

# EXPLORE TOHOKU & NIIGATA

EXPERIENCE THE RICH SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND  
TASTES OF THIS FASCINATING REGION.



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Advancement Center**

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## Introduction

On behalf of many partners involved with this publication, it is my pleasure to present Explore Tohoku and Niigata, Japan -2020.

Tohoku, the northeastern region of Japan's Honshu Island, comprises six prefectures: Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Yamagata, Miyagi and Fukushima. This area also has long-standing historical ties with neighboring Niigata Prefecture, a relationship that continues today.

The unique places, activities, products and more featured here were selected by a committee of the specialists and are all from the six prefectures of Tohoku as well as Niigata.

It is a great pleasure to offer this information for others around the world to enjoy. And we hope you will someday visit our area to enjoy these experiences directly at the source, as well as appreciate the region's seasonal charms.

March 2020

**Tsutomu Satake**

Chairman

Tohoku Regional Advancement Center



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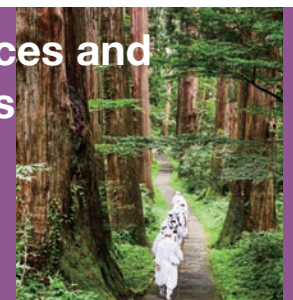
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# Message from the Prefectural Governors

Enjoy extraordinary, exciting experiences and enriching moments in the prefectures of Tohoku and Niigata.

## Delight in the Allure of Aomori

Located at the northernmost tip of Honshu, Aomori Prefecture has abundant nature and is surrounded by the sea on three sides. It has a myriad of attractions in all four seasons, including cherry blossoms in spring at places such as Hirosaki Park, world-class summer festivals such as Aomori Nebuta, autumn colors typified by Lake Towada and Oirase Gorge, and the chance to experience ground blizzards and “snow monsters” on the Hakkoda Mountains during winter.

Our prefecture is also the home of Jomon culture and has many Jomon ruins, including the Special Historical Site Sannai-Maruyama.

The abundance of nature in Aomori produces clear water and fertile soil, which in turn creates delicious food. This includes local dishes rooted in regional food culture, various agricultural, forestry, and fishery products, such as apples, garlic, and scallops, as well as rice carefully grown in the healthy soil. This clear water is nurtured by a rich natural environment that includes the World Heritage Site Shirakami-Sanchi.

Don't miss out on Aomori, where you can thoroughly delight in impressive nature, culture, and food.



**Shingo Mimura**  
Governor of Aomori Prefecture

## Overflowing with various charms, the “Beautiful Countryside of Akita”

Akita Prefecture is a blessed place, beginning with its abundant nature, of which Shirakami-Sanchi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are representative. Akita also has rich culture, such as the Namahage of Oga, who are deities who visit homes to bring good luck and are a UNESCO registered intangible cultural heritage. There is also the Kanto Lantern Festival, which is one of the three grandest festivals in the Tohoku region. These are widely known, but in recent years Akita has entertained an increasing number of guests from overseas who wish to meet Akita dogs in their native home.

“Fermentation tourism” is also increasing in popularity, which makes it possible to experience the fermented delicacies that represent Akita, such as Shottsuru fish sauce, sake, and miso.

This publication presents many wonderful things, such as tourist opportunities with real, hands-on experiences. It is filled with content that will allow you to enjoy Akita's unique charms to the fullest. It is my hope that with this publication in hand, you will travel to our prefecture and enjoy a bountiful trip to the “Beautiful Countryside of Akita”.



**Norihisa Satake**  
Governor of Akita Prefecture

## “The Golden Land, Iwate,” Nurtured by a Rich Climate

Iwate Prefecture has numerous outstanding regional attractions, such as history, culture, nature, and folk entertainment. They include the two World Heritage Sites, Hiraizumi and the Hashino Iron Mining and Smelting Site. The prefecture is also a treasure trove of foods nurtured by expansive land equivalent in size to Shikoku, comprised of 4 prefectures, and the seawaters of the Sanriku region, which is one of the world's leading fishing grounds. Iwate has an array of local cuisine and food cultures passed down for generations.

This publication shares tourist spots such as the World Heritage Sites that Iwate Prefecture takes great pride in, folk entertainment including the Sansa Odori that is the world's largest parade of drums, and souvenirs such as foods and crafts. Please take the opportunity to visit Iwate and experience with all 5 senses the many attractions of “The Golden Land, Iwate.”



**Takuya Tasso**  
Governor of Iwate Prefecture

## Welcome to Miyagi

Miyagi Prefecture has been promoting large-scale tourism campaigns and other initiatives to rekindle tourism and expand the number of visitors to our prefecture through sightseeing with the aim of tourism becoming one of the driving forces of restoration.

Through these initiatives, in 2017 the number of tourists that had significantly fallen immediately following the Great East Japan Earthquake surpassed the number of visitors in 2010 prior to the earthquake. In 2018, the prefecture saw the highest number of tourists ever.

In this publication we have put together signature products that will enable visitors from abroad to gain an even greater sense of the wonders of our prefecture.

Miyagi will greet you with the best foods, a warm smile, and heartfelt hospitality. We eagerly await your arrival.



**Yoshihiro Murai**  
Governor of Miyagi Prefecture

## The spirit of “Omotenashi” (hospitality) : “The other side of the Mountain: Another kind of Japan”

Yamagata Prefecture is called “another kind of Japan,” where people and nature exist in harmony. It is surrounded by beautiful mountains such as Mt. Gassan and Mt. Zao, and the Mogami River, known as ‘the mother river’ flows through the prefecture from south to north.

There are many things to see, taste, and experience; local seasonal delicious delicacies produced by the blessings of the rich soil, Japanese sake, which has won gold medals for 6 consecutive years in the Japanese Sake Competition of the International Wine Challenge (IWC), hot springs such as Ginzan Onsen, the ‘snow monsters’ of Mt. Zao and the ancient Yamadera Temple.

Of the many tourist attractions that Yamagata takes pride in, this publication focuses on spiritual culture and experiences such as Mt. Haguro and Iai Shrine, and the Hanagasa Festival, which is one of the major summer festivals in Tohoku, along with recommended local products that are popular with foreign visitors.

We hope you will visit Yamagata to fully enjoy seeing, tasting, and experiencing all that our prefecture has to offer.

We look forward to welcoming you to “another kind of Japan.”



**Mieko Yoshimura**  
Governor of Yamagata Prefecture

## Come, Drink, Eat “Fukushima”

We are sincerely thankful for the warm encouragement and support we have received from both Japan and abroad since the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred.

Fukushima Prefecture has many must-see tourist attractions, including beautiful flowers and landscapes to enjoy in all four seasons, over 130 hot springs, and a samurai culture that continues to be passed down today.

In addition, Fukushima is full of foods the entire country is proud of, such as Japanese sake that has won the gold prize from the National Research Institute of Brewing for 7 years in a row, rice that has been number one for 3 consecutive years in taste rankings, and peaches that represent the land of fruits, Fukushima.

Be sure to “Come, Drink, Eat” and revel in a journey that can only be experienced in Fukushima.



**Masao Uchibori**  
Governor of Fukushima Prefecture

## Experience the Hospitality of Niigata

Niigata is full of attractions—beautiful nature through the seasons, a varied food culture, and amazing hot springs.

This guidebook introduces tourist attractions and local products produced in Niigata. From our hammered copperware, western tableware, and traditional kimono manufacturing to our great tasting food and sake and warm hospitality, our prefecture's history and culture are steeped in the elegance of Japan. Niigata is also full of experiences that can only be had in the snow country, such as snowball fights and bullfights—all of this in the place where carp were first bred in Japan.

We hope you will get to know the Niigata Prefecture and experience all it has to offer.



**Hideyo Hanazumi**  
Governor of Niigata Prefecture





# Explore Tohoku & Niigata

Experience the rich sights, sounds and tastes of this fascinating region.

## Set Out on a Captivating Journey Through Tohoku and Niigata

Japan's Tohoku region lies in the northeast part of Honshu, the country's main island. To the region's southwest is Niigata Prefecture, with its coast along the Sea of Japan. This area, covering a large swath of Honshu, breathes a unique tradition and culture cultivated over a long history amid majestic natural surroundings.

Winter snows fall heavily in areas facing the Sea of Japan, with skiers from around the world coming in search of fine snow. And while the summer is short, it is a lively season of festivals including the illuminated floats of the Nebuta Festival, the lantern-laden poles carried in the Kanto Festival, and the colorful streamers of the Tanabata, or Star Festival. It is often said that the people of Tohoku and Niigata have a serious, patient, even stalwart, character. On farms throughout the region, they produce popular varieties of rice, like Koshihikari and Hitomebore, as well as a wealth of other foods from the seas and mountains.

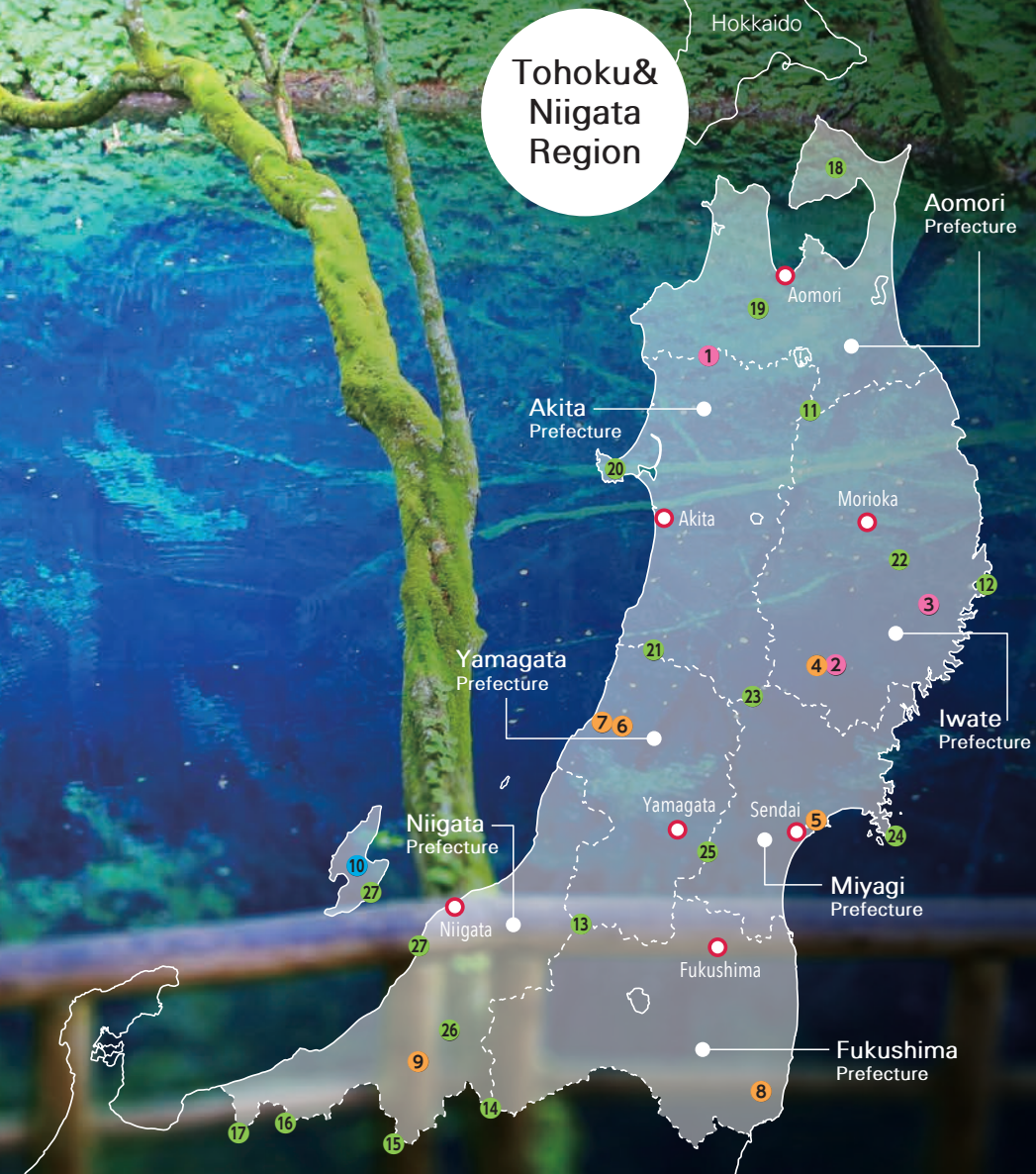
This guidebook offers an introduction to favorite destinations, cuisine and local specialties, festivals, traditional crafts and activities, storied enterprises and more to explore in Tohoku and Niigata. You'll discover lesser-known but wonderful and unique sites and specialties. Be sure to take this guide along on your fun-packed adventure through Tohoku and Niigata—an experience unlike anything you've done before.

### Lake Juniko at Shirakami-Sanchi, Natural World Heritage Site

At the foot of Shirakami-Sanchi, a mountainous area designated a Natural World Heritage Site, lies Lake Juniko, which is actually a collection of 33 lakes and ponds scattered among woods of virgin beech. The transparent, azure-blue waters of Aoike Pond (seen here) reflect the sunlight and surrounding trees in a dazzling display resembling a hologram. Enjoy a wonderful stroll among these magical lakes and ponds.

Tourism Section, Town of Fukaura 84-2 Nawashirozawa, Fukaura,  
Fukaura-machi, Nishitsugaru-gun, Aomori TEL:+81-173-74-4412 <http://fukadoko.jp/>

## Tohoku & Niigata Region



## Specially Designated Sites in Tohoku and Niigata

### World Heritage Sites

- ① The natural environs of Shirakami-Sanchi
- ② Hiraizumi—Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land
- ③ The Hashino Iron Mining and Smelting Site, Which is among the Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining

### National Treasures

- ④ Chuson-ji Konjiki-do Temple
  - ⑤ Main Hall of Zuigan-ji Temple
  - ⑥ The Five-Story Pagoda of Mt. Haguro
  - ⑦ Tachi Mei Sanemitsu: Historical long sword made by Sanemitsu, master swordsmith
  - ⑧ Shiramizu Amida Hall at Ganjo-ji Temple
  - ⑨ Flame-style pottery and other ceramics from the Sasayama Archeological Site
- \* These are just a few of the national treasures of Tohoku and Niigata.

### Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems

- ⑩ Sado City, Niigata—Sado's Satoyama in Harmony with Japanese Crested Ibis
- \* One of several agricultural World Heritage sites in Tohoku and Niigata.

