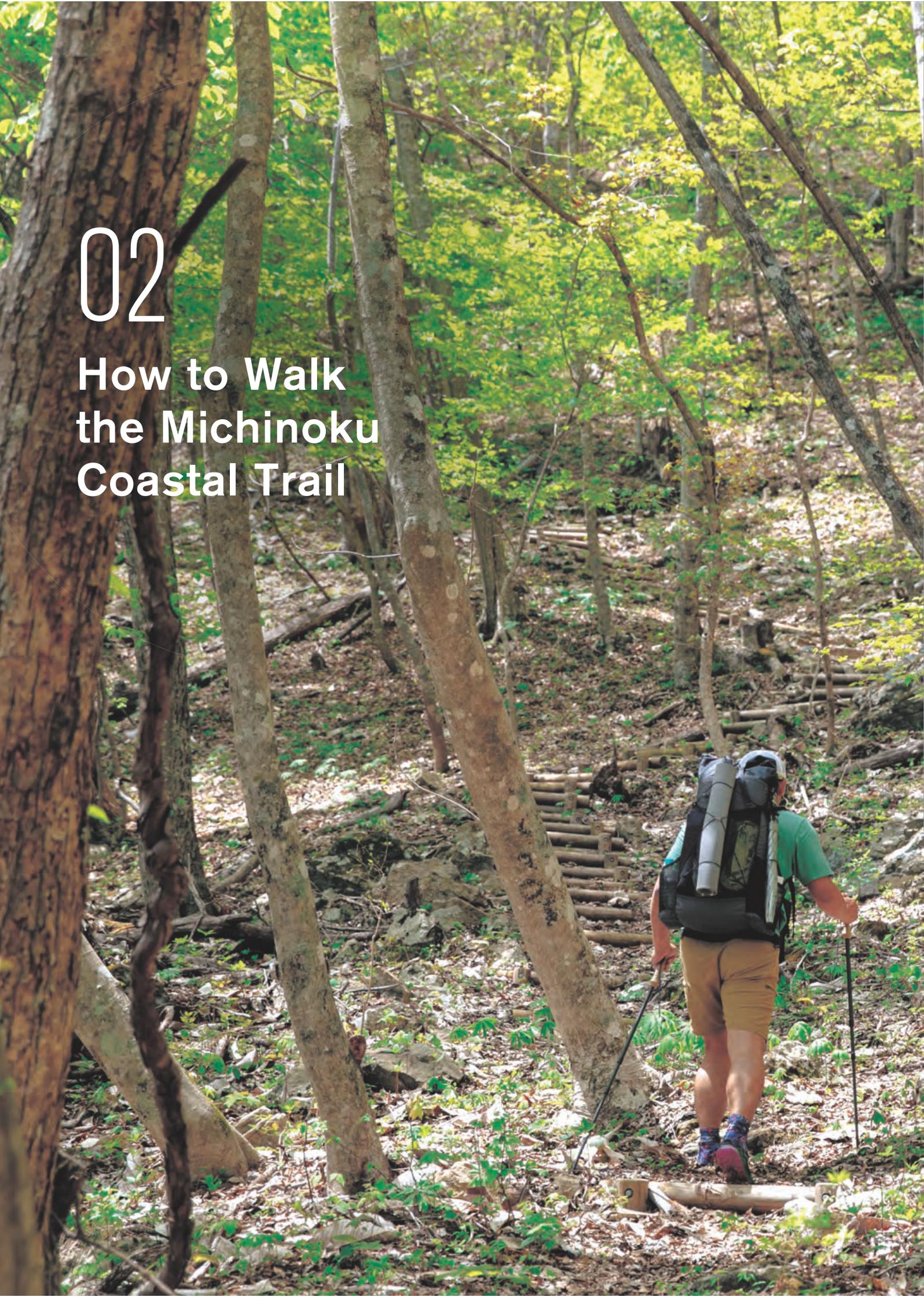


02

How to Walk  
the Michinoku  
Coastal Trail





# Planning, Preparation, and Mindset

Planning and preparation are essential when hiking a long-distance trail. Create your own journey plan by assessing your physical fitness and checking local information so that you can walk comfortably and enjoyably.



# 1

## Planning Your Walk

**Few long-distance trails in the world offer as good access and resupply environments as the Michinoku Coastal Trail (MCT). However, simply setting out without preparation can lead to painful experiences. The journey begins with the time you spend at your desk before you even start walking. The basics of how to create a plan are outlined below.**

### 1 Gathering Basic Trail Information

To make a plan, it is important to first understand the MCT. The website of the NPO Michinoku Trail Club contains a wealth of information, so start by gathering basic details there.

### 2 Deciding on a Route

You can start walking the MCT from either the north or the south. Many people walk from south to north in the spring, or from north to south in the autumn. If there is a specific route you want to walk, that is also fine. Think about where you want to start and where you want to go.

If possible, challenge yourself to a thru-hike, walking the entire trail in one go. If time is limited, a section hike covering only part of the trail is a good option, as is a day hike for just one day. Consider your walking style and the number of days available.

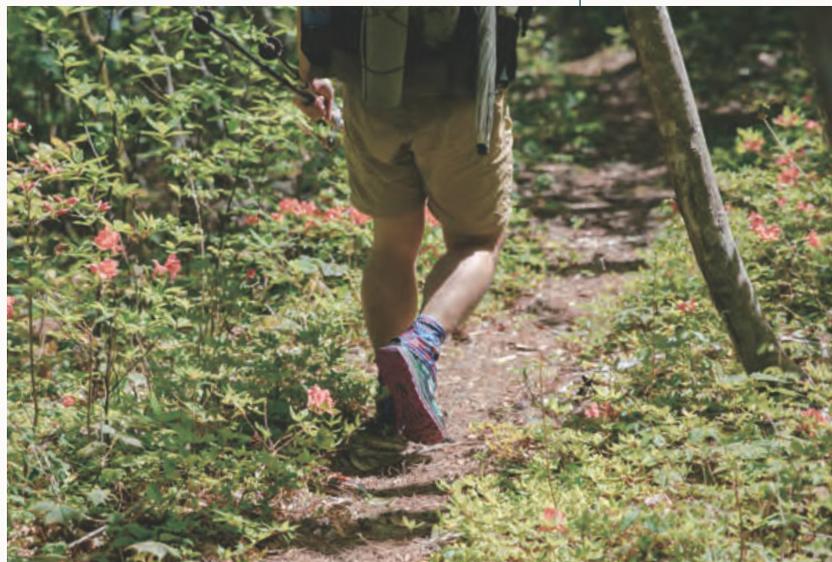
### 3 Checking Distance and Time

Once your route is decided, check the distances using the Data Book or Hiking Map Book published by the Michinoku Trail Club. By thinking about how many kilometers you will walk in a day, the necessary number of days will become clear. Since walking speed — how many kilometers per day or per hour —

varies from person to person, first-timers will only know their pace by actually walking.

As a reference, we suggest planning for “3 km per hour.” You can likely walk faster on flat ground, while uphill sections will be slower and downhill sections faster. However, steep or unstable downhill paths often take more time than flat terrain. It is best to start planning with the assumption of 3 km/h, taking various conditions into account. From there, you can adjust: if you are confident in your fitness, estimate longer distances (e.g., 3.5 km/h); if not, estimate shorter distances (e.g., 2.5 km/h). If thinking in daily units, a target of 20–30 km per day is standard for thru-hiking. For section hiking, aim for 10–20 km per day. For day hiking, it depends on the time you have available.

Although this chapter focuses on “walking the entire line = thru-hiking,” the planning order of (1) Gathering basic trail information, (2) Deciding on a route, and (3) Checking distance and time can also be applied to planning section hikes and day hikes.



# Gathering Information

## ▶ Data Book and Hiking Map Book

When planning your actual walk on the trail, the first thing you should pick up is the Data Book (DB). The DB summarizes information essential for walking plans, such as landmarks on the trail, distances from the starting point, facilities and features at those locations, and distances and elevation differences between points. Understanding “what lies ahead after how many kilometers” allows you to visualize your daily itinerary, rest spots, and

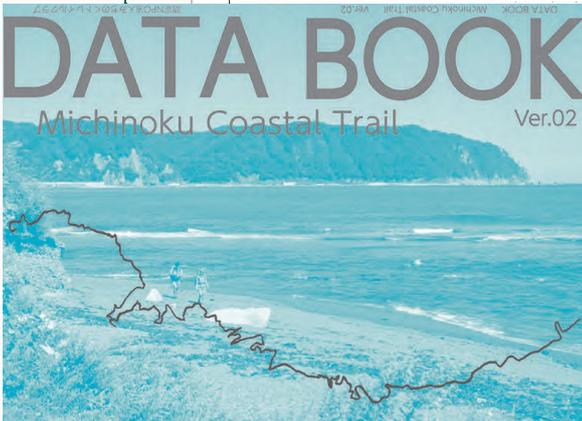
accommodation sites concretely.

The Hiking Map Book (MB) combines this DB information with maps to present it visually. The MB allows you to grasp the overall flow and terrain at a glance, making it useful for constructing and reviewing your itinerary. However, since the listed information is not as detailed as the DB, it is recommended to use it in conjunction with the DB when planning.

Planning, Preparation, and Mindset

八戸市 Hiogo	ランドマーク Landmark	設備等 Facilities	距離 Dist	SoBo	NoBo	標高 Elev	地図 MAP
	熊島ターミナス：熊嶋神社、熊島休息所 Kabushima Island terminus: Kabushima Shrine, Kabushima resting area	W, T	0.00	0.00	1059.46	2	01-01
	公衆トイレ、RIVERRUNS ※ガス缶あり +0.40km S、駅駅 (JR八戸線) +0.90km S、洋酒喫茶ブリス +7.20km S、キハ戸駅 (JR八戸線) +7.30km S Public toilet, Riverruns ※ They have gas canisters +0.40km S, Same station +0.90km S, Bar Prince +7.20km S, Hiob-Hachinohe station +7.30km S	W, T	0.12	0.12	1059.33	7	01-01
	八戸市水産科学館 マリエント Hachinohe City Marine Science Museum "Marient"	W, T, R	0.41	0.53	1058.93	11	01-01
	熊宮神社：SoBo 神社裏の道を直る Nishinoya Shrine: SoBo Follow path beside Shrine		0.21	0.74	1058.72	6	01-01
	南北漁港漁港 分岐：高瀬町の庄田路 合流点 (西) Ebisahama Fishing Harbor, Junction: Detour entry (west), Use detour during high water		0.15	0.89	1058.57	9	01-01
	浜小憩の間の間を通る / Go through fisherman's huts		0.63	1.52	1057.94	10	01-01
	海産料理店 小舟渡 / Kofunato Seafood Restaurant	R	0.29	1.81	1057.65	9	01-01
	マイルポスト / Mile post		0.21	2.02	1057.44	19	01-01
	分岐：NoBo 歩道へ、高瀬町の庄田路合流点 (東) Junction: NoBo Turn to path, Detour entry (east), Use detour during high water		0.07	2.09	1057.37	21	01-01
	カフェテラス ホロノバル / Holonbar Cafe	T, R	0.45	2.54	1056.91	15	01-01
	車毛崎展望台 / Ashigezaki Viewpoint	W, T	0.04	2.59	1056.87	11	01-01
	分岐、車毛崎第二展望台 +0.03km SE、車毛崎公衆トイレ +0.05km NW Junction, Ashigezaki Scenic Overlook No.2 +0.03km SE, Ashigezaki Public toilet +0.05km NW		0.10	2.69	1056.77	11	01-01
	中濱海岸 / Nakasuka Coast		0.29	2.98	1056.47	6	01-01
	沢 / Stream	W	0.30	3.28	1056.18	12	01-01
	広場 / Open spot		0.05	3.33	1056.13	11	01-01
	うみねこラインの碑、大須賀海岸バス停 Monument of Umineko line, Osuka Kaigan bus stop		0.22	3.55	1055.91	14	01-01
	大須賀海岸、広場 / Osuka coast, Open spot		0.81	4.36	1055.09	2	01-01
	白浜海水浴場 / Shihama Swimming Beach	W, T	0.97	5.33	1054.13	5	01-01
	海水浴場入り口、陸奥白浜駅 (JR八戸線) +0.40km S Entrance to swimming beach, Mutsu-Shihama station +0.40km S		0.21	5.54	1053.91	8	01-01
	白浜漁港：ゲートを通る。ハイカーは通行OK Shirahama Fishing Harbor: Go through the gate, Hikers OK to enter		0.08	5.62	1053.84	7	01-01
	深久保漁港：ゲートを通る。ハイカーは通行OK Fukakubo Fishing Harbor: Go through the gate, Hikers OK to enter	W, T	0.55	6.18	1053.28	9	01-01
	深久保漁港公衆トイレ / Fukakubo Fishing Harbor Public toilet	W, T	0.10	6.28	1053.18	10	01-01
			6.51	1052.95	16	01-01	
			7.55	1051.91	18	01-02	

八戸市 Hiogo	ランドマーク Landmark	設備等 Facilities	距離 Dist	SoBo	NoBo	標高 Elev	地図 MAP
	種差海岸インフォメーションセンター +0.08km W Tanesashi Coast Information Center +0.08km W	W, T, I, R	0.17	7.73	1051.73	20	01-02
	飯石 石橋 +0.14km W / Minshuku Ishibashi +0.14km W	W, T, H	0.18	7.91	1051.55	24	01-02
	飯石商店 ※ガス缶あり +0.03km W、種差海岸駅 (JR八戸線) +0.21km W、飯石 志保 +0.10km SW Iyanigawa store ※ They have gas canisters +0.03km W, Tanesashi Kaigan station +0.15km W, Minnyuku Shiro +0.10km SW	W, T, H, S	0.08	7.98	1051.48	13	01-02
	種差海岸 種久保南公衆トイレ (冬季閉鎖) Tanesashi Coast Tanakubo south Public toilet (Closed in winter)	W, T	0.04	8.03	1051.43	9	01-02
	種差海岸公衆トイレ (冬季閉鎖) Tanesashi Seaside Public toilet (Closed in winter)	T	0.45	8.47	1050.98	11	01-02
	種差漁港：ゲートを通る。ハイカーは通行OK Gate: Go through Tanesashi Fishing Harbor, Hikers OK to enter	T	0.39	8.86	1050.60	9	01-02
	分岐、高岩展望台 +0.06km E / Junction, Takaiva Viewpoint +0.06km E		0.62	9.48	1049.98	23	01-02
	法郎浜公衆トイレ (冬季閉鎖)、MCT サポートース施設：キャンプ可※ 要予約 +0.45km SW Hoshihama Public toilet (Closed in winter), MCT Supporters: OK to camp/overstay in advance +0.45km SW	W, T, C	0.27	9.75	1049.71	10	01-02
	法郎浜漁港：車両進入防止ロープ、ハイカーは通行OK Hoshihama Fishing Harbor: Rope barrier for cars, Hikers OK to enter		0.05	9.80	1049.66	12	01-02
	大久島駅 (JR八戸線) +0.07km SW / Okuki station +0.07km SW		0.49	10.29	1049.16	26	01-02
	大久島漁港、広場 / Okuki Fishing Harbor, Open spot	T	0.78	11.07	1048.38	3	01-02
	漁師用具と浜小屋 / Hamagoya (fisherman's Hut)		0.10	11.17	1048.28	12	01-02
	広場 / Open spot		1.43	12.60	1046.85	18	01-02
	広場 / Open spot		0.25	12.85	1046.61	9	01-02
	広場 / Open spot		0.22	13.07	1046.39	9	01-02
	広場 / Open spot		0.10	13.17	1046.29	8	01-02
	市道丁字路、金浜駅 (JR八戸線) +0.35km SW City road T-junction: Kanehama station +0.35km SW		0.28	13.44	1046.01	19	01-02
	金浜漁港・熊嶋神社 +0.09km N Kanehama Fishing Harbor/Shigama Shrine +0.09km N		0.44	13.88	1045.57	10	01-02
	八戸市 - 陸上町境界、広場 Hachinohe City/Hashikami Town border, Open spot		0.25	14.13	1045.32	8	01-02
	はしかみハマの駅 あるでーば / Hashikami Hama no Eki Aldra	W, T, R	0.34	14.48	1044.98	4	01-02
	熊持宗頼の経塚、大和漁港 +0.05km E Stone markers, Oja Fishing Harbor		0.26	14.74	1044.72	3	01-02
	大和さわやかトイレ、大和駅 (JR八戸線) +0.30km SW Oja-Sawayaka toilet, Oja station +0.30km SW	W, T	0.56	15.30	1044.16	7	01-03
	十文字商店、バス停 / Jumonji store, Bus stop		0.06	15.36	1044.10	6	01-03
	八幡丸 / Yahatamaru		0.06	15.42	1044.04	8	01-03
	油屋漁港 / Okoshi Fishing Harbor		0.10	15.52	1043.94	4	01-03





