

OUR DAYTIME ACTIVITIES/TOURS



DEGAM
Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau



Sara Millot-Ito

Travel Advisor, Inbound Tourism Chief
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Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau



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Season : From May to December

Yamabushi Guided Tour on Mt. Haguro - approx. 3.5 hours

Average price
(transportation not included)

15,300 yen/person (group of 4 participants)

Head for a spiritual journey inside Mt. Haguro's history, guided by an esteemed Yamabushi priest dispatched by the Dewa Sanzan shrine. After putting on your pilgrim robe: the shiroshozoku, chant the Dewa Sanzan prayer and discover the meaning behind each word with your interpreter-guide, venture inside the 400 years old lush cedar-lined paths, and learn about the profound connection between Japanese spirituality and nature. On your way, you will find the National Treasure : the Five-Storeyed Pagoda, 2446 stone steps, dozens of little shrines, and a few National Important Cultural Properties. Join us to experience Japan's spiritual heritage and the serene beauty of Mt. Haguro in a whole new light.

ITINERARY

- 8:30 Gathering at a shukubo pilgrim lodge to meet your Yamabushi guide
- 8:40 Putting on your pilgrim robe (shiroshozoku), take part in the departure prayer. Have a short lecture about the history of Mt. Haguro.
- 10:30 Start of the hike
- 12:00 Purification prayer inside the Dewa Sanzan Shrine



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Pilgrim robe rental
- Pilgrim necklance purchase
- Interpretation (English)
- Yamabushi guiding
- 2 prayers by Yamabushi priests
- Rainboots rental

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Transportation
- Accommodation
- Towel, change clothes
- Water, snacks or souvenirs
- Lunch at Saikan
- Raincoat



This activity is for people who do not have health conditions that would prevent any average intensity cardio workout. In case of rainy weather, we will provide you with rainboots but we expect you to bring your own raincoat. Very harsh weather conditions might lead to the cancellation of the whole experience (free of charge).

Categories:



Hiking (easy)



Meditation



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

- 10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
- The day before the tour: 40% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed





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Season : From Late December to Early March

Winter Yamabushi Experience - approx. 4 hours and half

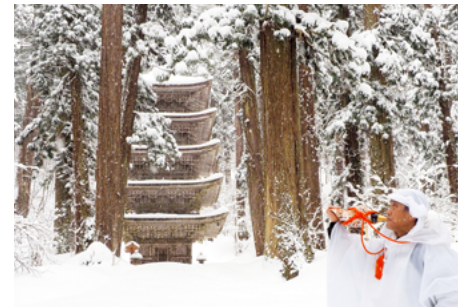
Average price
(transportation not included)

25,000 yen/person (group of 4 participants)

Step into a realm of winter enchantment on snowy Mt. Haguro. Guided by a revered Yamabushi priest, tread snow-covered trails and discover the snow-capped Five-Storied Pagoda (National Treasure). Uncover the Yamabushi's spiritual teachings as you ascend through snow-kissed forests with your snowshoes on. Or maybe will you opt for the traditional Japanese wooden snowshoes called "kanjiki"?. Connect with nature's beauty and the mountain's profound past. Marvel at frozen waterfalls and mystical shrines. Bask in the serene atmosphere, where each step in the snow leads you closer to nature's heart.

ITINERARY

- 8:30 Gathering at Ideha Bunka Museum
- 8:40 Meet with your Yamabushi guide, put on your gear
- 9:00 Start of the hike from the Zuishinmon gate
- 9:40 Historical introduction in front of the Five-Storied Pagoda
- 11:00 Arrival at the top of Mt. Haguro
- 11:30 Get your special votive amulet "ema"
- 12:00 Have the official prayer inside the Dewa Sanzan shrine
End of the tour. Have Shojin-Ryori for lunch at Saikan or go back



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Pilgrim robe rental
- Dewa Sanzan official raincoat & pilgrim necklace
- Yamabushi guidance
- Interpretation (English)
- Snowshoes (or kanjiki) & sticks
- Official prayer at the shrine
- Rainboot rental (if needed)

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Transportation
- Accommodation
- Towel, change clothes
- Water, snacks or souvenirs
- Lunch

This activity is for people who do not have health conditions that would prevent any average intensity cardio workout. In this activity, you will hike harsh slopes with snowshoes on. While we will accommodate to your hiking pace and make stops if needed, we recommend you do not partake in this activity if you do not feel confident in your physical condition.

Categories:



Hiking (hard)



Meditation



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

- 10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
- The day before the tour: 40% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed





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Season : All-year-round (contents vary according to seasons)

Shojin-Ryori Cooking Class & Lunch - 3 hours

Average price
(transportation not included)

14,000 yen/person (group of 4 participants)

Embark on a culinary odyssey to the summit of Mt. Haguro and discover the ancient art of Shojin-ryori cooking. Our cooking class will be led by Ito Shinkichi, the shojin-ryori chef at Saikan, the pilgrim lodge at the top of Mt. Haguro. The content of the class changes according to the season. In spring, get behind Saikan to pick some mountain vegetables before going back in the kitchens to transform them into delicious tempura (Japanese deep-fried vegetables), in autumn, learn how to prepare a delicious mushroom soup and in spring & summer, learn how to make sesame tofu!

ITINERARY

- 09:00** Follow the chef to go pick ingredients (available only during spring) or to discover the different ingredients of the Shojin-Ryori menu, and learn about the principles behind Dewa Sanzan's shojin-ryori.
- 10:00** Go back in the kitchens to learn how to cook sesame-tofu (all-year-round), mountain vegetable tempura (spring & autumn) or mushroom soup (autumn only)
- 11:00** Enjoy a 10 dish menu containing the dishes you have prepared beforehand inside Saikan



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Interpretation
- Picking/Cooking class
- 10 pieces lunch menu

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Extra food/drinks

This activity is suitable for vegetarians/pescetarians but needs a notice beforehand in order to make it compatible to a vegan diet (some dishes might contain bonito powder). Possibility to upgrade to a 15 dishes menu starting from 5 persons.

Categories:



Cooking class



Japanese food



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

- 10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
- The day before the tour : 40% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed





Masafumi Maeta

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Season : From May to October

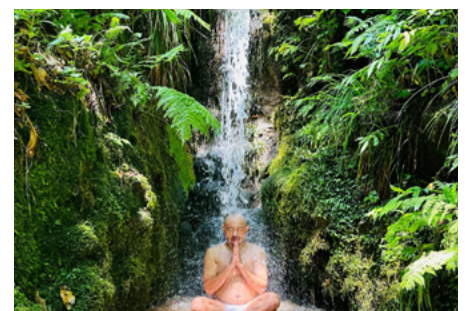
Yamabushi Experience on Mt. Kinbo - approx. 4 hours and half

Average price 19,000 yen/person (group of 4 participants)
(transportation not included)

Embark on a life-changing adventure amidst the rugged beauty of Mt. Kinbo! Join the Yamabushi Waterfall Training and unlock your inner strength. Guided by mountain ascetic monks, immerse yourself in sacred rituals, meditate under cascading waters, and discover the old paths of this sacred mountain that has been worshipped for more than 1300 years. Mt. Kinbo's shugendo has been lost since the 19th century, but the locals of Yutagawa Onsen have been trying to revive its traditions since the 2000s. Learn about the fascinating history of Japanese religions while visiting one of the most exciting hiking paths in Tsuruoka.

