

*Visit* **MIYAGI**  
Land of Contrasts

[visitmiyagi.com](http://visitmiyagi.com)



# Miyagi, Japan

## —Free yourself from tourist traps

Miyagi is home to the contrasting yet complementary features that constitute a quintessential part of the Japanese experience: ancient versus modern, mountains and sea, the ever-changing beauty of the seasons, and more. A few of the sights here are internationally famous, but many more are virtually unknown. Located well away from Japan's mainstream tourist beat, Miyagi offers authentic "local Japan" appeal.

The challenge, of course, is finding out about these off-the-beaten-path spots. Who better to introduce them than locals themselves? This pamphlet is designed to be an introduction to Visit Miyagi.com, the official English-language sightseeing website of Miyagi Prefecture. The articles on the site are all written by local English-speaking residents who want to communicate their love of the area and share some of their favorite places with you.

### Visit MIYAGI

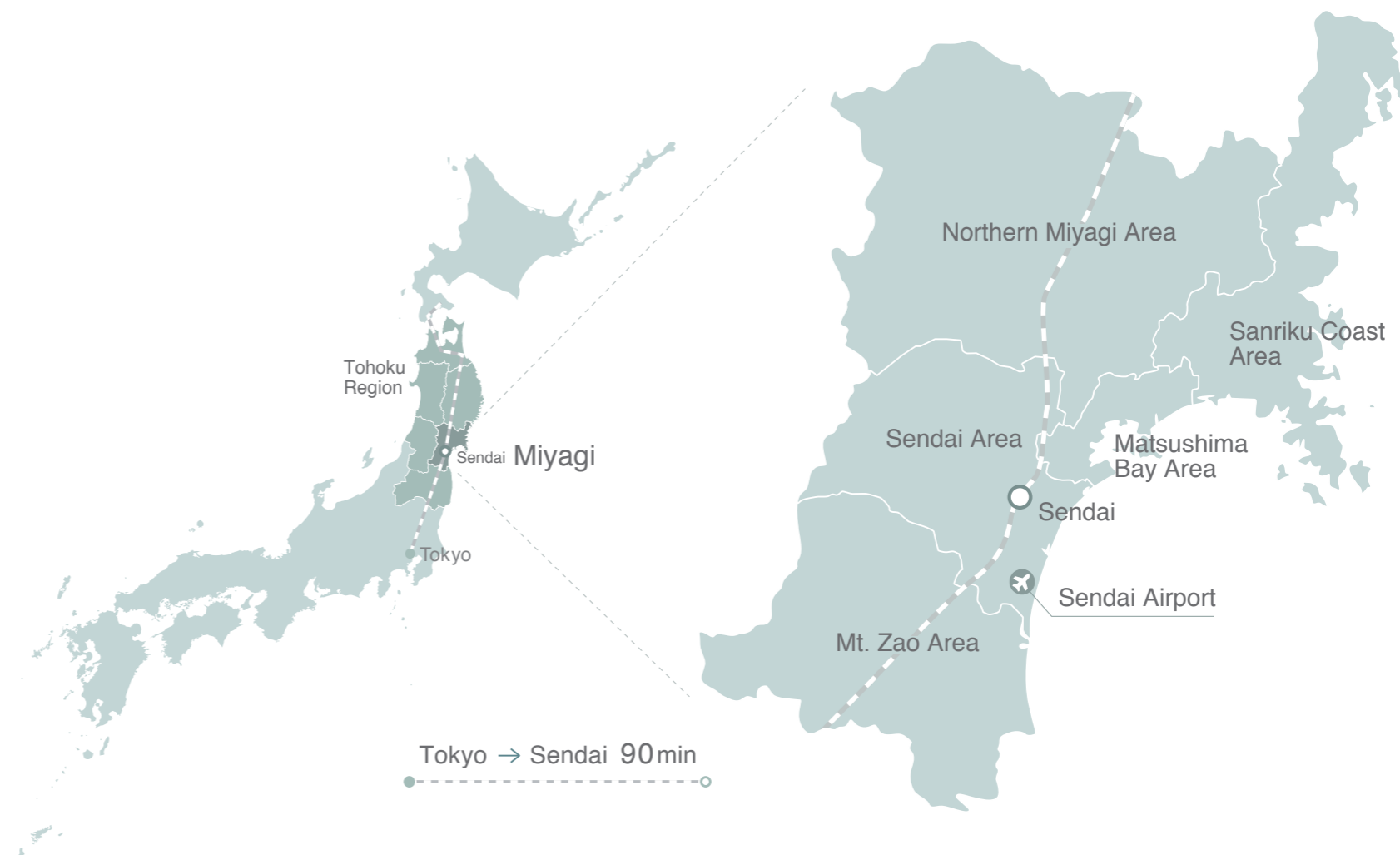
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# Miyagi

