

## Getting to Yuza from Tokyo

**✈ By air (ANA operates 4–5 flights daily)** ※Subject to seasonal change  
Haneda Airport → 60 min. → Shonai Airport → 40 min. by car → Yuza

**🚆 By train (Shinkansen and limited express train)**

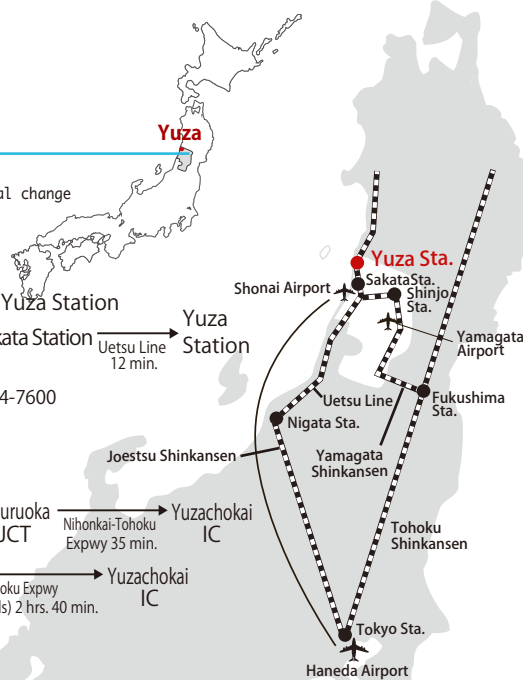
① Tokyo Station → Joetsu Shinkansen 2 hrs. → Niigata Station → Uetsu Line 2 hrs. 20 min. → Yuza Station  
② Tokyo Station → Yamagata Shinkansen 3 hrs. 30 min. → Shinjo Station → Rikuu West Line (provisional bus service) 2 hrs. → Sakata Station → Uetsu Line 12 min. → Yuza Station

**🚌 By express bus (overnight)** ※Reservation: Shonai Kotsu 0234-24-7600

Tokyo → 8 hrs. 30 min. → Sakata Station → 30 min. by car → Yuza

**🚗 By car (via expressways)**

① Tokyo → Tohoku Expwy 3 hrs. 40 min. → Fukushima-Nishi IC → Tohoku-Chuo Expwy 1 hr. 20 min. → Yamagata JCT → Yamagata Expwy 1 hr. 20 min. → Tsuruoka JCT → Nihonkai-Tohoku Expwy 35 min. → Yuzachokai IC  
② Tokyo → Kan-Etsu Expwy 3 hrs. 40 min. → Nagaoka JCT → Hokuriku Expwy 40 min. → Niigata Chuo JCT → Nihonkai-Tohoku Expwy (incl. surface roads) 2 hrs. 40 min. → Yuzachokai IC



## Yuza Tourist Information Website

Yuza Chokai Tourism Association <https://www.yuzachokai.jp/>

19-18 Yuza Aza Ishida, Yuza-machi, Akumi-gun, Yamagata Prefecture 999-8301 (in Yuza Station)  
Hours: Mon–Sat 8:30–17:30 (open on public holidays) Closed: Sundays/Year-end and New Year holidays  
Tel: 0234-72-5666 Fax: 0234-72-3999 e-mail: master@yuzachokai.jp



Yuza Chokai  
Tourism Association

## Yuza Travel Information

### Mt. Chokai value taxi plan

<https://www.yuzachokai.jp/spot/taxy-pack/>

Economical accommodation plans are available to help you enjoy your stay in Yuza and Mt. Chokai. Two persons or more staying at designated accommodations in Yuza will receive a coupon for 2 hours of taxi use.



Mt. Chokai  
value taxi plan

### Yuza tour/Mt. Chokai climbing tour

<https://www.yuzachokai.jp/travel/tour/>

Tours of natural springs, famous sights and climbs up Mt. Chokai can be arranged.



Yuza tour / Mt. Chokai  
climbing tour

### Accommodation and meal service charge cashback plan

<https://www.yuzachokai.jp/travel/cashback/>

Cashback plan for travel agencies booking designated accommodations and restaurants, per customer booked.



