

SACRED MOUNTAINS & PILGRIMAGE SITES IN NORTHERN JAPAN

TOURS & PRODUCTS CATALOG



Shoko Travel

X



DEGAM
Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau

OUR STAY PLANS



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July 1st - September 15th

The Dewa Sanzan Pilgrimage Trail - 3 nights, 4 days

Budget

(interpretation & transportation included)

108,000 yen/person (group of 8)

Time to put on your hiking shoes to learn about the ancient Japanese spirituality called "shugendo" and see Northern Japan's awe-inspiring landscapes on our 3-night, 4-day Dewa Sanzan sacred mountains tour. The Dewa Sanzan sacred mountains belong to the Bandai-Asahi National Park, an extensive volcanic area throughout Yamagata, Fukushima and Niigata Prefecture. Whereas the part of the park in Fukushima is mainly composed of active volcanoes, the Dewa Sanzan area is much more tranquil, with hiking trails across high-altitude mountains and beech forests. Guided by Yamabushi experts, traverse Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan, and Mt. Yudono's peaks. Immerse in rituals, explore hidden waterfalls, and gain profound insights into Japan's spiritual heritage. An unforgettable journey of enlightenment and culture awaits.

Day 1 - Arrival to Tsuruoka Station

MT. HAGURO: THE MOUNTAIN OF PRESENT



Arrive at the base of Mt. Haguro and be greeted by your experienced Yamabushi guide, a priest that worship the mountain, its gods and natural elements. Your Yamabushi guide will give you your shiroshozoku pilgrim clothes and tell you how to put them on after telling you the purpose of each part.

Ascend the revered 2,446-step stone staircase enveloped by towering cedar trees. Listen to tales of legends and beliefs that have flourished for centuries, harmonizing nature and spirituality.

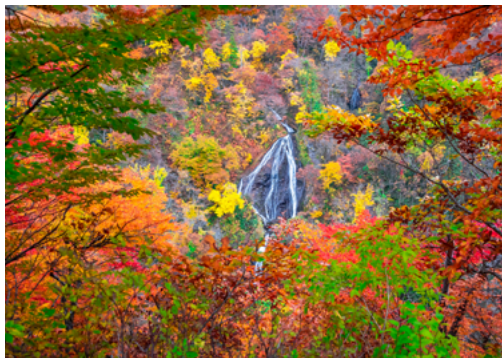
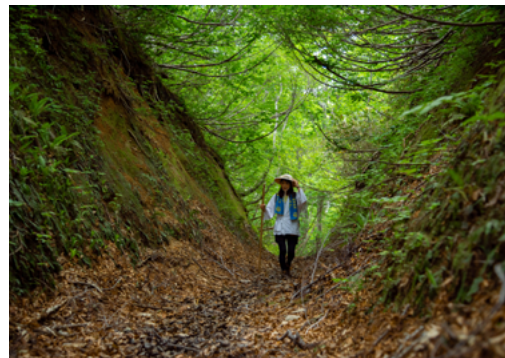
Reach the Dewa Sanzan shrine at the mountaintop, where you will receive the blessing prayer. Immerse in the serene atmosphere and admire the intricate woodwork that adorns the Sanjin Gosaiden Shrine. Have shojin-ryori (vegetarian cuisine eaten by the yamabushi disciples and shugendo trainees) at Saikan, the temple lodge at the top of the mountain. This is where we will stay for the night as well. Check-in, relax, and spend the rest of the day on the mountain as you wish.

