

JAPAN YAMAGATA

TRAVEL GUIDE



山形



Ginzan Onsen
[Obanazawa]



Zao Snow Monsters
[Yamagata City]

Take a trip to Yamagata

Yamagata Prefecture, is located approximately 1 hour by plane and 3 hours by train from Tokyo, in the Tohoku Region. Yamagata has four distinct seasons and is overflowing with the best food, blessed with high-quality fruit, rice, meat, and seafood. Yamagata is also famous for its snow resorts such as "Zao", known for its snow monsters, as well as onsen (hot springs) like "Ginzan Onsen", with a traditional Japanese aesthetic. Yamagata's ancient traditions have been carefully passed down through many generations, allowing visitors to experience the region's rich historical heritage, traditional festivals and mountain worship pilgrimages. Why don't you travel to Yamagata with all these charms?

Ever Changing Seasons

Summer in Yamagata is blazing hot, and the winter is icy cold. In spring, the remaining snow is replaced by cherry blossoms, followed by vibrant green colors in summer, fiery fall foliage, and frost-covered trees in winter. There is no shortage of things to do in Yamagata's beautiful and vast nature during each season, such as skiing and snowboarding in winter.

Diverse Cuisine and Onsen

With the ever-changing climate and rich nature, the region has developed high quality fruits, rice, beef, pork, seafood, and other products, resulting in all sorts of exquisite flavors and an incredibly diverse food culture. The area is also home to many different onsen, where visitors can enjoy a traditional Japanese atmosphere.

Rich Traditional Culture

The people of Yamagata cherish and pass down their traditions. Whether it be festivals and events that have been held since long ago, practicing faith in the mountains, or maintaining historical heritage sites and streetscapes—all of these traditions are alive within the people of the region.

| Shonai Region

A sprawling open land, covered by vast plains. Visitors can enjoy sports on the water in summer, and fresh seafood all year round. These plains receive relatively little snowfall.

| Mogami Region

One of the prefectures leading locations for rich forest nature. With its relatively cool climate, visitors can enjoy seasonal mountain ingredients, such as wild vegetables, and mushrooms.

| Okitama Region

Situated in the south, this region is a treasure trove of high quality food, including Yonezawa Beef and wine, and is blessed with many hot springs.

| Murayama Region

Located in central Yamagata, the region is surrounded by beautiful mountains, such as Mt. Zao, Mt. Gassan, and the Asahi Mountain Range. Visitors can also enjoy the region's beautiful nature and fascinating history, as well as city life in Yamagata City, the prefecture's capital.





A Rich History and Spiritual Culture

Yamagata is home to a vibrant culture, born from a long history



Dewa Sanzan, Sacred Peaks of Mountain Faith

The Sanzan (three mountains) of Dewa have been a place of spirituality since ancient times. Making a pilgrimage through Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono is known as the "Journey of Rebirth". Through a Yamabushi monk training experience, visitors can wear the traditional white garb and set out to experience the rigorous training process while learning about the area's nature, as well as the Shugendo faith.



精神文化

SDG Ideologies and Mountain Faith

Mt. Haguro is said to be where one may wish for happiness in life, while Mt. Gassan is a place to wish for comfort after death, Mt. Yudono is where one may wish for reincarnation. Making a pilgrimage through these three mountains is said to be the "Journey of Rebirth," a trip through the present, past, and future, a practice carried out since long ago. This respect for nature and concept of living harmoniously with it has been passed down by each generation through traditional cuisine, culture, and heritage, as well as careful town planning, enabling the region's people to lead sustainable lives.



1 The Five-Storied Pagoda of Mt. Haguro, A National Treasure [Tsuruoka]

The area's cedar-lined road has been awarded three stars by Michelin Green Guide Japan, and among these trees visitors will find the Tohoku region's oldest five-storied pagoda. Said to have been rebuilt around 600 years ago, the pagoda features a wooden structure standing at 29 meters tall, and has been designated as a National Treasure.



Shojin Vegetarian Cuisine [Tsuruoka]

Experience Haguro's unique Shojin cuisine, vegetarian based dishes that utilize wild vegetables and bamboo shoots gathered from around the Dewa Sanzan foothills.



