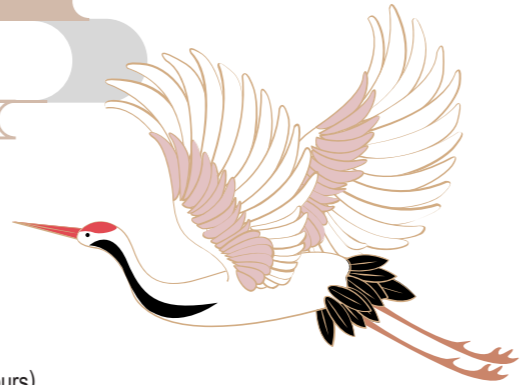
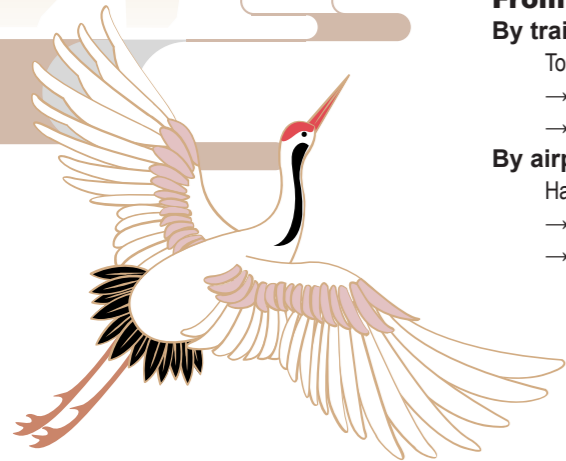


Access



From Tokyo:

By train (with JR pass)

- Tokyo Station (Joetsu Shinkansen, 2 hours)
- Niigata Station
- Tsuruoka Station (1 hour 40 minutes)

By airplane

- Haneda Airport (HND)
- Shonai Airport (SYO) 1 hour
- Shuttle bus to Tsuruoka Station (20 minutes)

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at tsuruoka@degam.jp or take a look at our website.

