2 WEEKS TO SEE ALL OF NORTHERN JAPAN

13 NIGHTS, 14 DAYS SELF-GUIDED TOUR FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELERS

DEGAM
TSURUOKA TOURISM BUREAU

IN COLLABORATION WITH:

In-outbound
Sendai Matsushima Inc.

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A tour 100% compatible with the JR-Pass!

DEGAM is actively engaged in sustainable tourism. We encourage our travelers to use the transportation means that are the least damaging to the environment.

This is why in this 2-weeks tour, we made it possible for you to go to town to town in all the 6 prefectures of the Tohoku region (the Northern part of the Honshu Island) by train and reduced the trajects by bus as much as possible. What's more, the itinerary is fully compatible witjh the Japan Rail Pass, an economic way to travel around Japan.

For more information about the JR Pass: click here.

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ABOUT THIS TOUR:

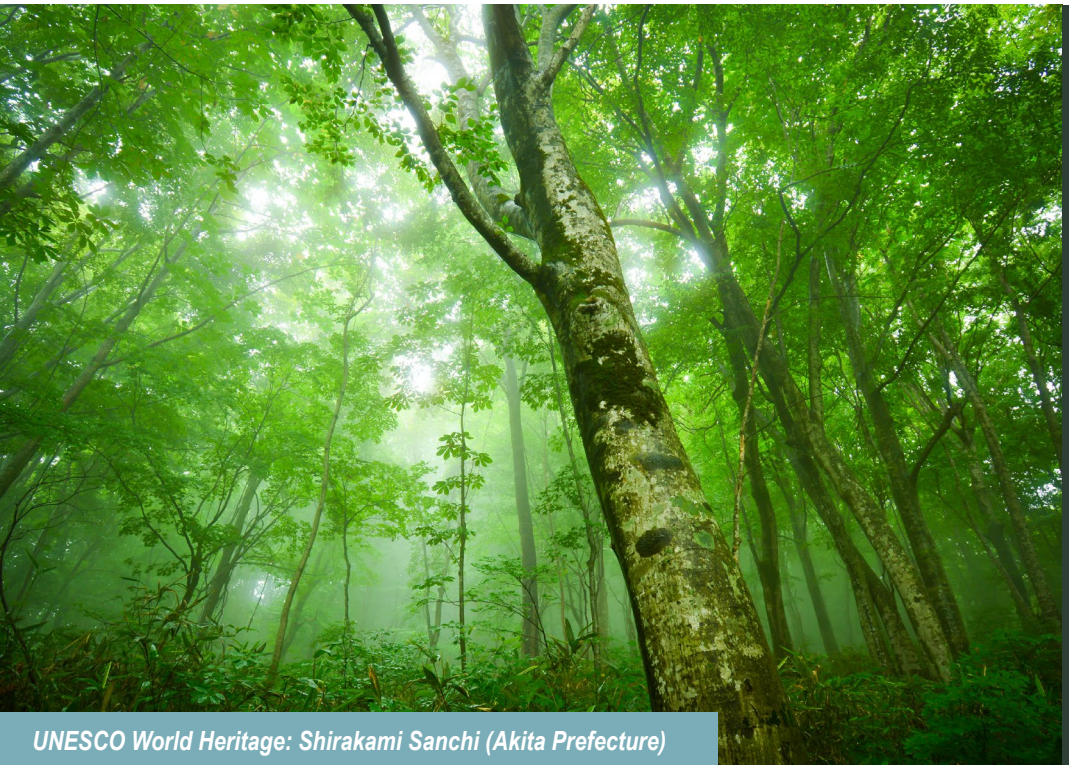
We understand that classic group tours in Japan have some downsides: lack of privacy, absence of freedom in the itinerary or schedule, difficulty to exchange with the local people...
But traveling solo in the Japanese countryside can also be very scary! Lack of English signs, no one to speak English with, hotels and attractions which only take reservations by phone...

