

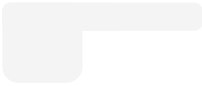


## Catching Sakura: My 12 Days Self-Drive Itinerary through Sendai, Fukushima, Nikko, and Tokyo in Spring – Day 2

### Description

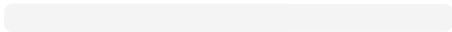
Today is going to be a fun day. We are going hiking at Yamadera. It's 1 hour drive away from where we were staying. The 1,015 stone steps of Yamadera lead to the historic Risshaku-ji Temple, also known as Yamadera, which means "Mountain Temple" in Japanese.

This is one of the must visit places in the region and I am looking forward to the scenery.



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the first flights of stairs to greet you when you arrive.

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no. this is not the Risshaku-ji Temple. this is just the start.

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These statues represent Jizo Bodhisattva, a beloved figure in Japanese Buddhism who is considered the protector of children, particularly those who have passed away before their parents. you can make a donation.

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now the real action begins.

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when you see this structure, you are half-way there. many visitors were resting here. I even saw 1 couple quarrelling because the girlfriend was too tired to carry on. lol!

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This should be the iconic view that you often see when researching on this place.

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All the way to the top, will be this resting hut where you can take a breather as well as capture some nice photos.

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I think the hike up is manageable for most people. Just take your time to enjoy the sights and peace as you climb. It should take you 30 minutes to 45 minutes at a leisurely pace. There are stops along the way for you to rest and catch your breath.

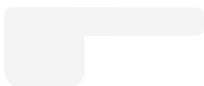
There is entrance fee payable. I think it was 300 yen per adult.

At areas where the steps are steep, they have railings installed to aide the climbers.

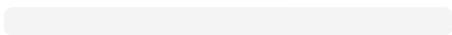




**Lunch:**



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At the foot of the mountain where we parked, there is a restaurant selling vegetarian fare. I think a number of restaurants around this area are all offering vegetarian food. It could be due to it's proximity to the buddhist temple and they serve the devotees visiting this place.

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This is the shop we visited. Runned by an elderly couple.

This is the shop we visited. Runned by an elderly couple.

Their english was limited but it was easy to order as the menu only offer 2 kind of set meal.



Looks simple but the soba was yummy and it was relatively affordable.

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I love shops like this with old school vibes.

I love shops like this with old school vibes.

The town was not crowded with tourists and it felt very peaceful exploring the place.

And by the way, it was after the meal that I realised I entered the wrong shop. Further down, there is another vegetarian soba shop whereby you can have your meal while enjoying the view of the stream. It was a good find nevertheless.

*(if you download my iteinary, the original shop's location is listed. give it a try if you have a chance to visit and let me know if it's good.)*

**Cherry Blossom – Funaoka Castle Ruins Park** Our next stop, is to catch some cherry blossoms on route back to Sendai city (hotel). This is a pretty well-known sakura viewing spot so it should be on your list if you are in the area.



Usually, all major hanami spots will have some sort of a bazaar going on. To offer food for vistiors who will be having a panic in the park and just taking in the beautiful sights.