### National Parks

- ⑪ Towada-Hachimantai National Park
- ⑫ Sanriku Fukko National Park
- ⑬ Bandai-Asahi National Park
- ⑭ Oze National Park
- ⑮ Joshin-etsu Kogen National Park
- ⑯ Myoko-Togakushi Renzan National Park
- ⑰ Chubusangaku National Park

### Quasi-National Parks

- ⑱ Shimokita Hantō Quasi-National Park
- ⑲ Tsugaru Quasi-National Park
- ⑳ Oga Quasi-National Park
- ㉑ Chokai Quasi-National Park
- ㉒ Hayachine Quasi-National Park
- ㉓ Kurikoma Quasi-National Park
- ㉔ Minamisanriku-Kinkasan Quasi-National Park
- ㉕ Zao Quasi-National Park
- ㉖ Echigo-Sanzan-Tadami Quasi-National Park
- ㉗ Sado-Yahiko-Yoneyama Quasi-National Park

\* For more about the national parks and quasi-national parks listed here, visit the Natural Parks Foundation website. <https://www.bes.or.jp>

● Prefectural capital



National treasure:  
**Flame-style Pottery**  
(Pottery from the Niigata Sasayama Ruins Excavation)

Dating from 5,000 years ago, Flame-style Pottery is characterized by its unique, flame-like shape and design, and is believed to have been used for cooking or ceremonial purposes. Tokamachi City Museum Collection

**Tokamachi City Museum**  
\*Closed through early June 2020 for renewal  
1-448-9 Nishihoncho, Tokamachi-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-25-757-5531 <http://www.tokamachi-museum.jp/>

National treasure: **Chuson-ji Temple Konjiki-do**

A Buddhist temple built using gold and raden by lord Fujiwara no Kiyohira in 1124. It was restored in 1968 and returned to its former appearance.

**Hiraizumi Tourism Association**  
61-7 Izumiya, Hiraizumi, Hiraizumi-cho, Nishiiwai-gun, Iwate  
TEL:+81-191-46-2110 <https://www.chusonji.or.jp/>



# A Sensory Experience among World Heritage Sites and National Treasures

**Enjoy a walk through the history of Tohoku and Niigata—from the ancient past to the present day**

World Heritage Sites to be explored in Tohoku and Niigata include 1) the natural environs of Shirakami-Sanchi, 2) Hiraizumi-Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land, and 3) the Hashino Iron Mining and Smelting Site, which is among the Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining.

Meanwhile, the National Treasures of Tohoku and Niigata include 1) Chuson-ji Konjiki-do Temple, 2) the Five-Story Pagoda of Mt. Haguro, 3) the Main

Hall of Zuigan-ji Temple, 4) the Shiramizu Amida Hall at Ganjo-ji Temple, 5) Flame-Style Pottery and other ceramics from the Sasayama Archaeological Site in Niigata Prefecture, and more.

No matter where you go, there are irreplaceable treasures that have been carefully preserved over the ages. Enjoy your walk through the history of Tohoku and Niigata, reflecting on the nature, culture, fine arts and lifestyles that have evolved from the ancient past to the present day.

Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems:

**Sado's Satoyama in Harmony with Japanese Crested Ibis**



Niigata Prefecture's Sado City was selected as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems for being "Sado's Satoyama in Harmony with Japanese Crested Ibis". It is home to an abundant ecosystem and a diverse countryside culture.

**Sado City Agricultural Policy Division Satoyama Promotion Unit**  
232 Chigusa, Sado-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-259-63-5117  
<https://www.city.sado.niigata.jp/topics/gihas/index/index.shtml>

National treasure:

**The Five-Story Pagoda of Mt. Haguro**

This oldest pagoda in Tohoku, built in the 900s, is 29m high with five stories and shingled roofs. Made entirely of plain, untreated wood, it is a sight to behold standing amidst the surrounding cedars.

7 Touge, Haguromachi, Tsuruoka-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-235-62-2355  
<http://www.tsuruokakanko.com>





# A Sensory Experience among World Heritage Sites and National Treasures



## Okina-Ame / AKITA

A long-established local specialty made entirely by hand in a week-long process, Okina-ame has the elasticity of mochi (rice cake), a jelly-like transparency and a touch of sweetness contributing to a unique flavor. It is made purely of agar and syrup from glutinous rice and barley. Containing no sugar or additives, it is loved by people of all ages.

### Kikyoya

6-8 Hatamachi, Noshiro-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-185-52-5853  
<https://www2.chuokai-akita.or.jp/okasi/okinaame/index.htm>

## Fukaura Tuna Steak Bowl /AOMORI

The town of Fukaura boasts some of the largest tuna catches in Aomori Prefecture, and you can savor this bounty and the hospitality of Fukaura in a new culinary offering. The Fukaura Tuna Steak Bowl features fresh, wild tuna prepared in three different ways: sashimi (raw), grilled on one side and grilled on both sides. You'll find this meal at seven establishments in Fukaura, each offering its own original sauce.



### Fukaura Tuna Cuisine Promotion Association

84-2 Nawashirozawa, Fukaura, Fukaura-machi, Nishitsugaru-gun, Aomori  
TEL:+81-173-74-4412 <http://www.fukauramaguro.com/>

## Shirakami-Sanchi: Dakedai Nature Observation and Education Woods /AKITA

World Heritage Site



Shirakami-Sanchi, a natural World Heritage site, is home to a rich, pristine ecosystem, little touched for over 8,000 years. In the Dakedai Nature Observation and Education Woods at the southern foot of Mt. Shirakami, you can walk freely through the virgin beech woods. No hiking gear required; sneakers will do! Your soothing encounter with small animals and colorful seasonal foliage will include the 400-Year-Old Beech pictured here, a symbol of Shirakami.

Shirakami-Sanchi World Heritage Conservation Center, Fujisatokan  
63 Fujikoto-satoguri, Fujisato-machi, Yamamoto-gun, Akita  
TEL:+81-185-79-3005 <http://www.shirakami-fujisatokan.jp/>

World Heritage Site

## Hiraizumi /IWATE



The northern branch of the noble House of Fujiwara flourished for over 100 years during the Heian period. They built the temples and gardens of Hiraizumi as a physical representation of the Pure Land (heaven/paradise) envisioned in Buddhist Pure Land ideology. The complex, including important archeological sites, is highly valued for its unique atmosphere and cultural significance, and was designated a World Heritage Site in 2011.

### Hiraizumi Tourism Association

61-7 Izumiya, Hiraizumi, Hiraizumi-cho, Nishiiwai-gun, Iwate  
TEL:+81-191-46-2110 <http://hiraizumi.or.jp/heritage/>



## Hiraizumi confectionery: Benkei Chikaramochi /IWATE

Produced by the local confectionery shop, Yoshino-ya, established in 1915, the name of this sweet is an interesting play on words. Musashibo Benkei, a well-known resident of the Hiraizumi area, was said to be a man of great strength ("chikaramochi" in Japanese). This mochi ("rice cake")-based sweet was thus created and named after him. Featuring very soft mochi with an ample filling of aromatic walnut, this treat has been loved by locals for many years.

Yoshino-ya 81-1 Izumiya, Hiraizumi, Hiraizumi-cho, Nishiiwai-gun, Iwate TEL:+81-191-46-2410

## Oku-no-Hiraizumi: Karinto manju confections /IWATE

These buns, with sweet red bean paste surrounded by a springy dough, are made with carefully selected flour, plus yams and a special brown sugar-based syrup called "kogashi mitsu." After steaming, the sweet buns are deep-fried to give the inside a fluffy texture and the outside a pleasant crispness.

Chibakei Seika Ltd. 59-3 Sanohara, Hiraizumi, Hiraizumi-cho, Nishiiwai-gun, Iwate  
TEL:+81-191-46-2791 <https://www.chibakei.co.jp/index.php>

## Authentic rice shochu "Tomozuna" — 40% alcohol; aged 12 years /IWATE

The Hamachidori Brewery has taken on the challenge of carrying on the traditional brewing techniques of the Nambu Master Brewers, using locally grown rice and pure underground water from the Kitakami Mountains. Tomozuna is an authentic shochu distilled using Japanese sake yeast and koji mold. Aged 12 years, it offers a pleasantly full flavor.

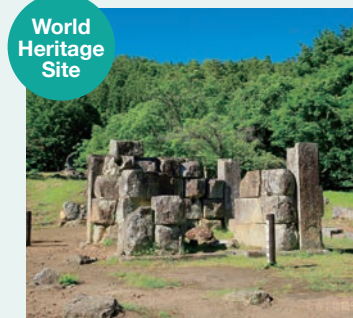
### Hamachidori Co., Ltd.

3-8-7 Kogawa-cho, Kamaishi-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-193-23-5613  
<https://hamachidori.net/>



## The Hashino Iron Mining and Smelting Site, from Japan's Meiji period industrial revolution /IWATE

World Heritage Site

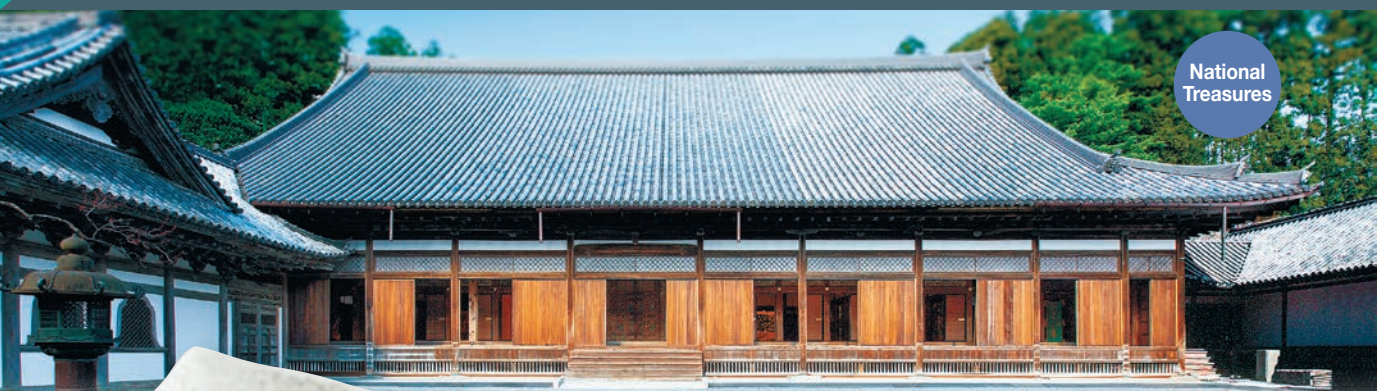


The Hashino Iron Mine complex, established in the 1850s, included iron ore mines, transport tracks and smelting facilities. The blast furnace was built under the guidance of Takato Oshima, the father of Japan's modern iron industry, and its remains are the oldest surviving western-style blast furnace remains in the country. Other remains on the site include a water wheel, management office, tenement housing, and mountain shrine, giving you a comprehensive picture of the iron industry in the Meiji era.

Kamaishi City Industry Promotion Department, World Heritage Division  
3-12-7 Odaira-cho, Kamaishi-shi, Iwate TEL:+81-193-22-8846  
<https://www.city.kamaishi.iwate.jp/docs/2020030600160/>



# A Sensory Experience among World Heritage Sites and National Treasures



National Treasures

## Zuigan-ji Temple

(National Treasure and Important Cultural Property of Japan) / MIYAGI

Zuigan-ji was founded by the Date clan in 1609. Construction took five years. The clan's head, Date Masamune, ruler of the Sendai Domain, dictated that the design follow the Momoyama style that flourished in Japan during the preceding decades of civil war. Timber for the structures was transported from Mt. Kumano in faroff Wakayama (900 km away), while 130 renowned carpenters from across Japan were summoned to build the temple. Visitors to the solemnly quiet main hall appreciate the beautiful architecture, gorgeous sliding door paintings and more.

91 Chonai, Matsushima, Matsushima-machi, Miyagi-gun, Miyagi  
TEL:+81-22-354-2023 <http://www.zuiganji.or.jp/en/index.html>

## Kitakata ramen / FUKUSHIMA

There are about a hundred ramen shops in Kitakata City. The noodles, soups, and tastes vary from shop to shop, but are characterized by thick, high-water-content noodles with a distinct texture and curl in a soy-based soup. The Kitakata Ramen Association, consisting of about 40 shops, offers a ramen map available free at tourist information centers.



## Kitakata Tourism and Product Association

7244-2 Oshimizu Higashi, Kitakata-shi, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-241-24-5200 <http://www.kitakata-kanko.jp/>

National Treasures



## Shiramizu Amida Hall, Ganjo-ji Temple / FUKUSHIMA

Amida Hall was built in 1160 in memory of Lord Iwaki Norimichi, husband of Tokuhime, daughter of the powerful samurai Fujiwara-no-Kiyohira. The hall was designated a National Treasure in 1952. The Heian Period (794-1185) hall is valuable for being one of only a few such structures housing a Buddhist statue that also has a Pure Land garden. Each season brings a different scene, including yamazakura cherry blossoms, lotus flowers and autumn leaves.

221 Hirohata, Shiramizu-machi, Uchigo, Iwaki-shi, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-246-26-7008 <http://shiramizu-amidado.org/access.html>



## Tsuruoka sweets / YAMAGATA

The Umetsukashiho confectionery shop has been in operation for 10 generations since its founding in the Edo Period (1603-1867). Its lineup of unique, traditional sweets, such as Karakara Rice Crackers and Gomen Kitsune, are made with natural ingredients. Even today, each item is dried by hand over a charcoal fire. While munching on one of these popular treats, you'll feel the warmth of the personal touch behind the simple, satisfying flavor.

## Umetsukashiho

2-8-16 Honcho, Tsuruoka-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-235-22-7348 <http://www.umetsukashiho.com/>

## Sweet-stewed carp / YAMAGATA

Uesugi Yozan, the famed and benevolent ninth lord of the Yonezawa Domain, bred carp, or "koi," for their nutritional value. His initiative is remembered today in sweet-stewed carp, a traditional dish in the Okitama district of Yonezawa. Slowly-simmered in sake, soy sauce and sugar, the delicious fish is served on special occasions and during the New Year holidays.

## Tasuku Foods Co., Ltd.

7-130 Aioi-cho, Yonezawa-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-238-22-7188 <http://www.koi-miyasaka.com/>



## Hegi soba / NIIGATA

Hegi soba, served on a tray called "hegi", is unique for being arranged with hand-waving gestures and is thus nicknamed hand-waving soba. Thickened with a seaweed called funori, it has a smooth and chewy texture that people love.

## Ojiya hegi soba

## Ojiya Tourism Association

1-13-20 Jonai, Ojiya-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-258-83-3512 <http://www.ojiyakanko.com>



## Tachi Mei Sanemitsu: Historical long sword

made by Sanemitsu, master swordsmith / YAMAGATA

The great warlord Oda Nobunaga bestowed this famed sword as a gift to Sakai Tadatsugu, the first patriarch of the Sakai clan that ruled the Shonai Domain (modern western Yamagata, along the Japan Sea). Wrapped in gold braid, it is a beautiful example of sword forging during the Momoyama Period (1583-1602). Other important cultural properties in the museum tell the story of the history and culture of the Shonai Domain.