— A land of diverse landscapes

Miyagi is located about three hundred kilometers northeast of Tokyo. Sendai, the capital of Miyagi and the largest city in Tohoku, sits at the center of the prefecture. To the west rise the mountains of Zao, a wilderness where the landscape changes dramatically with the seasons. To the east lies the iconic Matsushima Bay and the crenulated ria coastline of Sanriku. To the south are charming *satoyama* villages and the castle town Shiroishi. To the north: wetlands, farms, and the volcanically active Naruko area abundant in hot springs. With such variety packed in one prefecture, the sightseeing possibilities in Miyagi are nearly endless. Yet at the same time, Miyagi makes a great base from which to explore the broader Tohoku region.



# MT. ZAO

## See the iconic Okama Crater

Majestic mountain landscapes with natural beauty transformed by the seasons

Covered in snow for half the year, Mount Zao thaws to reveal the stunning Okama Crater and its colorful lake. In spring just after the roads are cleared, the towering wall of snow abutting the highway is an attraction in and of itself. In summer, hikers of all abilities can explore the rocky ridge around Okama. Autumn brings a spectacular show of gold and red leaves, which impress up close and from a distance.





## HITOME SENBON ZAKURA

The most beautiful cherry blossom spot in Miyagi

*Hanami*, cherry blossom viewing, is the highlight of spring in Japan. One of the best places for it in the entire country is Miyagi's Hitome Senbon Zakura, named one of Japan's Top 100 Cherry Blossom Spots. The Hitome Senbon Zakura (lit. "a thousand cherry trees in one glance") are a group of over one thousand cherry trees that bloom along an eight-kilometer stretch of the Shiroishi River. Enjoy the view from the grassy riverbank with a stroll or picnic, or from the water with a *yakatabune* boat ride. During peak cherry blossom season a festival takes place, with food stalls selling classic Japanese festival fare and an evening light-up of the delicate pink blossoms.



## SUMIKAWA SNOW PARK

Silky powder and accessible backcountry adventures

Sumikawa Snow Park is the highest-elevation ski resort in Miyagi, notable for its off-piste action and hip local flair. The snow is powdery and deep, making for runs so smooth it feels as if you're floating at times. The park also offers tours to view the "snow monsters" of Mount Zao by snowshoe trekking or snowcat vehicle.



Follow in the footsteps of the monks, poets and artists who have been making spiritual journeys to Matsushima for over one thousand years. Watch as the sunrise silhouettes 260 pine-topped islets against a sea of golden rays. Linger as the evening mist enshrouds these islets, a *sumi-e* ink painting come to life. These views can be enjoyed from the historic waterfront temple district, or while relaxing in the open-air hot spring baths of Matsushima Onsen. Explore offshore via island walking trails, sightseeing cruises, and sea kayak tours.



# MATSUSHIMA BAY

## One of the legendary Three Views of Japan

Iconic coastal landscapes, revered temples,  
and delicious seafood



## GODAIDO TEMPLE

An island temple with bridges designed to sharpen the senses

Set on an islet connected to shore by two deliberately precarious red bridges, Godaido is the most distinctive man-made sight in Matsushima. Though first established in 828 to enshrine the Five Great Wisdom Kings, the current building was constructed in 1604, commissioned by samurai warlord Date Masamune. It is the oldest example of Momoyama period architecture in Tohoku and is designated a National Important Cultural Property.