ITINERARY

- 8:30 Gathering at Kogane Community Center
- 8:40 Putting on your pilgrim robe (shiroshozoku), meeting with your guide
- 9:00 Start of the trek to Mt. Kinbo
- 10:00 Arrival at the Muso no Taki Falls, take the waterfall ritual or not (up to you)
- 11:00 Arrival at the main hall of the Kinbozan-shrine (National Important Cultural Property). Eat lunch (local onigiri rice balls)
- 11:30 Departure from the top to the base of Mt. Kinbo
- 13:00 End of the experience, give your pilgrim robe back



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Pilgrim robe rental
- Yamabushi guidance
- Interpretation (English)
- Waterfall ritual undergarment
- Lunch

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Transportation
- Accommodation
- Towel, change clothes
- Water, snacks or souvenirs

This activity is for people who do not have health conditions that would prevent any average intensity cardio workout. In this activity, you will be offered with the opportunity of taking the yamabushi waterfall training on Mt. Kinbo. Please bear in mind you will end up wet (bring a towel or change clothes if necessary). In case of rainy weather, we will shorten the hiking experience on the most dangerous parts and have a prayer inside the Kinbozan-shrine instead. Very harsh weather conditions might lead to the cancellation of the whole experience (free of charge).

Categories:



Hiking (easy)



Meditation



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

- 10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
- The day before the tour: 40% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed



Masafumi Maeta

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Season : From June to September

Pray, walk & drink : An evening stroll in Tsuruoka wearing yukata - 5 hours

Average price
(transportation not included)

32,500 yen/person (group of 4 participants)

Experience the enchanting city of Tsuruoka during summer! Adorn yourself in a high-quality kimono selected by one of the local kimono shops as locals and visitors come together to celebrate tradition and culture. Sample mouthwatering Japanese delicacies such as matcha icecream, meet with the miko servant of the Shonai shrine, pray for your happiness, and delight in the best local saké served by the nicest Japanese "mama" while we introduce you to the Japanese concept of "hashigo-zaké" ("ladder drinking", Japanese "bar hopping") in this all-inclusive tour!

ITINERARY

- 15:30** Have a traditional Kimono shop with several centuries old history make you wear a yukata that suits your shape and colors at Shonai Shrine.
- 16:00** Have the prayer at the Shonai Shrine while the priestess teaches you about the region. Then, stroll around in your yukata in the city.
- 16:30** Have a refreshing matcha green tea treat ! Will you go for soft icecream or kakikori? Or a green-tea crepe filled with delicious matcha icecream?
- 17:30** Time to start our Japanese bar hopping with Zakko, a sushi restaurant with a rich history! (5 sushi, 2 drinks included)
- 18:30** Have the finest Italian-Japanese fusion food & drinks at Haretoké!
- 20:30** To end in grace, we'll go to Sachiko's, to discover her delicious "ochazuké" (rice soup) and saké selection! (1 plate + 2 drinks included)



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Yukata rental & wearing fees
- Shonai Shrine guidance
- Matcha treat
- 3 plates, 6 drinks
- Interpretation

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Hairstyling
- Additional food & drinks
- Transportation

This activity includes alcohol-drinking places, but non-alcoholic beverages are available as well. However, no promotional offer is available in the case you choose to drink only non-alcoholic beverages.

Categories:



Japanese sake



Japanese food



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

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- Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
- No show, no contact : 100% billed





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Season : August - September

Pick, cook & eat! Make your own zunda-mochi! - 2 hours

Average price

(transportation & interpretation not included)

3500 yen/person (group of 10 participants)

Discover the art of making Zunda Mochi in Japan! Go in the fields pick a few branches of "dadachamame", also known as the "King of Edamame" for its unequaled taste and texture! Join our hands-on class to learn the time-honored techniques of creating this delectable treat. Experience the joy of pounding glutinous rice, crafting a chewy mochi cake, and topping it with sweet edamame paste. We will teach you how to make the traditional "zunda mochi", with a soft zunda paste, and "daifuku" (filled mochi). Enjoy your creation with a cup of tea!

ITINERARY

- Anytime before 16:00**
- Arrive at Shonai Kankobussankan (parking car available for buses).
 - Meet one of our staff on the parking lot who will lead you to the fields.
 - Go in the fields to pick a few branches of dadachamame
 - Bring your harvest to Shonai Kankobussankan
 - Prepare the zunda paste
 - Pound your mochi cake
 - Choose the style of mochi you want to make: "daifuku" (zunda paste wrapped inside the mochi), or zunda-kake (zunda paste over the mochi). Daifuku is slightly drier than the zunda-topped version.



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Dadachamame harvesting
- Cooking class
- Ingredients
- Gloves, aprons
- Tea

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Interpretation
- Transportation
- Additional drinks & food

Categories:



Farming experience

Japanese food

Cooking class

Cancellation policy:

- 10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
- The day before the tour: 40% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed



OUR STAY PLANS



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All-year-round

Tohoku's culinary adventure - Northern Japan's best saké & food - 7 nights, 8 days

Budget 206,000 yen/person (group of 8)

(transportation & interpretation not included)

Over the course of 7 nights and 8 days, you will immerse yourself in the natural beauty, rich history, and diverse culture of Niigata, Yamagata, Miyagi, and Iwate Prefectures. Nestled in the northeastern part of Japan's Honshu island (a region also known as "Tohoku"), this scenic and culturally rich corner of the country offers an unforgettable adventure filled with a blend of traditions, modernity, and timeless landscapes. This 7-night, 8-day journey is carefully curated to provide you with a well-rounded and enriching experience. From exploring historic temples and shrines to savoring regional specialties, you'll gain insight into the unique heritage of each prefecture. This tour is JR-pass friendly! (All non-JR networks transportations are covered in this tour)

Places visited:

Niigata city, Tsuruoka City (UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy), Dewa Sanzan, Yamadera, Ginzan Onsen, Sendai City, Onagawa port, Kinkasan Island, Ichinoseki city, Hiraizumi (UNESCO World Heritage), Morioka.

Dishes on the menu:

Sushi, Japan's Number 1 Bento Box, Shojin-ryori, Tonkatsu, Ramen, Zunda-mochi, Gyutan (Beef tongue), Kaisendon, Maesawa beef (Japan's top 3 wagyu), Wanko-soba, Morioka jajamen

Alcohols to discover:

Niigata sake, Tsuruoka sake, Sendai whiskey, Tono beer

Day 1 - Arrival to Niigata City

NIIGATA : JAPAN'S FIRST SAKE PRODUCER



Welcome to Niigata City, a transitional place between the Japanese "city" culture and Northern Japan's countryside way of life. This tour will take you on a journey through Niigata city, exploring its history linked to Kyoto's vibrant culture. Niigata prefecture is also Japan's Number 1 sake producer, boasting the largest number of sake breweries among all Japan's prefectures. This is because Niigata Prefecture benefits from an ideal environment for cultivating rice: lots of snow in the winter, warm and humid summers, Niigata's extensive fields have the best quality water and perfect temperature all-year-round to feed the soils with rich nutrients, making the crops plentiful and the rice delicious. Our first stop is the Saito Family's house, a merchant house owned by own the most influential families in the area, where we will have a cup of green tea and a piece of wagashi (Japanese cake made of sweet soybean paste) and have the pleasure to discover the arts of the Niigata "geigi" (Niigata's word for their local geishas), followed by a visit to Imayotsukasa Sake Brewery where we will also taste different kinds of local sake. We will have 2 hours of free time around Niigata station to stroll around or shop a little bit.

Lunch: Set of fresh sushi from Niigata port

Hotel: APA (\$)

TSURUOKA : BAR HOPPING IN JAPAN'S FIRST UNESCO CREATIVE CITY OF GASTRONOMY



Hop on the train in the morning from Niigata station and head for Tsuruoka station (Yamagata Prefecture). Have lunch at Suzune, a restaurant that received the "Best Bento Lunch Box in Japan" award in 2022 for lunch. A cab will come pick you to check-in at Suiden Terrasse, a modern hotel standing above rice fields that was designed by the famous architect Shigeru Ban. A local kimono shop with more than 100 years of history will greet you in the hotel with a collection of yukata (summer kimono) to choose from. Once you have chosen the yukata of your liking (the kimono expert will help you choose a pattern and color that suits your image), get on the cab to stroll around Tsuruoka City. Find the Ogawa Shoen shop, where you will have the choice between delicious matcha icecreams or matcha crepes. A local guide will show you around the Shonai Shrine, before bringing you to the best izakaya (Japanese bars), to begin your Japanese bar hopping journey in yukata.

