
Vonuma City Travel Guide





Uonuma City – A Rice-Growing Region Just 90 Minutes from Tokyo

Uonuma City is the production area of “Uonuma-grown Koshihikari,” Japan’s most famous rice. It is also a region blessed with a harsh yet beautiful natural environment, blanketed in deep snow for nearly half the year.

In spring, the melting snow provides precious “snowmelt water” that nourishes Uonuma-grown Koshihikari rice, as well as all life and the land itself.

Great water, great sake, great hot springs.
And cuisine nurtured by the wisdom of snow country and pristine snowmelt water.

Welcome to Uonuma City.

Uonuma Water Corridor

Period: Early June to mid-October

A 3-day, 2-night private guided tour
tracing the waterways of Uonuma City, the Gentle Land of Water

Day **1**: Discover the blessings of groundwater
from the Echigo Sanzan Mountains

Alluvial fan fieldwork, local cuisine experience,
visit to a rice malt (koji) factory, and more

Day **2**: Trace the headwaters of the Okutadami Dam
— Lake Oze-numa

Okutadami Lake cruise, Oze trekking, and more

Day **3**: Learn about the benefits brought by the Okutadami Lake (Dam)

Visit the Electric Power Museum, join a special inside tour of
the Okutadami Dam, and more





Uonuma City is one of the snowiest regions in Japan

In some areas, snow piles up as high as three to four meters, and life in winter is a constant battle against the snow. Even so, the people who live amid this heavy snowfall are gentle, resilient, and warm-hearted.

“Shiga”

MAP-1

“Shiga” is a natural phenomenon that occurs on clear mornings from winter to spring, when beautiful ice flowers bloom on the trees. While it is generally known as frozen mist or rime ice, in Uonuma it is called “Shiga.” It is a familiar sight of early spring.



Map



There are four ski resorts within Uonuma City.

Okutadami Maruyama Ski Resort [MAP-2](#) / Koide Ski Area [MAP-3](#)
Suhara Ski Resort [MAP-4](#) / Yakushi Ski Resort [MAP-5](#)



Web



With the Okutadami Dam in the background (Okutadami Maruyama Ski Resort)



Recommended Winter Activities

Additionally, you can enjoy snowball fights, making snow figures(snowmen), tubing, snowmobiling, and more.



Web



Snowshoe Experience



Sledding



Yakushi Ski Resort – Weekday Private Rental Available

MAP-5

Since it is a compact ski resort, it can be reserved exclusively on weekdays!



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Uonuma International Snowball Fight