2 Risshakuji Temple (Yamadera) [Yamagata City]

Risshakuji, a temple commonly referred to as Yamadera, is said to expel the troubles of its visitors when they climb its 1,015 stone steps. The entire mountain is a place of spirituality and monk training, and features a breathtaking view from Godaido, a hall that extends out from the slopes, of the town's sprawling scenery below.



3 Mine no Ura (Tarumizu Site) [Yamagata City]

A tucked-away spot, used as monk training grounds until around 100 years ago. The contrast between the honeycomb-like rock face and torii gate creates a solemn atmosphere. Stone Buddhist imagery is also enshrined within the crevices of the rock, and visitors can see old sites that still show traces of the monks' training grounds.



4 Kumano Taisha Shrine [Nanyo]

A location enshrouded in a tranquil aura, home to an 850 year old ginkgo tree, large torii gate, an impressive shrine and main hall. The shrine is known as a place of "matchmaking," with two dedicated events held annually—one between June and September, called Kanade, where visitors can make a wish upon the sounds of wind chimes, and one between October and December, called Kazahana, where the shrine grounds are decorated with pinwheels symbolizing each person's wishes.



7 Bunshokan (Yamagata Prefectural Folk Museum) [Yamagata City]

Built over 100 years ago as the Yamagata Prefectural Government Building, this Western-style structure is now used as the Yamagata Prefectural Folk Museum. The building's gates, windows, balconies, and clock tower (that is still functional today), all follow an impressive symmetrical design. Magnificently constructed with stone and brick, the building is registered as a national Important Cultural Property.



9 Iaido [Murayama]

Murayama is the birthplace of Iaido, a martial art that has been passed down for over 400 years. Nihon Issha Hayashizaki Iai Shrine, seen as a sacred ground for swordsmen, welcomes visitors that practice the art from all over the country. They also offer a 'samurai experience' program, in which participants can practice cutting tatami rolls, a unique experience only found in Murayama.



10 Yamagata Ai no Bushotai [Yonezawa]

A troupe of Sengoku warriors formed with the purpose of promoting tourism throughout Yamagata Prefecture. They visit popular locations, deliver incredible performances, and provide tours of one of their main hubs, Uesugi Shrine. As a very photogenic group, they're especially popular with international tourists.



Encounter Japan's Beautiful Traditional Culture



5 Somaro (Sakata Maiko) [Sakata]

The city of Sakata has prospered as a maritime transportation hub for many years, and is a place where Kyoto culture, a rarity in eastern Japan, has been carefully preserved. Sakata Maiko is one part of that culture, and visitors can enjoy their performances while having a local meal at the historical Somaro Teahouse.



8 Uesugi Shrine [Yonezawa]

Also known as a "power spot," this shrine is dedicated to Uesugi Kenshin, a figure said to be the strongest military commander of Japan's Sengoku period. "Uesugi Museum" exhibits valuable items related to the Uesugi family, including the National Treasure "Rakuchu Rakugai-zu" folding screen—a must-see for history fans.



祭 Traditional Festivals

Beautiful festivals where reserved and gentle people unleash their vibrant spirit.



Apr 29 - May 3

11 Yonezawa Uesugi Festival [Yonezawa]

A picturesque scene reminiscent of an old scroll unfolds around Uesugi Shrine as a procession of warriors and mikoshi (portable shrines) parade through the streets of Yonezawa. During the main event, armor-clad samurai perform an incredible reenactment of a historical battle, transporting visitors back to the Sengoku period.



Aug 5 - 7

12 Yamagata Hanagasa Festival [Yamagata City]

As one of the four major festivals of Tohoku, this event represents Yamagata in the summer. Dancers in beautiful kimonos parade through the city accompanied by the lively beats of Hanagasa taiko drumming. In addition to the traditional female and male varieties, other dances, such as the Kasa Mawashi Odori, are also performed.