Lunch : Japanese food

Hotel: Suiden Terrasse (\$\$\$)

SPIRITUAL FOOD IN THE DEWA SANZAN MOUNTAINS & TONKATSU



Next morning, time to head for the sacred mountains of the Dewa Sanzan with our visit of Mt. Haguro, the "mountain of present". The "Dewa Sanzan" are three sacred mountains in Yamagata Prefecture, Japan, known for their spiritual significance and natural beauty. These mountains are part of a revered pilgrimage route in Buddhism and Shugendo religions. Mt. Haguro is the first mountain traditionally visited during the pilgrimage. Its visit is quite challenging with its 2446 stone steps to the shrine at the top. For lunch, we will have "shojin-ryori" spiritual cuisine at Saikan. We will have a prayer at the Dewa Sanzan shrine before having 3H of free time on the mountain to explore as you like. For dinner, we will have local "Shonai Pork" tonkatsu cutlet to mark the end of the spiritual training by eating meat ("shojin-otoshi").

Hotel: Daiichi Hotel (\$)

"JUST LIKE IN A GHIBLI MOVIE" : YAMADERA, RAMEN AND GINZAN ONSEN



We will hop on the train to get to Yamagata station, where we will have a bowl of the famous "Yamagata ramen". Yamagata Prefecture's ramen is celebrated for its distinctive soy-based broth, chewy noodles, and use of high-quality local ingredients, making it a must-try culinary experience for ramen enthusiasts and food lovers visiting the region. We will take the bus to Yamadera, visit this beautiful temple above the void that is a revered pilgrimage site for Buddhists, before heading to Ginzan Onsen, one of the most, if not the most scenic hot spring villages in Japan. We will stay at one of the town's ryokan (\$\$\$\$)

TOHOKU'S MOST DELICIOUS SWEET: ZUNDA-MOCHI, WHISKY & MEMORIAL



How was your night in Ginzan Onsen? Now it's time for us to go to the other side of Tohoku on the Pacific coast: Miyagi Prefecture! We will visit Sendai City, the biggest city in the whole Tohoku region. After having so much Japanese food those days, aren't you craving some comfort food? After having Japanese-Western fusion burgers in the city, we will get to know why Japanese whiskey is so exquisite by visiting the Nikka Whisky Sendai Distillery, where we will be offered with a tasting session of different varieties of Nikka Whiskies. On the afternoon, we will have some "zunda mochi" (pound rice cakes topped with sweet edamame paste). We will take the train to Onagawa, an area that was badly hit by the 2011 Earthquake, visit the monuments linked to the disaster, and stay at the Hotel El Faro, a group of cute bungalows near the port.

Lunch: Hamburgers (can switch to Japanese food if required)

Hotel: Hotel El Faro (\$)

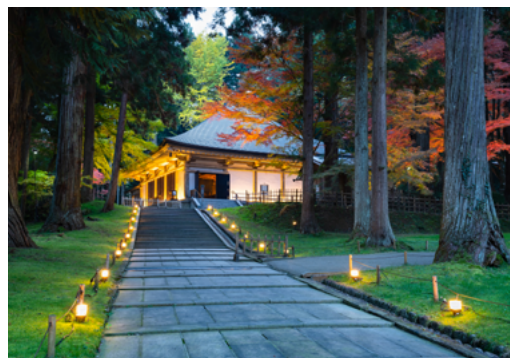
KINKASAN'S DEERS & EN ROUTE TO HIRAIZUMI



When the morning has come, take the ferry to the Kinkasan Island. Kinkasan is designated as a Natural Monument of Japan due to its role as a sanctuary for various wildlife species. The island is home to deer, monkeys, and numerous bird species, including eagles and other raptors. This makes it a paradise for wildlife enthusiasts and birdwatchers. There is a well-maintained pilgrimage route that takes visitors through the island's forests, past shrines and temples. It's just like a little Nara lost in the middle of the ocean! In the afternoon, take the train to Ichinoseki station. We will stay at Osawa Onsen, where we will have a taste of one of the "3 best wagyu" (Japanese beef) in Japan: the "Maesawa beef".

Hotel : Osawa Onsen (\$\$)

ENDLESS SOBA (WHEAT) NOODLES AT A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE



Hiraizumi is home to several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Chuson-ji Temple and Motsu-ji Temple. These temples are known for their exquisite gardens, ancient buildings, and historical artifacts. Chuson-ji, in particular, is renowned for its Konjikido Hall, a golden pavilion adorned with gold leaf, which is a masterpiece of Buddhist art. We will tour the entire site with electric bicycles, making a stop at a "wanko soba" restaurant for lunch. Wanko Soba is a unique and special type of soba (buckwheat noodle) dish that is particularly famous in Iwate Prefecture, often served in small, individual bowls, and the dining experience is characterized by the practice of continuous refilling. As soon as you finish a bowl of soba, the server will quickly replace it with another, and this process continues until you signal that you've had enough by covering your bowl. We will finish the day on a good Japanese beer (did you know most Japanese hop was produced in Iwate?)

