

Seasons of Eastern Japan
(3-Day/2-Night Summer Trip)

August and
September 2019 ARCHIVE
Akita, Niigata, and
Nagano



TRAIN SUITE
SHIKI-SHIMA

A Journey to Traditional Summer Events and Historical Townscapes

These three-day seasonal journeys included such attractions as “Yama Buttsuke” (clashing of festival floats) at Kakunodate-matsuri, which is listed as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage; a traditional local Tanabata festival event called “Tenku-no-Fuyajou” that has been passed down through generations; the Echigo “Ushi no Tsunotsuki” (bullfighting) that has been designated an important intangible folk cultural asset of Japan and has been carried out since olden times in districts such as Yamakoshi and Ojiya in Nagaoka, Niigata Prefecture; and visits to Narai-juku, the post town that flourished on the Kisoji section of the Nakasendo, and Murakami with its lovely black-walled townscapes.

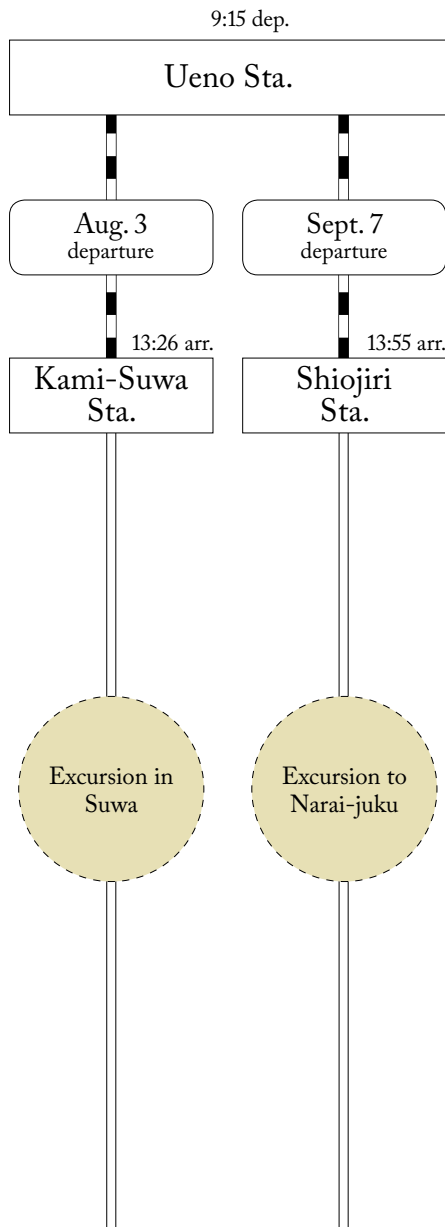
Saturday August 3 to Monday 5, 2019

- [Day 1] Taizi Harada Art Museum, and Suwa Grand Shrine Shimosha Akimiya
- [Day 2] Sightseeing in Murakami, and “Tenku-no-Fuyajou” (Tanabata festival)
- [Day 3] Ojiya “Ushi no Tsunotsuki” (bull fighting)

Saturday September 7 to Monday 9, 2019

- [Day 1] Narai-juku
- [Day 2] Sightseeing in Murakami, and “Yama Buttsuke” (clashing of festival floats) at Kakunodate-matsuri
- [Day 3] Yamakoshi “Ushi no Tsunotsuki” (bull fighting)

Day 1



Lunch | Onboard

Lunch prepared by Kouzou Okamoto of Ling Fu, a Chinese restaurant in Ueno

The first meal of this journey was onboard Train Suite Shiki-shima. Head chef Kouzou Okamoto, who runs Ling Fu, a restaurant next to Ueno's Shinobazu Pond, boarded Train Suite Shiki-shima to provide authentic Chinese cuisine made with carefully selected ingredients.

Sightseeing Excursion

[Aug. 3 departure] **Excursion in Suwa**
Off by coach on an excursion in Suwa

Taizi Harada Art Museum

This museum displays the works of the artist and graphic designer Taizi Harada, who is from Suwa. The passengers immersed themselves in the world of Taizi Harada, who took "Japan's hometowns" as his theme and depicted the daily lives of their inhabitants.

Suwa Grand Shrine Shimosha Akimiya

Suwa Grand Shrine is made up of four shrines: the Kamisha (Upper Shrines) of Maemiya and Honmiya on the south side of Lake Suwa and the Shimosha (Lower Shrines) of Harumiya and Akimiya on the north side of the lake. The passengers visited Shimosha Akimiya, where they observed features such as the magnificent carvings of the main hall of worship and the three-gabled sacred dance stage adorned with a massive shimenawa (sacred rice-straw rope).



