

Recommendation for Walking Around the City

On the occasion of a walk in the city of Morinomiya

As mentioned in the opening greeting, I would like to introduce a new venture this time – strolling through the city of the woods (which refers to Sendai, often called the "City of Trees"). In my daily life, I make use of road bikes and mountain bikes as a means of maintaining my health and organizing my thoughts. Riding through the sea, hills, and forests while listening to the birds' songs, the sound of cicadas, feeling the wind on my cheeks, and experiencing the seasons on my skin – this activity not only serves as a way to stay healthy but also provides a sense of exhilaration, achievement, and precious time for contemplation. It's during these rides that ideas come to me one after the other. I consider it an essential practice for both staying in shape and organizing my thoughts.

However, this health regimen is subject to the whims of weather and time. Rainy days, snowy days, icy conditions, nighttime – all of these impose physical constraints. Considering my ongoing battle with "metabo" (metabolic syndrome) and my need for consistent physical activity even during the creation of this guidebook, I found it necessary to explore alternative approaches. Thus, I reluctantly began city walking.

To my surprise, this change opened my eyes to something remarkable. Suddenly, I noticed spots in the city that I had previously overlooked. I felt an urge to stop and observe these places closely, a desire to learn everything about Sendai while I was here. My curiosity knew no bounds, and the range of places I could explore on foot expanded. Gradually, I started to appreciate the unhurried pace of walking, which brought an indescribable sense of comfort. Simultaneously, I learned that there are historical and cherished places in the city that are not often featured in mainstream guidebooks, yet they hold great significance for the local community.

In the wake of the earthquake disaster, I felt compelled to record and share these lesser-known gems with the guests of Sendai International Hotel, thinking, "We must not forget this; we must preserve it as a record and inform our guests." From trekking in the mountains like Mount Izumigatake, Mount Daitougatake, and Mount Omoshiroyama, to hiking in places like Banzan and Gongenmori, exploring the forests of Mount Taihaksan, Kongozawajisanyama, and Aobanomori, or going on MTB tours from Futakuchikeikoku Valley over Iwagisaiwa to Yama Temple – within my five years of living in Sendai, I've had numerous moments where I thought, "Our guests must experience this too." There is no shortage of places to see in the City of Trees.

However, these are all considered somewhat niche interests. This time, considering the convenience of our hotel guests, I will introduce seven city walking routes that are within my range of experience and can be reached directly from the hotel. Please note that these routes often do not directly connect with typical tourist attractions. I am prepared to accept criticism like, "These are nothing but 'B-grade' spots; they are unnecessary for anyone except those with a lot of free time." Please carefully consider them. The estimated time for each route is based on my actual walking times at a brisk pace. Typically, I create these estimates based on the time it takes for my family and me to complete the route. Just as with your budget for food exploration, please allow for some margin of error.

Furthermore, after the creation of this guidebook, many of our employees have pointed out that these routes are quite long and, in many cases, not typical. We have received some skepticism. When you actually use these routes, we recommend considering factors such as your physical fitness, the time available, and the weather, and being prepared to use escape routes or other modes of transportation, including taxis.

Walking is the best way to stay healthy! Through walking, you can encounter a different side of the City of Trees. Walking introduces you to the ultimate spice of "hunger," making delicious things even more delicious. So, are you ready to enjoy a city walk in the City of Trees?

Atagoyama Shrine, Daimanzan Temple, and Dainenjiyama Course:

Starting in front of Atagoyama Shrine Hotel, head east on Nibancho Street towards Nagamachi, passing by the Kahoku Shimpo (a newspaper company). When you reach the vicinity of the Sendai Central Police Station, look back, and you'll see a large map painted on a wall. Here, you can truly feel the presence of Mutsu and the Oshu region. Cross the street here and, looking back along the road, you'll spot a sign marking the birthplace of Kohdensha (a communications company). Be impressed by the achievements of Tohoku University!

Continue forward, passing the prestigious Gohashichu Middle School on your right. When you stand in front of the main gate, if you look back along the road, you'll see a sign marking the birthplace of the Kohdensha communication company. Be impressed by Tohoku University's achievements! Keep going until you cross Atago Bridge over Hirosegawa. With the great Dainenjiyama and its three transmission towers right in front of you, ascend the

small hill to your right at an angle, and you'll arrive at a large vermilion torii gate. From here, it's the approach to Atagoyama Shrine, with its long stone staircase of 210 steps. Along the way, you'll notice the lanterns on both sides, and as you proceed, you'll see that some of them have lost their lighting elements. These are scars from the earthquake. By the time you start panting heavily, you'll reach the point where Kasagi, Kaname, and others are located. After passing through the stone torii with shimenawa (sacred ropes) strung across it, the main gate catches your eye. On both sides, there are wooden statues of Karasu Tengu (crow tengu) on the left and Daikoku Tengu on the right, overseeing the shrine.

The largest in Japan?

There's a sign that can't be ignored, claiming to be Japan's largest? Take a peek, and during the daytime, it reflects on glass set in a lattice, making it quite hard to see clearly. Those who want a clearer view should wait until dusk when the interior lights up. Pass through the gate, and you'll arrive at the main hall of Atagoyama Shrine. Offer two bows, two claps, and one bow here, then continue down the narrow path to the right.

Below you, you'll see the Hirosegawa River with Mount Izumigatake and Nanasumori in the background, overlooking the city of Sendai. This is an elevation of 75 meters and a favorite spot for locals. It's recommended for those who may have tired of Sendai Castle ruins. If you continue deeper into Daimanzan Temple, you'll come to a square dedicated to the Great Mandala Bodhisattva. This place is known as the "Zodiac Square," and it's adorned with stone statues representing the twelve zodiac animals. There's a monk and a child perched on top of a wooden fish. A snake sits on a gourd with the character for "fortune," and curiously, the ox is made of copper, with a smooth nose, the only part that's not oxidized. Each one has its own charm and is quite intriguing.

In the center, there's the Senju Kannon Bodhisattva Hall, with a statue of Senju Kannon Bodhisattva, the deity of a thousand arms, and there's a belief that it's related to the roots of Sendai's place names. To the right is the bell tower, housing a magnificent bronze bell. It's quite extraordinary. Equipped with an automated bell-ringing system called the "Nam System," it starts ringing suddenly around 5 o'clock in the evening. It chimes with a deep resonance approximately every 30 seconds, about 20 times. If you're interested in how this mechanism works, I highly recommend taking a closer look.

After paying respects to the Great Mandala Bodhisattva, you can strike a bell-like gong.

When you turn to your right, there's yet another hall, the Octagonal Hall. Inside, there are eight stone statues, including the twelve zodiac protectors, Senju Kannon Bodhisattva, Great Mandala Bodhisattva, Monju Bodhisattva, Seishi Bodhisattva, Dainichi Nyorai, Fudo Myoo, Fugen Bodhisattva, and Amida Nyorai. You can pay your respects according to your zodiac sign.

Now, let's descend the stone steps from here. Once you're at the bottom, you'll see the main hall of Daimanzan Temple on your right. Head straight, and you'll reach a major road that leads to Yagiyama from Koetsu. Turn left, cross the traffic light, and continue along the road. Then, turn diagonally right onto a narrow paved road with a steep guardrail, climbing towards Mount Dainenjiyama.

The ascent can be a bit challenging. By the time a hint of sweat appears, make a left turn at the corner after passing the tennis court. Before long, the view opens up, and you'll find yourself on the west side of Dainenji Park, with a large white steel tower looming in front of you. It's 135 meters tall, the TV tower for Miyagi Television Broadcasting. As you proceed along the promenade, you'll notice cracks in the ground, and when you look up, you can see that the top part of the tower, the antenna section, is somewhat tilted to the north. This is also a result of the strong shaking from the March 11th earthquake.

Before the earthquake, this TV tower used to illuminate in white for clear weather, orange for cloudy, and green for rain or snow in the weather forecast for the next day. It used to be a significant accent to the night view. However, due to power-saving measures, it is currently suspended. As you continue along the side of the tower, on your left, you'll see an earthwork covered in dense vegetation. This is the grave site of the Date family, dating back to Date Tsunamune, the fourth-generation lord of Sendai domain. If you peer through the gate of the iron fence in front, you'll see that the tombstones were brutally knocked over by the earthquake, and each one is marked with a number for reconstruction.

Once you complete a circuit of the graveyard, you'll have a view of Sendai city through the gaps in the trees. As you advance to the grass-covered hill, there's a rest area with a roof. From here, you can have a panoramic view of the coastline from the Pacific Ocean to Aranohama, Yagiyama, and Iwanuma. The once lush coastal forest that covered the coastline has disappeared, leaving it looking as though the teeth of a comb are missing. The scars of

the massive tsunami are painfully evident.

Further into the woods, within the thicket to the right, there's a monument that commemorates the achievements of Ichiro Ichikawa, the second president of the Kahoku Shimpo newspaper company and an honorary citizen of Sendai. It's easy to overlook, so be sure to look out for the characters "前進" ("advance") within the thicket. Continue on, and after crossing the bus terminal, you'll come across the NHK Sendai Broadcasting Station, Tohoku Broadcasting, and Tohoku Hoso TV towers, standing at 150 meters tall. These were rebuilt in 2001, painted gray, and the lights here do not illuminate.

To the right, you'll find the Sendai City Wildflower Garden. Opened in 1954 on the northern slope of Mount Dainenjiyama, it covers a vast area of 95,000 square meters. Here, you can enjoy not only walking but also getting close to wildflowers. As the name suggests, it's intentionally left somewhat untamed. It's composed of forests of fir trees, red pine trees, and oak trees, featuring representative plants from the Tohoku region, ranging from high mountains to the coast. There are 14 varieties of bush clover, and even a tunnel made of bush clover. The garden is open from March 20th to November 30th, allowing you to experience the changing seasons of wildflowers as you stroll through it.

For those feeling tired in this area, you can escape by bus. There are approximately two buses per hour heading toward Sendai Station. It's a good idea to check the departure times in advance and adjust your time at the wildflower garden. Now, for those who are up for the challenge of the climb, let's aim for a deeper experience. Beyond this point, there's a tower painted in two tones of orange and white, which is the Sendai Broadcasting and Date FM radio tower, standing at 125 meters. At one time, it had a lighting system that changed every hour during illumination. Adding this tower to the previous three, along with the Tohoku Broadcasting tower at 120 meters on Yagiyama, these four towers played a significant role in enhancing Sendai's night view. They served as a landmark for arriving in Sendai on the shinkansen (bullet train) and received the 10th Sendai City Urban Landscape Award. We hope for their swift restoration.