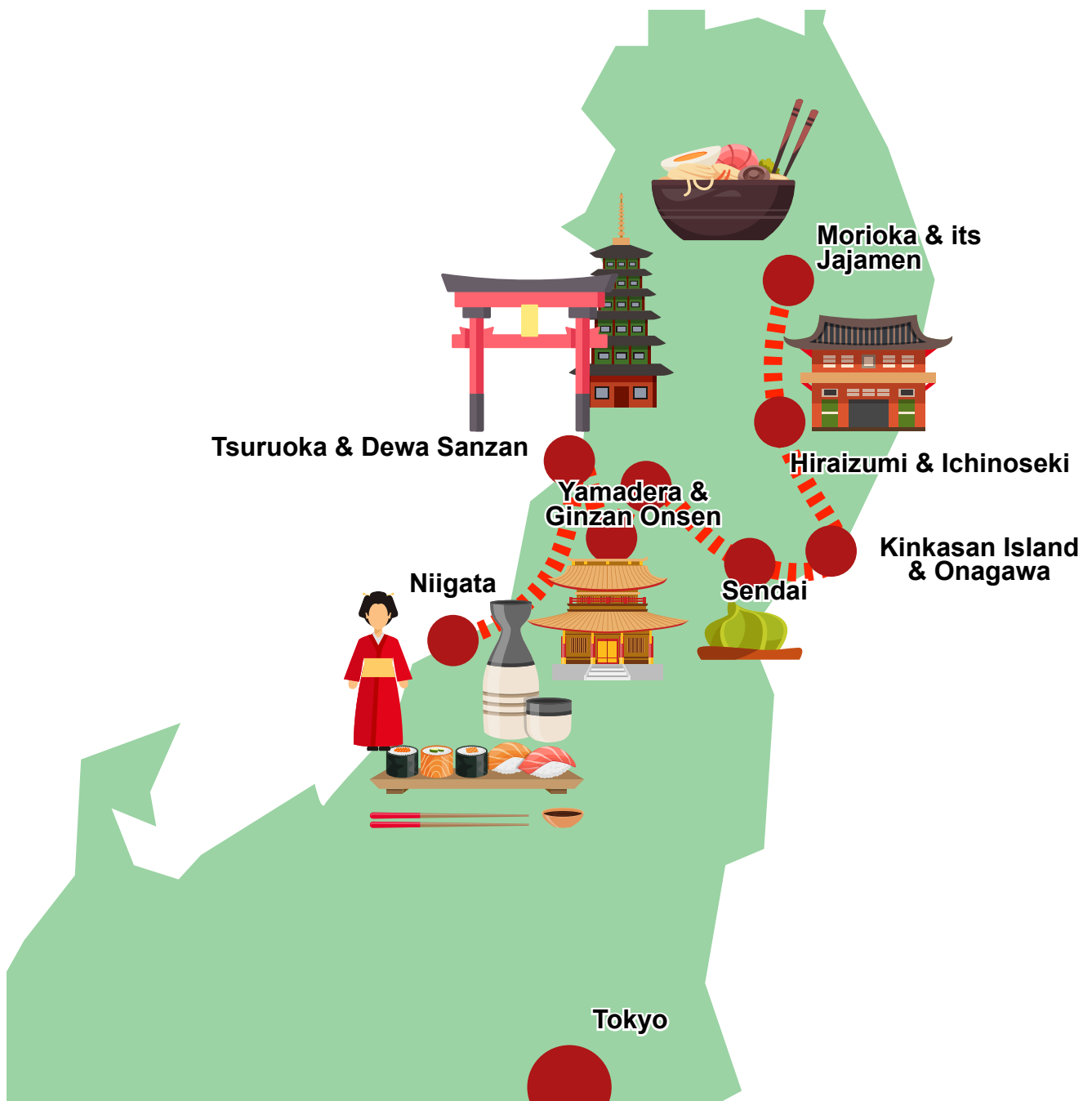
Hotel: Same as previous day

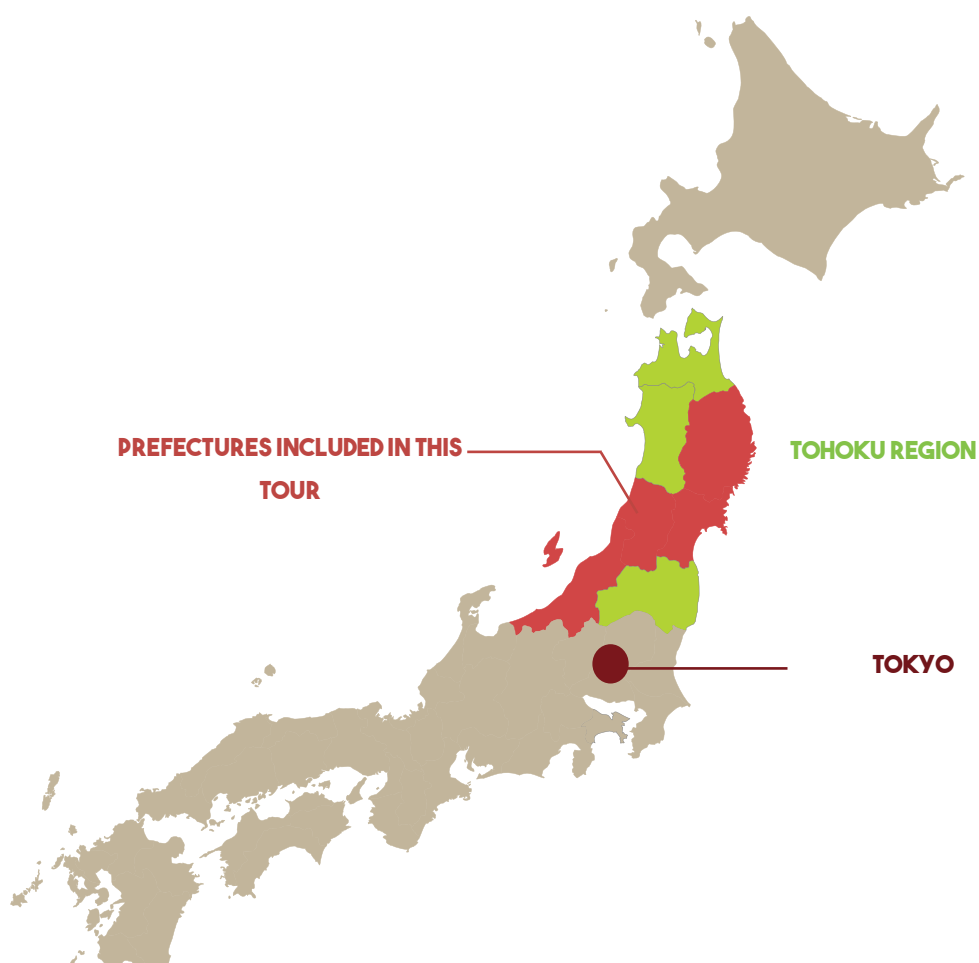
LEAVING TOHOKU ON A GOOD NOTE : MORIOKA'S JAJAMEN NOODLES



It's the last day of our trip to Tohoku... To erase the sweet-sour taste of your departure, we will serve you with Morioka's famous "Jajamen" after visiting the Morioka Hachimangu Shrine, a bright red shrine built in the 17th century. Morioka Jajamen features thick, handmade wheat noodles that are chewy and satisfying. Jajamen is traditionally served with a variety of toppings, including minced meat (usually a combination of ground pork and beef), finely chopped green onions, and sometimes cucumber or other vegetables. These toppings provide a balance of flavors and textures, enhancing the overall dining experience. We will have a look at the local souvenir shops so you can bring a little "Chagchag umako" (horses with locally-crafted decorations) doll back home.

Your itinerary on the map





What's included?

- Accommodation
- All meals
- Entrances to all establishments, structures and buildings
- Activities fees
- Bicycle rental
- Yukata rental (including geta sandals)
- Alcohol & drinks (only during D1's bar hopping session)
- Guiding material for your tour conductor
- Online meeting with your tour conductor to how to guide/navigate through this itinerary by DEGAM Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau
- 7am/11pm 7/7 support through Whatsapp
- Custom-made brochure for your customers
- Special adjustments

What's NOT included?

- Interpretation (contact us if needed)
- Transportation from/to the starting and ending points
- Private purchases
- Hairstyling (yukata bar hopping)
- Accident, trouble coverage
- Travel insurance
- Night time support

Categories:



Hiking (easy)



Japanese food



Japanese culture



Hot springs

Cancellation policy:

- 1 month prior to the tour : Free of charge
- 21 days prior to the tour : 20% billed
- The day before the tour: 50% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 80% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed

This tour is a model itinerary. Adjustments need to be made to accommodate to your customers and your company's needs.



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July 1st - September 15th

The Dewa Sanzan Pilgrimage Trail - 3 nights, 4 days

Budget

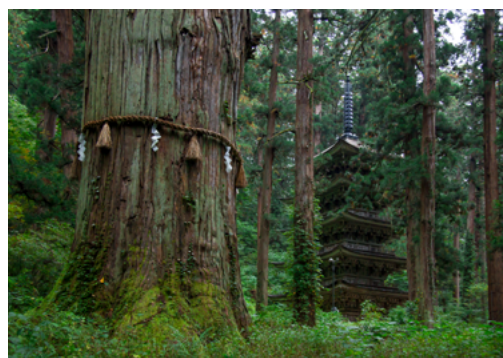
(interpretation & transportation included)

108,000 yen/person (group of 8)

Time to put on your hiking shoes to learn about the ancient Japanese spirituality called "shugendo" and see Northern Japan's awe-inspiring landscapes on our 3-night, 4-day Dewa Sanzan sacred mountains tour. The Dewa Sanzan sacred mountains belong to the Bandai-Asahi National Park, an extensive volcanic area throughout Yamagata, Fukushima and Niigata Prefecture. Whereas the part of the park in Fukushima is mainly composed of active volcanoes, the Dewa Sanzan area is much more tranquil, with hiking trails across high-altitude mountains and beech forests. Guided by Yamabushi experts, traverse Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono's peaks. Immerse in rituals, explore hidden waterfalls, and gain profound insights into Japan's spiritual heritage. An unforgettable journey of enlightenment and culture awaits.

