

Climbing Fuji?

-What you need to know



"You are wise to climb Fuji once and a fool to climb it twice." an old Japanese saying goes.

And there is second, somewhat different version:

"He who climbs Fuji once is a fool. He who climbs Fuji twice is twice a fool."

Most JET's consider climbing Fuji to be an essential part of their JET experience. For the new JET's it is also their first opportunity to meet many of their colleagues and start building a network of friends who are in `the same boat` as themselves. As a result of the popularity of this activity, and as a way of meeting the new arrivals each year, the Ibaraki AJET Council organizes an annual Fuji Climb sometime during the last weeks of August.

Indeed, climbing Fuji isn't just a popular past time with JET's. Of the 900,000 people who climb the 3,776m mountain every year, approximately 30% of those are foreigners. This is an interesting figure when you consider that 'foreigners' (Gaijin) make up only 2-3% of the population of Japan. HmMMMMM!

Why do people climb it?

When George Leigh Mallory, one of the most prominent British pre-war climbers, was asked the same question about Mt Everest, he replied:

"Because it's there"

Most people climb Fuji for the experience, and to see the morning sunrise (as depicted on old Japanese flags) from above the clouds, or to say they've climbed the highest mountain in the country.

Traditionally in the Japanese version of Buddhism, Japan's highest mountain was considered to be the home of the great kami-sama, or gods. Buddhists believed that Fuji served as a mystical

gateway between Heaven and Earth, and therefore karma could be earned by making a pilgrimage to the summit. However, only in recent times with good transportation systems, and roads $\frac{1}{2}$ way up the mountain, has it become accessible to the masses. Before this, most people who wished to climb Fuji, but were unwilling or unable to make the 3 day climb, made a symbolic ascent at one of many replica Fuji's constructed at temples around the country. The famous Haiku poet Issa wrote a haiku of just such an ascent:

Katasuburi soro-soro nobore fuji no yama (284.13)

Little snail
inch by inch, climb
Mt Fuji.

These days, most Japanese climb Fuji for a mixture of the reasons mentioned above.

What should you know?

Firstly, Fuji is a mountain, and should be treated as such. Please keep this in mind when you are making your preparations.

- The altitude that you'll be climbing at has a big effect on the weather. The AJET organized bus will transport you one of the 4 x 5th Stations on the mountain. Usually these are at about 2,500m above sea level. Temperatures here are usually about 10C (18-20F) cooler than the temperatures of the surrounding Kanto plain (Ibaraki, Tokyo and a number of other prefectures). At the summit, the difference is more like 20C (36-40F) or more depending on wind-chill and other conditions.
- Because of the altitude there is only 2/3rds of the Oxygen available at sea level. Most people notice the effects of this in the form of a mild headache and reduced athletic ability. However, some people experience more severe reactions.
- The trail is made of mud, stones, boulders, stairs and steps, scree slopes (finely ground scoria), gravel, sand, dirt, rock ridges. Good comfortable walking boots that have been previously `broken-in` are the best type of footwear to use.
- The stations on the mountains are usually booked out by tour companies for their clients. There is very little space inside, usually the operators are grumpy, and they charge the earth.
- Starting in 1994, there has been a movement to try and get UNESCO to register Fuji as World Heritage Site. So far the campaign has failed due to the pollution, consisting of garbage and human waste left behind by hikers. Watch out for meadow muffins and yellow snow.
- Fuji-san operates on a `pack-in, pack-out` basis. You must take all your garbage with you.
- NEVER leave the marked trail. There are several cliffs just outside the marked areas.
- Pay close attention to the trail that you are walking on. There are a number of walking tracks on the mountain and many 5th stations but only one bus to take you back

to Ibaraki. If you end up on the wrong side of the mountain, expect up to a 2-3 hour walk back, or a 30,000 yen taxi fare to get you where you should be. NO, unfortunately the bus won't be able to wait for you.

- Several people die on Fuji every year and many more have to be carried off with hypothermia and frostbite. Usually it is because they attempted the climb when they were poorly equipped and/or in adverse weather conditions.
- You will get stuck behind one of the hundreds of organized tours (often referred to as 'sheep') that are on the mountain each day. They are SLOW, hog the path, and each has a tour leader yelling at the top of his/her lungs disturbing the peace. The later that you leave the 5th Station, the more crowded it gets.

The following items should be considered to be essential for climbing Fuji-san:

Please have these with you BEFORE you get on to the bus.