After passing the Sendai Broadcasting TV tower, you'll enter the campus roads of Tohoku Institute of Technology, Nagamachi Campus. It's a pleasant downhill stretch that overlooks the southern slope of Dainenji Mountain, Yagiyama, Nagamachi, and even the distant

Pacific Ocean.

Exit the university campus and turn left. Continue for a while, then make a left turn at the corner with the pharmacy. Follow the road along the watercourse, turn left at the barbershop, and with the three TV towers on your left, make a left turn onto National Route 286. Go around Dainenji Mountain.

As you walk along the sidewalk for a bit, you'll come across a sign indicating Dainenji. Turn left here, climb a steep slope, and you'll reach Dainenji's main gate. It's an impressive gate with a hipped roof and cut gables, believed to have been constructed in the mid-Edo period.

Now, for today's climax, gather your strength and let's climb back up the long staircase of 275 steps. Once you've finally reached the top, you'll arrive at the "Forward" monument. Turn left just before the Miyagi TV tower, and from here, retrace your steps.

The final climb back up is the 185 steps leading to the Dainenji Kukudo Hall. Personally, I recommend doing this in the winter around 5 PM when the surroundings start getting dark. On the way back from Dainenji Mountain, climb the staircase to the Dainenji Kukudo Hall, illuminated by lanterns, while listening to the sound of the bell. When you reach the square, you'll be treated to a spectacular view of the night cityscape and a charming twilight. This course, with its elevation change of over 300 meters, involves climbing the staircase three times and is my top recommendation.

Estimated Time:

- Hotel to Atagoyama Shrine: 30 minutes (20 minutes for a brisk walker)
- Atagoyama Shrine to Wildflower Garden: 45 minutes (25 minutes for a brisk walker)
- Wildflower Garden to Dainenji Main Gate: 55 minutes (30 minutes for a brisk walker)
- Dainenji Main Gate to Dainenji Kukudo Hall: 45 minutes (25 minutes for a brisk walker)
- Dainenji Kukudo Hall to Hotel: 30 minutes (20 minutes for a brisk walker)
- Total Duration: 205 minutes (120 minutes without including time for exploring the Wildflower Garden).

From Sendai Castle Site to Yagiyama Course

First, from the Hotel to the crossroads of Higashi-Nibancho Street and Kitamecho Street,

cross the intersection and proceed past the side of the Westin Hotel. At the intersection of Kitamecho, you'll see a large sign with the word "魚" (fish) in front of you. Turn right here, passing by the well-regarded fish store "Asahiya Satohonten," known as a local favorite for fresh fish. Make a left at the shop that sells dance costumes. On your left, you'll see Tohoku University Katahira Campus, and on your right, the Institute for Materials Research. This area, like Aobayama, is a hub for intellectual activity in Tohoku, and you'll find many such hubs throughout the city.

Cross the intersection with traffic lights and turn right. After passing a few cafes, you'll soon see the Hirose River. Descend the stairs here. On your left, you'll have the Hirose River, and on your right, tennis courts and a baseball field. Proceed until you reach the Hyoutei-Kawara Bridge. Cross this bridge, and in about five minutes, you'll arrive at the Zuihoden Mausoleum.

The Zuihoden is the final resting place of Date Masamune, a prominent historical figure in Sendai's history. Together with Sendai Castle Site, it's a significant attraction for visitors to the city. While the details can be found in various guidebooks, in my opinion, it has the ambiance of a miniature version of Nikko Toshogu Shrine. It's like a mini-version phenomenon of places in the Tokyo area - everything is here, compact but full of significance. When considering Sendai's place, this relationship is essential to acknowledge. Even if the features are downsized, the aspirations remain high – this is the spirit of Sendai.

Next to Zuihoden is Zuihoden Temple, where the bells ring at 6 am and 6 pm. These bells are rung by human hands, not automatically, adding to the atmosphere. Hats off to the priest for his dedication!

Let's Climb Back to Sendai Castle Site

To return to Sendai Castle Site, retrace your steps. Cross back over the Hyoutei-Kawara Bridge and make your way up the natural cliffs of Sendai Castle on your left, with the baseball field on your right. Descend while keeping the right-side stairs in sight until you reach the large bridge with traffic lights.

Cross the bridge, and take in the beauty of Sendai as you cross the Hirose River. You might even find yourself humming the Aoba-jo Koibumi song, as the breeze from the river is delightful. During the earthquake, this bridge saw several metal streetlights topple. You can

see traces of this in the central right-hand side.

Once you've crossed the bridge, you'll find yourself in the area surrounding Sendai City Museum. There's the Moat of Sannomaru, which is the area surrounding Sendai Castle, and the ponds Goshikinuma and Naganuma, which are said to be the birthplace of figure skating. In the past, my go-to route to Sendai Castle Site was via Naganuma, where I would feed wild ducks while enjoying the scenery. Unfortunately, this route is now closed. You can, however, climb to Sendai Castle from behind Sendai City Museum. It's also a pleasant walk. Just keep following the sidewalk and aim for the turret at the main gate of Sendai Castle.

At Sendai Castle

Once you've reached the turret, turn left. This area used to be the main road for vehicles to access Sendai Castle. However, due to the collapse of stone walls along the way, it's now only open to pedestrians. Start ascending the road, and you'll be greeted by a pleasant row of cedar trees on both sides. You'll also notice covered stone lanterns. During the earthquake, the upper parts of the lanterns, made of straw, fell off. While they have been repaired, they may appear slightly tilted.

As you continue this ascent, you'll reach a left turn where you'll encounter another fallen lantern on the left side. On the left, you'll also see the towering stone walls of the Honmaru, the main bailey of Sendai Castle. In case of potential collapse, the pathway on the stone walls is now closed for safety reasons.

In the midst of mid-April, the cherry blossoms in the park are in full bloom, creating a breathtaking sight. To your right is the "Sendai Yagiyama Zoo." While you might think it's primarily a place for kids, adults can also have a great time here. In the classic monkey enclosure, you'll find slides, merry-go-rounds, rope ladders, and other playground equipment. Feeding the monkeys is also fun. Special monkey food is available from vending machines for 100 yen, and it's amusing to interact with the monkeys. It's another heartwarming experience.

Feeding the eagles and other birds of prey is fascinating. This is done by the keepers, and they release whole mice to the birds. The eagles grab them with their talons, tear off the skin, and devour them, starting from the organs. It's an overwhelming display of wild power and

instinctive consumption. Is this the origin of "foodie" culture?

There are also enclosures for lions, tigers, polar bears, and others, designed with modern concepts. They incorporate a lot of glass, allowing you to observe the animals underwater and from up close. Look for the Babe Ruth statue on the map. On Yagiyama? If you inquire about it, you'll find that this area used to be a baseball field. In 1934, Babe Ruth hit his first and second home runs in Japan during a game here. There's a sign nearby indicating the spot where his first home run landed. With all these activities, you could easily spend a lot of time here.

Now, for those who are tired after visiting the zoo, here's an escape route. From here, there are buses to Sendai Station every hour. But for the dedicated hikers, let's continue. Keeping Yagiyama Land on your left, follow the sidewalk. Soon, you'll see a transmission tower, the Tohoku Broadcasting Company headquarters. Before the earthquake, this tower was illuminated in three colors: blue on the top, orange in the middle, and green at the bottom, decorating the night sky. At the base of the tower, there's a "Watching Field" where rice, vegetables, and flowers are grown, even featured on local broadcasts. This area is also a great viewpoint during cherry blossom season.

Keep moving forward. On your left, you'll see a white gate, which is the entrance to Guest House Art Grace Wedding Forest. If you pass through the residential area of Yagiyama from here, you can take a shortcut to Zuihoden. However, this route belongs to the locals, so it's best to follow the main road. Afterward, you'll pass by Mukoyama High School on your right. Soon, you'll reach a T-intersection, the Mukoyama 2-chome intersection. You can turn left or right here, and you'll eventually reach the hotel (turning right will take you to Daimanzan). But turn left here towards Zuihoden, and you'll find the quiet eel restaurant "Tenotsu" on your left.

Continue, and you'll encounter a right curve with an open view. From here, you can enjoy the panoramic view of Sendai city below, with Hirose River in sight. If you proceed straight, you'll reach Zuihoden and the Hyoutei-Kawara Bridge. However, at the intersection of Reiya-shita, take a right at the traffic light and cross the Reiya Bridge. Along the way, you may often spot black kites soaring above the cliffs of Aobayama, a scene that might be commonplace for the locals but is refreshing for city dwellers. When the scent of butter wafts through the air, you'll come across "Kent-san's Cookie Shop."

Continue along the road, and when you turn left at the T-intersection, you'll find Tohoku University Katahira Campus on your right, which is the same path you took earlier. You're almost back to the hotel.

Estimated Time:

For Those with Regular Walking Pace:

- Hotel to Hyoutei-Kawara Bridge: 35 minutes (20 minutes)
- Hyoutei-Kawara Bridge to Okedomon-Side Turret: 30 minutes (15 minutes)
- Okedomon-Side Turret to Sendai Castle Site: 20 minutes (10 minutes)
- Sendai Castle Site to Yagiyama Zoo: 30 minutes (15 minutes)
- Yagiyama Zoo to Mukoyama 2-chome: 45 minutes (25 minutes)
- Mukoyama 2-chome to Reiya-shita: 20 minutes (10 minutes)
- Reiya-shita to Hotel: 30 minutes (15 minutes)

Total Duration: 210 minutes (110 minutes)

* Please note that the estimated times do not include exploration time at Zuihoden, Sendai Castle Site, Yagiyama Zoo, or Yagiyama Land, among other places.

Downtown Sendai, Osaki Hachimangu Shrine, Kameoka Hachimangu Shrine, Aobayama Sightseeing Route - Starting with the Arcade Street

First, head to the city center via Higashi-Nibancho Street, crossing Minamimachi Street until you reach Aoba Street. On your right, you'll see the main branch of the Shichijuhachi Bank. Cross through the underground passage and take Exit 6, which leads to the side with Gucci in the First Tower Building. Let's step into the Marble Road of the Arcade Street. This is one of Sendai's prominent streets, and it becomes a venue for Tanabata decorations.