DEGAM Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau helps you take part in a unique tour of the hidden gems sprinkled across Northern Japan, allowing you to make minor detours if you want and travel comfortably with your family and friends without the trouble of making the reservations in Japanese yourself.

We will design a 100% custom tour for you, adapt to your needs, make reservations, and gather all the information in our "Self-Guide Brochure," so you can discover the best of Northern Japan at your own pace. In this "2 weeks to see all of Northern Japan" tour, we wanted to introduce you to Northern Japan's most sacred grounds: the Dewa Sanzan, a 1400 years old spiritual site; Hiraizumi, a UNESCO World Heritage; Tohoku's beautiful and wild nature: Shirakami Sanchi (a UNESCO World Heritage) and Lake Towada (National Park); and also make you learn about Northern Japan's aborigene people: the Ezo and the Emishi, by going to the UNESCO World Heritage sites linked to the "Jomon" prehistory.

In this tour, there is nothing but the best of the attractions to see in Northern Japan, condensed in a two weeks trip. For a more slow-pace tour, please see our other brochures.

TOUR SEASON: JUNE - SEPTEMBER



UNESCO World Heritage: Shirakami Sanchi (Akita Prefecture)

WHY GO TO TOHOKU?

The Tohoku region remains preserved from mass tourism as only 2 percent of the foreign travelers choose to venture in the Tohoku region. The locals are eager to meet with foreign visitors, and will gladly welcome you in their homes and exchange with you.

Plus, your trip to the Tohoku region constitutes a huge contribution to the reconstruction project that is still ongoing since the 2011 Earthquake and Tsunami.

Going to the Tohoku region is seeing "the other face of Japan", as opposed to the vibrant, exuberant southern side of Japan.