Cashback plan

### Rent-a-cycle

<https://www.yuzachokai.jp/spot/rentalcycle/>

5 bicycles available free of charge at Yuza Station (at the Yuza Chokai Tourism Association, 8:30–17:30) and 8 available at the Yurari hotel at Chokai Onsen (Apr.–Oct., 8:00–19:00)



Rent-a-cycle

## Contact Information

Yuza Town Tourism Products Section <https://www.town.yuza.yamagata.jp/>

202 Yuza Aza Maizuru, Yuza-machi, Akumi-gun, Yamagata Prefecture 999-8301  
Tel: 0234-72-5886 (8:30~17:15) FAX: 0234-72-3315  
Closed: Sat/Sun/public holidays/late Dec.–early Jan.) e-mail: kanko@town.yuza.lg.jp



Yuza Town

巡る Wander  
Around  
Yuza

Flow with the Waters of Mt. Chokai

Cradle Special Issue  
Regional Cultural Information Magazine  
for Dewa-Shonai  
Tourist Guide to Yuza, Yamagata

ゆざまち





Residing in a certain place means being  
part of the region's history and rhythm of life.  
Visiting an area is to learn about it and experience it  
with all five senses.

Yuza, a town in the northernmost part of Yamagata's Shonai region,  
lies between imposing Mt. Chokai and the sparkling Sea of Japan.  
It is part of the grand cycle of water and life visitors can encounter here;  
this booklet is an introduction to Yuza's many attractions.

Wander Around Yuza

## CONTENTS

### Explore Mt. Chokai

<b>To the Summit</b>	03
MAP① / Climbing and Trekking	05
<b>To the Mountainside</b>	07
MAP② / Visiting Mountainside Waterfalls	09
<b>To the Foothills</b>	11
MAP③ / Touring the Springs	13

### Mt. Chokai Folk Worship

Chokaizan Omonoimi-jinja Shrine	15
Traditional Diversions and Rituals	17

### Enjoy Food

Relax	19
Dining Options	21
Buy	22

Experience, Recreation, Visit, Hot Springs, Overnight Stays	23
--	----

The Four Seasons	25
------------------	----

Things to Do in Yuza	27
----------------------	----





The summit of Mt. Chokai, also known as Dewa Fuji, is under the jurisdiction of Yuza. Past the elevation of 1,200 meters, a flower-filled panorama unfolds.



In summer, Mt. Chokai, one of Japan's 100 Famous Mountains, attracts climbers from all over the world. Above 1,200 meters, fields of flowers are the main attraction. Close to the Sea of Japan, Mt. Chokai receives massive snowfall in winter. As the weather warms, the snow along the ridges slowly melts and alpine plants emerge. From June to September, their delicate flowers burst into bloom for 2 to 3 km along the ridge climbing routes.

The spectacular panorama of the Sea of Japan is another attraction. Mt. Chokai, a free-standing peak, rises straight up from sea level. Trails on the seaward side offer endless views of the sea and flowering meadows. Spring attracts skiers who enjoy the same views and the thrill and unmatched experience of skiing down toward the sea. But conditions can change suddenly, so keep an eye on the weather.