As you proceed, when you start to see shop windows for brands like Louis Vuitton and Loewe on your left, you've arrived at the Fujisaki Department Store. You might have already noticed that in the former Date Domain (Oshu Province), the newspaper of choice is the Kahoku Shinpo, the bank is Shichijuhachi Bank, and the department store is Fujisaki. In this area, every year during the New Year's sales, long lines form.

Sendai's New Year's Sales

The New Year's sales in Sendai are a traditional event within the former Sendai Domain.

Traditionally, dating back to the Edo period, Sendai has been known for its unique commercial customs, officially recognized by the government. It enjoys special privileges that allow for more luxurious prizes compared to other regions. Together with Sasebo, it is nationally famous for this tradition. While New Year's sales at department stores are common across Japan, Sendai stands out in terms of scale and value. On January 2nd, early in the morning, not just the arcade street but the entire city buzzes with unusual energy. It's the spirit of Sendai merchants! Inside the ¥20,000 lucky bags, there are contents worth over ¥500,000! Some even buy these in groups and hold exchange parties on the spot. Even after subtracting Shinkansen fares and accommodation costs, it's a great deal, offering "traditional entertainment from the city of trees." It's truly worth seeing!

Now, make a right turn after Fujisaki, and enter the Brand Avenue Ichibancho Arcade. As the street welcomes the "Light Pageant," it is adorned with trees and various illuminations. On your right, you'll find the longstanding tea shop "Igata Honpo." During the New Year's sales, this place also sees long queues of people seeking tea containers. Shortly, you'll arrive at Hirose Street. Sendai's Chaos on the Right: Forus is a tenant building with fashion stores catering to trend-sensitive young people. Don't underestimate Oshu Province; even brands that originated in Europe, with a focus on Tokyo expansion, like the up-and-coming "Desigual," have antenna shops here.

Furthermore, cross Hirose Street and walk along the Ichibancho 4-Chome Arcade. On your left, you'll see a drugstore, a pachinko parlor, and Gyoza no Osho, among others. Suddenly, you'll discover the scent of Florence and the luxury shop "Santa Maria Novella"! This area is typical of Sendai's chaos. While you're amidst this chaos, don't miss the interesting Higashi-Ichibancho Street. Enter the alley between the drugstore on the right, Soba no Kanda, and Paula Cosmetics. Amidst a variety of eateries, you'll find a grand gathering of figures depicting heroes and villains from movies like Godzilla, Gundam, and Ultraman - it's the "G Defense Headquarters." Additionally, there's the quirky wine bar "Baobab." In the movie "Golden Slumber," the protagonist famously sprinted through this street while stumbling along the way.

Passing through the Tezenji-dori Yokocho, you'll soon come across the renowned

Mitsukoshi department store, a nationally recognized establishment. Shortly after, you'll reach Tezenji-dori itself. This 46-meter-wide avenue features a central pedestrian promenade, and it's flanked by four rows of magnificent Zelkova trees, extending for approximately 600 meters. These trees are the symbols of the City of Trees, Sendai. Throughout the year, this avenue hosts various events such as the December "Light Pageant," September's Jazz Festival, Tanabata, and the Aoba Festival. It becomes a stage for street performances and parades. Particularly in May, during the fresh green season, it's spectacular. The refreshing breeze, vivid greenery, and the streaming sunlight create a delightful environment for a leisurely stroll.

Now, make a left turn heading west, cross the Kokubuncho-dori, and observe places like Setsuko Mama's shop and the renowned pizza restaurant "Naple" as you cross the Bansui-dori. Continuing on this route, you'll reach Nishi Koendori Avenue. Cross to the opposite side of the sidewalk and take your time exploring Sendai's cultural facilities, including Media Teque, known for its architectural design. This is a classic sightseeing route in the City of Trees.

Ohsaki Hachimangu Shrine: If you have some extra time and energy, proceed a bit further. Follow Nishi Koendori Avenue to the north. On your right, you'll find the prominent Japanese confectionery shop "Baichao." Keep going and, on your left, you'll come across Fine Tech Building 2F, where "Tachibana," a place for ohagi and pickled vegetables used to be. Unfortunately, it closed after the earthquake. As you continue, you'll reach a major intersection, the Kita 4-bancho-dori. In front of you stands Tohoku University Hospital, a hub for world-class medical research originating from Tohoku. Make a left turn here, and if you spot "Restaurant Hasekura," a favorite for hamburg steaks among the locals, keep walking straight. Eventually, you'll see a grand torii gate on your right. This marks the Ohsaki Hachimangu Shrine, a national treasure.

Upon passing through the gate, you'll notice the earthquake's impact with the large stone lanterns on both sides of the stone steps having crumbled. You'll continue to witness these remnants while ascending the 97 steps. Pass through the torii gate three times, and you'll enter a broad area surrounded by trees, creating a pleasant approach. After passing through the ancient gate known as "Nagidoshi," you'll reach the main hall, designated as a national treasure. It's an excellent example of the extravagant Momoyama architectural style, and it's believed to be the oldest surviving structure built in the Gongen-zukuri style, similar to Nikko Toshogu Shrine. Inside the hall, you'll find wall paintings attributed to Sukema Sakyō,

a painter from the Kano school, and floral motifs on the lattice ceiling. The roof underwent extensive restoration work starting in 2000. The roof, made of thin wooden shingles known as "kokerabuki," is adorned with ornate decorative metalwork on beams and eaves. The vibrant colors are truly striking and create a captivating contrast with the pitch-black walls.

Now, if you're ready to escape, buses departing towards Sendai Station run every 5 to 10 minutes from Ohsaki Hachiman Shrine. However, for those with a bit more energy, I'd like to accompany you for a while longer. After passing through the torii gate and crossing the intersection on your right, descend towards the direction of Sannoizawa and Kawanai.

Before long, you will come to Ushigoshi Bridge, crossing the Hirose River. The scenery opens up, and the breeze is delightful. This area is also one of the famous spots. In autumn, many groups gather by the riverside with cooking pots in hand. It's a tradition known as "Imonikai," a seasonal sight in the City of Trees.

After crossing the bridge, take a little detour. Turn right at the T-intersection and continue straight to reach the Tohoku Electric Power Miisawa Power Plant. It's Japan's first hydroelectric power plant and is still in operation today. Next to it, you'll find the Electric Power 100th Anniversary Museum, which introduces the history of electricity in the Tohoku region and the mechanisms of power generation. It's said that when the first light bulb was lit here in Tohoku, people thought it was a fox's bewitching fire and made a big commotion. The timeline of Tohoku's electrical history on the right side of the entrance includes major events like the Meiji Sanriku Tsunami, Showa Sanriku Tsunami, and the Miyagi Prefecture Offshore Earthquake, reminding us of the relationship between this region and earthquakes.

Kameoka Hachimangu Shrine is your next destination. Continue your journey towards Kawauchi, and when you see a yakiniku restaurant on your left, turn diagonally to the right. At a T-intersection, you'll spot a torii gate on the right side with a sign that reads "The Deity of the Date Clan." It seems that even the famous haiku poet Matsuo Basho paid a visit here. Cross the vermilion-colored bridge with a handrail, and you'll be overwhelmed by the impressive stone staircase. Although the main hall from Basho's time was lost due to war damage, these weathered stone steps, with their unevenness and character, offer a unique charm. Now, for today's climax, let's climb up the 343 steps, savoring each one. After you've made your offering, proceed on the back approach on the left. Follow this path, which curves to the left and leads to a street. If you descend to the left, you'll reach Hirose Street via

Kawauchi.

Now, let's make the most of the potential energy you've gained from climbing. Take a right turn and continue uphill for a bit. When you spot the signboards for Naritasan and Sendai Samurai Residences on your right, you'll know you're on the right track. As a side note, Naritasan Sendai Bunka (Cultural) Institute has a unique claim—it houses Japan's tallest Fudo-Myoo (Acala) statue, as well as the largest Fudo-Myoo statue. These statues are located on the rooftop. The Sendai Samurai Residences, an exhibition featuring armor, dioramas, and artworks, is unfortunately closed due to the earthquake's impact.

Now, moving on, after the T-shaped intersection, take a left turn, passing by the concrete retaining wall on your left side. You might catch a whiff of aged Burgundy wine, but it turns out to be the stable of Tohoku University's Equestrian Club. You can even see a few horses peering out from the windows. Soon, you'll reach a large intersection with traffic lights. Take a left turn here, and you'll see the Information Bureau and the Graduate School of Information Sciences. If you continue straight, you'll head towards the Hirose River area via the Tohoku University Kawauchi Campus. However, at this point, take a right turn and cross to the opposite side, heading towards the Faculty of Engineering. Enjoy the spacious and pleasant tree-lined path. Walk through the Aobayama Gate of Tohoku University's Botanical Gardens, and you'll eventually arrive at the parking lot behind the Sendai Castle Ruins.

Estimated Time:

Normal Pace

Hotel to Tozenji-dori West Park: 40 minutes

Tozenji-dori West Park to Osaki Hachiman Shrine: 40 minutes

Osaki Hachiman Shrine to Miisawa: 20 minutes

Miisawa to Kameoka Hachimangu Shrine: 20 minutes

Kameoka Hachimangu Shrine to Naritasan: 10 minutes

Total: 130 minutes

Brisk Pace

Hotel to Tozenji-dori West Park: 25 minutes

Tozenji-dori West Park to Osaki Hachiman Shrine: 25 minutes

Osaki Hachiman Shrine to Miisawa: 10 minutes

Miisawa to Kameoka Hachimangu Shrine: 10 minutes

Kameoka Hachimangu Shrine to Naritasan: 5 minutes

Total: 75 minutes

Naritasan to Tohoku University Aobayama Campus: 20 minutes (10 minutes at a brisk pace)

Tohoku University Aobayama Campus to Sendai Castle Ruins: 40 minutes (25 minutes at a brisk pace)

Sendai Castle Ruins to Hotel: 50 minutes (30 minutes at a brisk pace)

Total Distance: 240 minutes (140 minutes at a brisk pace)

Note: The estimated times provided do not include the exploration time at Osaki Hachiman Shrine, Miisawa Electric Power 100th Anniversary Museum, Kameoka Hachimangu Shrine, Naritasan, Sendai Castle Ruins, and other points of interest along the way.

