

Seasons of Eastern Japan
(3-Day/2-Night Early Spring Trip)
February and March 2019

ARCHIVE

Gunma, Ibaraki, Nagano,
and Kanagawa

**A Journey to Admire
The Flowers of Early Spring**

In addition to admiring the ume (Japanese apricot) blossom, a harbinger of early spring, in Yugawara or Kairakuen, the passengers enjoyed experiences that are only possible in early spring, such as flower arranging in Karuizawa with leading flower box creator Nicolai Bergmann. They also visited the MOA Museum of Art where Red and White Plum Blossoms, a designated National Treasure, is on display. In addition to enjoying views of canola fields and sunsets from Train Suite Shiki-shima, they also had spectacular views of the Jomo-Sanzan mountains, particularly Mt. Haruna and Mt. Myogi, from a steam train. The journeys that departed on February 9 and 13 included a sightseeing excursion to Kasama from Tomobe Station, and the one that departed on March 5 included a sightseeing excursion to Mito from Kairakuen Station.

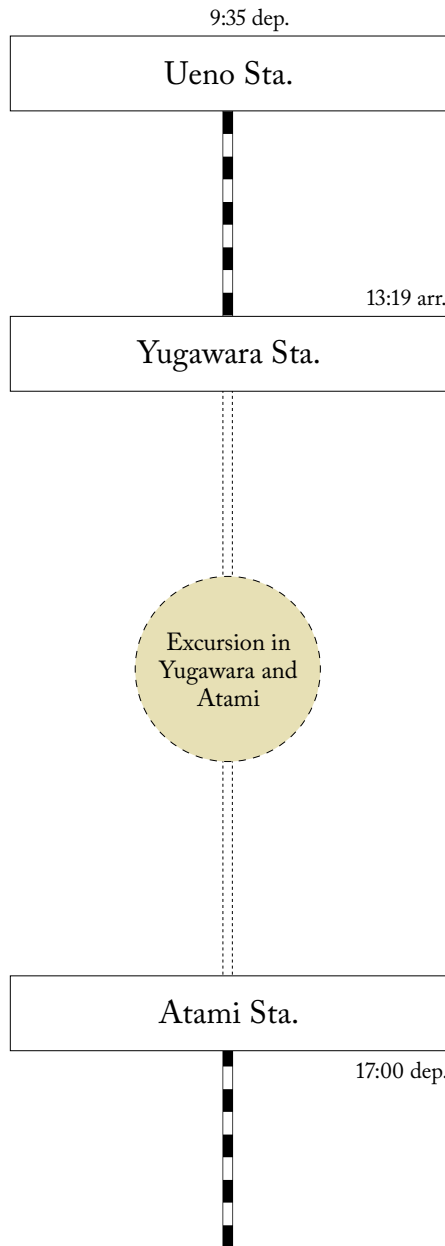
**Saturday February 9 to Monday 11 (public holiday), 2019, and
Wednesday February 13 to Friday 15, 2019**

[Day 1] Yugawara, Atami
[Day 2] Yokokawa, Karuizawa
[Day 3] Kasama

Tuesday March 5 to Thursday 7, 2019

[Day 1] Yugawara, Atami
[Day 2] Yokokawa, Karuizawa
[Day 3] Mito

Day 1



Lunch Onboard

Sushi for lunch, prepared by Yukiji Uzawa, head chef of Umihiko in Hotel Metropolitan Edmont

Yukiji Uzawa prepared nigirizushi from the freshest of ingredients for the first meal onboard the train.

Off by taxi on an excursion in Yugawara and Atami

Sightseeing Excursion

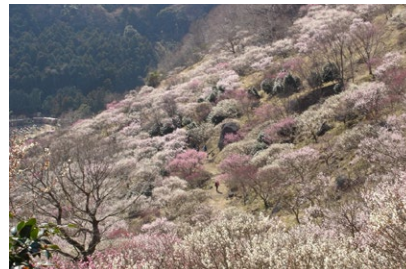
Excursion in Yugawara and Atami

The first excursion of the journey headed to Yugawara and Atami to experience the first harbingers of spring.

Yugawara Ume woods (Makuyama Park)

In early spring, the roughly 4,000 red and white ume trees come into bloom, creating a “carpet of blossom.”

The passengers enjoyed the delicate fragrance of the flowers as they strolled around the park.



Photograph courtesy of Yugawara

MOA Museum of Art

Red and White Plum Blossoms, by the Edo Era artist Ogata Kōrin, is a designated National Treasure of Japan. The passengers viewed this acknowledged masterpiece, painted in the artist’s later years, which is only on public display during the annual Ume Festival.



Overnight
on the train

Day 2

Takasaki Sta.

9:17 arr.

9:47 dep.

Dinner

Onboard

Dinner prepared by Winery Restaurant Zelkova grand chef Shoji Hirota

The passengers enjoyed accomplished “Yamanashi French” cuisine that brought out the very best from the Yamanashi ingredients, accompanied by artisanal wine nurtured amidst fragrant aromas.



Onboard



Lounge Komorebi (Car 5)

Relax over a drink at the end of the day, watching the beautiful scenery stream past the windows.