Taizi Harada *Mizubasho*
1983

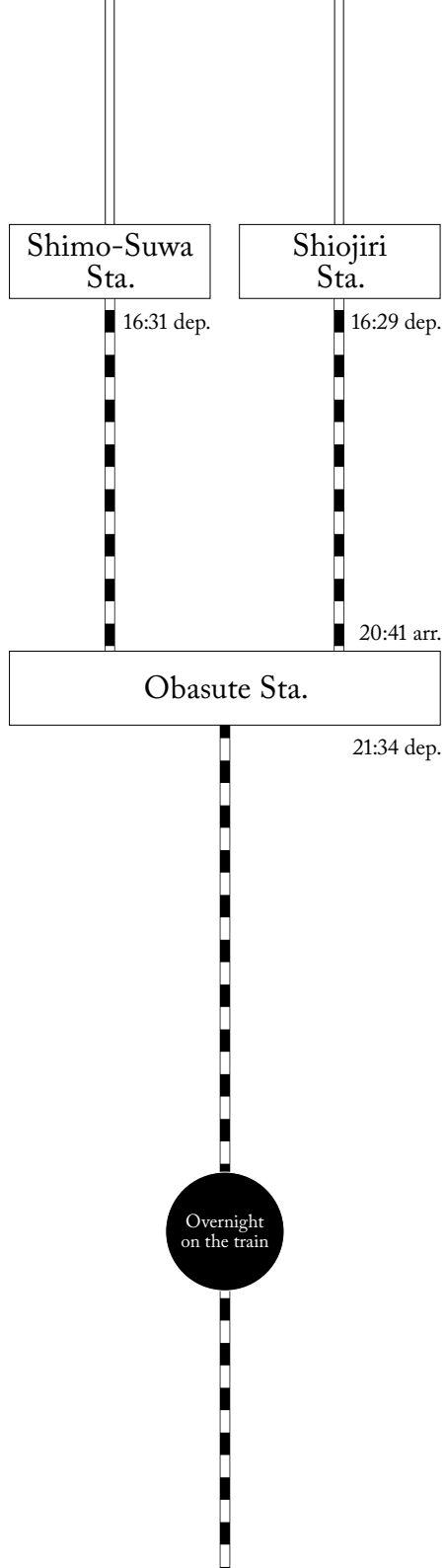
Sightseeing Excursion

[Sept. 7 departure.] **Excursion to Narai-juku**
Off by coach on an excursion to Narai-juku

Narai-juku

Narai-juku is a famous Japanese post town that flourished in olden times on the Kisoji section of the Nakasendo. Its townscape stretches over approximately one kilometer. The atmosphere of old Japan is very much present in Narai-juku even today, and the passengers gained a strong sense of Japanese history and culture.





Dinner Onboard

Dinner prepared by Train Suite Shiki-shima chef Shigeru Sato

The full-course dinner was French cuisine prepared by Train Suite Shiki-shima executive chef Shigeru Sato.

Sightseeing Excursion

Excursion in Obasute

The sight of Zenkoji Daira (the Nagano Basin) from Obasute Station is one of the top three train views in Japan. Train Suite Shiki-shima carried out a switch-back maneuver, which nowadays can usually only be experienced in a local train, to arrive at Obasute Station. In the exclusive lounge Sarashina-no-Tsuki built on the platform making plentiful use of local resources such as Nagano timber, the passengers enjoyed hors d'oeuvres made from local produce while sipping on local sakes and wines and gazing out upon the nightscape stretching out from the station.



Onboard



Lounge Komorebi (Car 5)

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

Day 2

[Aug. 3 departure]
3:43 arr.

[Sept. 7 departure]
2:00 arr.

Niitsu Sta.

Around 6:30 dep.

Excursion in
Murakami

Murakami Sta.

11:26 dep.

Sightseeing Excursion

Excursion in Murakami

Off by coach on an excursion in Murakami

Murakami is an old castle town in the northernmost part of Niigata. It is one of the few towns in Japan where castle ruins, samurai residences, traditional townhouses, and a temple district still remain. The passengers enjoyed a tour of Murakami, an area that has produced many local specialties.

