

Ten Days Exploring the Sacred Mountains of Japan

Begin your Japan adventure by embarking on a journey of 'rebirth' in Japan's deep north – the Tohoku region. The Dewa Sanzan (Three Holy Mountains of Dewa) make up one of Japan's most ancient sites of mountain worship. Pilgrimage across all three mountains – Mt. Haguro, Mt. Gassan & Mt. Yudo – is said to be a journey through the realms of death, the afterlife and, finally, spiritual rebirth.

The Kumano Kodo is a region of Japan comprised of branching pilgrimage routes that stretch into varying corners of the Kii-Peninsula. The pilgrimage itself dates back more than 1000 years and its routes have been walked by all levels of society; from commoners and artisans, to aristocrats and retired emperors, standing as a symbol of inclusivity for all seeking worship. The trails that comprise the region sprawl over mountain ranges and weave through lush valley greenery, each dotted with quiet hamlets and bustling hot-spring towns famous for their rejuvenating waters.

During the final leg of the tour you will experience what life was like 300 ago, life in Kisoji is very connected with mountain worship and nature. Experience the self meditation that Japanese have been doing and the thinking 'learning from everyday life'. Wash yourself off in the water fall and stand at the summit of spritial mountain. Also you will have Syoujin cuisine that is vegan food which can detox your body and mind.

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Highlights:

- Village to village walking on enchanting sections of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail
- Bathe in an outdoor hot-spring bath beside the Pacific Ocean
- Making chopsticks, farm experience and making rice in Kamado stove
- Standing under the waterfall as monk training
- Walk Ontake kodo and visit the shrine
- Wear the white monk training clothes and the hat
- Trek along the historical Nakasendo

Location: **The tour covers three main areas:**
The Kumano Kodo Trail (Wakayama Pref)
Nakasendo Mountain Pass (Nagano Pref)
Dewa Sanzan Pilgrimage (Yamagata Pref)

Main Activity: Mountaineering, hiking, cultural activity

Difficulty: 3

Availability: April to November

Tour Duration: 9 Nights 10 Days

Pax: Minimum: 4 Maximum: 8

Mountain 2

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Price: Four pax: 1,200,000JPY
 Six pax; 940,000JPY
 Eight pax: 820,000JPY

Day 1 – Local experience in Tsuruoka, Yamagata

Take the Tohoku Shinkansen from Tokyo → Yamagata Station.

Your journey in Yamagata begins at the grass roots – literally – by visiting the home of a local farming family in Tsuruoka City!

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.

Having satisfied your stomach and your mind it's time to head to Yunohama Onsen on the Japan Sea coast for an orientation session at your hotel before you watch the sunset over the ocean from the outdoor hot spring baths. Toast to the journey ahead over a delicious 'kaiseki' course meal featuring fresh local seafood and local sake!

Included meals: Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation:

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



Day 2 – Enter the Dewa Sanzan

Blessed with the fruits of the surrounding mountain ranges, sprawling plains and ocean at its door-step, Tsuruoka City has been globally recognized as Japan's only UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy! Today is all about discovering why this is the case, starting by getting your hands dirty! Join a local farming family on their field and try your hand at some farm-work, harvesting seasonal vegetables/fruits like local specialty 'Dadachamame' (a regional variety of edamame bean) or grape-picking.

Lunch:

Leaving the fields, follow the journey of the local produce from farm-to-plate! Enjoy a decadent course lunch 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 *Dewasanzan* – 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

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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-storey pagoda (a national treasure) and up the 2446 stone steps to the peak of Mt. Haguro / Dewasanzan 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: Mt. Haguro | Time – 2 hours | Elevation – 414m | 2446 stone steps

Difficulty: 2

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Miyatabo Pilgrim Lodging | shared room, Japanese style | shared bath/toilet



Day 3 – Completing the pilgrimage: Mt. Gassan & Mt. Yudono

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 Dewasanzan – Mt. Gassan and Mt. Yudono.

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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. Drive deeper into the mountains and stay overnight at the charming 'Hijiori Onsen' hot spring village. Soak your weary muscles in the hot-spring bath before being rewarded with another feast of traditional dishes made from locally sourced ingredients.

