

Aomori Port Office Mail Magazine — Vol.3

~Winter~

■ During the winter, Hakkoda is known for its “snow monsters,” frost-covered trees in fascinating shapes.

The Hakkoda Mountain Range, at the northernmost end of the Ou Mountains, soars above central Aomori Prefecture. The area is known for its wintertime juhyo (frost-covered trees) and mountain skiing.

The Hakkoda Mountain Range consists of a northern volcanic group, with the highest peak at Odake (1,584m); and a southern volcanic group, of which the highest peak is Kushigamine (1516m).

“Snow monsters,”- Hakkoda’s frost-covered trees (juhyo) - are a highlight of winter. They are formed as wind carves the snow and ice covering the trees into unique and fantastic shapes that resemble monsters. Although frost-covered trees may be seen all over the world, these “snow monsters” covered completely with snow and frost are extremely rare, and appear in only two places in the entire world, Hakkoda and Zao.

The Hakkoda Ropeway in northern Hakkoda offers the perfect experience for viewing juhyo. As visitors are carried up 650m in ten minutes, they can enjoy a grand view over the Hakkodas while having a closer look at a forest of juhyo below.

The slope below the ropeway is a popular destination for mountain skiers. The gentle slope where the Hakkoda Ski Resort lift operates is recommended for families. The winter weather is extremely cold and subject to sudden change, so make sure to come well-prepared.

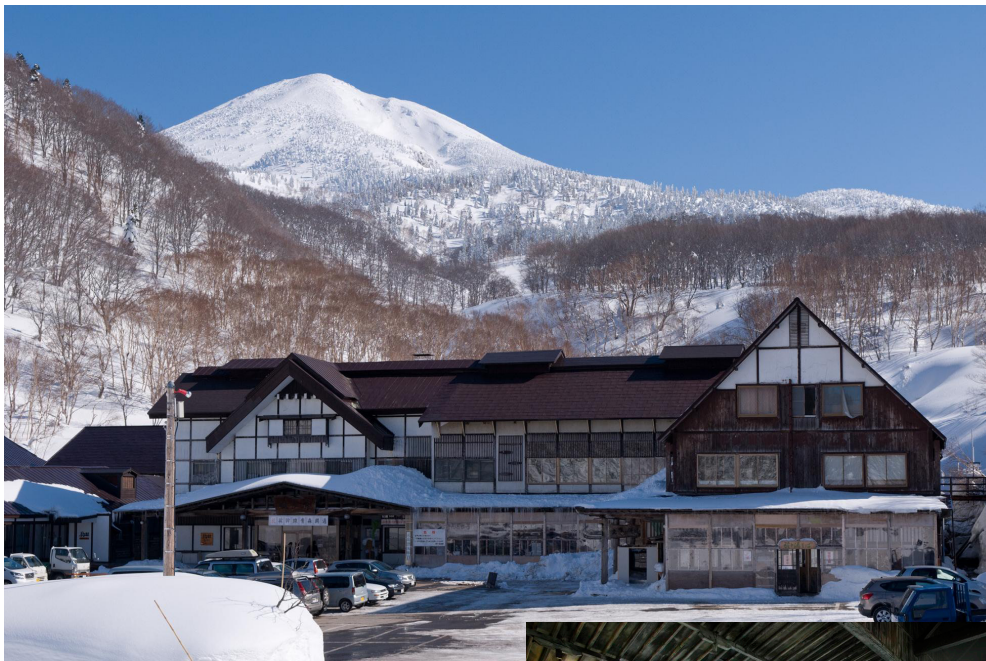


■ Hot springs are scattered throughout Aomori, and are essential destinations for anybody visiting the Prefecture.

The foothills of the Hakkoda Mountain Range are blessed with abundant hot springs (onsen), some of which are very famous. These include Sukayu Onsen, a resort with a history dating from 1684, boasting a huge bath called the “Sennin-buro” (1000-person bath). Others are Tsuta Onsen, with its crystal clear water, and Sarukura Onsen, known for its abundant milky-white water. All these embody the natural simplicity that characterizes the hot springs of Hakkoda.

Hot springs are scattered throughout Aomori, not only in the mountains, but also along the coasts. There is the Asamushi region along Mutsu Bay, only 30 minutes away from Aomori City by car. Fukaura Town on the Sea of Japan coast offers visitors a beautiful view of the sunset, and the Shimokita Peninsula, overlooking the Tsugaru Straits on the northern end of Honshu, also has popular hot springs.

The effects of hot springs depend on their mineral components and pH balance. Aomori has about 150 hot springs offering a variety of health benefits. Many of them are situated in stunning natural surroundings with local cuisine based on seafood and wild plants also being on offer. Accommodations are also widely available. All this means that hot springs are an essential part of any visit to Aomori.



Sukayu Onsen



Sennin-buro

■ Attention, all visitors! Miso curry milk ramen is highly recommended.

In Aomori City, a local ramen noodle dish known as “miso curry milk ramen” has become very popular lately. A Sapporo-style ramen shop in the city came up with the idea in 1975 and the locals, especially students, have loved it for the almost 40 years since then. Word of it first spread among tourists, then it appeared on TV and in magazine, and now it has attracted nationwide attention. In 2008, a local ramen shop organized the “Aomori Miso Curry Milk Ramen Association” to increase PR and to pass on the legendary taste to future generations.

The name of this dish says it all: the ramen has a miso-based broth with curry seasoning and milk, with butter then added as a topping. This combination is surprisingly delicious; some even find it addictive! Give this Aomori original ramen a try.