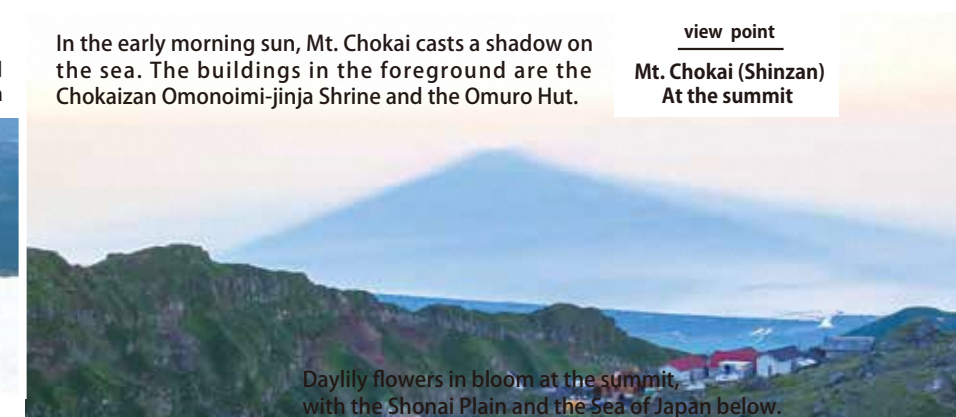


view point  
Fukura-guchi Trail  
Near Nagasaka



Spring skiing

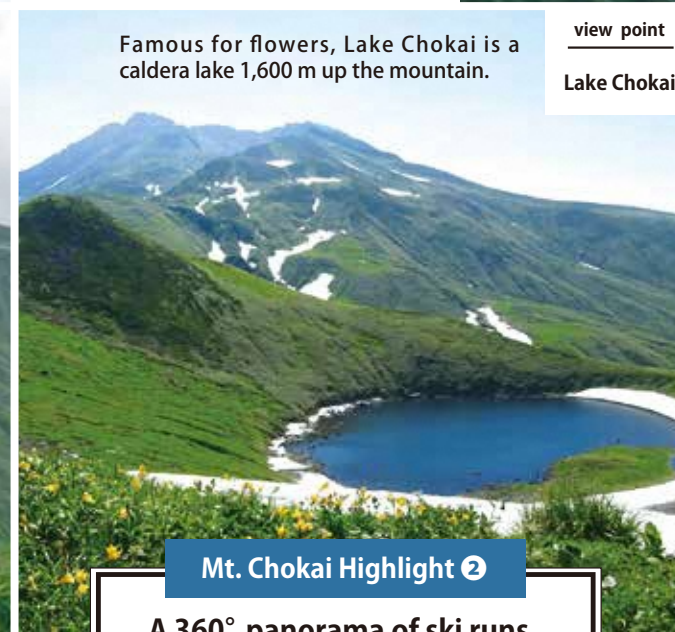
view point  
Fukura-guchi Trail  
Near Tsutaishizaka



view point  
Mt. Chokai (Shinzan)  
At the summit

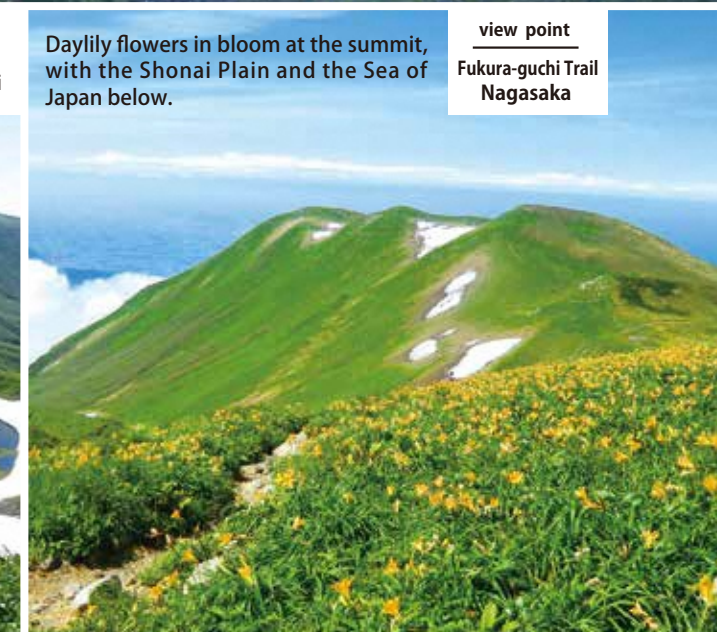
In the early morning sun, Mt. Chokai casts a shadow on the sea. The buildings in the foreground are the Chokaizan Omonoimi-jinja Shrine and the Omuro Hut.

Daylily flowers in bloom at the summit, with the Shonai Plain and the Sea of Japan below.



Famous for flowers, Lake Chokai is a caldera lake 1,600 m up the mountain.

view point  
Lake Chokai



Daylily flowers in bloom at the summit, with the Shonai Plain and the Sea of Japan below.

view point  
Fukura-guchi Trail  
Nagasaka

### Mt. Chokai Highlight ①

**A tapestry of alpine plants as far as the eye can see, and the Sea of Japan below!**

Flowers creating colorful scenery bloom along the ridges and continue for 2–3 km along the trail with the stunning blue of the Sea of Japan in the distance.

### Mt. Chokai Highlight ②

**A 360° panorama of ski runs, this is the perfect place for spring skiing!**

Backcountry skiing in endless fields of snow. Mt. Chokai offers 3–4 km of gentle slopes heading down toward the sea that keep avid skiers coming back for more.

▲ **Flowers bloom from July to early September.** Mountain lodges operate in season, ideal for beginning climbers.

▲ **Spring skiing from late April to end of May** The ski season starts when the Chokai Blue Line Road reopens after winter.



03 Daylily



Chokaifusuma



Aleutian avens



# MAP 1 Mt. Chokai Climbing and Trekking

There are 3 recommended climbing routes, each with distinctive features.

\*The required hiking time shown for each trail is approximate

**Summit**  
(Shinzan)

Elev. 2,236m

The summit is part of Yuza

**Gohonsha of Chokaizan Omonoimi-jinja Shrine**

See p.15 for details

The three climbing trails up to the summit are very demanding. Novices should start by trekking to enjoy the scenery and flowers along the way.

This area remains snow-covered even in summer, with the snow forming the parts of the kanji for "heart."



Heart-shaped large snow valley

The Yunodai-guchi Trail is the shortest for climbing from the Yamagata side. It's steep but has plenty of scenic views.

