

Aomori Autumn Colors Set a Lake Aflame

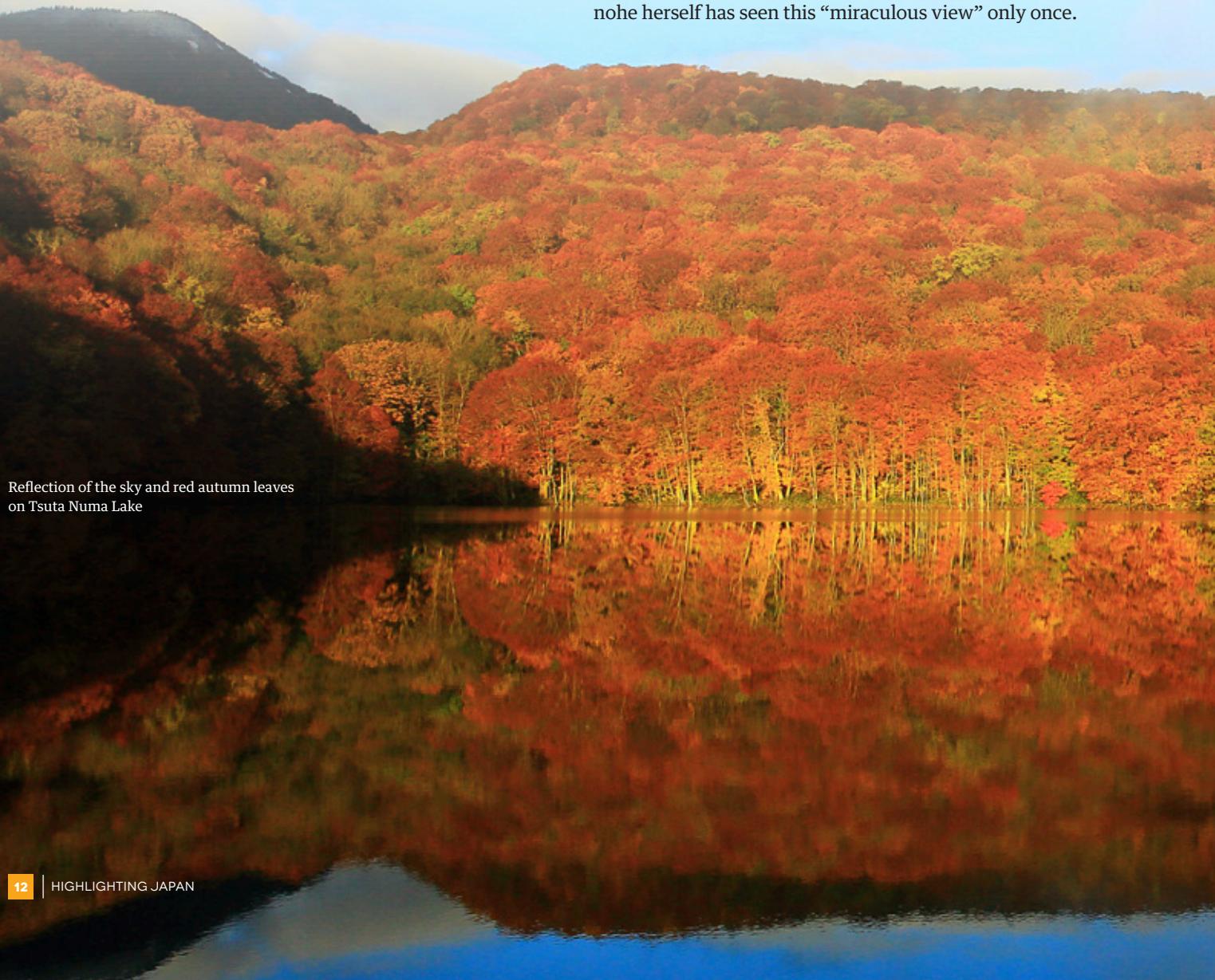
Tsuta Numa Lake in Towada City, Aomori Prefecture, reflects trees with red autumn leaves like a mirror, creating beautiful and glorious scenes.

SASAKI TAKASHI

THE Towada-Hachimantai National Park, located in the mountainous interior of the northern Tohoku region of Japan, is dotted with many places of scenic beauty, from active volcanoes to lakes and marshes surrounded by unspoiled virgin forest. Tsuta Numa Lake is one such place, becoming a popular attraction in recent years in particular for its spectacular autumn colors. Sannohe Rui of the Travel Towada Tourist Information Center explains the appeal of Tsuta Numa Lake.

“The reason for the popularity of Tsuta Numa Lake is, above all, its mirror-like reflection of stunning autumn colors. But since this can only be seen at certain times of the early morning and in certain weather conditions, it’s a truly precious scene!”

In early October, when the peaks of the Hakkoda mountain range seen from Tsuta Numa Lake begin to change color, a red carpet gradually extends toward the foothills. As the air clears and late autumn approaches, it reaches the area known as “Tsuta no Nana Numa,” meaning the seven ponds of Tsuta. The largest of these ponds, with a circumference of about one kilometer, is Tsuta Numa Lake. In late October, when the autumn colors here peak, red-colored trees such as beech and maple appear to burst into flames as dawn breaks and the sun rises over the lake. On a windless day, the surface of the lake becomes a mirror, reflecting the vivid colors of the autumn leaves. Sannohe herself has seen this “miraculous view” only once.



Reflection of the sky and red autumn leaves on Tsuta Numa Lake



Reflection of the red autumn leaves on Tsuta Numa Lake



Reflection of multi-colored autumn leaves on Tsuta Numa Lake

Photo: © Towada & Oirase Tourism Bureau

Tsuta Onsen, a hot spring in the southern part of the Hakoda mountain range, is the starting point of a roughly 2.8-kilometer nature trail with observation decking that takes in Tsuta Numa Lake and the six other ponds. In addition to the autumn foliage, visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of the abundant seasonal changes on view at the ponds of varying size and the primeval beech forest.

However, lately media coverage and social media activity featuring the spectacular autumn colors of Tsuta Numa Lake in the early morning have led to over-tourism, with concerns increasingly being voiced about tourism's impact on the surrounding environment. In response to these concerns and in light of the COVID-19 situation, the Tsuta Numa Lake

administrators introduced an advance reservation system in 2020 for the autumn leaf-viewing season which also restricts entry to the observation decking in the early morning.

Sannohe hopes that such an initiative will ensure that the natural environment of Tsuta Nana Numa is handed down to future generations, and that the autumn colors of Tsuta Numa Lake will continue to move visitors for many years to come. ■