Sennenzake Kikkawa Idutuya

Murakami is famed for its salmon, and is said to have more than 100 ways of preparing it. Even the intestines and skin are relished there. The passengers breakfasted on an array of salmon dishes from Sennenzake Kikkawa Idutuya, the first Murakami restaurant to specialize in salmon.

Breakfast



Sennenzake Kikkawa

This venerable shop was the first in this area to merchandise cooked salmon, and it offers a look at the salmon-related culture here that stretches back more than 1,000 years. The passengers also enjoyed a tour of the elegant shop premises, built in the traditional townhouse style during the Meiji Era.



Murakami-kibori-tsuishu and Sansaibori

For kibori-tsuishu, red lacquer is applied to carved wood. For sansaibori, three layers of different colored lacquer are applied to the wood and then engraved to produce a gorgeous finish. The passengers observed the artisanal skills involved in these traditional crafts that have been handed down through countless generations in Murakami.



Fujimien

Murakami tea has been grown in this castle town since the Edo Era and has a faintly sweet, delicate flavor. At Fujimien, a famous shop established in 1868, the passengers learned about the mentality of tea production here and the skills that have been passed down for generations.



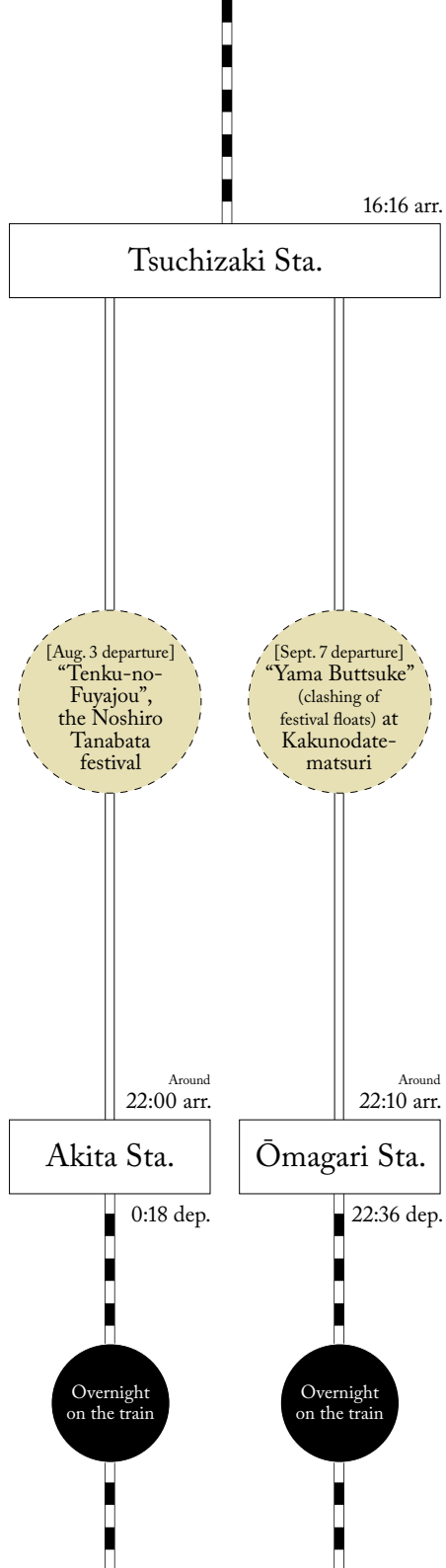
Lunch

Onboard

Lunch prepared by Train Suite Shiki-shima chef Shigeru Sato

Train Suite Shiki-shima executive chef Shigeru Sato comes from Akita Prefecture and he drew upon his feelings for his homeland to create a special Seasons of Eastern Japan menu of French cuisine.





Off by coach to the venues

Dinner Onboard

Special Hotel Metropolitan Akita boxed dinner

Hotel Metropolitan Akita prepared a special Train Suite Shiki-shima boxed dinner using local ingredients.

Sightseeing Excursion

[Aug. 3 departure]

“Tenku-no-Fuyajou”, the Noshiro Tanabata festival

The traditional Tanabata festival in Noshiro, in which a 18-meter high castle-shaped lantern float was paraded through the town, was revived in 2013 after a gap of more than a century. The passengers enjoyed the colorful spectacle of two giant lantern floats, plus the tallest lantern float in Japan, measuring a height of roughly 24 meters, being paraded through the streets of Noshiro to the accompaniment of festival drums and flutes.

