

Visit Japan: Yamagata Selected as One of National Geographic's 25 Best Destinations for 2026

A 3-day Yamagata spiritual renewal journey, limited to one group per day, visiting destinations selected by National Geographic

OBANAZAWA CITY, YAMAGATA PREFECTURE, JAPAN, April 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Yamagata Prefecture, located approximately 300 km north of Tokyo, is surrounded by rugged mountains and enveloped in a serene atmosphere that feels like another world. The area is home to sacred sites of faith such as Risshaku-ji Temple (Yamadera) and Dewa Sanzan, where prayers have been offered for over 1,000 years, as well as historic temples and shrines. Scenic hot spring resorts, including Ginzan Onsen, are scattered throughout the region. Distinct local cultures have been preserved through seasonal traditional festivals.

Unlike Kyoto and Tokyo, which face overtourism, the region has been highly valued for offering an escape from crowds, allowing visitors to experience Japan's original landscapes and mystical outdoor activities. The article also introduces Yamagata's unique food culture, including local dishes such as imoni and traditional sake brewing.

A special three-day taxi tour is now available, limited to one group per day, featuring the region's spiritual culture known as one of Japan's foremost sacred areas, the Bushido spirit cultivated



Ginzan Onsen, a journey into Japan as it was 100 years ago



there, and the nostalgic Ginzan Onsen, which preserves the atmosphere of Japan from 100 years ago.

Why Yamagata, the only destination selected in Japan, is drawing global attention

Snow Monsters (Juhyo) of Zao

These snow and ice formations, created when snow and ice adhere to trees, are a rare natural phenomenon formed under unique weather conditions. Some reach heights of up to 10 meters. The snow-covered landscape viewed from the ropeway, along with the milky-white hot springs at the base, defines winter in Zao.

Ginzan Onsen

A hot spring town in a mountain valley originating from the Nobesawa Silver Mine, which flourished in the early Edo period. The townscape retains the charm of the Taisho era from about 100 years ago, with some ryokan designated as nationally registered tangible cultural properties. Known for heavy snowfall, the soft glow of gas lamps at dusk creates breathtaking scenery, offering an experience reminiscent of stepping into a storybook world.

Dewa Sanzan

A collective name for Mount Haguro, Mount Gassan, and Mount Yudono, rising in central Yamagata Prefecture. With over 1,400 years of history, it is one of Japan's 三十三箇所 Shugendo sacred sites. Visiting the three mountains—representing the present (Mount Haguro), past (Mount Gassan), and future (Mount Yudono)—is known as Sankan Sando, symbolizing death and rebirth.

Risshaku-ji Temple (Yamadera)

A historic temple beloved by the famous poet Matsuo Basho and a representative sacred mountain of the Tohoku region. The approach consists of 1,015 stone steps, said to cleanse worldly desires upon ascent. The panoramic view from the mountaintop temple, often called a “temple in the sky,” is spectacular. Each season offers its own beauty, particularly the solemn



Dewa Sanzan, sacred mountains where the faith of death and rebirth lives on



Snow Monsters, known as Juhyo, a winter spectacle created by rare weather conditions

winter scenery of snow-covered rocks and halls.

Read the National Geographic's feat 'The best places in the world to travel to in 2026' feature here:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/best-of-the-world-2026>

Read the Yamagata Prefecture article here:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/best-of-the-world-2026/article/yamagata-japan>

Special Project:

A three-day Yamagata spiritual renewal journey visiting National Geographic-selected destinations (limited to one group per day)

This fully private tour focuses on Yamagata's unique spirituality and tranquility, which led to its selection by National Geographic. A dedicated concierge driver with deep knowledge of local history and culture provides guidance, taking guests to hidden locations not found in guidebooks.

Accommodation includes a two-night stay at Ginzan Onsen, preserving the ambiance of the Taisho era from 100 years ago. Guests can enjoy the quiet charm of early mornings without tourists and the magical atmosphere of the town illuminated by gas lamps at night.

Blessed with both mountain and sea, Yamagata is also a renowned culinary destination.

Carefully selected local specialties such as soba, seafood, and Yamagata beef are served. Guests can also fully enjoy the open-air hot spring baths with scenic views.

Risshaku-ji Temple, colloquially known as Yamadera, and Mount Haguro, where prayers have been offered for over 1,000 years, continue to attract profound reverence as sacred sites of rebirth.

Yamagata's deep forests, pure waters, and enduring samurai spirit offer a place for renewal. In 2026, this globally recognized destination provides a profound experience of spiritual rebirth.

Tour details available here:

https://www.ginzanso.jp/english/?utm_source=E-mail+Magazine&utm_medium=Other

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