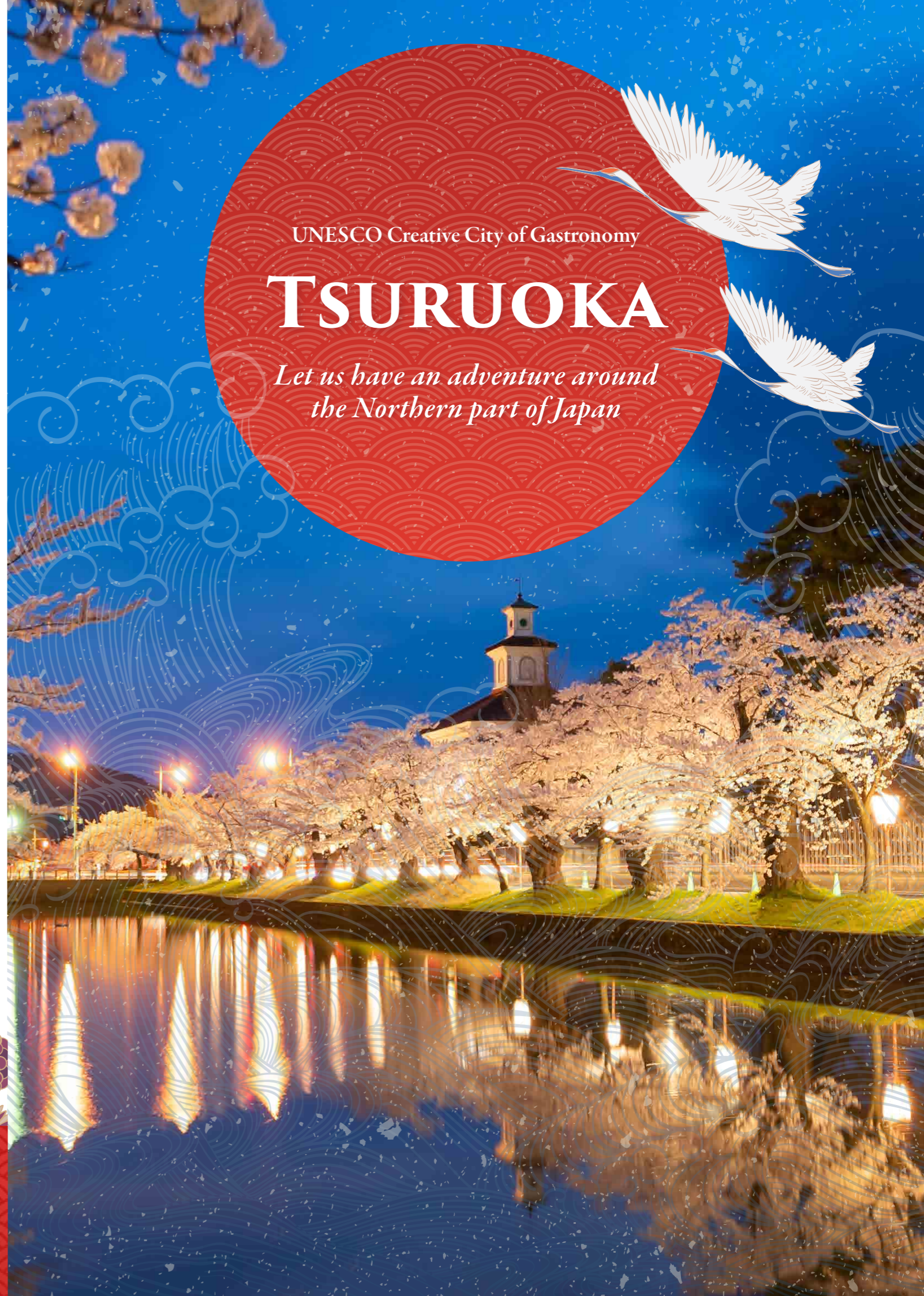
www.tsuruokacity.com

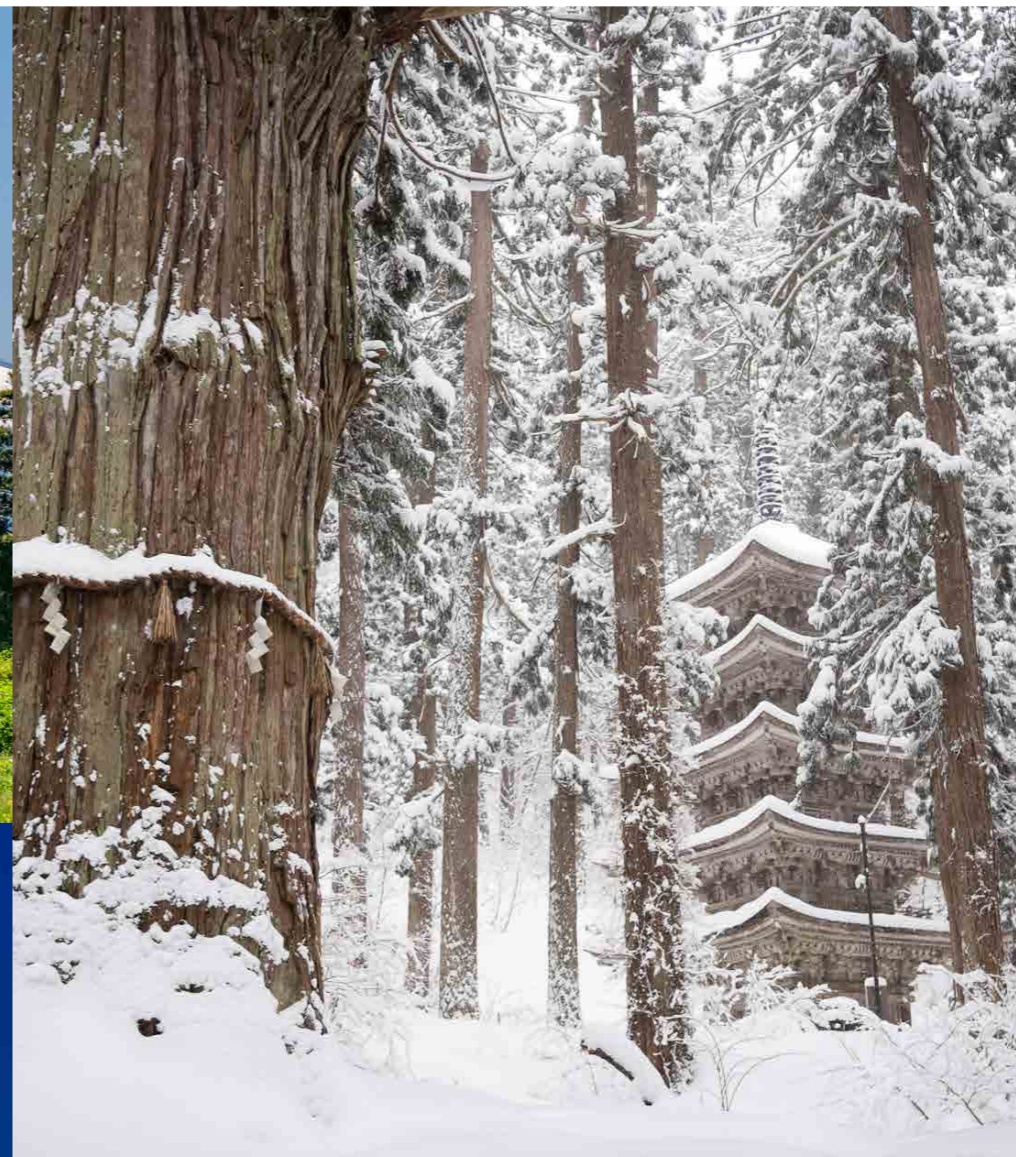
Languages supported: English, French, Japanese

UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy

TSURUOKA

*Let us have an adventure around
the Northern part of Japan*

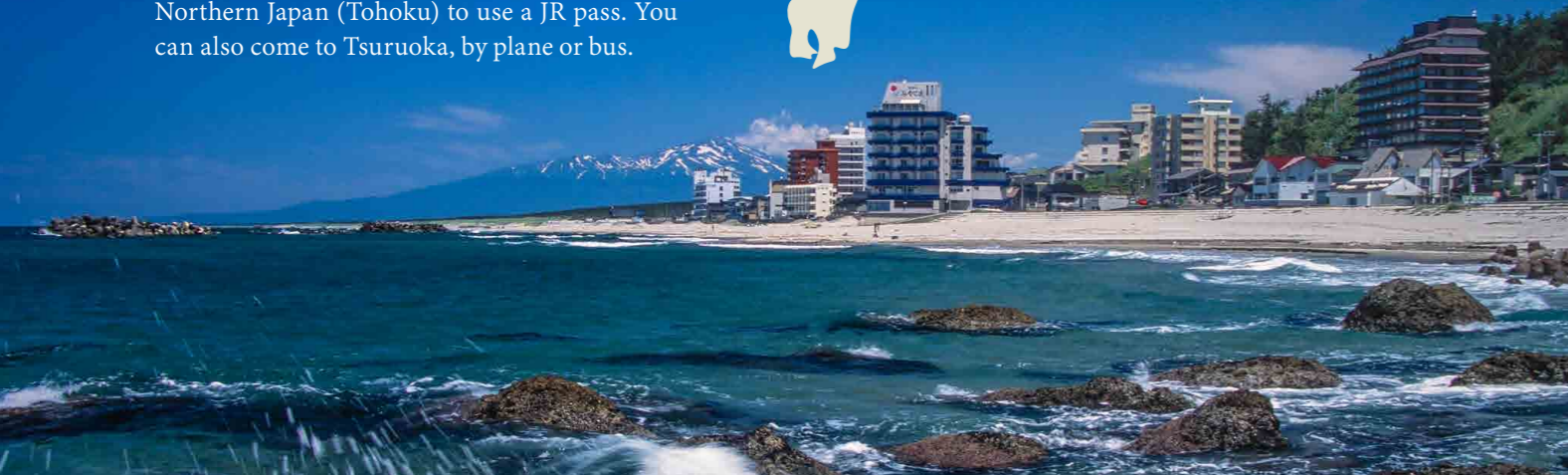




Tsuruoka in Yamagata Prefecture is located on the southern part of the Shonai plain, one of the largest grain-producing areas in Japan. Tsuruoka is surrounded by mountains, the Dewa-Sanzan mountains, Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono, in the east, and by the Asahi Renpo Mountain Range in the south. Both Dewa-Sanzan and the Asahi Renpo belong to The Bandai Asahi National Park. Tsuruoka faces the Japan Sea in Yamagata Prefecture, and the city is a beautiful place with an abundance of nature.

In 2014, Tsuruoka was designated a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, it was the first place in Japan to receive this honor. The cuisine of Tsuruoka is influenced by the ingredients and food people get from, the sea, mountains, rivers, and the food cultivated by people from the local villages, where they created traditional dishes and a local food culture. Tsuruoka has a rich repository of delicious foods, such as fresh seafood, edible wild plants and rice harvested from Shonai plain.

Tsuruoka has full of attractions, such as, an aquarium, which has one of the largest jellyfish tanks in the world, it has a castle town culture, and four hot springs, By JR it takes around four hours from Tokyo via Niigata, and four and a half hours from Sendai via Yamagata. It is very handy for people who want to travel around Northern Japan (Tohoku) to use a JR pass. You can also come to Tsuruoka, by plane or bus.



The place that must be visited on any trip to Tsuruoka is Dewa-Sanzan. Dewa-Sanzan is the collective name given to the three sacred mountains, Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono and it is one of the three main sites of Shugendo in Japan.

Yamabushi who are ascetic monks, undergo periods of long training in the mountains with the goal of attaining Buddhahood and communicating with the gods. The number of Yamabushi has been decreasing year by year, but their training continues. How about walking along the sacred road which has a history of more than 1,400 years to meet a Yamabushi?



