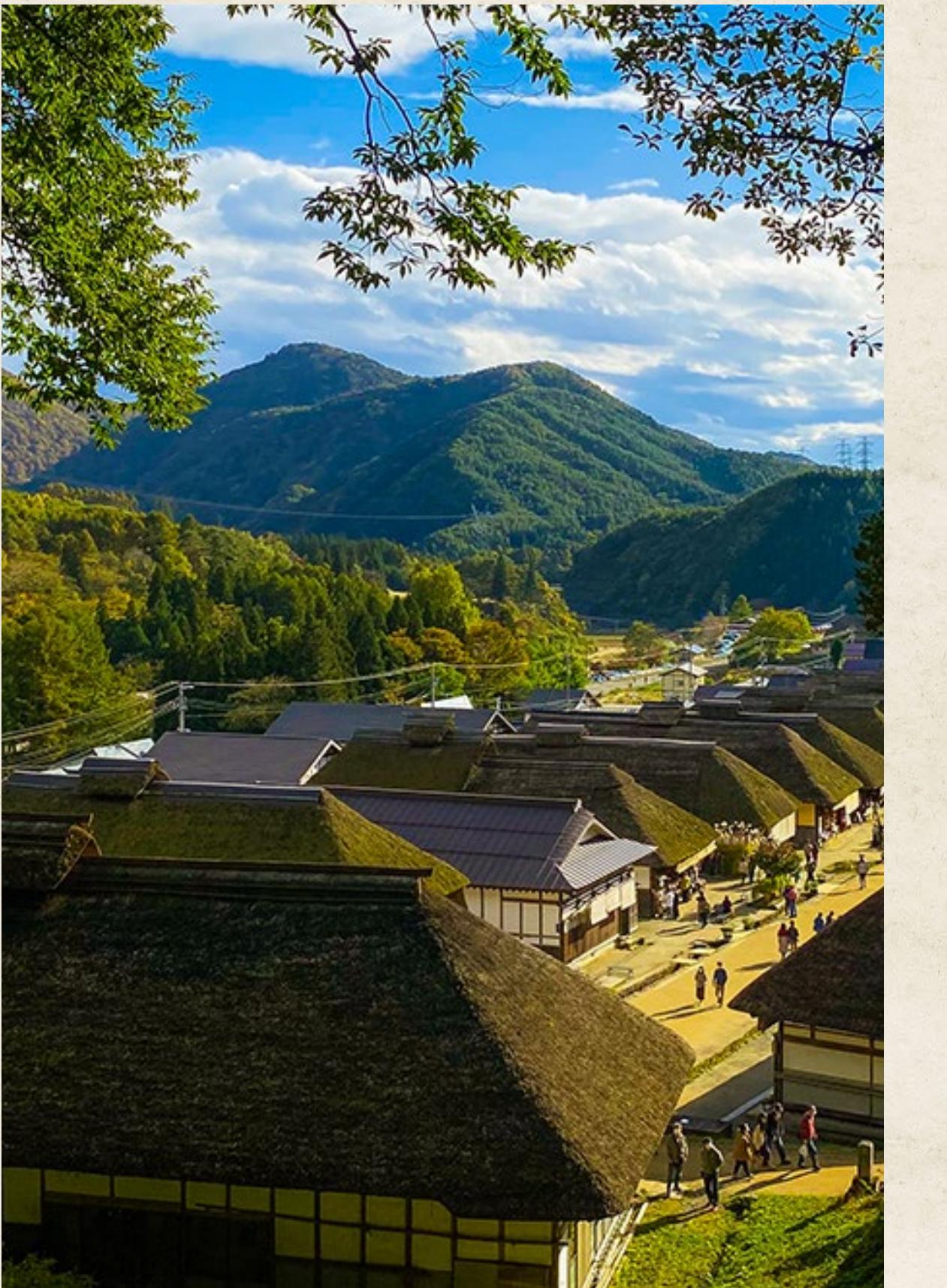


What to do in Fukushima Prefecture

Fukushima Prefecture stretches over 150 kilometres from the pacific coast into the mountainous interior of northeastern Honshu. It is filled with some of Japan's richest and most unique traditions, culture, history and nature.

With its vast land and natural resources, the prefecture offers a variety of natural, traditional and historical sites for travellers to enjoy.



Ouchi-juku

Take a journey to the past in Fukushima Prefecture's Ouchi-juku area. This isolated village boasts thatched-roof houses and natural streets making you feel at one with the people who lived here hundreds of years ago. Nestled in the southwestern mountains of Fukushima, Ouchi-juku is a great spot to visit thanks to its unique charm and history.

This village was established under the post station system of the Edo period, and played a vital role as a rest stop for travelers. In 1981, the well-preserved streets of Ouchi-juku led to it being designated as an Important Preservation District for a Group of Traditional Buildings. It isn't difficult to see why—the village looks as it did during its heyday. And with no telephone or electric wires above ground, the view from the top of the hill overlooking the village is marvelous. It is a picturesque village where you can lose yourself to the flow of time.