MT. GASSAN & MT. YUDONO: THE MOUNTAINS OF PAST & FUTURE



Arrive at the 8th station of Mt. Gassan, the second peak of the Dewa Sanzan trio, and meet your expert mountain guide. Mt. Gassan is the symbolic representation of the past in the Dewa Sanzan Pilgrimage, for the reason that it is thought to be the Realm of the Dead, aka, where the souls of the ancestors come to rest for eternity. Your guide will share insights into the mountain's significance within the Buddhist spirituality, revealing a profound interplay between nature, death and devotion. Have a small break at Busshoike Goya, a mountain hut halfway to the top. Reach the summit (1984m. high) and enjoy a moment of awe-inspiring panoramic views with Mt. Chokai afar. We will have lunch at the mountain hut at the top (Gassan Chojo Goya). We will complete the pilgrimage of the Dewa Sanzan sacred mountains by heading to our last mountain: Mt. Yudono, the mountain of future. This is where the pilgrim pray for their future reincarnations or their loved ones'. It is also the birthplace of the Sokushinbutsu mummies phenomenon in Japan: more than 11 monks out of the 17 mummies exposed today trained in this very place!

THE ROKUJURIGOE KAIDO, A PILGRIMAGE ROUTE THAT IS OVER 1200 YEARS OLD



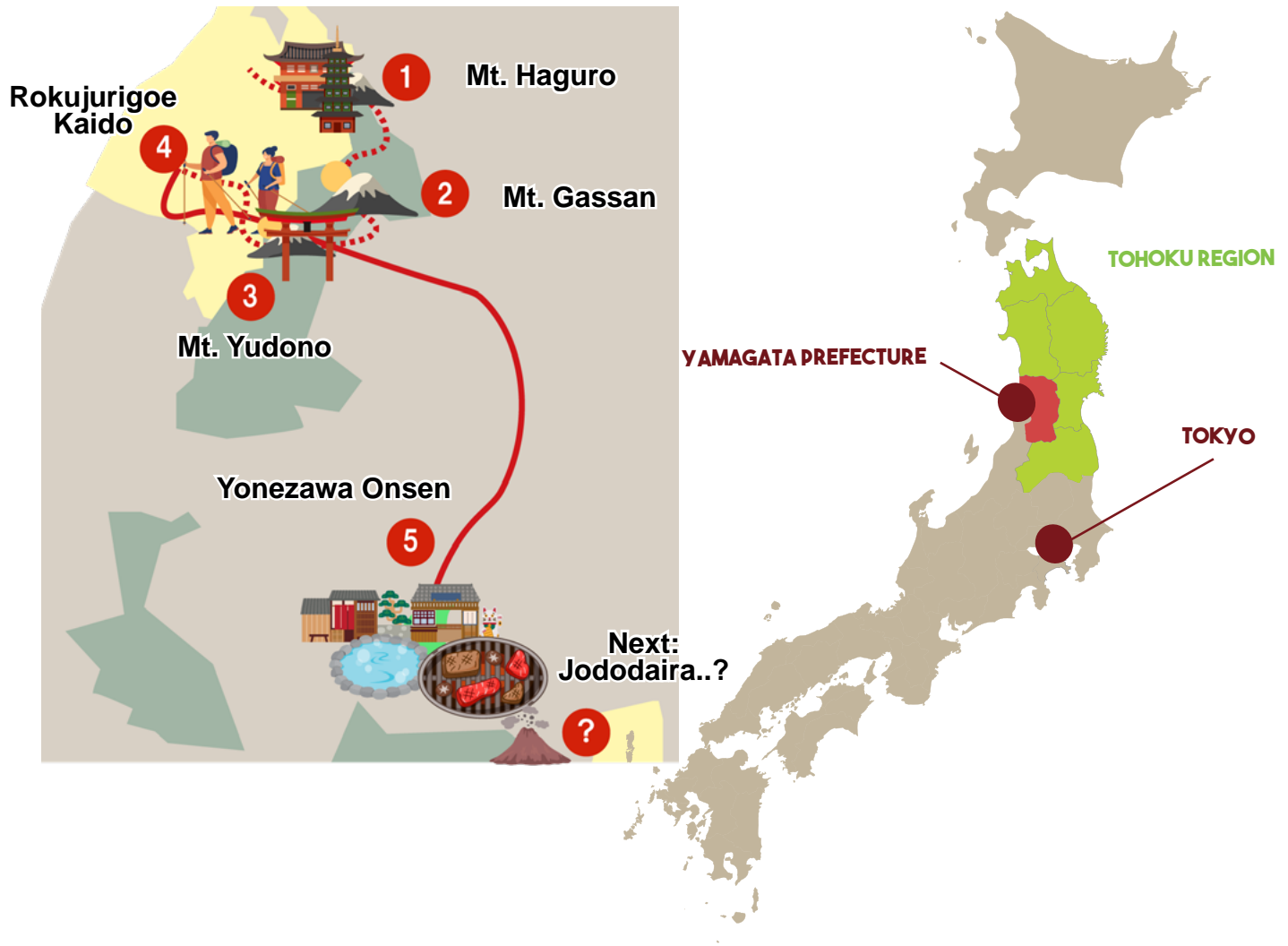
After staying at Yudonosan Sanrojo for the night, we will take the Rokujurigoe Kaido pilgrimage route down to Dainichibo Temple. This old pilgrimage route was traditionally used by the pilgrims en route to Mt. Yudono 1200 years ago. On our way, we will discover one of Japan's 100 most beautiful waterfalls (the Nanatsu falls), many Buddhist steles and relics, and 2 sokushinbutsu mummies. We will have onigiri rice balls for lunch, specially prepared by the local producers from Asahi Gu. For the night, we will stay at Yasuno Ryokan, a family-run ryokan near the Rokujurigoe Pilgrimage route.

