

# Active Chichibu !

## Spiritual hiking, thrilling Geo Park activities and an inn run by a former sumo wrestler



### Story

A one-night two-day trip to enjoy the nature which has been described as a "museum of geology", the valuable history and culture of Chichibu.

Spend your first day in the mountains of a national park hiking Omotesando to Mitsumine Shrine, one of the most prominent points of spiritual energy in the Kanto region. While appreciating the torii shrine gate and Yakushido ruins, keep in mind that this was once the only route for pilgrims. Steeped in solemnity and, at 1,100 meters (3,610 feet) above sea level, cut off from the outside world, Mitsumine Shrine offers an opportunity for spiritual cleansing. On the second day, venture to Chichibu Geo Gravity Park to experience the thrill of traversing the Arakawa Gorge on a zipline and walking across a suspension bridge from where the powerful beauty of the gorge is best appreciated. Accommodation for the night is at Miyamoto-ke, a 200-year-old renovated farmhouse located in Chichibu's satoyama. Born in Chichibu, the head of the household is a former makuuchi (senior-grade) sumo wrestler. Learn from him about sumo culture, sit at an irori, a traditional open hearth, and enjoy an authentic homemade sumo wrestler's dinner in the form of chanko nabe made by this former

sumo wrestler. Later, immerse yourself in Japan's national sport by taking a bath in a dohyoburo, a bathtub within a stylized sumo ring. Be sure to appreciate the various sumo-related items on display to gain a greater understanding of the sport. Known as "Laview," the limited express train between Tokyo and Chichibu is the pride of Seibu Railway. It has won numerous awards and gained wide recognition for its degree of perfection and design. The comfortable train journey also contributes to sustainability, meaning this two-day adventure is friendly to the environment, good for the health and purifying for the mind.

### Highlights:

- Enjoy a spiritual mountain hike along Omotesando to Mitsumine Shrine.
- Experience the thrill of crossing Chichibu Geogravity Park's Arakawa Gorge by zipline and suspension bridge.
- Appreciate the appeal of sumo, Japan's national sport, by staying at a 200-year-old farmhouse.

**Location:** Chichibu, Saitama Prefecture



**Main Activity:** Mitsumine Shrine Spiritual Hiking

**Difficulty:** 3

**Tour Period:** April-November

\*Departures every Sunday, Monday, Thursday and Friday  
(Confirmation required in advance as schedule may vary depending on the month.)

**Pax:** Minimum number of participants: 2; Maximum number of participants: 8

\*Ages 15 and above

# Itinerary

## Day 1 – Spiritual Hiking & Sumo Inn Accommodation

Meet up at Seibu Ikebukuro Station at 8:15 and introduce yourself to your tour guide before boarding the Seibu Limited Express Laview (all seats reserved). The train is admired for its design sense and bright, clean interiors, while the large windows offer wonderful views of the ever-changing scenery, altogether guaranteeing a pleasant and comfortable experience.