Hiking Map Book and  
Data Book on  
Michinoku Trail Club website

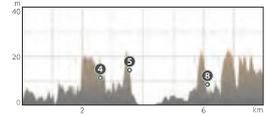


Online Map and GPS Data on  
Michinoku Trail Club website



### MAP 1 - 1

青森県・八戸市  
Aomori prefecture, Hachinohe city



No.	ランドマーク Landmark	設備等 Facilities	SoBo	NoBo	標高 Elev
1	青森ターミナス：青森神社、 青森休露所 Kabushima Island terminus: Kabushima Shrine, Kabushima resting area	W, T	0.00	1059.46	2
2	公衆トイレ / Public toilet	W, T	0.12	1059.56	7
A	RIVERRUNS 缶ガス缶あり Riverruns # They have gas canisters	W, T			
B	駅 (JR / 伊藤) Same Station				
3	カフェテラス、ホロンパイル Hakusai Cafe	T, R	2.54	1056.91	15
4	青毛崎展望台 Ashigasaki Viewpoint	W, T	2.59	1056.87	11
5	うまねこラインの碑、 大淵電停バス停 Monument of Umako line, Osuka Kaigan bus stop		3.55	1055.91	14
6	海水浴場入り口 Entrance to swimming beach		5.54	1053.91	8
C	篠島白浜 (JR / 伊藤) Nakushirahama Station				
7	白浜漁港：ゲートを通る Shirahama Fishing Harbor : Go through the gate		5.62	1053.84	7
8	深久保漁港：ゲートを通る Fukuhiko Fishing Harbor : Go through the gate	W, T	6.18	1053.28	9



In recent years, more people are walking using GPS devices or smartphones. Being able to know your current location immediately is a major advantage, but devices alone can sometimes make it difficult to understand landmarks or surrounding information. Furthermore, considering battery life and signal reception, paper DBs and MBs serve as reassuring backups.

Especially for long-term thru-hikes, it is difficult to create a perfect plan from the start. It is important to adjust your plan according to your physical condition that day, the weather, and local circumstances. As materials for making those judgments, the DB and MB are essential tools that support hikers.

## ▶ Alerts and Notices

Because the trail is constantly affected by nature, it is never in the same state. Paths may change. It can be said that the trail changes as if it were a living thing. Such information is disseminated and archived through the Michinoku Trail Club's website and social

media. Be sure to check these regularly while hiking the trail. Additionally, since alerts may include information regarding animals and plants, please check them in advance.

The following sections provide an overview of various points of caution.

On a trail where you walk through nature, the points to watch out for change depending on the season, weather, and time of day. In some situations, you may need to make the decision to take a detour or turn back. Refer to the following points to create a reasonable walking plan.

## ► Sunrise and Sunset

Plan with plenty of leeway so that you can finish walking before it gets dark. On forest roads and the eastern sides of marine terraces, it tends to get dim before sunset; sunset is particularly early from late autumn to early spring. On cloudy days, the surroundings become even darker, so it is important to decide early to move to a path where you can walk safely.

Smartphone lights drain batteries quickly, which may leave you unable to communicate in an emergency. Be sure to carry a headlamp just in case.



## ► Tosho (River Crossings)

There are several river crossing points from northern to southern Iwate Prefecture. Even streams that are only muddy puddles during dry seasons (like summer and winter) can rise to knee-height after continuous rain, such as during the rainy season. Also, note that some rivers have knee-deep water even during the dry season.

During typhoon season or localized



River crossing required at Koge River

downpours, water levels can rise rapidly, creating a danger of being swept away. Depending on the situation, do not force a crossing; use a detour route instead. Furthermore, even if the water volume is low, wet stones and fallen trees are highly slippery. It is important to avoid walking on them as much as possible and choose stable footing.

## ► Tide Levels

From Aomori Prefecture to central Iwate Prefecture, there are many sections where you walk along the coastline, such as sandy beaches, so caution regarding the ebb and flow of the tide is necessary. Depending on the tide level, walking may become impossible, so check a tide table before planning.

The state when the tide is highest in a day is called mancho (high tide), and the lowest is kancho (low tide). Depending on the day, the difference in tide levels can be more than 1 meter, and the trail may become impassable



at high tide. In such cases, you will have to use a detour route; to avoid long detours or having to turn back, checking the tide table is indispensable.

Note that oshio (spring tide) refers to periods with a large tidal range, while koshio (neap tide) refers to periods with a small range. Be especially careful during high tide on oshio days, as the water level is at its highest. Comparing tide tables for several days when planning will help you make safer judgments.

You can search for tide levels using keywords like “tide level + [region name].” Although the displayed values are for reference points and may differ from the actual location, they serve as a guide for judgment. Also, be aware of the weather, as waves can become high on windy days even if the tide level is low.

## ▶ Snow and Freezing

Although snowfall is not heavy on the plains of the Sanriku coast, there are areas where snow

accumulates. Especially on low mountains exceeding 300 meters in elevation or in shaded areas, the road surface may freeze, making footing slippery. It is reassuring to carry light crampons or chain spikes.

Also, snow attached to shoes or moisture inside shoes can cause toes to get cold easily, so choose footwear with insulation. Using gaiters to prevent snow from entering through the opening of the shoe is also effective. Since fingertips are prone to cooling when it snows or when touching snow and ice, do not forget to carry gloves.

## ▶ Signal Coverage

Mobile devices such as smartphones are essential tools for gathering information and communication. However, on trails through nature away from residential areas, there are many sections where signals do not reach depending on the carrier. Check signal conditions in advance and create an action plan based on the premise that you may not be able to communicate.

## ▶ Food and Water

There are relatively many places along the trail, such as vending machines and shops, where you can procure food and drinks. On the other hand, be aware that there are sections where you cannot resupply even after walking for a full day.

Hiking involves a lot of physical activity, and you may suffer from dehydration without realizing it or experience reduced performance due to a lack of calories. Be sure to carry a sufficient amount of food and water. Choose trail food that allows for efficient calorie intake, and for beverages, bringing a water purifier for emergencies is one option.

Be particularly careful with your resupply plan for thru-hikes that involve walking long distances over consecutive days.

# 4

## Equipment for Thru-Hikers

Put a tent on your back and try thru-hiking the MCT! The MCT has little snow, making it easy to enjoy hiking year-round. The journey of over 1,000 km offers a variety of expressions, from gentle sections near towns to rugged sections deep in nature. Since temperatures can drop below freezing in mid-winter, choosing the right equipment and preparing for the weather is crucial.

### ► Basic Equipment

Here is the basic equipment for thru-hiking.



Basic summer equipment

#### NOTE

Clothing should be based on layering. Since you may sweat while walking even in the cold season, avoid cotton materials, which can cause chills when wet, as much as possible. Synthetic fibers (polyester/nylon) or wool materials are desirable.

For shoes, trail running shoes are recommended as they can easily handle a wide range of terrain from mountain paths to paved roads.

#### Wear

- Backpack
- Trail running shoes
- Rainwear
- Hat
- Cold weather clothing



# Signposts and Markers

On the MCT, in addition to signposts and tapes indicating the direction of travel, various signs convey the charm of the MCT and the sentiments of the local regions. Along with official unified signs, unique local signboards are scattered throughout; finding them while walking is one of the joys of the trail.

## ► Signposts

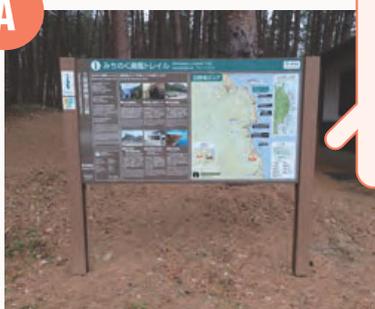
On the MCT, unified signs installed by the Ministry of the Environment are in place; as of the end of March 2023, there are 13 types.

These signs are installed primarily at confusing corners and junctions to support the safe passage of hikers. Additionally, tapes and stickers bearing the logo mark are used as markers.

On the other hand, the MCT is not designed to be walked relying solely on signposts. Since it is assumed that you will walk while checking a map, always carry a map or utilize GPX data when hiking. By loading GPX data into a map app, you can grasp where you are on the route. It is important to use signposts only as auxiliary information.

### Guidance and Location Confirmation

**A**



**Guideboard Type**  
Displays a map allowing you to check your current location. Information on local landmarks is also included.

**Simple Guideboard Type**  
A simplified version of type **A**, displaying a simple map.



**B**

**C**



**Location Name Display Type**  
Displays only the name of the current location.

**D**



**Location Explanation Type**  
Includes a simple explanation in addition to the name of the current location.

**E**



**Fingerpost Type**  
The direction of the arm indicates the direction of the next landmark.

**Directional Display Type**  
Indicates the landmark name and direction. Made of resin, this is the newest type of signpost.



**F**

### Directional Guidance

## Caution Regarding Overlooking Signposts

Signposts can be overlooked if surrounding grass is overgrown or if you are engrossed in conversation while walking. If you feel you haven't seen a signpost for a while, consider the possibility that you have lost your way and **check your current location using a map or GPX data as soon as possible.**

## Markers Indicating the Trail

**G**



### Metal Trail Marker

Installed beside the trail to indicate that the path you are walking is the trail. An arrow at the top indicates the direction of travel. Made of aluminum or stainless steel.

**H**



### Wooden Trail Marker

Installed beside the trail to indicate it is the trail. There is no indication of the direction of travel.

**I**



### Wooden Trail Marker (Simple)

Installed as a trail marker like types **G** and **H**. Some do not have arrow displays.

## Warnings

**J**



### Warning Sign

Notifies of dangerous spots or points of caution such as falling rocks, high tides, rising water, or bear sightings.



**K**



### Tape

Attached to tree branches, etc., to serve as trail markers. Used as an aid in places where it is easy to get lost.

## Auxiliary Markers

## ► Hiker Counters

The MCT has installed hiker counters to understand how many people are walking the trail. It is a click-type counter inside a box that looks like a birdhouse.

When you see one, please

press the button once per person to cooperate in tracking trail usage.

The cooperation of hikers helps with future trail maintenance and operation.

When walking the MCT, especially on nature paths, be aware that you may encounter dangerous plants and animals, just as when walking in the mountains. It is important to deepen your understanding of the natural environment and have the right mindset for walking safely.

## ► Animals

Most accidents with animals occur when hikers enter their habitats and encounter them unexpectedly, causing the animal to feel threatened. We must remember that we are “visitors” in nature and strive to act in a way that does not provoke animals. Walking while paying attention to your surroundings is crucial to prevent unfortunate accidents for both parties.



### **Tsukinowaguma** (Asiatic Black Bear)

Among the animals to watch out for, Tsukinowaguma (Asiatic black bear) poses the risk of the most serious accidents. Assume that they inhabit a wide range of nature paths along the MCT from Miyagi Prefecture to Aomori Prefecture, and exercise sufficient caution.

First, it is important to avoid surprise encounters. Alert bears to your presence in advance by using bear bells, whistles, radio noise, loud voices, or by clicking trekking poles together to give them time to retreat.



If you do encounter one, do not run away showing your back or shout loudly; instead, back away calmly and quietly. If attacked, a defensive posture of lying face down while protecting the back of your neck with both hands is considered effective. Also, be aware that a mother bear with cubs will be particularly aggressive to protect her young, requiring extra caution.

### **Hachi** (Wasps/Hornets)

Particular caution is needed regarding *suzumebachi* (hornets). If you accidentally approach a nest and are threatened, do not panic; stay calm and slowly leave the area.



If stung, immediately squeeze the wound gently while washing the poison away with running water. If anaphylactic shock — a severe allergic reaction to wasp venom — is suspected, seek medical attention immediately.

Avoiding perfumes or strongly scented laundry detergents that attract wasps, as well as refraining from wearing black clothing, are effective measures to prevent stinging accidents.

### **Hebi** (Snakes)

Venomous snakes inhabiting Japan’s Honshu include Yamakagashi (Tiger Keelback) and Mamushi (Mamushi viper). Neither will usually cause harm aggressively unless provoked by humans. If you encounter one, do not panic, approach it, or try to touch it; simply leave the area or wait for the snake to move away.

Carrying a poison remover is one measure in case you are bitten by a snake or stung by a wasp. Verify how to use it in advance and practice so that you can use it correctly in an emergency.



### **Madani** (Hard Ticks)

Madani (hard ticks) often inhabit environments where wild animals like deer and boars appear.

Effective preventive measures include wearing long sleeves and long pants to reduce skin exposure and using insect repellent spray.

If a tick attaches to you, be careful not to force it off, as the mouthparts (head) may remain in the skin. Even if you manage to remove it yourself, it is recommended to visit a medical institution just in case, as ticks can transmit infectious diseases.

### **Hiru** (Leeches)

Hiru (land leeches) often inhabit environments where wild animals like deer and boars appear. Along the MCT, many have been confirmed on the Oshika Peninsula and Kinkasan in Ishinomaki, and around Mt. Dairokuten in Onagawa.



Their activity increases from mid-April to late September when temperatures rise. Leeches first attach to shoes and then crawl up to find exposed skin to suck blood, so it is important not to leave gaps between shoes and pants. Take measures such as wearing gaiters or using leech repellents.

Even if you are bitten, although it may look like a lot of bleeding and cause strong itching, it rarely becomes a major problem. Bleeding will stop naturally over time, so stay calm, stop the bleeding, and keep the wound clean.

## ► Plants

Along the trail, there are poisonous plants such as Torikabuto (Monkshood), Dokuutsugi (Coriaria japonica), and Mamushigusa (Jack in the Pulpit), as well as plants that cause rashes or inflammation upon contact. Do not carelessly touch unfamiliar plants and strive to minimize skin exposure.

### **Kaentake** (Poison Fire Coral)

Kaentake (Poison Fire Coral) is a reddish-orange mushroom shaped like a human finger and is extremely toxic. It is said that a mere 3g is a lethal dose, and simply touching it can cause skin inflammation, so you must absolutely never go near it.

