

Coast-to-Coast Pilgrimage: Walk, Savour, Connect



Embark on a journey of ‘rebirth’ in Japan’s deep north – the Tohoku region.

This coast-to-coast journey connects the Pacific coast of Miyagi Prefecture to the Japan Sea coast of Yamagata Prefecture, showcasing the natural beauty of both coastal and mountainous areas and their respective cultural and culinary highlights.

Walk/trek your way through stunning scenery as you encounter three different ‘pilgrimage’ routes: the ancient spiritual training grounds of the Three Holy Mountains of Dewa (Dewa Sanzan), the inspiring ‘Michinoku Coastal Trail’ (including Kinkasan Island), and the ‘Narrow Road to the Deep North’ followed by prolific Edo period Haiku poet, Matsuo Basho.

Along with your friendly guides you’ll have the opportunity to meet with local farmers, fishermen, artisans and Yamabushi (mountain priests) who will be your personal connection to the area. Follow the journey of each local ingredient you eat – from farm/ocean-to-plate – and be inspired by stories of family tradition, history and a deep respect for both the blessings and ferocity of nature.

Walk in nature, *savour* local flavours and *connect* with the people and culture of Japan’s deep north.

Highlights:

- Trek all three peaks of the Dewa Sanzan (The Three Holy Mountains of Dewa)
- Experience the recovery of Tohoku’s coastline as you walk the Michinoku Coastal Trail (Kinkasan and Karakuwa Peninsula sections)
- Follow the footsteps of Haiku master Matsuo Basho and take-in the same untouched scenery.
- Enjoy epic ocean-to-table and farm-to-table culinary experiences, learning more about the local culture and people with every mouthful!
- Bathe in healing hot-springs at the end of each active day and experience staying overnight at authentic temple lodging.

Location:

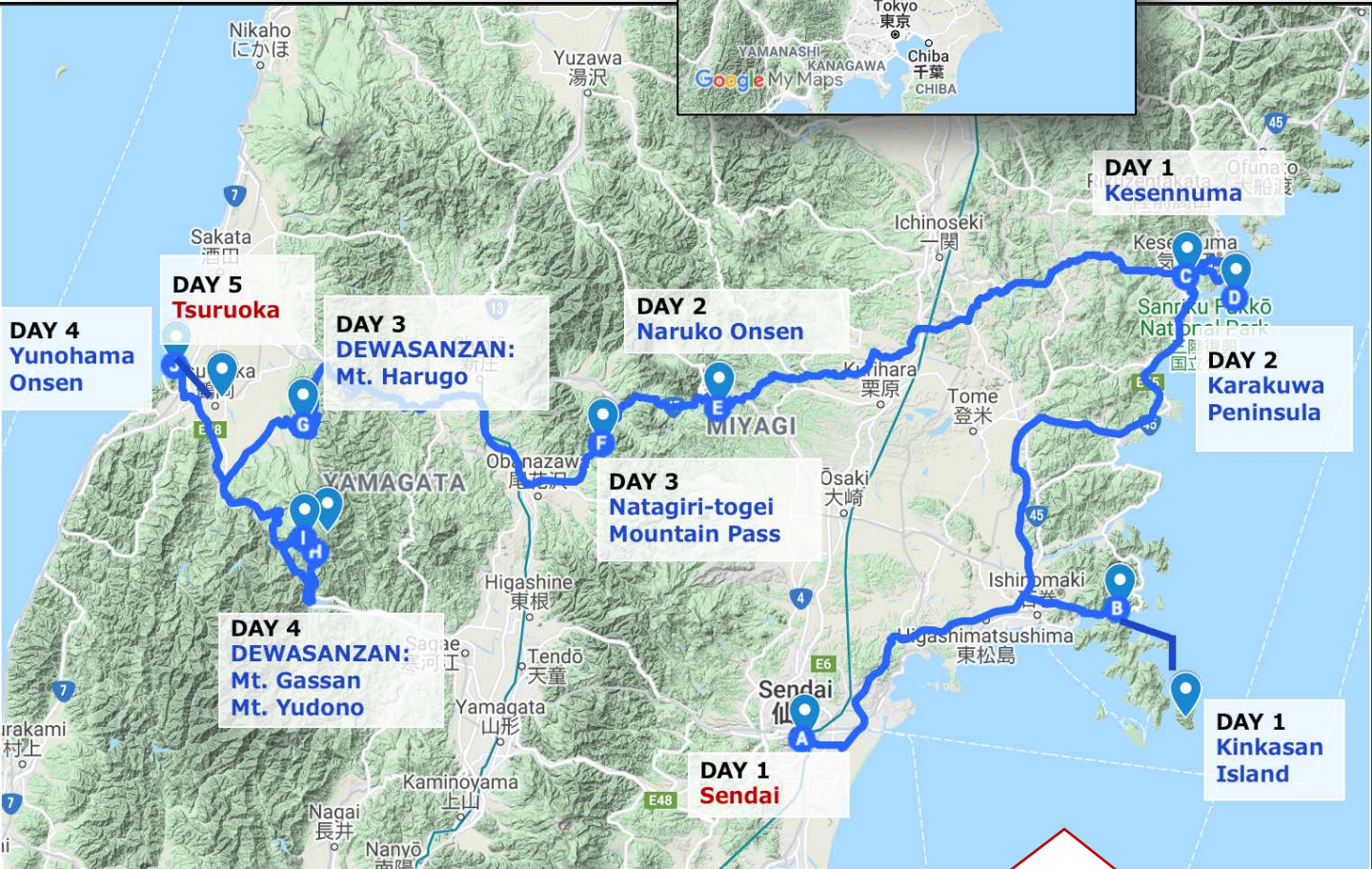
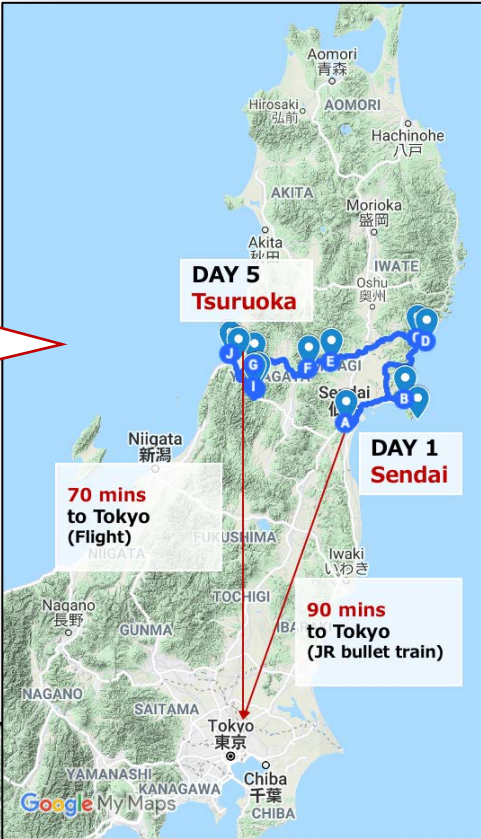
This itinerary begins just 90 minutes from the centre of Tokyo but worlds away – on the picturesque coastline of the Sanriku Fukko National Park. Hear inspiring stories and see with your own eyes the incredible recovery of an area ravaged but not defeated by natural disaster. Make your way across the mountains of northern Miyagi to neighbouring Yamagata Prefecture and the sacred lands of the Three Holy Mountains of Dewa, one of the oldest sites of mountain worship in Japan and part of the Bandai-Asahi National Park.

Main Activity:	Walking (some trekking), cultural and food-based experience	
Difficulty:	3	
Tour Dates:	TBA	
Pax:	Minimum 10	Maximum 16
Price:	10-13 persons 290,000 JPY	
	14-16 persons 250,000 JPY	

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Route map

Route start/end points within two hours access from Tokyo



Source: Google My Maps

Private transport/transfers all included.

Day-by-day Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart from Sendai City, hike Kinkasan Island

After meeting your guides and group at Sendai Station, you'll depart for the Pacific Coast of Miyagi Prefecture. From Onagawa Port you'll board a private boat to Kinkasan Island, one of the 'three sacred lands' of northern Japan. Here you'll hike to the summit of Mt. Kinkasan (part of the Michinoku Coastal Trail / Sanriku Fukko National Park), taking in panoramic views of the coastline while befriending the 500 deer that inhabit the island (fresh local sushi lunch included).

After the hike, drive a little further up the coast to beautiful Kesennuma City, where you'll be rewarded with a delicious meal at the 'brewer's table'; after a brewery tour and tasting session at Otokoyama Honten sake brewery, dine on local cuisine made with freshly caught seafood and expertly paired with three-four varieties of sake by the head brewer himself!

