Walking Japan's Michinoku Coastal Trail

Trip Code: SGJT

Version:

PIONEER	SELF-GUIDED	4 MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Off-the-beaten-track hiking in a truly special part of Japan, where a warm welcome awaits
- Admire the contrasts between stunning coastlines and forested mountains on seldom-trekked trails
- Witness the resilience of the region and its people at poignant tsunami memorials
- Enjoy a free day in beautiful Jodogahama on the Sanriku Coast
- Dine daily on the freshest, most sumptuous seafood and experience the specialties of Tohoku on your

AT A GLANCE

- 8 days walking
- Daily departures
- Suitable for 2+ travellers
- Join at Hachinohe / End in Kesennuma

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

Positioned at the northern frontier of Japan's main island, the region of Tohoku boasts of untamed natural environments, incredible local food and rural customs unique to the Japanese countryside. Visitors to this remote part of Japan will feel like they have stepped back in time, to an authentic and slower way of life where traditions abound, far removed from the buzz of big cities like Tokyo and Osaka.

Stretching for more than 1,000km along the north-eastern coast of Honshu, the Michinoku Coastal Trail was created to aid in the recovery of the Tohoku region after the devastation caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami of 11 March 2011. Linking remote fishing villages and pristine natural parks, many of which are inaccessible by car, this long-distance trail enables hikers to enjoy the ever-changing scenery of dramatic coastlines, densely forested mountains and sleepy villages, and peel back the layers to witness the spirit of the community and their deep connection with the sea.

Your hike begins in Hachinohe, the gateway to the Michinoku Coastal Trail, where the majority of travellers visit to walk the most scenic northern sections of the route. On this unique self-guided itinerary, you will delve deeper than most as you will also walk the lesser-trodden central rias to Kesennuma, where relics of the tsunami remain as silent testament to the natural disaster that so affected the region. The first half of the trip gives you the opportunity to learn more of the history and the stories of the area; with this poignant insight grounding you, you can approach the latter half of your time in Tohoku with a better understanding of how the people of the region coexist with nature. By walking on this pioneering route, your visit directly supports local communities and small businesses, contributing to ongoing recovery while experiencing one of Japan's most meaningful and inspiring long-distance trails.

Is this holiday for you?

If you are an experienced hiker and a seafood lover who is looking for an off-the-beaten-path experience in Japan, this self-guided holiday might be right up your street.

The Michinoku Trail is suitable for travellers who are accustomed to adventure and who need less support. Being in a remote part of Japan that does not see many visitors, you should be confident in route finding and independent navigation. There are route markings in the form of ribbons and post markers, but not all areas are well-signposted, and in heavily forested areas (particularly along the southern half of the route) the trail markers can be more difficult to spot when the foliage is thick. As the

landscape changes with the seasons, you will need to pay attention to your route finding, on paths that are not always clear.

Underfoot terrain on this trip is varied; you can expect to walk on paved roads, across soft sand or cobblestone beaches, on undulating paths with many steps, through wild forest trails with rough or loose ground, and clamber over rocks and driftwood along the rugged coast. There are narrow paths with sheer drops that can be difficult for those who struggle with heights. There is little option for shortening or skipping the walks.

For safety considerations on the more remote trails, this trip is suitable for groups of 2 or more travellers. There are no real opportunities for sea swimming on this tour as the waters are often treacherous.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Self-guided information pack containing your map and route notes
- Luggage transfers
- Train and organised taxi transfers required as described in the itinerary
- A Suica/ICOCA card pre-paid to cover the bus journeys required in the itinerary
- GPX tracks available

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Travel to Hachinohe
- Travel from Kesennuma
- Visas (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Entrance fees to museums, temples etc
- Personal equipment
- Any additional travel/activities/excursions indicated as optional

Your Self-Guided Pack & Route Notes

This self-guided holiday comes with comprehensive route notes and hiking maps. The route notes and travel guides supplied will contain all the details for your trip, including the daily walk descriptions and insights, along with useful tips and advice.

You will receive digital documents to peruse prior to departure, along with the GPX tracks of your routes. There is no need to print the documents before you travel. On arrival at your first hotel in Hachinohe, you will receive your self-guided travel pack containing a hard copy of your travel documents, together with your rail tickets and travel passes. This ensures that you have documents that contain the most up-to-date details about your tour, in case of any late-notice revisions.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The trip starts in Hachinohe and ends in Kesennuma. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. The nearest airport for this trip is Aomori Airport, with domestic connections to many airports in Japan. If you are making this trip part of a bigger adventure in Japan, you can also fly to any major city and make use of the famously efficient Japanese rail transport system.

If you are flying in to Aomori Airport, you can take a taxi to Shin-Aomori station, from where you can take the Shinkansen bullet train to Hachinohe Station (approx. 25 minutes journey time) and make one change for Hon-Hachinohe (approx. 10 minutes journey time).