## SAIGYO MODOSHI NO MATSU PARK

A park with panoramic view of Matsushima Bay

Saigyo Hoshi was a monk and poet who lived during the twelfth century. Legend has it that, weary after a long journey to Matsushima, he arrived at a hill where he took a rest under a great pine tree. A young boy joined him, challenging him with Buddhist riddles. Ashamed by his inability to answer, Saigyo gave up on his journey and turned back from whence he came. This public park is named after the encounter (lit. “The Pine Tree Which Made Saigyo Return”), and the grove where he once rested is memorialized with a stone marker. The park offers one of the best panoramic views of Matsushima Bay. In spring, the park’s 260 cherry trees come into bloom, framing the view in a froth of pink blossoms.



## CAFE LE ROMAN

French cafe with a view



Although historically a tourist destination, Matsushima has more to offer than just scenery and monuments. Cafe Le Roman is a case in point. Located in Saigyo Modoshi no Matsu Park, it is a popular cafe with a sophisticated contemporary atmosphere and high-quality confectionery, featuring one of the finest views of Matsushima Bay.

# WORLD-CLASS SEAFOOD

Unrivalled variety, quality, and freshness

Miyagi is a seafood-lover's paradise. Warm and cool currents converge just off the coast, creating one of the world's richest fishing grounds. Visit a wholesale fish market for a glimpse inside Japan's fishing industry, or dine sea-to-table on everything from oysters to exquisitely presented sushi.



## KESENNUMA FISH MARKET

Kesennuma Port, one of the largest fishing ports in Japan, accounts for more than 70% of the country's shark and swordfish production. It is also a major producer of mackerel, salmon, shellfish, and *katsuo* (skipjack tuna). The wholesale fish market here is a place where visitors can watch ships unload their haul and observe as buyers take part in silent auctions.

## SHIOGAMA SEAFOOD WHOLESALE MARKET

This wholesale market is open to both dealers and the general public. There are around 140 stalls selling all kinds of fresh seafood landed at the neighboring Shiogama Port. Shiogama is particularly well known for its incredibly high-quality *maguro* (red tuna). There are at least twenty stalls at the market that specialize in it. Walk by at the right moment and you may even be lucky enough to watch them carve one in front of you!







## MY KAISENDON

Custom seafood rice bowls at the Shiogama Seafood Wholesale Market



At the back of the Shiogama Seafood Wholesale Market you'll find the My Kaisendon Corner, offering visitors build-your-own *kaisendon* (seafood rice bowl) meals. Purchase a set of rice and miso soup for ¥400 from the booth, then trawl the market for toppings. Vendors here sell small servings of fresh seafood for this purpose, so customers can mix and match toppings however they please to create their custom rice bowl.



## SUSHI SHIRAHATA



A must-visit in Japan's sushi capital

Shiogama is known as the "Sushi Capital of Japan" for having the greatest number of sushi restaurants per capita in the entire country. Located less than thirty minutes from Sendai by train, this small city of 50,000 people is home to more than twenty sushi restaurants, all known for the quality of their product. One of the oldest and best-known is Sushi Shirahata, founded 35 years ago. It serves delicious *nigiri* and *maki* sushi, *donburi* and miso soup to sushi lovers coming to Shiogama for a high-class sushi experience.



## KIRAKIRADON

Sparkling seafood rice bowls

The coastal town of Minamisanriku has a uniquely beautiful take on the classic *kaisendon* seafood rice bowl. Named for the sparkle of the sun and sea, each season brings a different main ingredient, most famously the glittering *ikura* (salmon roe), which live up to the dish's name.



## YURIAGE PORT MORNING MARKET

Participate in a real fish-market auction

Yuriage has been a principal fishing port of Sendai since the Edo period. People come here from all over the area to snap up ultra-fresh seafood and produce, from market stalls and at auction. Unlike auctions at other fish markets, the one here is open to the public and all are invited to participate. Bid against locals for fresh seafood and produce—if your reflexes are quick enough you just might win something!