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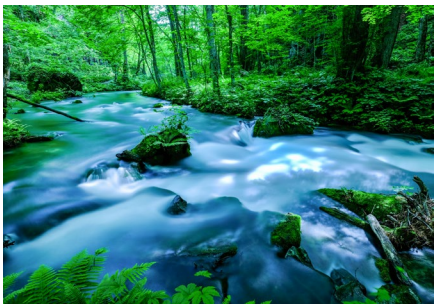
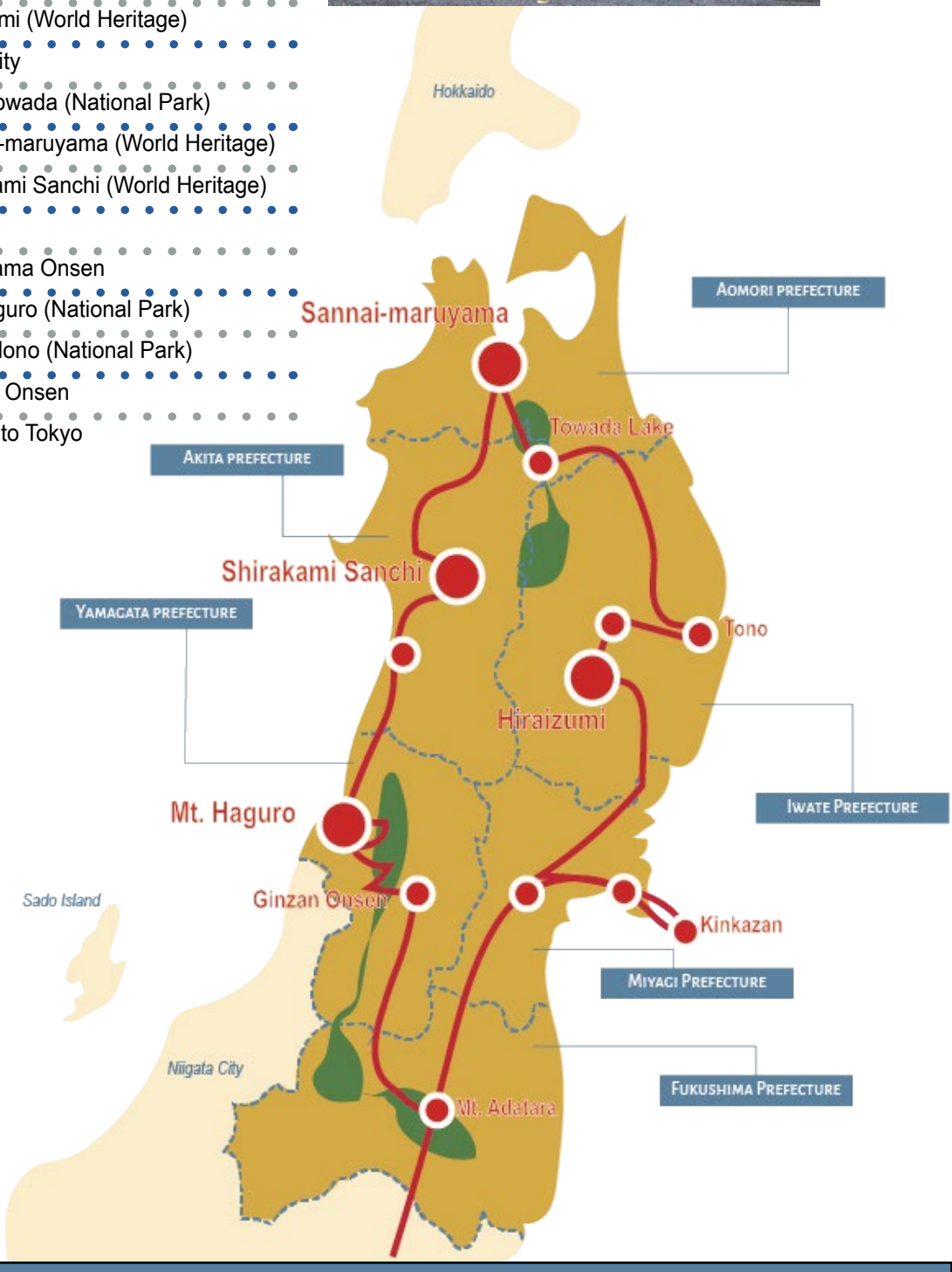
Your itinerary*

	Prefecture	Location
Day 1	Fukushima	Fukushima city, Dake Onsen
Day 2		Mt. Adatara (National Park)
Day 3	Miyagi	Sendai
Day 4		Onagawa Port
		Kinkazan Island
Day 5	Iwate	Hiraizumi (World Heritage)
Day 6		Tono City
Day 7	Aomori	Lake Towada (National Park)
Day 8		Sannai-maruyama (World Heritage)
	Akita	Shirakami Sanchi (World Heritage)
Day 9		Akita
Day 10	Yamagata	Yunohama Onsen
Day 11		Mt. Haguro (National Park)
Day 12		Mt. Yudono (National Park)
Day 13		Ginzan Onsen
Day 14	Tokyo	Return to Tokyo





This itinerary is an example of the tour you will buy. We will make slight changements to the itinerary/plan following your date of arrival and accommodate to your special requests if necessary.

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TRAVELS

Day 1 : Introduction to Fukushima (Dake Onsen)

Departure from Tokyo Station by Shinkansen (Tohoku Line). After roughly 1h45min. of traveling in the train in the beautiful countryside, you will arrive at Fukushima station. From there, make a transfer for Nihonmatsu station. Your host of the night will welcome you there and bring you to Dake Onsen.

Check-in at your ryokan in Dake Onsen.
Dake Onsen is one of Japan's few naturall
y acidic hot spring sources. The onsen source is located some 8 kilometers away from Dake Onsen town, meaning the hot spring water must be pulled from the source, travelling for around 40 minutes before it reaches the town.
Have a little stroll around Dake Onsen Town and discover the many little shrines sprinkled across the village and come back to your ryokan for dinner.

