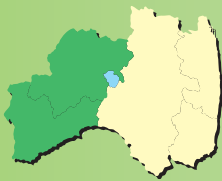


Western Region (Aizu)



Steeped in the history of a great castle town and blessed with superb natural attractions, the Aizu Region (Western Region) houses a treasure trove of tourist attractions, both historic and natural. Begin a cherry blossom journey into Aizu now and explore its fascinating history!

For flowering time information
<http://www.tif.ne.jp>
<http://www.tif.ne.jp/eng/index.shtml>

“Go-zakura” Five Great Cherry Trees of Aizu

“Go-zakura” collectively names the five most celebrated cherry trees within the Aizu region. Mention of the “Go-zakura” can be found in “Aizu Fudoki” (description of Aizu's natural attractions) compiled back in the days of the Aizu clan founder Lord Hoshina Masayuki (1611 ~ 1673) as well as in the “New Aizu Fudoki” compiled during the reign of the fifth-generation Lord Matsudaira Katanobu (1744 ~ 1805). Each one of the five trees is highly valued for its blossoms though they vary in blossoming time.



43 “Ishibe-zakura” Cherry Tree

[Aizu-Wakamatsu City] MAP C-3

Cherry blossom season: Mid- to late Apr.

This superb 600-year-old cherry tree was originally in the garden of Ishibe Jibudayu (a chief retainer of the Ashina clan who reigned over Aizu during the medieval period). The buds are reddish but the petals gradually turn pale pink. Standing on wide-open farmland, its luxuriant blossoms can be viewed from every direction.

[Access] 10 min. by bus from Aizu-Wakamatsu Sta. on JR Ban'etsu-saisen Line; or 10 min. drive after exiting Niitsuru Smart I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy
 [Inquiry] Aizu-Wakamatsu City Office (Tourism Sec.) Tel: +81(242)395-1251

44 “Tora-no-O Zakura” Cherry Tree

[Aizu-Misato Town] MAP C-3

Cherry blossom season: Mid- to late Apr.

This graceful tree of the Oshima-zakura variety graces the Hoyo-ji Temple precincts. It is believed to have been planted in the late 8th or early 9th century by the high Buddhist priest Tokuchi-daishi, the founder of Buddhism in the Aizu region. Each blossom contains five to ten red-pink petals, from which stamen protrude like a tiger's tail (*tora-no-o*).

[Access] 5 min. drive from Aizu-Takada Sta. on JR Tadami Line; or 10 min. drive after exiting Niitsuru Smart I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy
 [Inquiry] Aizu-Misato Town Tourism Association Tel: +81(242)55-1121



46 “Sugi-no-Ito Zakura” Cherry Tree

[Aizu-Bange Town] MAP C-3

Cherry blossom season: Mid- to late Apr.

This drooping cherry tree is believed to have been transplanted here from Miyagi-gun county during the late 16th century Tenso Period. Its beautiful blossoms are red-pink in the beginning and gradually turn whitish at their peak.

[Access] 5 min. drive from Aizu-Bange Sta. on JR Tadami Line; or 10 min. drive after exiting Aizu-Bange I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy
 [Inquiry] Aizu-Bange Town Tourism & Products Promotion Association Tel: +81(242)83-2111



Event

Cherry Blossom Festival [Late Apr.]

This festival is held when the “Sugi-no-Ito Zakura” cherry tree comes into full blossom. Sales of local specialties are featured.

[Inquiry] Aizu-Bange Town Tourism & Products Promotion Association Tel: +81(242)83-2111

ATI reporter-recommended gourmet venues

Bar-B-Q & Japanese Pub “Takehara”

In olden days, Aizu-Bange was the venue for a horse trading market, which gave rise to a tradition of horse meat dishes. A popular menu item at Takehara is the “Dotechin-don” bowl of rice topped with minced raw horse meat. The meat “melts” in your mouth, while its low calories are healthful and have special appeal to lady customers. Enjoy Aizu-Bange's horse meat, in *sashimi* and other dishes.



1, Soroku, Aizu-Bange Town, Kawanuma-gun Tel: +81(242)83-1627
 [Hours] 17:00 ~ 21:30
 Closed on Mon.

45 “Usuzumi-zakura” Cherry Tree

[Aizu-Misato Town] MAP C-3

Cherry blossom season: Mid- to late Apr.

This cherry tree is revered as the sacred tree of Isasumi Shrine dedicated to the guardian deity for all of the Aizu region. Its blossoms are an off-white delicately including the color of thin Indian ink (*usuzumi*). As the end of the blossoming time approaches, they turn red-pink from the center.

[Access] 30 min. by bus from Aizu-Wakamatsu Sta. on JR Ban'etsu-saisen Line; or 15 min. walk from Aizu-Takada Sta. on JR Tadami Line; or 10 min. drive after exiting Niitsuru Smart I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy
 [Inquiry] Aizu-Misato Town Tourism Association Tel: +81(242)55-1121



Event

Kashuku-sai Festival

In this festival, rice cakes containing petals of the Usuzumi-zakura at the Isasumi Shrine are distributed to local followers.

