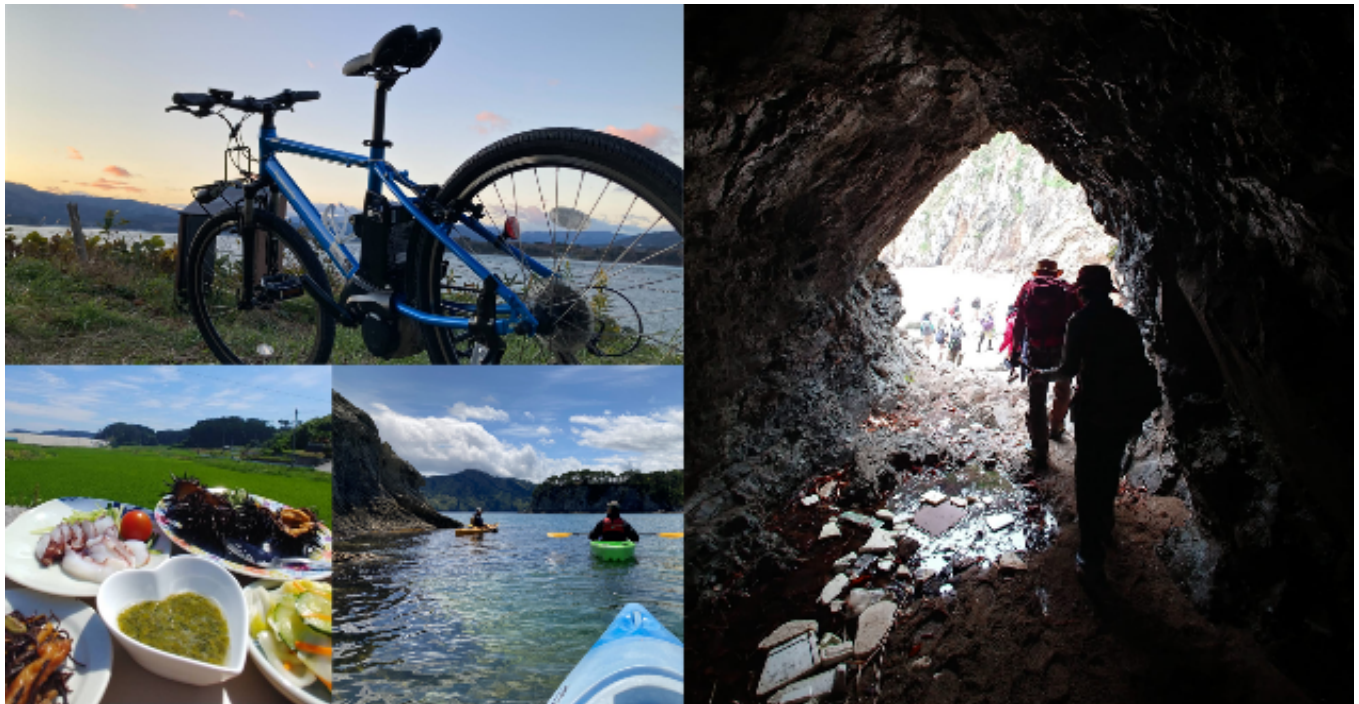


# MICHINOKU COASTAL HIKING TRAIL - 7 DAYS

## A MODEL OF RESILIENCE AND NATURE REGENERATION



Tohoku region of Japan is made up of the northernmost 6 prefecture on the main island, Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Sendai, Yamagata and Fukushima. This area boasts great natural beauty and an abundance of natural resources, such as delicious fresh seafood.

On March 11, 2011, the Tohoku Pacific Coast area was devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake. After more than 10 years of disaster recovery within the area, you can see the beautiful scenery that has not changed from before the earthquake and witness the lives of local people who have risen up against these adversities as you walk, cycle or kayak along the Michinoku Coastal trail and participate in activities unique to this area.

While learning about the disaster and interacting with local residents, this trip offers you a chance to contemplate “life”, not only that of yourself, but also of others, as well as life within our natural surroundings. You will also get a new perspective on living with the natural environment in a sustainable way through learning how the locals have lived with nature in everyday life.

