



- Explore the regions -

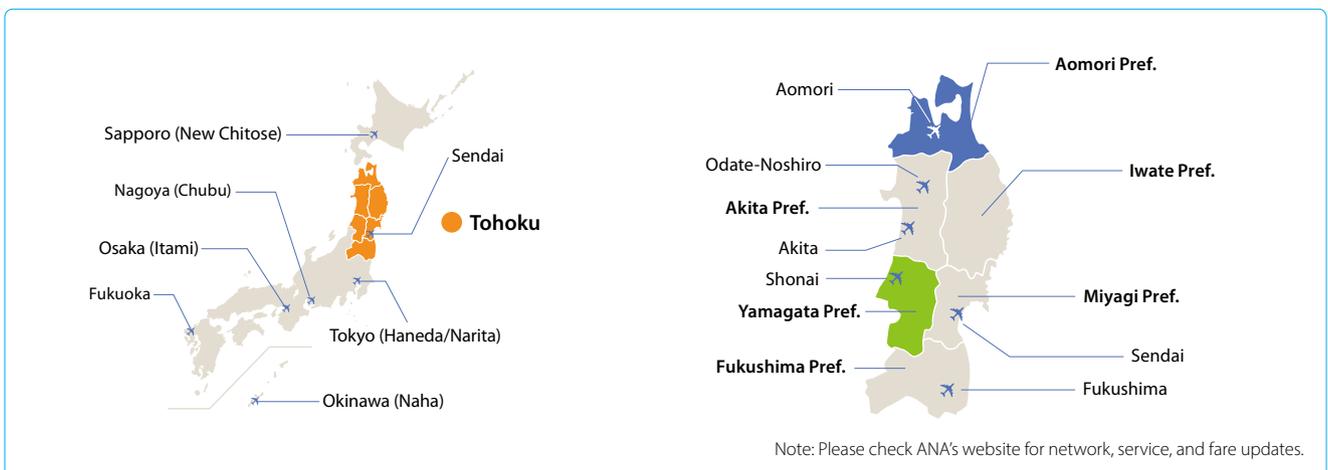


- 1 Bluefin tuna are a prized local delicacy known as “black diamonds,” Aomori Pref.
- 2 Iwagaki oysters of the Shonai coast make a tasty seafood choice, Yamagata Pref.

Delicious Seafood for Summertime Treats

With access to various coastal waters, Tohoku is a seafood lover’s paradise also favored by fishing aficionados. Such treasures from the sea include squid, scallops, and flounder. Aomori Prefecture, with fresh seafood year-round, is known

for bluefin tuna valued as “black diamonds” by gourmands and locals. Another seafood choice would be Iwagaki oysters from the Shonai region of Yamagata Prefecture. Dip into these rich catches for delightful summer seafood.



Aomori Pref.

Feast on Tasty Bluefin Tuna

Aomori Prefecture is surrounded on three sides by the Sea of Japan, Pacific Ocean, and Tsugaru Strait, and embraces Mutsu Bay as well as an expansion of rich fishing grounds. Surrounding areas enjoy the warm current moving up the Sea of Japan into Tsugaru Strait, and in the Pacific Ocean, a cold current from up north meets the warm Kuroshio Current from the south, all giving rise to plankton feeding many fish. This creates several fishing spots with an abundance of fish, including scallops, squid, and flounder, all tasty varieties harvested in Aomori as one of the highest volume catches in Japan.

Here, an array of fresh seafood is available year-round. Of particular renown are the tuna, which travel the Pacific in search of squid and other fish to feast on, said to be the best in Japan. They grow in volume on their journey, amassing fatty layers through autumn and winter before landing in Tsugaru Strait. The tuna that reach Aomori are bluefin, also referred to as “black diamonds” for their high value. Every year, starting around May, Fukaura Town, on the Sea of Japan, begins the season for catching natural fatty tuna that continues through autumn and winter off of Tsugaru Strait. They have just the right amount of fatty layers, and every part of the massive fish is equally tasty. Various eateries in the area offer special menu items featuring fresh, seasonal seafood and lead you to discover a favorite place to feast on Aomori’s finest tuna!



Natural bluefin tuna, with rich fleshy layers, is unloaded at Oma, a port town facing Tsugaru Strait.

Getting There: ANA serves Aomori Airport daily from Osaka (Itami) and Sapporo (New Chitose), and Odate-Noshiro Airport daily from Tokyo (Haneda).

Note: Sapporo-Aomori service is subject to suspension. Please check ANA’s website for network, service, and fare updates.

Yamagata Pref.

Savory Oysters for Summer

Oysters are known as “milk of the sea” for their high nutritional value. Pacific oysters are said to taste best in cold months ending in “-ber”, October–December. But oysters caught in Yamagata’s Shonai region—known as Iwagaki oysters—differ in flavor and appearance as well as size and shape from the Pacific varieties in season during cold months.



Mineral-rich underground water from Mt. Chokai flows into the Sea of Japan’s Shonai coastal area.

Iwagaki oysters feed for spawning from spring through summer, becoming most nutritionally dense and tasty while laying eggs around June through mid-August. From late August, they get smaller with release of their eggs, so peak flavor is a special treat limited to the summer season. Cold underground water, rich in minerals from Mt. Chokai, mixes with seawater and produces an abundance of plankton that Iwagaki oysters feast on and grow into mega proportions (15 to 20 cm).

In contrast to Pacific oysters, often farm-raised, Shonai’s naturally occurring Iwagaki oysters take six to seven years to grow into the right size for shipment, so fishing volume is carefully restricted. Iwagaki oysters happen to reside on the ocean floor and rocky areas inundated with rough waves and are caught by free divers, i.e., those diving without oxygen tanks. These divers expertly spot oysters clinging to rocks in camouflage and break them free from the rock surface using crow-bars. Iwagaki oysters can often grow to be bigger than an adult’s palm and are best enjoyed fresh with a squeeze of lemon and a drizzle of soy sauce. Visit Shonai and taste these succulent delicacies in season.

Getting There: ANA serves Shonai Airport daily from Tokyo (Haneda).

Looking Ahead

The next theme of Get to Know Tohoku is “Sightseeing,” set for August, when we feature Izunuma in Miyagi Pref. and Dragon Eye in Akita Pref.

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