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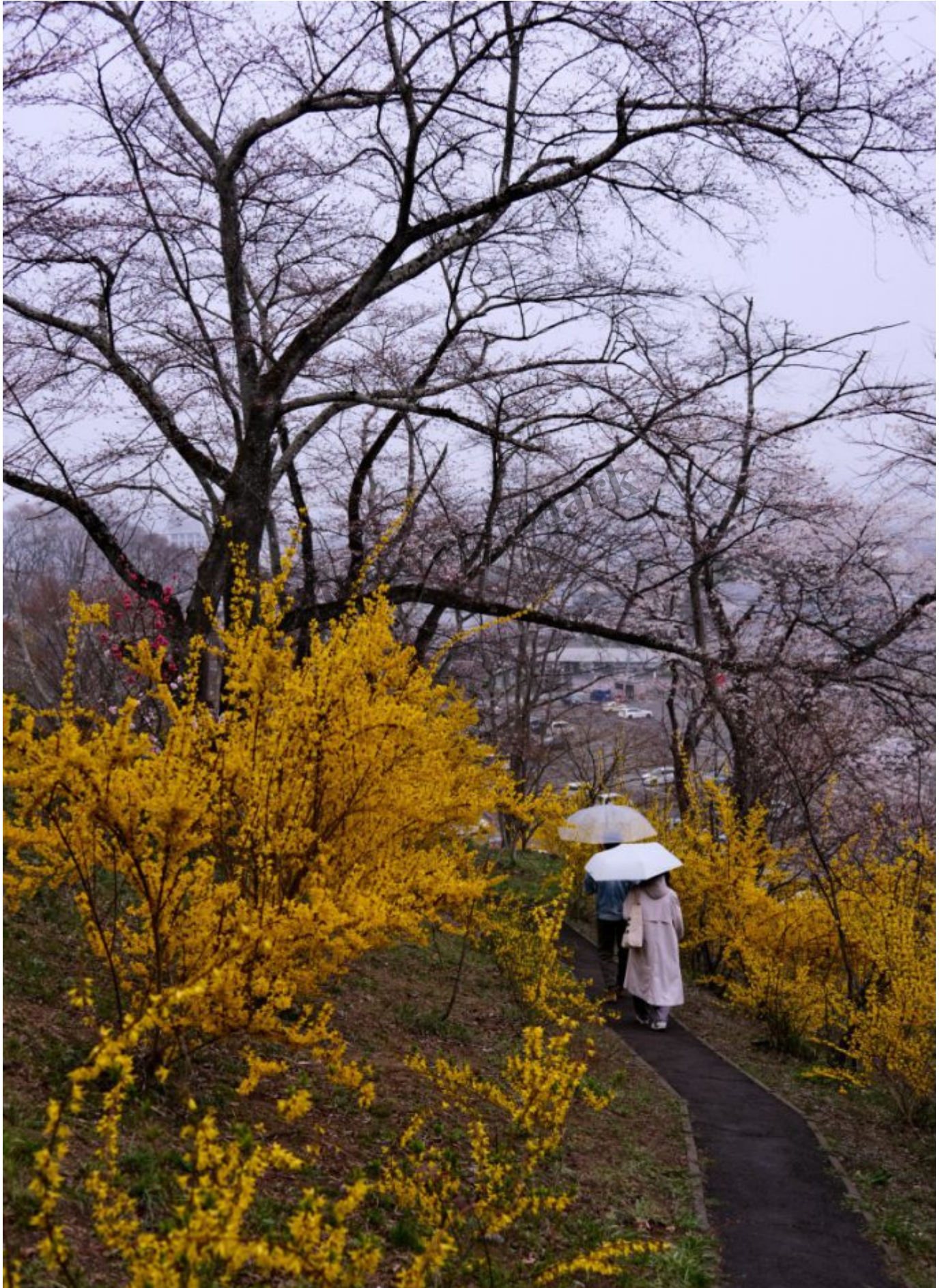


Unfortunately, the park ain't in full bloom yet.

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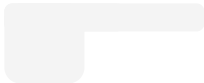


To add to the misery, the sky starting pouring, thereby officially signalling an end to our day as it was quite impossible to carry on exploring other parts of the park.

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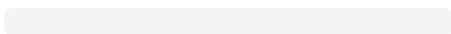
So here's the plan (no choice), we will head back for dinner and call it a day. And tomorrow morning, before we leave Sendai, we will visit this place again.

**Dinner: Gyu-tan (Ox Tongue), What Sendai is famous for**



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So back in town, we did spend a little bit of time shopping on the main city. There is a Mitsukoshi



shopping mall nearby so my wife went in to grab her cosmetics from Dior.

According to her, the good thing about buying from non-Tokyo area is that there is little to no wait.

It's easy that everything is pretty congregated within 1 compound. There are the shopping streets and alleyways with restaurants and pubs. All within walking reach.

I was just hanging around and trying to get some interesting photos.



Cheap strawberries so we pick up a few.

Cheap strawberries so we pick up a few. Not sweet as we imagined it to be.