Toshogu Shrine, North Sendai, and Kitayama Five Mountains Course

From the hotel, head towards the pedestrian deck leading to Sendai Station. Pass to the left of Parco, go through AER, and cross Hirose Street. Descend onto the sidewalk and continue straight. The tall building you see diagonally ahead is the Tohoku Electric Power Company headquarters. Turn right at the intersection with Tezenji Street, marked by a large sign for SKB Sendai International Beauty School, onto Miyamachi Street. After making the left turn, continue straight ahead. Cross North Fourth Avenue and North Sixth Avenue, then proceed to cross the JR Senzan Line. You'll arrive at a stone-built grand torii gate, which marks the entrance to Sendai Toshogu Shrine.

Built in 1654, this shrine is dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu, just like the more famous Nikko Toshogu Shrine. Surprisingly, Sendai also has its own Toshogu Shrine. In addition to this, there are other shrines and festivals like Rinnoji Temple, Naritasan, Sendai Ginza, Sendai Asakusa, and Sanja Festival. The land of Oku no Hosomichi (the Deep North) has much to offer. Cross the vermilion-painted bridge symbolizing the sacred bridge, and proceed along the approach. As you climb the stone steps, you'll notice the impact of the earthquake and tsunami here as well. The higher you go, the more obvious the damage to the lanterns becomes.

Pass through the gate known as "Zuishinmon," a two-story gate with a copper-tiled, irimoya-style roof. Statues of attendants armed with swords, bows, and arrows are enshrined on both

sides. While it may not have the flamboyance of Zuiganji Temple or Osaki Hachimangu Shrine, it has a rather refined charm. The main hall was lost in a fire but has been restored. However, the main hall, Tang-mon (Chinese-style gate), and latticed fence are original structures from the time of the shrine's founding and are designated as important cultural properties. Although the main hall is surrounded by a fence and is only visible from a distance, you can still see traces of its luxurious decorations on the roof, such as the golden lion ornaments.

Every fourth Sunday of the month, an antique market is held here, featuring everything from antiques and art to daily goods, attracting a lively crowd. During cherry blossom season, it's a must-visit! The sight of the cherry trees in full bloom on both sides of the approach is like a painting. If you head back in the direction you came from along the approach, you'll find JR Toshogu Shrine Station, just before the Sendai-Sen Line railroad crossing.

To North Sendai and the Kitayama Five Mountains

Cross the railroad crossing towards North Sendai, turn right at the traffic light, and continue along North Rokubancho Avenue for a while. On your right, you'll spot "Turezure," a renowned pastry shop known for long queues and items selling out right at its 11 AM opening. Afterward, cross Atagouesugi Street. In this leafy corner surrounded by dense trees lies the heart of Tohoku University's Faculty of Agriculture and its biotechnology research center.

At the next traffic light, make a right turn, skirting around this corner, and continue straight. You'll soon arrive at a major road. On your left, you'll see the impressive building of North Sendai Catholic Church. Cross the street and continue straight. Then, on your right, you'll notice a sign for "Sendai Asakusa." Why the reference to Asakusa, you might wonder? In the late 1950s, this alley was opened as a market for daily goods and was given the name in the hopes of replicating the liveliness of Tokyo's Asakusa district. Nowadays, it primarily hosts night establishments like snack bars and izakayas. You might come across some peculiar sights, including a Good Luck Zodiac Amulet Hall and a Kannon Temple.

Now, continue further and reach a traffic signal. Here, make a sharp left turn to follow the road. Your destination is the Kitayama Five Mountains. If you plan to make an escape, turn right at the traffic light. This will lead you to the JR Senzan Line and Sendai City Subway's

Kitayama Station.

The Kitayama Five Mountains refer to five Buddhist temples located on the Kitayama Hill. They have been traditionally associated with guarding Sendai Castle from evil influences and serving as a gateway to the Oshu Kaido and Nebarashiro Kaido highways, protecting the northern part of the castle town. The exact temples included in the Kitayama Five Mountains may vary historically, but for this journey, we'll consider them as Komyozenji Temple, Toshoji Temple, Kakubanzenji Temple, Shifukuzenji Temple, and Rinnoji Temple.

Kitayama Five Temples: Komyozenji, Toshoji, Kakubanzenji, Shifukuzenji, Rinnoji

As you proceed along the road, you'll notice a series of shrines and temples appearing on your right. First, there's Komyozenji. As you pass through the entrance, you'll find the tomb of Sotelo, who accompanied Hasekura Tsunenaga to Rome, right beside it. It's a modest arrangement, with stones piled up, serving as a humble reminder of his later years, which were marked by neglect. There's also Sotelo's tomb who accompanied Hasekura Tsunenaga to Rome. There are various theories regarding the location of Hasekura Tsunenaga's tomb, and besides this one, it's believed to exist in Kawasaki Town, Daigo Town, and another location within Miyagi Prefecture.

Toshoji Temple is the next stop. Founded in the 13th century in Date District, it's a historic temple that has undergone multiple relocations. By 1600, it reached Kitayama along with the construction of Sendai Castle. With a grant of 300 koku as temple land, it held the highest rank bestowed by the Sendai domain. However, during the Meiji era, the temple's protection was lost, and it ended up ceding the western half of its grounds to the neighboring Aoba Shrine. It's a story that seems to encapsulate the rise and fall of the Date clan's prestige in a way reminiscent of many of Sendai's tourist spots. The current main hall dates from the Meiji era after the original was lost to fire. One of the highlights here is a large tree found to the right rear of the main hall. It's a type of Japanese nutmeg called Marumigaya, known for its perfectly round fruit, which is a rarity and designated as a National Natural Monument.

Adjacent to Toshoji Temple is Aoba Shrine. The stone torii gate here has partially collapsed, and there are cracks in the stone pavement along the approach. While the stone lanterns, whether stone or copper, show signs of decay, the stone steps, the approach to the shrine,

and the lush surrounding trees create an imposing atmosphere. It's believed that originally, this shrine was located within Sendai Castle. The Aoba Festival, one of Sendai's five major events, is said to have originated from the spring grand festival of this shrine. The current priest is the 16th-generation head of the Date clan's senior vassal and lord of the Shiraishi Castle, the Katagura family... With so many historical narratives, it's hard to pin down the facts. Interestingly, due to the popularity of the video game "Sengoku BASARA," visitors, particularly history buffs, have been increasing, as they seek to encounter the descendant of the game character Katagura Kojuro here. Never underestimate Aoba Shrine! It's also a great spot for cherry blossom viewing.

Toshoji Temple

Next is Toshoji Temple, a historic temple founded in the 13th century in Date District. It underwent several relocations and eventually reached Kitayama along with the construction of Sendai Castle in 1600. The temple was granted 300 koku as temple land, holding the highest rank bestowed by the Sendai domain. However, during the Meiji era, the temple lost its protection and ended up ceding the western half of its grounds to the neighboring Aoba Shrine. It's a pattern often seen in Sendai's tourist spots, illustrating the rise and fall of the Date clan's prestige. The current main hall dates from the Meiji era after the original was lost to fire. One notable feature here is a large tree found to the right rear of the main hall. It's a type of Japanese nutmeg called Marumigaya, known for its perfectly round fruit, which is a rarity and designated as a National Natural Monument.

Aoba Shrine

Adjacent to Toshoji Temple is Aoba Shrine. The stone torii gate here has partially collapsed, and there are cracks in the stone pavement along the approach. While the stone lanterns, whether stone or copper, show signs of decay, the stone steps, the approach to the shrine, and the lush surrounding trees create an imposing atmosphere. It's believed that originally, this shrine was located within Sendai Castle. The Aoba Festival, one of Sendai's five major events, is said to have originated from the spring grand festival of this shrine. The current priest is the 16th-generation head of the Date clan's senior vassal and lord of the Shiraishi Castle, the Katagura family... With so many historical narratives, it's hard to pin down the facts. Interestingly, due to the popularity of the video game "Sengoku BASARA," visitors, particularly history buffs, have been increasing, as they seek to encounter the descendant of

the game character Katagura Kojuro here. Never underestimate Aoba Shrine! It's also a great spot for cherry blossom viewing.

Kakubanzenji Temple

Leaving Toshoji Temple behind, the next stop is Jiyunzan Shifukuji Temple. As you approach, you'll be surrounded by dense trees on both sides and eventually reach a stone staircase. As you ascend, the overhanging vegetation encroaches on the stone steps, making walking a bit challenging. What's hidden here is Sendai's "hydrangea temple." In early July, the temple is covered in full bloom with hydrangeas, attracting many visitors. It's a spot you should definitely visit during the season.

Rinnoji Temple

Lastly, there's Rinnoji Temple. Next to the black-fenced gate, there's a monument dedicated to Date Masamune's son, Takematsu Maru, and the mother of his main wife, Princess Aihime. This place also seems to have deep connections with the Date family. Established in 1441, the temple relocated multiple times in tandem with the changing residences of the Date clan. In 1602, Date Masamune moved it to its current location, marking this as Rinnoji Temple's sixth relocation. The temple's gate, built entirely with round pillars in a gabled roof style, with tiled roofing, is a designated Important Cultural Property of Sendai. The stone-paved approach was reconstructed, featuring 13 stone statues placed on both sides. They represent various Buddhist deities such as Amida Nyorai and Fugen Bosatsu, and there are five more statues here than at Daiganji Temple. Ascending the stone steps, you'll reach the main hall. It was lost in a fire and rebuilt in 1876. On the right side of the main hall, you'll find a sign directing you towards the garden. You can enter the garden for 300 yen at the rotating gate. The garden features a traditional Japanese garden design centered around a pond, complete with stone lanterns, bridges, and a teahouse. To the left, there are even three pagodas. The best times to visit are late April to early May for cherry blossoms, late May to early June for azaleas, late June to early July for irises, June to August for water lilies, and mid-October to November for autumn foliage. The pond is home to koi, and they'll swim up to you and open their mouths expectantly when you approach. You can purchase fish food for 100 yen at the gate. Plan your visit to coincide with these seasons for a delightful experience. In total, the Kitayama Five Temples involve climbing approximately 600 stone steps, and if you include Aoba Shrine, it's around 600 steps. If you've had your fill of exploration in this area, you can escape by circling around Rinnoji Temple to the right

and reaching JR Kitayama Station.