# Day-by-day Itinerary

## September 4th - Day 1

### Learn about the origins of the Michinoku Coastal Trail and start the journey on foot

Your trip begins at Sendai Station in Miyagi Prefecture, the gateway to northern Japan. It takes about 1 hour and 30 minutes by Shinkansen from Tokyo and can also be accessed from Sendai International Airport. The Tour leader will meet you at Sendai station, so please make your way here in time for departure. After meeting your tour leader, you will take a chartered bus to the Natori Trail Center in Natori City.

The "Michinoku Coastal Trail" is a trail route developed by the Ministry of the Environment to convey the recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred on March 11, 2011. In June 2019, the entire route opened as a national trail with a total length of over 1,000 km. We will start by having an introduction to grasp the concepts surrounding the creation of the route as a whole and learn about the characteristics of the area it covers and set the scene for the adventure that lies ahead.

After that, we will board the bus again and head south to Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture, the starting point of the Michinoku Coastal Trail. After a quick commemorative picture at the trailhead, we will start the tour with a hike around the Soma area.

Today's route shows the history and culture of Soma City, which flourished as a castle town. We start from Matsukawa Ura Park, which was completely destroyed due to the tsunami, but was rebuilt thanks to the help of volunteers from around the world. This route also takes us past the castle ruins as well as many shrines and Kannon statues that are believed to continue to protect the town. You can learn about the history of this town as you walk through the changing scenery. The overall hike today is a relatively easy hike of about 7 km done over 3 hours plus a lunch break. The course is mostly walking paved areas and has a gradual slope with elevation from 0m up to a maximum of 17m.

During the hike, we will grab a lunch box from a local restaurant and enjoy it during the hike.

### LUNCH

Today's lunch will be a lunch box with rice and the Soma beef mince cutlets prepared by a local delicatessen, Torikyu Seinikuten, in Soma city. They specialize in making various dishes using Soma brand beef, and the mince cutlets are particularly popular with the locals. A vegetarian option can also be arranged if requested in advance.

After hiking through Soma city, we will transfer to the area of Watari, in southern Miyagi Prefecture and stay overnight at the Watari Onsen Torinoumi Hotel. This hotel was destroyed by the tsunami, but has since rebuilt and serves as a symbol of resilience for the local area.

On the first day, the focus will be on intuitively grasping the scars caused by the earthquake and learning how the city is recovering through our main activity of hiking.

### DINNER

Dinner will be a Japanese set meal consisting of local seafood and other ingredients from the area.

### ACCOMMODATION

Watari Onsen Torinoumi or similar.

Located along the coastline, you can enjoy views of the Pacific Ocean from the hot springs bath and restaurant.

Twin-share western or Japanese style room with private bath and toilet.

Hot spring facilities are also available at the hotel.

**ACTIVITY:** Hiking

**DIFFICULTY:** 2

## September 5<sup>th</sup> - Day 2

**Learn about the power of the March 11, 2011 disaster and the history of people who have lived in harmony with the sea.**

At the start of the second day, we will visit Arahama Elementary School, which still stands as it was on the day of the tsunami and tells the story of the damage caused by this natural disaster. The school, which was severely damaged by the tsunami that reached the second floor of the building, quietly conveys the power of the tsunami and the stories of each person on that day as a "silent storyteller."

After visiting the school, we will start hiking and aim for the Yuriage area, where the shopping district has been rebuilt in the same place despite being damaged by the earthquake. You might wonder, why do people continue to live in a place where a tsunami may strike once again? Let's listen to the story told by the local guide to understand why.

The hike itself will be about 6.5km and 2 hours long, on a very flat, paved path with an accumulated elevation of 4m up and 4m down.

### LUNCH

For lunch today, you can choose any of the delicacies you would like available at the Yuriage shopping district. They have a variety of meals available from fresh seafood to curry and rice. So please enjoy a delicious local meal here.

After that, we will head north by bus and visit a place called Kesennuma city. Kesennuma city is one of the leading fishing cities in northern Japan, which boasts the largest catch of skipjack tuna in Japan. Located here is the Rias Ark Art museum, showcasing the history of the fishing industry here that people have continued since ancient times, as well as the unique lifestyles and culture of the people who have lived with both the bounty of the sea and the harshness it also bears.