Day 2 : Mt. Adatara (part of the National Park "Bandai-Asahi"

Your host will bring you to the bus station for Mt. Adatara's hiking trails. The summit of Mt. Adatara stands at an altitude of 1700 m, stretcheing about 9 kilometers in a north to south direction. Views of Mt. Adatara are lovely in and of themselves, but the views that visitors have of the surrounding area once they reach the summit are breathtaking. Chosen as one of Japan's top 100 mountains, as well as one of the top 100 mountains for flowers, a viewspot at an altitude of 1300 m can be accessed by gondola lift. This means that it is relatively easy to climb even for beginners; but can be pretty challenging too if you choose it to be.
At the end of the day, hop in the Shinkansen to Sendai station. Stay in Sendai City for the night.

Bandai Asahi's National Park

Bandai-Asahi's National Park is a regroupment of three mountain ranges: Dewa Sanzan, Asahi, Iide, and Azuma Mountain Ranges, to Mt. Bandai and Lake Inawashiro; making it the second biggest national park on land. All those mountains were cites in a millenial legend stating that a giant demon forged those mountains. Bandai-Asahi's mountains host an incredible number of endemic varieties of flowers, plants and animals.

Day 3: Vestiges of the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami

Take the train to Onagawa station in the morning and see the memorial house of the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake. Onagawa was one of the most violently impacted by the catastrophe. The port town is still trying to recover since then, but is still marked by the tragedy. The memorial-house is a place of grief, where people can remember their lost ones.

Have a kaisen bowl (sashimi rice bowl) lunch at one of Onagawa Market's seafood restaurant.

Get on the ferry to Kinkasan Island (30 minutes)

Kinkasan is a holy island located off the coast of Ishinomaki City, home to the legendary Koganeyama Shrine. It is said that those who make three consecutive annual pilgrimages to the shrine will be blessed with wealth for the rest of their lives. The shrine was originally a Buddhist temple, built around 750 CE in this area.

The island setting is enchanting, with the deer free to roam inside and outside the shrine grounds, and monkeys in the forest making the whole experience feel wild. No visit is complete without happening upon the Kinkasan deer, who are regarded as messengers of the gods by Shinto priests.

Hike the island and stay for the night in the island's Shinto pilgrim lodge.

Kinkasan's deers

Kinkasan's deers are not as used to visitors as the deers in Nara.

Please be careful when approaching the deers.

There is a biscuit-vending machine near the shrine.

If you plan to feed the deers some of the machine's treats: watch your hands so the deers don't bite you by accident.

Day 4: Hiraizumi, a UNESCO World Heritage

In the morning, get on the boat back to Onagawa, and head for Sendai station by train from Onagawa station.
From Sendai, head to Ichinoseki station.
Take the bus bound for Hiraizumi. (20 minutes)
For lunch, have some "Wanko Soba", Iwate's famous buckwheat noodles (did you know Iwate was Japan's number 1 buckwheat noodles producer?), at Yumenokaze Restaurant.

Visit Hiraizumi's site (Chusonji, Motsuji temples).
Go to Bishamondo by bicycle.

Stay at one of Hiraizumi's family pensions for the night.

Hiraizumi: a place of Buddhism

In the latter part of the Heian Period, three generations of the powerful Fujiwara clan of Mutsu who are said to "have built the culture of Hiraizumi".
Kiyohira, the first leader of the Fujiwara clan, is said to have moved to Hiraizumi around the year 1100, when he began building a peaceful, ideal town where gold was abundant based on the Buddhist culture in Oshu region.

Day 5: Tono, the charms of Tohoku's countryside

From Hiraizumi, head for Tono by train.
Have lunch around the station.
Visit the several spots in Tono linked to the legendary tales of Tono-Monogatari.