Nowadays, festivals and events help draw in new visitors. The annual Snow Festival in February turns Ouchi-juku into a pretty candlelit scene. Visit in July to see a procession of dancers dressed in traditional Edo Period costumes, and you might even get to wear a *happi* (festival attire jacket) and join the locals in their celebrations! And when you're feeling hungry be sure to try some of the local specialties, which include *negi soba* (fresh buckwheat noodles eaten using a green onion), stick-roasted char fish, and more. There's a little bit of everything at Ouchi-juku.

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Tsurugajo Castle

Tsurugajo Castle allows visitors the opportunity to experience history, nature, and tradition with all five senses. Despite being mostly reconstructed, the surrounding park's stone walls remain in their original state.

In 2010, for the first time since it was refurbished in 1965, the castle underwent a cosmetic restoration. Following completion in 2011, the same red-tile roofs seen by the *Byakkotai* (during the Boshin War and final days of the Tokugawa shogunate) are now displayed for all to see. This castle is one of the final strongholds of samurai that remained loyal to the shogunate and today stands as a symbol of courage and faithfulness.

Within the castle tower's museum, the swords and armor of the castle's successive lords are on display. Visitors can watch a CG-enhanced theatrical video reflecting on the great history of Aizu. In addition to the historical atmosphere surrounding Tsurugajo, visitors can sense the changes that have occurred throughout history, thanks to the engaging and informative museum within the castle walls.

It's fun to gaze across Aizu from the fifth floor, like a feudal lord admiring his domain—the viewing platform up here provides panoramic views taking in Mt. Bandai and Mt. Iimoriyama. The castle is also a must-see in the springtime when approximately 1,000 cherry trees offer a magnificent display within the castle's grounds.

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Soma Nomaoi Festival

Soma Nomaoi originated some one thousand odd years ago in the Minamisoma region. It has its roots in the training of horses in the field as part of military exercises, and in the ceremony of capturing wild horses. The horses caught as part of this ceremony would be kept at the local shrine and given an almost deity-like status.

The festival has gradually changed over time. Nowadays, visitors can enjoy an action-packed few days, which maintain the atmosphere of the warring states period. The main festival day features a solemn street parade, an exhilarating horse race, and a unique flag-catching competition on horseback. Each event is participated in by local people donning the samurai armor of their ancestors.

The final day of the festival features the Nomakake event, whereby a horse is treated as a "wild horse", and chased on foot before being "captured" and praised at the shrine.

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Kitakata Ramen

Bring an empty stomach to this one-day tour of Aizu cuisine and drink! This wonderful tour can be enjoyed any time of the year, making it an exceptional choice to add into your existing travel plans for the area. Travel by train, local bus, and taxi to reach your destinations and let your appetite lead you to your goal! How many new foods will be added to your favorites?

Leave from Kitakata Station to try Fukushima's famous Kitakata ramen for an early lunch at the popular Shokudo Hasegawa. The gentle flavor of the broth lends itself especially well to the ramen's toppings and the texture of the homemade noodles. Kitakata Ramen is one of the most famous types of ramen in Japan, and Kitakata City is crowded with shops and diners, with Hasegawa being a popular spot to dine!



Tadami Bridge

The JR Tadami Line is considered to be one of the most romantic railroad experiences. A panoramic view of the arch bridge stretches over Tadami River. The JR Tadami Line is a secluded line with picturesque views, known as "the most romantic railway. The No.1 Tadami Bridge View Spot is an observation deck where you can gaze on the scenery made by the beautiful surroundings, the bridge and the trains.

On clear winter days, the bridge is reflected in the river, surrounded by deep, glistening snow. Spring's fresh leaves, summer's lush greenery, autumn's red leaves... the view changes with each season. Snap photos of the trains passing by at this marvelous lookout point in the early morning! giving the traveller wonderful views as they travel through the nature of rural Fukushima.

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Fukushima Station

Fukushima Station is a railway station in the city of Fukushima, Fukushima Prefecture. The station is the terminus for the JR East Yamagata Shinkansen, and Ōu Main Line, as well as the third-sector Abukuma Express Line.

Mt. Bandai

Known as the Mt. Fuji of Aizu area, Mt. Bandai offers great hiking terrain, ski fields and outstanding scenery of beautiful landscapes that surround it.

Lake Inawashiro

For a nature refresh, Lake Inawashiro is another must-see spot in Fukushima. Known as one of the area's most iconic nature spots, the lake offers magnificent views of Mt. Bandai as well as being the winter home of hundreds of wild swan.

Access

Fukushima is easily accessible from most major transport hubs within Japan via JR Tohoku Shinkansen as well as regular JR trains.

At just 90 minutes from Tokyo, you will find it's a direct ride on the bullet train to reach the central Fukushima City region.

Tokyo Station → Fukushima Station
by Shinkansen: 90 minutes

JR Fukushima Station is a great gateway for seeing the sights of Fukushima Prefecture. Visitors coming from Haneda/Narita can take advantage of this easy-to-use route.

Tokyo Station → Koriyama
75 minutes

Traveling to JR Koriyama Station puts you at the center of Fukushima Prefecture, with easy access to the whole prefecture.

Tokyo Station → Aizu-Wakamatsu
150 minutes

Reach the castle town of Fukushima Prefecture in less than 3 hours from Tokyo.





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