9 NIGHTS, 10 DAYS TOUR
FOR SNOW LOVERS - FROM 5 PERSONS

SNOW, ONSEN AND FUN IN NORTHERN JAPAN

DEGAM
TSURUOKA TOURISM BUREAU

IN COLLABORATION WITH:

In-outbound
Sendai Matsushima Inc.

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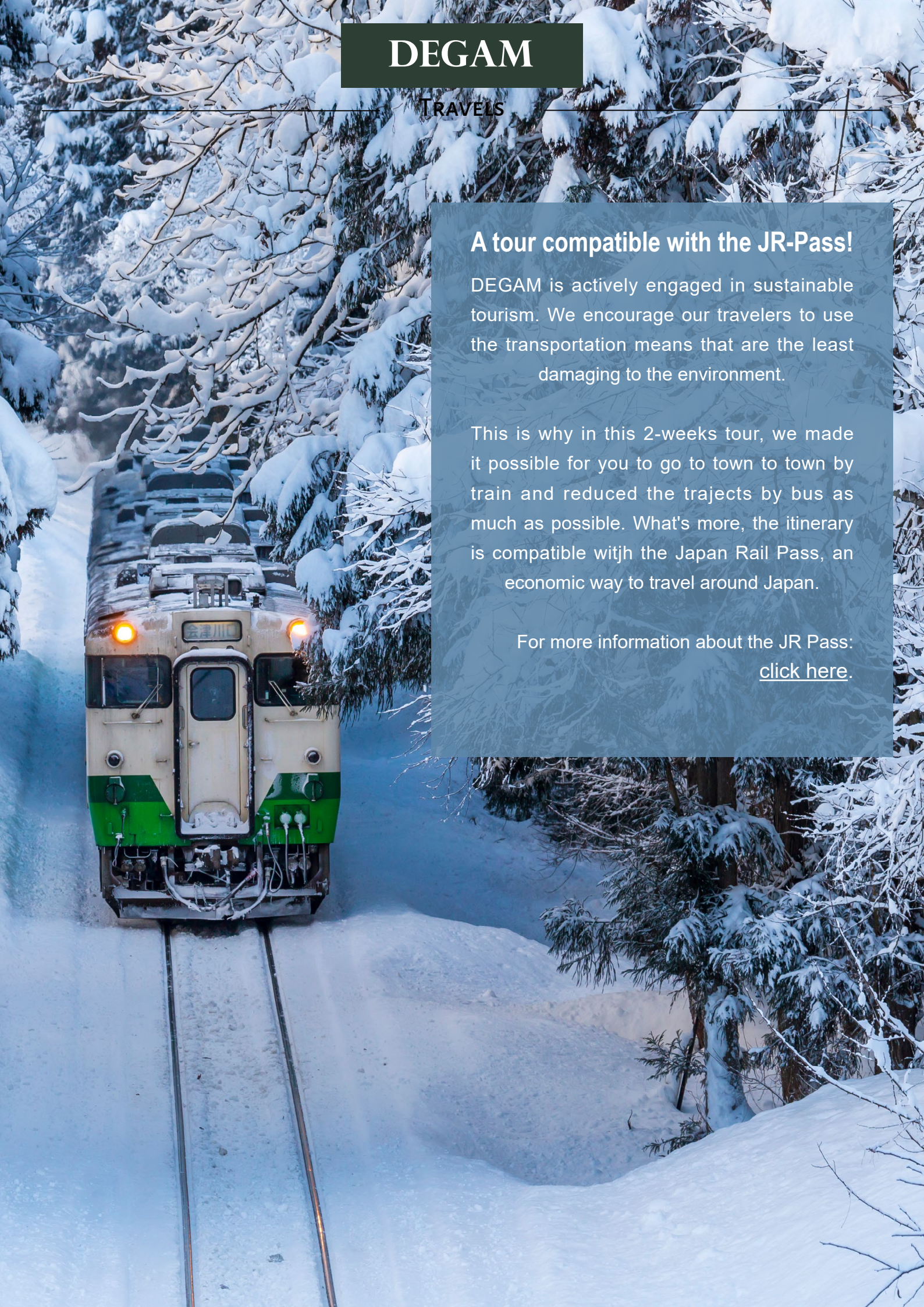
TRAVELS



A tour compatible with the JR-Pass!