\*Note that this particular sword is not continually on display.

## Chido Museum

10-18 Kachushinmachi, Tsuruoka-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-235-22-1199 <https://www.chido.jp/>



## Tokamachi City Museum / NIIGATA



Tokamachi City Museum, housing examples of Flame-style Pottery, Niigata Prefecture's National Treasure, will reopen in June 2020 with a new facade integrating the themes of Pottery, Fabric, Snow, and the Shinanogawa river. The Museum will also feature projection-mapping for exhibit explanations as well as a reconstructed traditional house.

\*Closed through early June 2020 for renewal.  
1-448-9 Nishihoncho, Tokamachi-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-25-757-5531  
<http://www.tokamachi-museum.jp/>

## Zunda mochi / MIYAGI

Zunda mochi is a local confectionery featuring mochi (rice cake) covered with boiled and mashed edamame (green soybeans) seasoned with sugar and salt. In recent years, it has gained nationwide fame as a specialty of Sendai. There are multiple theories as to its name and origin; it's even possible that the feudal lord, Date Masamune himself came up with the name.

Mikiya 78-1 Kamagafuchi, Nakada-machi, Taihaku-ku, Sendai-shi, Miyagi TEL:+81-22-242-8913



## Pure Rice, Special Brew Sake Urakasumi Zen / MIYAGI

Urakasumi Zen is the signature product of the Urakasumi Sake Brewery Saura Co., Ltd., founded in the city of Shiogama in 1724. It is a pure rice premium sake, or "junmai ginjo", balancing aromas and a mild flavor. Along with a platinum award in the junmai ginjo category at the Milano Sake Challenge 2019, Urakasumi has received numerous accolades in Japan and overseas. In the gallery adjacent to the Shiogama brewery, you can afford goods and sake samples along with a "choko", a small souvenir sake cup.

## Saura Co., Ltd.

2-19 Motomachi, Shiogama-shi, Miyagi  
TEL:+81-22-362-4165  
[www.urakasumi.com/](http://www.urakasumi.com/)

## Aizu painted candles / FUKUSHIMA

These traditional, hand-painted candles feature seasonal flowers in vivid colors. Cultivation of the lacquer tree was encouraged during the Muromachi period (1338-1573), and these candles were first made with its fruit. By the beginning of the Edo period (1603-1867), these painted candles were famed throughout the country for their quality. You can experience painting candles yourself at the Yamagata-ya main store (reservation required).

## Yamagata-ya main store

2-34 Uwamachi, Aizuwakamatsu-shi, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-242-22-5769 <http://rousoku.com/>



National Treasures



# Captivating Aomori and Northern Tohoku

## Nature, history and culture make a jaunt through Northern Tohoku a stirring experience

The Tohoku region is often divided in half, between Aomori, Akita and Iwate prefectures to the north and Miyagi, Yamagata and Fukushima prefectures to the south.

Aomori, the northernmost prefecture on the main island of Honshu, is home to many places of scenic beauty, such as Oirase Gorge and the Hotokegaura rock formations. A staple of summertime Aomori is the incredible Nebuta Festival, a spectacle famed throughout Japan. Surrounded on three sides by the sea, the prefecture is also a treasure trove of diverse seafood including tuna, squid, scallops and more.

In Akita Prefecture you'll find beautiful Lake Tazawa, Japan's deepest lake. New Year's Eve on the Oga Peninsula features the Namahage Festival, a unique folk event featuring frightful demon costumes. There's also Kakunodate, the old castle town. Akita has a variety of alluring sightseeing spots, plus a fine reputation for tasty sake.

In Iwate Prefecture, you'll find historical highlights like Hiraizumi, a World Heritage Site with Buddhist roots, Jodogahama Beach and other scenic sites along the coast, plus local cuisine like wanko soba, featuring "endless" delivery of buckwheat noodles. Iwate is a mesmerizing place to explore.

Each of these three prefectures has its own unique traits that make a trip through Northeastern Tohoku a moving experience. Here you can enjoy a captivating journey with terrific variety.



### Wanko soba/IWATE

Wanko soba is a unique, local variation on soba in which servings of the buckwheat noodles are tossed into the customer's bowl with a hearty shout as they are consumed one after another. The fun is in challenging yourself and companions to see how many servings you can consume.

**Hanamaki Tourism Association**  
3-183-1 Kuzu, Hanamaki-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-198-29-4522  
<http://i-namamen.com/>

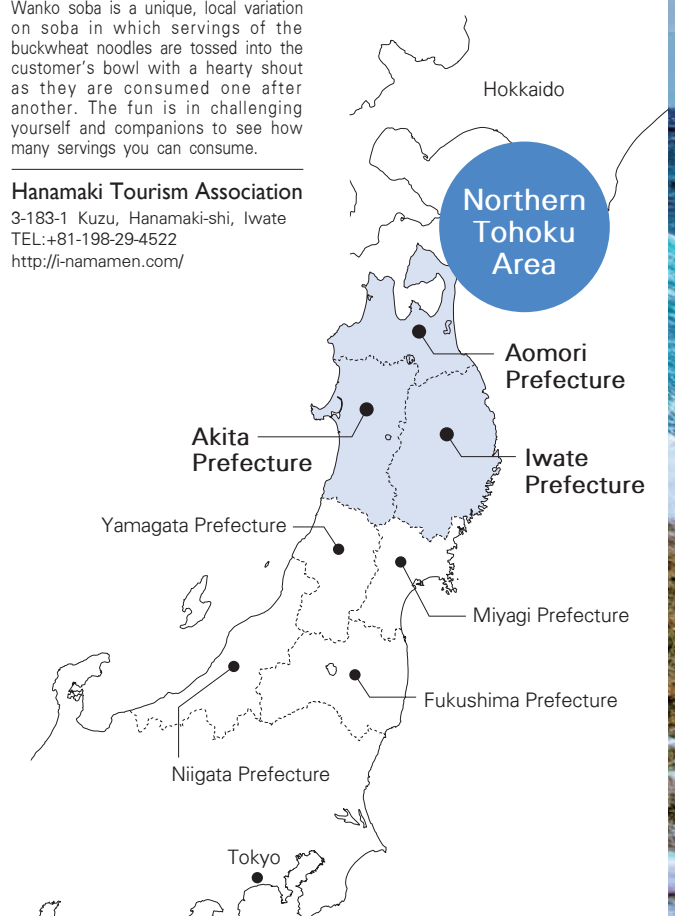


### Akita Inu/AKITA

This dog breed is native to Akita Prefecture and has been designated as a National Natural Treasure. Akitas have a large body with adorable facial features, triangular standing ears, and a curled tail. Akitas are very faithful to their owners and are gaining popularity, even overseas.

**Akita Prefecture Odate City Tourist Exchange Center "Akita Dog Visitor Center"**

1-13-1 Onari-cho, Odate-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-186-59-4649 <https://akitainunosato.jp/>



### National Natural Monument: Hotokegaura/AOMORI

Located in the western coast of the Shimokita Peninsula, northernmost Honshu, the rock formations of Hotokegaura were carved over the years by the rough waves of the Tsugaru Strait. The gigantic, oddly-shaped crags line the coast for 2 km, with many given names associated with Buddhism, such as Nyorai no Kubi (Buddha's Neck), Hitotsubotoke (Solitary Buddha) and Gohyaku Rakan (500 Enlightened Ones).

\*Sightseeing boat rides available: Apr 20 - Oct 31  
(depending on weather and sea conditions)

112 Osai, Sai, Sai-mura, Shimokita-gun, Aomori  
(Sai-mura Tourist Information Center)  
TEL:+81-175-38-4515 <https://saikanko.sakura.ne.jp>





## Captivating Aomori and Northern Tohoku

### Hasshoku Center/AOMORI

This enormous, 170-meter-long market, with some 60 shops, sells a range of Hachinohe specialties, from fresh seafood caught that morning to souvenirs making excellent seasonal gifts. If you're hungry, you can grill your purchases over charcoal at Shichirin Village, or pay a visit to the restaurant area. The bustling Hasshoku Center marks its 40th anniversary in 2020.

22-2 Kansai, Kwaragi, Hachinohe-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-178-28-9311 <https://www.849net.com/>

### Nokkedon/AOMORI

Try the popular local dish, nokkedon, at Kaga Shoten in the Hasshoku Center market area. A bowl of hot rice is filled to the brim with tuna, scallops and other seasonal sashimi of your choice. Enjoy a sumptuous bowl of excellent-quality, fresh seafood arranged just for you at Kaga Shoten.

TEL:+81-178-28-9367 (Kaga Shoten)  
<https://www.849net.com/>



### Seisen Hinomaru Sake/AKITA

This is the signature brand from a sake brewery that, since its foundation in 1689, has innovated to keep up with changing tastes while maintaining traditional methods. This medium-dry sake with umami flavor goes wonderfully with meals. You'll love it at any temperature, whether chilled in summer or hot in winter. With its striking label design and distribution limited to Akita Prefecture, a bottle of Hinomaru makes a great gift for friends elsewhere in Japan or abroad.

#### Hinomaru Brewing

114-2 Nanokamachi, Masuda, Masuda-machi, Yokote-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-182-45-2005 <https://hinomaru-sake.com/>

### Yokote Masuda Manga Museum/AKITA

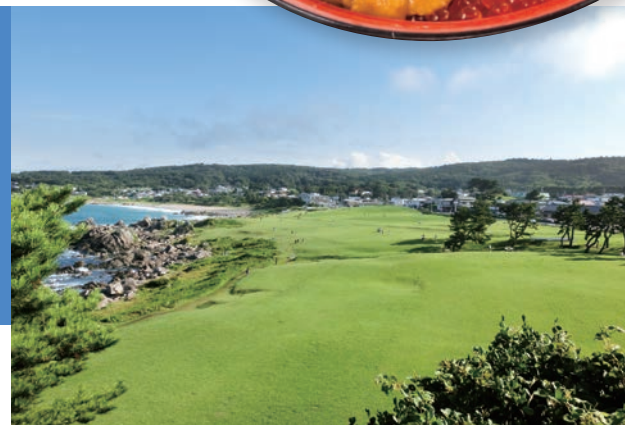
This museum is dedicated to manga, the Japanese comic books that have earned global acclaim for their plotlines and elaborate art. The museum's collection contains over 230,000 original drawings, and visitors will find drawings from many popular works on display. The power and beauty of the originals make a strong impression, and manga connoisseurs will enjoy many sections of the museum, like the Famous Quotes Road. This is the place to fully experience the allure of this grand aspect of Japanese pop culture.

Hours: 10:00 - 18:00 (last entry: 17:30)  
Closed: 3rd Tuesday of the month (or the following day if a national holiday)  
Admission: free entry to permanent exhibition (paid entry to special exhibitions)  
285 Shinmachi, Masuda, Masuda-machi, Yokote-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-182-45-5569 <https://manga-museum.com>

### Michinoku Coastal Trail (from Hachinohe to Fudai)/AOMORI

This 1,000 km-long nature trail stretches along the Pacific coast from Hachinohe City, Aomori Prefecture to Matsukawaura, Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture. One highlight is the Sanriku Fukko National Park's Tanesashi Coast, featuring grass covered headlands, home to more than 650 types of naturally-growing coastal and alpine plants. Seasonal flowers make it a view to anticipate throughout the year.

NPO ACTY 14-124 Tanakubo, Samemachi, Hachinohe-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-178-38-8455 <http://www.tanesashi.info/>



Tanesashi Coast



### The "Grave of Jesus Christ" /AOMORI

The head of the Takeuchi clan, which was based in what is today the city of Kita Ibaraki, Ibaraki Prefecture, was introduced to an ancient text which stated that "Christ, who was sentenced to crucifixion, secretly traveled to Japan." In 1935, he visited the village of Shingo, where he believed he "discovered" the grave of Jesus Christ. Exhibits at the Legend of Christ Museum include the ancient text, other materials on local customs and more.

#### Legend of Christ Museum

33-1 Herai notsuki, Shingo-mura, Sannohe-gun, Aomori  
TEL:+81-178-78-2511 <http://www.marumarushingo.com/>

### Shingo Raw Caramel Crackers/AOMORI

In the village of Shingo, it was once customary to eat crackers topped with black candies. These crackers build upon that tradition by adding milk, butter and other ingredients to the black candies to create a rich raw caramel, which is then sandwiched between a pair of crispy, Nambu crackers. The combination makes for a sweet treat with a fine flavor.

#### Shingo Village Furusato Public Corporation

11-2 Herai-amaike, Shingo-mura, Sannohe-gun, Aomori  
TEL:+81-178-78-2511 <http://www.marumarushingo.com/>



### Joboji Lacquerware/IWATE



Joboji lacquerware was first crafted by the monks of Tendai-ji Temple in Iwate and spread from there to the common people, who have carried on the tradition. These high-quality pieces, carefully coated with layer upon layer of lacquer, are a supreme example of the art.

#### Tekiseisha

23-6 Onyamanakamaeta, Joboji-machi, Ninohe-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-195-38-2511 <http://urushi-joboji.com/life/tekiseisha>

### Goshono Site/IWATE

This archeological site features the remains of a village dating from the latter half of the middle Jomon period, and indicating continuous human settlement in a 7.5-hectare area over an estimated 800 years. Application for consideration as a World Cultural Heritage Site has been made as part of the larger proposal for the "Jomon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaido and Northern Tohoku."

Goshono Jomon Museum 2 Goshono, Iwadate, Ichinohemachi,  
Ninohe-gun, Iwate TEL:+81-195-32-2652 <https://goshono-iseki.com/>



### Iwate Shorthorn beef /IWATE



Raised in an abundant natural environment, Iwate Shorthorn cattle produce nicely lean red meat with high amino acid content and full flavor.

#### Iwategyu Promotion Association

10-1 Uchimaru, Morioka-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-19-629-5735 <http://www.iwategyu.jp/>







Yamagata Hanagasa Festival

Hinoemata Kabuki Theater

Niigata Soh-Odori Festival

Summer Festival Sendai Sparrow Dance

Nishimonai Bon Odori

# An Amazing Display of Colors and a Festival of Dance

## The Origins of Summer Festivals and the Bon Festival Dance in Tohoku

Kazuhiro Kikuchi, Specially Appointed Professor,  
Doctor of Literature, Tohoku Bunkyo College

In the Tohoku region, the "yamase," a cool northeasterly wind carrying misty rain, blows in from the Pacific Ocean beginning in June. When this wind continues to blow through July and August—the season of major rice growth and flowering—the ears of rice stop growing and become damaged by the cool weather, resulting in crop failure and loss of the harvest. Notably, the great famine of the Edo period was primarily caused by the yamase. Paying respects to the souls of the dead and mourning for the victims of starvation and plague were deemed necessary to ensure abundant harvests and avoid such disasters in the future. The prayers and memorial rites on which festival activities and performances are based were thus carried out in summer during the rice flowering season. This is the root of the Three Great Summer Festivals of Tohoku—Nebuta in Aomori Prefecture, Kanto in Akita Prefecture, and Sendai Tanabata in Miyagi Prefecture—all of which arose in the Edo period.