YONEZAWA ONSEN



Now you have completed the whole Dewa Sanzan pilgrimage from both ends (the mountains & the Rokujurigoe kaido side), you must be starting to feel tired, and your muscles are certainly quite sore. Don't worry, we have your back. We will spend the whole day in Yonezawa City, the hub point that connects Yamagata & Fukushima Prefectures. Soak in Yonezawa's pristine hot springs, and relish on a dinner based on Yonezawa beef (known as one of Japan's best 3 wagyu beefs!). Otsukaresama deshita! ("You can be proud of your efforts").

Your itinerary on the map



What's included?

- Accommodation
- All meals
- Entrances to all establishments, structures and buildings
- Activities fees
- Private guidance fees from the several participants
- Pilgrim clothes rental
- Ritual & prayer fees
- Interpretation
- Transportation
- Bathing fees

What's NOT included?

- Private purchases
- Alcohol, additional food or drinks
- Hiking gear

Categories:



Cancellation policy:

- 1 month prior to the tour : Free of charge
- 21 days prior to the tour : 20% billed
- The day before the tour : 50% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 80% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed



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May - November

An Adventure inside Japan's Deep Countryside - 3 nights, 4 days

Budget

(interpretation & transportation included)

143,000 yen/person (group of 8)

Embark on a transformative journey with our 3 nights and 4 days tour, an immersive journey inside the countryside of Northern Japan. In this tour, you will experience all the aspects of living in Japan's countryside: visit the city on the first day while wearing a high-quality yukata (summer kimono) finely selected by a century-old kimono shop to match your body and colors, stroll around the Shonai Shrine to discover the grounds of what once used to be the local lords' castle, relish on delicious matcha icecreams/crepes, and stay in Suiden Terrasse, a magnificent hotel built by award-winning architect Shigeru Ban upon ricefields. On the second day, we will bring you to Mt. Kinbo to experience a now lost but once thriving shugendo pilgrimage site, have a Yamabushi priest lead you to waterfall meditation, then stay at a comfortable family-run ryokan at Yutagawa Onsen. On day 3, we will hop on our electric bicycles to visit the surroundings shrines hiding in the jungle to learn about the Japanese nature worship and special nature-related meditation called "shinrin-yoku". On the 4th day, we will visit the legendary Mt. Haguro, the first mountains visited during the pilgrimage of the Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa.