Nature, Pilgrimage and Outdoor Activities

SACRED MOUNTAINS, DEWA SANZAN

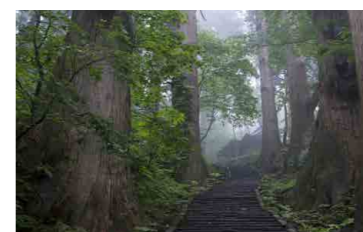


1. Mt. Haguro

Time required: Two hours ~ Half a day

Mt. Haguro has a height of 414m, is the smallest mountain among the Dewa-Sanzan Mountains, it is the only mountain that can be visited all year, even during the winter season. The entrance path leading to the Dewa Shrine at the peak

has 2446 stone steps along an avenue of cedars (This route has received three stars in the Michelin Green Guide) and it takes around one hour to one and a half hours. Mt. Haguro represents the present world and pilgrims pray for happiness.



2. Mt. Gassan

Time required: Two and a half hours, one way

Mt. Gassan is the highest mountain among the Dewa-Sanzan mountains with an elevation of 1984m. Mt. Gassan is one of the 100 top mountains in Japan. Climbing Mt. Gassan is possible from the first of July to early October. And Mt. Gassan is called 'The Past World' mountain, and the pilgrims who visit here pray for the souls of their ancestors.



3. Mt. Yudono

Time required: One~Five hours, one way

From Mt. Gassan to Mt. Yudono, it takes more than three and half hours. Mt. Yudono represents the Future, and pilgrims pray for the rebirth of a deceased loved one. Also, many Sokusinbutu mummies are enshrined on Mt. Yudono.

SPIRIT AND RELIGION

Are you interested in Japanese culture and history? How about visiting Tsuruoka to discover new aspects of Japanese culture? You will be guided through historic shrines and temples, and a mummy, called Sokusinbutsu.

Kitamaebune (cargo ships that sailed during the Edo period), connected Northern Japan with Kyoto on the Sea of Japan side, bringing many goods, riches, and culture to the Tohoku region. Kamo was a port of call for the Kitamaebune in the Tsuruoka area. Tsuruoka is a city that still has a lord. You can learn about the lord through visiting historical facilities and buildings which we can introduce to you.



4. Zenpoji

Time required: Around One ~ Three hours

Zenpoji is known nationwide as the temple of Ryujin, the dragon god. It is the Guardian deity of the sea, and many worshipers visit Zenpoji throughout the year. There are many valuable buildings in the temple precincts, e.g. The Five-Storeyed Pagoda, and at the back of the temple grounds

is Kaikui Pond, which is said to be the home of two dragon gods, which create a mysterious atmosphere in the deep green forest. You can also conduct Zen meditation and have Buddhist vegetarian cuisine at Zenpoji.



5. Shonai Shrine

Time required: One hour

Shonai Shrine is the historical shrine of the Shonai clan, and it was built on the site of the ruins of the main building of Tsuruga Castle in 1877. In the temple precincts you can see weapons and arts and crafts, and other items in connection with the Lord of the Shonai clan on display in the Homotsuden, treasure house.

Culture, History and Tradition

MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITS



6. Chido Museum

Time required: Around 1 ~ 2 hours

Located west of Tsuruoka Park, this facility is essential in learning about the history and culture of Tsuruoka. It had originally been an official residence of the Sakai family of Shonai, who were the lords of the Shonai Domain, and it has been opened to the public as a museum. Invaluable historical buildings such as the former Nishitagawa District Office, the Shibuya Family Home, which is a multi-story house, the former

Tsuruoka Police Station are registered among the Nationally Designated Important Cultural Properties list. The buildings were all relocated to inside the museum's property, the Sakai Garden, which is a Samurai-style Garden. Many exhibits are enrolled as important Tangible Folklore Cultural Property, and are National Important Folklore Cultural Assets because they depict life and culture in Shonai.



7. Chidokan

Time required: One hour

Chidokan was a han-school established by the Shonai clan, and in the school Soraigaku was taught. Today, the front gate, mausoleum, lecture room and inner rooms or Oirinoma, which is the Entrance Hall consisting of four rooms, which were especially made as an entrance for feudal lords' and chief retainers are opened to the public as a historic site designated by the National Government. Chidokan is the only existing building of its type in the Tohoku region. Chidokan is known for its historical and cultural value.



8. Matsugaoka Craft Park

After the Meiji Restoration, Samurai warriors put their swords down and instead, picked up hoes to start agricultural and other industries here. For example, they raised mulberry trees to grow silkworms and produce silk products. This cultivated land is designated as a National Historic Site.