### DINNER

The Kesennuma Brewers Table, which is prepared for dinner, is a pairing dinner that combines sake and local ingredients, which was newly started by a local sake brewer after the restoration of the damaged sake brewery. Experience the history and culture of this land through your own taste while gazing at the calm Kesennuma Bay.

### ACCOMMODATION

Kesennuma Plaza Hotel, Isomura Hotel or similar.

Single western or Japanese style room with private bath and toilet.

Hot spring facilities are also available at the hotel.

**ACTIVITY: Hiking, sake pairing dinner**

**DIFFICULTY : 2**

## September 6<sup>th</sup> - Day 3

**Contemplating lives saved and those lost in a devastated city, Rikuzentakata.**

On the third day, we visit Rikuzentakata City, which was devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake. In this town, about 1800 lives were lost, so as we cycle around this town, contemplate the importance of life and the events of that day. Yesterday we visited a town that had been rebuilt in the same location after the disaster, but in this town, they were unable to rebuild in the same way, and instead chose to create a disaster-resistant town by raising the height of the land they built on and moving the residences to higher ground. Cycling through this town is a way to get a three-dimensional experience of how different town development strategies have been put in place within different towns that were affected by the same disaster.

Today we will be using Ebikes (some cross bikes are also available). The course is about 20km, with an accumulated elevation of 397m. Cycling will be about 4.5hours, plus time for lunch, activities and breaks.

During the cycling course today, we will meet residents who will tell us about how they miraculously survived the 15-meter tsunami that hit the city that day, experience zazen meditation that is practiced at the local temples and shrines to pray for the lives lost and talk with people who despite the disaster continue to live happily in this area.

### **LUNCH**

Enjoy a meal prepared by the local ladies of the Nagawara area, which was once used as an emergency housing area after the tsunami. They use freshly caught seafood and locally sourced vegetables to create Japanese meals traditional to this area.

Today is a day to appreciate the "life and livelihood" that is taken for granted all too often as we meet with the local people in this area.

### **DINNER**

Dinner will be served at the Katsuyama Restaurant located in Miyako city. Here French cuisine is prepared using locally sourced ingredients.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Jodogahama Park Hotel.

Twin-share room with private bath and toilet.

Public bath facilities are also available at the hotel.

**ACTIVITY: Cycling, zazen meditation**

**DIFFICULTY:3**

## **September 7<sup>th</sup> - Day 4**

### **Kayaking in scenic Sanriku area, feel the abundant blessings from the sea and land**

On the 4th day, you can feel with your whole body that the sea has not only brought disasters but has also brought great blessings to the people who live here. At Jodogahama, one of the most scenic spots in the Sanriku area, experience sea kayaking and see the majestic scenery of Sanriku that cannot be seen from land. We will do a 90-minute tour within the area, with the actual course catered to the level of participants on the day.

For lunch, we will eat the "Bin Don" menu, which was developed after the earthquake to convey the rich marine resources of the region. The fresh seafood served in a milk bottle sparkles like a beautiful work of art.

### **LUNCH**

Bin don is a style of serving fresh seafood that is unique to this area. It allows customers to pour seasonal seafood ingredients, which have been arranged inside a milk bottle, over rice and then eat it. Please let us know in advance if you cannot eat raw fish, as we can organize either tempura, curry or a vegetarian option as well.

In the neighboring towns of Iwaizumi and Tanohata, there are strata accumulated in the shallow sea from about 110 million years ago, and some of Japan's first dinosaur fossils were excavated here. Experience the eternal workings of the earth through a hike while visiting the geo-sites here. Our hike today will be around 2 hours over 3.5km, with an accumulated elevation of 108m up and 77m down.

Today we can experience the magnificent power of nature and have a greater understanding about how we are continually supported by nature's blessings.

### **DINNER**

Dinner will be locally sourced ingredients served as a Japanese style set dinner.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Kurosaki-so.

Japanese style room, Twin share (single rooms can be organized for additional charge). Bath and toilet are not in rooms, but shared facilities are available.