DEGAM is actively engaged in sustainable tourism. We encourage our travelers to use the transportation means that are the least damaging to the environment.

This is why in this 2-weeks tour, we made it possible for you to go to town to town by train and reduced the trajects by bus as much as possible. What's more, the itinerary is compatible witjh the Japan Rail Pass, an economic way to travel around Japan.

For more information about the JR Pass: click here.

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ABOUT THIS TOUR:

We understand that classic group tours in Japan have some downsides: lack of privacy, absence of freedom in the itinerary or schedule, difficulty to exchange with the local people...
But traveling solo in the Japanese countryside can also be very scary! Lack of English signs, no one to speak English with, hotels and attractions which only take reservations by phone...
DEGAM Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau helps you take part in a unique tour of the hidden gems sprinkled across Northern Japan, allowing you to make minor detours if you want and travel comfortably with your family and friends without the trouble of making the reservations in Japanese yourself.
We will design a 100% custom tour for you, adapt to your needs, make reservations, and gather all the information in our "Self-Guide Brochure," so you can discover the best of Northern Japan at your own pace.
In this "Snow, Onsen and Fun in Northern Japan" tour, we wanted to introduce you to the best snow in Northern Japan!

It is in Tohoku that you will find Japan's heaviest snowfalls (contrary to what people think, it is not in Hokkaido! The deepest snow in inhabitable areas is in Nishikawa Town, Yamagata Prefecture!). In this tour, you will experience the best of Tohoku's snow in all the possible ways: skiing, snowshoeing, snow festivals, snowy onsens...

Let us design the perfect snow-trip in Japan for you!

TOUR SEASON: JANUARY-FEBRUARY

Zao's Snow Monsters (Miyagi/Yamagata Prefecture)

TOHOKU'S SNOW

The heaviest snowfalls in Japan were recorded in Nishikawa Town, Yamagata Prefecture. This owed the place its nickname of "Nippon 1 Yukiguni" (Japan's Number 1 Snowland).

The snow in Miyagi and Yamagata is very powdery and fresh. Not too cold, not too firm, it is just the right amount to enjoy the best slides!

In this trip, you will spend 4 days in Zao Onsen's Ski Resort, one of the most famous in Japan!

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Your itinerary*

	Prefecture	Location
Day 1	Miyagi	Zao Onsen's ski resort
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5	Yamagata	Mt. Haguro
Day 6		
Day 7		Mt. Yudono
Day 8		Yunohama Onsen & Kamo Aquarium
Day 9		Ginzan Onsen
Day 10		Return

This itinerary is an example of the tour you will buy. We will make slight changements to the itinerary/plan following your date of arrival and accommodate to your special requests if necessary. Also, there are many winter festivals during winter. We might change your schedule according to the local events calendar, to allow you attend to the most unforgettable "Winter Matsuri"!

Day 1-4 : Tohoku's Best Ski resort: Zao

Take the Tohoku Shinkansen to Zao Onsen from Tokyo station.
Take the bus to Zao Onsen's ski resort.
Enjoy 4 full days of ski in Tohoku's best ski resort.

Zao Onsen's Ski Resort's speciality : The Genghis Khan, a meat buffet that enhances the taste of mutton meat.

About Zao Onsen's Ski Resort

Zao Onsen features abundant sulphuric hot spring water with strong acidity. The town's streets are lined with a number of hot spring inns and hotels amid atmospheric spring steams. Winter attractions include the Zao Onsen Ski Resort and the legendary hoar frosts known as Snow Monsters. Visitors can take a cable car to enjoy views of the hoar frosts from the top of the ski area in February. The area is illuminated at night when the view of sparkling hoar frosts is particularly wonderful! Enjoy an active day out in the snow, marvel at the illuminated hoar frosts in the evening and cap the night off with a relaxing hot spring bath at Zao Onsen!