Nebuta originated with "nebuta nagashi," a ritual in which

lanterns are set afloat on a river or the sea to exorcise evil spirits and memorialize the dead. The origin of Kanto was the ritual of "nemuri nagashi" that was held to welcome the souls of the dead during Obon, when ancestral spirits return to their former homes. Of the seven ornaments seen in Sendai Tanabata, the lamps, "hiire andon," and Tanabata incense sticks, "senko," are of note. The lamps represent flames that receive the souls of the dead at Obon, while the incense sticks memorialize the spirits of the dead. Sendai Tanabata was conducted to pray for agricultural production, but can also be said to commemorate the departed. Finally, the Nishimonai Bon Odori (Bon dance, a traditional Japanese folk dance) of Ugo-machi, Akita Prefecture is well-known throughout Japan and is said to have originated with a dance performed to remember a departed castle lord. Among the dancers is a group of black-masked figures called "hikosa zokin," representing the spirits of the dead returning for Obon. The Bon Odori is a performance in which the deceased and living can meet once a year and joyfully dance together.



### ▲ Morioka Sansa Odori

You can see this festival dance in the streets of Morioka, August 1st to 4th. The event features hearty taiko drumming and flamboyant dancing. The Grand Taiko Parade and Grand Circle Dance (Dai-wa Odori) are must-sees.

Organizing Committee of the Morioka Sansa Odori Festival  
(Morioka Chamber of Commerce and Industry)  
14-12 Shimizu-cho, Morioka-shi, Iwate TEL:+81-19-624-5880 <http://www.sansaodori.jp/>

### Kuroishi Yosare

This dance originated from a 500-600 year-old song in which men and women shout out their love to each other during a Bon dance. Spectators can enjoy viewing three dancing styles: the Nagashi Odori, in which performers form lines and dance in a procession down the street; the Mawari Odori, performed while circling around a festival tower; and the Kumi Odori, in which participants dance hand-in-hand.

Kuroishi Tourist Information Center  
1-187 Midoricho, Kuroishi-shi, Aomori TEL:+81-172-52-3488  
<https://kuroishi.or.jp/event/summer/kuroishiyosare>



## Yamagata Hanagasa Festival Aug



A float dedicated to the deity Zao Gongen leads a procession of drummers beating on taiko drums and yelling "Yassho, Makasho!" They are accompanied by some 10,000 dancers garbed in brilliant costumes. This annual event, one of the four great festivals of the Tohoku region, runs from August 5th through 7th.

Yamagata Prefecture Hanagasa Council  
3-1-9 Nanukamachi, Yamagata-shi, Yamagata  
(Yamagata Chamber of Commerce and Industry)  
TEL:+81-23-642-8753 <http://www.hanagasa.jp/>

## Nishimonai Bon Odori Aug



Continuing for over 730 years, the Nishimonai Bon Odori (Dance) has been designated a National Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property. Audiences excitedly descend on this small town for the wild and impressive musical and vocal performances, along with a dazzling array of costumes and graceful dancing. This three-day festival offers a taste of a truly Japanese phenomenon.

Times: 7:00- 11:00 p.m. (Aug 16-17), 7:00-11:30 p.m. (Aug 18)  
Venue: Hocho district (known as Honcho-dori) of Nishimonai, Ugo-machi  
Town Ugo Tourism & Products Association  
200 Nakano, Nishimonai, Ugo-machi, Ogachi-gun, Akita  
TEL:+81-183-55-8635 <http://ugo.main.jp/>

## Hinoemata Kabuki Theater May Aug Sep



The Hinoemata Kabuki is an annual theatrical performance that is entirely put on by the village residents, from the performers and costume production to the makeup and stagehands. It is a traditional form of kabuki that Fukushima Prefecture has designated an important intangible folk cultural property. A long time ago, a farmer saw a kabuki performance in Edo (present-day Tokyo). Apparently, Hinoemata Kabuki began from the stories this farmer told the village about what he saw. Since then, the art has been passed down from parent to child, grandchild and on over the generations for more than 270 years.

Three performances a year: May, August and September  
Hinoemata Kabuki Stage - 664 Idaira, Hinoemata-mura, Minamiaizu-gun, Fukushima  
Oze-Hinoemata Tourism Association  
TEL:+81-241-75-2432 <http://www.oze-info.jp/history/>

## Summer Festival Sendai Sparrow Dance Aug



This festival is held every year from late July to early August outside the east gate of Sendai Station. A group of "mazura" dancers carrying a folding fan in each hand dance to tunes played by accompanying musicians as they proceed down the street. Spectators are free to jump in and join during the big dance at the end. Nearby you'll also find plenty of stalls selling foods, crafts and more.

Summer Festival Sendai Sparrow Dance Steering Committee  
Daiichi Hirose Building 4F, 2-1-8 Honcho, Aoba-ku,  
Sendai-shi, Miyagi  
TEL:+81-22-267-1040 <http://www.suzume-odori.com/>

## Aomori Nebuta Festival Aug



The Aomori Nebuta Festival, one of the Tohoku region's three great festivals, is a six-day annual event running from August 2-7. The "nebuta" are enormous, colorful lanterns shaped like people, animals, demons and more. Their procession down the streets, led by drummers beating large "taiko" drums and other accompanying musicians, is an incredible sight to behold. The dancers, called "haneto," shout and prance to help fire up the festivities.

Aomori Tourism and Convention Association  
1-2-18 Shinmachi, Aomori-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-17-723-7211 <https://www.nebuta.jp/>

## Kitakami Michinoku Performing Arts Festival Aug



This mega-event of local performing arts is held in early August. During the impressive Onikenbai Dance, a group of dancers wearing demon masks performs in front of a bonfire. In the Shishi Dance, dancers toting decorative three-meter bamboo poles beat on taiko drums and sing as they dance to excite the onlooking spectators.

Kitakami Convention & Visitor Bureau  
Odense Plaza Globe 1F 1-3-1 Odori, Kitakami-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-197-65-0300 <https://geinoumatsuri.com/>

## Niigata Soh-Odori Festival Sep



This annual September event features 15,000 dancers of all types from 250 troupes arriving from Japan and overseas. Over 200,000 spectators congregate to revel in the dance performances on the city streets. In the Soh-Odori on the second and third nights, the audience is allowed to enter the barriers and have fun joining in the dancing.

Niigata Soh-Odori Festival Executive Committee  
1-6-1-4F Bandai, Chuo-ku, Niigata-shi (Bus Center Bldg.), Niigata  
TEL:+81-25-383-6688 <http://www.soh-odori.net/>



# Festival Costumes, Local Specialties & Souvenirs



9



13



4



5



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10



11



14



7



12



1

NIIGATA  
Niigata Soh-Odori Festival

FUKUSHIMA  
Hinoemata Kabuki Theater



3



2



## 1 Goldfish Nebuta

Look out for the tightly wrapped orange packages designed like goldfish faces. These adorable, bite-sized yokan, a sweet made with red bean paste, also come in an apple flavor.

**Joboshi Takeuchi Candy Factory**  
5-1-20 Honcho, Aomori-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-17-734-1834  
<http://www.jyoboshi.com/>

## 3 Nishimonai Soba Noodles

In this unusual style of soba, the noodles are a mix of buckwheat flour and funori seaweed, and are served in a cold broth. Many visitors come to Ugo for the soba, and visit several local restaurants and the highway rest area to compare tastes.

**Town Ugo Tourism & Products Association**  
200 Nakano, Nishimonai, Ugo-machi, Ogachi-gun, Akita  
TEL:+81-183-55-8635 <http://ugo.main.jp/>

## 5 Sansa Taiko Drum Strap

This strap features a drum like those played in the Morioka Sansa Dance. Use it as a phone strap or keyholder. Prices start at 1,000 yen each.

**Organizing Committee of the Morioka Sansa Odori Festival, Morioka Chamber of Commerce and Industry**  
TEL:+81-19-624-5880 <http://www.sansaodori.jp/>

## 7 Tamamushi Lacquerware

This lacquerware from Sendai features vivid colors and a lustrous sheen. The style is called "tamamushi," the Japanese word for "jewel beetle," for the iridescent lacquer's resemblance to the remarkably beautiful wings of these insects. Changes in lighting cause subtle, ever-shifting variations in color. A bookmark with a seasonal Sendai design is a wonderful gift that is lightweight and gorgeous.

**Tamamushi Lacquerware Sohpono - Tohoku Kogei Co., Ltd.**  
3-3-20-1F Kamisugi, Aoba-ku, Sendai-shi, Miyagi  
TEL:+81-22-222-5401 [www.t-kogei.co.jp/](http://www.t-kogei.co.jp/)

## 9 Hanagasa Items

You, too, can jump in and participate at the Yamagata Hanagasa Festival! Get your hat, sandals, sash and other attire to join in for an even more exciting experience!

**Shobido Co., Ltd.**  
2-11-8 Midori-cho, Yamagata-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-23-631-1411  
<http://new.shobidou.co.jp/>

## 11 Sarunashi Jam

Sarunashi is a unique variety of kiwi fruit. It is a superfruit with enormous nutritional value, possessing 10 times the vitamin C of a lemon. This jam features natural colors and a rich flavor with a nice balance of tartness and sweetness.

**Michi-no-Eki Tamakawa**  
140-2 Miyanomae, Gampoji, Tamakawa-mura, Ishikawa-gun, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-247-57-3800  
<http://www.kobushinosato.com/sarunashi/index.html>

## 13 Tenugui Sake Set

Kirinzan sake brewery uses 100% locally grown rice from Aga. Released once a year, this special sake comes wrapped in a traditionally dyed textile from the nearby Fujioka Dyeing Factory (Est. 1748). \*The design changes every year.

**Kirinzan Brewery Co., Ltd.**  
46 Tsugawa, Agamachi, Higashikanbara-gun, Niigata  
TEL:+81-254-92-3511 <http://kirinzan.co.jp/lineup/other/>

## 2 Naturally Blue Gold Leaf Jam & Tsuraru Vidro Glassware

This set includes a fantastical apple jam with a gorgeous, royal blue color naturally produced by the Anchan Blue Tea leaf, and accented with a scattering of actual gold dust. A handmade Tsuraru Vidro glassware cup, symbolizing the nature of Aomori, completes the set.

**JT&Associates / Apple Loves Blue**  
243-13 Tamagawa, Hamada, Aomori-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-17-752-1755 <http://www.aol-jam.jp/>

## 4 Hanui Costumes

Colorful hanui costumes are stitched together from pieces of fabric, large and small. Some items, crafted from fabrics over a century old, become valuable works of art. View an exhibit of beautiful pieces at the Bon Odori Kaikan Museum.

**Town Ugo Tourism & Products Association**  
200 Nakano, Nishimonai, Ugo-machi, Ogachi-gun, Akita  
TEL:+81-183-55-8635 <http://ugo.main.jp/>

## 6 Shishi Dance Dolls

The Shishi Dance is a folk dance that has been designated as an Intangible Folk Cultural Property in Iwate Prefecture. These dolls made of Japanese washi paper illustrate the spirited drumming (taiko) and dancing (Kasuga style) characterizing the Shishi Dance.

**Odashima Folk Arts Center**  
10-20 Zaimoku-cho, Hanamaki-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-198-23-4856 <https://www.odasima.com/item.html>

## 8 Suzunosuke Hand Towel

The Sparrow Dance is also performed at the Sendai Aoba Festival, an early summer event in Sendai. Printed hand towels with the Sendai Aoba Festival Sparrow Dance mascot, Aoba Suzunosuke, are a popular souvenir.

**Sendai Aoba Festival Sponsor Association**  
Sendai City Hall Nishikicho Building 3F, 1-3-9 Nishikicho, Aoba-ku, Sendai-shi, Miyagi  
TEL:+81-22-223-8441

## 10 Hanagasa Dagashi Sweets

This gently flavored confection is made with roasted soybean flour and Yamagata-grown Tsuyahime rice flour. Its taste and ingredients convey the "heart" of Japan. Comes with a Hanagasa button pin. \*Limited sale from April to September 220 yen per bag (excluding tax)

**Hogetsudo**  
3-7-39 Kojirakawamachi, Yamagata-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-23-622-9361  
<http://www.hogetsudo.com/index.html>

## 12 Nango Tomato Juice

This tomato juice, with a sweet, bold flavor, is made from Nango tomatoes, a Minamiaizu specialty with a fiery red skin. Even if you're not a fan of tomato juice, you're likely to find this one delectable!

**JA Aizu Yotsuba**  
22-1 Kawakubo, Miyatoko, Minamiaizu-machi, Minamiaizu-gun, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-241-72-3800  
[http://www.nangotomato.jp/index\\_pc.html](http://www.nangotomato.jp/index_pc.html)

**14 Poppoyaki** This baked confection, made from brown sugar and flour, is said to have originated in Shibata Town, Niigata Prefecture, and is popular for its gentle sweetness. 10sticks for 370yen (tax included) Hours:9:00a.m.-4:00p.m. (closes as soon as the day's supply runs out) Closed: Saturdays, Sundays, and National holidays

**Ayame Corporation**  
15-34 Teraoasahi-dori, Nishi-ku, Niigata-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-25-201-9893  
mail order <http://ayame-poppo.com/#contact>





At the top of Mt. Torikabuto  
in Zao Onsen ski resort

### Alice French

Coordinator for International Relations  
Home Country: United Kingdom  
Currently resides in Yamagata-shi, Yamagata Prefecture



"I was hired as a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program) and have been working at Yamagata Prefectural Office since August 2019.

The scenery in Yamagata is very beautiful wherever you go, and all of the food is so delicious! I really enjoy living here. One of my favorite places to visit is Yonezawa, because it is home to so much of Yamagata's precious history. Uesugi Shrine and the Denko no Mori museum are very informative about the history of the Uesugi Clan and the life of Uesugi Kenshin. I always learn a lot when I go there. In winter, Zao Onsen is the best for sightseeing. The other day, I went to Zao Onsen with 2 friends who were visiting from Kyoto. We enjoyed the hot spring baths, ate delicious mochi, and rode the ropeway to see the winter landscape from the observatory at the top of the mountain. It was such a great day!

In addition, Yamagata offers many unique hands-on experiences where tourists can come into contact with the Prefecture's history and culture. They include a samurai experience in Murayama Town and a yamabushi (mountain priest) experience at Mt. Haguro. I think it's great that there are so many opportunities to actively experience the spirit of Yamagata through events such as these, as well as enjoying the delicious food and rich nature!"

### A message for international visitors to Yamagata Prefecture

Please make the most of the amazing nature in Yamagata all year round! There's cherry blossom viewing in spring, hiking to see the autumn leaves in fall, and skiing in winter. Yamagata also has a lot of historical and cultural must-sees. Don't miss out on the opportunity to experience them for yourself and have fun in Yamagata!