Day 1 - Arrival to Tsuruoka Station

MT. HAGURO: THE MOUNTAIN OF PRESENT



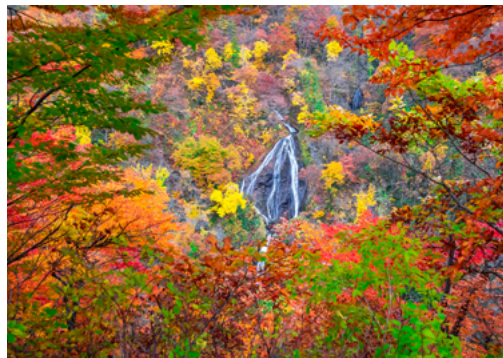
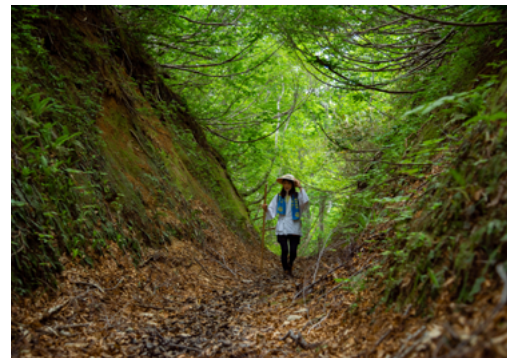
Arrive at the base of Mt. Haguro and be greeted by your experienced Yamabushi guide, a priest that worship the mountain, its gods and natural elements. Your Yamabushi guide will give you your shiroshozoku pilgrim clothes and tell you how to put them on after telling you the purpose of each part. Ascend the revered 2,446-step stone staircase enveloped by towering cedar trees. Listen to tales of legends and beliefs that have flourished for centuries, harmonizing nature and spirituality. Reach the Dewa Sanzan shrine at the mountaintop, where you will receive the blessing prayer. Immerse in the serene atmosphere and admire the intricate woodwork that adorns the Sanjin Gosaiden Shrine. Have shojin-ryori (vegetarian cuisine eaten by the yamabushi disciples and shugendo trainees) at Saikan, the temple lodge at the top of the mountain. This is where we will stay for the night as well. Check-in, relax, and spend the rest of the day on the mountain as you wish.

MT. GASSAN & MT. YUDONO: THE MOUNTAINS OF PAST & FUTURE



Arrive at the 8th station of Mt. Gassan, the second peak of the Dewa Sanzan trio, and meet your expert mountain guide. Mt. Gassan is the symbolic representation of the past in the Dewa Sanzan Pilgrimage, for the reason that it is thought to be the Realm of the Dead, aka, where the souls of the ancestors come to rest for eternity. Your guide will share insights into the mountain's significance within the Buddhist spirituality, revealing a profound interplay between nature, death and devotion. Have a small break at Busshoike Goya, a mountain hut halfway to the top. Reach the summit (1984m. high) and enjoy a moment of awe-inspiring panoramic views with Mt. Chokai afar. We will have lunch at the mountain hut at the top (Gassan Chojo Goya). We will complete the pilgrimage of the Dewa Sanzan sacred mountains by heading to our last mountain: Mt. Yudono, the mountain of future. This is where the pilgrim pray for their future reincarnations or their loved ones'. It is also the birthplace of the Sokushinbutsu mummies phenomenon in Japan: more than 11 monks out of the 17 mummies exposed today trained in this very place!

THE ROKUJURIGOE KAIDO, A PILGRIMAGE ROUTE THAT IS OVER 1200 YEARS OLD



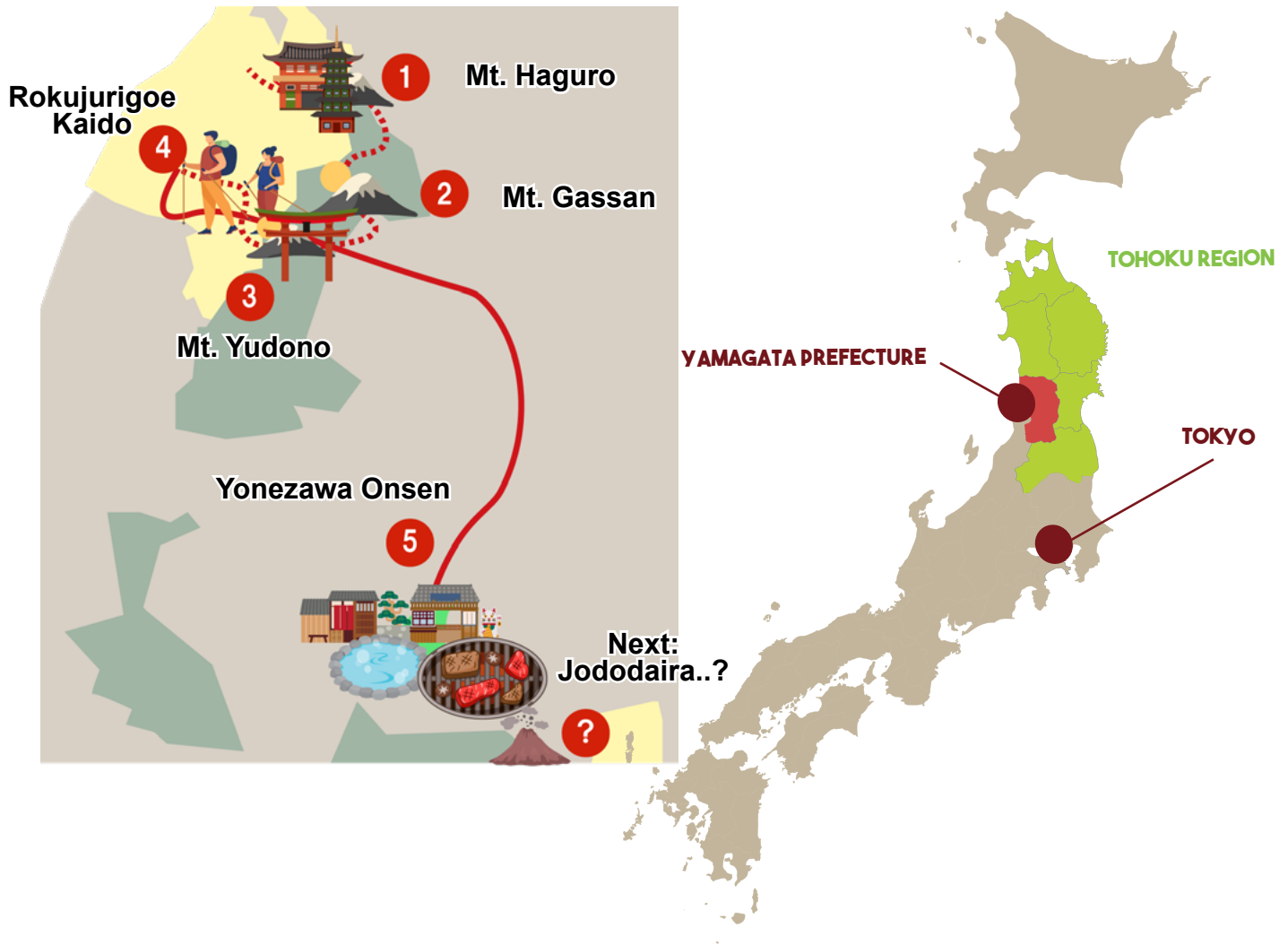
After staying at Yudonosan Sanrojo for the night, we will take the Rokujurigoe Kaido pilgrimage route down to Dainichibo Temple. This old pilgrimage route was traditionally used by the pilgrims en route to Mt. Yudono 1200 years ago. On our way, we will discover one of Japan's 100 most beautiful waterfalls (the Nanatsu falls), many Buddhist steles and relics, and 2 sokushinbutsu mummies. We will have onigiri rice balls for lunch, specially prepared by the local producers from Asahi Gu. For the night, we will stay at Yasuno Ryokan, a family-run ryokan near the Rokujurigoe Pilgrimage route.