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

Difficulty: 3

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Ryokan (Hijiori Onsen) | Shared room, shared bathroom | Onsen baths



Day 4 – From Tohoku to Nagano

An early start today as you make your way back to either Tsuruoka Station or Shonai Airport to head on to the next leg of the journey – the Nakasendo Mountain Pass.

Move from Magomejyuku to JR Nakatsugawa station.

You will meet up local guide at Magomezyuku to start trekking in Nakasendo that is 9 km, approx 3 hours.

You will stop shirines on the way, feel ancient people faith.

Lunch Lunchbox in the train

Going to Nakasendou where is the last station in Kisoji. You will feel that you are getting close to cities as Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo).

Check in to accommodation

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Dinner Syojin cuisin in Kurumisawa Ryokan

Activity: Trekking: Distance—6km | Time—3 hours | Elevation—250m

Difficulty: 3

Day 5: Japanese local lifestyle experience in Kiso

AM

You will harvest seasonal vegetables like potatoes, corn, red-raddishes and so on. Then you will cook rice on a traditional 'Momigara Kamaddo' stove and eat it with original Miso soup and Japanese pickles.

PM

Head off to the next spot by a private car at 1:15 pm. Arrive at 'Jyuni Syogongen' and start trekking toward the Kiyotaki falls. You will be instructed in 'takigyō' (waterfall meditation) and have the chance to try it for yourself. This was one of the rituals that ascetic monks would perform in order to purify their bodies and minds before entering Mt. Ontake.

Dinner : 'Shoujinryori' : Japanese monk style vegan food at Kurumisawa Ryokan

Activity: Culture experience & Trekking

Distance—1km | Time—1 hour | Elevation—280m

Difficulty: 2



Day 6 - Trekking in Mt. Ontake

Mountain 2

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You will walk along the Ontake Kodo trail with an English-speaking guide and a through guide.

Breakfast: At Kurumisawa Ryokan

AM

Leave the Ryokan at 8:15 am, visit Ontake shirine for approx 40 minutes. Get on a local bus to Ootaki and start trekking to Tanohara approx 2.5 hours.

Lunch: Onigiri (Japanese rice balls) wrapped by bamboo as monks eat since long time ago.

PM

Back to the Ontake kodo trekking. You will get on a bus at 3:45 PM at Tanahara bus stop.

Dinner : Shojin cuisin in Kurumisawa Ryokan.

Activity: Trekking Distance—6km | Time—4,5 hours | Elevation—756m

Difficulty: 3



Day 7: Travel to the Kii Peninsula

[TRAVEL FROM KISO-FUKUSHIMA]

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We transfer at Nagoya and Shin Osaka, travel south along the coast by train to Tanabe (about 5.5 hours), at the beginning of the Nakahechi, part of the network of ancient pilgrimage trails known as the Kumano Kodo, or Kumano Ancient Trail. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Kumano Kodo became popular from the 11th century as a place of pilgrimage from Kyoto by Emperors. The Kii Peninsula, which extends south from Nara and Osaka, has long been considered sacred in Japan, the entrance to the land of Yomi, the mythical afterworld. It is also the site of the three sacred shrines of Kumano, the Kumano Sanzan.

Included meals: Breakfast at Kurumizawa Ryokan
Boxed lunch on the train
Dinner at Akizuno Garden
Accommodation: Akizuno Garden



Day 8: Hike Chikatsuyu to Hongu Grand Shrine

Today we hike two scenic sections of the Kumano Kodo trail, passing ridge-top villages and oji shrines. Nobles would rest at these sub-shrines to refresh themselves and compose poems. From Chikatsuyu we walk first to Kobi-ro, then take a local bus to Hoshinmon-oji. From Hoshinmon-oji we descend to Hongu Grand Shrine. The symbol of the shrine is the mythological three-legged raven, representing the Hongu, Nachi, and Hayatama shrines – the same motif as the one used by the Japan Football Association. The three-legged crow was in mythology sent to guide Emperor Jimmu on his journey from Kumano to the Yamato Plain.

After visiting the shrine, we transfer by local bus to Yunomine Onsen, one of the oldest hot springs in Japan. We stay overnight in a comfortable Ryokan with its own hot spring bath or 'rotemburo'.