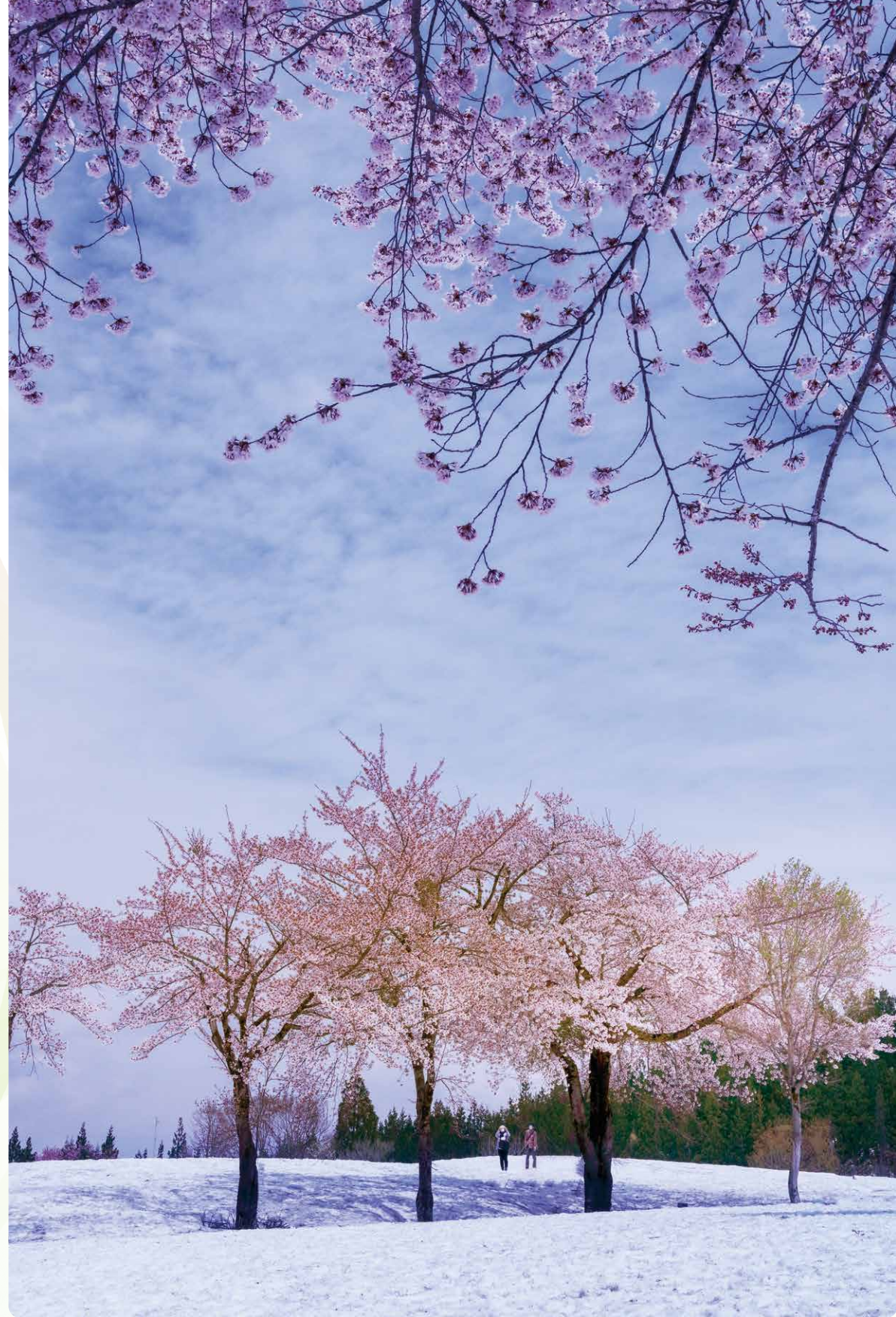
A winter event said to be the birthplace of “Yukigassen,” a snowball fight game, where teams make snowballs and toss them at each other.

In this tournament, not only wins and losses but also costumes and performances are judged, so cheers and laughter echo across the courts. It's an event that is fun not only to join but also just to watch.

Period: Early February every year



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MAP-6

Snow-Top Cherry Blossoms of Fukuyama Pass

As the name suggests, “snow-top cherry blossoms” are cherry trees that bloom on the snow. Even in snowy regions, the snow has usually melted by the time cherry blossoms bloom. However, in Fukuyama Pass in Uonuma City — where snowfall is especially deep — snow still remains during the cherry blossom season, allowing you to enjoy the rare sight of snow and cherry blossoms together.

Period: Mid- to late April every year



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Map



Snow Drifts (Yukinagare) MAP-7

“Yukinagare” is a natural phenomenon that can be seen at the Aburumagawa Dam and lasts for only about two weeks. Large masses of snow float on the dam lake, creating a scene that resembles drifting ice.



Web



Map



Uonuma Shibazakura Festival MAP-8

At the prefectural park “Negoya – Village of Flowers, Greenery, and Snow,” vibrant pink, red, and white *shibazakura* (mossphlox) bloom across the grounds like a colorful carpet. The park features about 200,000 *shibazakura* plants spread over roughly one hectare, and in busy years it attracts more than 30,000 visitors.



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Map

Period: Early to mid-May every year



Spring Skiing MAP-2

At the remote Okutadami Maruyama Ski Resort, you can enjoy skiing until early May. Skiing amid the fresh green of spring is an experience unique to this location.

Period: Late March to early May



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Rice Planting Experience

Step into the soft, muddy paddies where the rice will grow and plant young rice seedlings by hand.

