



みちのく潮風トレイル  
Michinoku Coastal Trail

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# Guidebook

## the Appeal of the Michinoku Coastal Trail Interpretation Master Plan ver.02



みちのく潮風トレイル  
Michinoku Coastal Trail

MCT  
Michinoku Coastal Trail



To everyone who has been  
and will be involved with  
the Michinoku Coastal Trail

## CONTENTS

02 Michinoku Coastal Trail Charter

04 What is the “Guidebook to Convey the Appeal of the Michinoku Coastal Trail” ?

06 What Is the Purpose of This Guidebook?

08 What Are the Story of This Trail?

### MCT Stories

10 1,000 km of Walking while Looking at the Sea

12 1,000 km of Encountering Diverse Landscapes

14 1,000 km of Passing Down Stories

16 1,000 km of Mountains, Rivers, Sea, and Living Creatures

18 1,000 km of Encountering People, Livelihoods, And Culture

### Stories of the MCT’s Three Areas

20 Coastal Terraces: Walking the “Sea Alps”

21 Rias Coast: Walking Mountain Passes And Peninsulas

22 Alluvial Plains: Walking Plains And Satoyama

23 Stories Connected to the MCT

24 A Trail We All Nurture Together

26 MCT by the Numbers

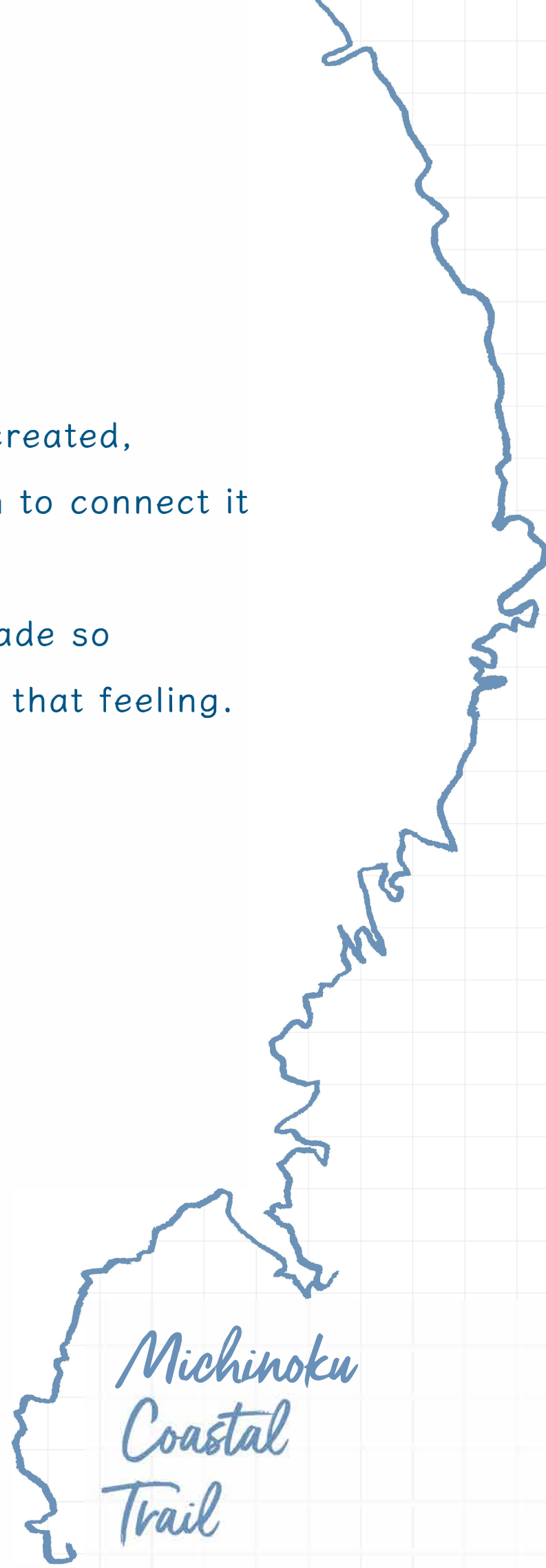
28 Walking Long Distances

30 Japan’s Long-distance Trails





Why was this trail created,  
and why do we wish to connect it  
to the future?  
This charter was made so  
everyone can share that feeling.