Aug 24 - 26

13 Shinjo Festival [Shinjo]

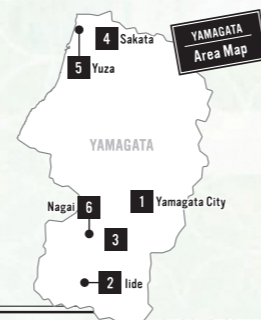
One of the 33 "Yama/ Hoko/ Yatai: Float Festivals of Japan", this festival is registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Scenery reminiscent of a historical picture scroll unfolds before visitors' eyes, from beautiful floats and mikoshi (portable shrine) processions, to the traditional Shishi Odori performance held at the Shinjo Castle Site.





Pristine Beauty

A magnificent sprawling landscape, sculpted by rich nature



1 Cherry Blossoms at Kajo Park [Yamagata City]

Located along the site of Yamagata Castle, one of Japan's Top 100 Castles, Kajo Park is famous for its cherry blossoms, with approximately 1,500 cherry trees in full bloom in spring. Located near Yamagata Station, it is easily accessible. The park features beautiful stone walls in addition to its cherry blossoms, and a stunning moat blanketed in pink by the scattered petals.



4 Tamasudare Falls [Sakata]

The largest waterfall in Yamagata, standing at 63 meters tall, and 5 meters wide. The location used to serve as a training ground for followers of the mountain faith, and is still considered a "power spot" to this day. Surrounded by massive cedars, the flowing water freezes over during the cold season.



5 Maruikesama Pond [Yuza]

A pond filled with cool, clear spring water that flows from Mt. Chokai, one of Japan's Top 100 Mountains. The pond features fantastic emerald hues that subtly shift with the light. Considered to be an object of faith, the area is carefully protected and preserved.



YAMAGATA SPRING



2 Submerged Forest of Lake Shirakawa [Iide]

As the warmth of the spring melts the winter snow into Lake Shirakawa, a scene of white willows unfolds out of the water--a mysterious sight visible only between mid-April and mid-May. The area is also great for those looking to go canoeing or standup paddleboarding.



6 Mifuchi Gorge Boat Tours [Nagai]

Mifuchi Gorge extends over 250 meters, with cliffs spanning over 50 meters high on both sides of a 3-5 meter wide river, making for an atmosphere of mystery and unparalleled beauty. Visitors can take a relaxing boat trip downstream while taking in the spectacular seasonal scenery.



YAMAGATA SUMMER

3 Nagai Flower Line

A local railway that runs around 30.5km through southern Yamagata, dotted with flowers such as irises, dahlias, lilies, roses, safflowers, and even cherry trees that are over 1,000 years old. In early spring, visitors can enjoy the beautiful scenery through the train's windows, which frame the contrast between the snow-capped mountains in the distance and the cherry blossoms nearby.



7 Fall Hiking at Mt Gassan

Autumn colors reach their most vibrant on Mt. Gassan around mid to late September. The summit and lift station area peak in late September to early October. The colorful fall forest, nurtured by heavy snow and a tough climate, is truly a breathtaking sight to behold.



YAMAGATA AUTUMN

8 Kamo Aquarium [Tsuruoka]

An aquarium boasting the world's largest number of jellyfish exhibits (certified by Guinness World Records in 2012). Visitors can learn about sea creatures at the Jellyfish Exhibition Area, and see them up close in a 5 meter diameter tank, known as the Jellyfish Dream Theater, that houses over 10,000 moon jellies.

9 Kuki Shrine [Asahi]

Kuki Shrine is the only shrine in the world dedicated to "kuki," the Japanese word for "air." The town of Asahi has designated June 5th as Air Day, a date that also coincides with World Environment Day, to express gratitude for the region's rich nature. During Air Day, the shrine's main hall is open to the public, and a traditional dance known as Miko no Mai is performed.



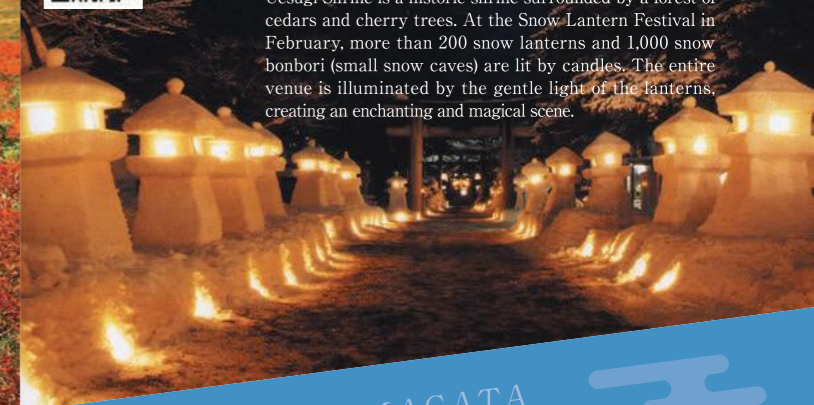
10 Mogami River Boat Ride [Tozawa]