4 hrs. to the summit one-way

**Yunodai-guchi**

Elev. 1,200m

30 cars

20 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

30 cars

Chokai Kogen Line Road  
Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

Open from end of June to late October

Chokai Kogen Line Road

A leisurely 6-hour round-trip trek  
Yunodai-guchi trekking trail for Gassan-mori and the large snow valley.

Rain turns this steep spot into a waterfall.



Gassan-mori

Gassan-mori affords a fine view of the Shonai plain. If you are trekking there, start from the parking lot around 9 a.m. so that you reach it by noon, in time to eat your packed lunch and admire the view.



Takinokoya Hut

Can be reached in 30 min. from the Yunodai-guchi trailhead. There is still snow early in the season, so tread carefully.

Tsurumaik Pond, favored by climbers and photographers, is a tranquil spot deep in a beech forest. If you leave the parking lot around 10 a.m., you can reach the pond by lunchtime and be back at your starting point by around 2 p.m. A great route for beginner trekkers.

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Beware! Steep cliff

Shops and restaurants at the head of the Kisakata-guchi Trail make it a convenient starting point.

5-6 hrs. to the summit one-way

**Hokodate-guchi**

Elev. 1,160m

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

Inakura Lodge

Hokodate Lodge

**Trekking trail to Lake Chokai**

A leisurely 6-hour round-trip trek

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

Trekking trail to Lake Chokai

The Fukura-guchi Trail is also called the Odaira-guchi Trail. This is the best option for enjoying alpine plants in season.

5-6 hrs. to the summit one-way

**Odaira-guchi**

Elev. 1,080m

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

Odaira Lodge

**Mt. Shogatake**

Elev. 1,635m

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path

Nagasaka Path



Mt. Shogatake

Famous for scenic views, Mt. Shogatake is among the 100 famous peaks of Yamagata. Flowers bloom along the ridge.

To Takase Gorge

To Ichi-no-taki / Ni-no-taki

## 【Climbing Rules】

- Be properly equipped for the climb; prepare a detailed climbing plan.
- Leave plenty of time for your climb.
- If you think you're not on the right track, turn back to a point you are sure is correct.
- Be prepared to abandon your climb if the weather is poor.

## 【Mountain Guides】

Recommended for beginners!

To ensure safe climbing, use a mountain guide. Details below.

Yuza Chokai Tourism Association  
<https://www.yuzachokai.jp/spot/gaido/>



## 【Mountain Lodgings】

- Ohama Hut (7th station)
- Ohama Shrine (summit)

## 【Climbing Facilities】

- Odaira-guchi
- Odaira Lodge (accommodations, shop, restaurant, baths)
- Yunodai-guchi
- Takinokoya Hut (accommodations)

- Hokodate-guchi
- Hokodate Lodge (accommodations)
- Inakura Lodge (shop, restaurant)

## 【Transport to Trailheads】

- Private car
- Taxi
- Sakata Daiichi Taxi
- Sakata Godo Taxi



巡  
鳥海山  
山腹へ  
Explore Mt. Chokai  
To the mountainside

Down from the summit, the mountain's flanks are covered in deep green beech woods. Subterranean water collected over millennia and plentiful snow melt have created waterfalls and springs.



Abundant rainfall is a hallmark of Mt. Chokai. Warm water vapor from the Tsushima Current in the Sea of Japan rises to form clouds that ride on winter northwest seasonal winds and dump rain and snow onto the mountain. This water forms streams that feed the beech forests and turn into rivers and waterfalls as they flow toward the foothills. Mt. Chokai is a volcano that has erupted repeatedly throughout history. The terrain is full of fissures formed by lava, which filter the rain and snow and

create highly pure water percolating to the surface and for which Yuza is known. The water flowing back into the sea becomes vapor once more, rising and dropping again on the mountain, a cycle that has repeated for millennia.

Thick beech forests grow halfway up the mountain, and the water flowing through gorges creates waterfalls, streams and springs. Trekking course trailheads are accessible by car, so it's worth exploring the forests created by the mountain's water.