Mt. Bandai



Goshiki-numa Nature Trail

### A message for international visitors to Fukushima Prefecture

I think many visitors to Fukushima and Japan, stay only for a short time, so it's important to think about the following.

- 1) When deciding on a destination, convenience and cost of transportation is an important factor.
- 2) Other important points are whether a location is characteristic of Japan and has features unique to a region, and whether there are places that are instagrammable.
- 3) There are tours for foreigners that start at major stations for bullet trains, etc., so if you've chosen a general destination, you won't need to prepare as much.

"I arrived in Fukushima Prefecture as a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) in May 2018. There are many great things about Fukushima, including a very long history, an abundance of nature, and delicious foods, but what amazes me most are the people who live here. They have suffered unimaginable hardship due to the Great East Japan Earthquake, but in spite of that they are kind and positive. I was truly moved by their stories of the disaster that they speak about so matter-of-factly.

I love the magnificent landscapes found in Fukushima. Since there is little untouched nature in my hometown of Guangzhou City in Guangdong Province, I felt soothed and exhilarated when hiking Mt. Bandai and walking around Goshiki-numa."

### LI YONGYANG

Coordinator for International Relations  
Home Country: The People's Republic of China  
Currently resides in Fukushima-shi, Fukushima Prefecture



## Foreign residents share advice on how to enjoy Tohoku and Niigata

We asked foreign residents of Tohoku and Niigata about their favorite places, foods, and memorable experiences in the prefectures they now call home.  
There are also messages for international visitors who will be enjoying sightseeing in Tohoku and Niigata.

"I arrived in Morioka in the summer of 2017. I came to Iwate Prefecture as a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program).

I like the beautiful fall and winter scenery in Morioka, which is something you can't really see back at home. I'm not used to the cold yet, but I'm very interested in the culture of the snow country in Tohoku.

Plus, I love festivals and like to experience the mood and energy of the Morioka Sansa Odori Festival held August 1st-4th every year, and to see the colorful floats in the Morioka Fall Festival held in September. Cold reimen noodles are popular in Morioka, but I think the hot onmen noodles taste good, as well. I also find the mochi culture of eating mochi with a variety of toppings in the city of Ichinoseki interesting. Since coming to Japan, I found it surprising that not only Iwate, but all of Japan is still a cash-based society. Plus, some stores will cut business hours short and close their doors without warning (laughs)."



At Morioka Sansa Odori Festival



At the Kuzumaki Winery  
in the town of Kuzumaki



### Jennifer Redona

Coordinator for International Relations  
Home Country: Guam, United States of America  
Currently resides in Morioka-shi, Iwate Prefecture

### A message for international visitors to Iwate Prefecture

Iwate is a beautiful place with many breathtaking sceneries and delicious food to eat. While most places are accessible by bus or train, it will make your experience better if you are able to rent a car to drive around the prefecture.

"I came to Niigata through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Programme) in August 2019. I had lived in Japan before and wanted to utilize my Japanese again. My image of Niigata before moving here was that it was all rural, but I was glad to see that Niigata City is still fairly urban compared to what I am used to.

The Niigata Prefecture is wonderful because no matter where you go you can eat great food. Since Niigata runs along the coast of the Sea of Japan, there's a ton of great seafood, and recently there's also been an uptick in ramen. Niigata is also famous for its sake, which is known for its crisp and dry taste. There are also places to enjoy winter sports like skiing and snowboarding in the mountains, and at only an hour and a half from Niigata City or from Tokyo, the mountains are very accessible."



Naeba Ski Resort

### A Message for international visitors to Niigata Prefecture

If you want to travel around to different places in Niigata Prefecture, a rental car is best! That said, it snows a lot in winter, so you should practice driving in the snow before coming if you've never done it before. If you like castles, then I recommend Shibata Castle, which is just a short train ride north of Niigata City.



### Brendan Murphy

Coordinator for International Relations  
Home Country: United States of America  
Currently Resides in Niigata-shi, Niigata Prefecture







# The Twelve Signs of the Japanese Zodiac



## Symbolic animal

子 Rat

丑 Ox

寅 Tiger

卯 Hare

辰 Dragon

巳 Snake

午 Horse

未 Sheep

申 Monkey

酉 Rooster

戌 Dog

亥 Boar

## Stories of Junishi in Japan

Kazuhiro Kikuchi, Specially Appointed Professor,  
Doctor of Literature, Tohoku Bunkyo College

The "Junishi," or twelve animals of the zodiac, originated in ancient China and were assigned to the 12 months of the calendar, the 12 compass directions (North, North-Northeast, East-Northeast, etc.), and the 12 hours of the day (each ancient hour equivalent to two modern hours). Over time, years were divided into 12 year cycles, with an animal assigned to each. Junishi were passed down from ancient Japan and became popular among commoners in the Edo period. Stories of junishi could be read in *Nihon Mukashibanashi Taisei* (*Collection of Japanese Folktales*), a compilation by the folklorist Keigo Seki. One of these stories is about a race among the animals. A deity specified a day and place he wanted the animals to gather and determined junishi according to the order in which the animals arrived, from 1st to 12th. The cat forgot the day of the gathering and asked the rat, but the rat purposely told him it was the day after the actual gathering. The ox walked slowly, so he started out the day before. The rat rode on his back, and just as the ox was about to reach the gathering spot, the rat jumped off his back and arrived barely ahead of the ox. Thus, the rat was 1st and the ox 2nd. The cat that had been tricked by the rat came a day late and was not included in junishi. There are many other related stories, but the current junishi was determined based on this story of the animal race.





## Towada Horse Park (Komakko Land)



Shotokukan, located in the Towada Horse Park, is a unique facility where you learn about the origins of famous horses, as well as the history and culture of residents and horses of the Nanbu region. At Komakko Ranch, also inside the park, a wide variety of horses can be found, including the Nomauma, a horse indigenous to Japan. You can interact with the horses through horseback rides (rope-led), carriage rides, and pony walks.

1-1 Umeyama, Fukamochi, Towada-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-176-26-2100 [komakkoland.jp](http://komakkoland.jp)

## Odate City Tourism & Exchange Facility : Akita Dog Visitor Center

©odate-shi



Opened in 2019 to promote the Akita dog breed, the center's museum and other attractions introduce the birthplace and history of the breed. The building's exterior is fashioned on the theme of the faithful dog Hachiko, and there is a tower made of 160 stuffed animals. Visitors can also interact with real Akita dogs in the meet-and-greet dog room.

1-13-1 Onari-cho, Odate-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-186-59-4649 <https://akitainunosato.jp/>



### ① "Fluffy Akita Dog Design" Blend coffee made by Nagahama Coffee [5-pack set]

This original drip coffee is officially recognized by ONE FOR AKITA. Every bag has cute Akita dog design. A portion of proceeds will be donated to Akitainu conservation association for Akita Dogs preservation activities.

One For Akita General Incorporated Association  
1-1-3 Yabaseminami, Akita-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-18-807-2535 <http://saveakita.or.jp/ofa/>

### ② Japanese Zodiac Neputa

Zodiac neputa are paper folk craft creations depicting the current year's animal of the Japanese zodiac. Made by local artisans, you can find them at the Tsugaru-han Neputa Village, where you can also try your hand at designing your own goldfish neputa.

Tsugaru-han Neputa Village  
61 Kamenoko-cho, Hirosaki-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-172-39-1511  
<http://neputamura.com/experience-crafts/>

### ③ Plush Toy : Masaru the Akita Dog

This stuffed animal is based on Masaru, the dog given to 2018 Olympic figure skating gold medalist Alina Zagitova. Her cute face and fluffy fur have been so realistically reproduced that you can't resist giving this adorable doggy a hug.

Akita Dog Conservation Society  
13-1 Sannomaru, Odate-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-186-42-2502  
<http://www.akitainu-hozonkai.com/>

## Junishi Shrine (Guardian Shrine of the Japanese Zodiac)



Junishi Shrine, located inside the larger Morioka Hachimangu Shrine, recognizes beliefs concerning the Japanese zodiac. Each animal of the zodiac is enshrined there, and paying annual homage to the animal of your birth year is said to bring good fortune.

Morioka Hachimangu Shrine  
13-1 Hachiman-cho, Morioka-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-19-652-5211 <http://morioka8man.jp/db10/>



## Town of Kami : Fire Prevention Tiger Dance at the Hatsu-uma Festival



Intended to ward off disastrous fires, this ritual has a history going back some 650 years. The dance's first organizers decided to put on the tiger dance after learning the Chinese saying that "the clouds obey the dragon, and the wind obeys the tiger." Every year on April 29, the town comes alive with brilliantly colored floats and a procession of marchers in tiger costumes. Finally, several tigers go high up on the roof of a building to put on a brave dance.

Commerce, Industry and Tourism Section, Town of Kami - Hatsu-uma Festival Organizing Committee Office  
3-5 Nishida, Kami-machi, Kami-gun, Miyagi  
TEL:+81-229-63-6000 <http://www.town.kami.miyagi.jp>



### ④ Silk Cocoon Figurines of the Japanese Zodiac

These adorable pieces are crafted from silkworm cocoons produced in Japan. Each handmade work bears a unique expression and exudes a warm glow of simple craftsmanship.

Murata Folk Craft Workshop  
5-5-6 Mitsuware, Morioka-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-19-661-2229  
<http://muratamingeikoubou.com/>

### ⑤ Tsutsumi Dolls

These folk dolls were first created in Sendai during the Edo Period (1603-1867). Each one is handmade and painted by artisans. These sophisticated, adorable dolls are widely popular, and as each year draws to a close, collectors seek out dolls of the next year's animal of the Japanese zodiac.

Haga Tsutsumi Doll Workshop  
3-30-10 Tsutsumimachi, Aoba-ku, Sendai-shi, Miyagi  
TEL:+81-22-275-1133  
<https://www.pref.miyagi.jp/soshiki/shinsan/10ningyo.html>

## Guardians of the Japanese Zodiac



Dainichi Nyorai, in Aoba-ward, Sendai, is home to guardian deity statues of the sheep and the monkey.

Long ago, the people of Sendai followed a custom of paying homage to statues representing the guardian deities of the Japanese zodiac. It is said that this custom flourished beginning in the mid-17th century, when Lord Date Masamune's arrival in Sendai brought stability to the community.

Miyagi general tourism information site:  
Miyagi Marugoto Exploration  
[www.miyagi-kankou.or.jp/kakikomi/detail.php?id=2407](http://www.miyagi-kankou.or.jp/kakikomi/detail.php?id=2407)





Soma Nomaoui Cavalry Exercise Reenactment



Over 1,000 years ago, Taira no Kijiro Masakado, the founder of the Soma clan, organized a military training exercise for his cavalry using wild horses in place of enemy forces. This was also the start of the traditional practice of offering captured horses to the gods. Modern-day festivities commemorating this history are held over three days in late July. Main events include the Armored Horse Competition, with steeds kicking up a storm of dust, and the Capture the Divine Flag contest, a battlefield-like spectacle reminiscent of scenes from picture scrolls drawn during Japan's Warring States Period.

Soma Nomaoui Executive Committee  
2-27 Motomachi, Haramachi-ku,  
Minamisoma-shi, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-244-22-3064 <http://soma-nomaoui.jp>



Kumano Shrine



The largest thatched roof building in Yamagata, Kumano Shrine was rebuilt by the imperial edict of Emperor Heizei in 806. Protected by the Emperor, it was a sacred site for ascetics of the region. The shrine is also said to house "the god of marriage", and it is said that if you find three rabbits carved in the rear wall of the main shrine, your wish will be fulfilled.

Kumano Shrine Office  
3476-1 Miyauchi, Nanyo-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-238-47-7777  
<http://kumano-taisha.or.jp/>

4



Yamakoshi Bullfighting



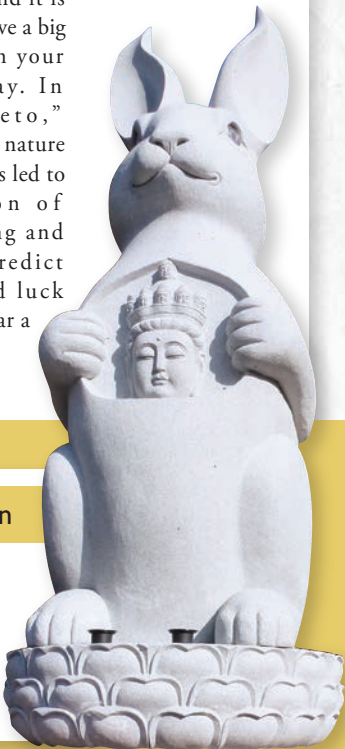
Bullfighting in Yamakoshi may date back as far as a thousand years. Bull oxen were indispensable in the cultivation of rice terraces, and this led to their joint use for entertainment through rousing bullfighting. Yamakoshi bullfighting is special in that it is designed to avoid injury to the bulls. It is also a spectacle to witness the technique of the referee, or "seko" when the bulls lock horns.

Yamakoshi Bullfighting Society  
1627-5 Yamakoshinanpei-otsu, Nagaoka-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-258-59-3933 <http://tsunotsuki.main.jp>

Eto Explained

Kazuhiro Kikuchi, Specially Appointed Professor,  
Doctor of Literature, Tohoku Bunkyo College

"Eto" is the word for the combination of "jikkan" (10 calendar signs) and "junishi" (12 signs of the zodiac) developed in ancient China. Jikkan is the division of a single month into three cycles of 10 days each: "kinoe," "kinoto," "hinoe," "hinoto," "tsuchinoe," "tsuchinoto," "kanoe," "kanoto," "mizunoe," and "mizunoto." These names are related to the five elements—metal, wood, water, fire, and earth—in Chinese thought. Junishi were originally comprised of the names for the 12 months, which later became associated with 12 animals: "ne" (rat), "ushi" (ox), "tora" (tiger), "u" (hare), "tatsu" (dragon), "mi" (snake), "uma" (horse), "hitsuji" (sheep), "saru" (monkey), "tori" (rooster), "inu" (dog), and "i" (boar). Later, each animal of the junishi was assigned to one year in a 12 year cycle, and this custom of celebrating the animal associated with the current year has become rooted in Japanese culture. Incidentally, 2020 is the year of "ne" (the rat). When the 60 combinations of jikkan and junishi are assigned to calendar days and years, it creates a 60-year cycle that reaches completion and returns to the beginning on the 61st year. Because of this, the year in which you reach the age of 61, according to East Asian age reckoning, is called "kanreki" (combining the characters for "return" and "calendar"), and it is customary to have a big celebration on your 61st birthday. In addition, "eto," associated with nature and animals, has led to the creation of fortune-telling and magic that predict character and luck based on the year a person is born.