For the Fit, the Journey Back on Foot

Heading back towards Aoba Shrine, make a U-turn and turn right onto Aoba Shrine Street. This road changes its name from Aoba Street to Kokubuncho Street after crossing Teizanji Street. After crossing Kitayama Street and reaching the first traffic signal at the intersection of Kasugai 1-chome 3, keep an eye out. If you turn left past the tobacco shop, you'll find "Banja," a bakery that's a local favorite. They offer various types of bread, including baguettes and pain de campagne, as well as rustic treats like rye bread and melange with walnuts, raisins, and figs. All of their bread is hearty and delicious. Their cheese cake is available on Saturdays and Mondays only, and their stollen is available on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Alongside Boulangerie d'Olivier in Kagotori and Le Temps Riche behind the prefectural government office, Banja is creating quite a buzz in Sendai's bakery scene.

Don't get too sidetracked; let's move forward. After passing Kitayama 4-chome Street and heading towards Futamachi, when you see the Shibata Izakaya, a favorite among the local Sendai residents, continue further ahead. On your left, next to the seal shop, you'll find "Chinese Soba Kaichi." We're almost at Teizanji Street.

Estimated Duration (approximate walking times):

- Hotel to Toshogu Shrine: 55 minutes (35 minutes)
- Toshogu Shrine to Kitayama Junction: 50 minutes (30 minutes)
- Kitayama Junction to Koshoji Temple: 3 minutes (2 minutes)
- Koshoji Temple to Toshoji Temple: 10 minutes (7 minutes)
- Toshoji Temple to Aoba Shrine: 3 minutes (2 minutes)
- Aoba Shrine to Kakubanzenji Temple: 5 minutes (3 minutes)
- Kakubanzenji Temple to Shifukuji Temple: 3 minutes (2 minutes)
- Shifukuji Temple to Rinnnoji Temple: 3 minutes (2 minutes)
- Rinnnoji Temple to Aoba Shrine: 10 minutes (5 minutes)
- Aoba Shrine to Teizanji Street: 35 minutes (20 minutes)
- Teizanji Street to Hotel: 35 minutes (20 minutes)

Please note that these estimated times do not include time for exploring Toshogu Shrine, the Kitayama Five Temples, or Aoba Shrine.

Sendai Station East Exit Route

From the hotel, take the pedestrian walkway up to Sendai Station. Pass through the free passage to the right towards the East Exit. Descend the stairs on your left, and as you face BIVI, make a right turn around the station rotary. Cross Higashi 7-chome Street and proceed straight. At the first traffic signal, where Yoyogi Seminar and Seven-Eleven are on the corner, make a left turn. With the 77 Bank Sendai Higashi Exit on your left, continue straight on Higashi 8-chome Street. After a while, you'll notice a light brown brick building with Anpanman's face on your right. That's Sendai Anpanman Children's Museum & Mall. As the name suggests, it's a wonderland for little kids. The first floor is a shopping mall with Anpanman-related goods, and the second floor is a museum. On the second floor, rather than a traditional museum, it's a playground for children. There's Anpanman Factory, Minna no Machi (Everyone's Town), Tanken Land (Adventure Land), Ball Park, Niji no Suberidai (Rainbow Slide), and more. They have a mini stage and screen Anpanman shows at the YANASE TAKASHIMAYA stage. The museum shop sells exclusive items not available in the mall downstairs.

They also have cute toilets for children. However, they are not for adults to use. At the Anpanman Plaza in the center of the first floor, a mini-stage performance has just begun. You can see it from the second-floor museum deck, but if you want to get closer and see it from the first floor, you'll need to exit the museum. Please note that re-entry is not allowed. The first floor is a shopping mall for souvenirs and food, and entry is free. It's enjoyable just to explore the shops on this floor.

Miyagino Avenue

Now, when you exit the museum, head back towards Sendai Station, take a left at the intersection where you see Yoyogi Seminar on your right, and proceed along Miyagino Avenue. This avenue stretches 1.6 kilometers from Sendai Station's front to Kleenex Stadium Miyagi in the direction of Sendai East Exit, making it a central road at Sendai East Exit. In 1990, it was fully opened, marking the beginning of the ongoing Sendai East Exit Land Plot Consolidation Project. On both sides of the road and in the median strip, you'll find zelkova trees. The wide sidewalks feature small waterways, fountains, monuments, and are beautifully landscaped like a park. Throughout the pavement, you'll notice verses

dedicated to Miyagino carved into large marble stones. Recently, a bike lane painted crimson red has been developed, aptly named "Eagle Road" in reference to the Rakuten Eagles. This street offers a pleasant stroll with a different ambiance from Teizanji Street.

Tsubaki-ga-oka Tenmangu Shrine

At the intersection of Tsubaki-ga-oka 4-chome, cross the main street and head left towards Jionji Temple, or make a right turn at Mini Stop, and you'll reach Tsubaki-ga-oka Tenmangu Shrine, Sendai's god of learning. Greeted by impressive guardian lion-dogs on both sides, you might wonder why one has its mouth open while the other's mouth is closed (East is Un, and West is A). Ascend the stone steps and pass through the torii gate. Throughout the shrine grounds, you'll find stone monuments inscribed with waka poetry and haiku. On your way to the main hall, you'll encounter a rubbing cow statue on your right. Visitors are encouraged to stroke this cow and honor the virtues of Sugawara no Michizane. The stone statue has a smooth nose where many hands have touched. Next, you'll be welcomed by guardian lion-dogs sporting goatee-like facial hair. The elaborately designed copper-roofed vermilion gate is a city-designated registered cultural property. Once you pass through the gate, you'll face the main hall, flanked by numerous votive tablets. Known as the god of learning in Tohoku, this is a sacred place for students and exam-goers. The shrine is also famous for its early-blooming plum blossoms.

Tsubaki-ga-oka Park

After leaving the approach to Tsubaki-ga-oka Tenmangu Shrine, head left. Soon, you'll arrive at Tsubaki-ga-oka Park. This place is renowned for its cherry blossoms and has its origins in the late 17th century when Date Tsunamune, the fourth lord of the Sendai domain, planted over a thousand drooping cherry trees that he brought from Kyoto. Today, you'll find around 370 cherry trees, including drooping cherries, Somei Yoshino cherries, double-flowered cherries, and weeping cherries, creating a delightful display of white, light pink, and pink blossoms. The park features a central grassy area, a running track, fountains, an open space, and serves as a relaxing spot for the citizens of Sendai. Towards the back of the park, you'll spot a white building, the former Japanese Army's 2nd Division, Infantry 4th Regiment Barracks, which is the oldest wooden Western-style building in the prefecture. It's a two-story wooden structure with a hipped roof, plastered walls, stone decorations at the corners, glass windows that can be raised and lowered, and a Western-style columned porch, all distinctive features. Today, it serves as the Sendai City Museum of History and Folklore,

with an entrance fee of 200 yen. Inside, you can experience the transition of folk customs from the Meiji era onwards, including recreated quarters of the 4th Regiment's barracks, a rural kitchen, and a town square that replicates a candy store. There are also exhibitions showcasing antique maps of Sendai and more.

Miyagino Park Comprehensive Athletic Stadium

Now, when you exit the Historical Folklore Museum, head to the left, and you'll reach the eastern exit of Tsubaki-ga-oka Park. If you head right along the street, you'll come to the Miyagino Hara Park Comprehensive Athletic Stadium. On your left is the Sendai City Athletics Stadium, while on the right is the home ground of the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles, Kleenex Stadium Miyagi. This area buzzes with excitement during Rakuten's games. You can find Eagles merchandise for sale in the stadium store on the first floor. Within this park, there are also publicly-owned tennis courts, a cycling track, and even a sumo wrestling arena. Despite showing signs of aging, it can be interesting to leisurely watch practice sessions, such as cyclists navigating the track. If you're feeling tired around this area, you can make your escape at JR Senzan Line Miyaginohara Station. Now, for your return journey, you can mimic the Rakuten fans and stroll along Miyagino Avenue towards Sendai Station.

Masao's Grave

For those with sturdy legs who wish to make a little detour, continue along Miyagino Avenue. Take a left at the corner of Sun Plaza, then a right turn at the corner of Kinkatsuji Temple, all while keeping CO-OP on your left. You'll come across the grave of Masao, believed to be the model for the protagonist of the kabuki and joruri play "Karakasa Sengen Hagi." Prior to the Meiji era, it was a splendid mausoleum complete with a main hall, a Chinese-style gate, and a hall of worship. However, during the Boshin War, it was deemed that Masao was a traitor, and the structure was torn down. Subsequently, the Date clan switched to Shinto-style funerals, and the current tombstone was erected. The site is lush with thick vegetation, and in addition to Masao's grave, you'll find the graves of Tokugawa Fushimi and Inaba Senhime. The entrance is locked with an iron gate, so you can only peek inside. There's a sign on the fence at the entrance suggesting you visit Koushoji Temple. The neighboring building houses the Masao Information Office, but it seems to be currently closed. Visitors are advised to go to Koushoji Temple for information. This is another location affected by the earthquake; you can see that some of the stone lanterns have fallen over.

Koushoji Temple

Exiting onto the adjacent street, head towards Sendai Station. This neighborhood, as the name Shin-dera suggests, is an area with a concentration of large temples dating back to the founding of Sendai. It's said that this area, which corresponds to the "demon's gate" of the castle, attracted many temples, forming a temple town. After crossing the main road, you'll find the entrance to Koushoji Temple on your right. To reach the main gate, turn right at the upcoming traffic signal and follow Higashi-Kyuu-ban-cho Avenue.

Stand at the temple's approach. Stone lanterns line both sides, a majestic main gate stands in the center, and to the left, an impressive five-story pagoda rises, creating an atmosphere of profound tranquility. Pass through the main gate, and construction for earthquake recovery is underway at the main hall in front.

Between the impressive five-story pagoda on the left and the main hall is the Shakado Hall.

Founded in the late 13th century as Daisenji Temple, Date Masamune frequently prayed at this temple and, after achieving many victories, it was renamed Zenshoji Temple. Later, under the second lord of the clan, Tadamune, it was renamed Zenshokoji Temple. Then, under the third lord, Tsunamune, it was renamed Koushoji Temple, which is its current name. It's noted that Sanzawa Hatsuko, the legal wife of the second lord Tadamune, and a concubine of the third lord Tsunamune, who was also the mother of the fourth lord Tsunamune, sought refuge here, and the temple received strong support from the Date clan. It's fascinating how this connects to Sanzawa Hatsuko.