Gastronomy and Cuisine Experience

Tsuruoka, which was the first city to be designated in Japan as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy has many restaurants that offer wonderful ingredients and dishes that bring out the best of each food.

In Tsuruoka, there are 60 indigenous crops which have been cultivated while preserving the characteristics of each species over generations. Local green soybeans "Dadacha mame", "Atsumi turnips" and "Shonai persimmons", for instance. These indigenous crops are used as important ingredients in many traditional dishes and chefs come up with creative usages with these indigenous crops.



9. Shojin-ryori, or vegetarian cuisine of Dewa-sanzan

The Dewa-Sanzan area serves traditional Buddhist vegetarian meals that are eaten by Yamabushi. Their vegetarian meals include all aspects and varieties of Shintoism cuisine, due to conversion from Buddhism to Shintoism, which occurred in the 19th century. This conversion made their vegetarian meals filling unlike ordinary Buddhist vegetarian meals. The chief chef of Saikan, the restaurant on top of Mt. Haguro can teach you how to cook their representative dishes like Goma Dofu (sesame tofu), Tempura of Edible Wild Plants and Miso Soup with Nameko Mushrooms. (Time required: Around 1 ~ 2 hours)



10. Tsuruoka Style Confections for the Doll Festival

The culture of making confections specially for the Doll Festivals had been brought to the Tsuruoka area by merchants on ships from Kyoto. Back then, the confections were no more than decorative sugar crafts, but confectioners in Tsuruoka have made refinements over a long period of time, resulting in today's sweets being a soft confection made of sweet bean, that comes in the shapes of local foods. They come in a variety of shapes and colors like lovely sea breams, bamboo shoots, cherries, tangerines and salmon, for instance. Why not experience making these sweet bean confections at one of the oldest Japanese style confectioners in Tsuruoka.



YUNOHAMA ONSEN

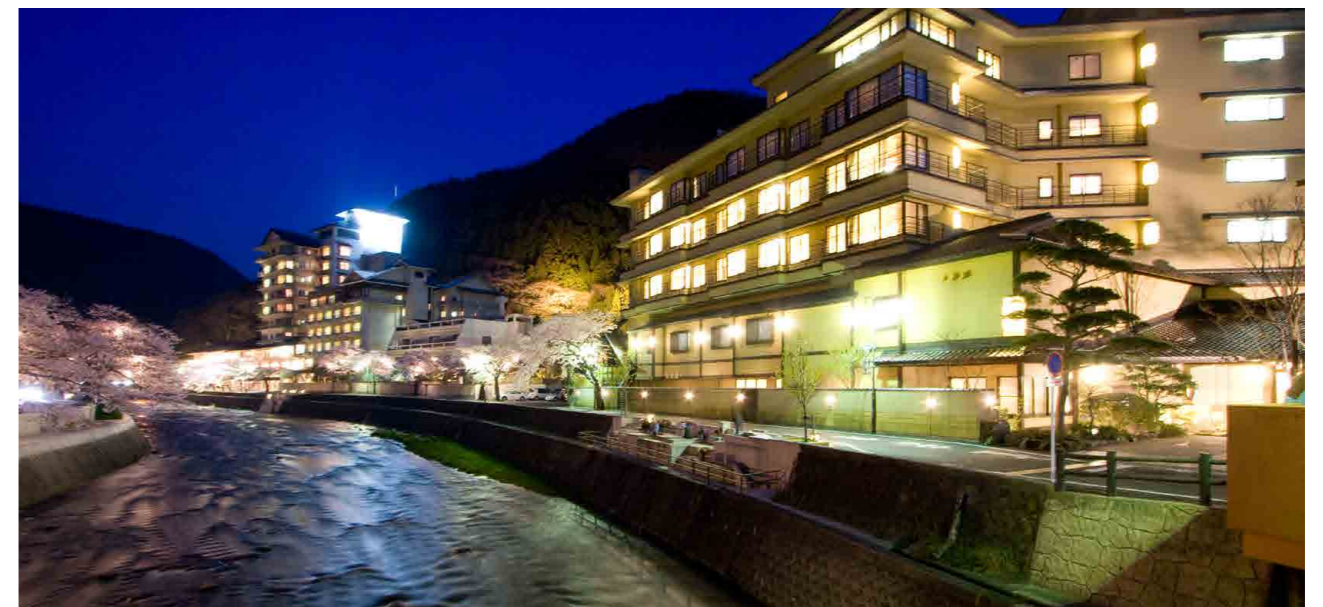


11. Yunohama Bathing Beach

Yunohama is one of the major hot spring villages in Yamagata prefecture. This hot spring dates from the 11th century, when a fisherman happened to witness a sea

turtle healing its wound in hot water. Yunohama is one of the foremost relaxing destinations with options of trying out marine sports.