YONEZAWA ONSEN



Now you have completed the whole Dewa Sanzan pilgrimage from both ends (the mountains & the Rokujurigoe kaido side), you must be starting to feel tired, and your muscles are certainly quite sore. Don't worry, we have your back. We will spend the whole day in Yonezawa City, the hub point that connects Yamagata & Fukushima Prefectures. Soak in Yonezawa's pristine hot springs, and relish on a dinner based on Yonezawa beef (known as one of Japan's best 3 wagyu beefs!). Otsukaresama deshita! ("You can be proud of your efforts").

Your itinerary on the map



What's included?

- Accommodation
- All meals
- Entrances to all establishments, structures and buildings
- Activities fees
- Private guidance fees from the several participants
- Pilgrim clothes rental
- Ritual & prayer fees
- Interpretation
- Transportation
- Bathing fees

What's NOT included?

- Private purchases
- Alcohol, additional food or drinks
- Hiking gear

Categories:



Cancellation policy:

- 1 month prior to the tour : Free of charge
- 21 days prior to the tour : 20% billed
- The day before the tour : 50% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 80% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed



Sara Millot-Ito

Travel Advisor, Inbound Tourism Chief
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May - November

An Adventure inside Japan's Deep Countryside - 3 nights, 4 days

Budget

(interpretation & transportation included)

143,000 yen/person (group of 8)

Embark on a transformative journey with our 3 nights and 4 days tour, an immersive journey inside the countryside of Northern Japan. In this tour, you will experience all the aspects of living in Japan's countryside: visit the city on the first day while wearing a high-quality yukata (summer kimono) finely selected by a century-old kimono shop to match your body and colors, stroll around the Shonai Shrine to discover the grounds of what once used to be the local lords' castle, relish on delicious matcha icecreams/crepes, and stay in Suiden Terrasse, a magnificent hotel built by award-winning architect Shigeru Ban upon ricefields. On the second day, we will bring you to Mt. Kinbo to experience a now lost but once thriving shugendo pilgrimage site, have a Yamabushi priest lead you to waterfall meditation, then stay at a comfortable family-run ryokan at Yutagawa Onsen. On day 3, we will hop on our electric bicycles to visit the surroundings shrines hiding in the jungle to learn about the Japanese nature worship and special nature-related meditation called "shinrin-yoku". On the 4th day, we will visit the legendary Mt. Haguro, the first mountains visited during the pilgrimage of the Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa.

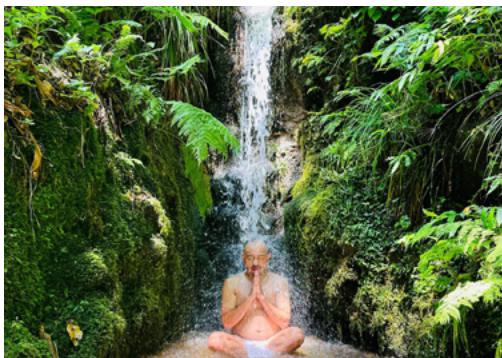
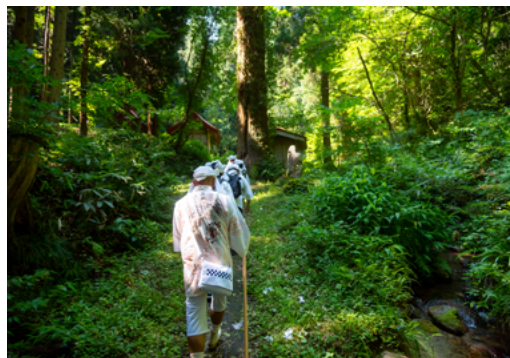
Day 1 - Arrival to Tsuruoka Station

LIFE IN A COUNTRYSIDE "CITY"



Arrive to Tsuruoka City before 2pm. Check-in at Suiden Terrasse, a hotel standing above ricefields, that was designed by the famous architect Shigeru Ban. Put your luggage and precious belongings in your room. After that, let's move on to a famous kimono shop that has been in the business for more than 200 years. See their yukata (summer kimono) collection, let them guide you about which colors and patterns suit you and the season, and choose the yukata you want to wear accordingly. An expert will teach you about how to wear a yukata and bow your obi (belt) in a style that suits you most. Now, time for a stroll inside Tsuruoka City, where we will stop by a matcha-specialized cafe, where you will have plenty of options to choose from. Will you go for a matcha-crepe filled with matcha icecream? Or matcha kakigori (grated ice topped with matcha-flavored syrup)? Or matcha parfait? Once we are done, we will stop by the Shonai Shrine to get the local lords bless us during our trip. We will go back to the city to head for our "full-inclusive bar hopping" session, with a total of 5 drinks and 5 dishes! Don't worry, our local interpreter will help you get the best of the local izakaya bars without the barrier of dialect.

LIFE ON THE MOUNTAINS : WATERFALL MEDITATION



Did you have a good night at Suiden Terrasse? Eat as much as you can during breakfast because the morning will be quite intense! Head for Mt. Kinbo, where you will meet a Yamabushi priest that also operates a ryokan in Yutagawa Onsen. He will bring you to a once thriving now lost pilgrimage site on Mt. Kinbo. Venture in the jungle and search for the Muso Falls. This is where you will take the waterfall meditation. For lunch, we will have onigiri rice balls on the mountain before reaching the top of Mt. Kinbo. From there, we will start our adventure looking for Mt. Kinbo's altar that was destroyed in the big earthquake in 1964. Will you be able to find it? Once our pilgrimage is complete, we will stay in a small family-run ryokan in Yutagawa Onsen where we will be offered with many varieties of local sake to taste during dinner.

LIFE IN THE RICEFIELDS : ELECTRIC BICYCLE TOUR & MT. HAGURO



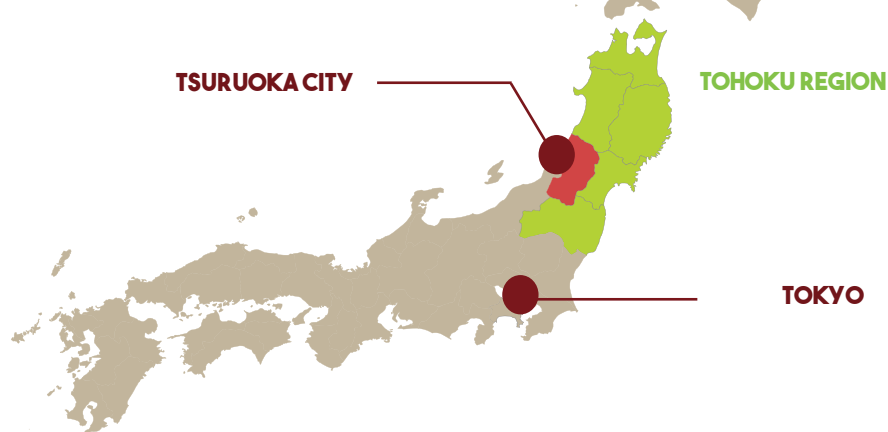
On the next morning, we will hop on electric bicycles to uncover the region of Mizusawa, a small agricultural area full of little shrines and temples that just await in the jungle to be discovered. There, we will visit Kumano Shrine's sacred tree, and Minakami Hachiman Shrine's National Important Cultural Property with its thatched roof and moss-covered path. For lunch, we will have Japanese curry topped with deep-fried cutlet (katsukare). Vegetarian options available. For the night, we will stay at a Shinto pilgrim lodge (shukubo) on Mt. Haguro. The shukubo is run by a Yamabushi priest. He is the one who will guide you on the next morning on Mt. Haguro.