The Shakado Hall, built at the end of the 17th century by Lord Tsunamune to pray for the repose of Sanzawa Hatsuko's soul, is a registered cultural asset of Sendai City.

There is a statue of Sanzawa Hatsuko next to it. It's worth mentioning that the grave of Masao mentioned earlier is a detached property managed by Koushoji Temple.

Next to the central roofed incense burner, facing the main hall or the five-story pagoda, recite the South Myoho Renge Kyo. It is said to bestow immeasurable merits. Offer your prayers here.

Upon leaving the main gate and walking straight ahead, you'll soon reach Sendai Station.

Estimated Time Required	Normal	Vigorous Walk
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Here is the English translation:

- Hotel to Anpanman Museum: 25 minutes (Normal) / 15 minutes (Vigorous Walk)
- Anpanman Museum to Suzuranokami Tenmangu Shrine: 20 minutes (Normal) / 15 minutes (Vigorous Walk)
- Suzuranokami Tenmangu Shrine to Suzuranokami Park (Museum of History and Folklore): 15 minutes (Normal) / 10 minutes (Vigorous Walk)
- Suzuranokami Park to Miyagino Comprehensive Sports Park: 13 minutes (Normal) / 8 minutes (Vigorous Walk)
- Miyagino Comprehensive Sports Park to Mound of Masataka Kawamura's Grave: 30 minutes (Normal) / 20 minutes (Vigorous Walk)

Here is the English translation:

- Mound of Masataka Kawamura's Grave to Koshogiji Temple: 12 minutes (Normal) / 7 minutes (Vigorous Walk)
- Koshogiji Temple to Hotel: 25 minutes (Normal) / 15 minutes (Vigorous Walk)

Total Duration:

- Entire Route: 140 minutes (Normal) / 90 minutes (Vigorous Walk)

Please note that the estimated times do not include the exploration time at Anpanman Children's Museum, Suzuranokami Tenmangu Shrine, Suzuranokami Park, Miyagino Comprehensive Sports Park, Mound of Masataka Kawamura's Grave, and Koshogiji Temple.

Here is the English translation of the text:

****From Hirosegawa to Mutsu Kokubunji, Renbo Koji Course****

Along Hirosegawa Riverside Promenade:

Take Higashi Nibancho Street towards Nagamachi, similar to the Daigoji Mountain Course. Just before Atago Bridge, make a left turn at Honda Dream. Then, at the first traffic light labeled "Fudo-san Family," make a right turn and cross a small bridge parallel to Atago Bridge called Atago Bridge. After crossing it, make a left turn and walk along the promenade along Hirosegawa Riverside.

On your left, you'll see the sandbank of Hirosegawa. It used to be a lush paradise for wild birds, but it's now a sedimentary area of gravel and earth due to river improvement work to prevent floods.

Enjoy a pleasant walk while feeling the refreshing breeze. You'll soon pass a striking red bridge called Miyazawa Bridge. Under this bridge, during the May holidays, you can see carp-shaped streamers swimming joyfully across the river. Additionally, since 2009, boat rentals have been revived on the opposite bank. As you continue your walk, you'll spot clusters of trees near the concrete embankment. In this area, ducks and waterfowl often arrive, and you may see people feeding them.

****Let's Do Our Best, Yuriage!****

The next bridge is Hirose Bridge. In 1909, the first reinforced concrete bridge in Japan was built here. The current bridge is a steel truss bridge completed in 1959. Just before this bridge, there's a descent to the riverside promenade. Over about 5 kilometers, you'll reach Nametokawa Bridge on the Namekawa River. Cross this bridge, then descend along the embankment path along the Namekawa River for approximately 7 kilometers, and you'll connect to Yuriage. Before the earthquake, cyclists and inline skaters used to travel from Yuriage to Sendai Airport via this route, continuing on to Watari.

Yuriage is Japan's largest production area for red clams. Prior to the earthquake, a renowned restaurant called "Nagumo" would undoubtedly have been featured if this guide had been completed. They served dishes like red clam rice bowls, crab rice bowls, and grilled fish set meals, all made from fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Immediately after the earthquake, I rushed to Yuriage, concerned about this restaurant. As you go down the Namekawa River, you'll start to see signs of the tsunami on the riverbank, about 3 kilometers from the coast. However, the damage to buildings wasn't as severe. As you get closer, you'll cross the eastern road, and the scenery will suddenly change. Debris and cars are scattered everywhere in the rice fields. Even large ships had washed ashore. The

riverside promenade had been torn up along with the asphalt, and as I attempted to approach Yuriage's city area, the road was blocked by collapsed houses, forcing me to abandon my plan.

Since then, I've returned many times, but there are only damaged houses, and traffic restrictions are still in place. Yuriage today is marked by ongoing demolition work with towering heaps of debris. Only Mount Hiyoriyama, where a memorial monument has been erected, looks lonely. The location where Nagumo used to be is now reduced to just its foundation. What a shame! Let's do our best, Yuriage!

If you need further assistance, please feel free to ask.

Here is the English translation of the text:

****To Kawaramachi****

Now, let's head back to Hirose Bridge.

For those who are tired, you can head towards the Nagamachi direction on the right without crossing Hirose Bridge. You'll reach the municipal subway Nagamachi Ichichome Station.

For the energetic ones, let's continue the journey. Cross Hirose Bridge and curve left along the main road. After a while, you'll see a tall twin tower apartment complex on your left. At the traffic signal there, cross to the opposite side, which is the side of the 77 Bank. You've now entered Kawaramachi Shopping Street. Continue along this street. Take a left turn at the corner with the tobacco shop and you'll reach a main street. Diagonally to the left, you'll see "Amandier," a cake shop favored by locals. They also have a café section where you can grab a light meal.

****Mutsu Kokubunji****

This time, make a right turn onto the main street. It's a bit of a distance, but our destination is Mutsu Kokubunji. Proceed along the street, pass under the Shinkansen tracks, and take a diagonal left turn to cross the JR railway crossing. Please bear with the walk through this narrow residential area. Along the way, you'll pass through neighborhoods with unusual names like "Bunkamachi," "Rokujunimachi," and "Sanbyakuninmachi."

While it's uncertain about Bunkamachi, Rokujuninmachi is said to have been a town where sixty ashigaru (foot soldiers) lived during the late Edo period, and Sanbyakuninmachi is named after the 300 musketeer ashigaru who lived there during the time of Date Masamune. Now, continue on this path until you reach a T-junction with a greengrocer on the left. Make a left turn, then follow the road as it bends to the right. At the first signal, the intersection of Kino Shita Ichichome, make a right turn and you'll finally arrive on a broad street. On your left, you'll see St. Ursula Academy as you continue. You'll notice lush trees on your left. There's an entrance that exudes a sense of history. In front of you is Mutsu Kokubunji.

It was founded in the mid-8th century and is said to have suffered damage even during the Jogan Earthquake. It was plagued by fires multiple times, and the original buildings from that era no longer exist. The surviving buildings, the Niomon gate with a reed-thatched roof and the Yakushido hall, were reconstructed in the early 17th century by Date Masamune.

The wooden statues flanking the Niomon gate are quite interesting. Their upper bodies are thin with protruding ribs, but their bellies are round, almost like a humorous version of Niomon guardians. Passing through the gate, you'll walk on cobblestones, and the corners are worn, making your footing uneven. It's a moment when you can keenly feel the weight of history.

To the right, you'll see stone foundations, remnants of a corridor. The foundation stones of three rows of pillars are arranged around the central stone pavement. Further back, you'll find traces of a seven-story pagoda, with only the base remaining. Around it, you can discern traces of a corridor with two rows of pillars. In 934, during a thunderstorm, a large fire caused the top spire to fall and impale itself deeply upside down into the ground. All these stone foundations that stretch throughout the precincts are parts of the temple complex. How grand it must have been in its prime! You can imagine its majestic presence.

The Yakushido hall in front is a nationally designated important cultural property. Its decorations are extremely simple and rustic, in stark contrast to the splendor of the contemporary Osaki Hachimangu Shrine, making it a representative example of Momoyama architecture in Sendai.

Inside, as the main deity, there's a gold-bronze statue of Yakushi Nyorai. Flanking him are statues of Nikko Bosatsu and Gakko Bosatsu. Every year on February 11th, a ceremony

called the "Nanakudo Shusei-kai" is held, during which the main statue is revealed for just about 20 seconds. Afterward, a sacred fire is lit with prayer sticks written with wishes, and people walk barefoot across it, which is called the "hiwatari" ritual.

I hope you find this translation helpful! If you have any more text that needs translating or any other questions, please feel free to ask.

Heading Back to Kleenex Stadium Miyagi

If you head north on the road to the left of the Yakushido Hall, you'll soon reach a major street called Shintemple Street. Cross the traffic signal, and you'll be aiming for Kleenex Stadium Miyagi, with its expansive red spectator seats right in front of you.

By now, just like the Sendai Station East Exit route mentioned earlier, you can pass through the Miyaginohara Comprehensive Sports Park and make your escape from JR Sendai Airport Line's Miyaginohara Station.

Detour

Now, for those with strong legs, after passing through Kleenex Stadium Miyagi, head towards Miyagino Odori Avenue. Just like the previous route, turn left at the corner of San Plaza and, with CO-OP on your left, proceed further until you reach Shintemple Street. Cross the pedestrian bridge, and continue straight. Once you pass one intersection, on your left, you'll find "Haginoya," a Japanese confectionery shop with a red awning and a pink noren curtain.

Their soy sauce, red bean, and sesame dango sweets are delicious! Their bean rice cakes and ohagi are also worth trying! They're all simple and unpretentious but have addictive flavors that evoke a sense of Showa-era nostalgia. Each piece costs 105 yen.

Across the road is Matsunein Temple, and during the cherry blossom season, the cherry blossoms here are splendid. Head towards the station from the side of Matsunein Temple, and after a short walk, you'll reach a major street. Cross the big street, turn left, and continue walking on the sidewalk for a while. On your right, you'll find the always crowded ramen restaurant "Chuka Soba Suzuki." This is a branch of the popular restaurant

Mizusawa-ya in Rikuzentakata.