## Michinoku Coastal Trail Charter

On March 11th, 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami wrought unprecedented damage to Tohoku's Pacific coast. It was a major turning point: faced with the fury of nature in a disaster said to happen at this scale once in a thousand years, many people in Japan and throughout the world were forced to consider how we should relate to nature.

After this disaster, the Ministry of the Environment started the "Green Reconstruction Project," a set of initiatives working for sustainable community planning as well as the preservation of abundant nature and local ways of life for the future. One such initiative is the Michinoku Coastal Trail.

Mr. Noriyoshi Kato, an advocate for walking through natural places when considering how humans and nature should relate to each other, proposed a "national trail leading through the Sanriku Coast national parks, a team effort between government and the people." Thus this long coastal trail was born, forming a single path along the Pacific coast from Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture to Soma, Fukushima Prefecture, and passing through four prefectures and twenty-eight cities, towns and villages\*.

We hope this natural trail will live on proudly on as a symbol of coexistence of people and nature for the people involved in the trail, that it will provide not only natural beauty and scenery but interactions between people who live in a place and people visiting that place, and that it will value the blessings of nature, the memories of disaster, and ways of life, histories, and cultures formed from harmony with nature. With this hope, we declare the following six values of our charter.

- 1. The trail will be for enjoying beautiful sights and natural features.*
- 2. The trail will bring about connections between people who live in a place and those who visit that place.*
- 3. The trail will leave lifelong memories of nature's kindness and harshness.*
- 4. The trail will forever testify the memories of disaster.*
- 5. The trail will pass on rich nature and cultures to future generations.*
- 6. The trail will welcome all who love to walk and will develop with everyone's help.*

\* In March 2023, Kakuda City in Miyagi Prefecture joined the Michinoku Coastal Trail management plan, and the MCT now officially goes through four prefectures and twenty-nine cities, towns and villages.





# What is the “Guidebook to Convey the Appeal of the Michinoku Coastal Trail” ?

It is an explanatory guide, also called an “Interpretation Master Plan” for people in many roles who share the “**stories**” that embody the appeal of the Michinoku Coastal Trail with visitors.



“Stories” here refers to the histories, backgrounds, and local lifestyles behind visible things such as scenery and regional cuisine, woven with easy-to-understand words. They convey an appeal that comes across when told. One might also call them “themes” or “narratives.”

**Interpretation** is one means of sharing the unique values and significance of local resources with visitors at national parks, World Heritage sites, and tourist areas. By sharing the unique value and stories behind natural environments, landscapes, cultural assets, and more with visitors, interpretation creates a bond between visitors and local resources.

The **Interpretation Master Plan** is a comprehensive plan that organizes everything—from the stories to the people who use them and the ways they are used.

see here →



Association for  
Interpretation  
Japan





# What Is the Purpose of This Guidebook?

It aims to convey the “stories” of the Michinoku Coastal Trail far and wide and increase the number of fans of the Tohoku Pacific coastal region.

Conveying the stories of local livelihoods



Conveying the stories of local food culture



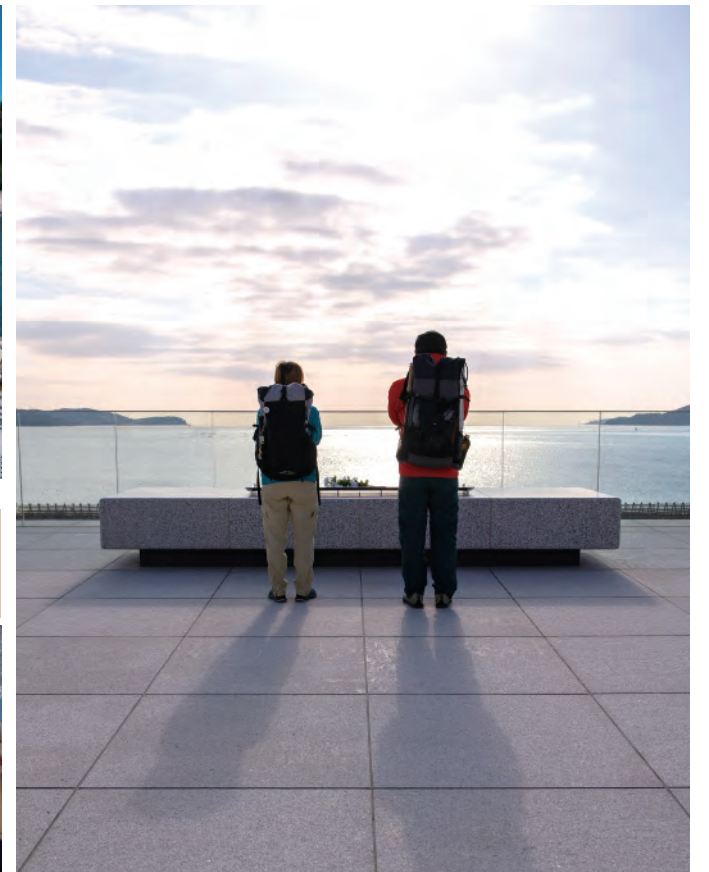
Conveying the stories of local natural environments