Stay in one of Tono City's family ryokan for the night

Day 6: Towaka Lake, part of the Hachimantai National Park

From Hanamaki station, take the train to Hachinohe station. From Hachinohe station, there is a bus that will bring you to Towada Lake.Hike around Towada Lake. Have lunch & stay there for the night.

Towada Lake

Lake Towada is the largest crater lake on the island of Honshu. Located on the border between Aomori and Akita prefectures, the lake is part of the Towada-Hachimantai National Park.

Day 7: Sannai-maruyama, a UNESCO World Heritage

You will need to go back to Hachinohe Station to get in the train for Aomori station. Once you arrived at Aomori, it's tim e to get some lunch. Aomori's food is famous for its many Western inspirations. Grab some Italian food in the city.

When your stomach is full, take the bus to Sannai-maruyama, the UNESCO World Heritage site that displays the most ancient Japanese civilization remains.

Visit the museums and stay in Aomori city's hotel for the night.

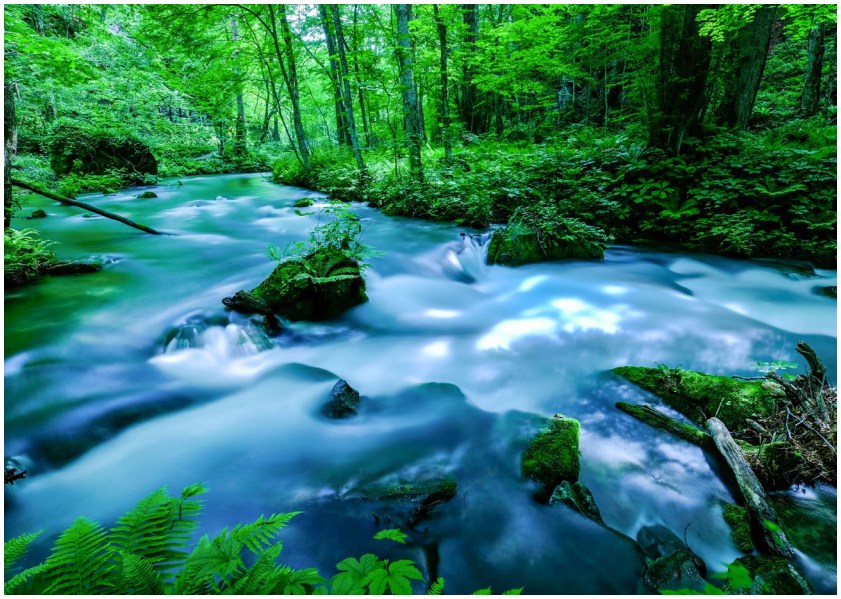
Tohoku and the Jomon Period

The Jomon period is an age of Japanese prehistory that spans a period of time from about 15,000 to 2,400 years ago. Northern Japan, where the Jomon Prehistoric Sites are located, has varied landforms, such as mountains, hills, plains, and lowlands, as well as inner bays, lakes and marshes, and rivers with an abundant flow of water. Under such environmental conditions, people living in Northern Japan were able to secure food in a stable manner, and they initiated a sedentary way of life using pottery around 15,000 years ago. Over the subsequent 10,000 years, they continued a lifestyle based on hunting, fishing, and gathering, adapting to environmental changes such as climate warming and cooling and the corresponding marine transgressions and regressions.

Day 9 : Shirakami Sanchi, a UNESCO World Heritage

Take the train from Aomori station to Hirosaki station.
Don't forget to grab your bento at Hirosaki's bento restaurant, as there are no restaurants in the Shirakami forests!
From Hirosaki, a bus going to Shirakami Sanchi will bring you to one of the most fabulous magical forests in Japan.

After you finished your hike, take the bus at Yunosawa-onsen-iriguchi's bus stop and get off at Futatsui Station. Make a transfer for Akita station.
You must be tired from the hike, so rest for the night in one of Akita's hotels



Shirakami Sanchi

The Shirakami Sanchi is a mountainous region located in the northernmost part of Japan's main island. It is an expansive 130,000 hectare area crossing into both Aomori and Akita prefectures.
The 16,971 hectare heart of the region was registered in December 1993 as Japan's very first World Heritage Site, along with Yakushima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture.

