

Exploring Parts of Tohoku



Aomori Park full of snow last December

Last December 21 2024 to January 3 2025, I went to three prefectures in Tohoku - Aomori, Akita, and Iwate. Instead of going home for Christmas in the Philippines, I chose to experience winter in Japan. Besides these three prefectures, I also went to Tokyo, Kanagawa, and Yamanashi to see Mount Fuji.

To spend less for this trip, I used two tickets available for foreigners. In the Kanto region, I used the *Seishun Juhachi Kippu* (Youth 18 Ticket). For ¥12,050, this ticket allows me to use local and rapid JR trains for 5 days, all over Japan. For my trip to Tohoku, I used the JR East Tohoku pass which is only available for foreigners. For ¥30,000, I am able to use unlimited JR East trains, including *shinkansen*, for 5 days.

I experienced my first snow in Aomori. When I stepped outside Aomori Station, I was surprised at how slippery snow can be. Because of the heavy snowfall, I was only able to go to the attractions near the station. It was still fun as it's my first winter - at the snowiest place on Earth, **I went east to Hachinohe to visit Kabushima Island. I learned that the torii gate in this island was the only structure in the area not destroyed by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. It was amazing because this part of Aomori is not covered with snow.**



Kabushima's torii gate

After Aomori, I went to Akita, which is my favorite among the places I went to. I went to Lake Tazawa, which is the deepest lake in Japan. I saw the golden statue similar to the Little Mermaid in Denmark. The reason Akita is



Tazawako in winter

my favorite is because it is covered with snow anywhere you go. It's like winter wonderland! Besides this, I also went to Kakunodate and Senshu Park.

I ended my winter trip with a visit to Iwate. I went to the city of Morioka, which for me, is a quieter version of Sendai. I saw Mount Iwate, Ishiwari-zakura, Bank of Iwate Red Brick Building, and the Morioka Castle Ruins Park.

During my trip, I ate great Japanese foods, met other foreigners who are traveling Japan, and experienced Japanese hospitality. **There is overtourism in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto so I hope other foreigners can visit Tohoku instead. For this year, I want to visit the rest of the region namely, Yamagata, Miyagi, and of course, Fukushima! I am glad to experience my first winter in Tohoku.**