[Inquiry] Isasumi Shrine Tel: +81(242)54-5050

47 “Oshika-zakura” Cherry Tree

[Inawashiro Town] MAP D-3

Cherry blossom season: Early to mid-May

With this cherry tree of the Kiku-zaki Sato-zakura variety, leaves come out in bell-like peals – a rarity. The red-pink blossoms are more reddish than the Somei-Yoshino variety. “Oshika-zakura” can be found in the precincts of Iwashashi Shrine, the oldest Shinto shrine in this area. According to legend, the tree was brought and planted here in the mid-10th century by an Imperial messenger when he paid a visit to the shrine for prayer.

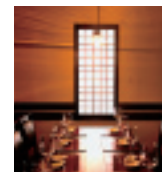
[Access] 10 min. drive from Inawashiro Sta. on JR Ban'etsu-saisen Line; or 10 min. drive after exiting Inawashiro/Bandai-kogen I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy
 [Inquiry] Inawashiro Tourism Association Tel: +81(242)62-2048



ATI reporter-recommended gourmet venues

Japanese Restaurant “Kishun”

Kishun was opened in 2007 by a former hotel chef. The cuisine here features naturally grown vegetables harvested from the chef's own family farm and are elegantly served. Its dinner course (¥3,500 and up) is based on only the best and freshest ingredients. Especially pleasing is that the chef arranges a personal menu, taking your individual preference into account. The lunch, featuring the famed Kawamata chicken, is highly popular.



Ohgida, Chiyoda, Inawashiro Town, Yama-gun Tel: +81(242)63-1376
 [Hours] 12:00 ~ 14:00; 17:30 ~ 22:00
 Closed on Sun. (subject to change)

48 “Chitose-zakura” Cherry Tree at Yonezawa

[Aizu-Misato Town] MAP C-3

Cherry blossom season: Mid- to late Apr.

This 700-year-old tree of the Beni Higan-zakura variety stands alone in a typically countryside setting. Its red-pink blossoms signal the time for rice-seeding, hence the nickname “Rice-seeding Blossoms.”

[Access] 3 min. drive or 15 min. walk from Negishi Sta. on JR Tadami Line; or 3 min. drive after exiting Niitsuru Smart I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy
 [Inquiry] Aizu-Misato Town Tourism Association Tel: +81(242)55-1121



ATI reporter-recommended gourmet venues

Gourmet Spot “Yanaba-tei”

“Yanaba-tei” highlights catfish dishes such as smoked catfish, *kamaboko* boiled fish paste, and *kabayaki* grilled catfish – all cultivated and refined by the chef over the past 20 years. Light in taste yet nutritious, catfish is highly prized delicacy. The “*Kabayaki-domburi*” bowl of rice topped with *kabayaki* (¥950) is most popular. Other seasonal dishes like homemade *soba* (100% pure buckwheat) noodles and broiled *ayu* sweetfish can also be enjoyed.

352-1, Nishi-Seto Otsu, Homa, Aizu-Misato Town, Onuma-gun
 Tel: +81(242)56-4677
 [Hours] 11:00 ~ 18:00
 Open year round



49 Cherry Tree at Koshio (or Cherry Tree of Uende) [Minami-Aizu Town]

MAP B-5

Cherry blossom season: Late Apr.

This cherry tree can be found on a small hill (locally known as “Uende”) in the Ina area's Koshio neighborhood. It is the first cherry tree to bloom in the Ina area. It is said that Elkichi Kawarada (1860 ~ 1897), a resident of Koshio, brought it as a young Yama-zakura seedling from the mountains and planted it here.

[Access] 60 min. by bus from Aizu-Tajima Sta. on Aizu Line; 60 min. by bus from Aizu-kogen Oze-guchi Sta. on Aizu R.R. Kinugawa Line; 120 min. drive after exiting Nishi-Nasuno/Shiobara I.C. on Tohoku Expwy; or 120 min. drive after exiting Aizu-Wakamatsu I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy
 [Inquiry] Minami-Aizu Town Office, Ina Branch Tel: +81(241)76-7715



ATI reporter-recommended gourmet venues

Restaurant “Oasis”

The Oasis is justly proud of their “Juwari (100% pure) Soba” noodles – all handmade, from the planting of the buckwheat seeds through the harvesting and milling to the actual noodle making. In tune with local dietary tradition, the chef intently promotes the “Locally Harvested Food for Local Consumption” campaign.

232, Yaso, Minami-Aizu Town, Minami Aizu-gun Tel: +81(241)78-5018 [Hours] 11:00 ~ 14:00 (~ 15:00 on Sat. and Sun.); 17:30 ~ 20:00 Closed on Tue.