1 Akabeko

There is a legend in Yanaizu Town that a red cow appeared and helped in rebuilding the Enzoji Temple after it was destroyed in the 1611 earthquake. You can see Akabekos (red cows), also known as "lucky cows," throughout the town.

Yanaizu Tourism Association  
176-3 Jikemachiko, Yanaizu, Yanaizu-machi,  
Kawanuma-gun, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-241-42-2346  
[https://www.aizukanko.com/kk/aibase/01shirou/bussan/bussan\\_akabeko.htm](https://www.aizukanko.com/kk/aibase/01shirou/bussan/bussan_akabeko.htm)

2 Miharu-koma

Miharu-koma are traditional wooden toy horses made in Takashiba-mura, ruled by the Miharu feudal lord. Black ones were offered to shrines as amulets for children while white ones were for the elderly. At Dekoyashiki's Hikoji Mingei, you can enjoy a tour of the production facilities as well as trying your hand at painting your own.

Takashiba Dekoyashiki Hikoji Mingei  
TEL:+81-24-972-2412  
<http://www.dekoyashiki-hikojimingei.co.jp/index.shtml>  
Takashiba Dekoyashiki Tourism Association  
(Office: Oichi Chaya) TEL:+81-24-971-3907  
[https://www.gurutto-koriyama.com/detail/index\\_203.html](https://www.gurutto-koriyama.com/detail/index_203.html)

3 Sasano Ittobori Woodwork Design Activity

Make your very own Otaka Poppo wooden hawk by painting the eyes and other features onto a carved piece of koshiabura wood.  
\*Reservation required.  
Time: 1 hour Price starts at 1,000 yen

Sasano Folk Crafts Hall  
5208-2 Sasanohoncho,  
Yonezawa-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-238-38-4288

4 Fine Japanese Zodiac Confections

The 4th generation owner of Furindo, founded in 1912, is a certified top-class confectioner of Japanese sweets. His fine, zodiac-themed confections are a popular product that generates big sales every year.  
\*Pre-order required.

Furindo Confectionery  
1-3-17 Motomachi, Nagai-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-238-88-2373 <http://fu-rindo.jp>

Chokokuji Temple Rabbit Kannon

The Rabbit Kannon, standing 6 meters tall, was built in 2018 in recognition of rabbits that help in weeding the temple grounds.

Chokokuji Temple  
13 Hase, Sado-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-259-66-2052 <http://sado-choukokuji.jp/>

Kumano Shrine





Yamamo Miso and Soy Sauce Brewing Company



### Yamamo Miso and Soy Sauce Brewing Company / AKITA

This soy sauce brewery was founded in 1867, and carries on with traditional products while also developing new ones in-step with the modern day. All are crafted with the plentiful, pure waters of Yuzawa using techniques passed on over generations. The fine reputation of the Yamamo brand has expanded worldwide in recent years. Visitors can take a tour of the brewery, the garden and the storehouse. Tour-goers praise it for offering a close-up look at the hands-on work of artisans, and the remodeled storehouse contains a gallery exhibiting works of art relating to the local area's history and culture. You'll also find a popular cafe serving gelato flavored with miso and soy sauce, as well as the factory shop selling miso, soy sauce and other goods for daily use. Even a brief stop at the storehouse alone offers visitors a chance to see and learn about the enterprise and taste its creations.

Hours: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Garden Cafe : 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. (last order at 4:30 p.m.)  
Closed: Inquire in advance  
124 Iwasaki, Yuzawa-shi, Akita TEL:+81-183-73-2902 <http://yamamo1867.com/>



# Experiences & Souvenirs from Tohoku & Niigata

## Discover Deep Culture through Interactive Experiences in Tohoku and Niigata

An interactive trip with hands-on activities is a wonderful way for curious travelers to learn and experience the allures of Tohoku and Niigata. Take sake, for example. It is a drink that pairs well with so many foods and has developed a dedicated following beyond Japan. Tohoku and Niigata are major rice-producing regions, and are thus home to numerous sake breweries, some of which offer sake samplings and brewery tours—great opportunities to experience the traditional culture of sake brewing.

If you're fascinated by samurai, ninja and such aspects of Japanese culture, you'll love a tour of a samurai residence or a lesson in "iaido," Japanese swordsmanship. You'll also have opportunities to appreciate and purchase traditional craftwork popularly known as "Cool Japan," and enjoy local gourmet dishes and souvenirs. And when you need a respite from your busy itinerary, why not visit a hot spring retreat where you can bathe and take in the incredible natural scenery? Perhaps it's time to get off the beaten track and embark on an enriching journey into Tohoku and Niigata.



### MARUNAO OPEN FACTORY / NIIGATA

Marunao creates chopsticks employing the special characteristics of various hardwoods, such as ebony and rosewood. The open factory has both a shop and a gallery. You can watch firsthand how the craftsmen bring their works to life. There is also an exhibition allowing a helpful glimpse of the history of the craftsmanship on display.

1662-1 Yada, Sanjo-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-256-45-7001 <http://www.marunao.com/>

### Suehiro Sake Brewery Co., Ltd. Kaeikura / FUKUSHIMA

A local sake brewery founded in 1850, Suehiro Sake puts a focus on the water, rice and people of the Aizu area, and has won many a gold prize at the Annual Japan Sake Awards. Its Suehiro Yamahai Junmai Ginjo was served at the summit dinner of the 2019 G20 Osaka Summit. Sake brewery tours and tastings are available for visitors. You will also find a stylish cafe refashioned from one of the historical brewery buildings.



12-38 Nisshin-machi, Aizuwakamatsu-shi, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-242-27-0002 <https://www.sake-suehiro.jp/>





### Bukeman Sweets/ AKITA

This venerable confectionery store in Kakunodate sells handmade local sweets with no additives. Enjoy the delicious aroma of these treats, stuffed with tasty ingredients, as they are baked before your eyes. There are four regular fillings, including red bean paste and cream, along with special, limited-time flavors to sample. Bukeman is particularly proud of its homestyle red bean paste sweets. Travelers will also be happy with the reasonable prices!

### Yukarido Confectionery, Bukeman Ozuka Branch

Bukeman : All items 120 yen (incl. tax)  
Months open: Oct-May 176-1 Shimosugasawa  
Kakunodate-machi, Semboku-shi, Akita TEL:+81-187-54-3768

### Yamabushi Mountain Training Programs/ YAMAGATA

Discover one of Tohoku's greatest locations for ancient mountain worship here on the Dewa Sanzan, the Three Mountains of Dewa: Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono. For centuries, mountain worshippers known as Yamabushi have undertaken ascetic training on these three sacred peaks. Led by 13th generation Master Fumihiro Hoshino, himself a very accomplished Yamabushi, Daishobo is a Shukubo pilgrim lodge that has offered visitors not only lodging, but the chance to be spiritually reborn through ascetic training. Yamabushido has taken this ancient training and made it available in English for those coming from abroad. Trainings are also known for offering Dewa Sanzan Shojin Ryori, meticulously prepared ascetic meals made using ancient techniques that incorporate ingredients sourced directly from the mountains. Take the opportunity to get back to nature, and back to yourself with Yamabushido. Other spiritual and cultural activities also available.

### Megurun Inc.

120-2 Konkōji, Yabase, Tsuruoka-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-90-2981-7251 yamabushido.jp megurun.com



YAMABUSHI

### Kakunodate Samurai Residences/ AKITA

Kakunodate has retained the same traditional look and feel for over 400 years. It is known as the "Little Kyoto of Michinoku" for its resemblance to the old Japanese capital of Kyoto. Walking down the street, you wouldn't be surprised to see a samurai step out of a nearby residence. The district is well-known for its cherry blossoms in spring and colorful leaves in autumn. The historical buildings and the natural surroundings produce a wonderful atmosphere. Make a memorable visit with a relaxing stroll through the gorgeous scenery or don a kimono for a rickshaw ride as you imagine a time when samurai and commoners strode along these streets.

### Tourism Section, Department of Tourism, Commerce and Industry, City of Semboku

36 Nakamachi, Kakunodate-machi, Semboku-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-187-43-3352 <https://www.city.semboku.akita.jp/sightseeing/>

SAMURAI



### Hachimantai Geothermal Dyeing/ IWATE

This dyeing method employs geothermal steam from the Matsukawa Geothermal Power Plant to produce powerful, intensely colored products filled with the energy of the earth. The unique process and products are attracting great attention, and at regular workshops, you can experience dyeing items such as handkerchiefs and scarves.

\*2,750 yen for dyeing workshop (for cotton mini scarf)~

\*Reservations usually required at least 7 days in advance for groups of 10 or more.

### Geothermal Dyeing Research Institute Co., Ltd.:

#### Workshop Mujosen

Rinhan-wo-shohan, 559 Matsukawakokuyurin, Matsuoyoriki, Hachimantai-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-195-78-2451 <http://geo-color.com/>



### Uonuma International Snowball Fight/ NIIGATA

Join a snowball fight with some 250 teams! This is safe and fun, organized combat following set rules. Highlights include the team captains wearing "yamagasa," woven bamboo hats. Other fun activities include a snow play zone and the Gourmet Grand Prix.

### Koide Festival Executive Committee

(Secretariat: Tourism Chief Clerk, Commerce, Industry and Tourism Section, Industry and Economy Department, City of Uonuma)  
213-1 Osawa, Uonuma-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-25-792-9754 <https://seinenbu.uonuma-koide.com/yuki/index.html>



NINJA

### Shizukuishi Ski Resort/ IWATE

In addition to fun on the snow, you can take in the starry night sky from the Shizukuishi Galaxy Ropeway. Hoshino Shizuku Studio, open from spring to autumn, will take your commemorative photo under the brilliant stars. Beyond great skiing and snowboarding, the full array of winter activities includes the Premium Snowmobile Tour, Snow Ninja Dojo and Shizukuishi Snow Land.

### Shizukuishi Prince Hotel

Shizukuishi-cho, Iwate-gun, Iwate (Takakura Onsen)  
TEL:+81-19-693-1111 <https://www.princehotels.co.jp/shizukuishi/>

### Japan's Hayashizaki Iai Shrine/ YAMAGATA



It is said that Jinsuke Shigenobu Hayashizaki, the founder of Iaido, devoted himself to training at Kumano Myojin (Japan's Hayashizaki Iai Shrine) in order to avenge his father and was given the secrets of Iai (sword drawing) by his great ancestors. In the experience session, you will learn about sword etiquette and the form of "Kata" in Iai, and perform "Tameshigiri" of Battoujutsu Technique.

### Murayama City Tourism Products Association

1-10-1 Tateokashinmachi, Murayama-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-237-53-1351 <https://www.iaidoexperience.com/>





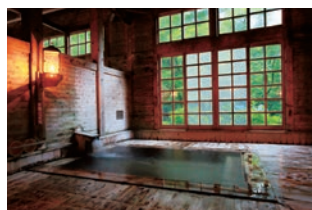
HOT SPRING



## Aoni Onsen/AOMORI

This quaint, quiet hot spring retreat nestled among the streams of the Aoni Valley opened in 1929. In addition to the four baths at Kenroku-no-Yu, enjoy countryside cuisine made with locally grown alpine vegetables and freshwater fish. With no electricity or radio available in the rooms, you can pass the evening in peace, illuminated only by lamplight.

1-7 Aonisawa-takinoue, Okiura, Kuroishi-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-172-54-8588 <https://www.aoninet.com/>



Kenroku-no-Yu, a bath constructed entirely of cypress wood



A magical scene of snow and lamplight

## Okuaizu Braided Crafts / FUKUSHIMA



These National Traditional Craftworks of Japan are braided by hand over the snowy months from plant materials found deep in the mountains of the Okuaizu region, including the bark of the crimson glory vine, silver vine, and hiroro. At the Mishima Town Local Crafts Museum, you can shop for sturdy, rustic baskets, bowls and more. Visitors can also join braiding and woodworking activities (reservation required).

### Mishima Town Local Crafts Museum

395 Nairi-Suwanoue, Mishima-machi, Onuma-gun, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-241-48-5502 [www.okuaizu-amikumij.jp](http://www.okuaizu-amikumij.jp)



## Hayato Onsen Tsurunoyu/FUKUSHIMA

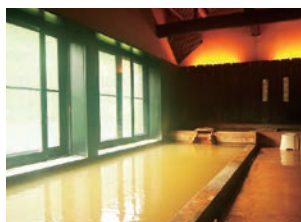
With a proud history going back 1,200 years, Hayato Onsen Tsurunoyu offers visitors free-flowing water from a 100% natural, medicinal hot spring. The open-air, communal bath is a fine place to relax and take in the seasonal scenery along the Tadami River. Visitors can enjoy an overnight stay or just a daytime visit. You can also journey down the river in a rowboat "Mugenkyo no Watashi" amidst the magical mists floating over the water on summer mornings and evenings. It's just a 15 minute walk down to the dock.

### Hayato Onsen Tsurunoyu

888 Yunodaira, Hayato, Mishima-machi, Onuma-gun, Fukushima TEL:+81-241-52-3324  
<https://www.okuaizu-tsurunoyu.jp/>

### Mugenkyo no Watashi (No service during winter)

Kaneyama-machi Tourism & Products Association  
TEL:+81-241-42-7211 <https://www.mugenkyo.info>



## Gojome Morning Market/AKITA

A wide variety of merchants offering fresh local goods and household items set up shop at this bustling morning market with a history of over 520 years. At the newer Morning Market Plus, you can find handmade goods, confectionery and more. At seasonal events like the Alpine Vegetable Festival in spring, don't miss Damakomochi, a delicious local rice cake pounded into a round shape.

Dates: Every day of the month with a date ending in a 2, 5, 7 or 0.  
(Occasionally open on other dates, too.)

Hours: 7 a.m. to noon

Location: Shitamachi Street (also known as Asaichi Street) in the town of Gojome

\*Morning Market Plus only opens on Sundays when the regular market is open

(dates ending in a 2, 5, 7 or 0) from April to November, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Commercial and Industrial Promotion Section, Gojome Town Hall

1-1-1 Nishiisonome, Gojome-machi, Minamiakita-gun, Akita

TEL:+81-18-852-5222 <http://www.town.gojome.akita.jp/gojomeasaichi/index.html>



MARKET

Damako-nabe

## Yuriage Port Morning Market/MIYAGI

This market is held every Sunday and on all official holidays at Yuriage Port in the city of Natori. You'll find 50 shops selling fresh fish, along with vegetables, meat, processed foods, sweets and more. You can enjoy a variety of activities, such as grilling up the seafood you just bought, bidding on items at the popular auction, or enjoying a delicious breakfast or lunch in the restaurant.