Activity: Hiking | Distance – 3km | Time – 3 hours | Elevation – 445m

Difficulty: 2

Accommodation: Kesennuma Plaza Hotel | shared room with ensuite | Onsen

Included meals: Lunch, Dinner



Day 2 - Local faces of recovery and sustainability

Soak up incredible views of the morning sun rising over the Pacific as you walk along the picturesque Karakuwa Peninsula (part of the Michinoku Coastal Trail). Jump on a local fishing boat and be taken out to oyster farms in the middle of the bay. Be guided by a local oyster farmer as you enjoy an up-close view of each step of the cultivation process, whilst also hearing first-hand stories of how the industry has recovered following the disaster of 2011. For lunch, freshly harvested oysters will be the star of a meal made from locally sourced seafood and ingredients at an oyster-shack run by a fishing family.

Driving inland across the mountains of Miyagi Prefecture you'll arrive at Naruko Onsen. Before it's time to soak in the hot springs, drop-in to the studio of a local lacquerware artisan for a personal workshop from the master himself! Discover a unique fusion of ancient craftsmanship and modern functionality by decorating your own lacquered bamboo 'eco-straw'.

Dinner

The personal connections continue over dinner as you tuck-in to a feast of dishes made with locally sourced ingredients at farmhouse restaurant 'Satonowa' overlooking the rice-fields. Savour the rare chance to share a table with the local producers who created the meal in front of you!

Activity: Hiking | Time – 1.5 hours

Difficulty: 2

Accommodation: Miyama Ryokan | shared room, Japanese style | Onsen

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 3 – Entering the spiritual realm of the Dewa Sanzan

Start your day with a morning hike along the Natagirikogen Mountain Pass – the same path followed by Edo Period Haiku poet Matsu Basho whilst composing his great compilation 'Narrow Road to the Deep North'. Stop for a coffee break in the forest as you take in the very same scenery that inspired his poems.

Lunch

Crossing over the border into Yamagata Prefecture, discover why the diverse food culture of Tsuruoka saw the city recognized as Japan's only 'UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy' at local restaurant 'Alchecciano' – Italian cuisine prepared by world-class Chef Masayuki Okuda, made solely from local ingredients including many heirloom vegetables.

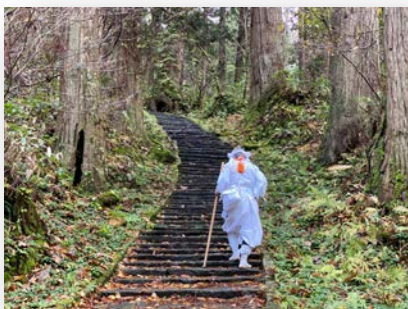
From the afternoon, enter the spiritual realm of the *Dewa Sanzan* – the Three Holy Mountains of Dewa. For over a thousand years, pilgrims from across Japan have travelled to these holy mountains to train their bodies, minds, and souls deep in the pristine nature of Yamagata. The pilgrimage traverses through the world of the present in the towering cedar forests of Mt. Haguro, death and the afterlife on the high peaks of Mt. Gassan, and rebirth at Mt. Yudono, the most holy site of the Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa. A journey to all three of these mountains is known as the ‘Journey of Rebirth’.

Starting with an introduction to the history and story of the area at Ideha Cultural Centre, take a guided hike to the five-story pagoda (a national treasure) and up the 2446 stone steps to the peak of Mt. Haguro / Dewa Sanzan Shrine guided by an authentic Yamabushi (mountain priest). After the hike, check-in to your lodging for the evening, ‘Miyatabo’ – authentic Shinto pilgrim lodging.

Dinner

Dinner will be a spiritual experience in and of itself as you learn how to make and correctly savour traditional ‘Shojinryori’ vegetarian cuisine. Whilst widely associated with Buddhism, the ‘Shojinryori’ of the Dewasanzan is a fusion of both Buddhist and Shinto beliefs, and the consummation of the meal is seen to be a form of ascetic practice. Assist with harvesting the ingredients before watching how some of the dishes are prepared. Eat the meal in ‘mindfulness’ and experience Shinto ceremony to prepare your mind and body for the continuation of the pilgrimage the following day.