- **Sturdy comfortable footwear.** Boots are preferable for the scree slopes on the descent.
- **Thick socks.** These will help cushion your feet during the climb
- **Gloves** (Preferably ski-gloves, but the white cotton ones that are popular for work in Japan are adequate if nothing else can be found))
- **Adequate head wear.** (Something to keep your head warm at the top and to protect you from the harsh UV light.)
- **Comfortable lightweight non-restrictive clothing** for hiking in.
- **Something warm to put over your hiking clothes** when resting or stationary at the top.
- **Lightweight hooded rainwear including pants.** This is essential!
- **A pack that can easily hold all of your hiking equipment.** Place your dry clothes inside a rubbish bag inside the pack. If it rains, your clothes will stay dry.
- **A waterproof flashlight with fresh batteries and a spare bulb.** You will be hiking at night for up to 10 hours in complete darkness. Mini-maglites are ideal.
- **Sunscreen.**
- **1/2 roll of toilet paper.** (You know why)
- **Sunglasses.**
- **At least 1.5 - 2 litres of water or sports drink.**
- **A basic first aid kit.** Avoid stocking your kit with aspirin based pain-relievers.
- **A packed meal and enough snacks for the walk.** DON`T BRING ALCOHOL as it both dehydrates you and encourages the onset of hypothermia in cold conditions.
- **Money**
- **Camera**
- **National Health Insurance Card.** You`ll be given this by your Board of Ed when you arrive.

Things you should also consider:

- Purchasing a walking stick from the 5th station. It makes the walk a lot easier plus you can get it branded at top (and every station in between!). It also make a great souvenir of the climb.
- Locating some hokairo. These are small heater pouches that cost about 100 yen each. They maintain a temperature of about 50-60C for up to 8 hours and are great when you are stationary at the summit. Your predecessor may have some left over from the previous winter.
- A change of clothes and a kit of basic toiletries to leave on the bus.

- Polypropylene thermal underwear is ideal for hiking in.
- Most of these items can be purchased from your local `home store` (eg Cainz Home, Komerei, Joyful Yamashin, Joyful Honda). Ask you supervisor where your local store is.