Many of the low-temperature climate beech trees which populated the northern hills and mountains of Japan long ago have disappeared.
However, because the Shirakami Sanchi located far from any city, and the terrain is full of precipitous cliffs, its trees have mostly been spared destruction by human hands. Here, a wide diversity of plants and animals thrive, including the Asian Black Bear, the Golden Eagle, and the Black Woodpecker.
The forest ecosystem created here is abundant, a paradise for many living creatures.

One of the site's most famous attraction is its turquoise-blue pond: Lake Juniko

Day 10 : Tsuruoka, between mountains and sea

Leave Akita city for Tsuruoka station.

Take the bus from the station to Kamo Aquarium.

Have some fugu sashimi lunch at Okimizuki restaurant, inside the aquarium.

Visit the world's biggest jellyfish aquarium and learn about those fascinating creatures.

After your visit, take the bus to Yunohama Onsen and spend the night there.

About Kamo Aquarium

Kamo Aquarium owes its reputation to the number of jellyfish species displayed to its public: more than 60 species have been reproduced with success by the aquarium's team.

A prowess that was made possible thanks to the scientific team's efforts and the director Mr. Okuizumi Kazuya, who is continually researching new ways to improve the jellyfish's environment.

Besides the jellyfish, the aquarium also displays an extensive collection of local sea creatures including seals and sea lions.

About Yunohama Onsen

Yunohama Onsen offers luxurious hot spring experiences at hotels facing the Sea of Japan, the perfect location to enjoy a spectacular sunset view while taking a relaxing soak in an open-air bath. The Yunohama Coast is also said to be the birthplace of Japanese surfing. There is a record that local youths rode waves on boards during the Edo period (1603-1868).

Kameya, the principal ryokan of the onsen town, has welcomed the imperial couple twice in its history, proof of the quality of Yunohama's ryokan.

Day 11 : Mt. Haguro, guardian of the Dewa Sanzan mountains (Bandai-Asahi's National Park)

Take the bus back to Tsuruoka station, and head for Mt. Haguro.
Hike Mt. Haguro and have Shojin-Ryori for lunch.

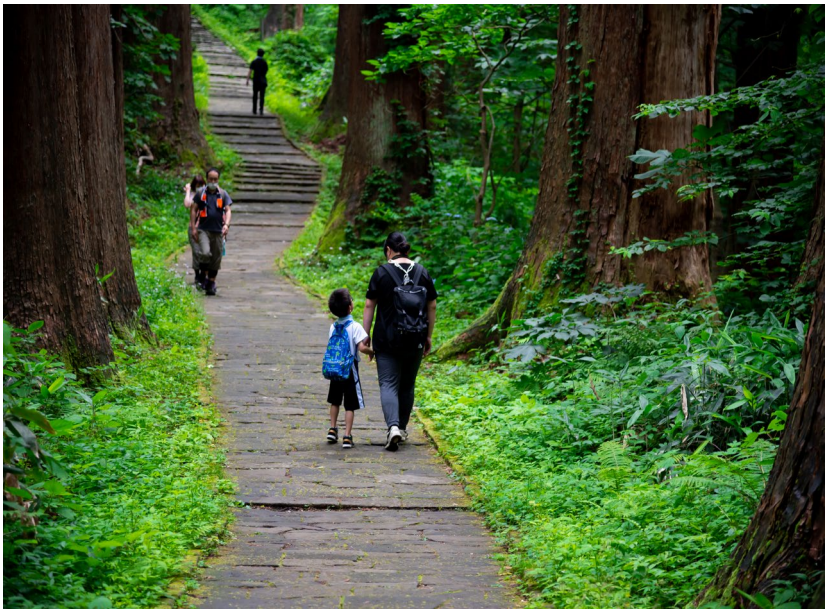
Stay in Saikan for the night.