A spring-fed waterfall created by water flowing from rock faces. Its mysterious air made it a sacred place for mountain ascetics.

view point  
Dohara  
Waterfall



The water from the falls flows into a stream but eventually disappears underground.



view point  
Ichi-no-taki  
Waterfall



view point  
Ni-no-taki  
Waterfall



view point  
Takase  
Gorge



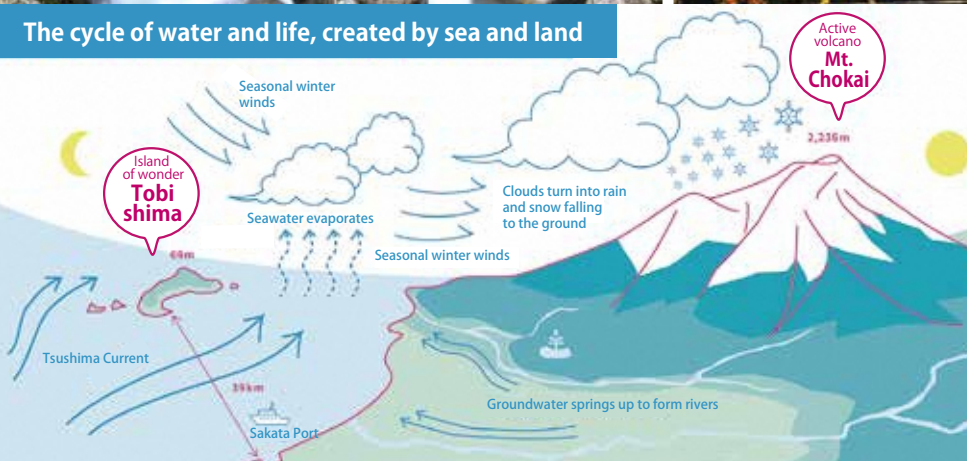
### Mt. Chokai Highlight ③

**Many of falls and rivers continue flowing throughout the year!**

Mountain rivers fed by snowmelt usually dry up before summer. Mt. Chokai's plentiful snowfall ensures that snowmelt continues into summer; many of its rivers flow all year long.

### Mt. Chokai & Tobishima Island Geopark <https://chokaitobishima.com/>

A geopark is an area whose geology and terrain can be studied to gain clues about Earth's past and future. Japan has 46 areas designated as geoparks (as of March 2023). Mt. Chokai and Tobishima have been recognized as a geopark site for observing the cycle of life and water.



The Mt. Chokai & Tobishima Island Geopark explores the cycle of life and water created by sea and land. As seen here, water from the sea rises into the air and is carried by winds to Mt. Chokai, where it falls as rain and snow. The water flows down the mountain to the sea, turning into water vapor and repeating the cycle.





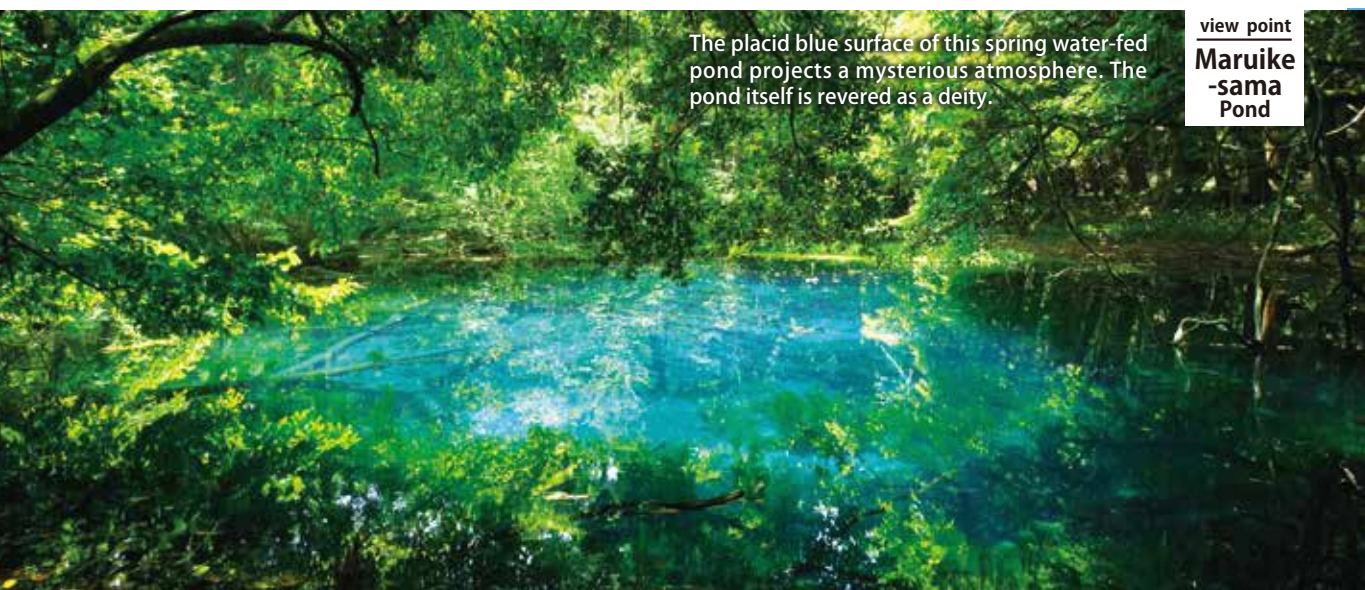




The mountain receives plentiful snow and rain from the sea. The water creates rivers, groundwater and springs flowing down to the foothills to support life and living things. The cycle is repeated as the water flows back to the sea and again to the mountain, an endless repetition of water creation.