Activity: Hiking ①: Natagiritoge Mountain Pass | Time – 2.5 hours | Elevation – 475m
Hiking ②: Mt. Haguro | Time – 2 hours | Elevation – 414m | 2446 stone steps
Difficulty: 3
Accommodation: Miyatabo Pilgrim Lodging | shared room, Japanese style | shared bath/toilet
Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 4 – A Journey of ‘Rebirth’

Wake-up early for a private Shinto prayer ceremony and breakfast of Shojinryori to prepare your mind, body and spirit for the pilgrimage ahead.

Day four will arguably be the most physically challenging of the itinerary as your group tackles the remaining two peaks of the Dewa Sanzan – Mt. Gassan and Mt. Yudono. Once again, you’ll be joined by a Yamabushi priest to not only guide the way, but to instruct you in the ascetic elements of the pilgrimage, including a visit to both Gassan Shrine and Yudono Shrine at the peak of each mountain. (Packed lunch included)

It is forbidden to speak of exactly what occurs during the blessing ceremonies at each shrine, but you will require an open-mind and a small towel...!

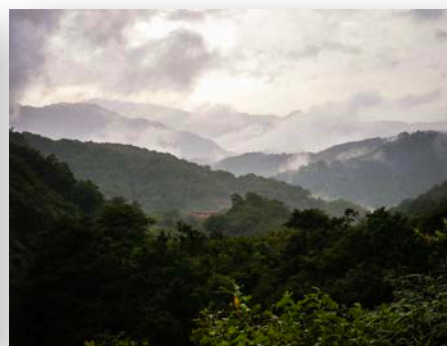
The pilgrimage of spiritual ‘rebirth’ is complete after ascending Mt. Yudono. Leave the Dewa Sanzan and head towards the Japan Sea coast to watch a breathtaking sunset from the hot spring baths of Yudono Onsen. Indulge in a delicious ‘kaiseki’ course meal of fresh seafood and toast to the final night of your journey with local sake and wine!

Activity: Trekking: Mt. Gassan | Elevation – 1984m → Mt. Yudono | Elevation – 1156m |
Time – 7 hours

Difficulty: 3

Accommodation: Ryokan (Yunohama Onsen) | Shared room, Japanese/Western (ensuite) | Onsen baths

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 5 – back to the grassroots!

Enjoy an easy morning and perhaps a stroll along the beach before setting off on the last day of activity. Today you'll leave the mountains and ocean behind for the far-reaching plains of Shonai. Join a local farming family on their field and participate in the harvest of some seasonal vegetables/fruits like 'Dadacha-mame' (local variety of edamame bean) or grapes.

Lunch

Be welcomed into the home of a friendly local family, the Chonans, at their farmhouse restaurant 'Chikeiken'. Feast on locally sourced vegetables and seafood and enjoy a chat with the vivacious Mrs. Chonan who will make you feel right at home.

After a lazy lunch, your private transport will drop you off at Tsuruoka Station or Shonai Airport from where you can make your way back to Tokyo, Sendai or onwards to Sapporo.

Activity: Agricultural experience | vegetable harvest

Difficulty: 1

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch



Accommodations :

Date:	Location:	Type:	Room:	Spa:
Day 1	Kesenuma	Hotel	Shared room with ensuite	Onsen spa
Day 2	Naruko Onsen	Ryokan	Shared room, shared bathroom	Onsen spa
Day 3	Miyatabo	Pilgrim Lodging	Shared room, shared bathroom	Bath
Day 4	Yunohama Onsen	Ryokan	Shared room with ensuite	Onsen spa

Meals

Breakfast & Dinner

Whilst all breakfast meals will be served at each accommodation site, dinners will feature a variety of different meal types – from interactive meals at local farm-to-table or ocean-to-table restaurants with local producers, to authentic ‘Shojinryori’ vegetarian cuisine served at pilgrim lodging. The final dinner will feature the traditional ‘kaiseki’ course meal (Japanese) that is typically served at hot-spring ryokan inns. There will be many opportunities to utilize your chopstick skills, but western-style eating utensils will also be made available upon request.

Lunch

Local cuisine is a huge feature of this itinerary and lunch meals will typically be included in an interactive culinary experience (such as oyster harvesting). For practical reasons, on the days that will be spent trekking in the mountains and away from shops and restaurants, typical ‘obento’ style lunches or ‘onigiri’ rice-balls will be provided for guests.

Dietary requirements

Most meals can be adjusted to suit differing dietary requirements upon prior request.