富士山頂からの下山ルート案内図

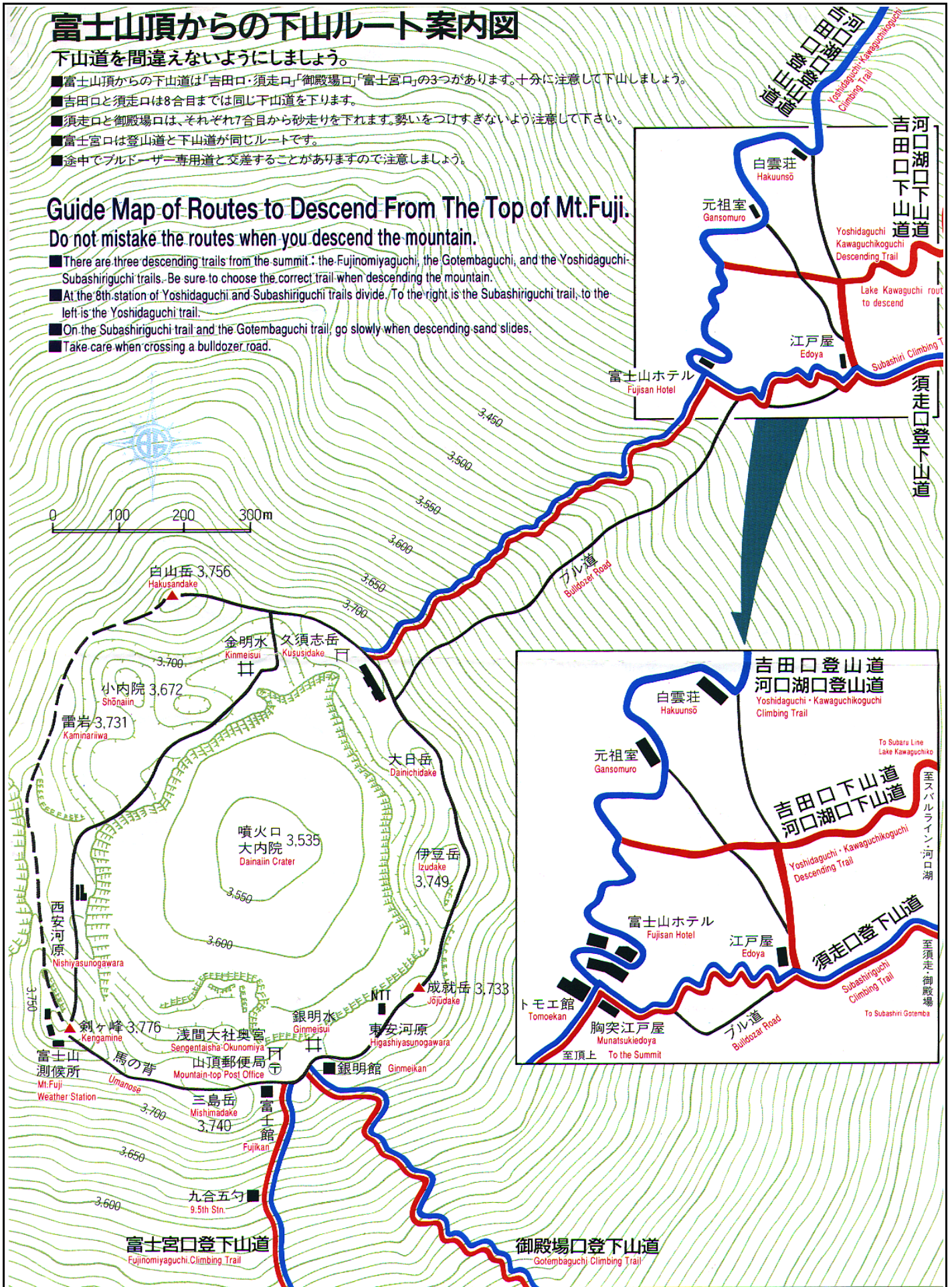
下山道を間違えないようにしましょう。

- 富士山頂からの下山道は「吉田口・須走口」「御殿場口」「富士宮口」の3つがあります。十分に注意して下山しましょう。
- 吉田口と須走口は8合目までは同じ下山道を下ります。
- 須走口と御殿場口は、それぞれ7合目から砂走りを下れます。勢いをつけすぎないように注意して下さい。
- 富士宮口は登山道と下山道が同じルートです。
- 途中でブルドーザー専用道と交差することがありますので注意しましょう。

Guide Map of Routes to Descend From The Top of Mt.Fuji.

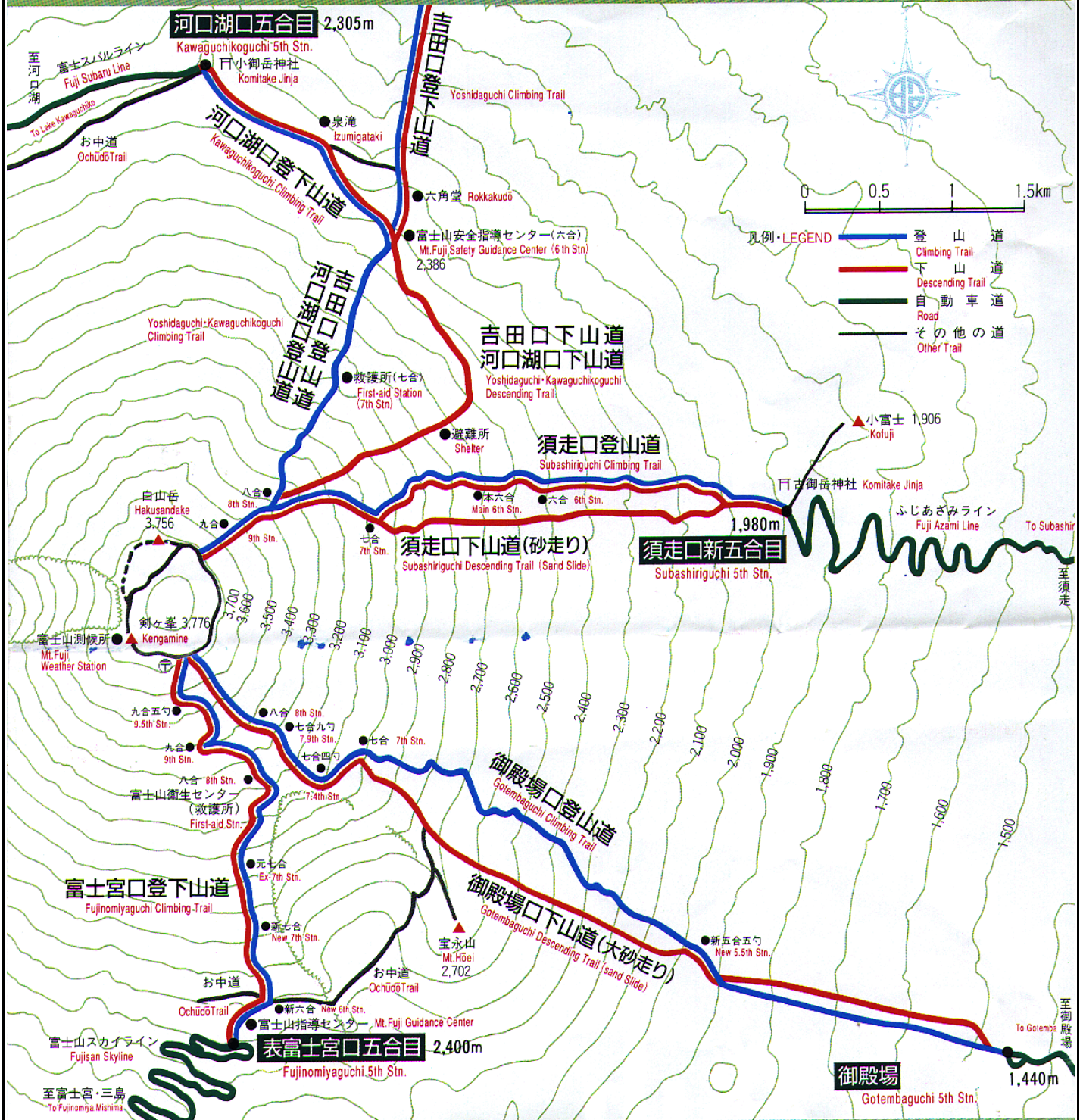
Do not mistake the routes when you descend the mountain.