ATSUMI ONSEN



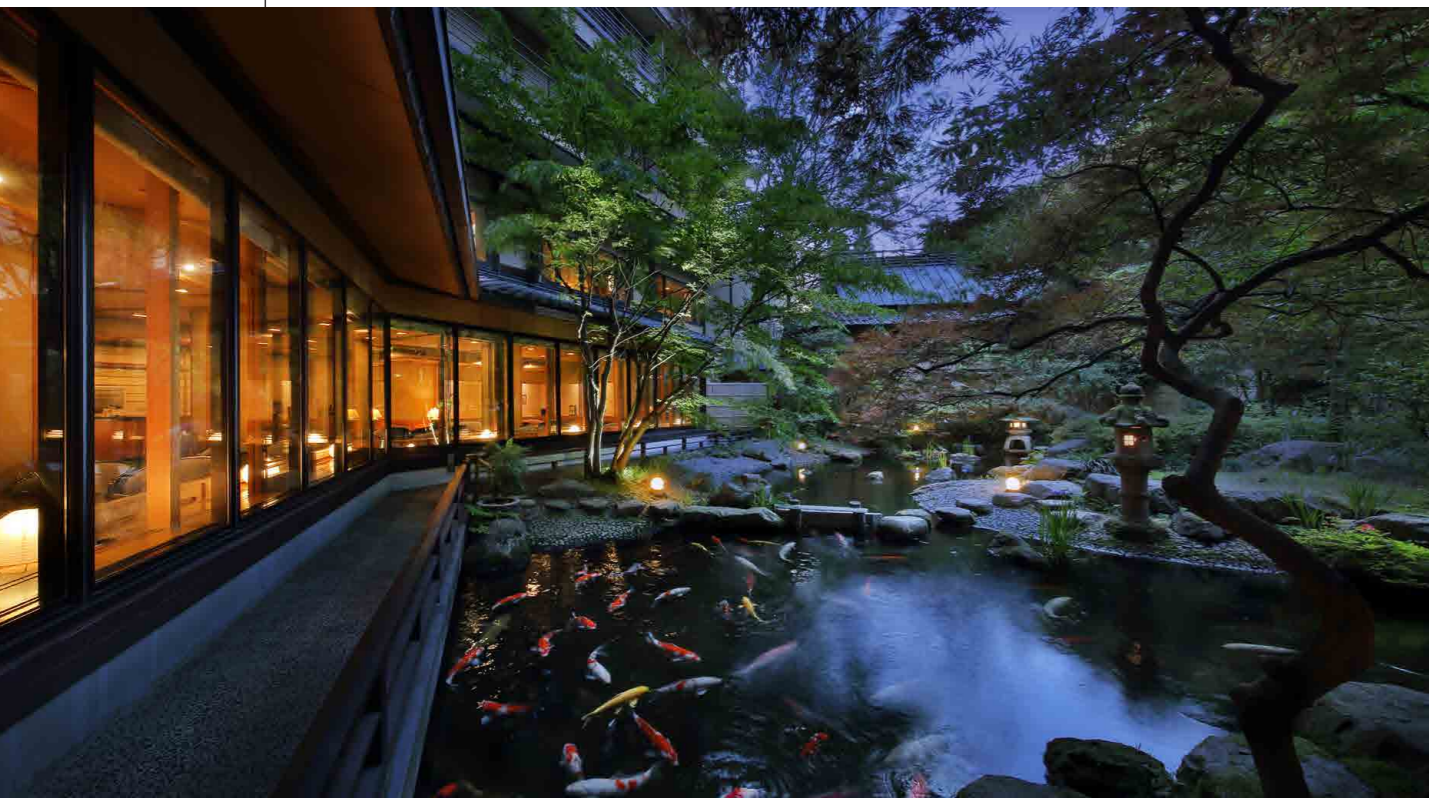
12. Atsumi River

Atsumi Onsen is best seen in late April, with a hundred cherry blossoms in bloom mainly along the Atsumi River. Atsumi Onsen is said to have originated 1300 years ago when Kukai (or En no Gyoja, the founder of Shugendo in the Legend)

struck the ground with his cane, and from that spot hot water with beneficial properties gushed out of the ground. Atsumi Onsen Rose Garden, is in bloom from June to October, it is best seen from June to July.

Tsuruoka has four nearby hot spring villages. In Yunohama Onsen you would enjoy the sunset from the beach, in Atsumi Onsen you can enjoy scenic walks alongside the Atsumi River. Some people call Yura Onsen the Enoshima of Tohoku region, and Yutagawa Onsen is also called the backyard of Tsuruoka.