Period: May



Warabi (Bracken) Foraging Experience

Surrounded by mountains, Uonuma City is a treasure trove of wild edible plants. This experience lets you pick “warabi,” one of the easiest wild greens to harvest.

Period: May to June



SUMMER

夏

MAP-9

Perennial Snowfield

The “Mannen-yuki” of Naka-arasawa is a snowfield that remains even in summer.

It is known as “the most easily accessible perennial snowfield in Japan,” taking only about 40 minutes from the trailhead.

Period: Mid-June to late October (varies by year)



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Map



MAP-10

Lilies of Tsukioka Park

Uonuma City, one of Japan's leading lily production areas.

In the Flower Plaza of Tsukioka Park, located on a hilltop with a view of the city, approximately 10,000 lilies bloom in full glory every year during the summer season.

Period: Mid-June to early July



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Map



Fireflies

Thanks to the pristine waters of Uonuma City, fireflies dance in the city when the season arrives, creating a mystical sight.

Period: Mid-June to late June



Cotton grass
(mid-June to mid-July)



Daylilies
(July)



Grasses turning autumn colors
(September to October)



MAP-11

Oze National Park (Heading to Oze from Uonuma)

Oze National Park, a designated natural monument, is one of Japan's most scenic areas, spanning across four prefectures, including Uonuma City in Niigata Prefecture. Located at an elevation of 1,400 meters, the park is home to Ozegahara, the largest wetland in Honshu, as well as Lake Ozenuma and Mt. Hiuchigatake, the highest peak north of the Tohoku region.

It is a treasure trove of wetland and alpine plants, and the park's seasonal landscapes are particularly captivating. Guided tours (additional fee) are also available.

Period: June 1 to October 15

Upper left photo:
The symbol of Oze, the skunk cabbage (mid-May to mid-June)



Web

It is highly recommended to take a guided tour!



The route to Oze from Uonuma is a hidden path that involves taking a boat from Lake Okutadami, followed by a bus transfer to the trailhead. Along the way to Lake Okutadami, you'll pass through the Okutadami Silver Line, a series of tunnels, 18 km of which are tunnels out of the total 22 km. This road was originally constructed in 1961 to transport materials for the construction of the Okutadami Dam. In some of the tunnels, the rough, unrefined walls from that time still remain, allowing visitors to see traces of the past.



Okutadami Silver Line



Transfer from boat to bus and head to the trailhead.



Mountain Hiking in Rural Areas

Uonuma City offers a variety of hiking options, from low mountains that can be climbed in about an hour to Mt. Echigo-Komagatake and Mt. Hiragatake, both listed among Japan's 100 Famous Mountains, as well as Mt. Nakanodake, Mt. Arasawa, and Mt. Sumon, which are listed among Japan's 200 Famous Mountains. There are trails for hikers of all skill levels, from beginners to advanced.



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Stand-Up Paddleboarding (SUP) Experience

An activity to enjoy on the crystal-clear waters of Lake Okutadami. SUP is a popular water sport where you paddle a board while standing.

Period: June to October / Duration: 2 hours



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Lake Okutadami MAP-12

A dam lake with one of the largest water storage capacities in Japan. Sightseeing boats operate on the lake, attracting many tourists throughout the year. The most popular season is during the autumn foliage! Visitors can experience vibrant fall colors, and the area has been selected as one of the “100 Best Spots for Autumn Foliage in Japan.”

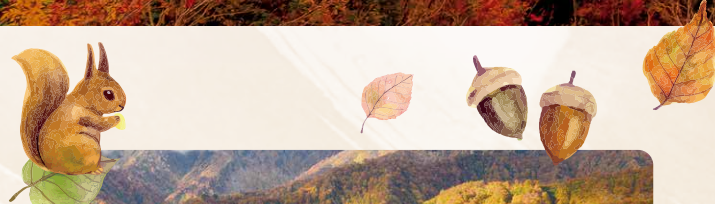
Best viewing period: Late October to early November



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Map



Ginzandaira MAP-13

Located at an elevation of 800 meters, Ginzandaira is a scenic hidden gem at the foot of Mt. Echigo-Komagatake and Mt. Arasawa. The log cabin village, surrounded by 2,000-meter-high mountains and stunning beech tree autumn colors, feels almost like a foreign land.

