



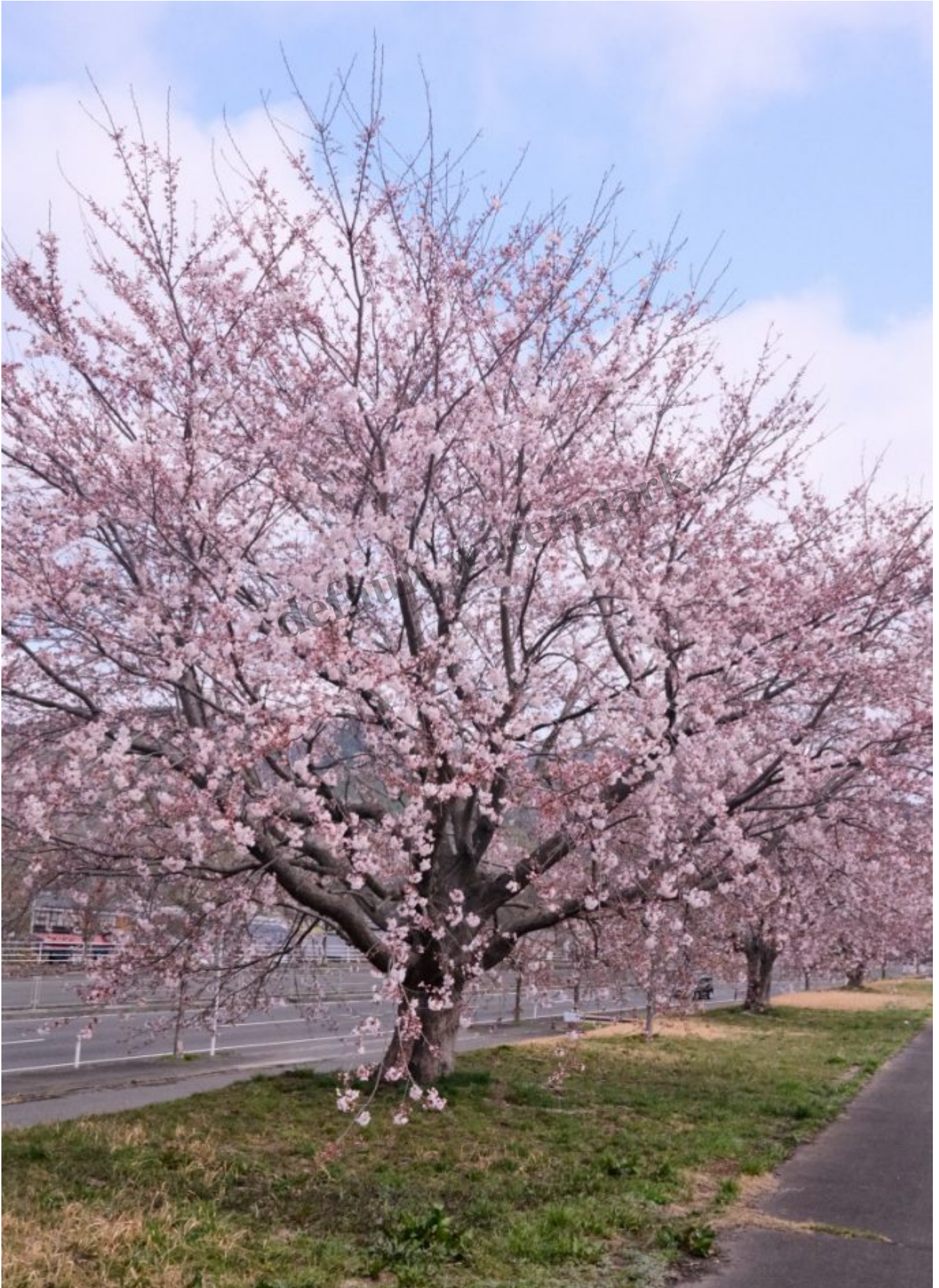
Catching Sakura: My 12 Days Self-Drive Itinerary through Sendai, Fukushima, Nikko, and Tokyo in Spring – Day 3

Description

Good morning! Today, we are checking out from Sendai and headed to the Zao Mountain region.

