



Eco-tourism in the “Reconstruction” National Park



Sanriku Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park, which extends about 250 kilometers north and south from southern Aomori Prefecture to the Oshika Peninsula in Miyagi Prefecture, aims to pass down the reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake from generation to generation. To this end, a more than 1,000-kilometer-long nature trail called the “Michinoku Coastal Trail” has newly opened, extending from the National Park into Fukushima.

SANO KENTARO

SANRIKU Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park with its beautiful and varied rias coastline was originally designated in 1995 as the Rikuchu Coast National Park. In 2010, the year before the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, the park attracted about 4.07 million visitors. In 2013, the park was designated as Sanriku Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park with a mission to

contribute to the reconstruction of the Sanriku area.

If you drive one and a half hours northeast from Sendai, the largest city in the Tohoku region, you will reach a beautiful spot called Kamiwarizaki in Minamisanriku Town that faces the Pacific Ocean. The name “Kamiwarizaki” was derived from the legend that God became angry at a quarrel between two villages and ripped a huge rock apart, separating the villages.

North of Minamisanriku in Rikuzentakata City, Iwate Prefecture, there used to be a place known as Takatamatsubara, a two-kilometer stretch of pine forests on a white beach. Afforestation began about 350 years ago, when trees were planted to protect the shoreline. It was a place of scenic beauty, where about 70,000 pine trees grew, and it attracted 1.09 million tourists in 2009 before the earthquake. The tsunami washed away Takatamatsubara, forests and all. Miraculously, however, a sole pine tree remained and became a form of emotional support for the local

- 1 The Kamiwarizaki rocks at Minamisanriku Town
- 2 The “Miracle Lone Pine Tree” at Takatamatsubara
- 3 The Kitayamazaki Cliffs at Tanohata Village

Photos: Tanaka Satoshi (1, 2); K@zuTa / PIXTA (3)

people. Unfortunately, this last pine tree withered, but following treatment and reinforcement, the tree has been preserved as the “Miracle Lone Pine Tree,” a monument that symbolizes the reconstruction efforts from the damage caused by the earthquake. A project to plant 40,000 pine trees by 2021 is under way to restore Takatamatsubara.

On the Suesaki Peninsula in Ofunato City, which is located on the northeastern side of Takatamatsubara, are two popular tourist destinations: the Goishi Coast, where stone-shaped round pebbles like go stones extend along the peninsula; and the Anatoshiiso Rock Arch, where there are many triangular rocks protruding from the surface of the sea.

Traveling on north from Ofunato to Miyako City, the landscape with a wild coastline until then changes dramatically and you will see Jodogahama Beach with a grove of pine trees atop sharply pointed white rhyolite rocks in an extremely transparent blue sea with gentle waves.

Sanriku Beach is known for its numerous fishing grounds, and Yamada Bay, where oyster cultivation is active, is located south of Jodogahama Beach. The bay was seriously damaged by the tsunami, but local fishermen have made great efforts and the oyster cultivation rafts are floating in the bay again. The oysters harvested in Yamada Bay have a firm body. You can enjoy steaming open and eating fresh oysters in their shells in oyster huts erected along the beach.

Sanriku Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park offers so many beautiful landscapes. The Tanesashi Coast in Hachinohe City, Aomori Prefecture, which is located in the northernmost part of the park, features a wide lawn of natural grass that stretches along the beach; Tanohata Village in Iwate Prefecture, about 70 kilometers to the south, is the location of the Kitayamazaki Cliffs, where cliffs some 200 meters high extend for eight kilometers. Ten kilometers further south again, set in untouched nature, is the overwhelming Unosu Cliff, which is shaped like the teeth of a saw.

The Michinoku Coastal Trail opened in June 2019 on the completion of work which began with



The pine tree-topped rocks at Jodogahama Beach (top); Yamada Bay oysters (bottom)

Photos: Tanaka Satoshi

the designation of Sanriku Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park in 2013. The trail connects Tanesashi Coast in Hachinohe City with Matsukawaura in Soma City, a scenic spot in northern Fukushima Prefecture, and extends over 1,000 kilometers through twenty-eight municipalities in four prefectures. The trail runs from the National Park to the disaster area of Fukushima through the coastal area of Miyagi. In connecting disaster areas, the trail aims to pass down the reconstruction efforts from the damage caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake from generation to generation. Trail walkers can enjoy the rich natural environment of Sanriku and interact with local people along the way.

Sanriku Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park is being reborn as an even more attractive park. 

This is a revised version of the article that appeared in the March 2018 issue of *Highlighting Japan*.