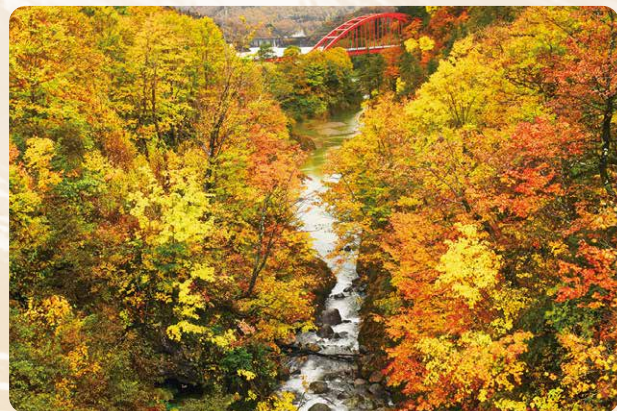
Best viewing period: Late October



Web



Map



Aburuma River Ravine MAP-14

A hidden autumn foliage spot located in the mountainous area on the border with Fukushima Prefecture, still not widely known. Beech and maple groves color the gorge in vivid reds and yellows during the season, making it ideal for a quiet, unhurried visit.

Best viewing period: Late October to early November



Web



Map



Shiori Pass MAP-15 Waterfall Clouds

A phenomenon where clouds flow down like a waterfall, known as “takigumo” (waterfall clouds). In the hidden area of Uonuma City, “Okutadami & Ginzandaira,” mist forms in the valleys of the mountains, eventually creating a stunning cloud waterfall, which can be seen at Shiori Pass.

Period: Late June to early November



Web



Map



Uwappara Cosmos Garden MAP-16

Located in the highland area of the Hirokami district, the garden spans 40,000 square meters and is home to approximately 1 million cosmos flowers planted every year. During the peak bloom period, it becomes a popular spot attracting many visitors.

Period: Early September to mid-October



Web



Map



Nukagama Rice Cooking Experience

In this traditional cooking method, rice husks (momi-gara) are used as fuel to cook rice. This practice reflects the wisdom of our ancestors, ensuring no rice goes to waste.

Period: September to October / **Duration:** 1 to 2 hours



Rice Harvesting Experience

Experience the traditional method of harvesting mature rice by using a sickle or other tools to cut the rice stalks.

Period: September to October
Duration: About 1 hour





Journey to the Hidden Realms! JR Tadami Line

The JR Tadami Line runs for about 135 kilometers, connecting Koide Station in Uonuma City, Niigata Prefecture, to Aizu-Wakamatsu Station in Aizuwakamatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture. Famous for its spectacular scenery, the route offers views of Uonuma's Koshihikari rice fields, Mt. Gongendo—known from the local folktale Yasaburo-basa—and the Aburuma River Ravine. The vivid autumn colors and the serene, ink-painting-like winter landscapes are especially stunning. With scenery that changes beautifully from season to season, it is a line you will want to ride again and again.



Meguro Residence

MAP-17

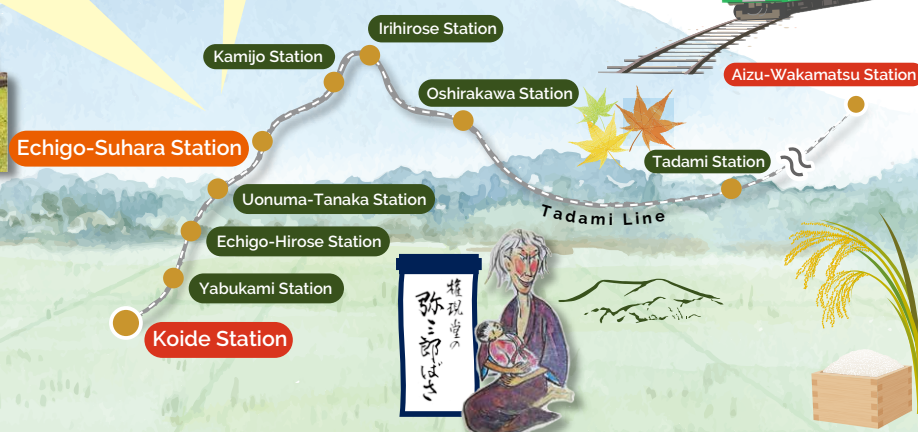
A traditional farmhouse of a wealthy landowner, nationally designated as an Important Cultural Property.