LIFE OF A PILGRIM OF THE DEWA SANZAN



Next morning, after receiving the Yamabushi prayer in the shukubo, we will put on our pilgrim clothing to hike the 2446 stone steps of Mt. Haguro, and discover the spirituality and the culture of Dewa Sanzan's shugendo pilgrims. After reaching the top, we will take the prayer at the Dewa Sanzan shrine to put an end to our trip, and fill our empty bellies on a delicious shojin-ryori (spiritual food that aims to purify one's body during a shugendo training) lunch at Saikan on top of the mountain. Go back to Tsuruoka city. End of the trip.

Your itinerary on the map



What's included?

- Accommodation
- All meals
- Matcha sweets & treats during D1's yukata bar hopping day
- Entrances to all establishments, structures and buildings
- Activities fees
- Private guidance fees from the several participants
- Pilgrim clothes rental, yukata rental (including geta sandals)
- Ritual & prayer fees
- Interpretation
- Transportation
- Alcohol & drinks (only during D1's bar hopping session)

What's NOT included?

- Private purchases
- Hairstyling (yukata bar hopping)

Categories:



Cancellation policy:

- 1 month prior to the tour : Free of charge
- 21 days prior to the tour : 20% billed
- The day before the tour: 50% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 80% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed



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July 1st - September 15th

Volcanos & Spirituality - Bandai Asahi National Park's trails - 9 nights, 10 days

Budget

(transportation & interpretation included)

597,000 yen per person (group of 10)

Japan is one of the most volcanic destinations on earth! Volcanic landscapes, such as the stark contrast between dark volcanic rock and lush vegetation, have contributed to Japan's aesthetic appreciation of nature. This has influenced various forms of art, including traditional painting and garden design. Volcanic eruptions release minerals and nutrients into the soil, making it highly fertile. This fertile soil has allowed Japan to develop a rich agricultural tradition, leading to the emergence of mountain/volcanos related spiritualities and religions ("sangaku-shinko") that are particularly strong in Northern Japan.

Discover how (and why) the people of Tohoku have built their lives in coexistence with these fiery giants, embracing both their ferocities and blessings, while learning about the faith they have shaped, the gastronomy they have contributed to and soaking in their relaxing hot springs!

Day 1 - Arrival to Fukushima City

FARMER LUNCH, BONSAI WORKSHOP & DAKE ONSEN



Farmer lunch at Suzu

Yoshiyuki and Yuka Suzuki are young asparagus farmers who recently took over their family fruit orchard and transformed it into a fusion of farming and culinary wizardry! Enjoy a chat with the Suzukis and hear more of their story before tucking into a tasty course lunch made with locally sourced ingredients.

After lunch and a quick dip in the hot spring foot baths, you'll head to 'Bonsai-ya Abe' - the home and studio of local Bonsai artisan, Daiki Abe. At the foot of Mt. Azuma, Abe-san and his father and grandfather before him, have developed a unique style of bonsai craftsmanship called 'Kukanyubi' 'the beauty of space' using the Japanese White Pine (Azuma Goyomatsu) that grow in the Azuma mountain range.

Enjoy a rare opportunity to watch a bonsai artisan at work, transforming a pine into an expression of the rugged nature of the mountains you'll be hiking tomorrow!

Hotel: Oyado-Hanakanzashi (\$\$\$)

AZUMA KOFUJI, ISSAIKYO-ZAN, GOSHIKI NUMA AND DAKE ONSEN



This stage is a leisurely exploration (4 hours) of the bewitching volcanic scenery around Jododaira. You will discover the vibrant Kamanuma marshes; loop around the crater lake of the Witch's Eye; marvel at the dynamic Mt. Issaikyo, as it spurts volcanic gases from its fumaroles; and, of course, get up close to the iconic Azuma-Kofuji's mesmerising caldera.

From the Jododaira visitor centre, ascend west towards Kamanuma Lake but turn right for Mt. Issaikyo first, saving the Kamanuma Marshes for the end of the hike. Once you gain the high ground on Mt. Issaikyo, you can admire Azuma-Kofuji's circular caldera and the astonishing volcanic scenery that surrounds you.

Hotel: same as previous day

MT. ADATARA'S ORANGE CRATER AND NUMAJIRI'S EXTREME ONSEN



Mt. Adatara comprises several active volcanoes across its broad, forested massif. The highest peak rises to 1,728 metres (5,669 ft) and is surrounded by hot springs and fumaroles. Its grandeur means it has been chosen as one of Japan's top 100 mountains and it has been the subject of poetry, notably by Kōtarō Takamura who helped to make the mountain famous. Depending on the weather and the season, we might also be able to make a stop at Numajiri's "Extreme Onsen", an area located behind Mt. Adatara, forbidden to regular trespassers but accessible to those who are accompanied with an expert guide to venture inside the natural source of Numajiri Onsen. An advice? Bring a swimsuit and a towel with you!

Hotel: same as previous day

"TIPSY & FULL BELLY" BAR-HOPPING IN SENDAI CITY



Sendai City, the biggest city in the Tohoku region of Japan, is full of wonders and delicious local dishes. After visiting the city's must-see spots guided by a local expert, you will get to try the region's best cuisine and alcohols in an exciting bar-hopping session in Sendai's small and narrow streets. Here are some must-try foods and drinks when you visit Sendai: Gyutan (Beef Tongue): it's usually seasoned with salt or a special sauce and cooked to perfection; Nikka Whisky : Sendai possesses one of the few distilleries of this renowned whisky brands in Japan, Imo Kenpi: These are deep-fried sweet potato sticks, perfect for snacking while exploring the city.

Hotel: Westin Sendai (\$\$\$)

SHIOGAMA FISH MARKET, SUSHI AND MATSUSHIMA ISLANDS



Shiogama Fish Market, located in Shiogama City near Sendai in Japan's Miyagi Prefecture, is a bustling and vibrant seafood market where you can experience the freshest catches of the day and immerse yourself in the local fishing culture. Engage with the vendors and fishermen to learn about the different types of fish and seafood available, their seasonality, and how they are caught and prepared. It's an educational experience for seafood enthusiasts. After that, we will head for Matsushima's Islands, one of Japan's 3 Most Scenic Views, which beauty was praised by the haiku poet Matsuo Basho. We will take boat tours around Matsushima Bay to get up close to the islands and enjoy the scenery. The boat tours provide different perspectives of the islands and often include narrated explanations of the history and Buddhist legends associated with the area.

Hotel: Same as previous day

MT. YUDONO, THE "MOUNTAIN OF SECRETS" AND ITS MUMMIES



A chartered bus will bring us to Mt. Yudono in Yamagata Prefecture. Mt. Yudono is part of the Dewa Sanzan triad, a group of holy mountains that are revered by Buddhists and nature-worshippers called "yamabushi", the practitioners of an ancient religion called Shugendo. The poet Matsuo Basho wrote two haikus about how emotional he was to be in Mt. Yudono and how painful it was for him to be forbidden to tell its secrets. Indeed, Mt. Yudono is a very mysterious place. One of its secrets involves the appearance of Japanese mummies called "Sokushinbutsu". We cannot write those secrets here, but you will discover them on-site with us.

Hotel: Daiichi Hotel (\$)

MT. HAGURO, THE "MOUNTAIN OF REBIRTH" AND ITS SURROUNDINGS



Next morning, we will begin our "spiritual rebirth" in Mt. Haguro, another mountain of the Dewa Sanzan holy mountains group. For that, we will need to put on our "shiroshozoku", the white pilgrim robe of the shugendo religion practitioners. This is to symbolize our spiritual death and our desire to get reborn in a newer, wiser version of ourselves. We will have "shojin-ryori" for lunch, a vegetarian cuisine that finds its roots in Buddhism but that also tells the religious turmoils that once existed between Shinto and Buddhist religions in Japan. This day will be full of spiritual teaching, but also historical insights about the Japanese religious background and folklore.

