



Chilly Mountain

Yoshi and I caught bad colds on top of Hakone's Mt. Komagatake, shown above in Ando Hiroshige's 1830s woodblock print, and we sniffled and coughed and called for more tissues at every hotel and inn for the rest of the trip. It was chilly up there in November, but it offered splendid views of Lake Ashi and Mt. Fuji. It's actually a puny mountain, no more than a third as high as Mt. Fuji, but Hiroshige found it tough to climb as he walked the Tokaido Road on his way to producing his famous "53 Stations of the Tokaido" series. So, in his Hakone artwork, he greatly exaggerated its steepness. Artistic license. Yoshi and I had no trouble climbing the mountain. We went up and then down in a ropeway gondola car. I purchased a high-quality reproduction of this print as a souvenir of my 12-day visit to the Hakone region, which I hadn't seen in 45 years. Cost was ¥8,000, about \$75. Hiroshige originals are mostly in museums and prohibitively expensive when available. Since the Hakone region stretches inland from Odawara on the Pacific coast to Lake Ashi in the mountains, I also purchased Hiroshige's Odawara print. And while I was at it, I picked up a copy of Katsushika Hokusai's Hakone view of Mt. Fuji. After all, Mt. Fuji was the theme of my 2004 trip. Once framed, the three prints will grace my home workshop, which, cluttered though it is, pretty much reflects my personal interests.

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