Conveying the stories of history and culture



Conveying the stories of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami



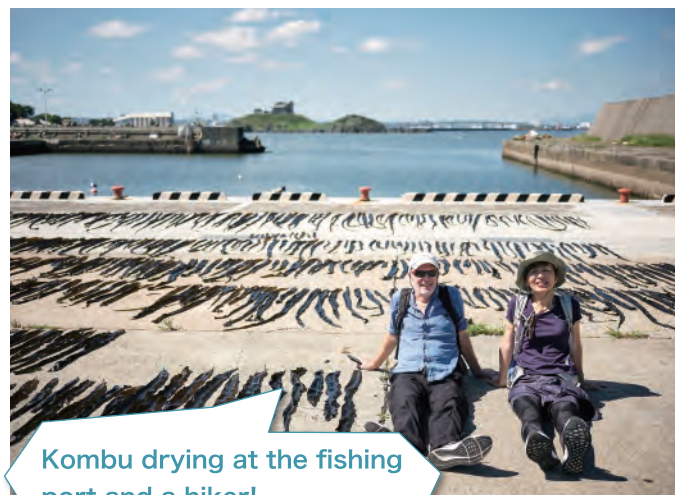
Conveying the stories of the landscape and natural features



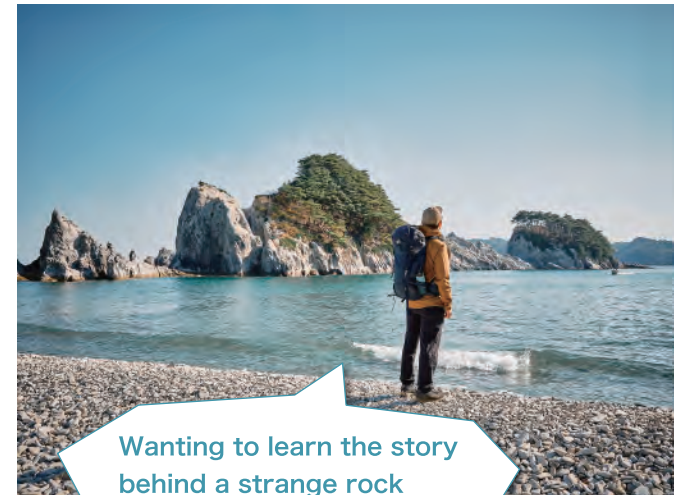




MCT's north Terminus



Kombu drying at the fishing port and a hiker!



Wanting to learn the story behind a strange rock formation



Interacting with local people



## What Are the Story of This Trail?

With these stories, hikers' experiences and learning become even richer.



As hikers walk, they discover many fascinating things about the area.



Deep interest in a model of a historic provincial capital



Families learning about local history



A place that unleashes children's curiosity



A captain's explanation

—making plenty of family memories while walking



# MCT Stories

MCT stands for Michinoku Coastal Trail when expressed in English. It has become a widely used abbreviation.

## 1,000 km of Walking while Looking at the Sea

**From Hachinohe in Aomori Prefecture to Soma in Fukushima Prefecture, this is a long-distance walking trail spanning over 1,000 km of the Tohoku coastline, built by everyone in the local communities.**

**You can walk while feeling the seasonal nature, the indigenous culture rooted in each area, and the lives of its people.**

You can walk for one day through a section and still have a pleasant time. You can also enjoy walking for a few days while staying in local inns or carry a tent on your back and walk all 1,000 km at once for an exciting challenge. On this journey, there are joys and new discoveries you can only experience precisely because you're moving at a walking pace.



