

FujiQ Highland

–Ice Skating, World Record Breaker Roller Coaster and Screams –

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Blue sky, sun shining bright, kids running, friends laughing, couples sharing an ice cream in the Ferris-wheel and four giant roller-coasters speeding from 100 km/h to over 180km/h in front of a magnificent view of Mt. Fuji. A perfect picture of a summer vacation day, except for the fact that it is not summer and thermometers show temperatures below 10 degrees Celsius at midday in Fujiyoshida city, where the famous amusement park FujiQ Highland is located.

FujiQ Highland is well known for its four major roller coasters, and thousands and thousands of visitors from all over the country and also overseas come to ride them, making the park a traditional destination in Yamanashi Prefecture.

Summer is undoubtedly the most popular season to make a trip to amusement parks. In Japan, especially in August when most schools have their break and company workers can take a couple of days off for Obon holidays, parks get crowded and you might spend hours lining up and getting sweaty under the

torrid sun to get to the most popular attractions. But from small kids to elder people, or even visitors with pets, anyone can have fun in FujiQ Highland all year round. In fact, in our experience, winter can be the best time to go to FujiQ Highland, not only because the park is less crowded but also due to some other things we learned on our visit last December.

Officially opened as FujiQ Highland in 1969, the park was originally the Fuji Goko International Skating Center. Nowadays, the conifer forest located just next to the park is still home to an outdoor rink used for speed skate competitions as well as for training by professional athletes. But only in winter can beginners also experience ice skating at

year it's difficult to see Mt. Fuji clearly, even from such a short distance as the park. If you visit it in the summer, you won't be able to see the mountain beautifully covered by snow; but in the winter, the sky gets clear and the magnificent sight of the world heritage Mt. Fuji can be appreciated almost every day.

After warming up in the skating rink, we headed to FujiQ Highland's top attractions, starting from the "King of Coasters" FUJIYAMA. Running at a maximum speed of 130 km/h, from the highest point of the 3 and a half minute ride we got an impressive view of Mt. Fuji, just before a terrifying drop. Eejanaika, DODODONPA and Takabisha complete the group of rollercoasters. Eejanaika runs forward and backward while



the rink built inside the park.

Operating from mid-November to the end of March, the ice skating rink is a seasonal attraction popular among people of all ages. Despite being outdoors, where the cold weather of Fujiyoshida would make you think twice before stepping outside, it is a fun activity that warms you up, even if you are just taking a few steps on the ice. One of FujiQ Highland's innovations is a two blade skate shoe designed for beginners, which allows you to do just that: take a walk on the ice instead of skating. You can also join ice skating classes, or try skating with the help of their original equipment. From the rink, you can see the colorful landscape of the park, and in the evening, a beautiful illumination that creates a fantastic atmosphere.

The view can also be considered a seasonal event. Due to clouds and other weather conditions, during two thirds of the

its seats rotate in different directions, creating crazy twist combinations that make you doubt the existence of gravity. DODODONPA reaches 180 km/h in only 1.56 seconds, the fastest acceleration in the world, and has the world's largest loop. Finally, at Takabisha you can experience a ride with a drop angle of 121 degrees, the world's steepest roller coaster. Facing the cold in these high speed rides might seem tough, but surprisingly, normal outdoor winter clothes are enough to let you enjoy all the fun while keeping warm. The atmosphere itself makes you feel like it is just a chill summer day.

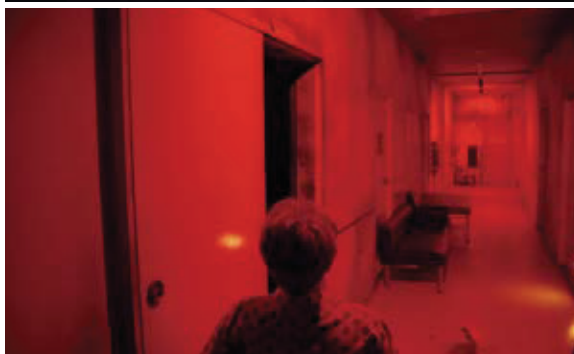
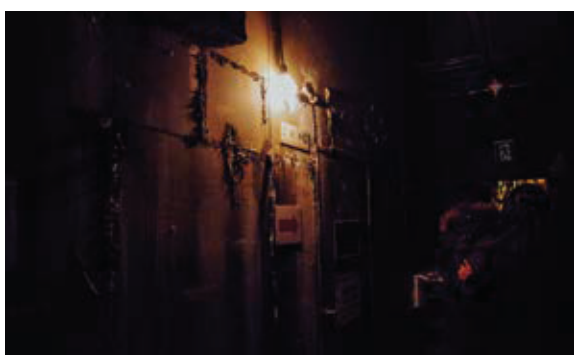
On the other hand, if the outdoor attractions make you forget about the cold, an indoor one can make your heart freeze. In Japan, telling ghosts stories is a summer tradition, when the chills and goosebumps we have while hearing fantastic stories of supernatural creatures are supposed

to help us to cool off, but visiting the scariest and longest haunted house in the world doesn't only give you a few chills.

Along with the roller coasters, the haunted house is a must go. But just don't go by yourself. In fact, one of the requirements to be allowed inside the haunted hospital is to be part of a group or at least have one other person with you, otherwise your entrance might be denied to ensure your own safety.

Officially called "Super Scary Labyrinth of Fear" in English, once you enter the abandoned hospital themed haunted house, it takes from about 40 minutes to one hour to reach the exit door and see the sunlight again. Many visitor cannot make

some nice time off, and even those who can't stand high places or wouldn't dare step into a haunted house can find many options that make the trip to FujiQ worth it. Thomas Land, extremely popular among children, is a special area with a Thomas the Tank Engine theme. The beautifully decorated La Ville de Gaspard et Lisa, a town full of shops and cafes, is based on the famous "Gaspard and Lisa" book series and is a great spot for tasting some sweets and taking cute pictures. Fans of Japanese pop culture and anime will definitely be delighted by attractions such as Evangelion World or Mizuki Shigeru's Ge-Ge-Ge Haunted Mansion, based on the popular character GeGeGe no Kitaro.



it and run away through the "Retire" doors located at some points of the route. It is probably the most terrifying haunted house in the world, and its renovation last summer definitely raised the scream level of this attraction. You can never know if the screams are part of the super realistic setting, if it was just some scared visitor, or maybe something else... Actors play the role of zombies and other horrifying creatures and if you don't want to become their next victim, buying an "omamori" lucky charm at the entrance might help you to get through the maze without freezing or jumping out of your skin.

Besides the above mentioned, there are many other thrilling attractions to help you to satisfy your craving for adrenaline. But of course, not only fans of heights and high speeds visit the park. FujiQ Highland is a great destination for anyone who just wants to take a break from the everyday life and have

Since last summer, park entrance became free of charge and now visitors only have to pay for the attractions they want to ride, so people can come just to buy souvenirs, take a look around, or enjoy the view! The park is located just a few steps from Fujikyu-Highland Station (Fujikyuko line), so it is easy to access other famous tourist spots in the Mt. Fuji area, such as Lake Kawaguchiko and Arakurayama Park, that are also highly recommended places to visit and be entertained by the stunning sight of Mt. Fuji.

Information

The park is open from 9:30 am to 5 pm (closes at 6 pm on weekends), and the ice skating rink operates from November to the end of March. More information about the access, operating days, events and attractions can be found on their website : <http://www.fujiq.jp>