Echigo Yukikura-kan Tamagawa Sake Brewery

MAP-18

A sake brewery that has been producing sake since 1673, in the era of Tokugawa Ietsuna, the 4th Shogun.



Saifuku-ji Temple (Founder's Hall)



Eirin-ji Temple

Ishikawa Uncho



Ishikawa Uncho was a master woodcarver who worked in Niigata Prefecture from the late Edo period to the early Meiji period, and he is often referred to as the "Michelangelo of Japan."

He left behind numerous vibrant and dynamic wooden sculptures at temples throughout the prefecture. In the city, two of his representative works can be found at Eirin-ji Temple and Saifuku-ji Temple (Founder's Hall).



Map of Eirin-ji Temple
MAP-19



Map of Saifuku-ji Temple
MAP-20

Uonuma's Three Great Strange Festivals

For the Japanese, festivals are traditional events that honor gods and ancestors, express gratitude to nature, and deepen community bonds. Some festivals are especially unique and unusual. Uonuma City is home to three such distinctive and extraordinary festivals, known as the "Three Great Strange Festivals."



Setchu Hanamizuiwai (Snowy Flower Water Blessing)

In this unique festival, held in the extreme cold, a young groom is drenched with fresh water drawn on New Year's Day, symbolizing wishes for marital harmony and family safety.

*Scheduled for the second Saturday of February each year



Shineri Benten Tataki Jizo (Benten Dance and Jizo Beating Festival)

This unique festival, which began in the mid-Edo period, is believed to bring blessings for good health and the prosperity of descendants. Highlights include participants performing the Benten Dance with distinctive makeup, and the procession of the sacred object.

*Typically held on the last Saturday of June.



Hyakuhatto (108 Torches)

A traditional event that has been held for about 380 years at Oritate Onsen. This ceremony, held on the first Sunday of March each year, is dedicated to praying for good health and abundant harvests. The 108 straw torches lined up along the ridge of the snowy mountain create a truly magical and otherworldly scene.





Local Gastronomy

Local Gastronomy of Snow Country Uonuma

The wisdom of the snow country is most clearly reflected in its food. From early spring to late autumn, wild plants are harvested and preserved through methods like salting, drying, or fermentation to ensure they last through the long winter. These preserved foods become essential for survival and are cherished as valuable winter provisions. Particularly, edible wild ferns such as *warabi* and *zenmai* become special dishes for the New Year holidays.

(In the center of the photo is *zenmai* (an edible wild fern) Stew, a representative local dish of Uonuma.)

Sake Brewery and Koji Factory Tour



Tamagawa Sake Brewery

A long-established sake brewery with a history of over 350 years. Its signature sake, "Echigo Yukikura," is a Daiginjo unpasteurized sake that is aged in snow, and it represents the finest craftsmanship of Tamagawa Sake Brewery.



Uonuma Brewing

One of the world's largest rice koji factories, where visitors can tour not only the factory itself but also the snow storage rooms. In the salon, you can enjoy drinks like *koji amazake* (sweet rice drink) and *koji amazake* soft serve ice cream.



Uonuma's Soul Food Grilled Offal (Namamotsu Yaki)



In the 1950s, during the construction of the Okutadami Dam, this dish became popular among workers as an affordable and convenient way to replenish their stamina. While most places use boiled pork offal for grilling, Uonuma City is known for using fresh, uncooked pork offal (namamotsu).



Ginzandaira Onsen

10 Stories Hotel Oze

MAP-22

Opened in 2024, this new accommodation facility in Ginzandaira offers guests an immersive experience in nature. The restaurant "Seizan Ryokusui" features 4 standard rooms, 6 log cabins, and a sauna. The theme of the cuisine is "Local Gastronomy."



