

Aomori Port Office Mail Magazine — Vol.4

~Spring~

■ Hirosaki Park: Colored with Four Centuries of History and 2600 Cherry Trees in Full Bloom

The flower that represents the spring in Japan is the cherry blossom; and one of the most renowned cherry-blossom viewing spots in Japan is Hirosaki Park in Hirosaki, Aomori. The cherries start to bloom around late April to early May, during which the nationally-famous Hirosaki Cherry Blossom Festival is held. Every year approximately 2 million people flock to the park to enjoy the magnificent view of the cherry blossoms, having picnic parties under the trees or strolling around the park.

The 49-hectare Hirosaki Park is the site of the Hirosaki-fief castle built four centuries ago; the main castle, five gates, and three watchtowers, as well as moats full of water still remain today.

In the park there are approximately 2600 cherry trees of 53 varieties, the most prominent being the Yoshino cherry (*Prunus × yedoensis*). When they come into full bloom, the entire park becomes beautifully colored with the pink of the flowers, including the main castle which stands aloft on a stone wall, and the moats which become covered with the fallen petals; wherever you are in the park, you will be surrounded by scenes colored with blossoms and history.



■ Zenringai: a Street Lined with 33 Zen Temples Where You Can Try Zazen Meditation

The castle town of Hirosaki is also known for having many temples. In particular, Zenringai, a street with 33 Sodo-sect Zen temples to the southwest of Hirosaki Park, is a popular tourist spot.

Zenringai was created by Tsugaru Nobuhira, second lord of the Hirosaki fief, who sought to fortify the area to the south of the castle; one year after the 1611 completion of the castle, he brought various Sodo-sect temples which had been scattered throughout the Tsugaru region to this street. The rows of temples begin with Choshoji, the family temple of the Tsugaru clan; this picturesque street has traditionally served as a spiritual ground for the locals.

Today, zazen meditation at a Zen temple is becoming a popular tourist activity. Indeed, meditating in the serenity of a Zen temple and attaining inner peace may be a fine way to enjoy the atmosphere of the ancient city of Hirosaki. (For more information on zazen experience, contact Hirosaki Tourism and Convention Bureau, 0172-35-3131.)



■ **With a Wide Variety of Processed Products, Sweet and Plump Scallops Make Perfect Souvenirs!**

Since Aomori prefecture is surrounded on three sides by the Pacific Ocean, the Japan Sea, and Mutsu Bay, a great variety of fish and shellfish are caught. In addition, aquaculture is a major industry; Aomori is the second largest producer of scallops after Hokkaido.

Mineral-rich river water flows into Mutsu Bay from the Hakkoda Mountains. This water provides a great environment for plankton, on which scallops feed. Because of this, Aomori's scallops have plumper adductors than those from other areas, with a unique sweetness and aroma. They are popularly used in a wide range of cuisines: in Japanese dishes such as sushi, sashimi, and tempura; in Western dishes such as soup, meuniere, and coquille; as well as in various Chinese dishes.

In Aomori, the delicious scallops of Mutsu Bay can be enjoyed practically throughout the year. There are numerous types of processed scallop products as well. When you are in Aomori, please try these delectable Aomori scallops and scallop products.