**In 2019, the trail—connected by everyone—officially opened in its entirety.**

For more details on its history, see here →



This trail is one of the initiatives under the “Green Reconstruction Project,” created by the Ministry of the Environment after the Great East Japan Earthquake that struck on March 11, 2011, as part of efforts centering on the creation of Sanriku Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park to aid in recovery. It was inspired by a proposal from the author and backpacker Noriyoshi Kato. Through cooperation among the Ministry of the Environment, four prefectures and twenty-nine municipalities, various private organizations, and local residents, segments of the trail along coastal areas from Kabushima in Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture, to Matsukawaura in Soma, Fukushima Prefecture, were opened in stages. On June 9, 2019, it became a national trail spanning over 1,000 km, fully opened end to end.

## The four prefectures and twenty-nine municipalities the Michinoku Coastal Trail passes through

[Aomori Prefecture] Hachinohe, Hashikami  
[Iwate Prefecture] Hirono, Kuji, Noda, Fudai, Tanohata, Iwaizumi, Miyako, Yamada, Otsuchi, Kamaishi, Ofunato, Rikuzentakata  
[Miyagi Prefecture] Kesennuma, Minamisanriku, Onagawa, Ishinomaki, Higashi-Matsushima, Shiogama, Tagajo, Sendai, Natori, Iwanuma, Watari, Kakuda, Yamamoto  
[Fukushima Prefecture] Shinchi, Soma



## Related Sanriku-area initiatives linked with the Michinoku Coastal Trail

### Sanriku Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park

Characterized by dynamic and varied scenery unique to the Tohoku Pacific coast, featuring sea, rivers, towns, and forests all in continuity.



### Sanriku Geopark

The Geopark area is home to important strata that tell the history of the Earth. It conveys the local lifestyle and culture that exists alongside the workings of the earth. It also aims to pass on the memory of the Great East Japan Earthquake.





# 1,000 km of Encountering Diverse Landscapes

A single, continuous trail visible even on a world map.  
Its length alone inspires a challenge.  
It's packed with the dense variety unique to the Tohoku coast.



**Thru-hiker**

Someone who walks the entire trail in one continuous journey

Because it is one continuous route, thru-hikers attempt to traverse it in one go and section hikers or day hikers come to walk only part of it.

There are many long-distance trails around the world, some spanning several thousand km, attracting hikers from across the globe. The MCT is also long enough to be noticeable on a world map. Among trails worldwide, the MCT is notable for running along the coastline. Along the Tohoku coast's complex terrain with many ups and downs, you can walk through sea, rivers, mountains, and towns while experiencing history and culture.



**Day hiker**

Someone who walks only for a day



Charter for this page

Charter2. The trail will bring about connections between people who live in a place and those who visit that place.



**Section hiker**

Someone who walks multiple days in a row



# 1,000 km of Passing Down Stories

**A great deal was lost in the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.**

**This trail is a path that passes down the memories of the earthquake, tsunami, and reconstruction.**

**Along the coast, communities that have always lived hand in hand with the sea have come together, helping and supporting each other, walking the path of recovery.**