Hotel: Same as previous day

MT. GASSAN & SHIZU ONSEN



Your pilgrimage to the Dewa Sanzan wouldn't be complete without ascending Mt. Gassan, the most important mountain in the trio, the highest and the most revered by the locals; as it is known as the "mountain of the past & the realm of the Dead". This is where the souls of ancestors come to rest for eternity and look upon their children living in the plains. The mountain is also home to dozens of local flowers and animal species. The sound of the Japanese bushwarbler (thought to be a messenger in the Buddhist tradition) will guide our steps, and if we are lucky, we might even be able to spot the Japanese stoat! After climbing Mt. Gassan, we will stay at Tsutaya Ryokan in Shizu Onsen, a comfortable hot spring ryokan led by a Yamabushi practitioner.

Hotel: Tsutaya ryokan (\$\$)

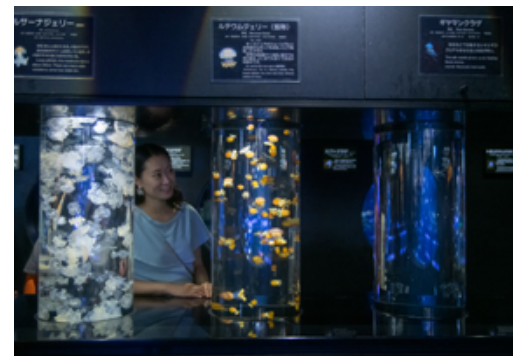
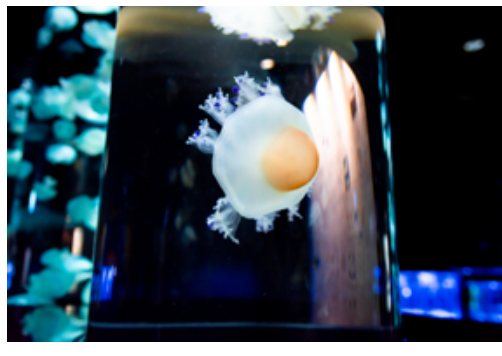
SAKE BREWERY VISIT, ZENPOJI TEMPLE AND YUNOHAMA ONSEN



Your muscles must be starting to ache after all that hiking. There is no better way to treat yourself and your tired body than to indulge in Japanese sake at Takenotsuyu's brewery and visit its factory. After regaining your soberness, we will go to Zenpoji Temple, one of Japan's 3 Main Soto Zen Temples to try ourselves at "seiza". Seiza is the way of seating correctly to allow your mind to empty itself. Many people think seiza is a way to meditate, but it is all the contrary! Seiza is a way for you to clear your heart and mind from superfluous thoughts. And you will see that it is a particularly difficult exercise. Your Buddhist monk guide will also tell you about the risks of falling into "makyo" (the "Realm of the Demons") and how to avoid that by controlling your ego. We will spend the night at the nearby Yunohama Onsen, in a luxurious ryokan that has welcomed two Imperial Couples in its history.

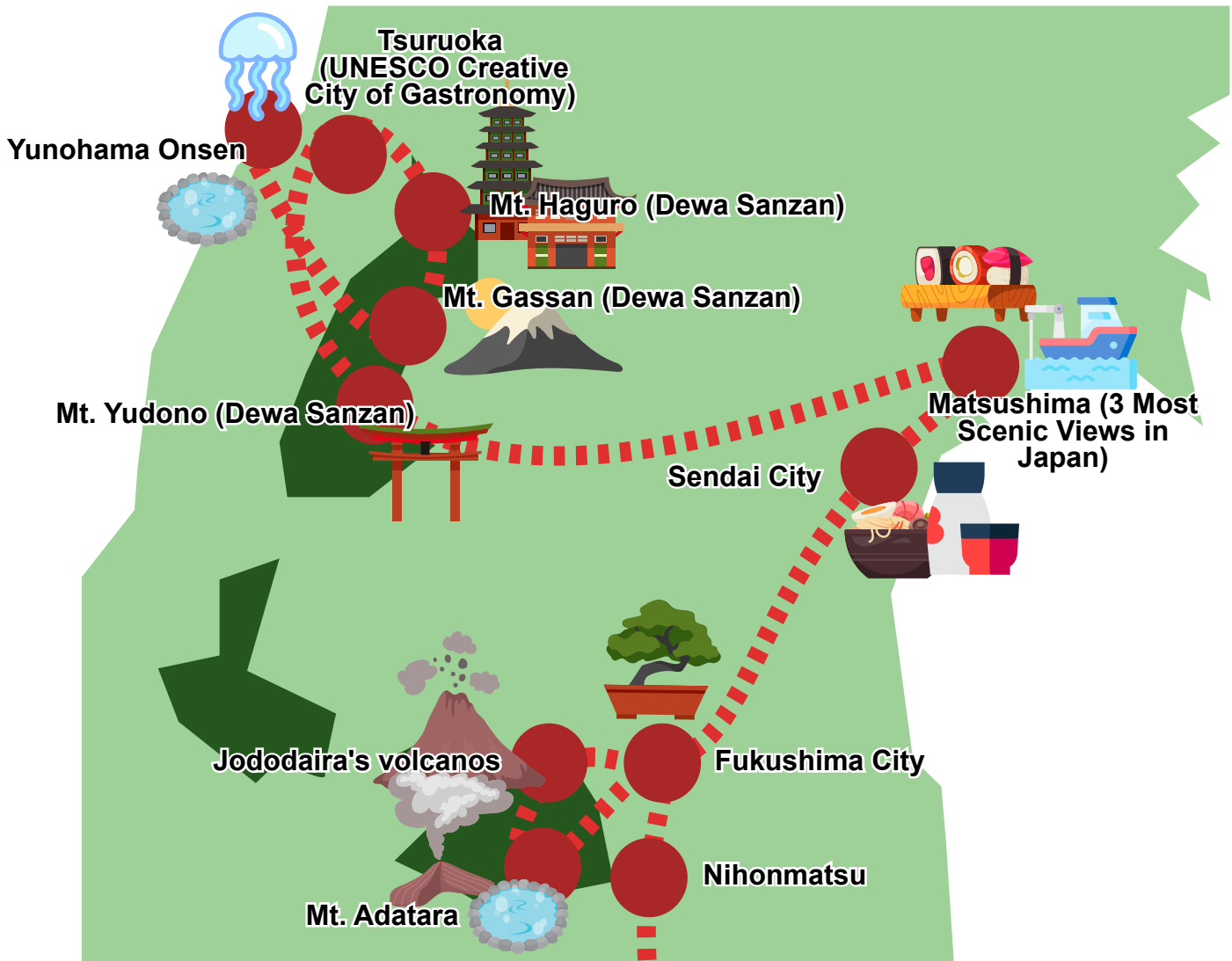
Hotel: Kameya (\$\$\$)

KAMO AQUARIUM



Time flies, but it is already the end of your trip. Before heading back to Tokyo or to your next destination, we will visit Kamo Aquarium, the number one jellyfish aquarium in the world, featuring the biggest jellyfish-only fish tank in the world, and more than 60 species of jellyfish exposed. The aquarium also exposes a big number of local sea creatures as a way to raise consciousness about the (threatened) diversity of the life present in the Sea of Japan. After seeing Tohoku's volcanos, cities, sacred mountains, onsens, forests, waterfalls, islands, eaten its delights and tasted its sake, we can say you have seen most aspects of what life in Northern Japan is about.

Your itinerary on the map



What's included?

- Accommodation
- All meals
- Interpretation
- Transportation for the parts noted in this itinerary
- Guiding
- Entrance to buildings & activity fees
- Prayers
- Pilgrim clothes rental

What's NOT included?

- Private purchases
- Extra orders of alcohol or food during dinners
- Travel insurance
- Medical costs in case of accidents or emergencies

Categories:



Cancellation policy:

- 1 month prior to the tour : Free of charge
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