The Zao Juhyo Festival takes place annually at the Zao Onsen Ski Resort from December to March. During the festival, the ski resort is transformed into a winter wonderland and special events are held including the colourful illumination of the hoar frosts, "Winter Hanabi" fireworks displays, projection displays on the snow slopes and the "1,000-person Torchlight Ski Descent".

The frost-covered trees can be seen from December to March and are at their peak in February. Be sure to check the latest information prior to your visit as the frosts can vary depending on recent weather conditions.

Characteristics:
14 slopes, longest slope: 10km, steepest slope: 38°

Day 5-6: Explore Mt. Haguro with snow-shoes

Get in the train for Tsuruoka station. From Tsuruoka station, get in the bus for Mt. Haguro. Get off at the shukubo pilgrim lodge village. Check-in at your pilgrim inn : Tamonkan.

Visit the local museums and stay for the night at Tamonkan.

The next day, meet with your show-shoe guide and head for Mt. Haguro's pagoda.

Mt. Haguro's pagoda

Mt. Haguro of The Dewa Sanzan is home to the oldest Five-storied Pagoda in all of Tohoku. When Haguro Town was amalgamated into Tsuruoka in 2005, the city became one of the only municipalites in Japan, let alone the world, to possess two Five-storied Pagodas, the other located at Zenpoji.

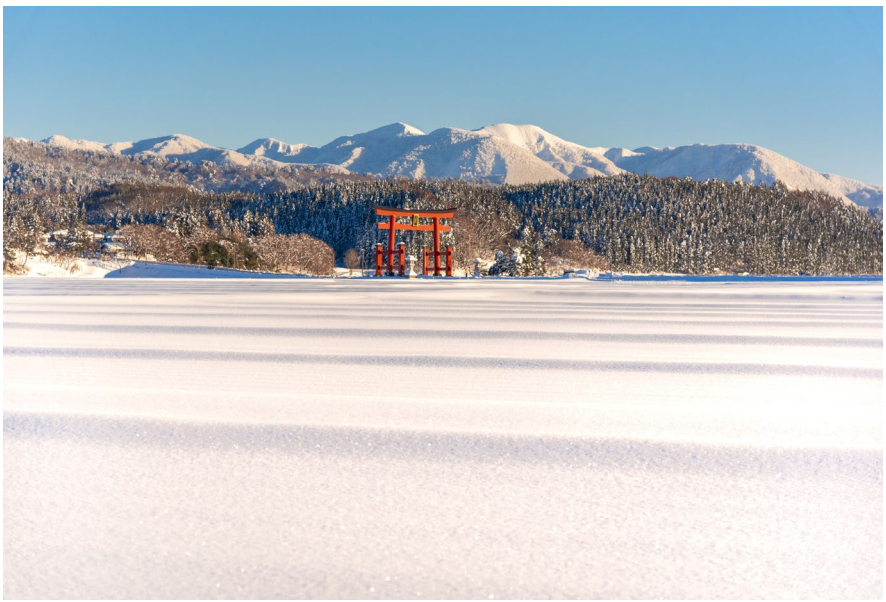
Just past the Grandpa Cedar Tree stands the imposing Five-Storied Pagoda. Originally constructed during the Heian Period (794-1185), the current structure is said to have been rebuilt in 1372. The pagoda preserves the original natural colour of the wood in what is called Shirakizukuri, and no nails were used in its construction.

Each roof has been built in an ancient Japanese style called Kokerabuki, and unlike other pagodas found in Japan they are all the same size.

This is so only the top roof has to counteract the weight of the snow in an area renowned for snow where sometimes up to 3 metres (10 feet) settles.

For centuries the people of Toge have religiously taken turns to climb up the middle of the pagoda and clear the snow from the roof each year.

This pagoda also has an earthquake dampening system inside of it in the form of a giant swinging pendulum to counteract the shakes and swaying that could topple this tower.



