

Looking stylish hiking mega-peaks

By Emi Urabe and naoko Fujimura, Bloomberg News

Forget the ice ax and \$500 climbing boots. The mode du jour for today's female mountain hikers in Japan is a miniskirt and leggings.

The North Face, the San Leandro maker of Gore-Tex waterproof jackets, and Alpine Tour Service Co. are targeting "yama girls," or mountain girls, the nickname for the growing number of women who are taking to the hills of Japan wearing short pants or fleece skirts with leggings and designer trekking boots.

"I want to wear something cute like a skirt," said Machiko Miyauchi, 25, who made her first ascent of Mount Fuji, Japan's highest peak, earlier this year after buying new equipment and shoes. "Climbing is healing. You can breathe fresh, clean air."

Visitors to Mount Fuji in the two months ended Aug. 31, the busiest climbing season, were the most since the government began tracking traffic using infrared sensors in 2005. The number of women applying for Alpine's treks jumped sixfold from last year, prompting the Tokyo company to increase women-only tours to 13 this year from six in 2009, spokesman Yasushi Kodama said.

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