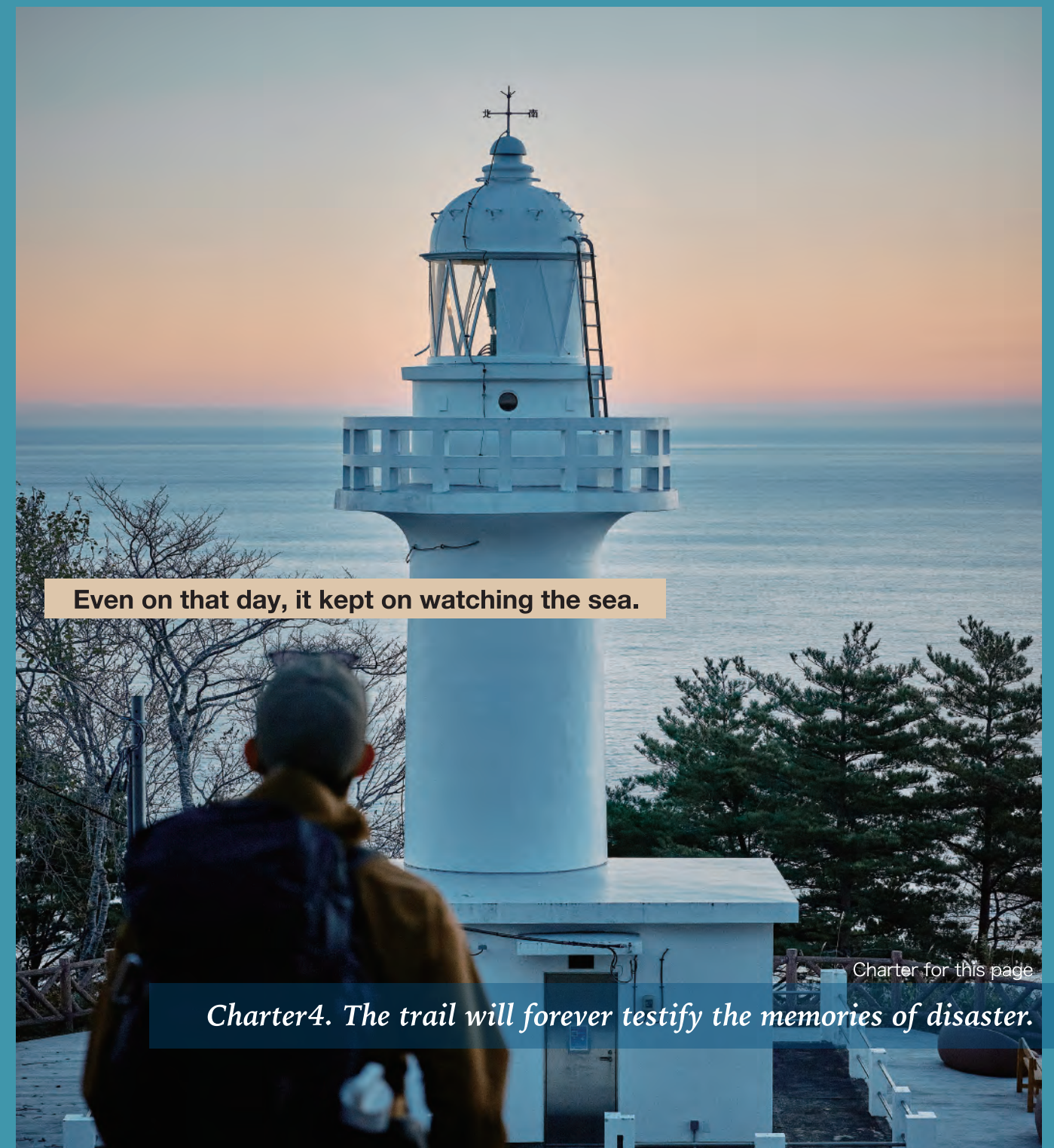
**This trail allows you to literally walk through and feel the strong, resilient way of life of the Tohoku coastal people.**

**It's a path of learning that nurtures the power to live. The chance encounters with local residents while walking and hearing firsthand accounts of the disaster are major highlights of this trail.**



Disaster Ruins Remain in Many Locations

During your walk, you may chat casually with local people, visit memorial facilities, see numerous Tsunami stone monument, or notice “Tsunami reached here” markings around town as well as bent guardrails never straightened out, older residential areas on higher ground, brand new neighborhoods on lower ground near sea level, and many lighthouses that have kept watch over the sea. As you walk, please think about the disaster and reconstruction, about disaster prevention and mitigation. We pass down these stories for everyone’s future.



Even on that day, it kept on watching the sea.

Charter4. The trail will forever testify the memories of disaster.



# 1,000 km of Mountains, Rivers, Sea, and Living Creatures

**Deep and expansive mountains that nurture life. From there, countless rivers flow toward the sea. Beyond these waters, rich in astonishing variety, lies a bountiful ocean that stands proudly on a global scale.**

Perhaps the defining feature of the MCT is how close the mountains and the sea are. Human activity and wildlife are also in close proximity, with rich ecosystems inhabited by large animals, such as the Asian black bear and the Japanese serow, as well as rare birds of prey, such as the golden eagle. Nutrient-rich waters flow from the mountains to the sea through various rivers, creating a world-class fishing ground. Although Tohoku is known for snow, clouds carrying snow are blocked by the deep Kitakami and Abukuma mountain ranges, leading to relatively little snow and many sunny days along the coast. In summer, a cool natural sea wind called the yamase blows, which is another big reason the MCT can be walked in all four seasons.