It occurs from early summer to autumn, often at the base of dead deciduous trees or on buried fallen trees.

Various other poisonous mushrooms also grow on the trail. Since identifying mushrooms is very difficult, do not collect them unless you have certain knowledge.



### **Urushi** (Sumac Family)

For deciduous shrubs like Yamaurushi (Japanese Lacquer Tree) or vines like Tsutaurushi (Poison Ivy), contact with their sap can cause inflammation accompanied by strong itching and blisters, resulting in severe pain.

The basic countermeasure is to dress to avoid skin exposure. It is also effective to learn to distinguish plants that cause rashes using a botanical guide in advance.

**Whether in the city or in nature, there is a possibility of encountering unexpected accidents or disasters while hiking. Knowing how to respond in advance allows you to act calmly in an emergency. Be sure to read the following to continue walking safely.**

## ▶ Michinoku Coastal Trail Alerts

Checking maps and planning before hiking is fundamental, but information regarding temporary road closures or detours due to natural disasters or road construction may not be reflected on maps.

The Michinoku Trail Club publishes the latest information regarding hiker safety — such as weather conditions like typhoons, sightings of dangerous animals, and entry restrictions due to hunting — under “Attention” on its official website. Be sure to check this before walking and act based on the latest information.

## ▶ Response During Emergencies/Disasters

When planning a hike, it is important to consider what risks are anticipated during emergencies or disasters and to be mentally prepared. Various risks lurk during hiking, from minor injuries to getting lost or becoming unable to move.

Pack cold weather gear, rainwear, a portable light, a charger, water, and trail food in your backpack in case you become stranded. Also, since there are sections of the MCT where mobile phone signals do not reach, telling people around you your destination, accommodation location, and scheduled return date before departure helps reduce risk.

In an emergency, it is important to contact

the appropriate agency depending on the situation. Note the following contact numbers:

These agencies always coordinate their response, and when you call, they can grasp your current location from your mobile phone’s location information. Do not think you are exaggerating; contacting them early leads to safety.

Natural disasters can occur anytime, anywhere. It is also important to understand the characteristics of the region and know the potential disasters. Along the MCT, in addition to typhoons, heavy rain, and landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis are potential threat. If an earthquake occurs, ensure your safety without panicking. If there is a risk of a tsunami, immediately perform a vertical evacuation to higher ground.

- Getting lost: Police  
TEL 110
- Accidents or injuries: Fire/Ambulance  
TEL 119
- Maritime accidents such as falling into the sea: Japan Coast Guard  
TEL 118

### Injuries

The risk of injury is inherent in outdoor hiking. Since various injuries such as light scrapes, cuts, and burns are anticipated, be sure to carry a first aid kit containing bandages, ointments, and anti-itch medicine in your backpack.

If the injury is minor, you can perform first aid and continue hiking while monitoring the situation. On the other hand, if self-locomotion is difficult due to a sprain or fracture, do not push yourself; contact the Fire Department (119) and request rescue before it gets dark.

### Getting Lost

When walking the MCT, walking while looking at a map is fundamental. Signposts are installed at confusing corners and junctions,



“Alerts” section on  
Michinoku Trail Club website



Online Map and GPS Data on  
Michinoku Trail Club website

but you cannot walk relying solely on them. Always move while confirming your current location and direction of travel on the map.

If you download GPX data from the Michinoku Trail Club’s official website and use it with a map app, you can confirm your current location and the route. If you feel uneasy about your path, do not proceed; stopping to check is important.

If you do get lost, do not panic; stay calm and retrace your steps. By acting calmly, you can often return to a familiar point. If you still feel anxious about turning back or cannot grasp your position, it is wise to contact the Police (110) before you become completely lost. Do not think it is an exaggeration; call before it gets dark and searching becomes difficult.

### Falls/Slips

The trail route includes mountain paths and undulating terrain along the coast. Tripping over tree roots or stones, or wandering off the route due to getting lost and ending up on a steep slope, can lead to the danger of slipping or falling.

A fall can cause distress or serious injury, and in the worst case, can be life-threatening. Plan a reasonable itinerary, ensure you are in good physical condition, and move cautiously while being conscious of your footing.

If you slip and fall and cannot move, do not try to move forcibly; contact the Fire Department (119) via mobile phone to request rescue.

### Earthquakes

Japan is an earthquake-prone country, and the area the MCT passes through is considered a region where crustal movements are still continuing due to the influence of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Therefore, it is important to act with the awareness that a large earthquake could occur at any time.

To act without panicking when an

earthquake happens, be conscious of the surrounding terrain and potential evacuation spots before you walk, and be mentally prepared.

### Tsunamis

The MCT has many sections along the coast. Since the shaking of an earthquake can be very strong and make it impossible to stand or move, ensuring your safety on the spot is the top priority. Once the shaking stops, move away from the coast or river mouths as quickly as possible, evacuate to a safe place such as high ground, and protect your life.

Additionally, along the trail, there are many tsunami memorial facilities established to pass on the lessons and learnings of past disasters to future generations. Stopping by during your walk to touch upon the memories and experiences of the region will be a precious time unique to this trail.

### Heavy Rain

In recent years, the risk of heavy rain disasters has increased across Japan due to climate change. There have been cases where heavy rain, flooding, and landslide alerts were issued along the Pacific coast of Tohoku as well.

To avoid being caught in such disasters while hiking, be sure to check the weather forecast before departure. Also, if advisories or warnings are issued while hiking, it is important to decide to stop walking before the wind and rain intensify. Check meteorological information from the Japan Meteorological Agency or evacuation information announced by local governments frequently via TV, radio, or official websites, and review your plan and itinerary.





Michinoku Coastal Trail  
Supporters Website



The Michinoku Trail Club also sells official original merchandise. You can purchase items not only from the online shop on the Trail Club's website but also at the Natori Trail Center, so be sure to stop by during your travels.

## ▶ Development and Provision of Original Trail Products

Among supporter facilities, some businesses develop and provide original products with an MCT motif. The content is diverse, including neck gaiters printed with illustrations of scenery on the trail, MCT midpoint keychains, postcards, and tenugui (Japan's multipurpose towels), as well as the development of food and drinks like beer, cocktails, and snacks in collaboration with local businesses led by tourism associations, and hiking goods inspired by the hikers' own experiences. The Michinoku Trail Club also sells T-shirts, pin badges, tenugui, and tumblers designed with the line of the route.

These products can be enjoyed not only as companions during hiking but also as memories of the trip or souvenirs. When you see them, please pick them up and feel the unique ingenuity and sentiments of the region.



## ▶ Provision of Rest Areas and Campsites by the Community

On the MCT, you cannot camp freely anywhere like on American long trails. On the other hand, there are local people who accept hikers pitching tents on private land for those having trouble finding accommodation or rest.

A representative example is the Tsunami Memorial and Community Facility Shiome in Okirai, Sanriku Town, Ofunato. In addition to providing tent sites for hikers, since 2021, Hikers Day, where hikers connected to Shiome gather and interact, has been held regularly, attracting many visitors.

Besides this, local collaborators accepting hikers are gradually increasing, such as beside shops in Noda, unused facilities on the Funakoshi Peninsula in Yamada, and in front of the station in Otsuchi. These local initiatives underpin the walking journey of the MCT.



Tsunami Memorial and Community Facility Shiome



# A Section Guide

The Michinoku Coastal Trail (MCT) runs north to south and has termini at both ends, so hikers can walk the trail in either direction. When planning a trip, it's worth considering whether to head southbound (SOBO) or northbound (NOBO), taking seasonal conditions into account. Although the trail runs through the Tohoku region, summers can be quite hot. The most comfortable seasons for hiking are generally from spring to early summer (late March to late June), and from autumn to early winter (mid-September to late November). For a spring thru-hike, many hikers start in the south and head north as temperatures gradually rise. In autumn, starting in the north and heading south allows hikers to stay ahead of the early arrival of winter in northern areas.

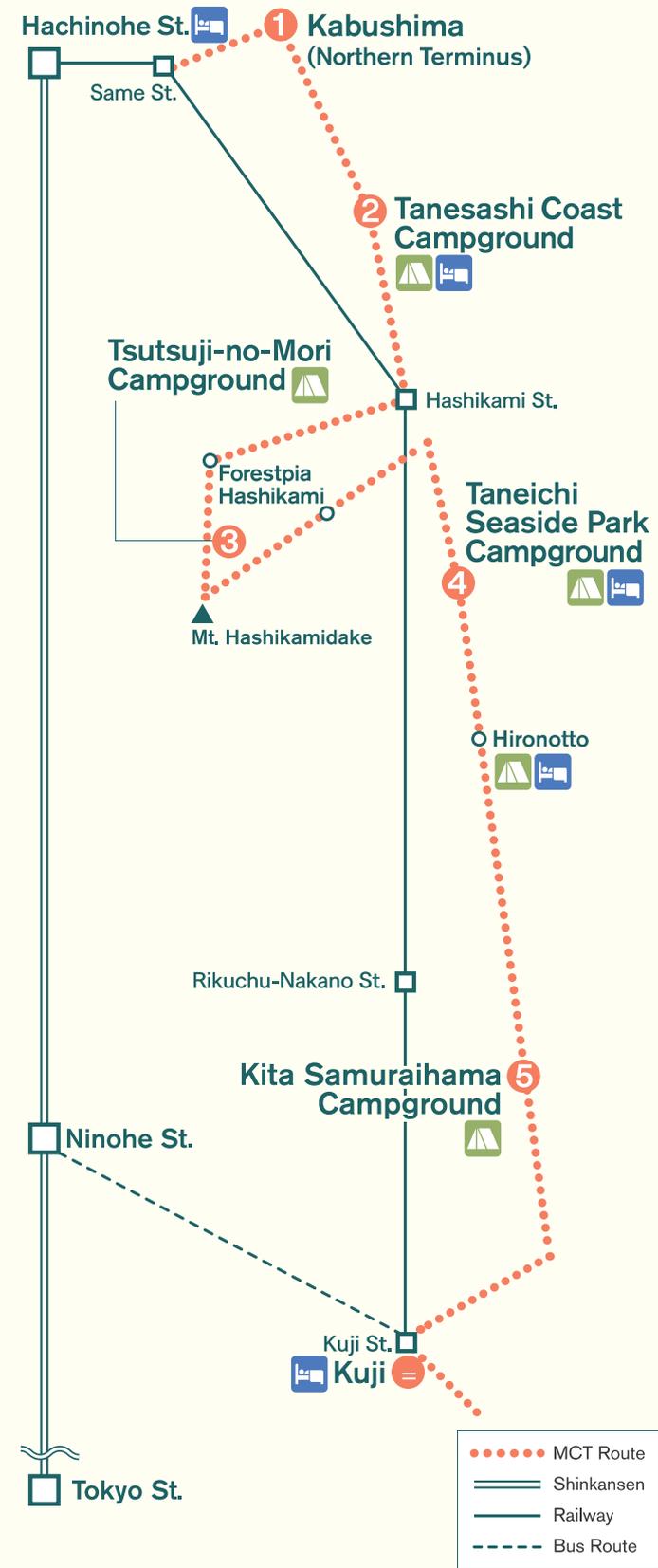
This guide is intended for thru-hikers who can walk approximately 20–30 km per day and primarily camp in tents while traveling. Hiking SOBO, the trail is divided into sections with convenient access points for hikers to enter and exit along the way. Route details, rest areas, and camping or accommodation sites are explained by dividing the trail into eight areas, from north to south.

\*For the latest information, please refer to the official website of the Michinoku Trail Club, as well as their official hiking map book and data book.



# Hachinohe to Kuji

94.1km



## 1 Kabushima (Northern Terminus)

## 2 Tanesashi Coast Campground



To reach the northern terminus, walk from JR Hachinohe Station, or take the JR Hachinohe Line to Same Station (“same” is the Japanese word for “shark”) and walk to Kabushima. A sign marking the “Northern Terminus” stands on the beach at Kabushima. From here, it is approximately 8 km to campground of the Tanesashi Natural Lawn. This section follows a scenic coastline lined with traditional fishing huts (*banya*), boardwalks, and sandy beaches. The terrain is generally easy and highly scenic. Bus routes and the JR line run roughly parallel to the trail.

## 3 Tsutsuji-no-Mori Campground



The next section to Tsutsuji-no-Mori Campground is approximately 22 km. Up to Forestpia Hashikami, the route follows sidewalks and is mostly paved, making it easy to cover longer distances. The trail up Mt. Hashikami is well maintained, but has many junctions, so careful navigation is required. Pay attention to the time of day when entering the mountain section. Bus stops and train stations appear along the route, allowing for easy access. If distance or time becomes challenging, returning to Hachinohe or Tanesashi by bus or train is an option. The campground requires advance reservations and is closed during winter.

## 4 Taneichi Seaside Park Campground



The next stretch to Taneichi Seaside Park Campground, about 25 km, passes the Mt. Hashikami parking area, crosses pastureland, and continues along forest roads, mountain trails, and paved roads. Camping is possible at the Tea House Tomon with advance reservation, making it an ideal campsite for northbound hikers before ascending Mt. Hashikami. Access other than by taxi is not possible until reaching the coastline. From the mountain summit, the trail trends downhill, making the distance more manageable to walk than it may appear. Urban sections can be confusing, with several points where it’s easy

to lose the trail. Once back on the coast, the trail follows the JR line again, which can be used for access.

## 5 Kita Samuraihama Campground

The approximately 24 km stretch to Kita Samuraihama Campground includes long distances and many paved-road sections. Camping and lodging are available at Shukunohe Hironotto. Uge Beach can be difficult to pass during high tide or storm surges. From Rikuchu-Nakano Station to Kuji, the trail moves away from the JR line, leaving taxis as the only access option. The crossing of the Koge River is one of the most challenging and iconic points on the Michinoku Coastal Trail (MCT). Check rainfall totals from the previous week, and assess not only the water depth but also the current strength. If water levels are high, do not attempt to cross and use an alternate route. After successfully crossing, you'll have entered Iwate Prefecture. Climb a sloped path to the Kuwahata settlement, where the trail transitions into more natural footpaths through pine forests. When Samurai Stone comes into view, Kita Samurai Beach is close.

## 6 Kuji

The next approximately 15 km to Kuji becomes a true natural trail, with frequent short, steep ups and downs that are difficult to discern from maps. Occasional side paths appear and can be used as escape routes, but because this section of continuous natural trail is longer than in previous sections, it's important to check your position regularly. Fishing ports serve as easy-to-spot landmarks. Once you reach the Mugyo settlement, the route is mostly paved as it leads into the town of Kuji.

### POINT

Resupply is available regularly at small shops and convenience stores, but the most reliable full resupply point is the supermarket in Taneichi. If you plan to stay at campgrounds, it's important to plan your resupply accordingly. While campgrounds are spaced at reasonable intervals, some require advance reservations. Shops along the Tanesashi Coast carry a limited selection of hiking-related gear. Accommodation options are limited to Hachinohe, the Tanesashi Coast, Taneichi, Shukunohe, and Kuji. Using the JR line makes flip-flop hiking\* relatively easy on this section.

\* Flip-flop hiking: skipping a section and returning later to hike it.



# Kuji to Miyako

144.41km



## 1 Kuji

Kuji City is a transportation hub and a gateway to the northern Sanriku region and Iwate Prefecture. Kuji is a final stop of the JR Hachinohe Line and Sanriku Railway, and accessible by express bus from Ninohe Station and Morioka Station.

