

“Let’s Go to Tohoku!” Product Planning Contest

The Chairperson’s Award Goes to the Trip Plan Called “Enjoy soul food & a B-level gourmet experience! Compact and full one night/two days in Miyako, Iwate”

-The Domestic Travel Promotion Committee Chairperson’s Award is Presented to “Travel with an expert to Yamadera and Jakushoji Temples.”



Sanriku Railway

At its meeting on January 24, the Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA)’s Domestic Travel Promotion Committee decided on the winners of the “Let’s Go to Tohoku!” Product Planning Contest, which is part of JATA’s Northeastern Japan Reconstruction Support Project. The Chairperson’s Award was presented to NOE Corporation for its trip plan called “Enjoy soul food & a B-level gourmet experience! Compact and full one night/two days in Miyako, Iwate.” The Domestic Travel Promotion Committee Chairperson’s Award was presented to Jalpak’s “Travel with an expert to Takahata, Naragejuku and Yamadera and Jakushoji Temples for the once-in-50-years exhibition of the statue” (in Yamagata Prefecture).

In December last year, a year and a half after the disaster, tourism in northeastern Japan was on the path to recovery, but recovery was slow in some regions due to direct damage from the disaster or the impact of rumors. In response, JATA undertook a project in which 1,000 staff personnel from member companies visited six prefectures in northeastern Japan to conduct fieldwork and exchange ideas. Entries in the product planning contest were accepted from members companies that participated in the project. The Selection Committee chose two trip plans from each of the six prefectures to be winners or runners-up of the Awards for Excellence, making a total of 12 travel plans that were chosen. The six prefectures are Akita, Aomori, Iwate, Yamagata, Miyagi, and Fukushima.

At the January 24 meeting of the Domestic Travel Promotion Committee, the recipients of the Chairperson’s Award and the Domestic Travel Promotion Committee Chairperson’s Award were chosen from among the 12 travel plans.

In the plan that captured the Chairperson’s Award, “Enjoy soul food & a B-level gourmet experience! Compact and full one night/two days in Miyako, Iwate,” all of the stores and restaurants are places that would

make anyone think, “I always wanted to come here!” and it also offers a compact selection of sights to see along the Miyagi coast, including Miyako Fish Market and Fresh Foods Market, and a pleasure boat ride. In addition to the places which offer splendid photogenic scenery unique to Iwate, the tour incorporates rides on Japan Railway’s Yamada Line and the Sanriku Railway. The planning staff explains, “In addition to weaving in travel through the disaster area so that travelers can glimpse the current condition of the area, we chose markets where they can also purchase souvenirs at reasonable prices. The cost of meals is not included, so we are able to offer this tour to the northeast at a price that is more within reach.”

The plan that received the Domestic Travel Promotion Committee Chairperson’s Award, “Travel with an expert to Takahata, Naragejuku and Yamadera and Jakushoji Temples for the once-in-50-years exhibition of the statue” features as its main sales point a tour to Risshakuji Temple, generally known as Yamadera, to see the statue which is shown to the public only once every 50 years. The plan takes care to allot more time than the regular tour for an explanation and tour by an expert. At Jakushoji, a temple which is said to bring good luck in romance, the tour includes shaking hands with a priest to bring good fortune, and also included is a walk with a charming local senior guide through the attractive old post-town of Naragejuku. In this way, the tour arranges for close contact with local people. The tour staff highlighted the attractions, saying, “Travelers are able to enjoy the flavors of Yamagata, including lunch featuring a variety of dishes made from healthy *konnyaku*, which is a major product of Yamagata, as well as Yamagata beef, simmered potatoes, buckwheat noodles, and the delicious *haenuki* variety of rice, and in addition, on the second night travelers stay in a private inn that is over 300 years old and have the opportunity to participate in an optional hands-on farming experience.”



Naragejuku