Each of these four hot springs have appeals of their own. You can enjoy them as either as a part of day trip or as an overnight stay.



Onsen and Hotels

YURA OONSEN



13. Yura Bathing Beach

Yura Onsen has been selected as one of the top 100 beaches in Japan, and one of the top 100 places to see a sunset in Japan as well. At Hakusan island, the symbol of

Yura coast, there is a shrine and fishing hole. The fishing hole is available from late April to early October.

YUTAGAWA OONSEN



14. Yutagawa Onsen

Yutagawa Onsen marked its start 1300 years ago. In the Middle Ages, pilgrims worn out from religious trainings stopped by to bathe. Most inns in this area are compact,

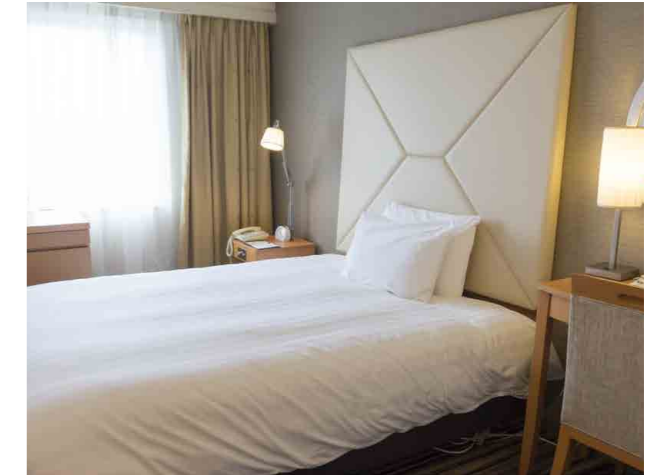
and it has a family-like atmosphere, Yutagawa Onsen is better suited for visits in small groups and family trips, rather than a group tour.

HOTELS



15. SHONAI HOTEL SUIDEN TERRASSE

SUIDEN TERRASSE is a new hotel designed by the prestigious architect, Shigeru Ban who has won The Pritzker Architecture Prize. This hotel is built on a rice field and features a wooden interior that exudes a timeless and calm atmosphere. It also features a gym, a hot spring, and a library.



16. Tokyo Dai-Ichi Hotel Tsuruoka

We recommend Tokyo Dai-Ichi Hotel Tsuruoka as a hotel near the station. It is adjacent to the shopping mall and the bus terminal. It is just a five-minute walk away from the train station. It has a hot spring, two restaurants, several meeting rooms and ceremony halls. The hotel can arrange a birthday party or a wedding party if you make a request.

ABOUT DEWA SANZAN SHUKUBO



17. Dewa Sanzan Shukubo

A Shukubo is traditionally a house for Buddhist pilgrims and the place where visitors prepare mentally to achieve their ascetic practices. The lodgings in Dewa-Sanzan are of Shinto origins, and they all are owned by the Yamabushi mountain priests. Therefore, the foods served

are not completely vegetarian (fish is included in some dishes). We strongly recommend joining the morning prayer. In the Shukubo, the bathrooms are shared, and the rooms are rarely locked. There are about 20 Shukubo in the Haguro area.

It is difficult to summarize the highlights of Tsuruoka in a few lines. Hiking, pilgrimages and visiting cultural spots are must-do activities in this area. Besides that, there are also many hidden attractions and places in Northern Japan for an unforgettable time. Kamo Aquarium is also known as “The World’s Best Jellyfish Aquarium”, where they successfully breed and exhibit over 60 kinds of jellyfish throughout the year. The aquarium also works to raise the public awareness of marine issues, global warming, and marine pollution.

Kamo Aquarium is also known as the "World's Largest Jellyfish Aquarium" and has successfully bred and exhibited over 60 species of jellyfish throughout the year. It is also committed to raising public awareness of ocean issues, global warming, and marine pollution.

