

福島 Fukushima Prefecture



Fukushima is the third largest prefecture in Japan and can be divided into three regions: Aizu (western area), Nakadori (central area) and Hamadori (coastal area).

More than 50 million tourists visited Fukushima in the year ended 31 March 2016, numbers rebounding to 90% of pre-disaster levels.

With easy access from Tokyo, Fukushima has long attracted tourists keen to explore its great outdoors and many onsen. Rich in nature, the prefecture is blessed with beautiful mountain scenery and fertile plains and coasts.

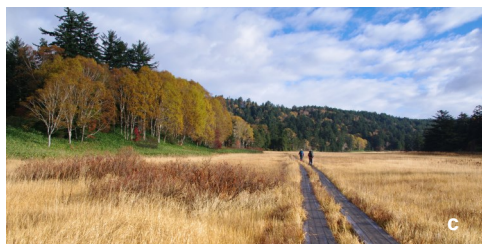


Located in Nakadori is the capital of Fukushima prefecture, Fukushima city. The city is also called the “Kingdom of Fruits” due to the wonderful seasonal fruits that can be enjoyed year round.

Visitors to the city during the cherry blossom season should be sure to visit Hanamiyama (‘flower viewing mountain’) just outside central Fukushima where cherry trees and rape seed colour the slopes pale pink and yellow as seen on the cover photo.

The city of Aizu-wakamatsu lies at the heart of the Aizu area and it was an important castle town during the Edo Period. You can still get a sense of its past thanks to the historical sites and buildings in the city. For history buffs, there is a small town to the south of the city that should fire their imaginations.

Ouchi-juku [a] is a small town that was a stop or post on the road between Aizu and the Edo (Tokyo) area during the Edo Period (1603-1868) when feudal lords from the regions had to regularly visit the capital. The postal towns offered accommodation and food for travellers. *Ukiyoé* prints by Hokusai and Hiroshige have immortalised many of the Edo period post towns along the Tokaido route between Edo and Kyoto. Visiting those places today, it is difficult to see any remnants from those days. Ouchi-juku however remains largely as it was. First it fell into disuse when a new route to Tokyo was established, and in 1981, its historic value was realised and preserved. To add to the romance, if coming by train you will alight at Yunokami Onsen Station, the only train station in Japan which still has a thatched roof.



Further south in Miharu town is one of Japan’s three great cherry trees, the Miharu Takizakura (waterfall cherry tree) [photo b]. Special buses are put on each year to enable the hundreds of thousands of people who come from around Japan to visit the tree, which is estimated to be more than 1,000 years old¹.

Even more remote scenery also draws tourists to Fukushima prefecture. To the south west in the Aizu district, there are the Oze Wetlands, part of the Oze National Park (Fukushima, Gunma and Niigata prefectures). Oze is Japan’s highest moorland and a series of walkways allows tourists access [c].



In the north of Aizu, you will find the Mt Bandai and Ura-Bandai area, one of the most popular areas with lovers of the outdoors [d]. The mountain lies to the north of Lake Inawashiro, Japan’s fourth largest lake. This lake is also known as Tenkyo-ko meaning ‘heaven’s mirror lake’, because it reflects Mt Bandai so beautifully.

On the topic of onsen (hot springs), there are more than 130 in Fukushima. Iwaki City, the main city of the Hamadori area, is a former coal mining town. In the 1950s when the industry closed down, Iwaki reinvented itself as an onsen destination, including since 1966, Spa Resort Hawaiians [e].



1. This makes Miharu Takizakura the youngest of the *Sandaizakura* (三大桜), the three great cherry trees: according to age estimates, the Usuzumizakura (Gifu prefecture) is more than 1,500 and the Jindaizakura (Yamanashi prefecture) is more than 2,000 years old.

MORE INFORMATION

- **Japan National Tourism Organisation** — www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/fukushima/
This has information about all three areas of Fukushima and about food, onsen, ski fields and festivals.
- **Tourism Information of Fukushima** — www.tif.ne.jp/lang/en/
You can check recent radiation levels at tourist spots via this TIF page.

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