*Charter 1. The trail will be for enjoying beautiful sights and natural features.*

Charter for this page





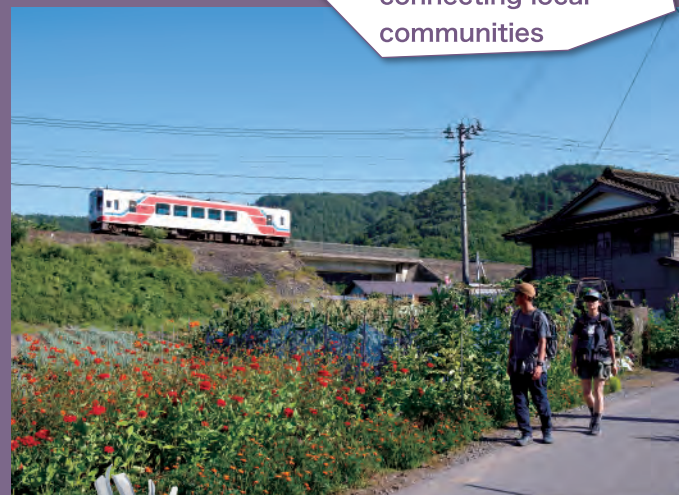
# 1,000 km of Encountering People, Livelihoods, And Culture

Complex terrain fosters diversity. Deeply rooted in local climate and landscapes, various styles of fishing have emerged along with a rare and vibrant sea culture.

In the area the MCT passes through, the sea once served as the main route of travel. Because of the complex coastline, many small settlements sprang up along the shore, each with its own distinct culture. A variety of folk performing arts deeply rooted in the local climate have been carefully handed down over many centuries and are still cherished today. Along the trail are about 250 small fishing ports. The harvested sea urchins, oysters, scallops, sea squirts, and other seafood are symbols of the sea's abundance. The MCT is a path that allows you to experience firsthand the life of people who have lived in harmony with the ocean since ancient times.



Shishi-odori  
(Deer Dance)



The Sanriku Railway  
connecting local  
communities



Fresh seafood cuisine



Tora-mai  
(Tiger Dance)



Charter for this page



Traditional fishing tools



Many fishing ports  
that make good  
use of the terrain

Charter5. The trail will pass on rich nature and cultures to future generations.





Stories of the MCT's Three Areas

# Coastal Terraces

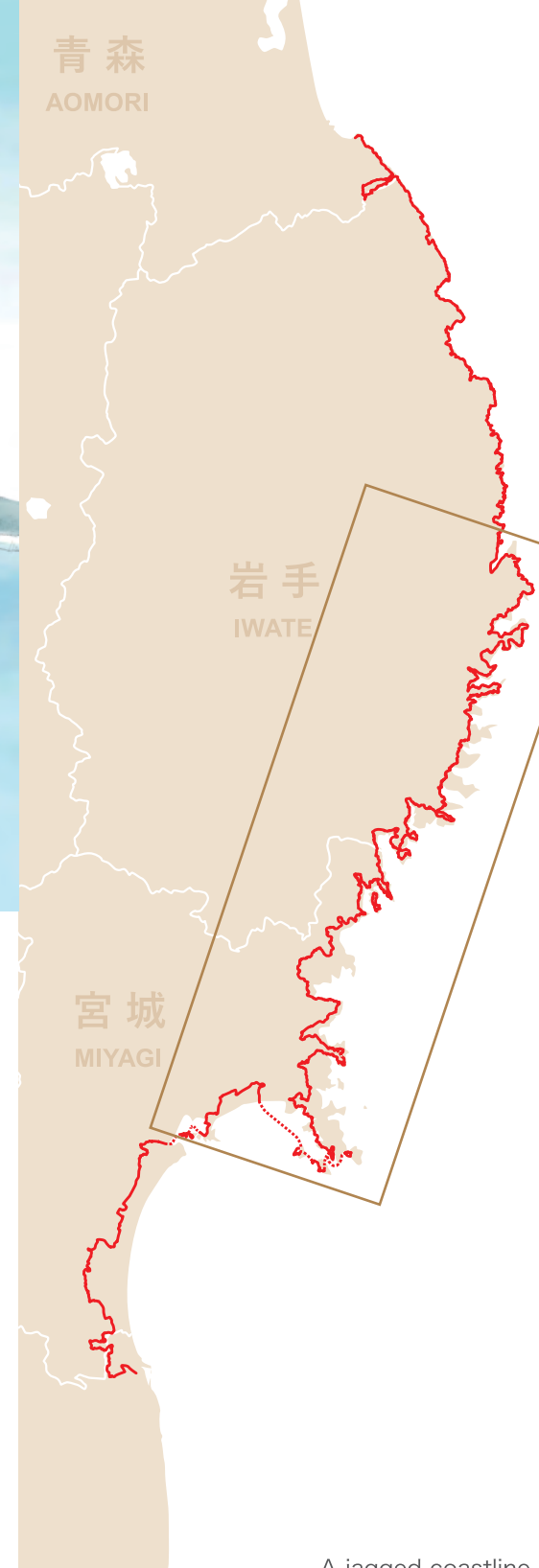
Walking the “Sea Alps”  
A Road of Serenity And Adventure  
Where Sea And Mountains Intersect