# MEET MIYAGI ARTISANS

Regional charm is vividly materialized in the works of local artisans. Craft here is characterized by a synthesis of tradition and innovation, natural blessings and meticulous technique.



## OKAZAKI

A humble chef who skillfully encapsulates the ingredients and seasons of Miyagi



When speaking with Toshiaki Okazaki, his sheer humility almost makes you forget that he is one of the most celebrated *washoku* (traditional Japanese cuisine) chefs in Miyagi and beloved by locals. Upon first impression, the dishes reflect the demeanor of the chef: neither flashy nor intimidating. However, it doesn't take much scrutiny to realize that their superb flavor, aesthetic presentation, and seasonal expression are nothing short of masterful, an ode to Miyagi's rich natural diversity.

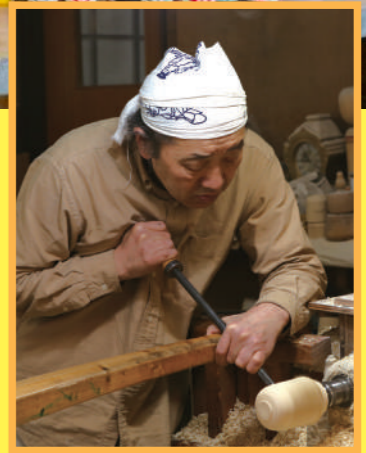


## SAKURAI KOKESHI

Innovative and traditional *kokeshi* from one of Japan's oldest kokeshi workshops



Sakurai Kokeshi has been producing handcrafted wooden *kokeshi* dolls for more than a century. These dolls originated in hot spring villages as toys for children. Fifth-generation master Akihiro continues to produce traditional Naruko kokeshi while exploring what modern kokeshi can be with contemporary colors, patterns, and shapes. This three-time All-Japan Kokeshi Festival Best Kokeshi award winner has recently begun to introduce kokeshi to Europe, exhibiting at the Maison et Objet design fair in Paris and organizing a kokeshi-making exhibition in Milan.



# ARCHITECTURE OLD AND NEW

Traditional Japanese and cutting-edge contemporary architecture sit side-by-side in Miyagi, a manifestation of the discrete yet interconnected histories and visions which coexist here.



## SHIOGAMA-JINJA SHRINE

A grand shrine overlooking Matsushima Bay

In ancient times, it is said that the gods taught people how to harvest salt by boiling seawater in large kettles. In gratitude, around the year 800 they named the area “Shiogama” (lit. “Salt Cauldron”) and dedicated Shiogama-Jinja Shrine to these deities. The shrine stands on a steep hill overlooking Matsushima Bay. Climb the 202 stone steps to reach the grand main entrance. Its impressive red buildings date from the early 1700s, and fourteen of them are designated National Important Cultural Properties.



## SENDAI MEDIATHEQUE

A vibrant hub of culture in the heart of Sendai

Designed by internationally-renowned architect Toyo Ito, sendai mediatheque is a stunning piece of contemporary architecture that has become a hub for cultural activities in Sendai, from grassroots activism to contemporary art exhibitions. This seven-story building is home to a public library, exhibition floors, a cinema, shops, and more.



# SENDAI



The capital of Miyagi and the gateway to Tohoku

With a population of one million—the largest in the Tohoku region—Sendai is bustling with business and leisure. More than just a busy metropolis, in this sprawling “City of Trees” you can also go hiking, skiing, and camping all without leaving the city limits. The city’s outskirts are even home to two hot spring areas with long histories. Sendai Airport, Sendai Port Ferry Terminal, and the major bus and train hub Sendai Station make Sendai a prime base from which to explore northern Japan. Though the ample transportation options make it easy to venture even as far as Hokkaido on a day trip, Sendai’s enticing blend of dining, nightlife, shopping, and nature will have you wanting to explore the metropolis itself, too.



## YOKOCHO CULTURE

These nostalgic alleyways are a quintessential part of the Sendai cityscape and the go-to spot for locals on a laid-back night out. Rub elbows (literally!) with fellow diners in the numerous small sushi bars, izakaya pubs, and other casual establishments that line the yokocho.