## 2 Mommy Store

From Kuji to the center of Noda Village, where the next Mammy Store is located, is about 21 km. Starting early is recommended since a large portion of the route is on nature trails. After departing from the station, the route traverses towards the coast. Note that getting non-food supplies is going to be difficult for a while from here on. While walking along the moderately busy coastal roadway to Kosode Beach, be cautious around curves with poor visibility. From Kosode, a steep uphill leads to a hilltop settlement, then continues on to the nature trail. The long distance with frequent small ups and downs make this route rather challenging, so consider a possible bivouac along the way. Drinking water can be obtained from several streams by bringing a water purifier. Continue on to Cape Misaki and down to the Kuki coast. After the beautiful shingle beach of Kukihama (beware of high tide and storm surge), the Rikuchu-Noda Station is not far. Tent camping is possible in the parking lot next to Mommy Store in Noda.

## 3 Beachside Farmer's Market Kiraumi

The route to Fudai Village, where Beachside Farmer's Market Kiraumi is located, is about 27 km. This section includes roadways, park trails, and nature trails along the coastline and through the mountains. Though the route has many ups and downs and is not easy, this longer-distance hike progresses rather quickly thanks to the frequent paved sections. Pay close attention to the map and trail markers, since it may be difficult to spot the entrance and exit in places like Tamagawa Beach and Shimoakka Park. Tamagawa Campground is well-maintained and great for camping or just taking a break. Check the time at Horinai Station or Shirai-Kaigan Station, and consider quitting the hike if behind schedule at this point. Accommodations are available near Horinai station. After Shirai-Kaigan Station, cross the

Chikaramochi River on foot. Check 7-day rainfall total, water depth and current; if rainfall was heavy, take a detour to avoid risk. The Mt. Urube route is not difficult but lacks an escape route. Be prepared for wet conditions, since its southern side turns into a water trail during the snowmelt and rainy seasons. After passing Fudai Junior High School, the nostalgic old shopping street, the Sanriku Railway's Fudai Station, and through the floodgate, Beachside Farmer's Market Kiraumi and the Pacific Ocean are just a little further ahead. Lodgings and campgrounds are located near Kurosaki. Scheduled bus service is also available. Contact the lodgings about shuttle options. Kuji and Miyako are also accessible from Fudai Station. Beyond Fudai Village, it is a challenge to find places to stock up on supplies other than basic items until Iwaizumi-Omoto.

#### 4 Aketo Campground

The route to Tanohata, where Aketo Campground is located, is about 23 km. The route includes partial roadways but mostly consists of nature trails with a decent number of ups and downs. Plan an early start, and carefully consider the weather and your physical condition. After a series of scenic coastal roadways, a substantial, long natural trail section starts from Kurosaki Fishing Port. Be cautious of falling rocks and high tides at Nedari Beach. Benten Fishing Port has a rest house. The hill up to Kurosaki is steep but not long; ascend it steadily without rushing. Kurosakiso is hiker-friendly and offers day-use hot springs, laundromat, toilets, and charging stations without requiring overnight stays. The nearby Kurosaki Auto Campsite is well-maintained and pleasant. The route then stretches along the gently sloping coastal terrace for a while. This portion is surprisingly long, so remember to keep track of time. The steep stairs descending into the valley lead to Kitayamazaki. Stop by at the Kitayamazaki Visitor Center if there are any questions. After going straight down the steep stairs, an unthinkable steep staircase appears shortly after. The stair steps are high and the handrails are insecure. It is best to avoid going up them in bad weather. The distance is short, so focus on taking each step and maintaining your breathing. Once reaching the top, the route continues through a refreshing forest with an ocean view. The

sight of a road means that the coast is near. A flashlight is handy for navigating the two dark, hand-carved tunnels that follow. While hiking on rocky stretches, watch for scrapes. Check high tide and storm surge information beforehand. After passing through the tunnels and climbing up and down a steep slope, the Tsukuehama Banyagun (Fisherman's Huts) comes into view. Tsukuehama is an escape point on this route. Aketo Campground is just a little further ahead, after some ups and downs. There are two lodging facilities beyond Aketo.

#### 5 Iwaizumi-Omoto

The route to Iwaizumi-Omoto is about 19 km. This section includes extensive roadways and forest roads with fewer advanced trails. However, it is physically demanding despite the distance due to the constant ups and downs. Plan an early start and monitor your physical condition. From the course, Sanriku Railway's Tanohata Station and Shimanokoshi Station are accessible, where basic food supplies are available (but only during business hours). A taxi-sharing service may be available at Unosu Park on certain days and times. The management office at the Gotenzaki Natural Rest Park parking lot is open for tent camping. Beyond this point, Oushinai Nature Trail extends for a long distance with few escape routes. Mobile phone service may be unavailable depending on the carrier. If your schedule is tight, consider camping here. After arriving at Omoto and passing through the floodgate, the railway tracks of Sanriku Railway come into view in the open area. Food restocking is possible at a supermarket or convenience store. Miyako is accessible via the Sanriku Railway and bus. The nearest lodging is Greenpia Sanriku Miyako, and shuttle service may be arranged.

#### 6 Taro Masaki

The route to Taro Masaki is 24 km. This section generally repeats the pattern of walking along town roads and village paths at low elevation, climbing up nature trails, and then descending to the next settlement, making it relatively easy to hike. Despite not requiring advanced skill, the access to the nature trail may be hard to find. Pay attention to the area near the national highway at Omoto Hachiman Shrine and Moshi Fishing Harbor for the southbound

(SOBO) route, and the north side of Settai for the northbound (NOBO) route. Sanriku Railway's Iwazumi-Omoto Station and Settai Station are on the way. The bus stops on the national highway also provide access to Miyako. After Settai, buses and taxis are the only transportation options. There are no campgrounds in Taro Masaki. Nearby lodgings are Nagisatei Taro-an and Greenpia Sanriku Miyako. Contact the lodging about shuttle options. Nagisatei Taro-an is about 3 km away and Taro Station about 5 km.

## 7 Miyako Anegasaki Auto Campground

The route to Miyako Anegasaki Auto Campground is 19 km. This section is physically challenging due to frequent ups and downs, as well as the long duration. Taro has a grocery store. A charging station can be found at the *michi no eki* (roadside station). Note that there is no stock-up location after Taro until Miyako. It is close to the Sanriku Railway stations and offers good access. The route consists of many nature trails beyond Taro, and some coastal trails may require detouring during high tide and storm surges. The trail becomes slightly easier once arriving at Mattsuki Beach. It is also accessible from Kashinai and Mattsuki bus stops on the national highway. Watch out for golf balls when passing through the golf course. Onatsupe has a *minshuku* (Japanese style bed and breakfast), but confirm their calendar in advance. Tsunami Memorial Park Nakanohama is a nice grassy park, built on the site of a former campground. Miyako Anegasaki Auto Campground is located after ascending a nature trail. This route feels closer than expected. Accommodations are also available at Kyukamura Rikuchu-Miyako.

## 8 Miyako

The route to Miyako is about 12 km. A well-maintained sidewalk continues. However, plan for extra time, as there are frequent steep ups and downs not shown on maps. Take a break while enjoying the view of Hideshima Fishing Harbor. The nature trail leading to Osawa Fishing Harbor follows a refreshing stream, which requires caution when the water level is high. Pay close attention to the map and trail markers. The hard part is over once reaching Takonohama Beach. Trail consultation is available at the Jodogahama Visitor Center. From here, Miyako City is just one final climb away.

### NOTE

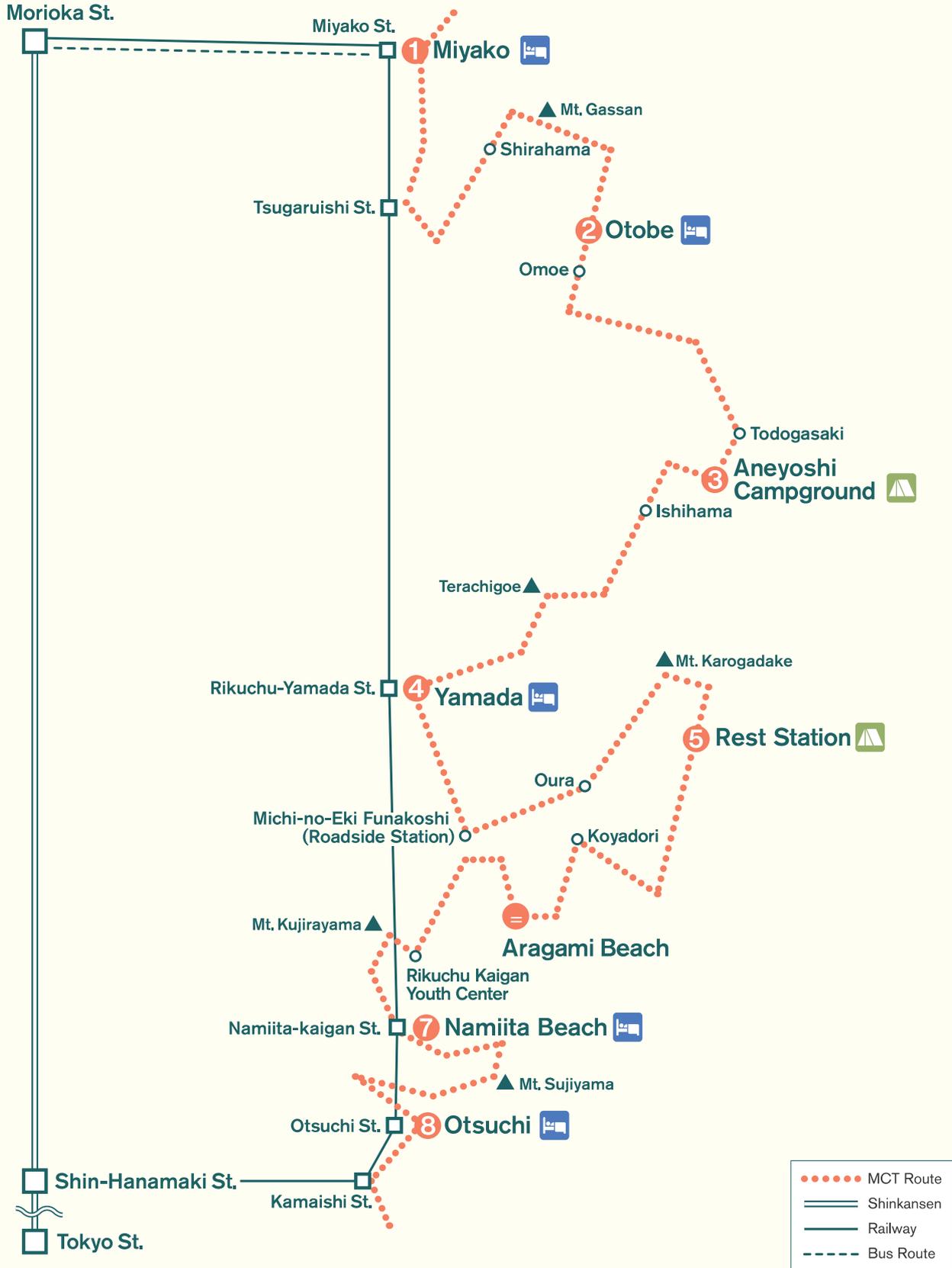
Kuji Station is a little far from the everyday shopping area of the locals, and large stores are a long walk away. The supermarket and drugstore near the station provide some supplies. After this point, shopping non-food items becomes difficult until Miyako. Plan ahead to make the most of this key resupply location.

Many campgrounds allow overnight stays without reservations, but be aware of shut down periods. When dividing this section based on campgrounds or lodging locations, it is inevitable that some days will be a "big day" requiring longer hikes than others, or that the section will need to be divided into shorter segments. Bivouac equipment is essential for this section. Lodging facilities are concentrated in Kuji and Miyako City, with some in Fudai and Tanohata. A flip-flop hike can be an option for this section by using the Sanriku Railway, taxi, bus or other transportation.



# Miyako to Otsuchi

128.4km



## 1 Miyako

Miyako is the largest city in the northern Sanriku region. Getting around is not easy for hikers due to its large area, but it is a key location to stock up on various items. Transportation to Miyako includes a highway bus from Morioka, the Sanriku Railway, and the JR line. Of all the places in northern Sanriku, Miyako is the quickest to access from Tokyo.

## 2 Otobe

This roughly 24 km route to Otobe is mostly paved, but plan for extra time due to the uphill terrain. From Miyako, the trail alternates between the roadway and a path on the seawall. There are several cafés on the way where hikers can stop by and ask questions. If not reaching Shirahama by noon, consider taking the bus back to Miyako. Follow a standard mountain trail for a while, and then the path becomes a strenuous, straight ascent. After reaching a roadway, the summit is almost directly above, but the route begins to descend without continuing up there. Navigate this long, steep downhill by taking steady steps. Modest ups and downs continue on, all the way to Otobe. Otobe has a *minshuku* accommodation, which may not be available during the peak season, as well as bus service to Miyako. The same bus route goes to main part of the Omoe area. Restocking basic supplies is possible here, but when planning, consider the next closest restocking location to be Yamada.

## 3 Aneyoshi Campground

The approximately 15 km route from Omoe to Aneyoshi Campground is a continuous nature trail with some ups and downs. It is a considerably easier hike than the previous part, but with no option to quit the hike from the beginning to the end. Monitor time, weather, and your physical condition accordingly. Cape Todogasaki, Honshu's easternmost point, has a large picnic pavilion. If you are physically strong enough to easily reach the Aneyoshi Campground early enough, continuing on to Yamada can be an option. A bus for Miyako runs twice a day from Aneyoshi, but the bus line only goes as far as Ishihama. The road continues beyond Ishihama to Yamada, but no bus service is available in this area. The nostalgic fishing ports on the Omoe Peninsula are inviting, but systematically follow your plan

since mobile phone service is unavailable in many of these picturesque areas.

## 4 Yamada

The route to Yamada is about 21 km, alternating between roadways and nature trails. Traffic is light, but exercise caution in case a vehicle appears suddenly. Mobile phones work near settlements, but reception is poor elsewhere, unless at a higher elevation. This part of the trail is easy to find as long as you pay attention to the map and trail markers. After Kawashiro, it turns into an ascending mountain trail, and a steep uphill climb awaits on the way to Terachigoe Pass. Thanks to the well-maintained trail, experienced hikers may find the climb relatively easy. Upon reaching the ridge, the pass is just a little further ahead. The descent requires extra caution to stay on the route, as the trail intersects with multiple paths and the terrain is complex. Look for trail markers, especially around Hamakawame, as the southbound (SOBO) and northbound (NOBO) routes are difficult to find there. The view of the bay, shaped as if embracing the water, indicates that Yamada is just a short distance away. Many intersections in town make it easy to get lost. In such a case, head to Rikuchu-Yamada Station, where many restaurants and supermarkets are located. There is one lodging facility near the station, and others in Osawa and Funakoshi. Access to Miyako and Kamaishi is possible via the Sanriku Railway.

Food restocking, including basic items, is not possible along the 70 km stretch from Yamada Town to Otsuchi, unless heading off to Yamada or Otsuchi after passing the Funakoshi Peninsula.