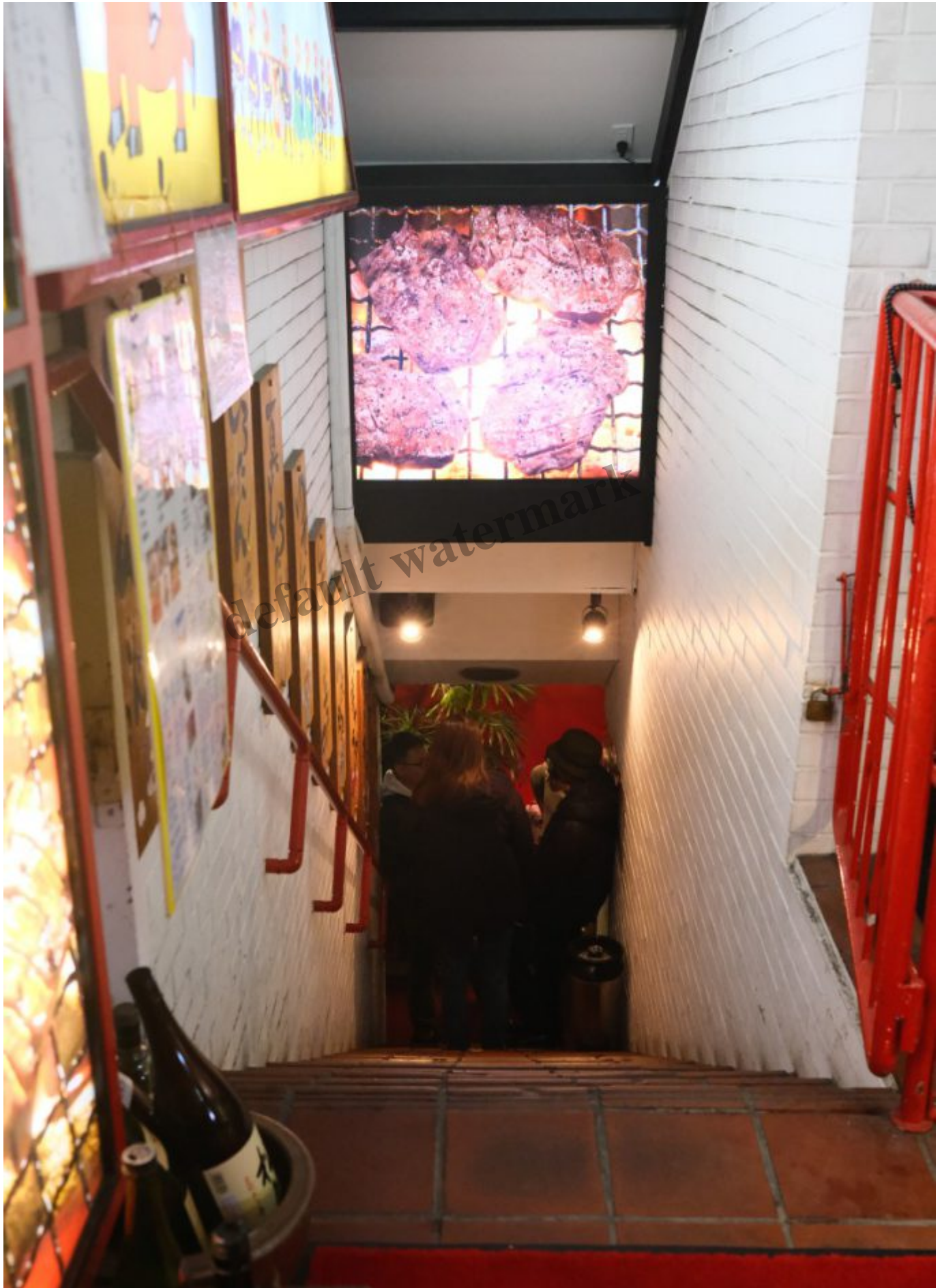


It was still drizzling throughout the evening but the shopping areas are mostly sheltered.

Now for Gyu-tan, that is something Sendai is famous for. We love Guy-tan. So we are looking forward.

In this area, there are several shops with pretty good rating on tabelog. I decided on this shop as it was open late and not that far away from where we were located.

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There was a short line in front of us. But the wait to be seated wasn't long as it was past peak dining hours when we visited.

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*Tip: always plan your dinner time before or after peak hours to maximise your shopping time!*



It was bustling and fully occupied.  
A mix of Taiwanese and local patrons mostly.

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Chilled tomato. Ever since we had this last trip, we will always order this item if it's available on the menu.

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Beef stew. So-so from memory.

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This was the main event. We ordered a set. You will realise that the guy-tan comes in thicker cut than what we have usually.

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The overall meal fee was affordable. The Gyu-tan was charcoal grilled and lightly seasoned. The meat was juicy.

There were bits where the chew was tough but overall, we were satisfied. This is not a high end eatery so manage your expectations on the food.

So after dinner, we headed back to rest. We plan to wake up early tomorrow to visit **Funaoka Castle Ruins Park** again before leaving Sendai and travel south.

\*\*\*

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**Author**

kevinyeo