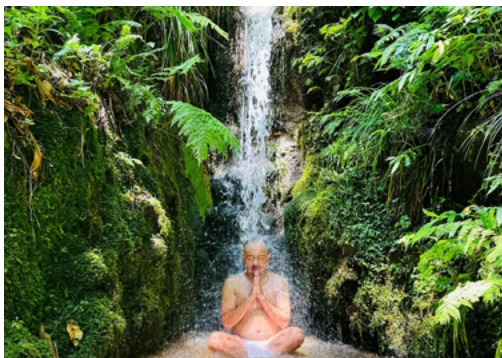
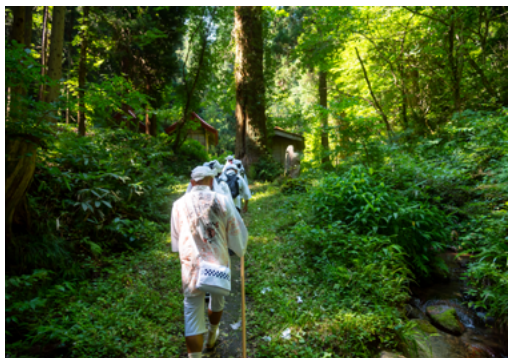
Day 1 - Arrival to Tsuruoka Station

LIFE IN A COUNTRYSIDE "CITY"



Arrive to Tsuruoka City before 2pm. Check-in at Suiden Terrasse, a hotel standing above ricefields, that was designed by the famous architect Shigeru Ban. Put your luggage and precious belongings in your room. After that, let's move on to a famous kimono shop that has been in the business for more than 200 years. See their yukata (summer kimono) collection, let them guide you about which colors and patterns suit you and the season, and choose the yukata you want to wear accordingly. An expert will teach you about how to wear a yukata and bow your obi (belt) in a style that suits you most. Now, time for a stroll inside Tsuruoka City, where we will stop by a matcha-specialized cafe, where you will have plenty of options to choose from. Will you go for a matcha-crepe filled with matcha icecream? Or matcha kakigori (grated ice topped with matcha-flavored syrup)? Or matcha parfait? Once we are done, we will stop by the Shonai Shrine to get the local lords bless us during our trip. We will go back to the city to head for our "full-inclusive bar hopping" session, with a total of 5 drinks and 5 dishes! Don't worry, our local interpreter will help you get the best of the local izakaya bars without the barrier of dialect.

LIFE ON THE MOUNTAINS : WATERFALL MEDITATION



Did you have a good night at Sudden Terrasse? Eat as much as you can during breakfast because the morning will be quite intense! Head for Mt. Kinbo, where you will meet a Yamabushi priest that also operates a ryokan in Yutagawa Onsen. He will bring you to a once thriving now lost pilgrimage site on Mt. Kinbo. Venture in the jungle and search for the Muso Falls. This is where you will take the waterfall meditation. For lunch, we will have onigiri rice balls on the mountain before reaching the top of Mt. Kinbo. From there, we will start our adventure looking for Mt. Kinbo's altar that was destroyed in the big earthquake in 1964. Will you be able to find it? Once our pilgrimage is complete, we will stay in a small family-run ryokan in Yutagawa Onsen where we will be offered with many varieties of local sake to taste during dinner.