Day 7 : Mt. Yudono's mummies & snow-shoe trek to Mt. Yudono

Get in the shuttle taxi to Mt. Yudono and hike to Yudonosan Senninzawa's giant torii gate.

For lunch, have soba & tempura at Nanakamado-tei.

After lunch, head for the mummies village and meet Daibichibo's sokushinbutsu mummy: Shinnyokai-shonin. You will stay at Yunohama Onsen.

About the sokushinbutsu mummies

As surprising as it sounds, Japan, too, has its own mummies. There are 17 mummies in Japan, within which 7 belong to Mt. Yudono's practice of Shingon Buddhism (esoteric Buddhism).

4 of them can be found in Tsuruoka City.

Monks believed mummifying their own bodies would make them experience the most atrocious pain in life, allowing them to become Buddhas so they could protect the people around them. The practice was forbidden by law in 1877. There are 11 mummies within 150km around Mt. Yudono, out of the 17 mummies present in Japan. Why are there so many Sokushinbutsu around Mt. Yudono?

Shingon Buddhism temples long directed Mt. Yudono. Shingon Buddhism is different from other Buddhist schools in that it teaches its disciples to reach a Buddha-like state during their present life (and not after death). The poverty and the illnesses striking Asahi village during Edo Period made the monks even more dedicated to their tasks of becoming Buddhas, the only being that is able to deliver the Humans from their suffering. An extreme practice of Shingon Buddhism's teaching was born: the sokushinbutsu auto-mummification training.

Day 8 : Yunohama Onsen & Jellies

Relax your sore muscles from all the exercise you've done the past week in Yunohama Onsen's hot springs.
Head for Kamo Aquarium.
Have some fugu (pufferfish) sashimi lunch at Okimizuki, the restaurant inside the aquarium and enjoy the beautiful colors of those mesmerizing creatures.

Kamo Aquarium: the Number One Jellyfish Aquarium in the world

With over 50 species on display, the newly renovated Kamo Aquarium boasts the largest display of jellyfish in the world. This coastal aquarium boasts a beautifully designed structure both inside and out and was designed specifically to feature its many jellyfish displays.

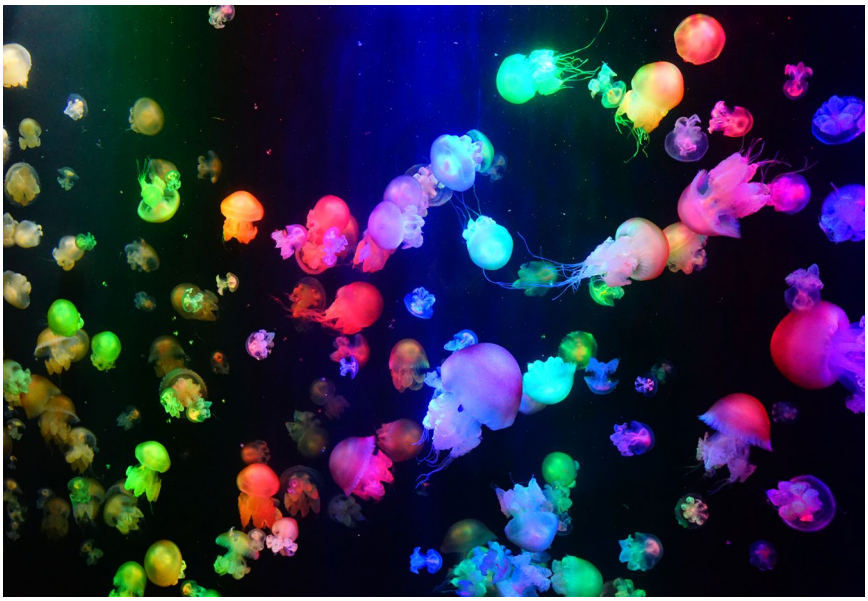
This aquarium is particularly famous for the Jellyfish Dream Theater, a massive 5m tank that houses over 2,000 moon jellyfish. This tank is also certified as the single largest jellyfish display in the world!