Breakfast

Onboard

Breakfast of special kamameshi (one-pot rice with meat and vegetables) from Toge-no-Kamameshi Honpo Oginoya

Toge-no-Kamameshi was created in 1958. It is an eki-bento (boxed lunch on sale at stations) served in a Mashiko earthenware pot. The passengers enjoyed a breakfast based around this special kamameshi while gazing out upon the scenery from Train Suite Shiki-shima.

Off for an excursion in Yokokawa and Karuizawa

 Train Suite Shiki-shima
  Train

Retro
Shiki-shima
steam
locomotive

10:49 arr.

Yokokawa Sta.

Excursion in
Yokokawa and
Karuizawa

Yokokawa Sta.

17:40 dep.

Overnight
on the train

Sightseeing Excursion

Excursion in Yokokawa and Karuizawa

During the Edo Era, the route between Yokokawa and Karuizawa was the Nakasendo, one of the five major highways of Japan, and the railway line between them was opened in 1893. It was closed down when the Hokuriku Shinkansen came into operation in 1997. The journey traced a route between historically important transportation hubs.

A ride in an old-fashioned passenger car pulled by a steam locomotive

The passengers traveled along the Shinetsu Main Line from Takasaki to Yokokawa in an old-fashioned car with wooden furnishings, pulled by a D51 steam locomotive. From it they enjoyed views of Mount Haruna and Mount Myogi in the Jomo-Sanzan mountains.

Kyu Karuizawa Hotel Otowa No Mori Lunch

The passengers feasted on the original menu created by head chef Yuki Takayanagi for Train Suite Shiki-shima. He showcased the Shinshu regions abundant natural resources, using seasonal ingredients to create a menu based on French cuisine.

Usui No. 3 Bridge (aka Megane-bashi)

Affectionately nicknamed “Megane-bashi” (because the arches resemble spectacles, “megane” in Japanese), this is the largest arched brick bridge in Japan. It has been designated an Important Cultural Asset of Japan, and has been made part of the Apt Road hiking trail visited by the passengers.

Flower arranging lesson from Nicolai Bergman

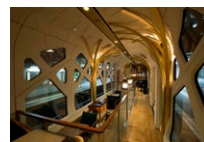
Leading flower box arranger Nicolai Bergmann, famed for the beautiful color gradations he creates, gave a flower arranging class at Kyu Karuizawa Hotel Otowa No Mori. The passengers created spring flower arrangements.



Dinner | Onboard

Dinner prepared by Train Suite Shiki-shima chef Hitoshi Iwasaki

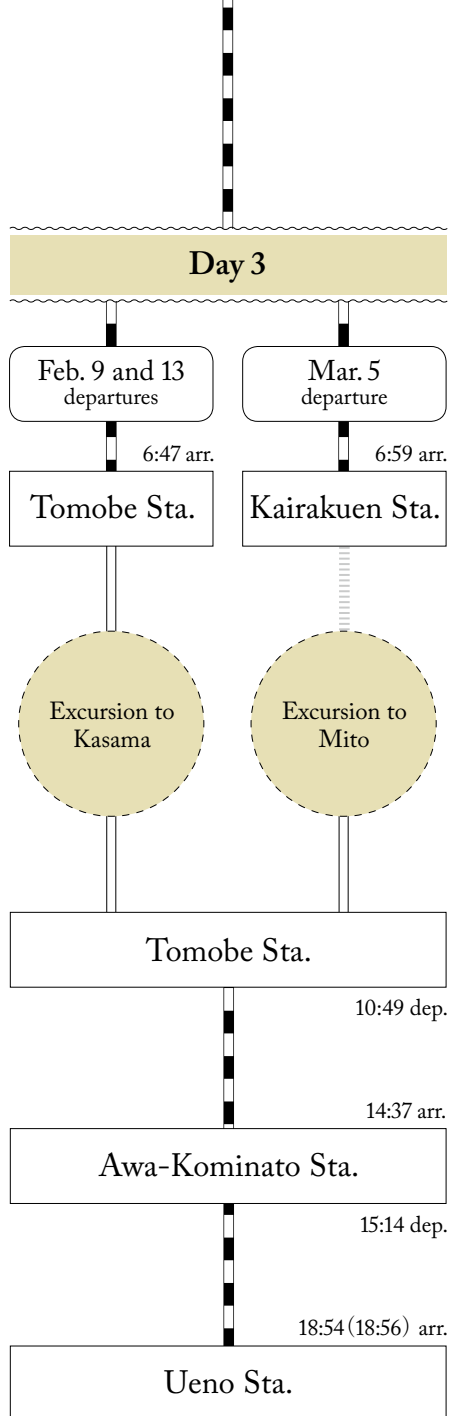
Executive chef Hitoshi Iwasaki prepared French cuisine using ingredients typical of the region being traveled by Train Suite Shiki-shima.



Onboard

Lounge Komorebi (Car 5)

Relax over a drink at the end of the day, watching the beautiful scenery stream past the windows.



Sightseeing Excursion

[Feb. 9 and 13 departures] **Excursion to Kasama**

Unagi Ryoushin

Breakfast

Bansaku Baba prepared a breakfast from aromatic, top-grade eel and Ibaraki Prefecture produce.