**ACTIVITY: Sea kayak, hiking**  
**DIFFICULTY: 3**

## September 8<sup>th</sup> - Day 5

**Learn from the wisdom of the locals who make the most of the harsh but rich blessings of nature as you make salt and hike Kitayamazaki**

"Tsukuhama Banya Group " is a work hut for fishermen, and it is a historic landscape that was selected as one of the "100 historical and cultural properties of fishing villages that we want to preserve for the future" before the earthquake. Unfortunately, it was washed away by the tsunami. However, it was rebuilt to its former appearance with the support of locals. At the Banyan group, you can experience how to make salt using traditional methods that make use of the bounty of the sea and also learn about the wisdom of the people who live in this area.

At lunchtime, "L'Oreole Tanohata" is a popular restaurant opened by a French chef who is passionate about local resources and aims to develop the local food culture. Dishes that bring out the goodness of the ingredients themselves without unnecessary seasoning convey the richness of the land.

### LUNCH

Today we will enjoy a French course lunch which will be made using all locally sourced ingredients at the L'Oreole Tanohata restaurant.

In the afternoon, we will hike through the area where poor peasants rebelled after being heavily taxed, known as the "Sanpei Ikki". While remembering those days, walk through the pitch-black hand-carved tunnel with the light of traditional fire torches, reviving the heated scene of the day.

It is a hike with many ups and downs in the northern Alps and it will lead us to our goal, Kitayamazaki. It is a physically demanding activity, but it is well worth the experience and offers us the chance to face the resilient but warm nature of locals, while remembering the path taken by our tenacious predecessors. The hike will be about 5.8km over about 4 hours with an accumulated elevation of 684m up and 556m down.

At night, enjoy the local performing arts famous in this region. While appreciating the blessings of the sea, you can feel the souls of people who prayed, wished, and lived here.

### DINNER

Dinner will be locally sourced ingredients served as a Japanese style set dinner.

### ACCOMMODATION

Kurosaki-so.

Japanese style room, twin share (single rooms can be organized for additional charge). Bath and toilet are not in rooms, but shared facilities are available.

**ACTIVITY: Salt making, hiking, Kagura show**  
**DIFFICULTY: 3**

## September 9<sup>th</sup> - Day 6

### **Calmly looking at the sea, thinking about the coexistence of nature and humans**

Today will be greeted with a gentle coastal hike to relax and revitalize after the hard hike of the previous day. Iwate Prefecture, where Hirono Town is located, boasts the second largest sea urchin production in Japan after Hokkaido. Practicing the “creation and cultivation fishery” strategy, that carefully raises and releases young sea urchin into the sea at cultivation centers without overexploiting resources. In this area they are aiming for a sustainable fishery that protects the limited natural resources and environment and connects them to the future.

“Hirono Emotion”, which you can experience during a gentle hike, is an experience that was created to welcome the guests traveling on the restaurant train as they pass through this region by waving flags from near the train line. Experience the warm hospitality from the Hirono community through various local activities. The hike itself will be about 7km over roughly 2 hours with an accumulated elevation of 45m up and 55 m down. The path will be a mixture of walking along the beach and paved paths.

### **LUNCH**

Hirono is famous for its fresh sea urchin. Today we will enjoy a locally made lunch box with Sea-urchin rice and other local ingredients.

Tanesashi Beach, the goal of the day, is a rare place in Japan where you can admire a wide variety of plants. Enjoy the scenery from the sea through SUP (about 90 minute course including warm up time), and in the evening, have a taste of the delicious BBQ using local ingredients and local sake, and deepen exchanges with your fellow participants through camping on the final night.

### **DINNER**

Our final dinner will be a BBQ dinner using local ingredients from the Hachinohe area.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Tanesashi Kaigan CampGrounds.

Camping tents 2~4 people per tent.

Toilet and Shower blocks available.

**ACTIVITY: Hiking, stand-up paddle boarding, camping**

**DIFFICULTY: 2**

## September 10<sup>th</sup> - Day 7

### **Pledge to connect with nature and live a rich life -Yoga at Sunrise, Nature Walk & Kabushima Shrine**

Today is the final day of the trip. Reflect on your journey through yoga while watching the sun rise over the Pacific Ocean and experience the feeling of being one with nature.