## ZUIHODEN, DATE FAMILY MAUSOLEUM

Zuihoden is the mausoleum of Date Masamune, the founder of Sendai and one of the most interesting and charismatic samurai warlords of the turbulent sixteenth century.



## SENDAI TANABATA FESTIVAL

Held every year August 6–8

The Sendai Tanabata Festival is the largest Tanabata celebration in Japan, with over two million visitors attending each year. It is known for the huge, intricate *fukinagashi* decorations hung all across downtown Sendai.



# HEARTWARMING ENCOUNTERS

Miyagi is a great destination for animal lovers because it offers the chance to interact with a variety of free-roaming animals in their natural habitats. From feeding the deer on the holy Kinkasan Island to photographing the migratory birds that winter at Lake Izunuma-Uchinuma, these close encounters will warm your heart and add an unforgettable chapter to your travels in Japan.



## ZAO FOX VILLAGE

Pet and feed foxes at this wildlife reserve



Established to study a parasite that affects canines in Siberia and East Asia, Zao Fox Village has become a popular sightseeing destination, drawing visitors from all over the world. Its highlight is the main enclosure that guests can enter and freely walk around, observing the foxes up close and even feeding them. There is also a petting area where visitors can hold some of the reserve's most docile foxes.



## CAT ISLAND TASHIROJIMA

A small island where cats outnumber people

Tashirojima is a cat lover's paradise: a small island where cats outnumber human inhabitants six to one! The kitties roam the island freely, seeking attention (and treats) from visitors and residents. In addition, the island is also home to a cat shrine and cat-shaped rental cabins.



## MANGA ISLAND

Adorable cat-shaped cabins and artwork by famous manga artists

The quaint and lovable cat island Tashirojima is home to a public campground with adorable cat-shaped cabins. The interior of the cabins are decorated in cat-themed artwork by famous manga artists like Ishinomori Shotaro. The campground overlooks the ocean and is a great spot for stargazing on clear nights. Better yet, the friendly "free-range" cats of the island often come by looking for food and affection.



# OUTDOOR RECREATION

Though not far from civilization, Miyagi's undulating mountains, volcanic gorges, long coastline, and winding rivers retain the feel of untouched wilderness. It's an atmosphere as well-suited for quiet reflection as it is for exciting outdoor adventures.



MT. KURIKOMA



# HIKE MIYAGI

Be enveloped in a fresh landscape every season

Miyagi offers beautiful hiking all year round. No matter what time of year, visitors are sure to find pleasant trails and stunning vistas. Landscapes vary greatly with the season—the same trail hiked even in summer will look completely different come autumn. Spring is the time of year for wildflower hikes; summer is the easiest time of year to tackle Miyagi's highest peaks. Autumn is the most popular time of year for hiking amongst locals, who come out in droves to take in the fall foliage. In winter, even amateur hikers can trek to icy spectacles like snow monsters and frozen waterfalls with the help of professional mountaineering guides.



# CYCLE MIYAGI

Cycle through a national park, charming rural villages, and more

Miyagi's size and varied terrain make it a very pleasant prefecture for cycling. Cities here are relatively flat and compact, and scenic nature is always within reach. The coast is home to some of the country's best seafood, and the northern 25% or so is part of the Sanriku Fukko National Park. Heading inland to the west, you'll find plains that soon give way to mountains. The foothills here are dotted with quaint towns and villages exceedingly pleasant to explore by bike. The higher you climb, the more wilderness you'll encounter. The grueling climbs here are made worth it by the beautiful scenery and the joy of discovering secluded hot springs or countryside cafes hidden within landscapes that appear to be uninhabited.



## MICHINOKU COASTAL TRAIL

A 900-kilometer long trek from Fukushima to Aomori Prefecture



## MIYAGI OLLE TRAILS

Scenic day hikes packed with natural and historical points of interest  
[www.miyagiolle.jp/en/](http://www.miyagiolle.jp/en/)



## CYCLING THE ZAO HIGHLANDS

Ride through volcanic highlands, up and over a 1,600-meter mountain pass





## SAKE

Miyagi sake consistently ranks highly at national and international competitions. It is predominantly high-quality *junmai* sake, made to pair perfectly with the region's seafood. Learn more about Miyagi sake by taking a brewery tour or going sake tasting.