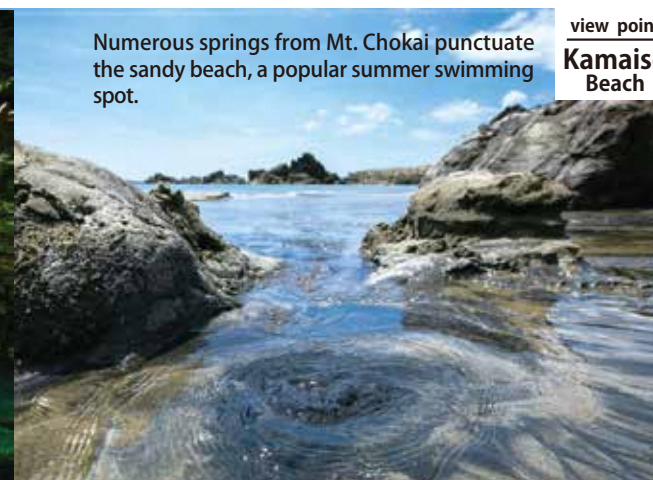
Mt. Chokai, where water flows to the sea and back again to the mountain. The water also carries nutrients from the mountain to the sea, nurturing salmon that return to the rivers of their birth to spawn and die. Insects and animals go up the food chain, giving the mountain nutrients. just as the salmon that matures in the ocean to then swim back up the river of its birth to spawn and die, insects and various animals also, caught in the life and death cycle of the food chain, return nutrients to the summit of the mountain. The cycle continues, with nutrients flowing to the sea and nurturing sea life,

just like water is the cycle of life. Life in the foothills also depends on the mountain's water. Yuza's hamlets grew thanks to the rivers, ponds and springs the water created. Inhabitants use the water for drinking and washing, irrigating paddies and fields to grow rice and vegetables and making sake. Salmon incubation has existed on the Gakko River system, where salmon return every year, for 100 years. At Fukura, oysters grow large thanks to springs bubbling from the ocean floor. The grand cycle of life and water between Mt. Chokai and the sea supports life in Yuza.



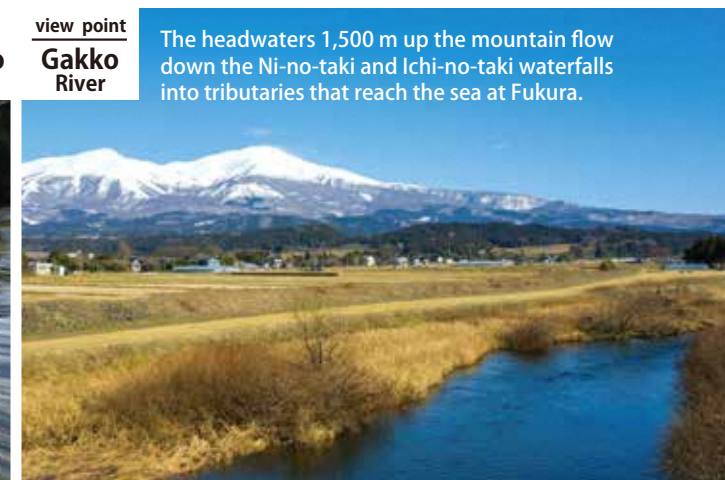
The placid blue surface of this spring water-fed pond projects a mysterious atmosphere. The pond itself is revered as a deity.