Before that, we are making a detour **Funaoka Castle Ruins Park** to continue from where we left off yesterday.

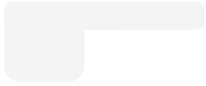
Along the way, we saw a row of Sakura trees so we stopped briefly for some photos. I think the appeal of a self drive holiday is when you see something interesting, you can just stop briefly to check the place out before resuming on your original route.





We were glad that the weather is holding up well today.





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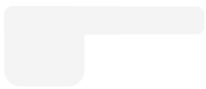


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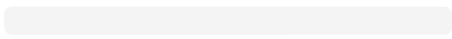
Arrived at the park and caught some performances.



Looks nice but this is only about 50% to 60% bloom. Peak will probably come in another 1 to 2 weeks' time.



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This is one of the best photo spots in the park. The tram passing through the rows of Sakura trees. You can take this tram instead of walking up the slope to the hill top.

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Besides the tram, the other iconic photo spot is when you climb all the way to the hill top. There, you see this giant statue of Guan Yin.

So again, from this picture, you can tell that we are early. You can imagine the beauty of this frame if the sakura are in full bloom.

Do not let my photos fool you.

It was pretty crowded at the top. Lots of tourists just hanging around and blocking your way.

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Hitome Senbonzakura

Since we have places to go, we did not loiter too long in the park. But not too far from Funaoka Castle Ruins Park, there is a nice spot along a river with rows of cherry blossoms.



I think it is a very beautiful place to just have a stroll in the chill weather and just be at ease with yourself.



Parking is a bit of a challenge but I'm sure you can work around it ?

Lunch: ????? | Makoto Sushi



This was not planned. Sometime life's best moments come from impromptu discovery. I personally love travelling this way.

I do not think as a tourist, you will ever have any business being in this part of the town. There's literally nothing nearby.

It was on the way to our next destination and doing some research, this shop popped up on my radar.





It was run by an elderly couple. The sashimi / sushi was very fresh and I remember we only paid SGD10 per pax for this wonderful meal.



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Zao Ropeway Zao Sanroku Station