Tochiomata Onsen

Jizaikan

MAP-23

A renowned radium hot spring, a member of the Japan Association of Secluded Hot Spring Inns. This onsen has preserved its healing traditions for nearly 400 years, dating back to the Edo period. Meals are based on the *ichiju-yonsai* (one soup, four side dishes) style, using locally sourced ingredients, offering a traditional therapeutic dining experience.

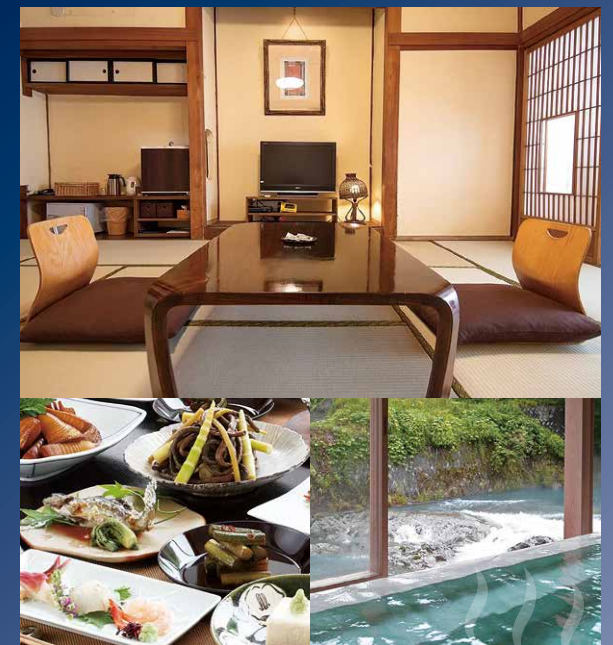


Oyu Onsen

Tomoya Hotel

MAP-24

Located in the Oyu Onsen village, with a history of over 1,300 years, this hotel offers four private, flowing hot spring baths. The guest rooms combine retro charm with casual modern design. The cuisine focuses on the natural flavors of the ingredients, with careful seasoning and attention to detail in preparation.



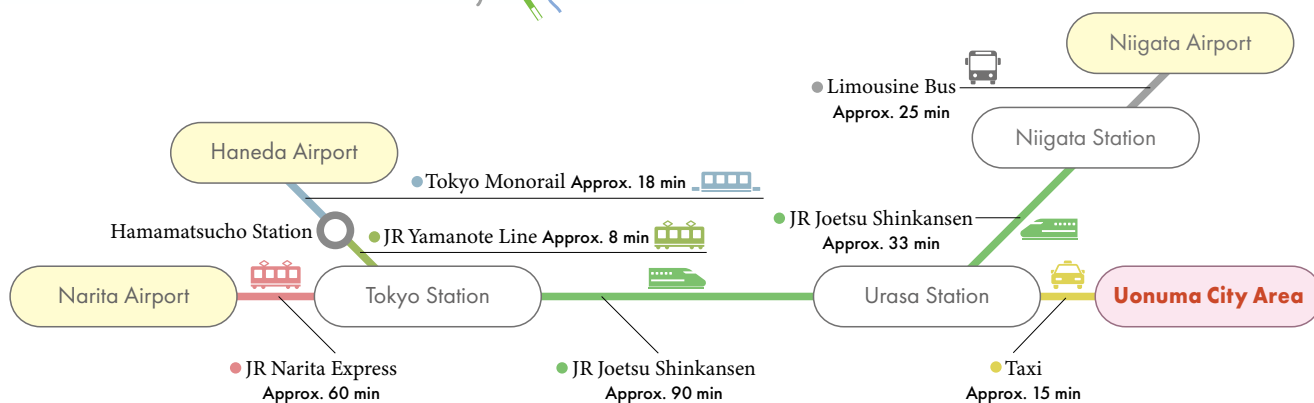
Gensen Yunoyado Kairi

MAP-25

Located in the Oyu Onsen village with over 1,300 years of history, this inn offers seven natural hot springs sourced from three different springs, allowing guests to fully enjoy a relaxing onsen experience. Highly regarded for its wide variety of dishes prepared with seasonal ingredients from Echigo and the Sea of Japan.



Access to Uonuma City



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