LIFE IN THE RICEFIELDS : ELECTRIC BICYCLE TOUR & MT. HAGURO



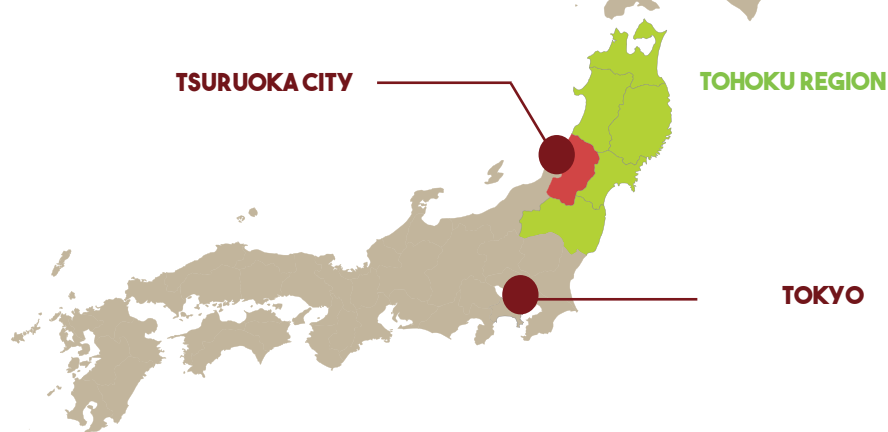
On the next morning, we will hop on electric bicycles to uncover the region of Mizusawa, a small agricultural area full of little shrines and temples that just await in the jungle to be discovered. There, we will visit Kumano Shrine's sacred tree, and Minakami Hachiman Shrine's National Important Cultural Property with its thatched roof and moss-covered path. For lunch, we will have Japanese curry topped with deep-fried cutlet (katsukare). Vegetarian options available. For the night, we will stay at a Shinto pilgrim lodge (shukubo) on Mt. Haguro. The shukubo is run by a Yamabushi priest. He is the one who will guide you on the next morning on Mt. Haguro.

LIFE OF A PILGRIM OF THE DEWA SANZAN



Next morning, after receiving the Yamabushi prayer in the shukubo, we will put on our pilgrim clothing to hike the 2446 stone steps of Mt. Haguro, and discover the spirituality and the culture of Dewa Sanzan's shugendo pilgrims. After reaching the top, we will take the prayer at the Dewa Sanzan shrine to put an end to our trip, and fill our empty bellies on a delicious shojin-ryori (spiritual food that aims to purify one's body during a shugendo training) lunch at Saikan on top of the mountain. Go back to Tsuruoka city. End of the trip.

Your itinerary on the map



What's included?

- Accommodation
- All meals
- Matcha sweets & treats during D1's yukata bar hopping day
- Entrances to all establishments, structures and buildings
- Activities fees
- Private guidance fees from the several participants
- Pilgrim clothes rental, yukata rental (including geta sandals)
- Ritual & prayer fees
- Interpretation
- Transportation
- Alcohol & drinks (only during D1's bar hopping session)

What's NOT included?

- Private purchases
- Hairstyling (yukata bar hopping)

Categories:



Hiking (easy)



Meditation



Japanese food



Cycling



Japanese culture



Hot springs

Cancellation policy:

- 1 month prior to the tour : Free of charge
- 21 days prior to the tour : 20% billed
- The day before the tour: 50% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 80% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed

OUR DAYTIME ACTIVITIES/TOURS



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Season : From May to December

Yamabushi Guided Tour on Mt. Haguro - approx. 3.5 hours

Average price
(transportation not included)

15,300 yen/person (group of 4 participants)

Head for a spiritual journey inside Mt. Haguro's history, guided by an esteemed Yamabushi priest dispatched by the Dewa Sanzan shrine. After putting on your pilgrim robe: the shiroshozoku, chant the Dewa Sanzan prayer and discover the meaning behind each word with your interpreter-guide, venture inside the 400 years old lush cedar-lined paths, and learn about the profound connection between Japanese spirituality and nature. On your way, you will find the National Treasure : the Five-Storeyed Pagoda, 2446 stone steps, dozens of little shrines, and a few National Important Cultural Properties. Join us to experience Japan's spiritual heritage and the serene beauty of Mt. Haguro in a whole new light.