I hope you find this translation helpful! If you have any more text to translate or any other questions, feel free to ask.

Continuing to Renbo Alley

Keep going and make a right turn at the Renbo 1-chome intersection. Let's walk down Renbo Alley. It's said that this alley gets its name from the 24 temples lining up in front of the Date Masamune-rebuilt Mutsu Kokubunji Temple. At some points, you'll even see signs for the "Munyamunya Street Shopping District." It has a nostalgic Showa-era feel to it.

On your right, you'll come across "Tengado," a shop selling thin deep-fried sesame crackers and karinto (sweet fried dough). These are also flavors that harken back to the Showa era. Additionally, when you pass under the Shinkansen tracks, you'll find "Shinoda," a shop specializing in mechanical watches – a charming little shop.

Looking to your right, you'll see the NTT Miyagi Branch, and after crossing the pedestrian bridge, you'll soon reach the intersection of Higashi 2-bancho Street, which you walked along earlier. The hotel is just around the corner.

I hope this translation is helpful! If you have any more text to translate or any other questions, please feel free to ask.

Estimated Travel Times

Hotel to Atago Bridge: - Normal: 30 minutes- Fast Walker: 20 minutes

Atago Bridge to Hirose Bridge: - Normal: 25 minutes- Fast Walker: 15 minutes

Hirose Bridge to Kawaramachi: - Normal: 15 minutes- Fast Walker: 10 minutes

Kawaramachi to Mutsu Kokubunji Temple: - Normal: 45 minutes- Fast Walker: 30 minutes

Mutsu Kokubunji Temple to Kleenex Stadium Miyagi: - Normal: 15 minutes- Fast Walker: 10 minutes

Kleenex Stadium Miyagi to Matsune Temple: - Normal: 40 minutes- Fast Walker: 25 minutes

Matsune Temple to Hotel: - Normal: 45 minutes- Fast Walker: 30 minutes

Total Travel Time (excluding exploration time at Mutsu Kokubunji Temple, Kleenex Stadium Miyagi, etc.): - Normal: 215 minutes- Fast Walker: 140 minutes

I hope this helps! If you have any more text to translate or further questions, please feel free to ask.

****Unrestrained Exploration of Kokucho Town****

****Introduction to Kokucho Town****

Let's begin by defining Kokucho Town as the entertainment district enclosed by Tezenji Street, Hirose Street, and the arcade streets of Ichibancho 4-chome, along with Bansui Street.

In ancient times, residents of the temple town near Mutsu Kokubunji Temple collectively relocated during the construction of Sendai Castle. During the Edo period, it had a commercial and post town atmosphere along the Oshu Kaido highway. With the Meiji Restoration and the arrival of government forces, it transformed into an entertainment district.

Subsequently, as the red-light district relocated due to the movement of military facilities to the east side of Sendai Station and the vicinity of Suzume-ga-Oka, it shifted its focus to restaurants and geisha teahouses. In the 1960s, during the period of high economic growth, dining and entertainment buildings began to appear alongside the traditional geisha district, leading to its transformation from a geisha area into a more common entertainment district. Today, it boasts over 3,000 dining establishments, making it the largest entertainment district in Tohoku.

After the earthquake, Kokucho Town transformed into a place where makeshift stalls selling yakitori, onigiri, miso soup, and other items appeared on the streets at night. It had an atmosphere reminiscent of a black market. In the cold nights, people wandered around looking for any open shops. Despite the city gas supply being unreliable, some managed to

reopen their businesses using charcoal, propane gas, cassette cookers, and whatever ingredients they could find. Kokucho Town showed its resilience.

After much searching, we finally arrived at one shop. Orders were limited to two items per person, and takeaway packs were highly appreciated. It was almost like experiencing a glimpse of a future food crisis. However, those chaotic days are now in the past. Kokucho Town quickly recovered and seems to be leading the way in revitalizing the spirit of Tohoku. Today, it stands as an indefatigable city that never sleeps, absorbing the energy of the people flocking to Tohoku. Let's take a stroll through Kokucho Town.

Within this entertainment district, there are three north-south lines: Inari Koji, Kokucho Street, and Tohoku Kyosai Hospital Street (temporary name, as there is no official name yet). These are enclosed by Tezenji Street and Hirose Street to the east and west, forming five east-west lines: Third Kyoritsu Building Street (temporary name), Mototaji-cho Street, Nighter Building Street (temporary name), Toraya Yokocho to Hon Yagura-cho Street, and Shichifuku Street. Each of these streets is one-way, so be cautious when approaching by taxi. To become a local expert, remember the names of the main streets. You can approach by taxi and say, "Bunchou, ○○ Building," and you'll be one step closer to being a local expert yourself.

I hope this helps! If you have any more text to translate or further questions, please feel free to ask.

****Inari Koji****

Let's embark on an exploration of Inari Koji, a treasure trove of unique shops. We'll head north from Hirose Street toward Tezenji Street. While this involves going against the flow of one-way traffic, during the nighttime, cars are prohibited from entering this street, so there should be no issues. First, on your left at the entrance, there's the 7th floor of the 19-Fuji Building, home to "RB," a wine bar that often graces my pages. Then, on your right, you'll find "Hanaita," a popular traditional Japanese restaurant located on the 1st floor of the Third Fujiwara Building, and it's open even on Sundays. Adjacent to it, on the 1st floor, is the renowned wine bar "Bonne Plus." On the 2nd floor of the Fifth Yoshioka Building, you'll discover "Ajiraku," known for its delicious beef tongue dishes. After passing through Toraya Yokocho, take a left into a narrow alley, and you'll find "Issenkaku," a 24-hour-operating, late-night ramen shop, perfect for ending your night in Kokucho Town. Continue on, and on your left, in the FOX-B Building on the 2nd floor, you'll encounter "Le Bar Kawagoe," often dubbed Sendai's number one bar, which is also open on Sundays. After crossing

Mototaji-cho Street, a little further on your left, you'll find "Ako," a super-popular izakaya that I, Jimocho, highly recommend. Continuing on your right, you'll see the renowned local spot "Oden Miyoshi."

****Kokucho Street****

Next is Kokucho Street, the main road of the district. It's a one-way street from Hirose Street to Tezenji Street. While this street is not primarily known for dining, due to its high rents, it's where upscale clubs thrive. First, on your right, in the basement of the Second Fujiwara Building, there's "Piropo," a super-popular upscale club where you can sing karaoke in private rooms. After crossing Toraya Yokocho, on your right, you'll find "Iwasaki," a small Japanese-style restaurant popular with the ladies, located behind Hime Ramen. On the 3rd floor of the adjacent Emu Road Building, you'll discover "Fairy Kohara," a super-popular upscale club favored by branch managers, presidents, and their families. Right next door, on the 5th floor of the Peace Building, you'll find "Noah," a club well-liked by slightly mischievous older gentlemen. Crossing to the left, you'll reach the Senkan Plaza Building on the 3rd floor, home to the charmingly unique club "Il Socio Dolce." Moving to the right, you'll find "Wakuwaku," a well-known club on the 3rd floor of the Hokuei Building. On the same floor, there's "Noaaru," a cozy snack bar with private karaoke rooms. Next door, on the 4th floor of the Marui Plaza Building, you'll encounter "Oro Oro," another famous upscale club. On the corner across from Nogase Tobacconist, which also sells cigars, there's the Grand Parade Building, a hub for clubs and snack bars. On the left side, you'll notice the Lion Building Taiyo-kan while heading toward Tezenji Street.

I hope this translation helps! If you have any more text to translate or other questions, feel free to ask.

****Tezenji Street****

At the corner of Tezenji Street, on the 2nd floor of the Sendai Rich Hotel Kokucho, you'll find "Bisui Hanzo," a restaurant run by Mr. Murakami, who used to work at "Totoya." Heading west on Tezenji Street, on the 1st floor of the Tezenji Park Building, you'll discover the incredibly famous club "Radonna," run by Setsuko Mama.

****Third Kyoritsu Building Street (Temporary Name)****

The east-west cross street, Third Kyoritsu Building Street (temporary name), is a one-way street heading west from the Mitsukoshi department store area. When taking a taxi, you'll approach it via the main street in Higashi-Nibancho, passing between the Mitsukoshi main building and the new building (formerly 141).

When coming from the Mitsukoshi side and crossing Kokucho Street, on your left, you'll see the Third Kyoritsu Building. The 1st floor houses my highly recommended sushi place, "Sushi Minomushi." On the 2nd floor, there's "Katsuya," a seafood izakaya. On the opposite side, on the 1st floor of the Kojima Building, there's "Che Gomez," a wine bar perfect for pairing with soba.

****Mototaji-cho Street****

Mototaji-cho Street is a one-way street heading east from Wansuidori Street toward Mitsukoshi. It's accessible by taxi via the Arch of Triumph Building Street. On the 1st floor of the Arch of Triumph Building on your left, you'll find "Ban Mitakahashi," which is the top recommendation in my guidebook. On the right is Mototaji-cho Park, where concerts and other events are frequently held. Continuing toward Mitsukoshi, on the left side, there's a cozy club called "Graie" on the 2nd floor of the Grand Hamayu Building.

****Naita Building Street (Temporary Name)****

Next is Naita Building Street (temporary name), a one-way street heading east from west. To access it, you can enter from Tohoku Kyosai Hospital Street (temporary name). Just on the left as you enter, on the 1st floor of the Nanjo Building, there's "Totoya," a reasonably priced and popular traditional Japanese restaurant. Next door, you'll find "Isoto," a place where the owner sells freshly caught fish, and you can even savor octopus sashimi that sticks to your tongue. A little further along, on the 1st floor of the Rainbow Station Building on your left, you'll come across "Daisuke," a shop specializing in Shizuoka-style oden.

I hope this translation helps you! If you have any more text to translate or further questions, feel free to ask.

****Toraya Alley - Hommarucho Street****

In Toraya Alley, vehicle entry is prohibited at night. When entering from Ichibancho 4-

chome Arcade, on your left, you'll find "Daikoshou," the definitive destination for charcoal-grilled steak in Sendai, on the 2nd floor. On the right, there's the stylish Korean restaurant "Gaya." In the adjacent basement, there's the hidden gem dining bar, "Shizukutouya."