In addition to its primary theme of sea jellies, this facility also features sea life that can be found off the coastline of the Western Tohoku Region. This includes both freshwater aquatic life found in the rivers and lakes of Yamagata and saltwater life found in the sea.

The Kamo Aquarium is located approximately 20-30 minutes away from Tsuruoka Station, making it an excellent addition to other tourists locations here in the Shonai Region.

It is in close proximity to Yunohama Beach and has a great view of the sunset over the Sea of Japan. The Kamo Aquarium also has a restaurant located nearby the entrance where you can enjoy fresh seafood caught in the oceans that surround the facility. This restaurant is run by Chef Suda, one of Yamagata's most famous chefs and specializes in fugu and jellyfish cuisine.

Chef Suda also runs a special sushi workshop that is available for guests with advance reservation.



Day 9&10 : Ginzan Onsen

You have spent the night at Ginzan Onsen after your trip to Kamo Aquarium.

Enjoy one of Japan's most scenic and enchanting landscapes in one of Ginzan Onsen's ryokan.

Visit the mine ruins and the frozen waterfall around Ginzan Onsen, taste the deliciously tender "Yonezawa Beef" (Yamagata's local wagyu beef), and when you're finished, go back to Oishida Station, where you'll take the Yamagata Shinkansen back to Tokyo.

About Ginzan Onsen

The scenic Onsen town has recently made the buzz on Instagram and other social networks.

Its Ghibliesque appearance and its lush green environment makes it the perfect destination for the weary travelers who seek some comfort and relaxation.

Originally obtaining its name from the silver mine located near the back of this town, Ginzan Onsen translates out to Silver Mountain Hotsprings and was founded over 400 years ago when it thrived off of its silver production.

After its mines shut down, the town rediscovered itself as a premier hot spring resort by designating an entire portion of its town to over a dozen bathhouses that still stand today.

With their wooden frames and white plaster walls, these buildings preserve the elegance of their Taisho Era (1912 to 1926) architecture and are romanticized through the many dramas this town is featured in.

The nostalgic and warm feel that visitors often praise this town for is also thanks to the gas street lamps that give this town a soft glow.

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Tour price:

- 5 persons group: 295,000 yen (tax included) *approx. 2450 USD per person*
- 10 persons group: 275,000 yen (tax included) *approx. 2260 USD per person*

*For groups above 11 persons, ask us for a revised quotation***

What's included in the price:

- Accommodation (breakfast + dinner included)
- Lunch
- Itineraries not covered by the JR-Pass
- Entrance fees/activity fees
- Reservation-making
- Remote coordination *(your agent will send you reminders every morning about the plan of the day)*
- Daytime help support *(your agent will answer your support requests by phone/chat during daytime only)*
- Self-guide brochure

What's NOT included in the price:

- On-site interpretation (daytime help support covers interpretation related to: reservations, emergency, incidents only. For touristic or leisure interpretation, please order our interpretation services separately)
- Any change to the plan (accommodation, restaurant, activity, itinerary)
- The flight from your location
- Drinks (if unspecified)
- Souvenirs, shopping
- Travel insurance
- Luggage transportation service

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How to make a reservation?

- Contact us by email at: millot.sara@degam.jp
- Make a reservation online on www.tsuruokacity.com/bookings
- Contact us by phone: (+81)235-26-1218 *(from Monday to Friday, 8:30-17:30 JST)*

Vegan, vegetarian, allergies...

- If you have special needs, we will be happy to adapt the plan to your desires!

Let us know how you need your trip to be, we will reshape it to make it perfect for you!
Email: millot.sara@degam.jp

Self-guided material

A 100% custom 20 pages guide will be written by our team to match your trip exactly, so you know all the interesting facts about the places you visit. A paper-version will be sent-out to you prior to your visit, but you will also receive a digital version readable on your phone.

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Local Destination Management Organization registered by the Japanese government
Tour-operator since 2019

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