The final section at the northernmost end of the trail offers the dramatic landscape of sandy beaches and rugged reefs from the Sanriku Coast. A promenade is maintained in the pine forest, and you can see the rough scenery of the coast through the trees.

Kabushima Shrine at the finish point is a place where migratory birds such as black-tailed gulls fly every year. At our final destination, which is 1000 km away from the starting point in Soma City, we will take a group photo to commemorate the trek, offer prayers to the shrine, and conclude the tour.

You then take a bus to Aomori Airport, from where you will fly to Sapporo for the beginning of the ATWS. On your way home, reflect on the many people you have met on this journey in Japan, a country prone to disasters, and how they continue to live each day in harmony with nature.

## **LUNCH**

Today we will enjoy a local lunch set with views of Kabushima Shrine. You can choose from a variety of dishes to create your own original lunch. Mostly Western or Japanese style dishes.

**ACTIVITY:** Yoga, hiking

**DIFFICULTY:** 2

# What's included & What to bring

## **What's included**

- Group leader to support and translate from Japanese to English throughout the tour
- Local experienced guide for each activity such as hiking, sea kayaking, cycling and SUP
- Most breakfast, lunch and dinners as written (no breakfast day 1, no lunch day 2, no dinner day 3)
- Transportation from the start of tour in Sendai to the finish of tour at Aomori Airport

## **We provide**

- All equipment needed for cycling (helmets, bicycles) , sea kayaking (kayak, oars, lifejackets) and stand-up paddle boarding (boards, lifejackets).
- A reusable water-bottle for the tour

## **What to bring**

Autumn in Japan can range from quite warm days to cool nights and is also prone to typhoons, so we recommend bringing clothing that is easy to move in but can also be easily layered. For the water activities, we recommend neoprene socks or strap on sandals.

For any days listed as hiking, we recommend a pair of shoes suitable for hiking. The trail will be a mixture of cemented paths, nature paths and mountainous trails. As this season is prone to sudden typhoons, we recommend bringing 2-part rainwear that can easily be put on and taken off as needed.

- Hiking wear (long trousers, or shorts and tights, quick-dry t-shirts, light jacket)
- Clothing suitable to get wet (kayak and SUP)
- Hiking boots
- Rain wear suitable for hiking
- Neoprene socks or strap-on sandals to be worn during kayak and SUP activities
- Hiking backpack (small day pack size)
- Swimsuit & towel
- Sun cap or hat
- Sunglasses
- Sun block & toiletries
- Camera or phone, battery pack
- Other things to bring just for leisure are books, games and binoculars-

# Reservation & Cancellation Policy

## Payment Methods

Trip Price for non-hosted delegates: 350,000JPY

We will send a booking confirmation by email with an invoice requesting the balance 20 days prior to the tour departure date. If Michinori Travel Tohoku has not received payment by the due date, the booking will be canceled.

Payment can be made via bank transfer, online credit card payment or payment at convenience stores via a payment slip if within Japan.

## Cancellation

Cancellations made by guests are effective on receipt of written notification or telephone to our head office. The scale of charges, expressed as a percentage of the tour prices, is as follows:

- More than 20 days prior to departure~ Cancellation is free;
- 20 days~8 days before departure~20%;
- 7 days to 2 days prior to departure~ 30%;
- Day before departure~ 40%;

## Disclaimer

Trip Cancellation: Michinori Travel Tohoku reserves the right to cancel the tour before the departure date if the minimum number of participants was not confirmed. In this case we will notify the guests within 10 days before departure, and any payment made will be refunded in full.

Furthermore, we also reserve the right to cancel the tour in cases when unforeseen events beyond our control arise, such as acts of God, etc of war, civil commotion, suspension of Tour services by transportation and accommodation facilities, etc., orders from government and other public agencies, and other causes, whereby it becomes impossible or highly unlikely to carry out the safe and smooth implementation of the tour as scheduled according to the itinerary. In such cases, Michinori Travel Tohoku is not responsible for compensating any additional costs such as flights or accommodation.

## TOUR OPERATOR

Michinori Travel Tohoku

1-17-18 Kuriyagawa, Morioka city, Iwate Prefecture, Japan

+81(0)19-641-8811

for\_english@michinoritravel-tohoku.jp



# Route map