Enjoy magnificent seasonal scenery, from fresh greens in spring, to the deep reds of fall, while taking a boat ride down the Mogami River. In winter, the boats even come equipped with traditional kotatsu (heated tables), so passengers can stay warm while taking in the surrounding glimmering white landscape.



11 Uesugi Snow Lantern Festival [Yonezawa]

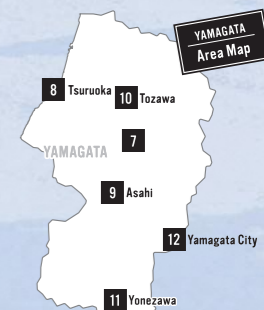
Uesugi Shrine is a historic shrine surrounded by a forest of cedars and cherry trees. At the Snow Lantern Festival in February, more than 200 snow lanterns and 1,000 snow bonbori (small snow caves) are lit by candles. The entire venue is illuminated by the gentle light of the lanterns, creating an enchanting and magical scene.



YAMAGATA WINTER

12 Zao Onsen Ski Resort [Yamagata City]

One of the largest winter resorts of the Tohoku region, featuring outstanding snow quality, varied slopes, course designs, and rare frost-covered trees. The area offers a variety of things to enjoy after skiing, including onsen, restaurants, events, and more.



Fine Dining



YAMAGATA

A Myriad of Exquisite Flavors

A gourmet paradise, praised as the “crème de la crème” of Japan

Check here for Yamagata Prefecture Gourmet Information



Top-Grade Wagyu Beef

As a top-ranked brand, Yonezawa Beef meets strict standards for appearance, meat quality, and marbling. It melts in the mouth, and has a rich aroma and flavor throughout.

Beef



Yonezawa Beef

Yonezawa Beef, said to be one of the best Wagyu beefs, is a piece of culinary art, cultivated by a climate with diverse temperatures, and the skill of producers who dedicate unparalleled amounts of time and effort to their craft. Yonezawa Beef is excellent for traditional Japanese dishes such as sukiyaki and shabu-shabu, as well as steak, due to its elegant sweetness.



A Rich and Unique Food Culture

Yamagata Sake

The prefecture of Yamagata is renowned for its many sake breweries that have received high accolades at competitions. The prefecture is also home to numerous wineries that are highly regarded around the world, offering tours, tastings, and sales.



Food culture

Yamagata Ramen Culture

Yamagata is a leading ramen hub in Japan. Each region has its own unique flavors to offer. Many soba noodle shops also serve ramen, and during the summer, visitors can even try out the local specialty, hiyashi (cold) ramen.



Yamagata Seafood

Shonai Region of Yamagata faces the Sea of Japan, known for its abundant supply of fresh and delicious seafood, and especially renowned for its exceptional fishing grounds. Enjoy fresh dishes at famous seafood restaurants located throughout the prefecture.



Yamagata Imoni

In Yamagata, the fall season brings around the beloved local dish, imoni, a traditional recipe made by simmering potatoes and other vegetables, along with beef or pork with soy sauce or miso. When fall arrives, locals gather by the riverside to enjoy the meal at “imoni-kai” (imoni parties).



Experiences



YAMAGATA

Special Experiences Unique to Yamagata

Try something new in Yamagata, a land blessed with abundant nature

Fruits

Fruit Picking

Visitors to Yamagata can try their hand at fruit picking and tasting at local farms nearly all year round. In addition to strawberries and cherries, the area is also home to melons, peaches, grapes, and other fruit that can be picked fresh.