## 5 Rest Station

The roughly 20 km route to the rest station consists mostly of roadways, transitioning to a nature trail partway. Considering the distance and duration, an early start is recommended, especially since it involves crossing Mt. Karogatake. Michi no Eki Yamada, a roadside station near the entry to the Funakoshi Peninsula offers food and souvenirs. The route to Oura Fishing Harbor is straightforward. After the Oura bus stop, quitting the hike becomes harder until exiting the peninsula. The hike to Mt. Karogatake is not particularly advanced, apart from the long ascent. The eastbound descent from

the summit quickly drops after leaving the ridge line and leads to the Sukuiso Coast. Follow the easy roadway to the rest station. Check the MTC website, as prior notification is required to use the rest station.

## 6 Aragami Beach

This roughly 17 km route to Aragami Beach is mostly nature trails. Once entering the nature trail shortly after the rest area, there is no route to quit the hike until Koyadori. The narrow winding path with frequent ups and downs along the terrain requires longer time to cover the distance. Even after the trail turns into a paved road, there is still some way to go until seeing reassuring signs of human habitation. After ascending the forest road to Ushikorobashi Pass, the nature trail onward offers pleasant views of the sea beyond the ridge. Then the continuous descent leads all the way to the coast. Check the tide information beforehand, as the short segment of the coastal trail is dangerous during high tide or storm surges. Then the forest road leads to the calm Funakoshi Bay with its beautiful white sandy beach. Parking and restrooms are available near the beach. Sanriku Railway's Iwate-Funakoshi Station and bus stop are about 3 km away from here, and taxi transportation is also possible.

## 7 Namiita Beach

The approximately 14 km route to Namiita Beach starts with roadways and includes a climb up Mt. Kujira. If you have the stamina for a longer hike, it may be possible to go straight through to Otsuchi, which is 32 km away. The route first leads to a national highway. If restocking is necessary, visit the town via bus or the Sanriku Railway. Once reaching the road located on the mountainside of the Sanriku Expressway, follow the single path to the Rikuchu Kaigan Youth Center, where water is available. Note that there is no water supply after this location, until you have climbed up and down the mountain. The section from the Youth Center to Mt. Kujira is a gradual climb along ridges and ridgelines, which takes some time but does not require advanced skills. Exercise extra caution on the way up to the summit around the chained areas, and on the way down around the steep southern drop, as well as on the rain-damaged trails. Pay attention to the route as it continues

onto the forest road, which goes under the Sanriku Expressway and leads to Namiita Kaigan Station. There is a small shop nearby and lodging facilities within 1 km. Miyako and Otsuchi are accessible via the Sanriku Railway.

## 8 Otsuchi

The roughly 18 km route to Otsuchi is mostly roadways without any difficult parts, and it is fairly easy to cover the distance. However, take care not to miss the turns and trail access points around the Kirikiri area and Otsuchi Town. Beyond Otsuchi Fishing Port, there are convenience stores to take a break. After passing through the curve toward Shiroyama Park, which overlooks the town of Otsuchi and the bay, Otsuchi Station is just a short distance ahead. Lodging facilities, supermarkets, and convenience stores are located within a short walking distance of the station, less than 1 km away. Tent camping may be possible around the station.

### NOTE

The difficulty of this section is significantly increased due to the combination of multiple mountain climbs and travel along peninsulas, necessitating long-distance hiking through places that are difficult to access and restock supplies in. Although each small segment of this section is not difficult, the overall hike requires highly strategic preparation and planning. For those with stamina, this section can be hiked in fewer days by going a longer distance in one day. Remember to stock up supplies in Miyako, Yamada, and Otsuchi. Since this section lacks campgrounds, gathering local information is crucial for sleeping in the open air. If you are staying in lodging, consider the access, since many lodgings are off the route. Fortunately, obtaining water (including vending machines) is relatively easy, except during mountain climbing. Bivouac gear is advisable, unless you plan to divide the section into smaller segments and access it via public transportation. Accommodations are mostly in Miyako and Kamaishi, with some in Yamada and Otsuchi.

# Otsuchi to Ofunato

125.78km



## 1 Otsuchi

Otsuchi is a town sandwiched between Miyako to the north and Kamaishi to the south. Although not a major transportation hub, it is the final stop for night buses from Tokyo and express buses from Morioka via Kamaishi. The Sanriku Railway and bus lines provide access to Kamaishi. The JR line from Kamaishi goes to Shin-Hanamaki Station, where you can connect to the Tohoku Shinkansen. The Sanriku Railway runs between Otsuchi and Ofunato, from which, Ichinoseki is accessible via Kesenuma.

## 2 Nebama Beach Campground



The roughly 11 km stretch from Otsuchi to the campground at Nebama Beach is an easy hike mostly along roadways. Adjust your schedule here to prepare for the Hakozaki Peninsula ahead. Accommodations are available nearby, including in Hakozaki Shirahama, where you can shorten the hike on the following day. Depending on where you start before arriving at Otsuchi, there is an option of stopping by Otsuchi to restock your supplies and then continuing on to the Hakozaki Peninsula without staying overnight. Check the campground availability online or contact them in advance. The drugstore in Unosumai is the last food restocking location before Kamaishi.

## 3 Mizuumi Park

The approximately 31 km route to Mizuumi Park is not difficult but long. An early start is recommended, depending on the season. The route follows the road that loops around the peninsula and is easy to find. Mobile phone reception is poor in this remote area, with no houses along the roughly 12 km stretch from Hakozaki Shirahama to the Kariyado Fishing Port. The fork leading to Ohakozaki Shrine (not to be confused with Hakozaki Shrine in the opposite direction) appears one third of the way to Kariyado. Regular vehicles can drive up to this fork. At the end of the forked path lies the Senjojiki rock formation located at the tip of the peninsula. This detour is over 6 km round trip, requiring a different plan to visit this scenic site. Beyond the fork, the road becomes more desolate. The tunnel about halfway along is the only rain shelter in this part. The fork leading to the coast means you are in Okariyado. If you have time, head to the shore to see Sanganjima Island up close. From here,

Kariyado is not far. Take a break and refresh yourself for the rest of this long hike. The 8 km stretch to Kuwanohama is a joyful hike along the peninsula's ria coast. The surroundings change beyond Kuwanohama, and the national highway nears. Ryoishi Station and bus stop are close by from the juncture with the national highway. Using public transportation to Otsuchi or Kamaishi can be an option, depending on the time and your stamina. Hike with care on the busy national highway, especially on the bridge without a sidewalk on the way to Mizuumi. Another bus stop is located near the Mizuumi traffic lights. Shortly after this is the well-maintained Mizuumi Park with a swimming beach, parking, and toilets.

## 4 Toni

The 22 km hike to Toni Station is not difficult, but be prepared to climb two mountain passes, and aim for an early start. The route follows along forest roads, roadways, and a nature trail that includes parts of a historic road called the Sanriku Hamakaido. Be careful not to miss the fork to the pass, branching from the forest road filled with Japanese red pines. The steep ascent only lasts until the ridge. After the gentle descent from the small Toyasaka Pass, the ocean can be viewed in the distance. Pay close attention to the route around the intersections in Kamaishi Town. There are many attractive restaurants, including Kamaishi ramen and other Japanese food. Kamaishi Station is a transportation hub served by the Sanriku Railway and JR line. The downtown area is a bit far from the station, but the city has several hotels and a large mall, making it a major restocking location. The uphill to the Iron and Steel Museum is somewhat steep. Heita Station has a convenience store nearby. Ending the hike here is a good option if it is late or if you are short on stamina. Stock up on supplies here, since restocking opportunities are few after this point. Head straight south, then branch off from the roadway to the trail leading to the mountain pass, which is rough at the beginning. The trail, bearing traces of damage from heavy rain, heads south with a steep climb. With steady steps, going over the Ishizuka Pass is surprisingly quick. Shortly after comes the Hongo settlement, famous for its cherry blossom avenue. The fork from the nature trail may be hard to spot, but once Toni Bay and the Kojirahama Fishing Port are in view, Toni Station is close. Kamaishi and Ofunato are accessible via the Sanriku Railway.

## 5 Okirai

The route to Okirai in Sanriku Town is 19.3 km, crossing two mountain passes along the historic Sanriku Hamakaido road. The trail alternates between roadways, forest roads, and nature trails. Okirai is the next closest restocking location after Toni. Enter the road to the mountain pass from Shimoarakawa and go up the forest road. The hiking map book shows there is a side path to the entrance of the Kuwadai Tunnel. After this path, there is no route to quit the hike until Yoshihama. The road then turns into a nature trail, imbued with a sense of human history. The trail grows steeper near Kuwadai Pass, a quaint pass deep in the mountains. Unlike the northern side, the southern slope is gentle and expansive with fallen pine trees and large boulders. It turns into a steep slope after crossing a stream. Descending the forest road leads to a road near the opposite side of the tunnel. Yoshihama has the nostalgic vibe of an old Sanriku town, inviting hikers to stroll inside the settlement. A restroom is located at Yoshihama Beach. The route continues ascending to Rasei Pass. Unlike the previous passes, this climb is easy since it mostly follows the forest road that used to be a bus route. Then descend to Okirai. Kamaishi and Ofunato are accessible from Sanriku Station. The town has restaurants, supermarkets, and a laundromat. Lodgings, a rest area for hikers, and a community-managed tent camping site are located near the station. Okirai can be the start point for flip-flop hikes, and is undoubtedly a key location for a successful hike in Section 4.

## 6 Ryori Post Office

The approximately 28 km route to the Ryori Post Office is mostly paved and unpaved roadways, with a nature trail around the ridge of Cape Ryori. The roadway from Okirai to Ryori Station is long but pleasant. Pass through Horei Station and Koishihama Station. There are no restocking locations before Ryori. Keep track of your schedule, since the trail becomes a single path after Cape Ryori, eliminating any options to quit the hike. Despite the lack of human habitation beyond Nonomae Fishing Port, the road is well maintained for vehicle traffic. Be sure to pay attention to the nature trail to Mt. Tateishi, which appears shortly after the fork to the Ryorizaki Lighthouse. The easy ridgeline trail leads to a large picnic pavilion in the clearing (no water supply). The

route to the peak requires caution not to get lost. After hiking down the mountain, find trail markers to navigate through the logging area with unclear paths. The short fording and streamside hike shortly lead to the roadway to Ryori Fishing Port. The post office is located in central Ryori, and an inn is east of the station. Okirai and Ofunato are accessible via the Sanriku Railway.

\* This section has been partially closed due to a forest fire in Ofunato City in 2025. Check the official website of the Michinoku Coastal Trail (MCT) for information.

## 7 Ofunato

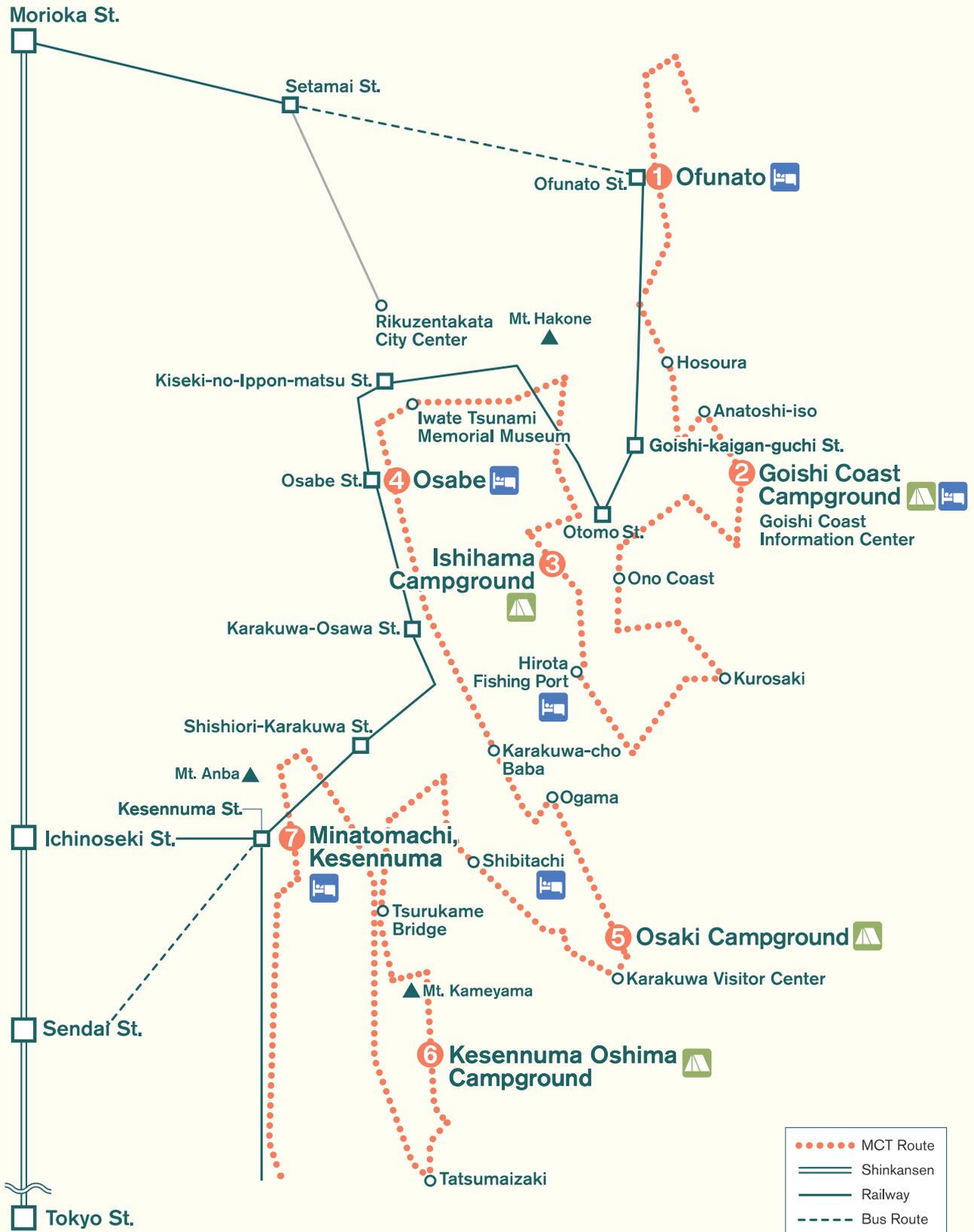
The 13.5 km route to Ofunato Station on the Ofunato Line BRT is not long but goes over a mountain pass. Ryori has a DIY store and convenience stores. The route through the historic town of Ryori continues toward the Ryori River Dam. Along the way, water can be supplied from the running faucet in front of the workshop upon request. This water source was shared by all the locals during the earthquake. Other water sources are scarce ahead. Head towards the Ryori Pass through the torii gate at Fudo Falls, which is worth a visit if your schedule allows. Beyond the pass through the historic trail, the route leads to Akazaki and continues on to the interesting path right through an otherworldly huge cement factory. Circle around and pass by Sakari Station (Ofunato's transportation hub) before heading south to Ofunato Station. Accommodations and supermarkets are located nearby.

### NOTE

This section covers five mountain passes along the Sanriku Hamakaido, and the strenuous hike of the Hakozaki Peninsula. In addition to restocking difficulties and poor accessibility, there is only one campground (in Nebama) throughout the course. Bivouac equipment is advisable, since there are places that cannot be divided into shorter segments by using public transportation. After Kamaishi, more frequent restocking locations and access to the Sanriku Railway allow for more flexible planning to suit your skill level. Accommodations are available in Otsuchi, Kamaishi, Okirai, Ryori, and Ofunato, which also serve as bases for flip-flop hikes by combining with the Sanriku Railway.