ITINERARY

- 8:30 Gathering at a shukubo pilgrim lodge to meet your Yamabushi guide
- 8:40 Putting on your pilgrim robe (shiroshozoku), take part in the departure prayer. Have a short lecture about the history of Mt. Haguro.
- 10:30 Start of the hike
- 12:00 Purification prayer inside the Dewa Sanzan Shrine



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Pilgrim robe rental
- Pilgrim necklace purchase
- Interpretation (English)
- Yamabushi guiding
- 2 prayers by Yamabushi priests
- Rainboots rental

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Transportation
- Accommodation
- Towel, change clothes
- Water, snacks or souvenirs
- Lunch at Saikan
- Raincoat



This activity is for people who do not have health conditions that would prevent any average intensity cardio workout. In case of rainy weather, we will provide you with rainboots but we expect you to bring your own raincoat. Very harsh weather conditions might lead to the cancellation of the whole experience (free of charge).

Categories:



Hiking (easy)



Meditation



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
The day before the tour: 40% billed
Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
No show, no contact: 100% billed





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Season : From Late December to Early March

Winter Yamabushi Experience - approx. 4 hours and half

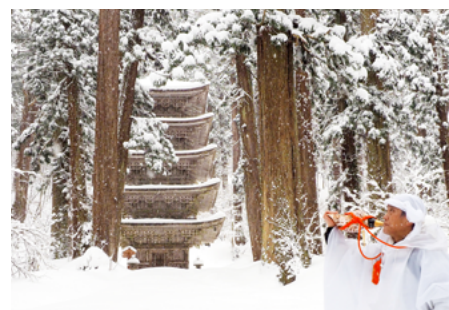
Average price
(transportation not included)

25,000 yen/person (group of 4 participants)

Step into a realm of winter enchantment on snowy Mt. Haguro. Guided by a revered Yamabushi priest, tread snow-covered trails and discover the snow-capped Five-Storied Pagoda (National Treasure). Uncover the Yamabushi's spiritual teachings as you ascend through snow-kissed forests with your snowshoes on. Or maybe will you opt for the traditional Japanese wooden snowshoes called "kanjiki"? Connect with nature's beauty and the mountain's profound past. Marvel at frozen waterfalls and mystical shrines. Bask in the serene atmosphere, where each step in the snow leads you closer to nature's heart.

ITINERARY

- 8:30 Gathering at Ideha Bunka Museum
- 8:40 Meet with your Yamabushi guide, put on your gear
- 9:00 Start of the hike from the Zuishinmon gate
- 9:40 Historical introduction in front of the Five-Storied Pagoda
- 11:00 Arrival at the top of Mt. Haguro
- 11:30 Get your special votive amulet "ema"
- 12:00 Have the official prayer inside the Dewa Sanzan shrine
- End of the tour. Have Shojin-Ryori for lunch at Saikan or go back



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Pilgrim robe rental
- Dewa Sanzan official raincoat & pilgrim necklace
- Yamabushi guidance
- Interpretation (English)
- Snowshoes (or kanjiki) & sticks
- Official prayer at the shrine
- Rainboot rental (if needed)

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Transportation
- Accommodation
- Towel, change clothes
- Water, snacks or souvenirs
- Lunch

This activity is for people who do not have health conditions that would prevent any average intensity cardio workout. In this activity, you will hike harsh slopes with snowshoes on. While we will accomodate to your hiking pace and make stops if needed, we recommend you do not partake in this activity if you do not feel confident in your physical condition.

Categories:



Hiking (hard)



Meditation



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

- 10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
- The day before the tour: 40% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed



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Season : All-year-round (contents vary according to seasons)

Shojin-Ryori Cooking Class & Lunch - 3 hours

Average price
(transportation not included)

14,000 yen/person (group of 4 participants)

Embark on a culinary odyssey to the summit of Mt. Haguro and discover the ancient art of Shojin-ryori cooking. Our cooking class will be led by Ito Shinkichi, the shojin-ryori chef at Saikan, the pilgrim lodge at the top of Mt. Haguro. The content of the class changes according to the season. In spring, get behind Saikan to pick some mountain vegetables before going back in the kitchens to transform them into delicious tempura (Japanese deep-fried vegetables), in autumn, learn how to prepare a delicious mushroom soup and in spring & summer, learn how to make sesame tofu!