Watermelons: Jul - Aug



Melons: Jul - Oct



Peaches: Aug



Grapes (Shine Muscat): Aug - Sep



Japanese Pears: Aug - Sep



Apples: Sep - Dec



Persimmons: Oct - Nov



Pears: Oct - Dec

Experience

Immerse Yourself in the Great Outdoors!



Summer Skiing at Mt. Gassan

[Nishikawa]

Mt. Gassan Ski Resort is open in April when other resorts are typically closed, and continues welcoming guests even up until July. Reinvigorate yourself during the warm weather, and try skiing and snowboarding amongst the stunning scenery of a beautifully contrasting blue sky, white snow, and fresh green nature.

Shonai Fishing

The vast Shonai coast is an angler's paradise. Catch a variety of high quality, tasty fish throughout the year. Local businesses also provide fishing events aimed at tourists from abroad wanting to try Japanese techniques first-hand.



Cycling

[Prefecture-Wide]

There are many cycling routes throughout Yamagata that showcase the region's beautiful and varied natural landscapes, sea, mountains, and countryside. Cyclists can also stop by delicious restaurants and onsen, as well as learn about the regional history, culture, and events, while making new friends with the local people.



Soba Noodle Making

[Prefecture-Wide]

Yamagata is renowned throughout the country for its soba noodles. The noodle making process is called “soba-uchi” in Japanese, and is revered to the extent that some people even take it up as a hobby. With the chance to experience soba making yourself, it is not to be missed out on!



Go cherry picking!



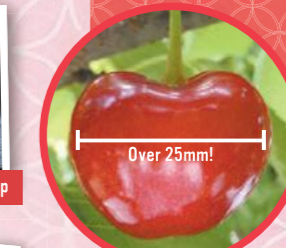
Cherry Parfait



Over 25mm wide giant cherries!

The birthplace of Yamagata Benio, a brand new variety!

Yamagata Benio, a new variety of giant cherry, has recently become available in Yamagata, Japan's leading region for cherry production. At over 25mm in diameter, these cherries boast a distinct sweetness and firm texture.



Over 25mm!



Winter Strawberry Picking

Pick and eat your own sweet and tasty strawberries at a warm greenhouse, backdropped by a snowy wonderland outside.



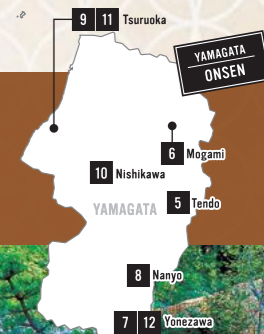
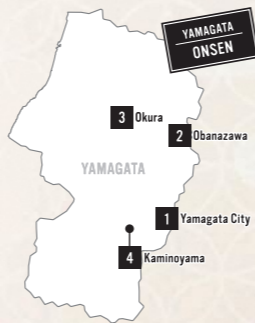
Onsen
(Hot Springs)



YAMAGATA

Vibrant Onsen Culture

Overflowing with beautiful nature and wonderful hot springs, a diverse onsen culture has developed in Yamagata



The Pinnacle of Relaxation—Onsen Culture

Ease into the hot waters, take in the seasonal scents and sounds, be amazed by the stunning views, and enjoy the regional flavors



1 Zao Onsen

[Yamagata City]

One of Japan's famous onsen districts, with a history dating back to over 1900 years ago. It's known as the Bijin-dukuri no Yu, or "beauty water", due to its high concentration of minerals. The area is also very popular for its atmospheric feel, and large open-air baths situated among mountain streams for those who want to take in the great outdoors.



3 Hijiori Onsen (Hijiori no Hi)

[Okura]

A rustic onsen district brimming with high quality free-flowing spring waters. Also home to various events, such as Hijiori no Hi in summer and fall, in which lanterns decorated with imagery drawn by artists staying in town at the time light up the area. Okura also has a local morning market held every day between April and November.



Hijiori no Hi Lantern

Morning Market



4 Kaminoyama Onsen

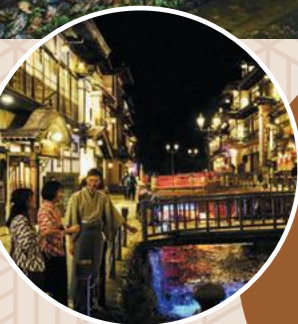
[Kaminoyama]

Located at the foot of Mt. Zao, this area's spring waters are known for their intense warmth and beneficial effects on the skin, due to their high heat retention and moisturizing properties. Kaminoyama is also a place for visitors to heal their mind and body, whether through Kurort Health Walking* to feel the nature, or through the great local cuisine and wine.