- There are three descending trails from the summit : the Fujinomiya-guchi, the Gotembaguchi, and the Yoshidaguchi-Subashiriguchi trails. Be sure to choose the correct trail when descending the mountain.
- At the 8th station of Yoshidaguchi and Subashiriguchi trails divide. To the right is the Subashiriguchi trail, to the left is the Yoshidaguchi trail.
- On the Subashiriguchi trail and the Gotembaguchi trail, go slowly when descending sand slides.
- Take care when crossing a bulldozer road.



富士山安全登山のご案内

Mt. Fuji Safety Climbing Guide



富士登山の注意事項

- 富士山は日本一の山です。登り始める前に天気予報、雨具、防寒具の準備を十分に確認して下さい。
- 万一、天候が急変したらまず最寄りの山小屋へ避難して下さい。
- 富士山は、登山道以外のところで一見登れるように見えますが、落石をおこなすなど大変危険ですので、必ず登山道を歩いて下さい。
- 夜間登山をする場合、懐中電灯は不可欠です。電池の有無を確認して下さい。
- 富士山ではゴミ持ち帰りを求めています。富士山の美化にご協力下さい。
- 指導センターは吉田口六合目と富士宮口五合目にあります。
- 救護所は吉田口七合目と富士宮口八合目にあります。

Precautionary Notes on Climbing Mt. Fuji.

- Mt. Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan. Before you climb, check the weather forecast and make sure that provisions against rain and cold have been well made.
- If the weather suddenly changes, please take refuge in the nearest mountain hut.
- Don't stray from the routes; it causes falling rocks.
- Please carry a flashlight for night hikes and check the batteries.
- Don't throw away trash. Keep Mt. Fuji clean.
- Guidance Centers are at the 6th Station on the Yoshidaguchi and the 5th Station on the Fujinomiya.
- First-Aid Stations are at the 7th Station on the Yoshidaguchi and the 8th Station on the Fujinomiya.

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Disclaimers:

- The information contained within this guide is provided on a `as is` basis. It is based on the experiences and recommendations of JETs and other sources, who have undertaken this climb in the past. Although we have taken the utmost care to ensure that the information contained herein is recent and accurate, we cannot be held responsible for any errors.
- The I-AJET Social Co-ordinators will accept bookings for the trip on a preferential basis. Current Ibaraki JET participants will receive priority over all others. Bookings are taken and charges are set at the discretion of the Social Co-ordinators. Please contact your I-AJET Council Member or the Social Co-ordinators for information on the next Fuji trip.
- I-AJET organize the transportation to and from the mountain. We do not organize a guided tour to the summit.
 - You are responsible for making your own way to the summit from the 5th station.
 - You are also responsible for your own actions and own wellbeing on the mountain.
 - You are responsible for ensuring that you are on the bus, or have made contact with the organizers, PRIOR to the bus's departure time. Due to traffic and hireage conditions, it will be highly unlikely that the bus will be able to depart later than that time.
- If you fail to rendezvous with the bus at the nominated departure time, you will be responsible for your own transport home.