

Feel the Vibrant Spirit of Tohoku



A Lively Fishing Port: Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture

Ishinomaki, a city in Miyagi Prefecture, is located less than three hours by train north of Tokyo. Before the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011, the city had been one of Japan's biggest fishing ports. The tsunami that followed the quake heavily damaged the fish market and other facilities, and four months later the market reopened in temporary quarters. In September 2015, the market resumed full-scale operations in a new building and the former liveliness returned.

The port at Ishinomaki developed as the landing site for catches of sardines, mackerel, bonito, Pacific saury, and other fish, mainly from the Kinkasan Island/Sanriku offshore fishing ground, said to be one of the world's three greatest fisheries. Cold and warm currents meet here, and the region's sawtooth coastline and numerous islands offer ideal habitats for marine life. These waters are thus the source of a rich variety of fish and shellfish.

Ishinomaki's fishing industry has made a strong comeback, and in 2015 the value of the catch landed at the port came to roughly the same amount as before the earthquake.



Soma Nomaoi: Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture

Minamisoma, a city in Fukushima Prefecture, is located about three hours by train or car north of Tokyo. Soma Nomaoi, an equestrian event with roots in tenth-century military exercises using wild horses and in the custom of offering horses to the divinities, is held here in late July every year. During the festival, the city presents scenes that take viewers centuries into the past, including a parade of 500 mounted warriors clad in traditional armor and surcoats passing through the streets along a 3-kilometer (1.8-mile) course. There is also the breathtaking spectacle of armored young warriors in groups of 10 racing their fleet steeds at breakneck speed around an earthen track, casting up plumes of dust as they go.

The city was seriously affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, but its recovery has progressed, and some 200,000 visitors from Japan and overseas gather here for this event.