* Guided walks for a fun, non-strenuous and effective workout



Kaminoyama Onsen Foot baths



Try kimono-wearing!

2 Ginzan Onsen

[Obanazawa]

An onsen district with an old-fashioned atmosphere, where wooden inns line the riverside. The area is also popular for its "kimono experience," in which visitors can take a stroll around town wearing traditional clothing.



The Many Onsen of Yamagata



5 Tendo Onsen [Tendo]

The onsen district of Tendo is also well-known as where pieces for the traditional game shogi (Japanese chess) are produced. As a popular hub for sightseeing tours around the prefecture, the area is home to a variety of accommodations, ranging from traditional Japanese-style inns, to modern hotels.



6 Semi Onsen [Mogami]

As an onsen district boasting a history of over 1,000 years, the area's waters are said to have medicinal effects on those with joint pain or gynecological ailments. At Semi no Yu, guests can take footbaths, and make their own onsen tamago (slow-boiled eggs traditionally made at an onsen- guests are asked to bring their own eggs). In spring, the area is also well known for its cherry blossom trees which adorn the streets with beautiful pink hues.



7 Shirabu Onsen [Yonezawa]

Located at an altitude of 850 meters, this onsen offers a bounty of spring water. Snowfall here usually begins around the end of fall, and continues until around April. Visitors can also enjoy nature all year round, including trekking in summer, seeing the beautiful leaves in fall, and powder-snow skiing in winter at the Tengendai Plateau, one of Japan's 100 most famous mountains.



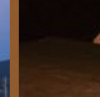
8 Akayu Onsen [Nanyo]

It's said that long ago, a samurai wounded from battle stopped at this spring to heal his body. At this onsen district, visitors can take a dip in a footbath at two locations, enjoy ramen and other dishes at the many restaurants scattered throughout the area, or have a taste of a popular local traditional confection, Anbin Mochi. The area even features paragliding opportunities.



9 Atsumi Onsen [Tsuruoka]

It's said that Atsumi Onsen began when a crane healed its wounds in the waters of the spring over 1,200 years ago. The hot spring water is also known for its positive effects on the skin, due to the water's high heat retention and moisturizing effects. Visitors can also enjoy the approximately 150 cherry blossom trees that bloom along the river, have a taste of a type of sweetfish known as ayu in early summer, and catch an up-close glimpse of salmon running upstream in fall.



10 Gassan Shizu Onsen (Yuki Hatago no Akari) [Nishikawa]

A popular onsen with a high salt content that is said to warm the body to its core. A regional event called "Yuki Hatago no Akari" utilizes the area's heavy snowfall to bring back the streetscapes of olden days, making for a magical candle-lit atmosphere at sunset. Visitors can also enjoy local gourmet food from vendors.



11 Yunohama Onsen [Tsuruoka]

An onsen resort facing the Sea of Japan. Watch the sun drift into the sea while soaking in an open-air bath. The resort features many rooms with ocean views, and guests can enjoy sports out on the water, such as swimming and surfing, in the summer.



12 Onogawa Onsen [Yonezawa]

Onogawa Onsen's water is rich in metasilicic acid, which is typically used in lotions. The onsen is comprised of entirely free-flowing spring water. It also has drinkable water, which is considered a rarity in Japan, as well as two footbaths, making it great for those looking to take a break after enjoying a walk around town.

Onsen resorts also often feature hot spring baths in rooms, as well as reservable private baths.

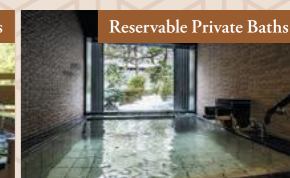
Many Accommodations have private baths.

Guest Room Baths





Take a dip any time you like in a private bath attached to your room.

Reservable Private Baths

Baths that can be reserved for a certain period of time, for those looking to relax or have an open-air bath all to themselves.