What’s included

- 4 nights accommodation
- 4 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 4 dinners
- Oyster harvesting experience
- Lacquerware painting experience
- Yamabushi guided trekking and ascetic training program
- Agricultural harvesting experience
- All transport and transfers as listed in itinerary
- Some snacks and refreshments
- Travel insurance
- English speaking guides / interpretation

Not included

- Airfares and transport to/from start and end points.
- Personal expenses
- Alcoholic beverages with meals (unless stated otherwise).

What we provide & What to bring

We provide

- Emergency first-aid kit
- Emergency drinking water and food supplies
- Emergency shelter equipment

What to bring

Essentials

- Multiple changes of clothing that are appropriate for trekking (items that are easy to move in, quick-drying, easy to layer.)
- Trekking/hiking boots (mid- to high-cut)
- Rain/weather-proof layers (jacket and pants)
- Fleece or down jacket
- Thermal layers (top and bottom)
- Gloves/beanies/neck-warmers etc. to keep you warm
- Spare changes of socks
- Refillable water-bottle/hydration system (2L)
- Sun-hat, sunglasses and sunscreen
- Portable toilet and other necessary toiletries
- Quick-dry hand towel
- High-energy snacks/provisions (can be purchased on location)
- Head-torch
- Personal medications
- Hiking backpack with capacity to fit above items / rain-cover for backpack
- Passport
- Some cash in Japanese yen. (Some countryside areas do not accept credit-cards. There will be opportunity to withdraw cash at ATMs at convenience stores/post-office on route.)

Recommended

- Walking poles
- Hiking/sports leggings and gloves
- Power bank and charger for mobile phone
- Camera

About us

Inoutbound Sendai Matsushima Inc. is a local DMC and tour operator based in Sendai City, the gateway to the greater Tohoku region of northern Japan. With a focus on the Miyagi area, we work closely with local businesses and key-people throughout Tohoku to create and curate unique experience programs and customised itineraries for visitors from all around Japan and the world. Our friendly team of experts can provide bilingual guiding services, consultation for independent travelers and agents, as well as on-the-ground tour operation for familiarisation, special interest and incentive trips. We pride ourselves on leading our guests off-the-beaten-path for authentic local experience that will stay with them for a lifetime.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM:

At Inoutbound Sendai Matsushima we believe that responsible tourism should always leave minimal impact on the environment and maximum positive impact on the local community. We strive to support local business by working with family-run hotels, restaurants and local guides, and ensure our activities contribute positively to the protection and promotion of local culture and tradition.

GUIDES

MITSUMASA GOTO (MITSU)

(Advanced First-aid Responder Course 2020)



Mitsu is a Miyagi local, born and raised, and between back-packing and working in the travel & PR industry for more than 20 years, he's travelled overseas well over 30 times. As well as embracing his love of the outdoors, Mitsu is one of Tohoku's biggest foodies and can follow his nose to the best local eateries across the region! Mitsu is well on his way to completing the entire length of the 'Michinoku Coastal Trail' (1000km) by the 10th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami disaster in March 2021.

QUINLAN FARIS (Q)

(Nature Experience Activity Leader 2020)



Hailing from Madison, Wisconsin, Quinlan's journey brought him to Japan 20 years ago after a 10-month spell in China. After 10 years in Tokyo, during which he took multiple back-packing trips to India and Nepal, he moved north to Iwate. You'll most likely find him up a local volcano hiking up a storm, brewing some coffee, or foraging for wild vegetables to feed his Airbnb guests / entertain his YouTube subscribers (GoNorth Japan).

Information and Requirements

Dietary Restrictions

We understand that food and eating are one of the most important (if not THE most important) aspects of travelling to a new destination! As such, we like to make sure that no stomach is left behind, regardless of dietary needs. Whilst some of the more remote locations may require flexibility from guests, we will do our best to cater to all dietary needs where possible. Please be sure to inform us of any allergies or dietary requirements at the time of booking to allow us to make appropriate arrangements.

Emergency Response Plan

Whilst we're focused on showing you a fun and memorable time in Tohoku, the safety and wellbeing of our guests is our utmost priority! All our guides are trained emergency first-aid responders and will carry an emergency first-aid kit at all times throughout the tour. In each location, activities will be carried out under the direct guidance of locals who have years of experience hiking and trekking in the relevant mountain ranges.

Please note that in the event of unsafe or unfavourable weather conditions, the content of outdoor activities may be forced to change to ensure the safety of all guests and guides. In such cases, outdoor activity will be substituted with alternative sight-seeing activities. For your own safety and that of fellow guests, please listen and cooperate with the instruction of the guides throughout the tour.