# Ofunato to Kesennuma

124.69km



## 1 Ofunato

Ofunato is a transportation hub, the starting point of the BRT and the Sanriku Railway. The Shinkansen's Sendai Station and Ichinoseki Station are accessible by express buses, and Kesenuma by BRT. A night bus to Tokyo is also available. Ofunato serves as a restocking location, yet the shops are somewhat inconveniently scattered. Many stores are found around Sakari Station, and some restaurants, supermarkets, drugstores, and accommodations are around Ofunato Station near the fishing port.

## 2 Goishi Coast Campground

The roughly 16 km route from Ofunato to Goishi Coast campground is mostly roadways with some nature trails. It zigzags through the city area along BRT routes, providing easy access. Ofunato Onsen is a hiker-friendly lodging. The convenience store near the scenic Hosoura Fishing Port is the last decent food restocking location before Otomo. Branch off to the nature trail around Anatoshi-Iso Rock, and hike while enjoying the ocean view behind the forest of black and red pines. The previously passed Cape Ryori is visible in the distance. A variety of trail information and consultation are available at the Goishi Coast Information Center. The campground reception is also located here.

## 3 Ishihama Campground

The approximately 23 km stretch to Ishihama Campground alternates between nature trails and roadways. The nature trail ends at the Goishisaki Lighthouse. Hike along the roadway and through the beach that gave Goishi Coast its name. Goishikaiganguchi Station can be accessed near Kadonohama Fishing Port. There is a supermarket near Otomo Station and a convenience store by Ono Beach. After Otomo, the route departs from the BRT route for a while. The bus service on the Hirota Peninsula connects to downtown Rikuzentakata. A guide map created by Hirota Elementary School students\* is a great companion for the hike. In Mutsugaura, keep an eye out for the trail marker indicating the obscured entrance to the nature trail. Unexpectedly frequent ups and downs continue. The Kurosaki Senkyo observation deck is only a short detour off the trail, and might be interesting. Kurosaki also has a day-use hot spring. Continue on through the Hirota Peninsula settlements.

A minshuku accommodation is located in Nesaki. Once the elementary school comes into view, go down the path ahead toward the coast to reach the Ishihama Campground. Check availability beforehand.

\* Download it from the official website of Rikuzentakata City Tourism and Products Association, or get a copy at tourist information facilities in the city.

## 4 Osabe

The roughly 21 km route to Osabe is mostly paved. As you hike through the Hirota Peninsula, the townscape of Rikuzentakata comes back into view. A convenience store is located a little off the route in Otomoura. During apple season, the apple orchards along the route—uncommon for the Sanriku coast—are a pleasure for the eye. The Japanese sweets shop near the junction with Apple Road (a prefectural road) offers bread and cake. Cross the road and ascend the steep, arduous uphill to the Shimin no Mori Forest where the trailhead of Mt. Hakone is located. Then descend along the road. Note that the route branches off to the forest road partway. Hike among the houses and along the seawall to the city. If you are making a detour downtown, turn off at the intersection by the convenience store in Numata. The city's tourism association is a great hiker-friendly place to seek local information. The Iwate Tsunami Memorial Museum is along the route, and Kiseki no Ipponmatsu (Miracle Pine) Station is nearby. Osabe Fishing Harbor comes into view after crossing the bridge over the Kesen River. Osabe Station for the BRT is on the national highway, and accommodations are located a little further south. Rikuzentakata is a key restocking location for various items, and has lodging facilities.

## 5 Osaki Campground

The approximately 21 km route to Osaki Campground consists of paved roads and nature trails, and heads south to the Karakuwa Peninsula. The route enters Miyagi Prefecture and passes by Karakuwaosawa Station. It departs from the BRT route for a while, and the Osaki Line, a local bus line operating within the Kesenuma city area, provides access to the route. The Osaki Line runs along the east side of the peninsula to the Karakuwa Peninsula Visitor Center. The route is mostly straightforward, except for the nature trail entrance near Dairiseki Coast that requires attention. There are shops,

convenience stores, and supermarkets up until Baba Fishing Port to stock up on supplies. It becomes difficult to restock food beyond this point until Kesenuma. Continue on to the Karakuwa Peninsula, and take the nature trail from Ogama, which overlaps with the Miyagi Olle Trail. The expansive view of the Pacific Ocean signals that the Osaki Campground is near. Although reservations are unnecessary, notification of the campground keeper is required on arrival. The Karakuwa Peninsula Visitor Center is located nearby, if you need any assistance. Several lodgings are located on the peninsula. Since the route loops around the narrow, north-south-oriented peninsula, the lodgings can be accessed on both the east and west sides, allowing for use of one of the lodgings during this peninsula hike.

## 6 Kesenuma Oshima Campground

The roughly 23 km stretch to Kesenuma Oshima Campground is mostly paved, with some nature trails. After reaching the tip of the Karakuwa Peninsula, pay attention to the fork at Osaki-jinja Shrine, branching off from the nature trail. Public transportation access is poor until Oshima Island, which can be viewed across the strait. Shibilitachi Fishing Harbor has a *minshuku* guesthouse. The view of fishing huts in the intricate bay brings the ocean close to you. Hayama-jinja Shrine is shortly after. Hike through the mountains and cross the “Tsurukame Ohashi” bridge (also known as the Kesenuma Oshima Ohashi), connecting Tsurugaura and Mt. Kameyama, to Oshima Island. Start from the west to head for the Mt. Kameyama peak. The winding path may be a little unclear. A short but relatively steep climb leads to the observation deck, where you can see the path you came up and the path ahead. Descend to the roadway on the east and then head south. Kugunari Beach is a little further away, and making a side trip on the way can be an option if you have time and stamina. The camping reception is within the Kyukamura Kesenuma Oshima hotel, which is a short distance from the campground. There are guesthouses less than 1 km away, and other easily accessible lodging facilities further away.

## 7 Minatomachi, Kesenuma

The approximately 22 km hike to the Minatomachi area of Kesenuma is mostly paved, with some nature trails. A bus line

connects Oshima Island and Kesenuma's city area, including Minatomachi. The newly planted pine grove on Tanakahama Beach is expected to be well-established in ten years. Pass Kodanohama Beach, cherished by the local community, and head toward the Cape Tatsumaizaki Natural Trail entrance. A bus stop is at Shinodaira along the way. Although there is a breakwater, be cautious of waves around the beach during high tide and storm surges. The route continues on to a paved path after the Cape Tatsumaizaki Natural Trail entrance near the restaurant. A bus service operates on the main road. Pass Uranohama Harbor and cross the Tsurukame Ohashi bridge back. Hike along the Kesenuma port area and descend toward the Mt. Anbasan trailhead, and to Minatomachi. There are hotels and guesthouses nearby.

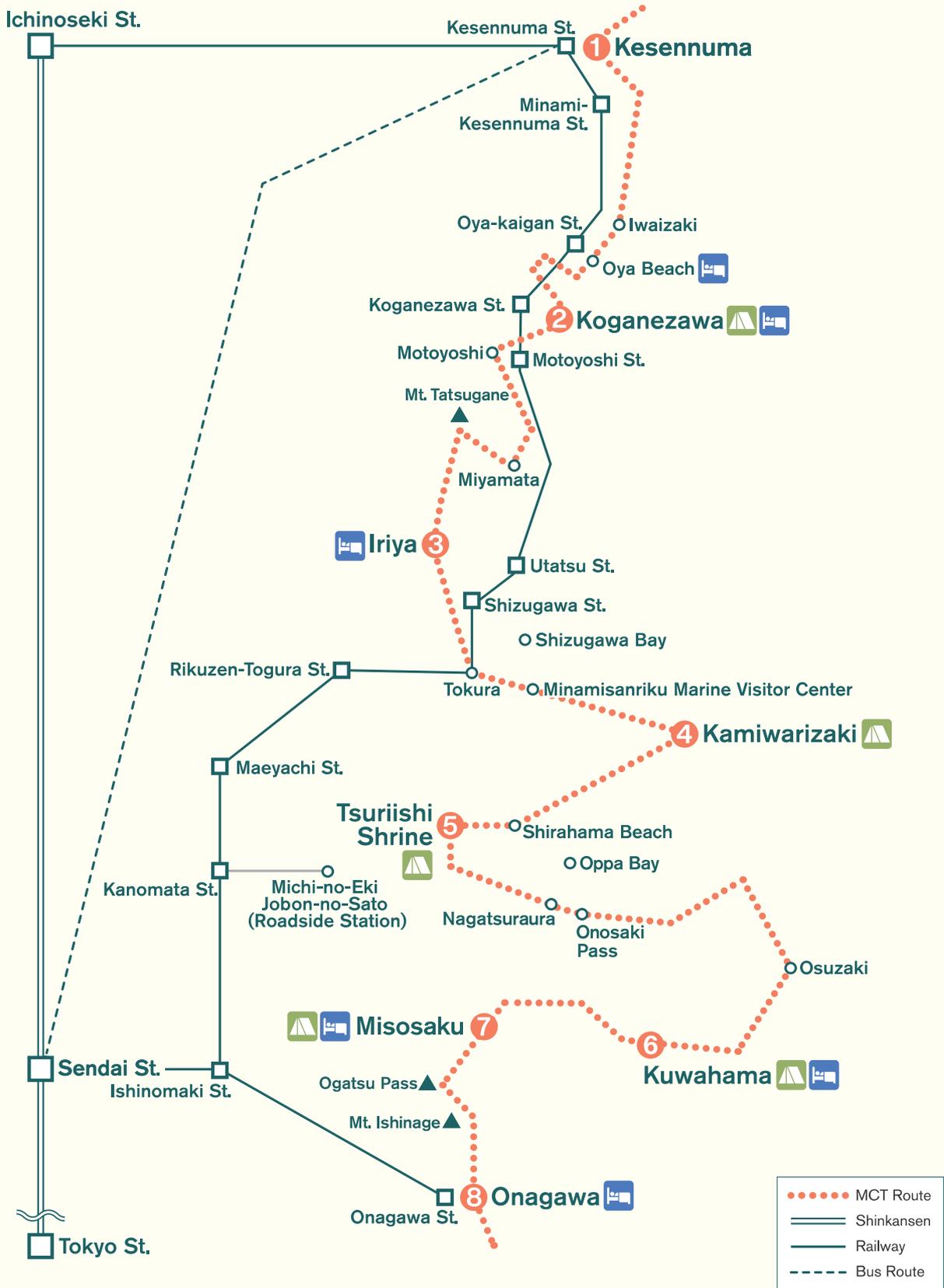
### NOTE

This section is less difficult than previous ones, although it requires planned restocking. Restocking locations are absent from the Karakuwa Peninsula to downtown Kesenuma, but bus and other transportation options provide access to the town if needed. This section involves more road walking, and it is easier to modify the plan to cover a longer distance per day, depending on your stamina and schedule. A flip-flop hike can be an option by using bus transportation. There are lodging facilities and campgrounds in each area between Ofunato and Kesenuma, which makes it easy to plan your hike.



# Kesennuma to Onagawa

146.46km



## 1 Kesennuma

Kesennuma is served by JR railways and the BRT. The BRT runs north to Mori Station in Ofunato, while to the south it heads inland, connecting to the Ishinomaki Line and reaching Maeyachi Station. To the west, the Ofunato Line provides access to Ichinoseki Station, where travelers can transfer to the Shinkansen. There are also highway bus services from Sendai. The center of daily life in the region is located inland, while the port area is home to many tourist facilities. The city is large and can be somewhat inconvenient for hikers. There are drugstores and convenience stores around the port, as well as a sufficient range of restaurants and accommodation options.

## 2 Koganezawa

The distance from Kesennuma to Motoyoshicho Koganezawa is about 27 km, mostly on paved roads. The route winds repeatedly through built-up areas, so you'll find yourself checking the map often. The BRT line runs roughly alongside the route. From Cape Iwaizaki, there are good views of Tatsumaizaki on Oshima Island. Be aware that once you pass Oya Kaigan, there are no opportunities to resupply on food until you reach the center of the Motoyoshi area of Kesennuma. Just beyond the roadside station, a striking red building stands out, almost like an American burger stand. It's a perfect spot for a quick stop. After passing through several natural fishing harbors and looping down toward the Oya History Museum, you'll spot Koganezawa Station. A nearby pension is hiker-friendly and allows not only overnight stays but also pitching a tent; it's best to contact them in advance. Be sure to greet them properly and use the place with courtesy. Since the next stage is long, it may be a good idea to push on ahead and then return here. Motoyoshi is also home to other hiker-friendly local businesses, so it's worth doing a bit of research.

## 3 Iriya

The next section to Iriya in Minamisanriku Town is about 30 km. While the route is largely paved, there are stretches of mountain paths, making this a big day. In the center of Motoyoshi, there is a supermarket, a drugstore, and a home improvement store. There is also a convenience store in front of Motoyoshi Station—a suitable place to check and restock your food supplies. In Minamisanriku,

resupply is not possible unless you detour off the route to Shizugawa. The trail joins the Minamisanriku Green Road and heads toward Mt. Tatsugane. From around Miyakata, you enter an area served by local buses, which can take you out toward Utatsu. During the daytime, these buses operate on a demand-responsive basis, and anyone can use them by registering via smartphone. Beyond Hinokuchi (the site of the Jakko Temple ruins), you climb a scenic mountain trail known as the "Gyoja no Michi" (Pilgrims' Path). Many stone Buddhas are enshrined on Mt. Tatsugane. Although the summit itself is not on the main route, it is highly recommended to make the climb. From the top, you can take in sweeping views of both the path you have already walked and the road that lies ahead. It's arguably one of the finest viewpoints on the Michinoku Coastal Trail (MCT). After weaving through the settlement of the Iriya district, you'll find an inn beyond a shrine. Even if you are not staying overnight, they will allow hikers to rest there. There are no nearby places to camp. If you need to go down into town, take the demand-responsive bus service, which operates throughout the day. There are no resupply options in the immediate area.

## 4 Kamiwarizaki

The next section to Cape Kamiwarizaki is about 20 km. The route is mostly on paved roads, but also includes walking along forest roads in the mountains. When you reach the national highway at ground level, it may be worth detouring off the route to cross the Hachiman River. After resupplying here, there are no further opportunities to restock until you reach the center of the Ogatsu area. After crossing the old Kesemichi road, you arrive in Tokura, where the route leaves the BRT line. The BRT heads inland from here and runs as far as Maeyachi. To reach Cape Kamiwarizaki, there is a local bus route called the Tokura Line, which also provides access to Shizugawa. The Minamisanriku Marine Visitor Center is one of the information hubs for the MCT. Along the road, with fine views over Shizugawa Bay, there are also minshuku (family-run inns). The shop at the Cape Kamiwarizaki campground has regular closing days, so it's best to check in advance. If your energy and motivation are in good shape, continue to the next destination. That said, several big days continue here, so be careful not to push yourself too hard.

## 5 Tsurishi Shrine

The next section to Tsurishi Shrine is about 13 km on roads throughout. There are still minshuku and similar lodgings beyond Cape Kamiwarizaki, and in Kotaki, a small shop. The atmosphere of the sea changes here, and views of Oppa Bay come into sight as you pass through several fishing ports. The table benches at Shirahama Beach are under a roof and a good place to take a break. The Ishinomaki Kawa Visitor Center is a sister facility to the Minamisanriku Marine Visitor Center. The Kitakami River here is especially beautiful. Tsurishi Shrine has long been cherished by the local community, even before the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Within the shrine grounds, there is a delicatessen that is hiker-friendly. It's worth asking there about camping or other arrangements. Private lodgings stand on the far side of the Kitakami River. The relatively short distance of this section mainly serves to balance the length of the next stage. On weekdays only, the Kitakami District Community Bus runs between Cape Kamiwarizaki and Kanomata Station.