## WINE

Miyagi's climate produces estate-grown grapes that have garnered the attention of Japan's burgeoning domestic wine industry. Wineries have recently sprouted up in several locations across Miyagi, each having its own unique backstory and characteristic approach.

### AKIU WINERY

Up-and-coming winery with their own vineyard estate

Japan's recent boom in domestic wine production is little known outside of the archipelago. One of the industry's most-promising up-and-comers is Akiu Winery, located in the quiet hills of Akiu just thirty minutes from central Sendai.



## WHISKY

It's safe to say that Japanese whisky has become world famous. Some of it gets made right here in Miyagi at the Nikka Whisky Miyagikyo Distillery, an active distillery that doubles as a tourist destination.

### MIYAGIKYO WHISKY DISTILLERY

A distillery founded by Japan's "Father of Whisky" Taketsuru Masataka

In 1969, Nikka built the Miyagikyo Distillery at the junction of two rivers in the picturesque mountains of Sakunami. Visitors can take a free seventy-minute tour of the facilities, which gives an overview of the whisky production process and the life of founder Taketsuru Masataka, followed by a complimentary tasting.



### URAKASUMI SAKE BREWERY

A historic seaside brewery with global reach



### ICHINOKURA SAKE BREWERY

Four rivals combine to make "One Brewery"



### OTOKOYAMA HONTEN SAKE BREWERY

A longstanding brewery near one of the biggest fishing ports in Japan





MINAMISANRIKU HOTEL KANYO



GAGA ONSEN

## ONSEN HOT SPRINGS

Immerse yourself in the nature and culture of Miyagi by soaking in some of the prefecture's world-class *onsen* (natural hot springs). The different water sources produce baths of different temperatures, mineral content, acidity, color, and texture. Just as the waters vary, so do the surroundings. Onsen range from simple communal bathhouses, to luxurious spa-like facilities, to rustic-chic outdoor baths hewn from boulders.

### SAKUNAMI ONSEN



Sakunami Onsen, with many of its baths situated on the rocky banks of the Hirose River, is home to hot springs said to treat a variety of illnesses, from rheumatism to beriberi. In ancient times, weary monks and the shogun alike visited Sakunami to heal mind and body.



SAKUNAMI ICHINOBO

### MATSUSHIMA ONSEN



Seven hotels near the famous Matsushima Bay are equipped with onsen facilities. The open-air baths are ideal for watching the sun or moon rise over the rippling waters of Matsushima Bay.



KOMATSUKAN

### AKIU ONSEN



Akiu Onsen is a well-developed hot spring town tucked away in the low mountains of western Sendai. Locals claim the waters of Akiu can improve quality of sleep, circulation, and reduce stress levels. No wonder this area is known as the "living room of Sendai."



HOTEL ZUIHO

### NARUKO ONSEN



Out of the ten types of hot spring water found in Japan, Naruko boasts eight, gushing out from more than four hundred different sources, coupled with a wide range of bathing facilities, from traditional inns to modern hotels with luxurious private baths.

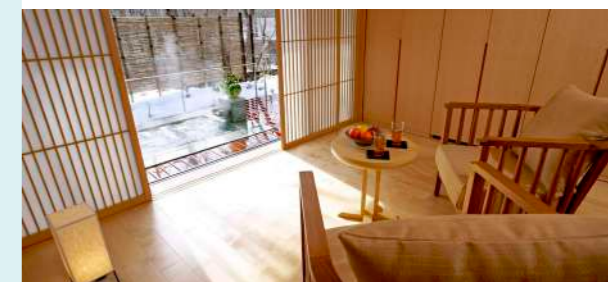


RYOKAN OHNUMA

### TOGATTA ONSEN



Togatta Onsen is located in the foothills of Mount Zao. The central area is compact and has a pleasant small-town-like feel. In addition to the numerous onsen inns, there are also two public bathing facilities here, well-trafficked by locals and day-trippers from Sendai.