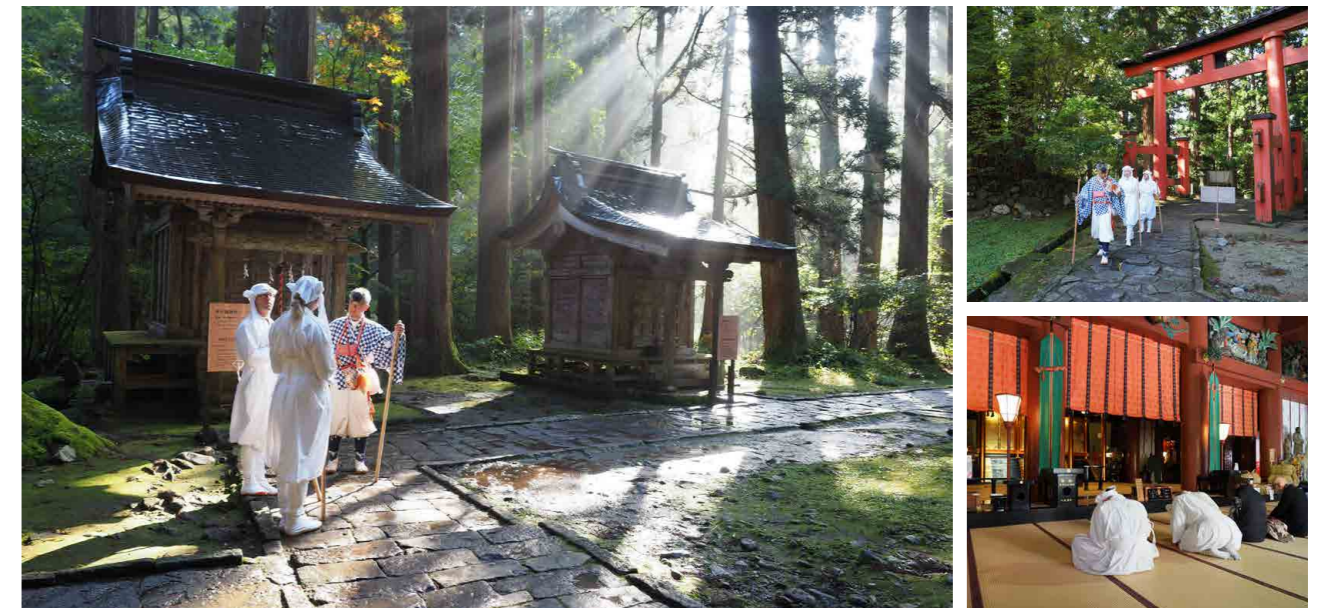


18. Tsuruoka City Kamo Aquarium

Kamo Aquarium had few visitors after the collapse of the 1990’s economic bubble. At that time, Kazuya Okuizumi who was a staff member looking after jellyfish at the time, helped raise the appeal of the aquarium by successfully maintaining the jellyfish, which he loved, and by also reorganizing the aquariums

management. He then became the director of the aquarium, where he successfully developed methods to keep and breed jellyfish that had short lifespans. Throughout the year, the aquarium displays 60 different types of jellyfish.

TOUR GUIDE



19. Haguro Yamabushi Guide

You can have the experience of being a Yamabushi by wearing white clothing. After worshipping at Dewa-Sanzan Shrine, you can enjoy eating Buddhist vegetarian cuisine at Saikan, a reservation is required.

Time Required: Around Three hours.
Active Period: Whole year, snow shoe rental is required during the winter season.

Activities in Tsuruoka

Why not include Tsuruoka in your Tohoku trip ?

1 By bullet train from Tokyo



2 Visit Niigata (City):
The dance of Geisha in Niigata, Saito Family House Tour, Old town tour



Yamagata Tour: Yamadera Temple and Ginzan Onsen



4



3 Tsuruoka Tour: Dewa Sanzan sacred mountains, Kamo Aquarium, Zenpoji Temple, Yunohama Onsen



Fukushima Tour: Mt. Azuma-Kofuji(Bandai-Asahi National Park), Mt. Adatarata, Dake Onsen



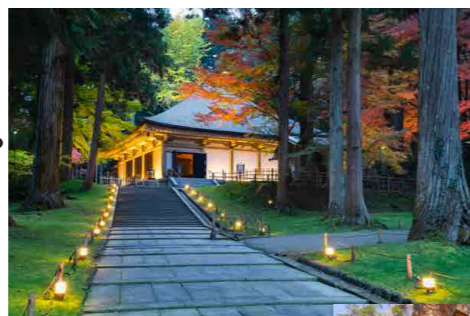
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6



Miyagi tour: Onagawa Port and Ruins of the 2011 Earthquake Disaster, Mt. Kinkazan(There are deer)



Hiraizumi Tour (UNESCO World Heritage Site): Chusonji Temple, Motsuji Temple, Other Temples in the area



7



8 Visiting Tono: Tono Story Hall (Japanese Folk Monster), Beer Tasting, Hop Field Tour



Hiroasaki Tour: Hiroasaki Castle, Shamisen concert at an Izakaya restaurant



12 Go around Oga, Namahage in Akita



12



9 Visiting Aomori Prefecture (City): Discovery of Jomon culture, Sannai Maruyama Ruins(UNESCO World Heritage Site)



11 Visiting Shirakami Mountains (UNESCO World Heritage Site)

Approximate time required: 12-16 days
The best season: July~October
This itinerary can be done with a JR pass.

After the tour, you will return to Tokyo via Niigata or Fukushima.