Weather Conditions

September is a very pleasant time to visit the Tohoku region. With the height of summer behind, daytime temperatures tend to vary between 18 – 25 °C with about 70% humidity. However, the weather is known to be changeable and typically several degrees cooler in more mountainous areas. We advise all guests to come prepared with adequate sun protection as well as protective layers for cooler/wet-weather. Please consult the 'what to bring' list to make sure you are prepared for all likely conditions.

Whilst the peak of Autumn foliage tends to be in late October/early November, it is possible that some slight changes of colour can be seen at higher altitudes in September.

Reservation & Cancellation Policy

Reservation

Customers interested in signing up for the tour should submit the required information to the Company along with a deposit in the amount indicated in the pertinent web information or brochure. For operational reasons, the Customer may be required to furnish the required information using a prescribed form or screen. The deposit shall be applied towards payment for travel. The Tour Participation Agreement between the Customer and the Company shall become legally binding upon agreement by the Company to enter into the Tour Participation Agreement with the Customer and receipt of the deposit.

Payment Methods

Payment for the tour must be made by the thirteenth (13th) day prior to the day preceding the tour commencement date. Customers submitting tour participation requests subsequent to the thirteenth (13th) day prior to the day preceding the tour commencement date must pay for the tour prior to the tour commencement date and in no case later than the deadline for payment specified by the Company or its Sales Location. If the Customer is a cardholder of a credit card issued by a partner credit card company, the Company, with the consent of the Customer, may charge payment for the tour (including the deposit and any items identified as Additional Charges) as well as any applicable cancellation fees and/or other charges under Article 14, additional charges under Article 10 and any traveler substitution fees under Article 13 to said credit card without obtaining the signature of the Customer even in the absence of an agreement between the Customer and the Company regarding Credit Card Payment Authorization under Article 24 below. In such case, unless otherwise requested by the Customer, the Card Transaction Date shall be the date on which said consent is given by the Customer.

Cancellation

- If the Customer cancels travel for personal reasons subsequent to the formation of a legally binding Tour Participation Agreement, the Customer shall be required to pay the cancellation fees indicated in the pertinent web information or brochure and the relevant tour participant[s] shall be required to pay any cost differential associated with any change in the number of travelers occupying any guestrooms.
- The Customer shall also be liable for payment of the prescribed cancellation fees in the event of cancellation by the Customer due to the Customer's inability to obtain financing due to any cause not attributable to the Company.
- If the Customer fails to make payment of the Tour Price by the deadline, the Company shall deem the Customer to have terminated the Tour Participation Agreement as of the day following said payment deadline and an amount equal to the applicable cancellation fee shall be charged and payable by the Customer to the Company.
- Any modification to the departure date or any partial modification to the itinerary (including but not limited to transportation and accommodations) made by the

Customer for the Customer's own personal reasons shall be deemed a cancellation of the Customer's participation in the overall tour and shall subject the Customer to the payment of the prescribed cancellation fees:

- Cancelled more than 21 days prior to departure: Zero fees.
- Cancelled between 20 and 8 days prior to departure: 20% of the Tour Price.
- Cancelled between 7 days and 48 hours prior to departure: 30% of the Tour Price.
- Cancelled between 48 and 24 hours prior to departure :40% of the Tour Price.
- Cancelled within 24 hours of departure: 50% of the Tour Price.
- Cancelled on the day of departure: 100% of the Tour Price.
- ***No refunds will be given after the tour has commenced.***

Disclaimer

Assumption of risk and safety declaration

Travellers are advised that all activities are undertaken entirely at their own risk and they must behave in a fit and proper manner at all times in accordance with JTB Corp. guidelines. All adventure tours and outdoor activities carry inherent risks and JTB Corp. nor its partners do not assume any responsibility for accidents that are caused by its customers or caused by factors outside of human control.

With the purchase of your trip you acknowledge that:

- By its very nature, adventure travel, hiking are more challenging and demanding with a significantly higher level of risk, and involve potential exposure to injury and possibly death.

- Additional dangers and risks associated with adventure travel may include difficult and dangerous terrain; high altitude; extremes of weather, including sudden and unexpected changes; political instability; remoteness from normal medical services and from communications; and evacuation difficulties in the event of illness or injury.
- You must follow our guide's instructions and use any safety equipment provided at all times. For the above reasons you accept the inherent and increased dangers and risks associated with the proposed adventure and the accompanying risk of injury, death or property damage or loss.