view point  
**Maruike-sama Pond**



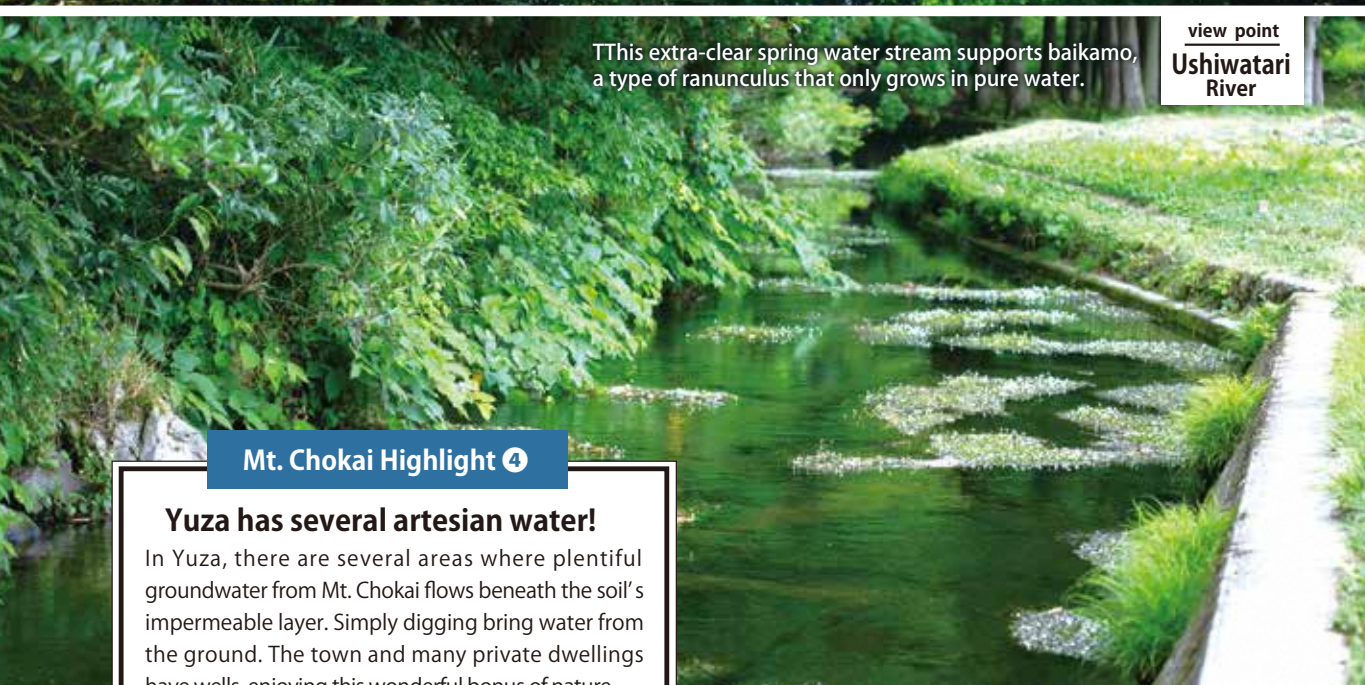
Numerous springs from Mt. Chokai punctuate the sandy beach, a popular summer swimming spot.

view point  
**Kamaiso Beach**



view point  
**Gakko River**

The headwaters 1,500 m up the mountain flow down the Ni-no-taki and Ichi-no-taki waterfalls into tributaries that reach the sea at Fukura.



This extra-clear spring water stream supports baikamo, a type of ranunculus that only grows in pure water.

view point  
**Ushiwatari River**

#### Mt. Chokai Highlight ④

##### Yuza has several artesian water!

In Yuza, there are several areas where plentiful groundwater from Mt. Chokai flows beneath the soil's impermeable layer. Simply digging bring water from the ground. The town and many private dwellings have wells, enjoying this wonderful bonus of nature.



Fields Growing rice



Catching salmon River

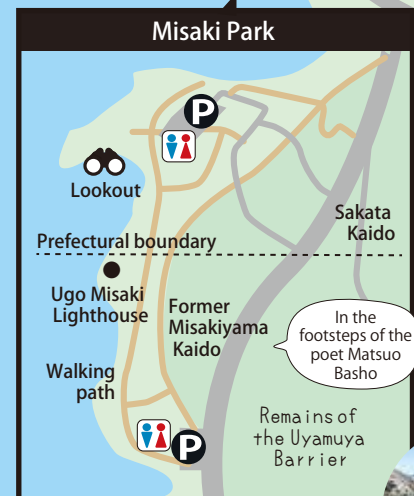


Sea Harvesting oysters



Making sake Village





This area straddles the prefectures of Akita and Yamagata. View the setting sun from the walking path, a forest of bay trees and historic ruins.



At Dewa Futami, two rocks are bound by a sacred straw rope to pray for the safety of fishers at sea. A favorite photo spot in May and August, when the sun sets directly between the ropes; the sight ensures that viewers will be blessed with good fortune.

The Water of Kamiko



A UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage!  
Mega, Takinoura and Torisaki, home of the amahage festival.



Chokai Blue Line Road

Jomon Period ruins preserved by spring water!



Koyamazaki prehistoric site

Communal washing basins at Mega. The first is for drinking water, the second for rinsing rice and cooling, the third for washing vegetables and seaweed, the fourth for laundry, the fifth for washing farm tools and the sixth for washing diapers.