As you cross Kokucho Street, it transitions into Hommarucho Street. This section goes from Kokucho Street to Wansuidori Street and is a one-way street heading toward Wansuidori. On your right, you'll find "Momosui," an izakaya known for its delicious fresh mackerel on the 1st floor of the Andersen Building.

****Shichifuku Street****

Shichifuku Street is a one-way street heading east from west. On your right, toward the back of the yellow Lemon Chateau on the 1st floor, there's "Butt Junior," a recommended bar for ending your night in Kokucho, where you can also enjoy tasty katsu sandwiches. On your left, on the 1st floor of Guroku Ichibankan, there's "Ichimichi," a restaurant known for reasonably priced and well-prepared dishes.

****Tohoku Kyosai Hospital Street (Temporary Name)****

This street is a one-way street heading from Hirose Street to Tezenji Street. When taking a taxi, it's an essential approach to Shichifuku Street, Naita Building Street (temporary name), and Mototaji-cho Street.

Near Naita Building Street and on your left, there's "Cure Kokucho," a hot spring sauna for refreshing before a night out. Near Third Kyoritsu Building Street (temporary name) and on your left, you'll find the main store of "Tsukasa," a famous beef tongue restaurant on the 1st floor of the Seto Building.

Feeling tired yet? This is how you navigate the ins and outs of Kokucho Street.

****Budget Estimates****

- Izakayas: ¥6,000 to ¥7,000
- Snack Bars: Approximately ¥8,000
- Clubs: ¥12,000 to ¥18,000 (excluding bottle fees)

I hope this translation is helpful! If you have any more text to translate or further questions,

feel free to ask.

****Extra Edition****

For example, on an MTB (Mountain Bike):

****Climbing Mount Aoba****

Ride through Tohoku University's Kawauchi Campus and ascend Mount Aoba. The hill climb, with the sound of birds and dappled sunlight, provides a delightful experience that makes you forget the effort. On your right, you'll pass impressive buildings like the Faculty of Science and the Natural History Specimen Museum of Tohoku University. After crossing an intersection with access to Aoba Campus, where the Faculty of Engineering is located, you'll see construction underway for the Tozai Line Aobayama Station of the subway on your left. Eventually, your view opens up, revealing traces of fairways and tea houses. This was once the site of the Sendai Country Club. You can almost hear nostalgic voices from the good old days coming from the locals.

As you continue, there are several entrances to Aobanomori on your right. The descent to Miizawa is an excellent hiking route. Keep in mind that this area is off-limits to MTBs; it's a playground for walkers. After a short climb while observing yellow signs warning of bear sightings, you'll find Aobayama Golf Practice Range on your left. This marks the apex of your ride. Soon, you'll reach the final bus stop, Aobadai Terminal, at the turning point.

****Around Mount Aoba - A Hidden Playground****

Continue straight ahead, pass the signpost for Toritoriyama Bird Forest on your left, and descend to the right to reach the Tohoku Institute of Technology grounds. For those arriving by car, there are a few parking spaces in front of this sign and beside the grounds.

Beyond that lies the vast expanse of Kongozawa Jizan's Forest and Kuguritoriyama Jizan's Forest. With names like Hiyo-dori Line, Kakko Line, and Tsubaki Line, there are 18 walking paths, all inviting you to fully enjoy the forest. Admire the warblers, bathe in the songs of cicadas, frolic among the autumn leaves, and sense the presence of deer and bears. Along the way, you'll encounter long flights of stairs running alongside water pipes and even the Kuguritoriyama Water Distribution Center, which may seem like a secret UFO base.

Combined with Taihaku-san Natural Observation Forest, explore this area extensively, immerse yourself in the pleasures of feeling the seasons firsthand, and take in the thrill of the experience!

Strangely, even though you're so close to the city, encounters with other people are rare here. It's a secret playground! Aoba-yama and its surroundings are full of charm, and it would be a waste to use them solely for anti-aging exercises. Young people, dream big!

If you land in the Yagiyama South area from here, climb again toward the direction of the Animal Park, make a right turn, and consider having lunch at "Teuchi Soba Mizuki" in Aoyama. I highly recommend it for the aroma, texture, and broth—it's one of my favorites. Their whole iwana (char) tempura is also a must-try. They're open only for lunch and often sell out.

If you're heading toward Mount Uenoyama, along the former Route 286, aim for the bakery "Au Four Neuf du Bois," known for its wood-burning oven. However, after the earthquake, they switched to an electric oven. What a shame!

Enjoy your adventure in these areas around Mount Aoba!

Please note that this is a creative translation intended to capture the essence and details of the original text. If you have any further questions or need additional translations, feel free to ask.

****Heading to Oritate****

Now, let's not make any detours this time. After reaching Aobadai Bus Turnaround at the previous stop, turn right and head towards Oritate. It's time to release that accumulated potential energy. Enjoy the exhilarating downhill ride, but be cautious of the curves. This is a lesser-traveled back road on the west side, so there's still some vehicular traffic. Pushing the speed too far can lead to unpleasant consequences... As in my case, with a complex and incurable fracture of the right little finger, let's ensure that doesn't happen to you.

As you gaze at the Tohoku Expressway on your left, continue your descent. At the bottom, turn left at the tunnel and head towards Oritate from Goryoku.

The Oritate 5th Avenue district, situated at the northern face of Ban-yama and at the foot of the mountain, suffered extensive damage in the earthquake. The area near the Daibaiji Temple's rear approach and the descent route for Ban-yama's snow mountain hike, a place familiar to me, experienced landslides due to excessive embankment. Numerous houses tilted, and even now, there are warning signs of danger. Standing there with the loss of their owners, it's a desolate sight. The paved road, now cracked and uneven with piled-up sandbags in places, is painful to see. Let's not forget that besides the tsunami, there was considerable damage. We can only hope for a speedy recovery and reconstruction.

****Aiko Daibutsu****

From the Oritate intersection, travel along National Route 48, cross the Namise Bridge, make a left turn, and follow the narrow paved road that winds along the southern foothills of Gongen Mori. The sight of the Hirose River flowing amidst the trees on your left is soothing. Eventually, it merges with the main road from Rikuzen-Ochiai to Izumi. When you reach the first traffic signal, instead of heading towards Izumi, turn diagonally to the left while keeping Mount Daito on your right, and climb the hill towards Akasaka via Prefectural Road 55.

Going straight is the usual route, but if you spot a liquor and tobacco shop on your right, take a diagonal left, downhill while gazing at the Zao mountain range. You'll pass through a rural landscape of satoyama, glimpsing the Hirose River through bamboo groves, and then you'll climb again, which adds an interesting twist.

Return to the original road, and you'll soon see a magnificent weeping cherry tree on your right. When you round the bend, you'll suddenly spot an unusual Buddha figure with a lightning rod on its left! This is the Aiko Daibutsu. It stands 15 meters tall and sits atop Aiko Hill, overlooking the world below. On its side, you'll find a quirky, yellow monorail-like vehicle that strangely resembles a cable car from two decades ago. It's called the Namunamu-gou, I hear. The fare for a ride is just 10 yen per trip. Let's make a quick visit here.

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****Mount Jōbutsu and Beyond****

This road will eventually lead to Mount Jōbutsu, passing through the Okura Dam. Mount Jōbutsu is a town at the entrance to Jōbutsu Nyorai and Seifuku-ji Temple, known for its legends of Heike refugees. It is believed to have blessings for matchmaking and safe childbirth. A must-visit spot for locals, famous for its triangular fried tofu and a type of grilled rice ball called "yakimeshi." Combined with Okura Dam, it's a casual driving spot for locals. It's also perfect for a mountain bike ride and lunch. However, please note that due to recent heavy rainfall, the road is blocked halfway. The narrow mountain road entrance is barricaded. What a pity!

By the way, from Okura Dam towards Saku-nami, the Nikka Whisky Sendai Factory is quite interesting. Factory tours to see the whisky production process are a common choice. Along the way, you'll also find the Horinari Shijūhachi Falls, and from the factory's central square, you can get a great view of a mountain that strikingly resembles a gorilla's profile! Don't miss the Gorilla Mountain!

From Gongen Mori to Minamiyoshinari

Head towards the base of Gongen Mori spreading in front of you. Eventually, you'll reach a T-shaped intersection; turn right. Immediately, go around the Seven-Eleven on your left and climb the north side of Gongen Mori. It's a narrow paved road with heavy car traffic, but keep climbing steadily. After passing Katsugyū-ji, once you've reached the top, start descending towards Minamiyoshinari.

You'll soon cross the Tohoku Expressway, and the road will widen into a residential area. After crossing Prefectural Route 37, the Sendai North Circular Road, make a left turn. Aim for the red-and-white two-tone antenna, the NTT Tohoku Network Center, for your final climb.

Once you've reached the top of Kunimi Pass and turned slightly to the right, you'll find Myōhō-ji and its pagoda containing Buddha's relics. The dome section of the main pagoda measures 18.3 meters, and its pinnacle reaches 30.5 meters, an impressive tower. Instead of guardian lion-dogs, a long-tailed white lion is enshrined at the front. Inside the tower, four golden Buddhas are housed. In the past, one could apparently have a panoramic view of Sendai city from the tower. However, now the view is obstructed by thick foliage, and the scenic view of yesteryears is no longer accessible.

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****Thrilling Downhill to the City****

Now, with the side trips behind us, let's get ready for the climax. Let's release all that stored-up potential energy in one go. A thrilling downhill ride with a panoramic view of Sendai city and Sendai Bay, this is my top recommendation.

The speed picks up instantly, racing down while competing with cars. But be sure to watch your braking points carefully. Cross over the Kunimi Water Purification Plant, veer diagonally to the left, pass under the Sendai-Yamagata Line, make a left turn at the traffic light, and follow the road down. At the bottom, make a right turn.

Continue straight, along a narrow road at some points, passing to the east of Ōsaki-Hachimangū Shrine, until you reach National Route 48. Once you're here, the hotel is just around the corner.

Now that we're in the heart of Sendai, which route shall we take back? How about making a stop at the Miyagi Prefectural Art Museum? Or perhaps, dash through daytime Kokubuncho? Maybe we should pick up some Campanile from "L'Atelier de Campagne" behind the Prefectural Office? If you skip the side trips, it's about 33 km and a 2-hour ride.

The fun is up to your preferences!

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