Responsibilities of the Company

- (1) The Company shall be responsible for compensating the Customer for any losses incurred by the Customer as a result of any willful or negligent act on the part of the Company or any agent performing travel arrangement services on behalf of the Company in connection with performance under the Tour Participation Agreement. However, said responsibility shall only apply in those instances in which notice is received by the Company within two (2) years from the day following the occurrence of any such loss.
- (1) As a general rule, the Company shall assume no responsibility under Paragraph (1) above if the Customer incurs any loss due to the following causes (this non-exhaustive list is presented here for illustrative purposes):
 - Natural disaster, war, rioting and/or any modification to the tour itinerary or tour cancellation resulting therefrom
 - Losses resulting from accidents or fires involving any provider of transportation, accommodations or other travel services
 - Suspension of service by any provider of transportation, accommodations or other travel services and/or any modification of the tour itinerary or tour cancellation resulting therefrom
 - Government order, quarantine due to communicable disease and/or any modification to the tour itinerary or tour cancellation resulting therefrom
 - Accidents occurring during free activity time
 - Food poisoning
 - Theft
 - Delays, suspension of service, schedule changes or rerouting by any transportation provider or any modifications to the tour itinerary or any curtailment of stay at the destination resulting therefrom.

- 3) Notwithstanding the provisions regarding the deadline for furnishing notice of loss to the Company set forth in Paragraph (1) above, the Company shall only furnish compensation for losses involving baggage under said Paragraph (1) if notice is received by the Company within fourteen (14) days from the day following the occurrence of said loss. Irrespective of the amount of said damages, the maximum amount of compensation to be furnished by the Company for losses involving baggage shall be limited to 150,000 yen per person (except in instances involving any willful or grossly negligent act on the part of the Company).

Special Compensation

- (1) Irrespective of whether or not any liability is incurred by the Company pursuant to Paragraph (1) of the preceding ①, the Company shall pay the Customer a Death Indemnity (15,000,000 yen), Permanent Disability Indemnity (up to a maximum of 15,000,000 yen), Inpatient Solatium (20,000 yen – 200,000 yen) or Outpatient Solatium (10,000 yen – 50,000 yen) for certain damages sustained to life or limb if the Customer suffers any sudden and unforeseen accident while participating in an agent-organized tour and an indemnity for losses involving baggage (up to a maximum of 100,000 yen per piece or pair and up to a maximum of 150,000 yen per agent-organized tour participant) in accordance with the Special Compensation Rules set forth in the Company's General Terms and Conditions.
- (2) Notwithstanding the provisions set forth in the preceding Paragraph (1), losses occurring on a day during which no travel services that constitute part of the Company-organized tour are furnished shall not be considered as having occurred during the Customer's participation in the tour as long as said day is explicitly indicated in the pertinent web information or brochure as a day on which no travel services are to be furnished.
- (3) The Company shall not pay any indemnity or solatium under Paragraph (1) above for any losses incurred by the Customer during participation in an agent-organized tour if said losses result from a willful act or drunk driving by the Customer, illness or similar such cause, or as a result of any accident occurring during any dangerous activity, including but not limited to mountain climbing (involving the use of mountain climbing gear such as ice axes, climbing irons, ropes and/or hammers), luge riding, bobsled riding, skydiving, hang gliding, flying aboard any ultralight aircraft (powered hang gliders, microlight aircraft, etc.) and/or gyroplaning during free activity time if such activity is not included in the agent-organized tour.

The foregoing exception shall not apply in the event that said activity is included in the agent-organized tour itinerary.

- (4) The Company shall not pay any indemnification for losses in connection with any items identified as excluded from indemnification in the Company's General Terms and Conditions, including but not limited to cash, securities, credit cards, vouchers, airline tickets, passports, driver's licenses, visas, certificates of deposit, certificates of savings (including passbooks and ATM cards), data or any similar such items, and contact lenses.
- (5) If the Company is subject to an obligation to pay any indemnification under Paragraph (1) above as well as an obligation to pay any compensation for losses as described under the preceding Article 19, the Company shall be deemed to have performed its obligation to pay both said indemnification and said compensation to the extent of the amount paid by the Company in performance of either of these two obligations.

Tour Operator / Contact



Inoutbound Sendai Matsushima Inc.

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