by each other on a mountain trail, in principle, use a hand towel or a mask.

Never walk off-trail, however, to keep the mutual distance. It may cause a rockfall and injure others below.

9. **Use masks and hand towels as needed.** [Avoid crowded places and close contact]

As a general rule, wear a mask or a hand towel to cover your mouth and nose in the following cases:

- Indoor public facilities (toilets, shops, rest areas, etc.)
- When it is hard to keep social distance from people other than companions
- When passing each other on the trails
 - Please greet by hand signs or bows instead of voice.
 - It may be useful to attach a hand towel to your backpack shoulder belt at the departure and cover your mouth and nose when passing by each other, as putting on and taking off a mask every time is impractical.
 - However, if the face cover is wet or you have difficulty breathing, try to keep social distance without forcing yourself to use a face cover.

10. **When there is congestion on trails, please wait and go forward alternately between those ascending and descending.** [Avoid crowded places and close contact]

For hiking in Japan, it is generally considered “those ascending have the right of way”, but since Mt. Fuji trails are narrow and steep, there may be lines of people both ascending and descending. In particular, if there is congestion or areas where it takes a long time to pass through, such as narrow paths or rocky areas, please cooperate to alternate ascending and descending while keeping a physical distance. If there is a safety officer, follow his/her instructions.

11. **Maintain your own comfortable pace to avoid heavy breathing.** [Avoid crowded places and close contact / health management]

Keep a comfortable pace to avoid heavy breathing. Heavy breathing dissipates more saliva than breathing at an average time and may increase the risk of infection. Avoid pushing yourself to overtake. Climbing at a reasonable pace is also effective for preventing altitude sickness.

12. **Avoid sharing items and touching piles and ropes.** [Hygiene management]

Do not share items with anyone other than your companions. For example, when you take a picture, avoid handing over your camera to someone other than your companions. In principle, do not touch piles and ropes provided to indicate the trails, nor use them as a handrail.

13. **Disinfect your hands after using toilets or visiting shops.** [Hygiene management]

Disinfect your hands thoroughly after using public facilities (toilets, shops, rest areas, chains, etc.).

14. **Take waste and vomit home with you in airtight bags.** [Hygiene management]

To prevent the spread of infection, it is necessary to seal trash and vomit. Make sure to take them home with you in airtight storage bags (sickness bag, etc.).

15. **If you become unwell or if worsening weather is predicted, discontinue climbing immediately and descend the mountain.** [Health management]

If you have any of the following conditions during the climbing, discontinue climbing and descend the mountain.

- Have a fever of 37.5°C or higher or 1°C or higher than the normal body temperature range
- Have labored breathing (dyspnea) with tachypnea (24 or more breaths per minute) or severe weariness
- Have a cough, even a mild one
- Have other poor health conditions

- When unfavorable weather is predicted

Also, if you may have close contact with people with any of the above conditions, start descending regardless of the presence or absence of symptoms.

Since extra protective measures will be required, the rescue operation under the COVID-19 pandemic takes longer than usual and burdens rescue workers. Therefore, to prevent further deterioration of your physical condition, descend the mountain promptly.