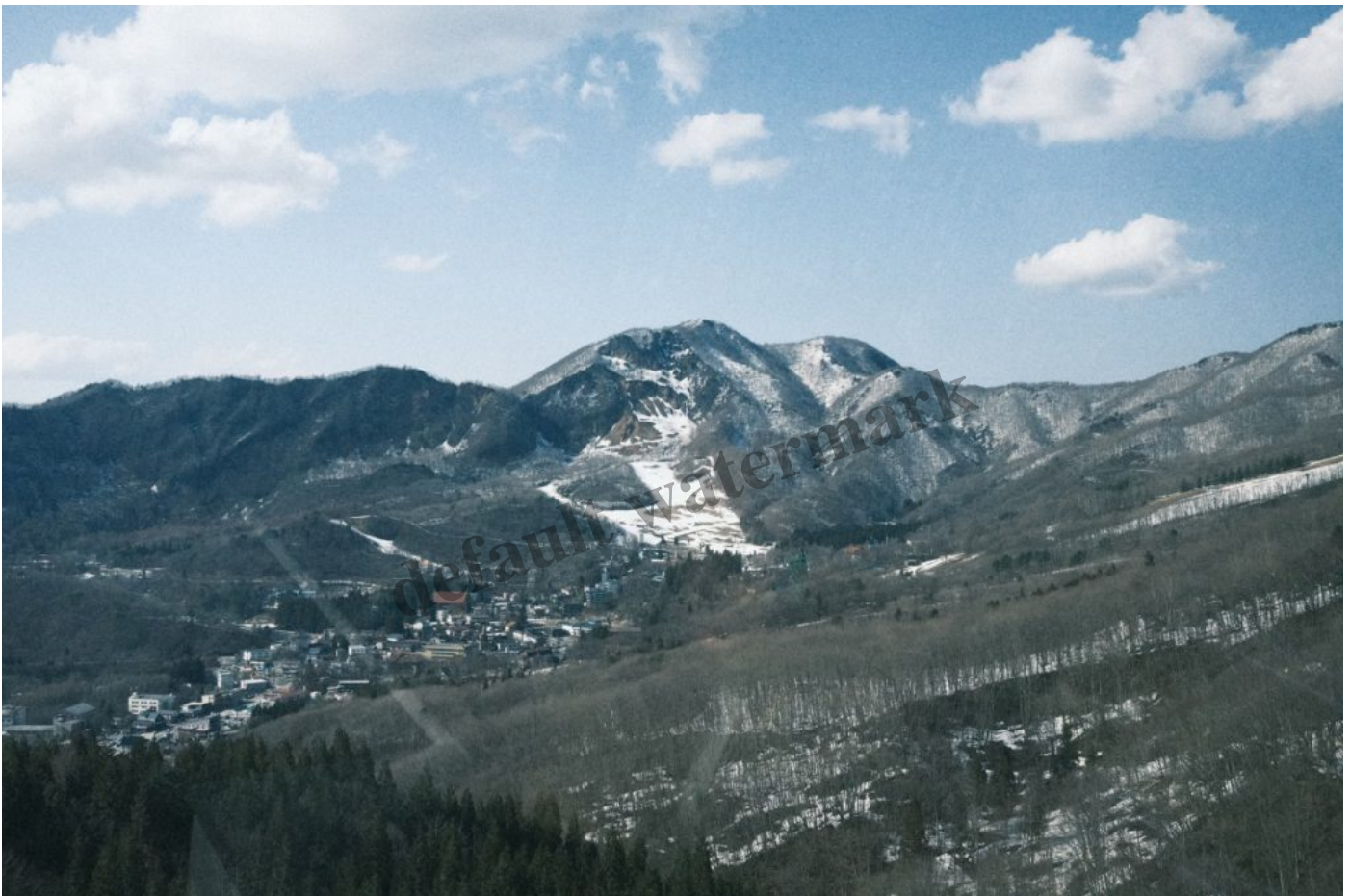


We are here to see something special before the ice melts away in summer. This is place people usually visit in winter to see the famous 'snow monsters', a phenomenon caused by freezing of the fir trees.

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It's so cool to be seeing snow in such a long time!



It was not cold at all, I was just wearing a jacket up the ropeway.



Yes and this is why we went up the ropeway. It was super cool so trudge through the snow and also see **Zao Jizoson** partially covered in snow.

There isn't any difficult climb so it's suitable for people of all ages. Perhaps just beware of the slippery surface as you walk.

For the adventurous, you can consider doing a hike in the snow.

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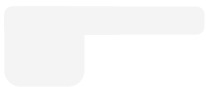
The sun was about to set and we want to check into our next hotel early so we can visit the onsen before it turns dark.

Our hotel is only a short 5 minutes drive away. (Zao Kokusai Hotel Yamagata).

I do not have any pictures or videos of the onsen for you but it was quite nice, soaking in the onsen surrounded by snow.

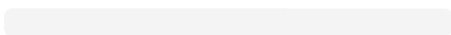
The dinner was yummy. Usually such kiseki dinner tend to taste about the same across different hotels/ryokans.

But for this hotel's dinner, it was good in our opinion.



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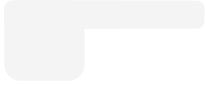
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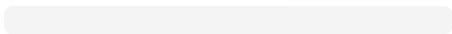
I shall leave you with another video I took of the hotel and say good night to you.

See you in the next post – day 4!



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Date Created

03/11/2024

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kevinyeo

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