

Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City — OCTOBER 2019

Thank you for picking up this quarters' "Fukushima Dreams – a quarterly publication of Fukushima City". In this issue, we hope that you will learn more about, and be moved by the various charms that Fukushima City has to offer.

With a population of around 290,000 people, Fukushima is surrounded by the beauty of nature. Due to its location, the city has a characteristic basin climate, and is a famous fruit production area: producing many varieties through the seasons, including cherries, peaches, Asian pears, grapes and apples.

We hope that through this edition, you'll come to appreciate even a little of what Fukushima City has to offer.



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① Fukushima, a key location for transportation

JR Fukushima Station is a strategic location for the railway network as a stop for the Tohoku Shinkansen Line, Yamagata Shinkansen Line, Tohoku Main Line, Ou Main Line, Fukushima Kotsu Iizaka Line, and Abukuma Express Line. When Fukushima was mandated as a city in 1907, the Tohoku and Ou Main Lines had already been established as the area's primary means of transportation. Following the installation of the Fukushima Kotsu Iizaka Line in the Taisho era, the Tohoku Shinkansen Line opened in 1982 and the Abukuma Express Line in 1988. In addition, the Yamagata Shinkansen opened in 1992 giving the train network its current route status.

In this issue, we will focus on the Abukuma Express Line, which celebrated its 30th anniversary since opening last year, and introduce recommended and scenic spots along the line.

② Running along the Abukuma River

The Abukuma Express Line is a local line with 24 stations that stretch across the 54.9km between Fukushima Station and Tsukinoki Station in Miyagi Prefecture.

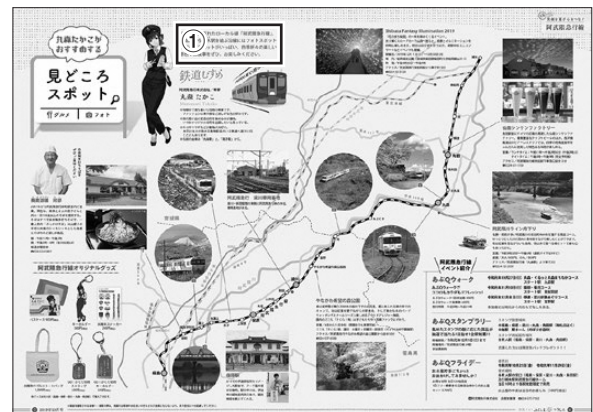
Surrounded by mountains and forest, you can view the magnificent Abukuma River from the train window. In addition to the abundant natural scenery of its location, 18 of its stations are unmanned, and it has earned popularity as a train line with a secluded atmosphere. Hobara and Abukuma Stations are two among the many stations that have been selected as part of the 100 Best Stations in Tohoku.

Furthermore, an array of special bargain ticket plans are available, so there's no reason to miss taking a ride. We're waiting for you.

③ A brand-new makeover for the AB900 series train

As the current 8100 series cars that have been running since the line opened ages, new train cars are beginning to replace the old ones as they retire. The first phase light blue hydrangea car began running on July 1. Currently there is only one train of the new cars in operation, so if you're lucky you just might be able to catch it!

The exterior has a large motif representing the letter "A" for Abukuma Express on the side. The colors surrounding the head of the train stand out when it leaves and arrives at the platform. Five color variations representing the characteristics of the areas along the line are planned so that people come to know the train as the face of the Abukuma Express Line and riders grow fond of it. Overall, the colors are pale giving it a modern and gentle impression.



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① Abukuma Express Line is a local train line surrounded by mountains and forest. There are plenty of great photo spots and delicious eats along this line connecting Fukushima and Tsukinoki Stations. Enjoy the beautiful scenery and seasonal foods throughout the four seasons.

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① Fukushima is famous for its Kayaba pears, which are a rare find around the country. We have been growing these delicious pears here for 130 years.

② Fukushima City is a paradise of exquisite fruits. Among them, the volume of peaches and pears produced here are among the highest in the country. Kayaba pears grown in the Kayaba district located in the northwest of Fukushima City are particularly famous and are said to occupy the largest concentrated growing area in all of Japan. In this issue, we will introduce Saichi Shigihara and his son Hirokazu, who have been growing pears in this area for generations.

③ Saichi Shigihara

④ Hirokazu Shigihara

⑤ Dedicated pear farmers in the Kayaba district of Fukushima City since the Meiji era



Saichi and Hirokazu Shigihara are the descendants of Kayaba pear farming pioneer Sazo Shigihara. They are dedicated pear farmers on land that has been farmed for approximately 130 years in the Kayaba district of Fukushima City. The long-awaited harvest season is from late summer through autumn. At Mr. Shigihara's home, the harvest begins in late August with the Kosui and Hosui varieties, followed by the Nansui, Akizuki, and Nijisseiki, which balances sweet and tart nicely, and the even larger, sweeter, and juicier Nitaka varieties from late September through early October. By the end of October, the large and juicy Shinko variety with its perfect sweetness is ready, followed by the finale act weighing up to 1 kg each, the giant Okusankichi. The harvesting season for all of the varieties is a mere two weeks. Though the season is short, Nitaka and Shinko keep well. Okusankichi has an excellent shelf life and is said to be perfect for eating around January or February the year after it is picked. Saichi says, "eating a juicy Okusankichi and enjoying its unique pear crunchiness in winter sitting in a warm and cozy room is actually quite delicious."