CHIKUSENKO





## SENDAI 3.11 MEMORIAL COMMUNITY CENTER



The 3.11 Memorial Community Center is located inside Arai Station. It's a great place to learn about how the March 2011 disaster impacted life in Sendai's coastal suburbs. On the first floor is a community space housing a wooden topographic map, books, and slideshows that give a clear overview of the damage. The second floor houses a permanent exhibition of photos and a timeline chronicling the March 2011 disasters and the progress of the recovery.

# RECOVERY AND BEYOND

On March 11, 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake shook Tohoku, triggering a thirty-nine-meter-high tsunami that devastated coastal communities across Miyagi, Fukushima, and Iwate Prefectures. These communities have had to rebuild from the ground up. Although the tragedy of that day must never be forgotten, let us also celebrate that there has also been remarkable progress toward recovery. Visitors have a positive role to play in these communities, as tourism is a source of revenue that can be used to fund further recovery efforts.



## ONAGAWA TOWN



In 2011, 70% of Onagawa was decimated by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. With most of the town's buildings washed away, the community was left no choice but to rebuild from the ground up. The story of Onagawa's reconstruction is truly remarkable. Spearheaded by a spirited mayor working hand-in-hand with local residents, the town has been reborn as a place of collective vision and intent.



## MILLENNIUM HOPE HILLS



The Millennium Hope Hills are a set of parks built around thirty-six-foot-tall grass-covered hills formed out of tsunami rubble. They are simultaneously a memorial to the many lives lost, an evacuation shelter, and part of a system of barriers designed to mitigate the impact of any future tsunami. The view of the ocean and floodplain from the hilltops makes it easy to understand the scale of the 2011 tsunami and state of the recovery.



## HIYORIYAMA PARK



Hiyoriyama Park sits at the peak of little Mount Hiyoriyama. The park overlooks the Kadonowaki and Minamihama residential districts of Ishinomaki City, where sadly, more than five hundred people lost their lives during the 2011 tsunami. Viewpoints around the park display photos of the views pre-disaster. The contrast between the current views and those depicted in the photographs gives visitors a sense of the magnitude of the destruction. It is a must-see for visitors wanting to learn about the 2011 tsunami and Ishinomaki's reconstruction.

# ACCESS

Miyagi Prefecture is located about 300 kilometers northeast of Tokyo and is part of the Tohoku region. There are a number of ways to get to and around Miyagi. Let us introduce you to some of the major routes below.



## Getting to Miyagi

Three main transportation methods provide access to Miyagi: rail, road, and air.

### By rail

The Tohoku Shinkansen transports passengers from Tokyo to Sendai in about 1.5 hours. Shinkansen (bullet trains) are also a quick and easy way to get to Miyagi from other prefectures, especially Hokkaido, Aomori, Iwate, Akita, and Fukushima.

### By road

The Tohoku Expressway toll road runs north-south through Miyagi Prefecture, and is the main road used to access Miyagi. There are numerous highway bus connections between Miyagi and other cities across Japan, including Tokyo.

### By air

Sendai Airport has international flights connecting Sendai with Seoul, Shanghai, Taipei, and Bangkok (as of December 2019). Domestic flights fly direct to major Japanese cities. If you fly in to Sendai Airport, you can get to downtown Sendai directly via the Sendai Airport Access Line train. The airport also offers direct bus service to Matsushima, Hiraizumi, Akiu Onsen, and other sightseeing destinations.