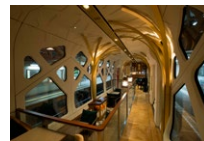


Sightseeing Excursion

[Sept. 7 departure]

“Yama Buttsuke” (clashing of festival floats) at Kakunodate-matsuri

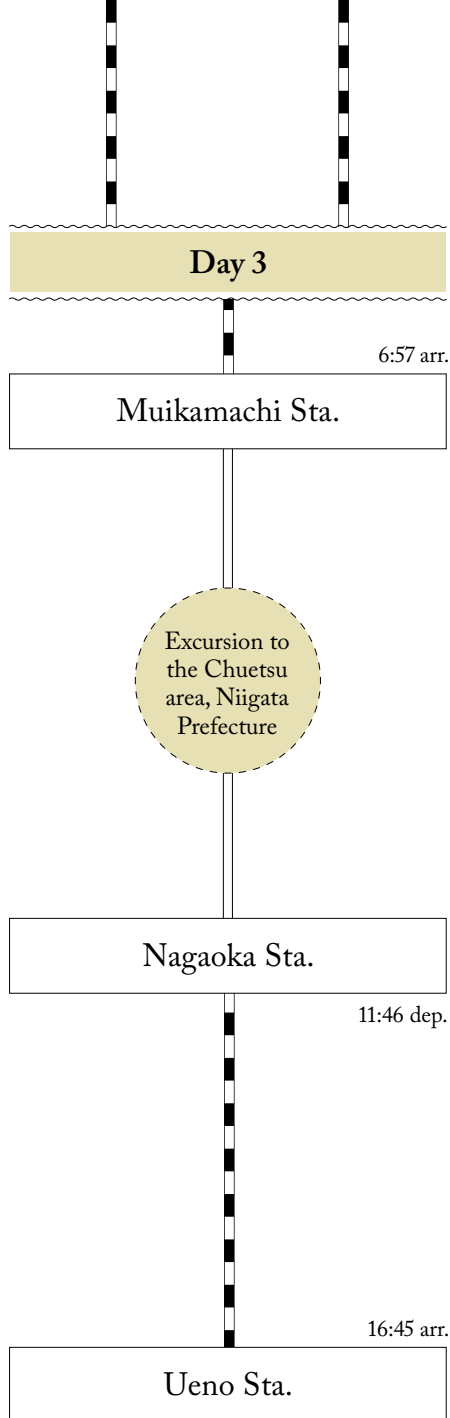
The Kakunodate-matsuri “Yama Buttsuke” is listed as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is held annually from September 7 to 9, and a festival mood grips the town for those three days. The passengers experienced at close quarters the sheer intensity of the clashes between the floats in what is one of Japan’s three most dynamic festivals of this kind.



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

Excursion to the Chuetsu area, Niigata Prefecture
Off by coach on an excursion to the Chuetsu area, Niigata Prefecture

Echigo regional cuisine at Keyakien

Breakfast

Keyakien offers seasonal Echigo delicacies such as locally sourced vegetables and edible wild plants. (Echigo is the old name for Niigata Prefecture.) Keyakien is a thatched cottage built around 150 years ago in typical snow country style. The passengers enjoyed simple country fare and the warm feeling that comes from being in a natural environment.

Ushi no Tsunotsuki

[Aug. 3 departure]: Ojiya. [Sept. 7 departure]: Yamakoshi

Ushi no Tsunotsuki has been held since olden times in Niigata prefecture's "20 villages and hamlets" area, which includes Ojiya and Yamakoshi (in the city of Nagaoka). It has been designated an important intangible folk cultural asset of Japan. The passengers were thrilled by this proud local tradition that dates back a thousand years, and the stirring spectacle of fighting bulls locking horns in intense combat.

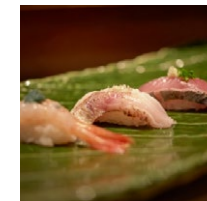


Lunch

Onboard

Kiwami (zenith) sushi platter lunch prepared by Toshiya Yoshizawa of Sekaizushi in Niigata

Underpinned by its traditions and formal conventions, Niigata sushi brings out the delicious flavor of local fish with no unnecessary flourishes. The passengers enjoyed freshly-made nigirizushi along with the stunning scenery.





* The route between Akita and Ōmagari was only taken during the September 7 trip

Train Suite Shiki-shima Seasons of Eastern Japan (3-Day/2-Night Summer Trip) August and September 2019 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.

