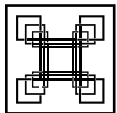


Seasons of Eastern Japan
(3-Day/2-Night Spring Trip)

March 2018 ARCHIVE

Iwate, Yamagata, Tochigi,
and Ibaraki



TRAIN SUITE

四季島

SHIKI-SHIMA

An Intellectual and Aesthetic Journey Through Japan's Brightly-Hued Spring

The Doll Festival is a traditional Japanese ritual where families pray that girls will be healthy and thrive.

This cultural tradition remains strong in many parts of eastern Japan. In Sakata (Yamagata Prefecture), which has a vibrant Doll Festival culture, the passengers viewed the traditional, carefully preserved dolls that were brought there on Kitamaebune ships. The following day, they had a chartered trip on the SL Ginga to experience Ihatov, the utopian world depicted by Kenji Miyazawa. On the third day of this spring journey into the beauty of Japan, the cultural experiences included art in Nasu (Tochigi Prefecture) and Yuki-tsumugi (silk pongee) in Yuki (Ibaraki Prefecture).

Saturday March 24 to Monday 26, 2018

[Day 1] Sakata Hina Kaido (Doll Street)

[Day 2] Hanamaki SL Ginga, Tono

[Day 3] Seiji Fujishiro Museum, Nasu Kogen (Highland),
Yuki walking tour



TRAIN SUITE
SHIKI-SHIMA

Day 1

10:10 dep.

Ueno Sta.

18:46 arr.

Sakata Sta.

Excursion in
Sakata

Overnight
on the train

Lunch Onboard

Lunch prepared by Train Suite Shiki-shima chef Hitoshi Iwasaki

The first meal of this journey was onboard Train Suite Shiki-shima. It was prepared by executive chef Hitoshi Iwasaki.



Off by coach on an excursion in Sakata

Sightseeing Excursion

Excursion in Sakata

Sakata prospered in the Edo Era thanks to the Kitamaebune ships, which also brought it the culture of Kyoto. The passengers enjoyed strolling around Sakata Hina Kaido, a window on the town's gorgeous history.

Sanno Club

Originally a traditional Japanese restaurant built in 1895. The passengers had a guided tour of the richly designed interior and the gorgeous Sakata Kasafuku, one of Japan's three most famous examples of little doll ornaments dangled from an umbrella-like structure, and also learned about Sakata's history and culture.



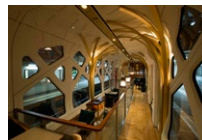
Teahouse and Hina Doll Collection Somaro

Dinner

Opened in 2000 as a restoration of Sakata's famed Edo Era traditional Japanese restaurant, Somaya. Historical Hina dolls are on display there, and it offers a glimpse of the glorious past. After admiring the building and displays, the passengers enjoyed a meal and watched Sakata maiko (apprentice geisha) perform an enchanting dance.

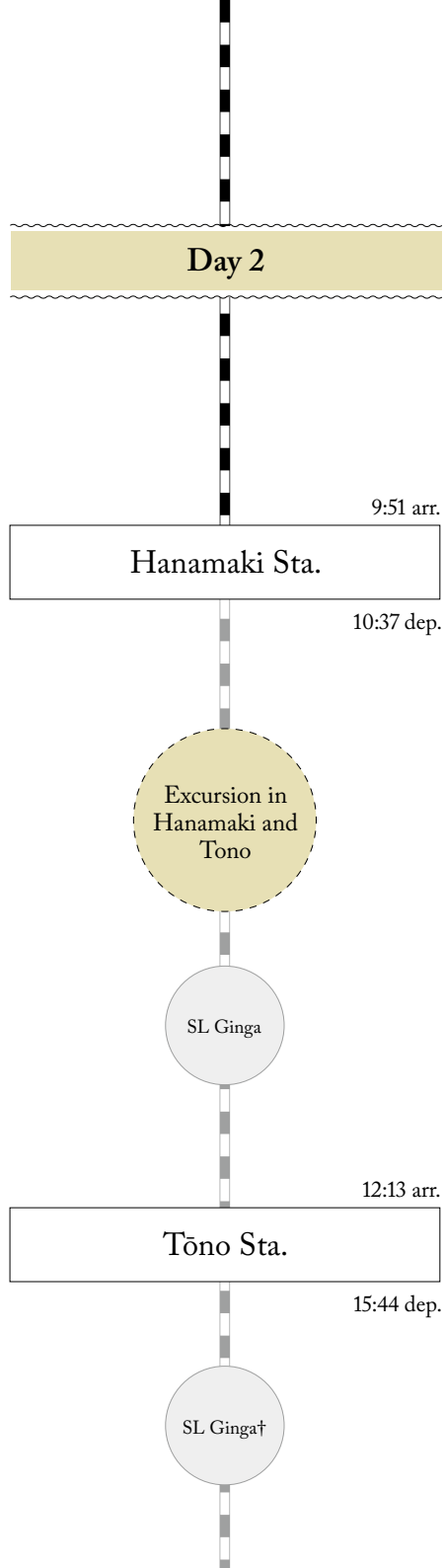


Onboard



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 prepared by Hotel Metropolitan Morioka chef Hitoshi Takahashi

Hotel Metropolitan Morioka head chef Hitoshi Takahashi prepared a meal that showcased the flavors of Iwate seasonal delicacies and the subtle nuances of Japanese cuisine.

Off on an excursion in Hanamaki and Tono

Sightseeing Excursion

Excursion in Hanamaki and Tono

The passengers boarded SL Ginga, so redolent of the world of Kenji Miyazawa, and visited Tono and its unspoilt pastoral landscapes.

SL Ginga

Its passenger cars decorated with motifs of constellations and animals that appear in Night on the Galactic Railroad, the SL Ginga draws its passengers into the world of Miyazawa's story. The passengers enjoyed their journey on this extraordinary train, with its romantic Taisho Era ambience, including the warmth of its woody interior decor and lighting that resembles gas lamps.

Shunsai Wada in Tono

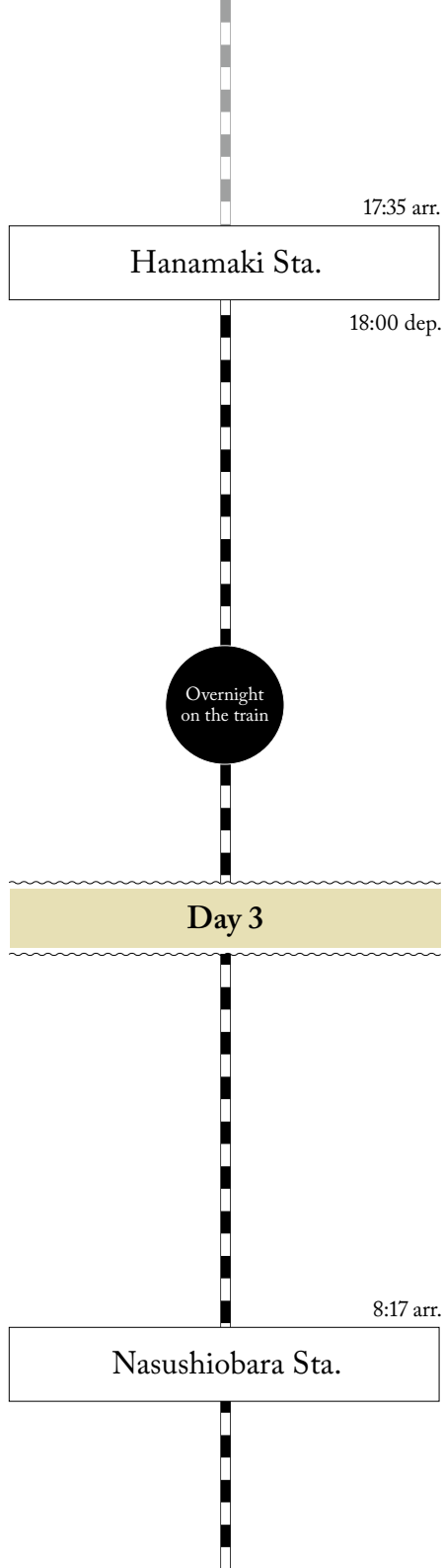
This restaurant serves Japanese cuisine that makes excellent use of seasonal ingredients and traditional techniques. The dishes were beautifully arranged and used carefully chosen stock to match the ingredients, so the passengers gained a sense of spring through their eyes as well as their taste buds.

Tono Furusato Village

The passengers strolled around the old-fashioned village that recreates the scenery of a Tono mountain hamlet of old, and then visited a crooked thatched cottage to watch Hayachine Kagura, ancient Shinto music and dance that has been passed down through the generations.

Lunch





Hanamaki Sta.

17:35 arr.

18:00 dep.

Overnight
on the train

Day 3

Nasushiobara Sta.

8:17 arr.

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.

Breakfast



Onboard

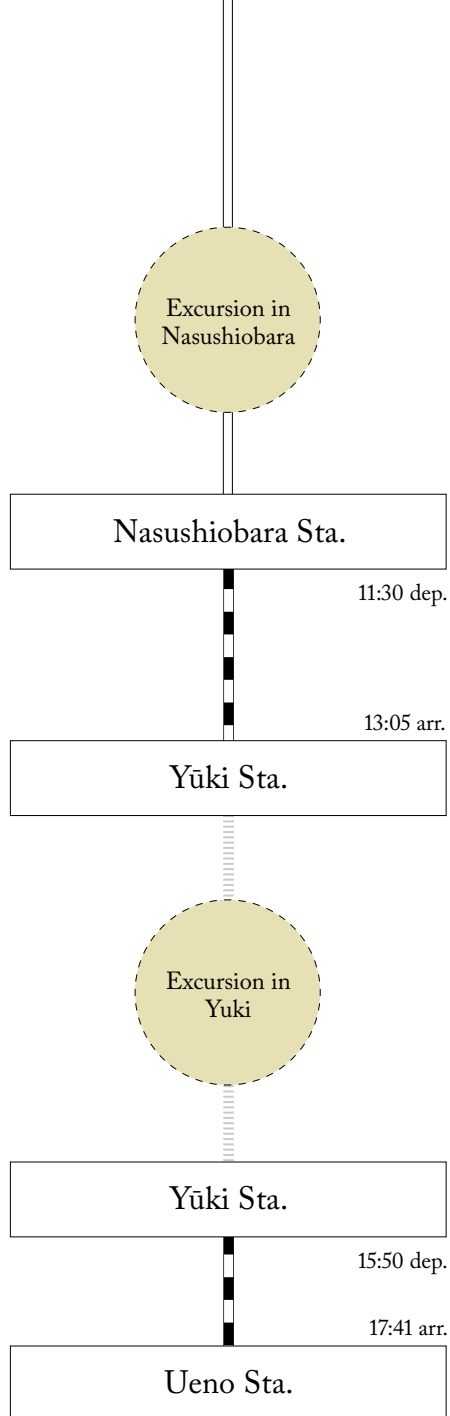
Breakfast prepared by Kazunori Otowa of Otowa Restaurant in Utsunomiya

Kazunori Otowa serves French cuisine that is an expression of the Tochigi climate and has its roots in Utsunomiya. The meal he prepared was a real tour de force.



Off by coach on an excursion in Nasushiobara

 Train Suite Shiki-shima
  Train



Sightseeing Excursion

Excursion in Nasushiobara

Seiji Fujishiro Museum, Nasu Kogen

The passengers visited the Seiji Fujishiro Museum, opened to house a vast collection of the silhouette creations of the artist and author of Hikari no Inori, where they experienced the thrill of seeming to step into the world of his artworks.

Lunch Onboard

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

The passengers enjoyed seasonal nigirizushi made from carefully selected ingredients and the finest fish.

Sightseeing Excursion

Excursion in Yuki

Yuki-tsumugi (silk pongee) has been called the starting point for Japanese silks. This silk fabric production process has been inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as a technique which Japan can proudly share with the world. The passengers enjoyed their experience of a silk weaving town where traditional techniques are kept very much alive.

A look around Yuki

Yuki is a castle town that has prospered through the ages. It still has clearly defined districts dating back to medieval times, and “misegura” storehouses built between the late Edo and Taisho eras. The passengers wore kimono made of Yuki-tsumugi and took a rickshaw ride for a look around this quaint, old-fashioned town.





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.