Market days: Sundays and holidays

Hours: 6 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Yuriage Port Morning Market Association

5-23-20 Yuriage, Natori-shi, Miyagi TEL:+81-22-395-7211 <http://yuriageasaichi.com/>

## Northern Limit Shirasu/MIYAGI

"Shirasu" are tiny young sardines harvested from the cold ocean waters off the coast of Tohoku. These fatty fish with a subtle sweetness are boiled and dried to bring out their excellent flavor. Suzuei, was originally founded in Namie, Fukushima Prefecture. Temporarily suspending business after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, Suzuei reopened in Natori to continue its proud history of over 70 years preparing shirasu.

### Gyosho Suzuei

3-90-1 Yuriage, Natori-shi, Miyagi TEL:+81-22-393-6303 <http://suzueinatori.thebase.in/>



## Nakayoshi/AOMORI

Port town of Hachinohe is known for one of the largest squid catch in Japan. Using only the best quality caught from our water, we made it into a wafer to sandwich cheese! Unique combination goes hand in hand. Great with beer or wine, or as an appetizer, we certainly recommended it for souvenir! Enjoy the taste of squid and cheese in harmony!

### Hanaman Shokuhin

24-11 Mishimashita, Shiroganemachi, Hachinohe-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-178-33-0353 <https://hanaman.net/>



## Tatehana Wharf Morning Market /AOMORI

This market, one of the largest in Japan, is held early on Sunday mornings from mid-March to December at the large wharf in Hachinohe. Every week more than 10,000 shoppers browse over 300 stalls selling a wide variety of products from the fresh and dried seafoods that are Hachinohe specialties to vegetables, fruits, prepared dishes, breads, and an array of miscellaneous goods.

4-1 Shiroshita, Hachinohe-shi, Aomori (Kayama Coffee)  
Minato Sunday Morning Market Cooperative  
TEL:+81-80-5734-3251  
<http://minatonichiyouasaichikai.com/>







Kawatsura Lacquerware



Sendai Tansu (Chest of Drawers)



Uetsu Shina-fu Fabric



100-Year-Old Ryotei Ukiyo

# The Flavor, Skill and Spirit of Tradition

## The Background and Attraction of Long-established Shops in Tohoku and Niigata

Satoshi Kato, Associate Professor,  
Tohoku University Archives

More than 30,000 shops in Japan have been in business for over a century, and these venerable establishments are an important part of the character and fabric of Japanese society. Tohoku and Niigata are blessed with an abundance of these jewels. The traditions on which these businesses are based are well-seen in the importance placed on respect for customers, the high levels of service at many hot springs and other tourist attractions, and a culture that merges tradition

with modern sensibilities. Since the Edo period, many merchants of Tohoku have strived to contribute to society and prioritize the joy of the buyer. The region boasts the greatest number of hot springs in Japan and traditional products unique to the region have been appreciated throughout the years. Department store exhibits of local products were first held in Tohoku, and the region's producers continue to offer traditional goods while constantly innovating to create products

compatible with modern lifestyles and contemporary trends. The many long-established shops of Tohoku and Niigata are a testament to the region's sense of history, hospitality, and ability to adapt to modern sensibilities.



Ando Brewing



## AOMORI



This rice will become fine-tasting sake.



Nakamachi Komise Street

### Narumi Sake Brewery on Nakamachi Komise Street

Nakamachi Komise Street in the city of Kuroishi, Aomori is a well-known sightseeing street lined by traditional buildings with the walkway covered by a 600 meter-long, wooden arcade. Still retaining the atmosphere of the old castle town, the district is also home to Narumi Sake Brewery. The area's nickname is Inamura, or "rice village," because the area has historically enjoyed good harvests, even when other areas fared poorly. For over 200 years, the brewery has used "Inamura" as a trade name, and produced fine sake such as Inamuraya Bunshiro, Inamuraya and Kikunoi. The sake storehouse, designated by the city as an Important Cultural Property, was built several decades before the brewery's establishment by a merchant from Omi, a province near the ancient Japanese capital of Kyoto. Except during brewing season, tours can be booked in advance.

#### Narumi Sake Brewery

1-1 Nakamachi, Kuroishi-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-172-52-3321 <http://narumijozoten.com>



Kikunoi Daiginjo

Kikunoi Special  
Pure Rice Sake



Manji Monaka Sweets



### Manji Monaka Sweets from Kaiundo

Kaiundo, the maker of Manji Monaka sweets, is a business of long standing that was founded in 1878. The sweets' symbol, called "manji" in Japanese, is a common religious symbol in Asia that dates back to ancient times. It was also used as a symbol of Tsugaru Domain under the Tokugawa Shogunate, and today it is the emblem of the City of Hirosaki. In 1906, in commemoration at a festival on the 300th anniversary of the death of Tsugaru Tamenobu, the domain's first lord, the second-generation proprietor of Kaiundo respectfully offered monaka sweets for which he was permitted to use the manji. Kaiundo then created the Manji Monaka sweets. The treats have an aromatic outer layer. Inside is a white bean paste made from navy beans, mixed with sweetened red beans produced in Hokkaido. Manji Monaka have a fine reputation as a part of Hirosaki's culinary history.

#### Kaiundo Confectionery

83 Dotemachi, Hirosaki-shi, Aomori (Kaiundo)  
TEL:+81-172-32-2354  
<https://www.facebook.com/開雲堂-269871630566957/>

### Kogin-sashi

The Tsugaru area of Aomori has always experienced harsh, cold winters, and during the Edo Period (1603-1867), the women of Tsugaru began producing Tsugaru Kogin-sashi. The cloth's characteristic needlework involves stitching cotton yarn into hemp cloth to give the fabric greater heat retention and durability. Hirosaki city was the hub of development of the technique, and it is counted among the three great needlework traditions of Japan. This traditional craft has been preserved to the present day, and these entirely handmade pieces have attracted a wide following for their rustic style and geometric designs.

#### Hirosaki Kogin Laboratory

61 Zaifuchō, Hirosaki-shi, Aomori  
TEL:+81-172-32-0595 <http://tsugaru-kogin.jp/>



Kogin-sashi business card cases



Kogin-sashi covered buttons



Kogin-sashi bags





These beautiful wares feature natural, rounded lines and a glossy sheen.



Advanced technique is indispensable for applying the lacquer smoothly



The subtle art of lacquerwork



The display and sales corner is filled with the best products from the prefecture

## Kawatsura Lacquerware

It is said that the Kawatsura Lacquerware got its start with lacquer being applied to armor during the 12th century. It developed into a high-quality, traditional craft as large-scale production began during the mid-17th century. It is distinctive for the traditional drying method involving initial rough shaping and smoking of the pieces. This creates a strong wood resistant to cracking, distortion, and decay, that even repels insects. Another feature of Kawatsura Lacquerware is Hananuri, an advanced hand-painting technique that doesn't leave brush marks. Artisans of the Kawatsura District specialize in different parts of the process, with up to 10 manual steps going into the creation of each beautiful piece of lacquerware. Most are traditional pieces such as bowls, lacquer boxes, and trays, but new products with new colors and forms are being developed to fit modern lifestyles. We believe that lacquerware pieces crafted by artisans from natural wood make good companions, bringing warmth and life to the dining table.

### Akita Prefecture Lacquerware Industry Cooperative Association

142-1 Odate Nakano, Kawatsura-cho, Yuzawa-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-183-42-2410 <http://www.kawatsura.or.jp/>



The rounded edges are pleasant to the touch.



A great snack with tea!



Each roll is carefully formed



## Tofu Kamaboko

Tofu kamaboko have been a tradition for 150 years in Omagari, home of the world-famous fireworks festival. The treats are made with no synthetic additives or preservatives, strictly following an old recipe in which fine tofu and "surimi" paste, made from white fish meat, are blended and steamed. Tofu kamaboko are quite healthy, with a pleasant, slightly sweet flavor. They can serve as fancy treats for special occasions or gifts, but locals also often serve them as snacks with tea. The traditional type, when sliced, somewhat resembles a Swiss roll cake, and comes with outer wrappings in four different textures and flavors. The popular, bite-sized tofu kamaboko comes individually wrapped for a quick snack anytime. They're also great for sharing with a group!

### Tsujiya Nakadori Main Shop

1-20 Nakadori-machi, Omagari, Daisen-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-187-62-0494 <https://akita-tsujiya.jp/>

## Kaden Soy Sauce

This soy sauce is made with the "saishikomi" technique, in which fermented soy sauce is used in place of the usual salted water in the production process. This results in a rich flavor and aroma. Besides serving it with sashimi or sushi, you can use it in all kinds of cooking or as a subtle accent for many dishes. Ando Brewing has a history going back more than 160 years, and while times may change, Ando's accomplished master brewer has meticulously preserved the quality of this naturally brewed soy sauce containing zero additives. Small-scale production means sales are mostly limited to the brewery's own store, where, in addition to its traditional soy sauce, you can sample and purchase its wonderful miso (soybean paste), tsukemono (pickles) and other items. Enjoy searching for flavors that delight your palate while feeling the tradition of this venerable establishment.

### Ando Brewing

27 Shimoshinmachi, Kakunodate-machi, Semboku-shi, Akita  
TEL:+81-187-53-2008 <https://www.andojyozo.co.jp/>



Meticulously fermented, additive-free soy sauce



A plethora of items to peruse in the gift shop



IWATE

Workers pour melted iron into a kettle mold.



An artisan creates a pattern in a casting mold.

## Nambu Ironware

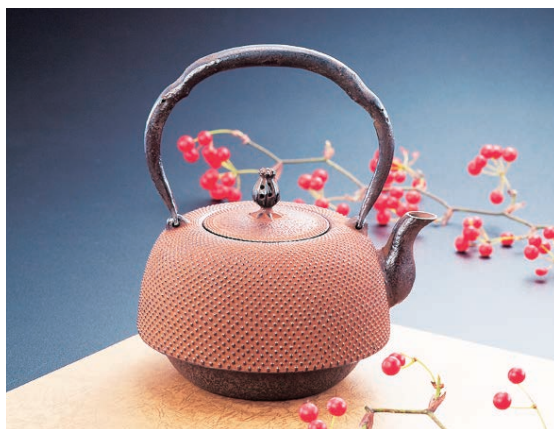
Several hundred years ago, when the Tokugawa shoguns ruled Japan, kettles and other ironware came into widespread use as the practice of tea drinking grew. Nambu ironware was, and still is, a particularly popular style. In addition to their utility, these items have recently gained notice for their beautiful design, leading to a growing reputation as excellent articles for everyday use. Since its start over a century ago in 1902, Iwachu has established a fine name for itself as a top manufacturer of Nambu ironware. Iwachu remains faithful to traditional techniques and handles everything from design to sale, sending over a million items a year to buyers in Japan and beyond. In addition to iron kettles, the company's lineup includes kitchenware and more, making it a favorite stop for younger shoppers.

### Iwachu Co., Ltd.

2-23-9 Minamisenboku, Morioka-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-19-635-2501 <https://iwachu.co.jp/>



Hikifune teapots



Typical Nambu ironware Type23 Kettles with a hailstone pattern



Bamboo bark wrapping exudes a warmth of its own.



## Walnut Yokan

Created using traditional methods by a confectionery shop established over 110 years ago, these treats feature Manchurian walnuts inserted into yokan made of red beans, agar, and starch syrup, with absolutely no additives. The finely chopped walnuts add a subtle aroma and unique texture to the delicious yokan. There are two types, "black" which uses red beans and "white" which uses navy beans. With its unforgettable flavor, you'll crave it again and again.

### Sazen Shoten Co., Ltd.

25 Ochikubo, Fukuoka, Ninohe-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-195-23-3136



"Koji" is sprinkled onto steamed rice to facilitate fermentation.

## Nanbu Bijin

Nanbu Bijin is an enduring, best-selling brand of fine sake. Dating back to 1902, it is produced in a setting surrounded by nature, with a climate well-suited to sake brewing following the traditional techniques of the Nambu Master Brewers. In 1997, Nanbu Bijin was first exported abroad using the brand's English translation, "Southern Beauty." Junji Matsumori, a young Nambu Master Brewer and recipient of the Aomori Prefecture Commendation for Highly Skilled Youths, and Kosuke Kuji, the fifth-generation owner of the Nanbu Bijin brewery, currently manage sake production. Nanbu Bijin goes down smoothly and can be paired with any cuisine.

### Nanbu Bijin Co., Ltd.

13 Kamicho Fukuoka, Ninohe-shi, Iwate  
TEL:+81-195-23-3133 <https://www.nanbubijin.co.jp/>



Nanbu Bijin  
Special Pure Rice Sake

The image shows an example of the products.

Nanbu Bijin  
Junmai Daiginjo

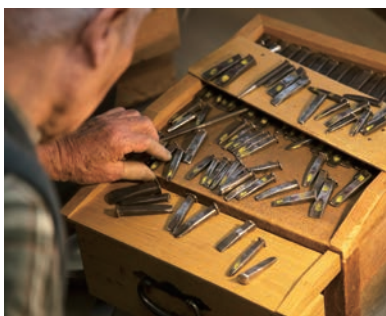


## MIYAGI

Gorgeous clasps are crafted from steel plates 1 to 2 millimeters thick.



The patterns are engraved with a hammer and chisel.



Handmade chisels of assorted types.



A jewelry case

## Sendai Tansu (Chest of Drawers)

Production of these ornate pieces of furniture began sometime around the mid-1800s. They were originally used by warriors for everyday use to store their swords and formal "haori" coats. These dressers are sturdily constructed from zelkova or chestnut wood, with "kijiro" lacquer beautifully highlighting the wood grain. The pieces also feature splendid steel fittings. Three jobs—joining, applying lacquer and installing the metal fittings—are performed separately by professional craftsmen. Each tansu (chest of drawers) is produced with painstaking care. Many families proudly maintain and display beautiful dressers inherited from ancestors, and everyone can appreciate the tradition of Sendai tansu and how they reflect the culture and lifestyle of Japanese through the generations.

### Sendai Tansu Cooperative

2-7-3 Honcho, Aoba-ku, Sendai-shi, Miyagi  
c/o Yunomekagu main store  
TEL:+81-22-225-8368 <http://www.sendai-tansu.com/>



A Sendai chest of drawers



Tsutsumiyaki gallery

## Tsutsumiyaki Kenba Kiln - Ceramics Workshop

Around the turn of the 18th century, a garrison of low-ranking samurai assigned here are said to have started up a kiln as a side business. The name of this pottery, Tsutsumiyaki, comes from the town of Tsutsumi, in which the kiln was located. North of Sendai Castle, Tsutsumi was in what is today Aoba Ward, Sendai. The pottery is distinguished by a rustic simplicity born of the local clay, and by the splendid "namakoyu" design produced with black and white glazing. During peak times, there were 30 producers in the area, but today only Kenba Kiln remains in operation. This enterprise was later relocated to the Marutazawa neighborhood in Sendai's Izumi Ward to carry on the traditional techniques. From March through November, their ceramics workshops offer a great chance to produce pottery with a hand-operated potter's wheel.