Depart from Seibu Ikebukuro Station at 8:30 and arrive at the fourth stop, Seibu Chichibu Station, at 9:51. At Seibu Chichibu Station leave any large luggage items in a coin locker and head to the bus stop. The Seibu express bus for Mitsumine Shrine leaves at 10:20 and arrives at 10:55 at Owa, where you alight. At 11:00, pass through the torii gate at the entrance to Mitsumine Shrine's Omotesando next to the bus stop and begin the hike. The walk covers a distance of about 3.7 kilometers (2.3 miles) and takes around two and a half hours. For centuries, this route was the only one by which worshippers could reach Mitsumine Shrine. The well-trodden path is easy to follow. Although the elevation gain is about 700 meters (2,300 feet), the ascent is gradual as the trail winds through the mountain, making the route accessible to all levels of walkers. As it runs through a national park, the route offers the ideal opportunity to enjoy carefully preserved nature, with tall trees hundreds of years old and moss-covered craggy outcrops to the left and right. There are numerous places of interest along the way, such as a torii gate beside a waterfall and the ruins of Yakushido, a bygone sanatorium. As your guide explains the significance of the many points of interest, conjuring up images of pilgrims from the distant past, you may come to better appreciate the spirituality of the Japanese people. For this reason, this hike is not only a physical experience, but a spiritual one as well. The two stops for a rest along the way are at Seijo Falls and the Yakushido ruins. Arrive at Okumiya Yohaiden, part of Mitsumine Shrine, at 13:30. Be sure to check out the viewpoint, which is 1,100 meters (3,610 feet) above sea level. Relish the sense of accomplishment and fulfillment that you feel as you gaze out over the spectacular Chichibu mountain scenery. For lunch, head to teahouse Mitsumine Oinuchaya Sanrokutei next to the shrine. With the Chichibu mountainscape as your view, tuck into authentic village cooking such as homemade soba and the unusual imodengaku, all of which are made with plenty of fresh wild vegetables. After lunch, head to the main hall of Mitsumine Shrine to pray and pay your respects. The solemn atmosphere here is believed to help cleanse the soul. From the main hall, visit the bronze statue of Yamato Takeru, who is said to have founded Mitsumine Shrine. Proceed to the Kaguraden, a building where sacred dance and music are performed. Be sure to stop by the Mitsumine Visitor Center to learn more about Chichibu's natural environment. From the bus stop, catch the 15:30 Seibu bus bound for Seibu Chichibu Station. At the station collect your belongings from the coin locker and then take a taxi to your accommodation for the night, arriving at 17:20. Enjoy a homemade welcome drink while the proprietor, a former makuuchi sumo wrestler, offers a talk on sumo, Japan's national sport, and introduces various sumo-related items that are of particular interest to visitors from overseas.

Afterwards, check into your room. The inn is a renovated traditional Japanese farmhouse with six guestrooms in total. The rooms are traditional in style but several have beds, which some visitors may find more comfortable than futons. (Guests requiring a bed need to confirm in advance.)

Cf. Some people travel for new and interesting experiences, including sleeping on a futon.

The farmhouse has a selection of distinctive baths to enjoy, including a ceramic bathtub in each room, the ogama (large cauldron) bath, bathe with teppo pillar (training pillar for sumo wrestler) and an open-air bath within a mockup sumo ring.

For dinner, the main dish is authentic chanko nabe, the popular sumo wrestler dish. Plenty of the ingredients are from Okuchichibu's satoyama areas, while the freshly picked vegetables and fruit are from the farmhouse garden and the freshwater fish from a nearby stream. The meal is cooked the old-fashioned way, in a sunken hearth known as an irori. On top of this cultural treat, you get to immerse yourself in the national sport of sumo wrestling.

\*Please note that when bad weather makes it difficult to hike, travel to Mitsumine Shrine is by bus.

### Lunch

- Homemade soba with wild vegetables
- Imodengaku

### Dinner

- Satoyama irori cuisine (chanko nabe)

**Activity:** Spiritual Hiking  
Time required: 2.5 hours / Walking distance: 3.7 km (2.3 miles) / Elevation gain: 700 m (2,300 ft.)

**Difficulty:** 3

# Itinerary

## Day2 – Thrilling Geo Park Activities

Breakfast at the farmhouse is at 7:30. Start the day with a healthy Japanese-style breakfast made with fresh ingredients. Leave the farmhouse at 8:30 by taxi to arrive at Seibu Chichibu Station at 8:50. Deposit any large luggage items in a coin locker at the station and head to the bus stop to board the 9:10 Seibu bus for Mitsumine Shrine. The bus arrives at Mitsumineguchi at 9:35. From there, it's a 15-minute walk to Chichibu Geo Gravity Park.

Following an explanation about the day's activities (Canyon Fly and Canyon Walk), try on the harness for the zipline. At 10:00, zipline across the Arakawa Gorge while enjoying a spectacular bird's-eye view of the gorge some 60 meters (200 feet) below. Return by walking across the 100-meter-long (328 feet) suspension bridge that spans the gorge. Attached by a harness, feel secure as you relish the thrill of looking down through the gaps between the bridge girders to the Arakawa Gorge directly below. Chichibu also offers valuable geological insights that, together with the sense of achievement felt after traversing the gorge, often leave a deep impression on visitors to this designated geopark. An optional thrill is the Canyon Swing, in which seated participants drop from a height of 57 meters (187 feet) down into the gorge while attached to a cord, in a similar way to canyon bungee bronco. This activity is available for an additional fee.