⑥ **The temperature difference unique to this fan-shaped basin grows sweet, delicious pears**

It is said that pears, the representative flavor of autumn, choose the land where they grow. Why did this area not only succeed in growing pears, but become known throughout the country for producing good quality pears? When we asked Saichi, he answered with the following. "I think this land is really well-suited to growing pears. The Kayaba district is fan-shaped land in the Fukushima Basin with sandy soil sandwiched between the Matsukawa and Arakawa rivers. Drainage is good. There isn't too much rainfall, and the groundwater flows deep so it is not easily absorbed upward. The second reason is the unique hot and humid climate of the basin. The big difference in temperature during the day and at night boost the fruit's sweetness. I think it is a combination of many fortunate factors that create these high quality pears that have a level of sweetness rarely seen anywhere else in the country and a small core."

However, no matter how well-suited pears are to the area, back in the old days, the Kayaba district was a wasteland with rocks scattered throughout. The stones were removed by hand and the land turned into an orchard. It's not difficult to imagine how hard that must have been. "It wasn't only Sazo who did it. Everyone who moved here to make their living with pears did it too. Though there are now few stone walls in the pear orchards remaining after the roads have been expanded, they are evidence of their hard work."

Growing pears and hard work come as a set. This year's pears are delicious too!

From the Heisei era into Reiwa. Even as time progresses, growing pears and hard work always come as set, explains sixth generation pear farmer Hirokazu. "In our home, we have no historic materials about growing pears left after they were destroyed in a fire in 1947. Eight years ago, the Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami happened, and at the time, the products were checked both by JA and independently before they were sent out and no radiation was detected. No matter what, my job is to deliver safe and delicious pears to our customers." He says it was the fact that customers were waiting for his product that motivated him to keep going. "In recent years, the aging pear trees have become a concern. If you have been growing pears for nearly 130 years, even if you plant new seedling pears, it is difficult for them to grow." In an attempt to resolve this problem, they surveyed the situation with the union and implemented the "joint lifting method." "We tried planting Kosui. It was a process of repeated trial and error, but we should be able to harvest next year," says Hirokazu smiling. We hope you'll try the delicious results of the farmers' efforts in a Kayaba pear.

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① **Fukushima City gets a new logomark!**

② We asked for submissions for a new logomark to go with Fukushima City's new catchphrase, "Mi Waku Man Sai Fukushima City," and from among the submissions our new logomark entry and special prize entry were selected! We will use these two submissions to show people outside the city, prefecture, and even overseas, the appeal of our city.

③ **Design adopted as the new logomark**

Creator Chihiro Nakayama (Fukushima City)

The logomark is the four characters for Mi, Waku, Man, and Sai decorated and enclosed in a circle so the viewer can see the charm it represents from a variety of angles. The characters are roughly hand-drawn and use brilliant colors to represent the bustling scenes of Fukushima City, a place that is simple and fun.

④ **Special Award Design**

Creator Shinji Komatsu (Fukuoka Prefecture)

By anthropomorphizing the catchphrase characters of Mi, Waku, Man, and Sai, I wanted to create a logomark that would be well-liked and easily identifiable by anyone regardless of age or gender. For "Mi" I used a peach as they are one of Fukushima's specialty products. For "Waku" I used the steam from a hot spring so that people will associate it with warmth. "Man" is represented by a fork and knife embodying delicious foods, and "Sai" was created in the image of green and abundant nature.

⑤ **Olympic and Paralympic Games coming soon! Vol.4**

Fukushima City has been newly registered as Vietnam's host town looking toward the Tokyo 2020 games. This is the second country we have been registered for following Switzerland.

From July 29 - August 10, the Vietnam women's soccer team held a training camp at Shinobugaoka Stadium in Fukushima City for the first time since we registered as a host town. On August 4, a friendly match was held between the Vietnam national team and Mynavi Vegalta Sendai Ladies team, and the stadium rang out with the voices of the cheering crowd. Inquiries can be made with the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games Fukushima City Promotion Office ☎024-563-5660

⑥ **On the cover**

The photo was taken from the platform at Senoue Station looking toward Mukaisenoue Station.

Passing over the blue steel bridge over the Abukuma River, the familiar cream-colored train runs through abundant greenery surrounded by fruit orchards.

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