Walking distance: 11.3km / 7 miles

Elevation gain: 350m/1,150 feet ascent, 360m/1,180 feet descent

Time required: 4 hours

Included meals: Breakfast buffet at Akizuno Garden
Boxed lunch on the trail
Dinner at Yunomine so

Accommodation: Yunomine so



Day 9: Hike to Nachi Grand Shrine and waterfall

We transfer by local bus to Koguchi and hike the final section of the trail over the Ogumotorigoe Pass, to glimpse the Pacific Ocean and then descend to Nachi-taki waterfall and Nachi Taisha (Grand Shrine), one of the three 'Grand Shrines of Kumano'. From there we take a short bus ride to the fishing port of Katsuura and to our hotel. Walking distance: 14.5km / 9 miles

Elevation gain: 980m/3,215 feet ascent; 920m/3,020 feet descent

Time required: 6 hours

Included meals: Breakfast buffet at Yunomine so
Boxed lunch on the trail
Dinner at Hotel Urashima

Accommodation: Hotel Urashima



Day 10: Move back to Nagoya Station/ End of tour.

About us

1. High Mount Associe Inc.

We propose a tour that responds flexibility to individual demands and can provide tours full of hospitality, these are our most cherished spirits.

Our experiences of which we has managed the hotel since 1980 and has started welcoming from all over the world at Nagano Olympic of 1998, promise the guests the best time to visit Japan. We are confident in our prompt and sincere response. We are really happy and looking forward to having a good relationship together.

Please feel free to contact: yo98-mail@highmount.com

2. Oku Japan

Oku Japan operates guided, self-guided and custom tours around Japan. Our main office is in Kyoto, and some of our sales staff are based in the UK. Our guides are professional, trained guides who are bilingual Japanese and English (as well as some who speak German or French) and have a deep knowledge of and passion for Japan's people, culture, and history.

OkuJapan.com

3. Inoutbound Sendai Matsushima Inc.

We are 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.

Guides

Kana Hattori

Kana was born in Nagoya and raised in Kobe, studied in Kyoto and the US. She has studied the tea ceremony in Kyoto and the philosophy of Zen -- "Living in the moment" -- has been always the core part of her spiritual life. Kana is passionate about Japanese traditional culture, and about explaining it to foreign visitors through her guiding.

Her hobbies include singing; she regularly sings at concerts and including once at a sake brewery, where she sang and played the piano wearing kimono.

(In some cases, the guide may change.)



NAGANO

Mr. Daniel Moore

Daniel was born in Atlanta but moved to Nagano at 7 months old when his father entered Shinshu University's graduate school program. Daniel lived in Tokyo and Nagano until 16 years old, going to public Japanese school. After completing high school and university in the United States and living briefly in Kenya, Daniel returned to Japan where he began working as a walking, snowshoeing and outdoor guide for Walk Japan. Since 2018, Daniel has worked as a guide for various tour companies including Oku Japan, running his company pickleball trips, teaching pickleball in Japan and playing professionally. He lives near Shiga Kogen in Nagano, where he runs a guest house, hiking and snowboarding as much as he can. Daniel is a hiking and onsen enthusiast and is looking forward to returning to Hokkaido, where he has guided several times in the past.



Additional supporting guides:

Mr. Chris Gladden – Mr. Chris Gladden is a guide living in Otaki Village, Kiso District. Guiding unique to local are popular. In addition to the guide business, he also runs a translation business.

TOHOKU

MITSUMASA GOTO (MITSU)

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(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.

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 Method

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.

(2) 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.
- 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.

Licensed travel agent: 2-390

Registered DMO (Japan) : 20065

Address:

7F Nippou-Koutoudai-Nishi Bldg.

3-11-5 Kokubuncho, Aoba-Ku, Sendai,

Miyagi Prefecture, JAPAN 980-0803

TEL : +81-22-302-7390

Email: tours@inoutbound.co.jp

Partner Companies

High Mount Associe.inc

5983 Hokuzyo Hakuba Kita,

Azumigun Nagano Pref. Japan.

CEO: Joe Anyo

Email: yo98-mail@highmount.com

Phone: (+81) 261 85 0323

Oku-Japan

info@okujapan.com