About Mt. Haguro

Dewa Sanzan is the collective name given to the "Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa" — Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono. It has been a pilgrimage site for religious practitioners of 'Shugendo' for more than 1400 years. Shugendo (in Japanese: "the Way of the Harsh Training") is derived from Esoteric Buddhism practices; it includes principles from both the Shinto religion and Taoism and is strongly linked to Japan's original spirituality that centers on the worship of mountains.

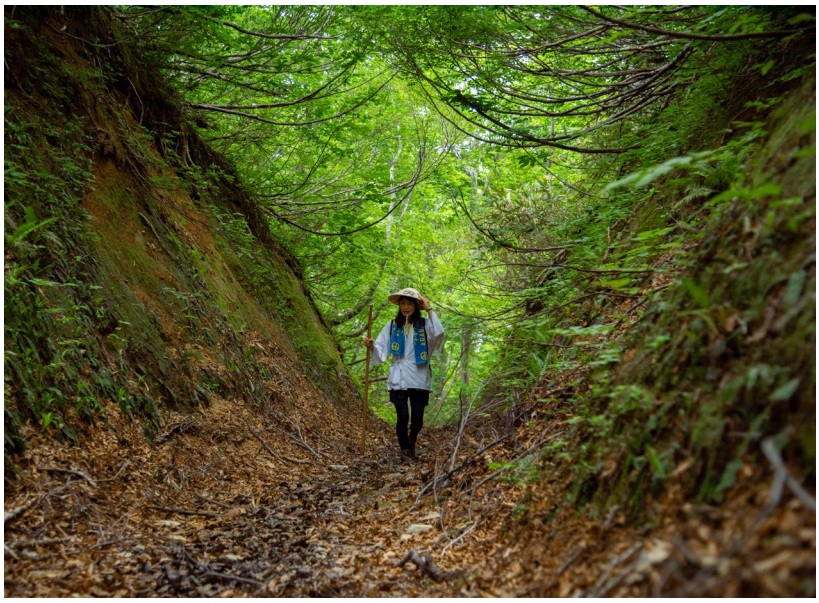
In Mt. Haguro stands the general shrine of The Dewa Sanzan. Mt. Haguro symbolizes the present life and it is where the pilgrims come to pray for happiness in this life.

Pilgrims eat the "shojin-ryori" in order to purify themselves before entering in Dewa Sanzan's sacred grounds. Shojin-ryori is a vegetarian cuisine, that derives from the Buddhist vegetarian meal of the same name.



Day 12 : Mt. Yudono and its Sokushinbutsu mummies (Bandai-Asahi's National Park)

On the next day, get in the bus for Yudonosan Senninzawa from Hagurosan Sancho (summit of Mt. Haguro).
Hike Mt. Yudono from the giant arch, visit the shrine and come back for lunch at Yudonosan Sanrojo (shuttle bus available).
In the afternoon, hike the Rokujurigoe Kaido for 4 hours.
A taxi will be waiting for you to bring you to Dainichibo Temple, where you will find the mummy of Shinnyokai-shonin: a "Sokushinbutsu" of Mt. Yudono.



About the Rokujurigoe Kaido Pilgrimage

The Rokujurigoe-kaido (direct translation: “The Over-235km-road”), is an ancient trail that was once the heart of commercial, religious and administrative activities of the Shonai region. The first mention of the Rokujurigoe-kaido goes back 1,200 years. It connected Tsuruoka, Oami village, Tamugimata village, Mt. Yudono to Sagae, and even Yamagata city. Although its name says it is "235 kilometers long,” the passable part of the path is only 44km long* nowadays; what remains is a very challenging trekking experience—even for professional hikers.