Kasama pottery workshop

Kasama started to produce ceramics in the mid-Edo Era and is now home to around 300 potters and their kilns. The passengers had the opportunity to create their very own piece of Kasama ware.



[Mar. 5 departure] **Excursion to Mito**

Kairakuen

This garden was created by Tokugawa Nariaki, the 9th lord of the Mito Domain. The passengers enjoyed a spectacular view of the roughly 3,000 ume trees, of around 100 different species, that come into full bloom in early spring.



Nakagawaro

Breakfast

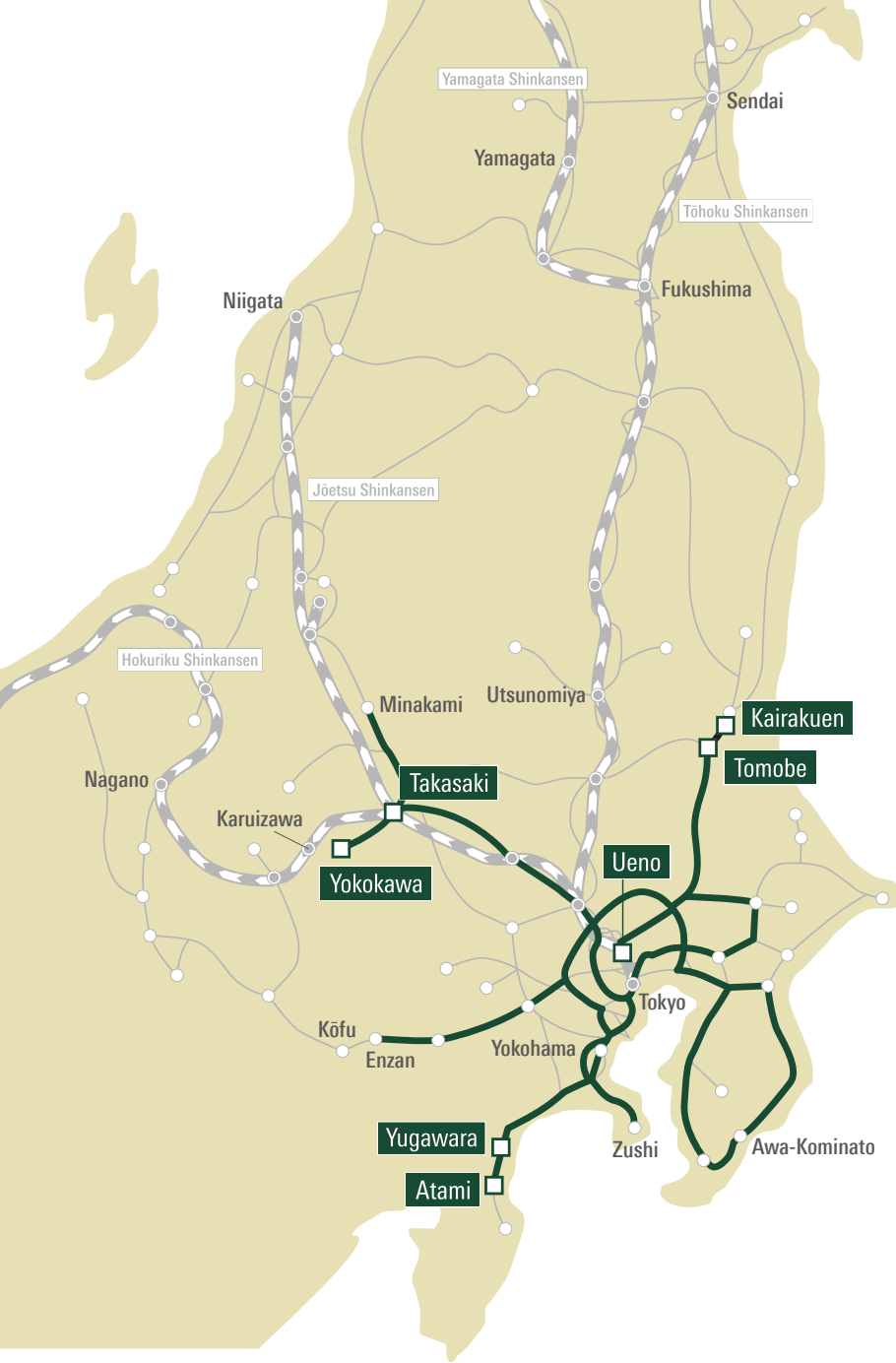
Nakagawaro has attracted many artists and writers since its founding in 1822. The passengers enjoyed authentic eel dishes created via the traditions and spirit of hospitality that have been handed down here for more than 190 years.

Lunch Onboard

Lunch prepared by Train Suite Shiki-shima chef Hitoshi Iwasaki

The passengers enjoyed lunch onboard the train while gazing out at the scenery.

Passengers enjoyed strolling through the area near the station.



Train Suite Shiki-shima
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Route Map

* The photos are all for illustrative purposes only.

* The map on the left is of the route that was followed. Only the main stops are shown.