## Getting around Miyagi

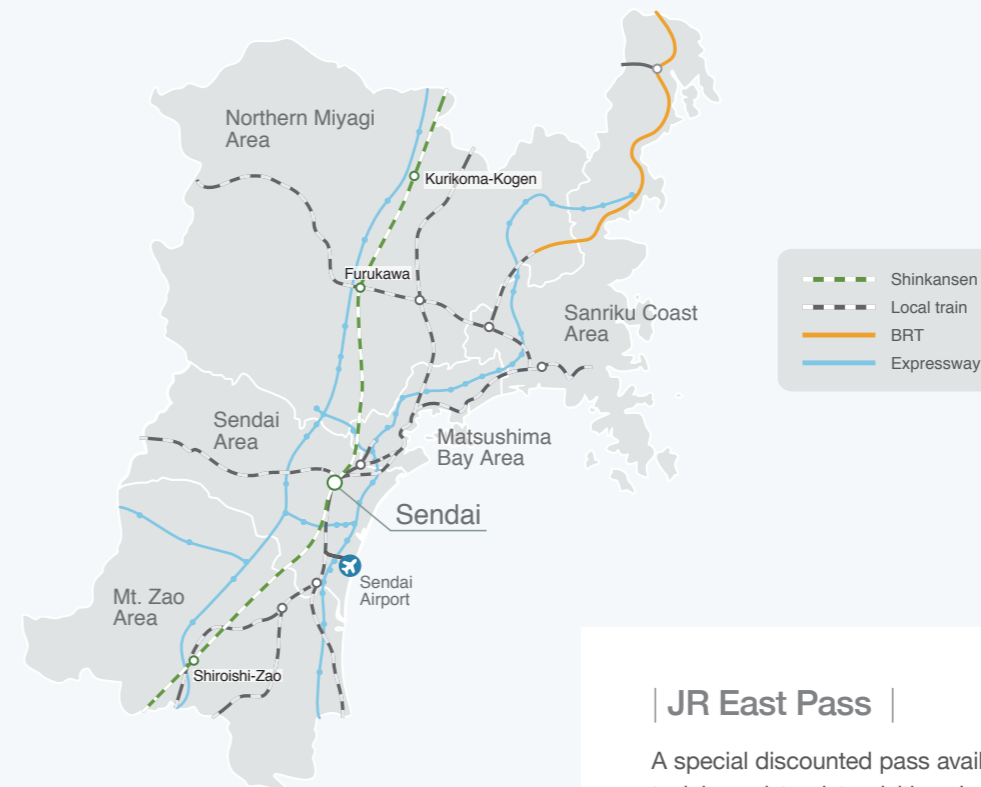
Major means of getting around Miyagi are train, subway, bus, and car.

### By train and subway

The 3 major local train lines are the Tohoku Line, which runs north-south through inland Miyagi; the Senseki Line, which runs north-south along the coast connecting Sendai to Matsushima and the Sanriku Coast area; and the Senzan Line, which connects Sendai and Yamagata in neighboring Yamagata Prefecture. Within Sendai City, there is a subway system with 2 lines: the north-south Nanboku and east-west Tozai lines.

### By car

You can get almost anywhere in Miyagi by car within about 2 hours. Major toll-road highways include the Tohoku Expressway, which runs north-south through Miyagi, and the Sanriku Coast Expressway, which provides access to the Sanriku Coast areas. There is also a network of free, public highways throughout the prefecture.



## Travel Passes

### | Sendai Area Pass |

For visitors with a foreign passport and short-term visa, this 1-day pass offers unlimited travel between Sendai, Sendai Airport, Matsushima, Yamadera, Shiroishi, Akiu Onsen, and beyond. Pass holders can also receive special benefits and discounts at popular Sendai City tourist spots.



### | Sendai Marugoto Pass |

A 2-day pass offering unlimited rides on trains, subways, and buses throughout Sendai City and to major nearby sightseeing spots like Matsushima and Yamadera.



### | JR East Pass |

A special discounted pass available only to inbound tourists visiting Japan on a short-term visa (no longer than 90 days) and holding a non-Japanese passport. The pass offers unlimited rides on all JR East train lines in the JR East Pass (Tohoku Area)-designated zone, which includes travel to and from Narita and Haneda Airport, shinkansen throughout Tohoku, and more.



### | Tohoku Highway Bus Ticket |

For visitors with a foreign passport and short-term visa, this ticket offers unlimited travel on select highway bus and local bus services across the 6 prefectures of Tohoku: Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Yamagata, Miyagi, and Fukushima.



### | Tohoku Expressway Pass |

Offers unlimited use of toll-road expressways in the Tohoku region for a flat fee. Available only in conjunction with car rental from a participating dealer. The pass is programmed into the car's ETC card at time of rental.