If you are travelling from Tokyo, you can take the Tohoku Shinkansen bullet train to Hachinohe Station (journey time approximately 2 hours 45 minutes), where you can change for Hon-Hachinohe.

At the end of your trip in Kesennuma, you can take the train to Ichinoseki Station (approx. 1 hour 20 minutes), from where you can pick up the Shinkansen train back to Tokyo (journey time around 1 hour 40 minutes) and beyond, or northward back to Shin-Aomori (approx. 1 hour 20 minutes) for Aomori Airport.

Meal Plan

This holiday is arranged on a bed & breakfast basis. You also have your evening meals included for 6 nights of your itinerary.

You can stock up on some lunch supplies from shops before you set off for the day, occasionally there are also shops or restaurants along the way. Sometimes your accommodation hosts can supply a small bento box as a light lunch. Your personal day-to-day itinerary will contain more information about the options available each day.

Food & Water

Water from the taps is perfectly drinkable on this holiday - please use this to fill your personal bottles for your daily activities. We do not encourage the purchase of single-use plastic bottles.

Along the Michinoku Trail, seafood features heavily in all meals due to the traditions and culture of this coastal region. Here, the rugged terrain does not lend itself to agriculture, so the ocean provides the main food source and local cuisine is heavily reliant on the industry of fishing. You might like to sample the regional specialties such as scallops, sea urchin (*uni*), and sea squirts (*hoya*) which have an unusual look and taste – caught from the Sanriku coast, these are considered blessings from the sea.

A popular local dish in Hachinohe is *senbei-jiru*, a warming hotpot of fish or chicken and pieces of locally-made wheat crackers known as *Nanbu senbei*, which softens to a moreish chewy texture in the flavoursome broth.

Each region of Japan has its own specialty noodles; in Morioka in the Iwate Prefecture, the most famous are *reimen*, a cold dish of potato starch noodles topped with kimchi; *jajamen*, a dish of flat udon noodles with an array of toppings; and *wanko soba*, a fun all-you-can-eat dining experience featuring small lacquer dishes of soba noodles that are rapidly replenished by servers, with lots of encouragement to continue until you admit defeat! The name of this quirky custom comes from the wooden bowls in which the bite-sized portions of soba noodles are served.

Included meals at ryokan and minshuku are traditional multi-course Japanese home cooking, with an emphasis on utilising fresh and local ingredients. These meals typically include the freshest sashimi, seafood dishes, local vegetables, hot pot, soup, rice and pickles. Food is always locally sourced, in keeping with the unwritten “9km rule” in Japan.

If you are vegetarian, please be advised that, outside the cities, vegetarianism is not a concept that is widely understood. Whilst vegetarian options are available they are limited, and it is difficult to guarantee that ‘vegetarian’ dishes are 100% vegetarian as most Japanese dishes contain dashi, which typically contains fish. Strict vegetarian diets, vegan diets, and or gluten free diets will be difficult to accommodate in Japan. It will not be possible to avoid fish and seafood on this trip so you should be prepared for this.

If you have any special dietary requirements or allergies, please discuss these with our Sales & Support Team and ensure that these are relayed at the time of booking, in order that we can endeavour to book locations that may be more set up to cater for special requests.

Accommodation

On this trip, you will stay in a mixture of hotels and traditional Japanese inns (known as ryokan or minshuku), all giving a true reflection of the customs in this region of lesser-trodden Japan. The day-by-day itinerary gives an indication of the type of accommodation typically used each night, however please note that accommodations can be subject to change depending on availability.

All accommodations are on a twin or double sharing basis. Single rooms are available at a supplementary cost. All locations offer WiFi connectivity.

While in larger towns and cities, you will usually stay in modern Japanese hotels with all the expected amenities including en-suite facilities, air conditioning, TV and fridge. Breakfasts are buffet-style with Japanese and international cuisines, and there is usually a bar and restaurant available at the hotel. Space is often at a premium so rooms are generally compact and cosy. As double rooms tend to be smaller than twin rooms, we usually book twin rooms by default. Double rooms are subject to availability.

At the smaller towns and villages along the trail, you will experience the traditional hospitality of family-run ryokan and minshuku.

When you stay at ryokan, you will have private rooms with traditional tatami (straw) mat floors, on which a futon mattress will be laid out in the evening for sleeping. Many ryokan have en-suite facilities, as well as access to gender-segregated communal baths. Some older buildings may only have shared facilities. In the evenings, you and your fellow guests can enjoy your *kaiseki*-style meal in the dining room; these are multi-course set menus, prepared with pride by your hosts and typically using fresh local ingredients and featuring the specialties of the region. Japanese breakfasts also follow a similar theme.