ITINERARY

- 09:00** Follow the chef to go pick ingredients (available only during spring) or to discover the different ingredients of the Shojin-Ryori menu, and learn about the principles behind Dewa Sanzan's shojin-ryori.
- 10:00** Go back in the kitchens to learn how to cook sesame-tofu (all-year-round), mountain vegetable tempura (spring & autumn) or mushroom soup (autumn only)
- 11:00** Enjoy a 10 dish menu containing the dishes you have prepared beforehand inside Saikan



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Interpretation
- Picking/Cooking class
- 10 pieces lunch menu

WHAT'S **NOT** INCLUDED?

- Extra food/drinks

This activity is suitable for vegetarians/pescetarians but needs a notice beforehand in order to make it compatible to a vegan diet (some dishes might contain bonito powder). Possibility to upgrade to a 15 dishes menu starting from 5 persons.

Categories:



Cooking class



Japanese food



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

- 10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
- The day before the tour: 40% billed
- Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
- No show, no contact: 100% billed



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Season : From May to October

Yamabushi Experience on Mt. Kinbo - approx. 4 hours and half

Average price
(transportation not included)

19,000 yen/person (group of 4 participants)

Embark on a life-changing adventure amidst the rugged beauty of Mt. Kinbo! Join the Yamabushi Waterfall Training and unlock your inner strength. Guided by mountain ascetic monks, immerse yourself in sacred rituals, meditate under cascading waters, and discover the old paths of this sacred mountain that has been worshipped for more than 1300 years. Mt. Kinbo's shugendo has been lost since the 19th century, but the locals of Yutagawa Onsen have been trying to revive its traditions since the 2000s. Learn about the fascinating history of Japanese religions while visiting one of the most exciting hiking paths in Tsuruoka.

ITINERARY

- 8:30 Gathering at Kogane Community Center
- 8:40 Putting on your pilgrim robe (shiroshozoku), meeting with your guide
- 9:00 Start of the trek to Mt. Kinbo
- 10:00 Arrival at the Muso no Taki Falls, take the waterfall ritual or not (up to you)
- 11:00 Arrival at the main hall of the Kinbozan-shrine (National Important Cultural Property). Eat lunch (local onigiri rice balls)
- 11:30 Departure from the top to the base of Mt. Kinbo
- 13:00 End of the experience, give your pilgrim robe back

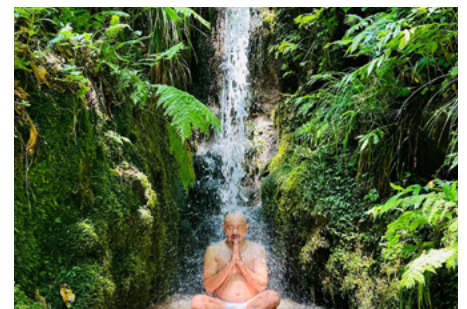


WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Pilgrim robe rental
- Yamabushi guidance
- Interpretation (English)
- Waterfall ritual undergarment
- Lunch

WHAT'S *NOT* INCLUDED?

- Transportation
- Accommodation
- Towel, change clothes
- Water, snacks or souvenirs



This activity is for people who do not have health conditions that would prevent any average intensity cardio workout. In this activity, you will be offered with the opportunity of taking the yamabushi waterfall training on Mt. Kinbo. Please bear in mind you will end up wet (bring a towel or change clothes if necessary). In case of rainy weather, we will shorten the hiking experience on the most dangerous parts and have a prayer inside the Kinbozan-shrine instead. Very harsh weather conditions might lead to the cancellation of the whole experience (free of charge).

Categories:



Hiking (easy)



Meditation



Japanese culture

Cancellation policy:

10 days prior to the tour : 30% billed
 The day before the tour : 40% billed
 Cancellation on the tour day : 50% billed
 No show, no contact: 100% billed