## 6 Kuwahama

The next section to Ogatsucho Kuwahama is about 30 km. The route is mainly on roads, but also includes a natural trail that leads over a mountain pass. After crossing the Kitakami River, you head to the far side of Nagatsuraura Lagoon and climb the steep Onosaki Toge Pass. Where forest roads intersect, the route can be a bit hard to follow. From Ogatsucho Naburi onward, it becomes clearer, though there are still sections where the trail has only recently been cut. Tracing the outline of the peninsula, the route brings you to Cape Osuzaki. There is a minshuku at Cape Osuzaki, but its operating status should be checked in advance. If you can stay here, it makes for a well-balanced itinerary. From here to Hazaka, the route continues entirely along roads. From Hazaka, you return to a natural trail, and once you emerge at a fishing port, you arrive in Kuwahama. In Kuwahama there is an activity facility and a minshuku. Both require advance contact, but they may allow hikers to pitch tents. There are also resident bus services—both demand-responsive and scheduled—that run from Naburi through Osu and the center of Ogatsu to the roadside station, Jobon no Sato.

## 7 Misosaku

The next section to Misosaku is about 10 km. You descend along roads and then follow the seawall, where you'll come to the roadside station, Kenjou No Sato Ogatsu. It includes shops where you can restock supplies, and also restaurants. The destination is close from here. In Misosaku, there is a guesthouse created specifically for MCT hikers by an owner experienced with overseas long-distance trails. Tents are welcome, and can be pitched in the garden. After having completed several big days, it may be a good idea to take things slowly here. If you still have the energy, however, pushing on and crossing the mountains in one go is also an option.

## 8 Onagawa

The next section to Onagawa is about 17 km, combining road walking with mountain trails. Start by climbing along the valley, where there is only one main road to follow. There is a campground partway along the route. As the road hugs the mountainside, it rises gently in long curves, following the contours of the land. It was likely an old mountain pass road that was later paved, and it has a character you wouldn't normally associate with paved roads. Just before it feels like you are about to crest the pass, the route turns onto a mountain trail. From open sections of the route, you can look back over Ogatsu, where you have walked from. Taking care not to confuse forest roads with the true mountain path, you will arrive gradually at Mt. Ishinage. The Ogatsu–Namiita Coast–Mt. Ishinage section is used as the winter detour of the main trail route, and offers a satisfying amount of time on mountain paths. There is also a hiker-friendly community exchange center along the way. The southern slope near the summit is somewhat rough and can be slippery, but the gradient gradually eases. Once you emerge onto the forest road, you can take a breath—only a little farther to Onagawa Station. Enjoy returning to a town atmosphere after some time in the mountains. Around Onagawa Station there are accommodation options, as well as some supermarkets, convenience stores, and restaurants. JR lines provide access to Ishinomaki and Sendai, and from Onagawa Fishing Port there are ferry services to Kinkasan Island (check operating days in advance).

## NOTE

When choosing daily stages with accommodation and resupply in mind, this section can be tricky to break up, but there are many possible approaches. If you plan to combine walking with bus travel, note that some services operate only on certain days or on a demand-responsive basis. Because these transport networks are primarily intended for local residents, planning can be challenging. In broad terms, your plan will come down to whether you push through in longer stretches or divide the route into shorter segments. Covering longer distances in one go is physically demanding, but it makes the overall plan simpler. Breaking the route into smaller stages reduces the physical load but makes itinerary management more complex. As long as food resupply is planned in advance, it should

not present any major problems. Although there are stretches with little sign of human presence, from Kesenuma onward there is still a noticeable sense of habitation. There is only one designated campground, but thanks to the cooperation of local shops and businesses, it is possible to complete most of the route while camping. To ensure we can pass the baton to future hikers, let's observe proper trail etiquette. The section from Kitakami to Ogatsu is difficult to shorten. Ogatsu has a guesthouse, but if you find yourself in real difficulty, consider consulting the Natori Trail Center. Accommodation is concentrated in Kesenuma; elsewhere it is scattered along the route. There are several options around Cape Kamiwarizaki in Minamisanriku and Kitakami, and a few in Onagawa as well.



# Onagawa to Shiogama

163.45km

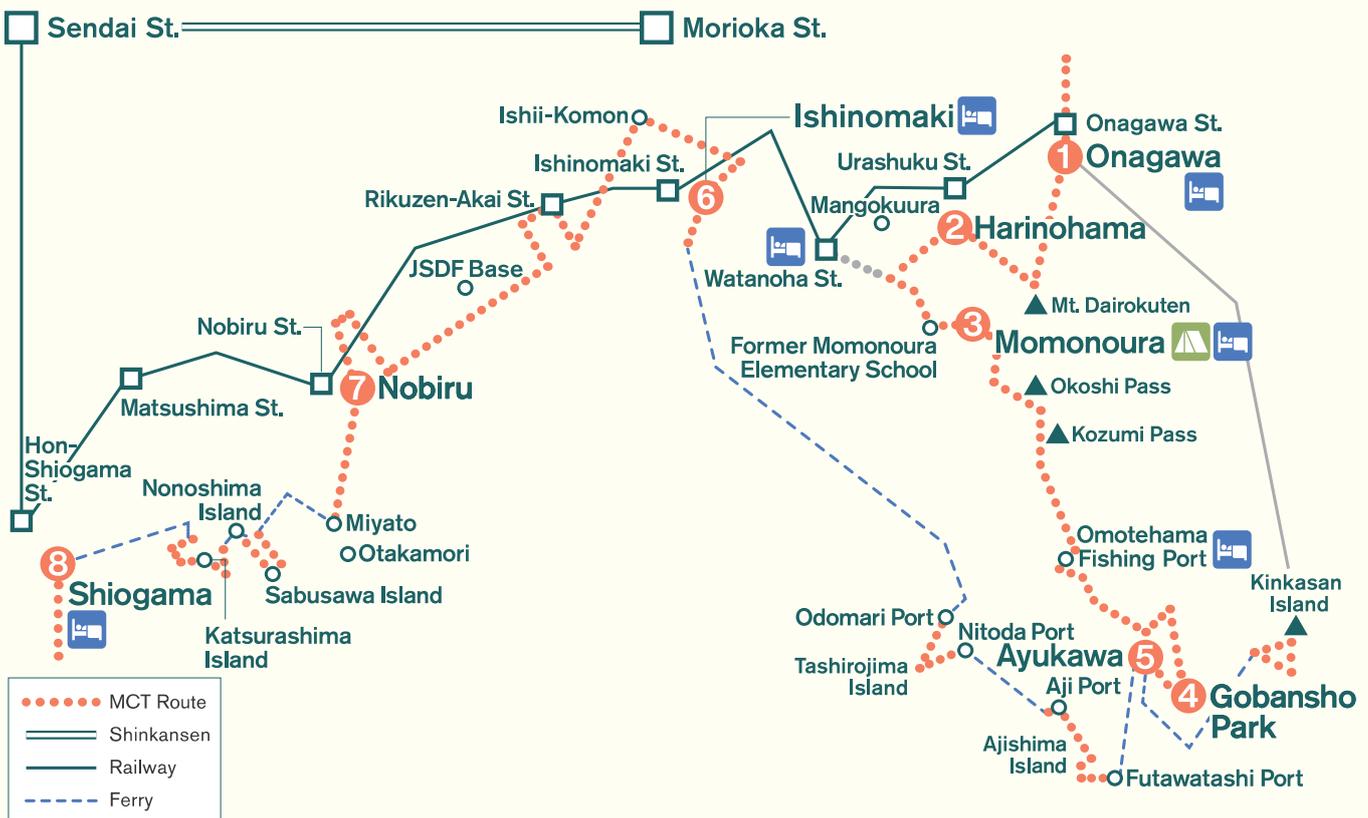
## 1 Onagawa

Onagawa is served by JR lines and is located directly east of Ishinomaki, with connections continuing on to Sendai. Bus routes departing from Ishinomaki also provide access to Minamisanriku Town, Ogatsu Town, and the Oshika Peninsula further north. The area around Onagawa Station is a convenient base for hikers, as essential services are concentrated nearby. Tourist attractions are also located in the same area, along with a good selection of dining options. When hiking towards the Oshika Peninsula, hikers should be aware of “leeches”. While they are neither considered dangerous nor known to transmit disease, their bites can be a nuisance due to prolonged bleeding. Leeches are less active or absent during colder seasons and prefer warm, humid conditions. They can attach themselves to hikers even while walking, so

remain aware of your surroundings, including during rest stops. Leeches are particularly common around Mt. Dairokuten, and tend to be more prevalent in deeper mountain areas.

## 2 Harinohama

The distance between Onagawa and the next destination, Harinohama, is approximately 10km. Taking the detour via Urashuku Station adds another 1km to the journey. This section of the trail alternates between paved roads and natural trails. While there are opportunities to resupply further along the route, hikers are advised to set out well-prepared. Onagawa offers several hiker-friendly shops, including Diamond Head. The route follows the road before branching into a forest path, transitioning into a mountain trail. Precautions such as leech repellent are recommended. En route, the trail intersects with the Oshika Cobalt Line. The trail is generally easy to walk, and does not extend to the summit of Mt. Dairokuten – though the peak is a worthwhile detour if time permits. The descent follows a broad ridge and is easy to walk, but the trail itself can be difficult to track. Pay close attention to maps and trail markers. The landscape opens up near the transmission towers, with a good view of Mangokuura Bay. Be careful not to



stray from the trail. Upon reaching the road, continue to Harinohama. The trail continues southwest from here, but hikers may also choose to go north to Urashuku Station and take the Ishinomaki Line to Watanoha Station (approx. 6km), or continue on foot. Accommodation is available in Onagawa and Ishinomaki, as well as around both Urashuku and Watanoha.

### 3 Momonoura

The distance to the next destination, Momonoura, is approximately 10km. Walking from Watanoha Station adds an extra 3km to the journey. This section alternates between paved roads and natural trails, with resupply available at Kyubunhama and Ayukawa. After passing through the long Kazakoshi Tunnel, the road loses its pedestrian path. Traffic here is heavy, so proceed with caution. When a treehouse comes into view, the trail reaches Hamagurihama. From here, the trail begins to trace a historic local footpath, passing the former site of Momonoura Elementary School. Watch out for traffic and steep drop-offs when walking along the prefectural road. The view of residential houses and a fishing port marks your arrival in Momonoura. Momonoura Village nearby offers both accommodation and tent sites. The Ayukawa Line bus from Ishinomaki Station provides access to the Oshika Peninsula. Community buses also operate throughout the Oshika district, though their routes can be complex.

### 4 Gobansho Park

It is approximately 26km to the next destination, Gobansho Park. The trail is mostly paved, with some mountain paths along the way. From Momonoura Fishing Port, the trail climbs to the prefectural road before branching onto a side path near the former site of Oginohama Elementary School. The trail follows a path along a stream climbing towards the Okoshi Pass, another former local footpath. Extra caution is required after heavy rainfall. The route eventually returns to the prefectural road, where hikers should remain alert to traffic. From Kodumihama, the trail enters Kodumi Pass. Below the trail runs a modern road tunnel. The route follows the stream up to the ridgeline before descending into Koamikurahama. Accommodation is available near the Omotehama Fishing Port. After crossing Ishitouge, the trail reaches

Ayukawa Fishing Port, though the route heads towards the mountains. Continuing south along a footpath leads to Karafune Bansho, where clear views of Kinkasan Island open up. *Minshuku* (Japanese style bed and breakfast) and guesthouses and lodgings are located in Kurosaki near Gobansho Park, with additional accommodation available around Ayukawa Port.

### 5 Ayukawa

The distance to Kinkasan Island and back to Ayukawa Port is approximately 25 km (including ferry travel). While there are short paved stretches, Kinkasan itself consists almost entirely of mountain trails. The primary challenge is not the distance, but the ferry schedule: regular services only operate on Sundays, with occasional extra services on Saturdays and public holidays. Check the schedule in advance. Only one round trip is available on the day, allowing approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes on the island. The route around Kinkasan is about 6 km, involving a climb. Even strong hikers should allow at least two hours, meaning that completing the trail within the ferry's operating window would likely require a running pace. Even a simple round trip to the summit would most likely be a tight squeeze. One option is to stay overnight at the temple lodging on Kinkasan. However, ferry operations the following day are not guaranteed, particularly in poor weather. We recommend planning this as a day trip during favorable weather conditions. There are two ways to complete the full trail. One option is to use an alternative regular ferry route. In addition to the Ayukawa Port – Kinkasan service, there are regular departures from Onagawa Port. Taking the return trip from Ayukawa Port to Kinkasan and the outbound trip from Kinkasan to Onagawa allows for more time on the island, though this is still recommended only for strong hikers. The second option is to charter a boat. When weather conditions are favorable, charter boats operate daily by reservation. However, for solo travelers, the cost is approximately six times that of a regular round-trip fare. Using a regular ferry for one leg can help reduce expenses. Charter services allow greater flexibility in scheduling, and round-trip charters are also available. A round trip is charged as a single fare if the boat waits at the island for 40 minutes or less. For longer stays, each leg is charged as a separate

one-way trip, effectively doubling the cost. As ferry access is highly weather-dependent, it is strongly recommended to prepare a backup plan. An insider tip: consider the special ferry services offered during New Year period.

## 6 **Ishinomaki** 🚢

The route passing through Aji Island and Tashiro Island, all the way to Ishinomaki covers approximately 41 km, including ferry travel. Ferry schedules to Aji Island and Tashiro Island are not optimized for hikers, making a direct itinerary difficult without careful planning. The trail on both islands consists mostly of paved roads with some short forest sections. Accommodation is available on both islands, but they often operate seasonally and offer fewer rooms than in urban areas. Tashiro Island has a designated campsite. Weather conditions may prevent departure from the islands, and resupply should generally be considered unavailable on both.

One possible itinerary is to travel from Ayukawa to Ishinomaki in a single day. From Ayukawa Port, take the Ajishima Line ferry, arriving shortly at Futawatashi Port. After a stroll around Aji Island, take the ferry from Aji Island Port to Nitoda Port. There is little time at Tashiro Island—departing the island from Odomari Port requires hiking approximately 5 km in 1 hour and 40 minutes. If the

connection is missed, returning to Ayukawa Port on the next ferry is recommended. A relaxed alternative would be spending time at the Oshika Peninsula and travelling to Ishinomaki Station the next day by ferry or local bus. Upon arriving at Ishinomaki Port, walk through the city to the station, where hiker-friendly accommodation is also available.

## 7 **Nobiru**

The distance to Nobiru is approximately 29 km. The trail follows a footpath and is mostly paved. While the distance is long, there are no technical difficulties to the hike. Urban areas continue for much of the way, allowing resupply as needed. The trail joins the Old Kitakami River footpath, passing the Ishii Lock and continuing along the Kitakami Canal. Exercise caution where roads intersect the trail at several points. Upon reaching Yodogawa, the route detours toward Rikuzen-Akai Station before rejoining the footpath along the Kitakami Canal. Resupply is recommended before this section. The route continues straight along the canal, passing behind the Japan Air Self-Defense Force base. Beyond the canal lies Nobiru. The trail crosses over the Naruse River. Sendai and Ishinomaki can be accessed from Nobiru Station. The neighboring Tona Station is within walking distance and has a supermarket nearby.