\*A drone filming service is available on request. The footage of your day's activities makes an invaluable souvenir. (Video transfer to smartphone; additional fee)

\*\*Please note that in case of bad weather, the activities are cancelled. Participants visit the Arakawa Gorge, the suspension bridge and view Mt. Buko. (Each participant receives a refund.)

The morning activities finish at 11:15. Walk to Mitsumineguchi Station bus stop and catch the 11:30 Seibu bus to Seibu Chichibu Station to arrive at 12:00 noon. From the bus stop, walk 8 minutes to Nosaka for lunch. Nosaka is the birthplace of Chichibu's famous dish of pork and miso on rice. As it is popular among locals, reservations are not possible and therefore there may be a wait of 15 to 20 minutes for a table. The dish of charcoal-grilled quality pork and miso over rice is also an opportunity to experience the local food culture. Using miso to preserve pork is an age-old practice in Chichibu. Originally, the method was used to preserve the meat of wild boar. Over the years, the meat of boar was swapped for the meat of pigs and the dish was established as a Chichibu specialty. After lunch, walk to Chichibu Shrine, arriving at 13:40. Along with Mitsumine Shrine, it is one of Chichibu's three eminent shrines. The main building was built on the orders of Tokugawa Iyasu, the founder of the Edo Shogunate, making it a very important shrine historically. Spend time in the shrine learning from your guide about its history and the famed Tsunagi-no-ryu. This dragon sculpture, believed to be the work of master craftsman Hidari Jingoro, reveals the high level of artistry that existed in Japan at the time.

Leave the shrine at 14:30 and walk 20 minutes to Matsuri-no-Yu, an onsen (hot spring) in front of Seibu Chichibu Station. Here, immerse yourself in hot spring water (the baths include open-air baths, highly concentrated carbonated baths, "silk" baths and bedrock baths) and sooth your body after two days of exertion. Leave the onsen at 15:50 and browse the adjacent souvenir shop for items unique to Chichibu.

At 16:00, head to the station platform to wait for the Seibu Limited Express Laview. Board the train at 16:24 and arrive back at Seibu Ikebukuro Station in Tokyo at 17:47.

## Breakfast

- Japanese-style breakfast set

## Lunch

- Pork and miso on rice (with miso soup and pickles)

### Activity:

Activity: Zipline & Suspension Bridge Walk

Required time: Approx. 1 hour / Distance (zipline and suspension bridge walk: Approx. 100 m (328 ft.)) / Minimum height of participants: 140 cm (4.6 ft.), Minimum age of participants: 15 years old

\* Please note that this activity is not available to pregnant women, those who have been drinking alcohol and those with chronic illnesses such as heart disease.

### Difficulty:

2

## Reference Price

JPY 73,000~ JPY77,000 /per person

\*Calculated on a four-participant basis with two people per room.

\* Price may vary depending on guestroom type.

## What's included

- Train fares (Seibu Ikebukuro - Seibu Chichibu, both ways; Seibu Limited Express Laview reserved seats)
- Bus fare (as described in itinerary)
- Taxi fare (as described in itinerary)
- Interpreter guide (The same guide accompanies the tour for the entire day, from leaving to returning to Ikebukuro, Tokyo.) Language: English
- Accommodation (accommodation fee as stated in the itinerary: 1 night with 2 meals, 1 room for 2 people, tax and service charge included)
- Meals (as stated in the itinerary)
- Activities (as stated in the itinerary) (Excludes additional fees for options listed in the itinerary.)

## What to bring

### What to bring

For the spiritual hike

- Hiking shoes with thick soles
- Long pants/trousers and long-sleeved comfortable top
- Hat and sunglasses (depending on the season)
- Daypack (allow both hands to be free)
- Towel, trekking poles (recommended)
- Drinking water

Canyon Fly (zipline) & Canyon Walk (suspension bridge walk)

- Pants/trousers (no skirts), to enable participant to wear zipline harness
- Sneakers (no high heels or sandals) for walking on the suspension bridge

People travel for new and interesting experiences, including sleeping on a futon.

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### Tour Operator / Contact

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