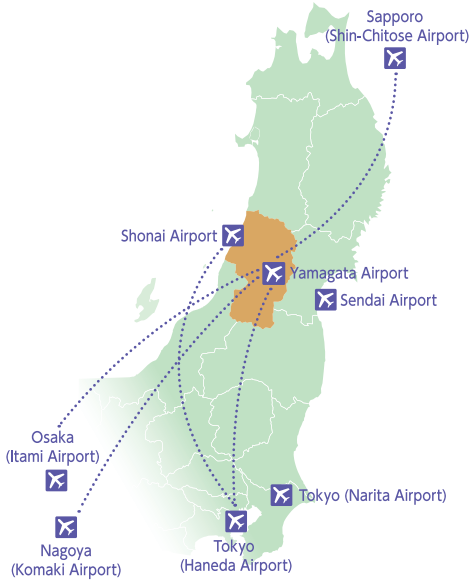
Access to Yamagata Prefecture

Key
 JR Shinkansen
 JR Lines
 Expressways
 General Road

By plane

(Domestic Airline)

Haneda	approx. 1 hr	Yamagata
Haneda	approx. 1 hr	Shonai
Osaka	approx. 1.5 hrs	Yamagata
Shin-Chitose	approx. 1.2 hrs	Yamagata
Nagoya	approx. 1 hr	Yamagata

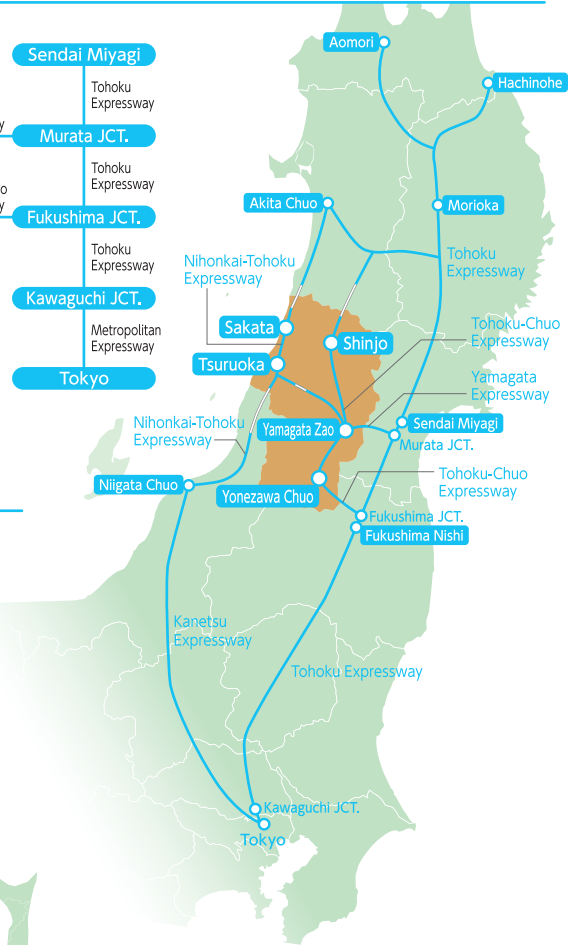


By car

Sakata	approx. 45 min.	Nihonkai-Tohoku Expressway	Yamagata Expressway	Shinjo	approx. 50 min.	Tohoku-Chuo Expressway	Yamagata Expressway	Sendai Miyagi	Tohoku Expressway
Tsuruoka	approx. 1.5 hrs			Yamagata Zao	approx. 30 min.	Tohoku-Chuo Expressway		Murata JCT.	Tohoku Expressway
				Yonezawa Chuo	approx. 40 min.			Fukushima JCT.	Tohoku Expressway
								Kawaguchi JCT.	Tohoku Expressway
								Metropolitan Expressway	
								Tokyo	