Minshuku are usually older wooden buildings; these inns have private tatami rooms with futons, and shared facilities. These are more akin to being a guest in a Japanese home, and are a slightly less formal experience than ryokan. You might expect to take your meals (also multi-course *kaiseki*-style) with your hosts who will be delighted to share their lovingly prepared home cooking with you, as well as exchange of stories and experiences.

We can assist with arranging extra nights pre-tour in Hachinohe and/or post-tour in Kesennuma if you would like to extend your stay in the region. Rates are dependent on availability and will be on request - please contact our sales team to request a quote.

Japan is a cash society, particularly outside of cities and large towns, so having a supply of cash in Japanese Yen would be a good idea.

When it comes to tattoos, it is important to note that attitudes can vary significantly among different accommodations. If you have any tattoos, you should be respectful and cover these when using onsen or communal baths.

Additional Information

Black bears can be found in the more remote areas of Honshu, including in the northern Tohoku region. While hiking in this area, seeing signs of bears (spoor) is a possibility, although seeing a bear itself is uncommon. As a precaution, a bear bell is supplied on this trip, along with more details and guidance that can be found in your walking guide.

Baggage Allowance

Your main luggage will be transferred between each of your accommodations while you are out on your hike. We ask that your luggage is limited to one piece per person, and that the weight is kept under 20kg. For ease of getting around, we recommend that you keep your luggage manageable and of a size that can easily fit into the luggage racks or overhead storage areas on trains.

Please ensure that your luggage is ready for collection each morning. You will also need a daypack to carry your daily essentials such as waterproofs, etc with you.

For international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required**,** and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa Japan

UK and USA passport holders do not require a visa for short stays.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The unit of currency in Japan is the Japanese Yen.

Preparing for your Holiday

The advantage of a self-guided walking holiday is that you decide the pace however, getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable your walks will be. You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking up to 5 hours a day for consecutive days in hilly and mountainous terrain.

Climate

Japan has a temperate climate, in that it has four distinct seasons. However, a variety of influences, including the Siberian air stream and various Pacific Ocean currents, give the country a complex climatic pattern.

This walking trip is available from mid-April to October. The rainy season that begins in June on the mainland does not arrive to the northern region of Tohoku until August, making June a great time to travel to this area.

As the region enters the spring season, April can still feel cool (average highs around 12 degrees centigrade) and there could be a small risk of late snow at this time of year. As we enter May and June, the temperature warms up to a pleasant daytime average of around 17 degrees centigrade; while in the summer months, temperatures can feel hot - as high as the low 30s - but it will be cooler at higher elevations. It starts to cool off again from September to October with average temperatures around 18-20 degrees centigrade.

Precipitation can occur at any time of the year and you should always be prepared for all eventualities.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's **'Travel Aware'** campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

Ghosts of the Tsunami - Richard Lloyd Parry

One Month in Tohoku - Caroline Pover

Etiquette Guide to Japan - Boye Lafayette De Mente / Geoff Botting

Abroad in Japan - Chris Broad

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our Travel Insurance page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Self Guided Equipment List

- Hiking boots with good-grip soles
- Hiking socks
- Long / short hiking trousers
- Functional base layer top and leggings
- T-shirts
- Fleece / extra warm layer
- Windproof jacket
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers

- Hat, gloves, and neck gaiter
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Sunhat
- Small first aid kit inside your rucksack
- Water bottle or hydration pack
- Mobile Phone (ensure your data package covers your destination)
- Power bank
- Waterproof phone cover
- Camera (and batteries / memory card)
- Reusable sealable picnic boxes for picnics
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Walking poles
- Headtorch with spare batteries
- Personal wash kit
- Your self-guided route notes
- Rucksack (approx. 20L)

Land Only Information

Please note our 'from price' listed is based on 4 persons on twin or double occupancy, however we can quote for groups of 2 or more travellers, contact our sales team for a quote.

When considering your travel dates, you might like to investigate any seasonal opening times of attractions and points of interest.

All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. You may even wish to make this holiday part of a bigger adventure or pair it with one of our other holidays. We can arrange additional nights accommodation before or after your self-guided trip, just speak with our sales team to find out more.

Please DO NOT book your flights before you have received your booking confirmation and your deposit has been taken.

Our Sales Team will also be happy to provide you a quote for scheduled flights from your nearest regional airport (where possible). Flight prices are subject to change depending on availability and seasonality. Flight prices will only be confirmed to you when all services have been arranged and confirmed for your requested dates.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

On this exclusive to KE itinerary, not only will you experience the beauty of Tohoku's Pacific Coast, you will also have the opportunity to gain a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the community and the way of life here, as the people live with an intrinsic respect for nature and her power.Working with our partner in Japan, we have included special moments and connections on this trip, where you can enjoy interactions with the local community and perhaps sample a little treat unique to the area.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 23/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change