Popular for its sacred atmosphere!



Onoso Shrine



Baikamo flowers of Ushiwatari River

Best viewing June to July

Temple with a mysterious atmosphere



See p.18 for details

Kinomesawa Bridge

Skunk cabbage clusters



Skunk cabbage clusters



Stone Statues of the 16 Arhats

See p.18 for details

# MAP 3 Mt. Chokai Touring the Springs

The waters of Mt. Chokai flow through the Gakko River to Fukura, the final destination for life-sustaining water. Springs and other attractions abound.

Fukura Area

Stone Statues of the 16 arhats



Sunset Jurokurakan



Dewa Futami



Nishihama Cottages & Campground



Chokai Onsen Yurari



Apon Nishihama



Torimitei



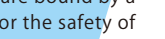
Soba Shop Tachikawa



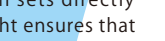
Roadside Station Chokai Furatto



ヤマサ鮮魚



Convenience store



At Furatto, you'll find food, souvenirs and fresh produce

Chokaizan Omonoimi-jinja Shrine Fukura Kuchinomiya



Former Fukura Elementary School



Sunset Jurokurakan



Dewa Futami



Nishihama Cottages & Campground



Chokai Onsen Yurari



Apon Nishihama



Torimitei



Soba Shop Tachikawa



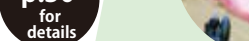
Roadside Station Chokai Furatto



ヤマサ鮮魚



Convenience store



At Furatto, you'll find food, souvenirs and fresh produce

Minowa Salmon Fishery Cooperative



Koyamazaki prehistoric site



Masukawa Salmon Fishery Cooperative



Masukawa Salmon Hatchery



Yosenji Temple



Masukawa Salmon Hatchery



Famous for cherry trees



Nakayama Riverside Park



Arasawa River



In autumn, the rivers are filled with salmon



Yuzo Chokai IC



Nihonka-Tohoku Expwy



Ushiwatari River



Salmon catching area



Maruikesama Pond



Chokai Blue Line Road



Chokai Blue Line Road



Chokai Blue Line Road



Chokai Blue Line Road



Chokai Blue Line Road



Chokai Blue Line Road



Chokai Blue Line Road



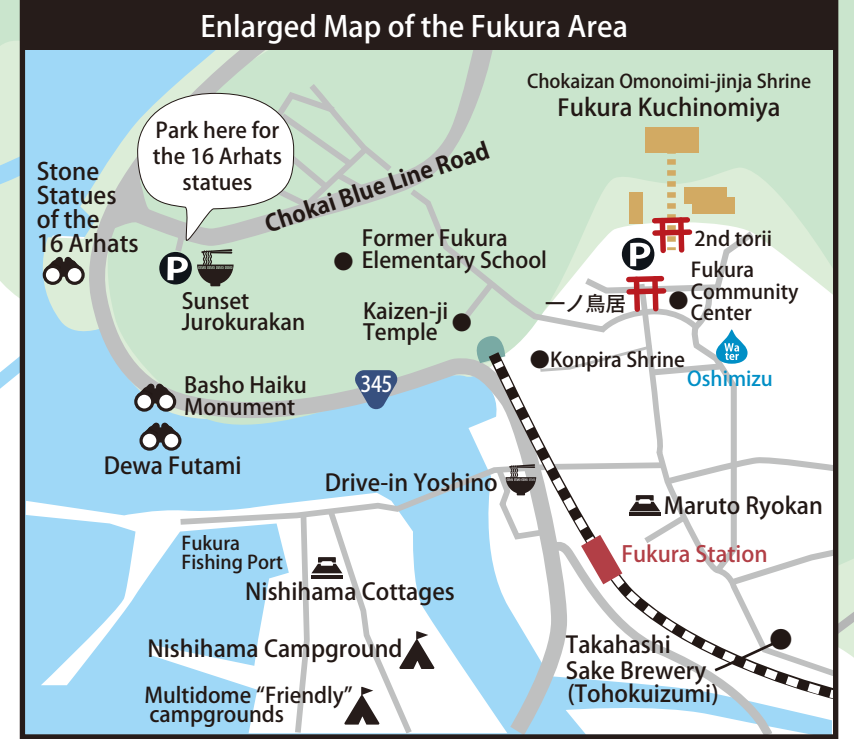
Chokai Blue Line Road



Chokai Blue Line Road



Chokai Blue Line Road



Merry Bokujo Farm



Has a wood-fired oven



Boulangerie NAO



See p.22 for details