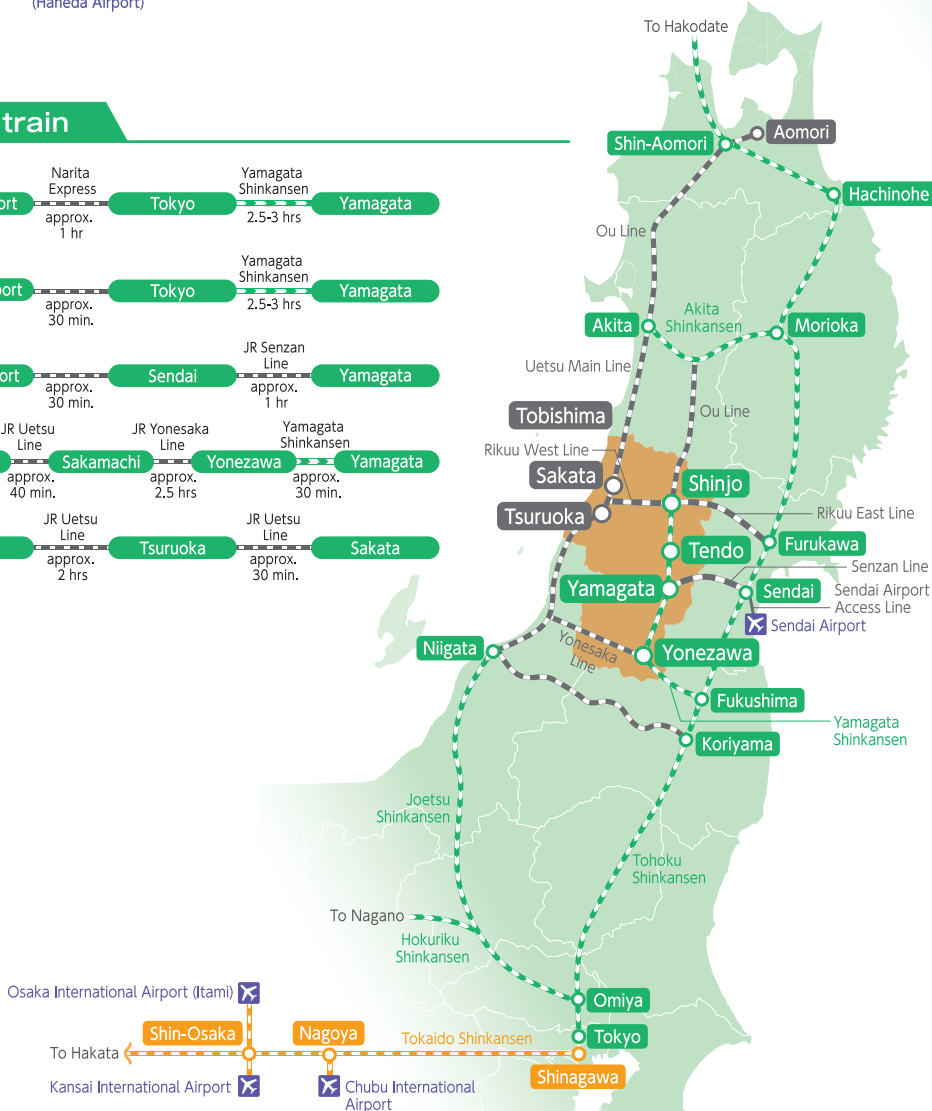
By bus

Tokyo	approx. 6 hrs	Yamagata
Sendai	approx. 1 hr	Yamagata
Sendai Airport	approx. 1.5 hrs	Yamagata



By train

Narita Airport	Narita Express	Tokyo	Yamagata Shinkansen	Yamagata	approx. 2.5-3 hrs
Haneda Airport		Tokyo	Yamagata Shinkansen	Yamagata	approx. 2.5-3 hrs
Sendai Airport		Sendai	JR Senzan Line	Yamagata	approx. 1 hr
Niigata	JR Uetsu Line	Sakamachi	JR Yonesaka Line	Yonezawa	approx. 2.5 hrs
Niigata	JR Uetsu Line	Tsuruoka	JR Uetsu Line	Sakata	approx. 30 min.
			Yamagata Shinkansen	Yamagata	approx. 30 min.



Check here for more information on Yamagata Prefecture!

The Official Tourism Website of Yamagata, Japan

STAY YAMAGATA



Check out the wonders of Yamagata in this video!

myyamagata



For Inquiries

Yamagata Tourism Information Center
 (10:00~18:00
 *open 365 days a year)

Phone: +81-23-647-2333