### Tsutsumiyaki Kenba Kiln

Reservation required for ceramics workshop

Adults (1kg) 3,200 yen, children (500g) 1,600 yen

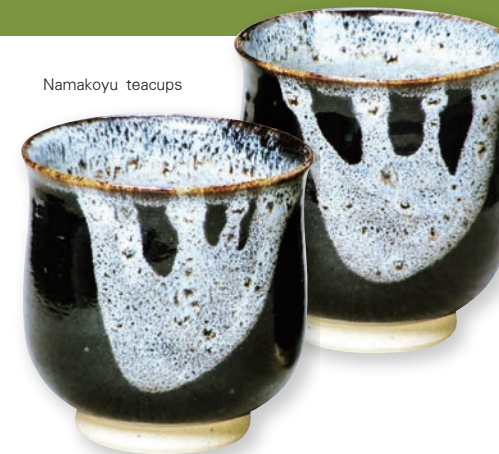
(Separate charge applies if you want your pieces shipped.)

Class size: 4-36 people

Time: averages around 2 hours \*No workshops in winter (Dec-Feb)

8-4 Akasaka, Kamiyagari, Izumi-ku, Sendai-shi, Miyagi TEL:+81-22-372-3639 [tsutsumiyaki.net/](http://tsutsumiyaki.net/)

Namakoyu teacups



Unglazed cups fired in a gas kiln.



## Grill Your Own Sasa Kamaboko!

Sasa Kamaboko, a Miyagi specialty, is made from white fish ground into a paste called "surimi" and then pounded into the shape of a palm-sized bamboo leaf. You can try making your own Sasa Kamaboko at Matsushima Kamaboko Honpo's main store in Matsushima and at the Monzen branch. When you skewer the Sasa Kamaboko with a bamboo stick and place it on the grill, it begins to expand. Keep flipping it over occasionally for six or seven minutes. When you see nice sear marks, it's time to eat. The outside is crispy and aromatic, while the inside is soft and fluffy. This is the outstanding flavor of Sasa Kamaboko grilled up hot. Take your time enjoying your grilled delicacy as you sip on complimentary tea.

\*Grilling costs 250 yen (incl.tax) per piece of Sasa Kamaboko.

### Matsushima Kamaboko Honpo

120 Chonai, Matsushima, Matsushima-machi, Miyagi-gun, Miyagi  
TEL:+81-22-354-4016 <http://www.matsukama.jp/>



## YAMAGATA

Carefully hand-woven



The breathable fabric is perfect for caps



Enjoy a hands-on experience (reservation required)



Thread laboriously produced from tree bark

## Uetsu Shina-fu Fabric

Shina-fu Fabric is woven with thread made from the bark of linden and Japanese lime trees—a technique dating back as far as 1,200 years and passed through the generations in the Uetsu Region. Sekigawa Village is a small settlement of about 36 homes on the border of Yamagata and Niigata Prefectures. Women of the town carry on the Shina-fu tradition cooperatively, each specializing in particular aspects of production. The time consuming manual processes involved—cutting trees, peeling bark, boiling the bark to soften it, outdoor drying, tearing the bark to create threads, and weaving the fabric—take more than a year. But the resulting Shina-fu is durable and appealing, with a rustic feel and color. Shina-fu is currently used not only in obi but also in bags, caps, and wallets. It's a long-lasting and beloved craftwork.

### Sekigawa Shina Fabric Cooperative

222 Sekigawa, Tsuruoka-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-235-47-2502 <http://shinafu.jp>



Accessory cases and luncheon mats made with Shina-fu



Yamagata Monaka



Hogetsudo confections

## Hogetsudo

Hogetsudo has a 70-year history producing Japanese and Western confections that fit the season, focus on local ingredients, such as rice and soybeans, and have a reputation for both presentation and taste. The current, second and third generation owners continue to develop new confections that combine traditional techniques and a modern sensibility. Particularly well-known items, and popular souvenirs, include their delicious Karinto and their Yamagata Monaka, in the form of a person's side-profile. "Ganko Yubeshi" are garnished with walnuts and sesame to convey the authentic taste of Yamagata's traditional "Yubeshi" sweet.

3-7-39 Kojirakawamachi, Yamagata-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-23-622-9361 <http://www.hogetsudo.com/index.html>



Savor the rich flavor of soba.

## Shojiya Soba Restaurant

This venerable establishment dates back to a teahouse that served soba at the edge of the Yamagata Castle moat. Founded over 150 years ago, the restaurant carries on the practices of its forebears, still making its own noodles by hand. Their soba is made from 10 parts buckwheat flour and one part "tsunagi," a flour that binds the ingredients together. This kind of soba is called "toichi soba." The noodles, with a slightly green hue, have a pleasant chewiness, aromatic scent and subtly sweet flavor. Sit by the fire and sip sake while enjoying your soba, or have your meal in a historical storehouse. Both are great ways to dine! In addition to the original establishment, the Gotenzeki Nanokamachi Branch, in the central part of town, features a more modern atmosphere.

### Soba Restaurant Shojiya, Yamagata Main Branch

14-28 Saiwaicho, Yamagata-shi, Yamagata  
TEL:+81-23-622-1380 <https://www.shojiya.jp/honten/>





# FUKUSHIMA



Kagu no Ki no Mi



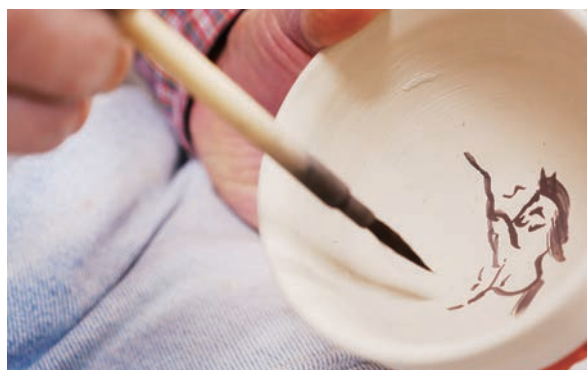
Fly Me to The Moon  
Yokan Fantasia



## Honke Nagato-ya

This long-established shop, founded in 1848, started making confectionery under orders of the Aizu feudal lord. They strive to make sweets offering something new while retaining the meticulous skills and materials involved in producing their traditional sweets. Popular products include the artistic "Fly Me to The Moon Yokan Fantasia" in which a bird flies closer to a full moon with each cut of the confection, and the tea-time confection "Kagu no Ki no Mi" (Fruit of the Aroma Tree) which was served at the Ise-Shima Summit.

2-10 Kawara-machi, Aizuwakamatsu-shi, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-242-27-1358 <http://www.nagatoya.net/>



Painting a horse



Double-walled structure

## Obori Somayaki

This simple pottery is made in the Obori District of Namie-machi, Futaba-gun, Fukushima Prefecture and it is nationally recognized as an important traditional craft. It has three distinctive characteristics. First are the "aohibi" or cracks that run all over the surface, creating fascinating patterns. Second is the double-wall structure, accomplished through double-firing, that allows easy handling, even with hot beverages. Third is the "Hashirikoma," the figure of a dashing horse, on each piece. This is a sacred horse of the old Soma domain, a lucky-charm only produced in this area. Obori Somayaki dates back to the start of the Edo period, and 11 potters (9 of which have formed a cooperative) continue to preserve this tradition of over 300 years. The disasters resulting from the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 forced production out of its historical home, but plans are being made to bring it back to the region.

### Obori Somayaki Cooperative

115-25 Ozawahara, Nihonmatsu-shi, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-243-24-8812 <http://www.somayaki.or.jp/>



Pottery shop



## Aizu Hongoyaki Pottery

Aizumisato-machi (former Aizuhongo-machi) is the oldest pottery-producing area in the Tohoku region. The local industry reportedly got its start when Lord Gamo Ujisato invited roof tile producers to come set up shop and make the tiles for his castle renovation. In 1645, Lord Hoshina Masayuki, the founder of the Aizu Matsudaira clan, opened a kiln that prospered by serving the imperial court. Beginning in 1800, local makers supplemented their pottery by using stone to manufacture porcelain. There are 13 local potters, each with his/her own unique style and personality, all with shops along a narrow street branching off from Setomachi Street, which retains the look of an early 20th century commercial district. Despite their simple design, these works assert a tangible presence all can appreciate. Visitors can also join a ceramics workshop taught by a professional potter.

### Aizu Hongoyaki Business Cooperative

1823-1 Kawarachoko, Aizumisato-machi, Onuma-gun, Fukushima  
TEL:+81-242-56-3007 <https://aizuhongouyaki.jp/>



Aizu Hongoyaki Workshop



Pieces of Aizu Hongoyaki



# NIIGATA



One choice from the lunch menu



"Haru no Ma" is sure to leave an impression with its red ochre painted walls.



"Oohiroma" boasts a spacious, 153-tatami mat area.



"Suisha no Ma" is furnished on the theme of a water mill.

## 100-Year-Old Ryotei Ukiyo

A ryotei is a high-end restaurant that serves traditional Japanese cuisine such as kaiseki ryori (Japanese multi-course haute cuisine) in private rooms floored with tatami mats. The Ukiyo is a charming ryotei in a 140-year-old wooden building designated as a Tangible Cultural Property of Japan. It's an exceptional pleasure to enjoy beautiful Japanese cuisine in a luxurious, traditional dining room. It is even possible to request a young geisha to perform a song or dance. Ukiyo is a leader in the 100-year-old Ryotei Network, a network of traditional ryotei, together preserving ryotei culture around Japan. Visitors are also welcome to experience ryotei culture as well as enjoying local tourist attractions through various planned activities. By spending time in a gorgeous ryotei, one can experience the essence of Japan.

3-5-4 Nakamachi, Joetsu-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-25-524-2217 <http://www.ukiyo.jp>



The "Kinseki no Ne" course at the winery restaurant



The first stone storehouse registered as a Tangible Cultural Property of Japan



"Miyukibana," an Iwanohara wine



## Iwanohara Vineyard

The Iwanohara Vineyard was established in 1890 by Zenbei Kawakami, the Father of Japanese Wine Grapes. He hoped to stimulate development of a new industry through the cultivation of grapes in Joetsu Takada, an area of heavy snows. Since that beginning, passionate producers have been making use of the snow to manage temperatures and create high-quality Japanese wines. At Iwanohara, you can tour the vineyard, wine cellar and memorial hall celebrating the achievements of Zenbei Kawakami, as well as stopping by the shop and winery restaurant where you can sample wines while enjoying the scenic view. There are also educational tours and events in every season providing opportunities to enjoy local delicacies.

1223 Kitagata, Joetsu-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-25-528-4002 <http://www.iwanohara.sgn.ne.jp/index.html>

## Murakami Salmon Culture

Salmon is called "iyoboya" in the dialect spoken around the city of Murakami. Salmon fishing in the Miomote River, which runs through the city, has long been a thriving local enterprise. In the early modern era, salmon was an important resource for the surrounding Murakami Domain. However, overfishing in the 1700s depleted stocks and threatened the financial health of the feudal domain's government. Aoto Buheiji, a warrior in Murakami Domain, proposed a plan to conserve the river and institute a government-backed system to replenish the salmon population by making it easier for the fish to lay eggs and the eggs to hatch. The project took 31 years to implement, but it was a success that restored the domain's financial health through salmon. Since that time, the people of Murakami have had a firmly entrenched tradition of conservation to protect their salmon. They have also developed food preparation methods that bring out the flavor of every part of the fish, with traditional preparation techniques passed down through the generations. Every year, the Keikonsai Festival and other events are held to express the local community's gratitude to the salmon. Visitors can also take a tour on the Miomote River to experience "Iguriamiryo" fishing.

## Murakami City Tourism Association

11-8 Tabata-machi, Murakami-shi, Niigata  
TEL:+81-254-53-2258  
<https://www.sake3.com/en/salmon.html>



A full course of fresh salmon



Iyoboya Kaikan, Japan's first museum dedicated to salmon



"Iguriamiryo" fishing



List of outlets in Japan

Shops in other areas of Japan offering Tohoku and Niigata products for direct sale.

Outlet shops from each prefecture (Antenna shops) offer a variety of attractive products. Please take your time to stop by at these shops when you visit Tokyo, Osaka or Fukuoka.

Iwate

Iwate Ginga Plaza

5-15-1-1F Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0061  
TEL: +81-3-3524-8282 URL: <http://www.iwate-ginpla.net/language/en.html>

Miyagi

Miyagi Hometown Plaza

1-2-2-1F-2F Higashi Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo 170-0013  
TEL: +81-3-5956-3511 URL: <http://cocomiyagi.jp/>

Fukushima

Nihonbashi Fukushima-kan MIDETTE

4-3-16 Yanagiya Taiyo Building 1F Nihonbashi-Muromachi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103-0022  
TEL: +81-3-6262-3977 URL: <https://midette.com/>

Aomori

Aomori Hokusaikan-Tokyo branch

2-3-11-1F Fujimi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0071  
TEL: +81-3-3237-8371 URL: <https://www.hokusaikan.com/>

Akita

Akita Bisaikan

4-10-8-1F Takanawa, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-0074  
TEL: +81-3-5447-1010 URL: <http://www.akita-bisaikan.jp/>

Akita

Akita Furusatokan

2-10-1-1F Yurakucho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0006  
TEL: +81-3-3214-2670 URL: <http://www.a-bussan.jp/shop/tokyo/>

Yamagata

Oishii Yamagata Plaza

1-5-10-1F-2F Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0061  
TEL: +81-3-5250-1750 URL: <https://oishii-yamagata.jp>

Niigata

Omotesando Niigatakan N'ESPACE

4-11-7 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-0001  
TEL: +81-3-5771-7711 URL: <https://www.nico.or.jp/nespace/>

Niigata

NIIGATA OKOME

WHITY UMEDA, 4-3 Umedachikagai, Komatsubaracho, Kita-ku, Osaka-shi, Osaka 530-0018  
TEL: +81-6-6232-8356 URL: <https://niigataokome.com/>

Aomori  
Iwate  
Akita

Michinoku Yume Plaza

2-8-34-1F Tenjin, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka-shi, Fukuoka 810-0001  
TEL: +81-92-736-1122 URL: <https://www.iwatekensan.co.jp/lang/en/>

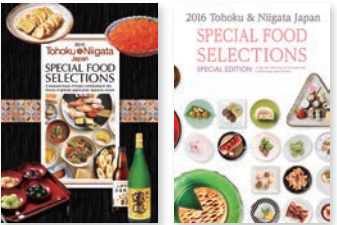
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\*Please note that not all products from this guide book are available at the stores listed above.

\*Some of the websites above may not offer an English version.



Prior to this publication, seven Japanese editions, three English editions and one Chinese edition (in both Simplified and Traditional Chinese) have been published, and are available for free download from the following website.

<http://www.kasseiken.jp/investigation/index.php>



This guidebook is also available at this website.

<https://www.explore-tohoku-niigata.jp/en/>



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