



## **World's Most Photographed Mountain**

Mt. Fuji was the theme of my November/December 2004 vacation in Japan, but I never got really up close. That pleasure must wait until another trip. I could have scanned some stunning images for you, but I prefer to show you what my own digital camera saw at Hakone's Lake Ashi. Above, I stand smiling and shivering on a puny but chilly Hakone mountain as Mt. Fuji rises 12,385 feet behind me. Below are shots I took from our room windows at two different hotels on the lake. I will never climb this mountain. You can take a bus halfway up, but then the climb to the top takes about eight hours and the descent takes three more hours. Japanese say that only a fool never climbs Mt. Fuji, and that only a fool climbs it twice. But even once is too much for me at my age. Historically, the sacred mountain is not politically correct. Japanese men have been climbing it since ancient times, but women were not allowed to do so until quite modern times, and even today women are not thoroughly welcome at the Shinto shrine on top. Women are polluted, you see.

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