Because the Dewa Sanzan pilgrims in the Tohoku region mainly used this route to visit Mt. Yudono, it is also called "Yudono-michi" ("the path to Mt. Yudono"). At the time, however, any traveler would have used the Rokujurigoe-kaido; the lords of the Shonai clan even took it to get to the capital any time the Shogun called them back by their side.

Walking along the Rokujurigoe-kaido is a good way to imagine what life was like for a Dewa Sanzan pilgrim 1200 years ago. You will pass by several sacred trees as well as religious steles (stone monuments) referring to Buddhism and/or Dewa Sanzan. You may rest in what were once teahouses for pilgrims and see many more vestiges of a time gone by.

*The course taken during this day is only 11km long.

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Travels

Day 13: Yamadera and Ginzan Onsen: landscapes that will leave you speechless

Take the train bound for Yamagata city through Shinjo. Take the bus to Yamadera and hike the sacred mountain. Go back to Yamagata city, from where you will head for Ginzan Onsen to stay for the night.

Day 14: End of your trip

Explore Ginzan Onsen's town and go back to Tokyo station from Yamagata station with the Shinkansen.

About Ginzan Onsen

The scenic Onsen town has recently made the buzz on Instagram and other social networks.
Its Ghibliesque appearance and its lush green environment makes it the perfect destination for the weary travelers who seek some comfort and relaxation.
Originally obtaining its name from the silver mine located near the back of this town, Ginzan Onsen translates out to Silver Mountain Hotsprings and was founded over 400 years ago when it thrived off of its silver production.

After its mines shut down, the town rediscovered itself as a premier hot spring resort by designating an entire portion of its town to over a dozen bathhouses that still stand today.

With their wooden frames and white plaster walls, these buildings preserve the elegance of their Taisho Era (1912 to 1926) architecture and are romanticized through the many dramas this town is featured in.

The nostalgic and warm feel that visitors often praise this town for is also thanks to the gas street lamps that give this town a soft glow.

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Tour price:

- Without the JR-Pass : 260,000 yen (tax included) *approx. USD*
- 14 days JR-Pass included: 320,000 yen (tax. included) *approx. USD*

*For groups above 6 persons, ask us for a revised quotation***

What's included in the price:

- Accommodation (breakfast + dinner included)
- Lunch
- Itineraries not covered by the JR-Pass
- Entrance fees/activity fees
- Reservation-making
- Remote coordination *(your agent will send you reminders every morning about the plan of the day)*
- Daytime help support *(your agent will answer your support requests by phone/chat during *daytime only)*
- Self-guide brochure

What's NOT included in the price:

- On-site interpretation (daytime help support covers interpretation related to: reservations, emergency, incidents only. For touristic or leisure interpretation, please order our interpretation services separately)
- Any change to the plan (accommodation, restaurant, activity, itinerary)
- The flight from your location
- Drinks (if unspecified)
- Souvenirs, shopping
- Travel insurance
- Luggage transportation service

How to make a reservation?

- Contact us by email at: millot.sara@degam.jp
- Make a reservation online on www.tsuruokacity.com/bookings
- Contact us by phone: (+81)235-26-1218 *(from Monday to Friday, 8:30-17:30 JST)*

Vegan, vegetarian, allergies...

- If you have special needs, we will be happy to adapt the plan to your desires!

Let us know how you need your trip to be, we will reshape it so it is perfect for you!
Email: millot.sara@degam.jp

Self-guided material

A 100% custom 20 pages guide will be written by our team to match your trip exactly, so you know all the interesting facts about the places you visit. A paper-version will be sent-out to you prior to your visit, but you will also receive a digital version readable on your phone.

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TSURUOKA TOURISM BUREAU

DEGAM Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau
(General Associated Corporation)
997-0015 Yamagata Prefecture, Tsuruoka City, Suehiromachi 3-1
MARICA East 2nd floor
Local Destination Management Organization registered by the Japanese government
Tour-operator since 2019

Contact: Sara MILLOT (email: millot.sara@degam.jp phone: +81235-26-1218)