



Northern Honshū (Tōhoku)

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Why Go?

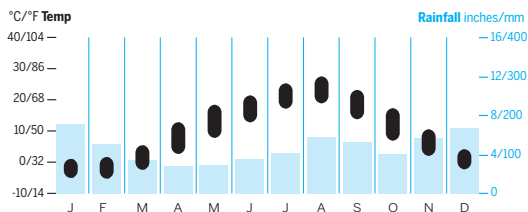
‘The rough sea, stretching out towards Sado, the Milky Way,’ Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1689)

In the days of Matsuo Bashō, the famous travelling poet, a trip to northern Honshū was synonymous with walking to the ends of the Earth. Tōhoku (東北; literally ‘northeast’) is still very much the rugged north, a land of hulking volcanic massifs and remote hot springs, of ancient folk beliefs and unique customs born of centuries of isolation.

In a sense, nothing has changed, and yet everything has changed. In 2011, an enormous earthquake and tsunami (see p7) destroyed a long stretch of coastline. The recovery effort, happening at both government and grassroots levels, faces enormous challenges. This shouldn’t stop you from visiting. The vast majority of northern Honshū was spared significant damage and remains as attractive as ever to those seeking, as Bashō was, an off-the-beaten-track adventure.

When to Go

Aomori



Dec–Feb Siberian cold, but great skiing and *yukimiburo* (snow viewing from an onsen).

Jun–Aug Mild summers come to life with spirited festivals and magnificent greenery.

Sep–Oct A brief but intense autumn is marked by spectacular displays of foliage.

Northern Honshū (Tōhoku) Highlights

- Following the footsteps of the *yamabushi* (mountain ascetics) through the sacred peaks of **Dewa Sanzan**
- Soaking your worries away at rustic **Nyūto Onsen**, in the mountains above Tazawa-ko
- Cycling through the **Tōno** valley, the land that time forgot
- Getting away from the mainland crush on **Sado-ga-shima**, a former island of exile
- Experiencing one of Tōhoku's legendary festivals, like the Tanabata Matsuri in **Sendai**
- Dodging ice-covered trees known as 'ice monsters' at **Zaō Onsen**
- Making a pilgrimage to the mountaintop temples of **Yamadera**, just like the poet Bashō
- Exploring the apocalyptic landscape of Ozore-san on the **Shimokita Peninsula**
- Reliving the glory of **Hirazumi**, the 11th-century Buddhist paradise on earth
- Traipsing around the verdant shores of **Towada-ko**, Honshū's largest crater lake



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