

Mount fuji



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Currently there are 14 World Heritage sites located in Japan. Of course, 11 are cultural properties and 3 are national properties. If you were a representative of Japan, what would you nominate as the next World Heritage site and why? Mount Fuji or, “Fuji-san” is Japan’s highest summit-rising to 3,776 metres above sea level. Though it has already been denied the title of becoming a World Heritage site once before, there is still strong support from the Japanese population that it should be considered as such.

Besides being able to meet several of the criteria for selection, the way in which Fuji continues to attract national and international attention is paramount to its suitability in becoming a World Heritage site. Fuji’s impact on Japan’s artistic heritage has been profound, inspiring countless poets and artists, even around the world. The oldest work depicting the mountain dates as far back as the 11th century and it is clear how Mt Fuji is rooted to its country and to its people.

Fuji appears quite often in a range of different artworks due to its rather large reputation as being widely admired and sometimes revered as being an embodiment of beauty itself. An example of acclaimed art featuring Fuji is Kanagawa-oki Nami-ura (“Fuji Behind the Waves Off Kanagawa”) by Katsushika Hokusai and it is the best known of Hokusai’s already renowned “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” ukiyo-e prints. The way that Fuji is continually being made subject for painters and photographers alike make it apparent that it still holds its place as one of the most picturesque and striking views that can be experienced in Japan.

As well as being a well recognised representation of Japanese culture, Fuji-san is not only considered as an amazing natural landscape but also as a spiritual site. It has, countless times, been referred to as a “ sacred mountain”. To followers of the Shinto religion (one of the most highly dominant religions in Japan), Mt. Fuji is the embodiment of the very spirit of nature and it is also the site of the shrine for Sengen-sama who is a Shinto goddess.

It was beliefs such as these which led more and more people to climb it in medieval times and today, over 300 000 people make their way up the mountain every year, braving the (approx. ) 8 hour trek. But due to many careless hikers, trash is often strewn all over the mountain, putting a scar on Fuji’s often majestic appearance. Around one third of those who climb Mount Fuji are foreign tourists looking to share a once in a lifetime experience with the enthusiastic Japanese nationals. The mountain is home to any Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples and torii gates marking the entrance to sacred Shinto areas close to the summit holding Sengen-sama’s shrine. Mt Fuji is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Japan and its significance has not dwindled over the years. Fuji is an active stratovolcano that last erupted long ago in 1707 and is not expected to erupt any time soon. Geologists assume that it was created 600 000 years ago. It is often considered “ attractive” due its almost symmetrical disposition and its “ perfect” conical shape and it is this fact that generally makes it pleasing to the eye.

It is enclosed by lakes and dense forests that surround its base which makes it a habitat for numerous amounts of wildlife and makes it rich in vegetation. There are also farms based near the foot of Mt Fuji which once again makes

it fairly important in producing goods for the general public to benefit from. Furthermore, within the cities surrounding Fuji, are shrines which are designated cultural properties which retain legacies of the Edo period (1600-1868) which preserve the architectural and technological advances of this period of time.

Tourist spots around this area are abundant and there are many sights to be seen and enjoyed by foreigners and Japanese natives alike. And on Fuji's lower regions, there are many other prominent cultural properties, sites, landscapes, and natural monuments that cover a range of enriching values that it embodies, so its virtue as a significant cultural landscape is unwavering. The seventh on the list of criteria for selection to become a World Heritage site is, " to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance".