



— Samurai Story —

Kanazawa, Tokyo, Yamagata





A deep dive into the culture and ways of samurai



The samurai spirit lives on

Cultivate your mind, body, and spirit as you experience firsthand how the samurai arts and traditions live on in the present day.

From JPY **1,100,000***

Per person for a group of 2

*Accommodations, meals, and drinks not included.
Tour price varies based on number of participants.

Tour points

1) Personalized experiences led by masters

Guests receive private introductory training in samurai arts from descendants of samurai families and other skilled masters.

2) English-speaking guides knowledgeable in martial arts

Guests are accompanied throughout their journey by a guide knowledgeable in martial arts to provide interpretation and other assistance.

3) Private and custom

The itineraries presented here are suggested examples; the listed activities may not be available on certain dates due to pre-existing bookings or other circumstances. The package is customizable; we highly recommend booking at your earliest convenience.

Contents

P.4 Kanazawa Highlights

Martial arts

P.6 Kanazawa Cultural Arts

Kanazawa-leg cultural highlights and an example itinerary

P.10 Tokyo Highlights

Tokyo-leg highlights and an example itinerary

P.12 Yamagata Highlights

Yamagata-leg highlights and an example itinerary

1		4
		5
2	3	

1. Sumo wrestlers ready for a match
2. Samurai armor on display in Kanazawa
3. Kendo practice at a private dojo in Kanazawa
4. The tile rooftops of Kanazawa Castle
5. A maiko at a geisha house in Yamagata

Kanazawa Highlights

Kanazawa was once the seat of the powerful Maeda clan. Get a sense for what samurai life was like in its heyday with hands-on experiences and visits to beautifully preserved historical districts.



Kendo

Kendo is a martial art born out of samurai duels in which opponents attempt to strike one another with bamboo swords. Learn the fundamentals under the guidance of an experienced master at his private dojo, then participate in a friendly match against one another.



Kyudo

Kyudo is a martial art derived from samurai archery, requiring precision and a steady hand. Learn the fundamentals under the guidance of an experienced master, then shoot arrows at targets placed across a field at the official kyudo training grounds of Kanazawa.



A stroll to take in the historical atmosphere of Nagamachi, a neighborhood where Maeda clan samurai once resided.

3-day, 2-night plan

Day 1

10:00 A.M.

Visit a samurai district

A guided walking tour of Nagamachi, a historical preservation district of samurai residences.

1:00 P.M.

Kenrokuen Garden

This spacious and refined garden of the Maeda clan is counted among the Three Gardens of Japan.

2:30 P.M.

Kyudo experience

An introduction to Japanese archery, culminating in target practice with real arrows.

Day 2

9:00 A.M.

Kendo experience

An introduction to kendo swordsmanship, culminating in a friendly duel between student and teacher.

12:00 P.M.

See samurai swords

Meet the descendant of a samurai family for a private showing of his family's swords.

2:00 P.M.

Stroll a samurai-era entertainment district

Higashi Chaya is one of the best-preserved samurai-era entertainment districts in Japan.

Day 3

9:00 A.M.

Zen museum visit

The D.T. Suzuki Museum, dedicated to the philosopher who popularized Zen in the West.

10:30 A.M.

Tea ceremony experience

Learn tea ceremony etiquette and how to whisk a proper cup of matcha.

1:30 P.M.

Bullet train ride to Tokyo

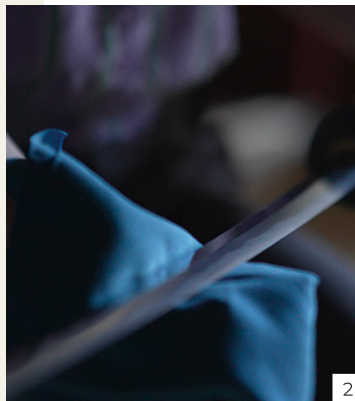
Travel through scenic Japanese countryside and into the heart of the metropolis.

Kanazawa

Cultural Arts



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1. Crossing a stone bridge at Kenrokuen Garden
2. A sword once belonging to a Kanazawa samurai
3. Handling swords from the Shijimaya private collection
4. Tea ceremony at Gyokusen-en teahouse
5. A properly whisked bowl of matcha
6. Evening in the Higashi Chaya district

The peace of the Edo period allowed cultural arts to flourish amongst the samurai class. The ruling shogun kept a watchful eye on rival clans like the Maeda, and excessive time devoted to martial arts was viewed with mistrust. To avoid arousing suspicion, samurai of this period turned to cultural pursuits like tea ceremony and horticulture.

Do



Martial and cultural arts

Hands-on experiences in the same arts practiced by the samurai, both martial and cultural, under the guidance of experienced masters. Invigorate with private introductory experiences in kendo swordsmanship and kyudo archery. Unwind while enjoying cultural arts like tea ceremony and kaga yuzen textiles.

See



Traditional Japanese neighborhoods

Visit historical neighborhoods that feel as if you've stepped back in time to the golden age of samurai. Stroll Nagamachi, a former samurai residential district. Play in Higashi Chaya, a well-preserved entertainment district historically frequented for both pleasure and discreet political liaisons.

Eat



© Kanazawa City

Seafood

Savor the bounty of seafood caught from the ocean just off the coast here, where the mingling of ocean currents nurtures a rich variety of sea life. Fresh sushi is of course a mainstay of modern Kanazawa cuisine, while fermented varieties like kabura-zushi offer visitors a taste of history.

Stay



Our recommendation: Hyatt Centric Kanazawa

An upscale hotel featuring regionally inspired design and ultra-convenient access to Kanazawa Station.



Kanazawa Add-ons

Aikido, a weaponless martial art

Along with judo and kendo, aikido is a martial art representative of modern budo. Often called “Zen in motion” or “the Way of Harmonious Spirit,” aikido does not involve competing against others to determine inferiority or superiority. Rather, the goal of aikido is to subdue one’s opponent without fighting, a challenging physical and spiritual feat accomplished through intensive training of mind and body.



Zen temples and meditation

Experience Zen at temples in Kanazawa. At samurai temple Josho-ji, practices like soburi Zen, the swinging of a sword hundreds of times as a form of moving meditation, continue to this day. Hoen-ji Temple is known for its beautiful garden. Under the guidance of a monk, perform a purification ritual and zazen seated meditation. Afterwards, be invigorated with a cup of matcha tea and wagashi sweets.



Kodo, the Way of Fragrance

Kodo is the art of incense appreciation. A practice favored by samurai, it is counted among the three classical Japanese arts of refinement along with tea ceremony and ikebana flower arrangement. Enjoy the fragrance of precious aromatic woods and chant sutras at a temple. Immersed in this atmosphere, senses sharpen and the allure of the invisible becomes palpable.



Ryotei fine dining and geisha entertainment

Dine in historical surroundings on traditional Kaga kaiseki cuisine at Kinjohro, a ryotei founded in 1890. Historically, ryotei were invitation-only restaurants where politicians and merchants would entertain guests—business and pleasure intertwined. Nowadays, guests can continue to enjoy the same high-class atmosphere and cuisine as these important figures of yore. Genuine geisha, known as “geigi” in Kanazawa, will charm guests with their refined hospitality and performances.



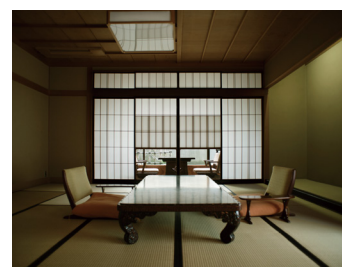
Noh theater

Noh is the oldest extant form of theater in the world. Experience the inner workings of this ancient performing art firsthand. On a Noh stage, under the guidance of a Noh performer, try playing traditional musical instruments associated with Noh and learn shimai, a type of Noh dance.



Our recommendation: Ryokan Asadaya

Established in 1867, Asadaya is considered the most luxurious ryokan in Kanazawa. Guest room interiors are crafted from the finest Japanese materials, from Akita cedar to Wajima lacquerware, exuding a refined and tranquil atmosphere where guests can truly relax. Asadaya is also renowned for its culinary excellence, serving world-class ingredients sourced locally, prepared into Japanese delicacies befitting of the season.



Tokyo Highlights

The shogun made Tokyo, then known as Edo, his seat of power in 1603. During the peaceful period which followed, samurai influence reached an apex and cultural sophistication soared to new heights.

2-night, 1-day plan

Day 4

9:00 A.M.

Watch a sumo training

Visit a sumo stable and be awed by the intense training of professional sumo wrestlers.

10:30 A.M.

Breakfast with sumo wrestlers

After their morning training, join the wrestlers and their coach for a breakfast of chanko nabe.

12:00 P.M.

Tour historical Tokyo

Explore samurai-era culture in Tokyo via a guided walking tour through Ryogoku, the sumo capital of Japan.



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Travel agency contact information



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🌐 <https://www.gltjp.com/en/>



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1. Cruising the Sumida River, with views of Tokyo Skytree
2. Handmade traditional wagashi sweets in Sumida
3. Enthralled guests watch as sumo wrestlers train
4. A practice bout between sumo wrestlers
5. "Sumida" written in bold sumo script on a paper lantern
6. A guest feels the handprint of a renowned sumo wrestler

Revel in the contrast between modern-day Tokyo and historical Edo. Feel the raw power of sumo up close and personal and come to understand its connection to samurai while visiting Ryogoku, the sumo capital of Japan. Spend the evening luxuriating in one of Tokyo's finest hotels.

Do



Meet sumo wrestlers

Gain exclusive access to a sumo stable to watch a morning practice. Be astounded at not only the might, but also the grace and speed with which these heavy-weight wrestlers move. Casual restaurant meals featuring sumo shows by former competitive sumo wrestlers are also available.

See



The sumo capital of Japan

Enjoy a private guided tour of sumo and samurai-related spots in and around Ryogoku, the sumo capital of Japan, to learn about the connection between sumo and samurai. Visit Ryogoku Kokugikan National Sumo Arena, a sumo temple, Tokyo's best sword museum, a traditional lantern maker's workshop, and more.

Eat



Chanko nabe

A high-protein hotpot made with fresh vegetables and a variety of meats, chanko nabe is the breakfast staple of professional sumo wrestlers. Each stable has their own recipe; many are so delicious that retired sumo wrestlers often open restaurants where they serve their signature dish to the public.

Stay



Our recommendation: Janu Tokyo

Opened in March 2024, Janu Tokyo is located in Azabudai Hills—one of the city's most exciting new complexes. With 122 light-filled rooms and suites, 8 restaurants and bars for dining and socializing, and an expansive wellness center that houses one of the city's largest gyms, there is much to explore within the hotel walls. Located in the Toranomon district, just steps away from Roppongi.

Yamagata Highlights

Witness how the samurai spirit has transformed over time. In Tsuruoka, learn how these former warriors reintegrated into society through silk and agriculture after the samurai class was abolished. In Murayama, meet a charismatic swordmaster who embodies the modern samurai spirit for an in-depth training.



1

4-day, 3-night plan

Day 5

9:00 A.M.

Fly to Yamagata

Reach the Shonai region of northern Yamagata swiftly via a 1-hour flight from Tokyo.

11:00 A.M.

Tsuruoka, UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy

Eat your way around Tsuruoka, a city known for its sake, heirloom vegetables, and more.

3:00 P.M.

Pilgrim's lodge experience

Stay overnight at a yamabushi mountain monk pilgrim's lodge at the base of holy Mt. Haguro.

Day 6

7:00 A.M.

Mountain monk breakfast and prayer ritual

Participate in a Shugendo prayer ritual and enjoy a breakfast of mountain monk cuisine.

9:00 A.M.

Mountain monk experience

Accompanied by a real yamabushi mountain monk, climb the 2,446 stone stairs to reach the shrine at the peak of Mt. Haguro.

2:00 P.M.

Zen meditation

Calm and focus the spirit with a zazen meditation session led by monks at Zenpoji Temple.

Day 7

9:00 A.M.

Chido Museum

A museum founded by a descendant of the samurai clan who once ruled the area. Exhibits include katana and historical buildings designated National Important Cultural Properties.

12:00 P.M.

Samurai Silk

Visit Matsugaoka, where samurai founded silk cultivation and started a new life for themselves after the fall of the shogunate.

3:00 P.M.

Overnight stay at Suiden Terrasse

A hot spring hotel with architecture by Ban Shigeru, set in the midst of rice paddies.

Day 8

10:00 A.M.

Iai Shrine

The birthplace of iaido swordsmanship, founded when a samurai undergoing ascetic training here was bestowed a vision.

11:00 A.M.

In-depth samurai sword training

A 5-hour intensive introductory training session, culminating in cutting through tatami with a real katana.

5:00 P.M.

Return to Tokyo

Travel back to Tokyo via the Yamagata Shinkansen bullet train.



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1. Yoshihiro Abe, founder of the Abe-ha Itto-ryu style
2. A rack of swords at the dojo of Iai Shrine
3. Ready for a test cutting, a guest wields a real sword

Murayama, Yamagata is known as the birthplace of iaido swordsmanship. Here, meet a charismatic master who embodies the modern samurai spirit for an in-depth training covering both traditional iaido as well as a modern battojutsu. At the end of training, wield a real katana to slice through rolled tatami.

Do



A hero's journey

Visit spiritual sites that soothe the soul and sharpen the mind: meditate at a Zen temple; hike an ancient pilgrimage path with a mountain monk. Then, rise to the challenge of a 5-hour samurai swordsmanship training, culminating in tameshigiri test cutting—slicing through rolled tatami with a real katana.

See



Geisha and Samurai Silk

Indulge in fine silk and fine entertainment. Visit a geisha house to meet maiko and watch them dance, much as wealthy samurai-era merchants did. Visit Matsugaoka, a silk making area founded by samurai in the 1800s, to shop for some of the finest silk in Japan—dubbed Samurai Silk in honor of its origins.

Eat



Yamagata Italian

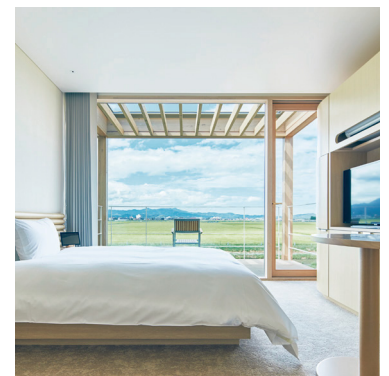
Savor Italian cuisine made with Yamagata wagyu beef and heirloom vegetables unique to Tsuruoka, Japan's first UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Tsuruoka is home to over 60 varieties of heirloom vegetables, passed down over centuries through careful cultivation and seed selection by local farmers.

Stay



Our recommendation: Suiden Terrasse

A modern hot spring hotel set in the midst of rice paddies. Architect Ban Shigeru's signature aesthetic, set off against the bucolic surroundings, is a sight to behold.



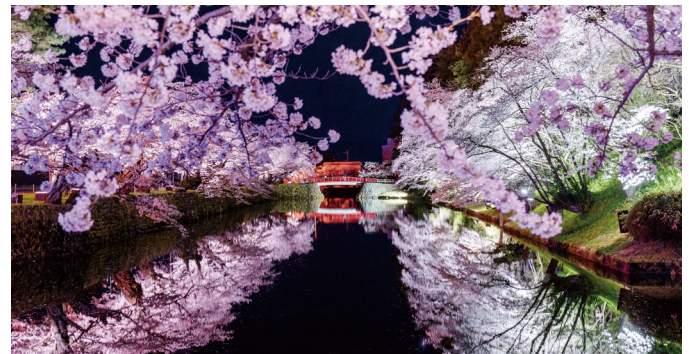
Yamagata Add-ons

Yonezawa, Yamagata

A castle town with a rich history, Yonezawa has many sights to see and places to explore. Abundant in nature, visitors can get away from the big city and experience a more laid-back and relaxing side of Japan.

Uesugi Shrine

The spirit of Kenshin Uesugi, the strongest samurai commander of the Warring States period, is enshrined at Uesugi Shrine. Nearby, Matsugasaki Shrine houses the spirit of Yozan Uesugi—the samurai whom American president John F. Kennedy greatly admired. The surrounding park is a famous cherry blossom spot.



Uesugi Hakushakutei dining

Uesugi Hakushakutei was once the residence of Mochinori Uesugi, head of the Uesugi clan. Now designated a national Important Cultural Property, part of the estate has been converted into a restaurant where visitors can enjoy traditional Yamagata cuisine.



Taiko drumming with Minyo Ikka

Samurai relied upon the beating of taiko drums during military campaigns to cue fighting maneuvers. Even today, taiko drums are an indispensable feature of sporting events in Japan. Be captivated by the powerful rhythms and dynamic movements of taiko with a private performance by professional taiko troupe Minyo Ikka. After the performance, audience members are invited to try beating on the enormous Uesugi Taiko drum.



Shodo Japanese calligraphy

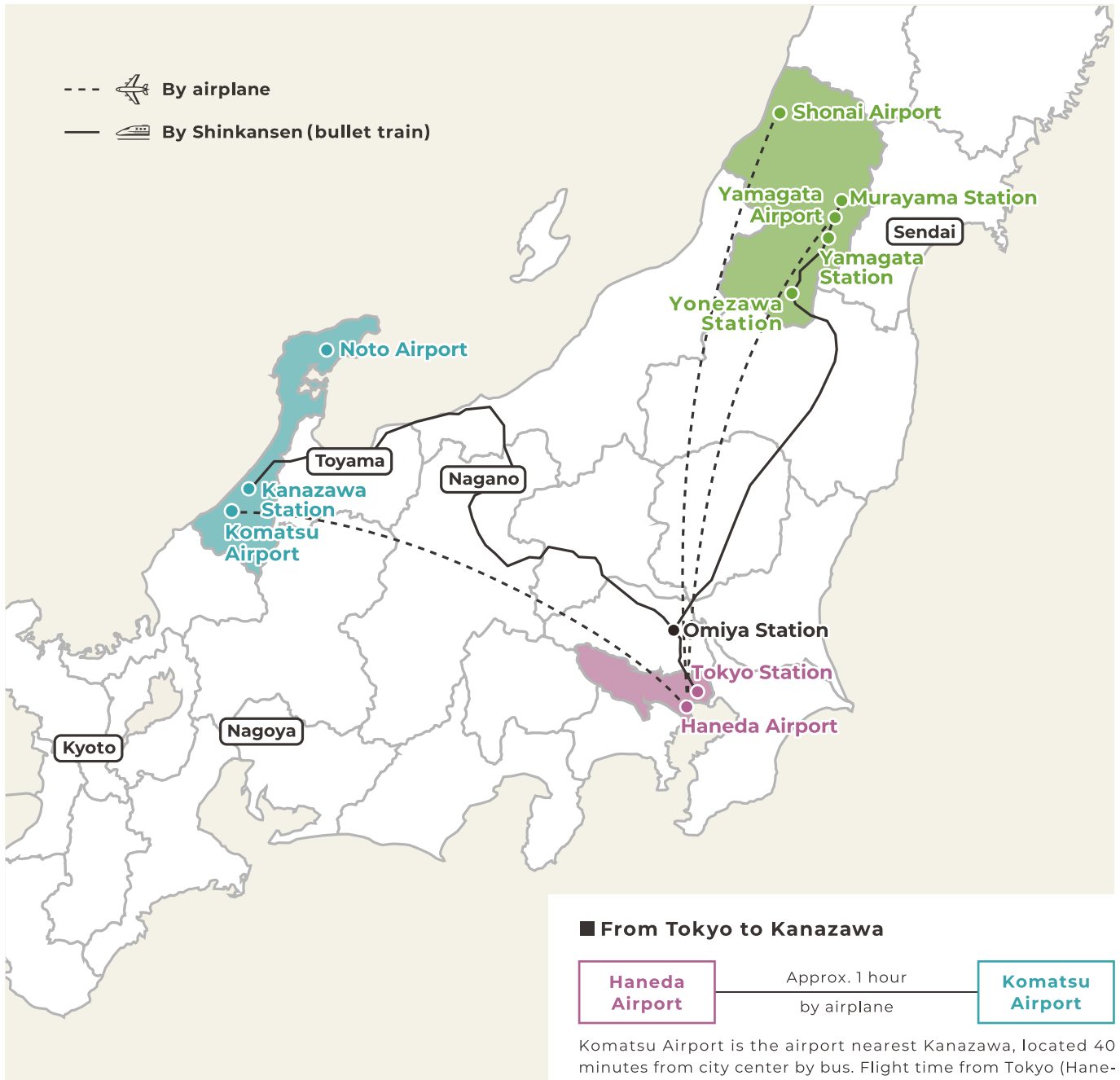
Shodo Japanese calligraphy masterpieces are some of the most admired artworks in Japan. Performed simply with ink and brush, watching a performance by a shodo master as they compose a new work is valued as a deeply cultural occasion. Watch a Japanese calligraphy performance by a shodo master, then learn the fundamentals of the art under their guidance. After mastering rudimentary brush strokes, select kanji with deep personal relevance and learn to write them in elegant shodo script.



Our recommendation: Yamagata the Takinami ryokan

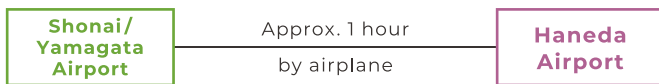
Stay overnight at Yamagata the Takinami in the hot spring town of Akayu Onsen. Boasting over 900 years of history, legend has it that Akayu Onsen was discovered when wounded samurai came here to bathe and found their wounds miraculously healed the moment they entered the water. Yamagata the Takinami is the finest ryokan in Akayu Onsen. Housed in historical Japanese buildings, the interior has been renovated in an elegant fusion of traditional and contemporary design, showcasing furnishings by Japanese and European designers.



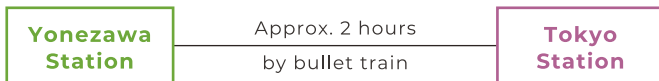
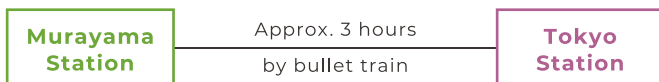


Access info

■ From Yamagata to Tokyo

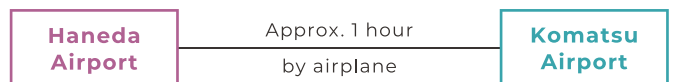


Yamagata Prefecture is home to 2 airports, Yamagata Airport and Shonai Airport. Flight time to Haneda from either is about 1 hour.

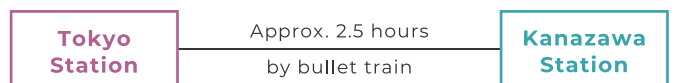


The Yamagata Shinkansen bullet train line runs the length of Yamagata Prefecture. Murayama, the bullet train station closest to Iai Shrine, is about 3 hours from Tokyo. Yonezawa, the bullet train station serving Yonezawa City, is about 2 hours from Tokyo.

■ From Tokyo to Kanazawa

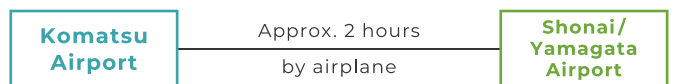


Komatsu Airport is the airport nearest Kanazawa, located 40 minutes from city center by bus. Flight time from Tokyo (Haneda) to Komatsu is about 1 hour.

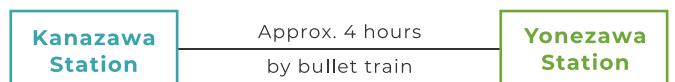


The Hokuriku Shinkansen bullet train line provides access to Kanazawa. Kanazawa Station, located in the heart of the city, can be reached in about 2.5 hours from central Tokyo.

■ From Kanazawa to Yamagata



To access Yamagata Prefecture by plane from Kanazawa, fly from Komatsu Airport to Haneda Airport, then from Haneda to Shonai or Yamagata Airport. Total flight time is about 2 hours.



Yamagata Prefecture is about 4 hours from Kanazawa by bullet train, with one transfer at Omiya Station.