Local accommodation is available, and hikers may be able to camp with prior arrangement.

## 8 Shiogama

The distance to Shiogama is approximately 24 km, following mostly paved roads and natural trails. There are no resupply points between Nobiru and Shiogama. This section explores Urato Islands. Ferry services from Miyato Island to the surrounding islands are suspended during winter. These ferry routes are specifically coordinated for the MCT, and hikers are required to book at least five days in advance. The Miyato area overlaps with the Miyagi Olle trail. If time permits, climbing Mt. Otakamori is a local favorite. Free inter-island ferries operate between Sabusawa Island, Nono Island, and Katsura Island, offering an invaluable experience. Trails across all islands are well-marked. Shiogama City Ferries connect each island with Shiogama Port, allowing hikers to return from any island. Upon arrival at Shiogama Port, the Michinoku Coastal Trail (MCT) enters a bustling urban area. A nearby pizza restaurant is notably hiker-friendly, with excellent food and welcoming atmosphere. Try gathering local tips and recommendations here. Shiogama is served by both Hon-Shiogama Station (Senseki Line) and Shiogama Station (Tohoku Line); Hon-Shiogama Station is the closest to the trail. The city offers ample accommodation,

convenient resupply, and easy access to Sendai.

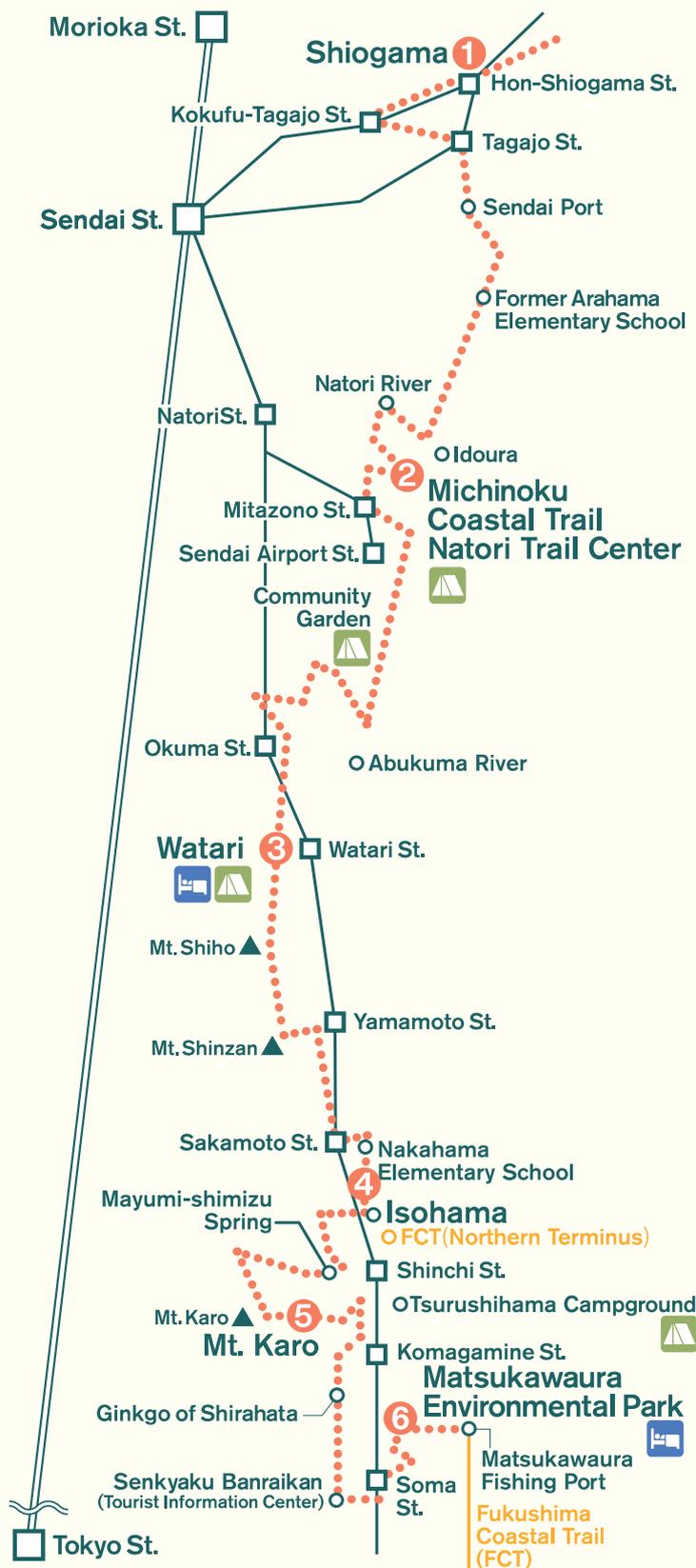
### NOTE

Overall, this section of the trail is easily accessible. There are several transportation options, and the route is straightforward once you reach Onagawa or Ishinomaki. While the trail itself is not physically demanding, the key to this section depends on careful planning around access to Kinkasan Island, Aji Island, and Tashiro Island. Meticulous planning is essential, as ferry services are highly dependent on weather conditions. The Ajishima Line can be suspended for nearly a week — a reminder of the trail's close connection to the natural environment. Resupply opportunities are available almost daily, as the trail passes through relatively populated areas. Campsites are limited to Tashiro Island, where two locations allow hikers to pitch tents. The abundance of hiker-friendly facilities is a significant advantage; when in doubt, do not hesitate to seek local advice. Accommodation is widely available throughout the region including, and beyond, Onagawa, Ishinomaki, Ayukawa, and Shiogama.



# Shiogama to Soma

128.4km



\* See p.158 for the legend.

## 1 Shiogama

Located between Ishinomaki to the east and Sendai to the west, Shiogama is a historic port town served by JR lines and ferries to the Urato Islands. Access is excellent, with easy resupply and plenty of accommodation options.

## 2 Michinoku Coastal Trail Natori Trail Center

It is approximately 29km to the Natori Trail Center. The route is mostly paved, with brief sections of natural paths. While the distance is long, the terrain is largely flat, and public transport is readily available if needed. After visiting Shiogama Shrine, follow the historic Kinkasan Road. Despite its historic charm, the road is narrow with heavy traffic. As you approach Tagajo Castle, the scenery grows more atmospheric. Rifu Town lies beyond Kasenuma Lake. The Tagajo Ruins feature an iconic restored gate. The trail passes directly through Kokufu-Tagajo Station (Tohoku Line); be cautious here, as frequent turns make it easy to get lost. You will also pass under Tagajo Station (Senseki Line). Resupply is easy in this urban area. After Nakanosakae Station, the route leaves the railway line. There are no resupply options between Sendai Port and Natori. The trail follows the curved cycling path along Sendai Bay—watch out for fast-moving bicycles. Parks and restrooms are available along the way. Buses from the Arahama Elementary School Ruins provide connections to the subway. Past the Kaigan Park Adventure Field, the trail follows an embankment overlooking Idoura Lagoon. Yuriage lies across the Natori River. Passing the riverside restaurants, you arrive at the central hub of the Michinoku Coastal Trail (MCT): the Natori Trail Center. The area offers lodging, baths, and tourist facilities, while the Natori TC itself includes a dedicated campground. This is the primary source of information for the MCT. Many staff members have walked the entire trail, so feel free to ask for advice.

## 3 Watari

It is approx. 33km to Watari. The route is mostly paved with some park pathways. Though long in distance, the terrain is straightforward. Resupply is possible via short detours. Sendai Airport with rail access is nearby. Heading south, you will pass a hiker-friendly farm. Further inland, a community garden permits camping. Follow the Abukuma River embankment and cross the bridge near the paper mill. Leaving

the river, a café in front of Okuma Station offers restroom access. The trail then skirts the base of the mountains—look for red apples in season. Traditional inns (ryokan) are available in Watari's town center, and a supermarket is located near the bus stop. As you begin your ascent into the Abukuma Highlands, ensure you are well prepared. A local private company also allows camping; check the Michinoku Trail Club website for details.

#### 4 Isohama

It is approx. 20km to Isohama. This section is primarily a mountain walk. A forest road leads to the trailhead, where the route enters the mountains. While the ridgeline includes gentle ups and downs, it is a generally easy hike. The name Youchizaka (Night Attack Slope) likely dates back to a battle in the Sengoku period. Mt. Shihozan features a large gazebo and an observation deck with clear views of the Abukuma River. Beyond this point lies Kakuda City. Follow the road down to Myotsu Pass, where the trail enters the mountains once again. The trail eventually opens into a clearing; once you see the gazebo and the 'Requiem Bell,' you have reached Mt. Shinzan. This is a place to quietly gaze out over the Pacific Ocean. The descent includes multiple forks, so navigate carefully. The trail finishes at the Shinzan Sanroku Shonen no Mori (Shinzan Foothills Youth Forest), then continues through a residential area to reach the national route near Yamashita Station. Walking this stretch of the route is a legacy of the original trail planning, when coastal routing was not possible. Turn just before Sakamoto Station, where a convenience store stands directly in front. After passing the Ruins of Nakahama Elementary School, you will reach the junction leading to Isohama Fishing Port. The trail goes under the Joban Line tracks, entering Fukushima Prefecture. From Isohama, continue along the coast to Ioyama Park, the starting point of the Fukushima Hamakaido Trail. Tsurushihama Campground is not far from here. Alternatively, you can take the train from Sakamoto Station to Shinchi Station and find accommodation near the station.

#### 5 Mt. Karo

It is approx. 20km to Mt. Karou. This section is mostly paved through Shinchi Town. En route, you can see Mayumi-shimizu, a

natural spring cherished and protected by the locals. Pass under the highway to reach the mountain. The trailhead appears before the road fully crosses the range. The path is a gentle and pleasant forest walk, but becomes steep just below the summit. From the top of Mt. Karou, panoramic views extend beyond Matsukawaura. Take care of the descent, as there are multiple routes. There is no bus service at the trailhead. Located nearby, Karou-no-yu offers accommodation as well as day-use dining and bathing; check for irregular holidays in advance. The nearest guesthouse is approx. 4km away. Komagamine Station is approx. 7km away, while Soma Station is a 20-min taxi ride.

#### 6 Matsukawaura Environmental Park

It is approx. 24km to Matsukawaura Environmental Park. The route is mostly paved, winding through farmland dotted with irrigation ponds. Ancient kitchen middens and castle ruins add historical depth to the landscape. Pass the Shirahata Gingko Tree and go under the national route to enter Soma City. The streets retain the atmosphere of a historic castle town. Visit the Senkyaku Banraikan, a tourism hub that welcomes hikers with information on both the MCT and Fukushima Hamakaido Trail. Follow the riverside path toward the sea. The drifting scent of the tide signals your arrival at Matsukawaura Environmental Park. Buses are available to return to Soma Station, but having come this far, continuing on foot toward the coast is highly recommended to fully appreciate the lagoon's scale. A district of traditional inns (ryokan) can be found near the Matsukawaura Fishing Port.

#### NOTE

Exercise caution regarding resupply when entering mountain sections. Resupply can also be limited elsewhere, but you can generally find supplies with a short detour. The only dedicated campsite is at the Natori TC, though some hiker-friendly facilities permit tent stays. As this is largely an urban area, hikers typically rely on commercial accommodations. While accommodations exist throughout the region, they are rarely located directly along the trail. Making effective use of the Joban Line allows for flexible planning, including flip-flop hikes.

## Every long journey begins with a single step.

### Now, let's begin walking.

Let's go on a journey. Traveling requires planning and preparation, but a long-distance trail is, by nature, a journey of time and distance that can never be fully prepared for. In that sense, it's all a bit improvised. Plans often go out the window. You walk where the wind takes you, following your instincts. Along the way, I've met many people, and it feels like I've learned something new from each of them.

On a long trail, you don't have to follow the route exactly as laid out. A trail, after all, is simply a line connecting one terminus to another—an invisible line, nothing more. So, feel free to wander. Take detours. Some paths are recommended by others; some you choose for yourself. In English, these are often called “alternate routes.”

When a single trail stretches on for so long, it's natural to want to walk

the entire thing, because walking it all carries a certain romance. I completely understand the desire to thru-hike, to walk it in one continuous journey. I feel the same way. There is a view that can only be seen through an unbroken chain of days on the trail. As the days flow together, both body and mind become immersed in hiking, and being on the trail itself turns into your life. In that experience lies a sense of unity with nature that only those who have walked it can truly understand.

At the same time, there are things you can only discover by connecting the trail section by section, returning again and again until you've completed the whole route. Taking several years to finish a single trail is, in fact, a very luxurious way to hike. I would even say that both approaches are forms of “thru-hiking.” Only those who have walked the entire trail, one way or another, can weave the words that come from that experience.



One of the great joys of section hiking is the ability to choose the best season for each area. While section hiking the Michinoku Coastal Trail with friends year after year, I once had the chance to walk through a breathtaking avenue of cherry blossoms for the first time. When hiking the entire trail in one go, timing something like peak bloom is far from easy. We hadn't planned it, it was simply the kind of serendipity that comes from returning again and again. The more often you walk a trail, the deeper your understanding of both the trail itself and the communities along it becomes. There are countless experiences you simply can't gain by walking straight through once, and that is the true pleasure of section hiking.

I want as many people as possible to walk these trails. But that doesn't mean you have to walk the entire thing. You don't even have to walk at all. You can walk, or not walk. There's no rule that says you must. Fast or slow, it doesn't matter. If you took that first step to free your mind, you shouldn't be bound by ideas of how something "has to be." There's no competition here. A trail is just a path. You're free to compete if you want, but I hope long trails themselves remain free from measures of superiority or rivalry. That's just not what they're for.

I believe the longer the trail, the greater its appeal. There are hardships, of course, but there are also countless joys waiting ahead. That is what it means to walk a long trail. Certainly, you could walk long distances or take long journeys without the framework of a trail. But I've learned so much by walking within this framework.

In the United States, hikers who walk a long trail in the same year are called the "Class of 'XX," like a graduating class. It sounds a bit like school, and that's not such a bad thing. People of all ages, genders, and backgrounds, brought together simply because they walked in the same year. The idea of the long trail as a place of learning rings true to me.

Any step will do. Even a single step is enough. But when you take that step, I hope you carry this thought with you:

*This path is long, stretching on and on beyond what the eye can see. Past the next turn, and the one after that, beyond the mountains ahead, it continues far into the distance.*

Hold this feeling close, and take your first step forward. After all, it is the most important mindset for walking a long-distance trail.



#### Profile

### Shin Hasegawa

Long-distance hiker. After working at ski resorts and mountain huts, he joined the staff of the outdoor specialty shop, Hiker's Depot. In 2010, he completed a thru-hike of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), one of the United States' three major long-distance trails. He actively shares his hiking experiences through blogs and events. By co-hosting LONG DISTANCE HIKERS DAY with the web magazine TRAILS, he works to foster the culture of long-distance trails and hiking in Japan. He is the author of *LONG DISTANCE HIKING* (TRAILS, 2015). He serves as Representative Director and Institute Director of Trailblaze Hiking Institute Inc. and as a director of Leave No Trace Japan.