High, uplifted land standing almost like sheer cliffs from the sea. Beyond the natural grassy slopes where horses once roamed freely, you cross many rivers and pass through deep forests. Waves thunder against rocks, and after going through hand-carved tunnels, you'll find countless fishing ports and dairy-farming villages. The challenging terrain shaped by the rich sea has given birth to the livelihoods of the northern Sanriku region, sustaining people's lives even now.

Endless sheer cliffs



Coastal terraces with wild natural grassland



Stories of the MCT's Three Areas

# Rias Coast

Walking Mountain Passes And Peninsulas  
A Path of Profound History Amid  
Breathtaking Seascapes

About 10,000 years ago, the sea extended far into the mountain valleys, forming a coastline with many inlets and peninsulas. Quiet bays and well-forested hillsides create fertile fishing grounds, where people have long cultivated oysters and scallops. Passing through red pine forests and over mountain passes, you'll see the next town spread out below. At the tip of a peninsula, you can watch the sunrise illuminate the ocean, embraced by tranquility and nature.

A jagged coastline lined with peninsulas



A stone-paved mountain pass—a historic road







Stories of the MCT's Three Areas

# Alluvial Plains

Walking Plains And Satoyama  
A Route Where the Living History of  
Bygone Times Still Thrives in  
Contemporary Towns

This vast land was formed by sediment carried by multiple rivers. Blessed with fertile soil and abundant water resources, agriculture and urban areas have flourished here since ancient times, cultivating a rich cultural heritage. As you walk past numerous scenic or historic sites, you can reflect on the lives of those in both the past and present. Touring small islands by boat and climbing into the satoyama, you'll see big skies and the sweeping curve of the coastline.

View of the alluvial plain

Seaweed farming is thriving



## 120km Connecting Hachinohe And Lake Towada Hachinohe Towada Trail (HTT)

A long-distance trail that connects sea, mountains, rivers, and rural landscapes, from Hachinohe to Lake Towada in Towada, Aomori Prefecture. One prefecture, two cities, and two towns cooperate across a broad area along with the Ministry of the Environment and private organizations. With history and faith tied together, the route has seen frequent traffic since ancient times. Spanning 120 km, it takes you from a fishing town through farmland, orchards, forests, and valley streams—walking a gradient from urban areas into nature.

\* Test opening scheduled for late April 2025

## Stories Connected to the MCT

In the northern and southern regions of the Michinoku Coastal Trail, new trails have been born. Some people walk all three trails at once, some visit Tohoku again after finishing the MCT to walk the HTT and FCT, and some start with a shorter FCT hike then move on to the MCT. Each person enjoys traveling on foot through Tohoku in their own style.

## 200km Along the Fukushima Coastline Fukushima Coastal Trail (FCT)

A long-distance trail along the coast of Fukushima Prefecture, from Shinchi at the northern tip to Iwaki at the southern tip. Thirteen cities and towns belonging to the Utsukushima Hamakaido Promotion Council, along with private organizations, are collaborating across a broad area. The route from Shinchi to Soma overlaps with the MCT. With views of a grand and sometimes fierce Pacific Ocean, a natural environment nurtured by the Abukuma Mountain Range, and local traditions passed down through generations, this 200-km trail allows you to feel the authentic allure of the Hamadori region of Fukushima.

\* Opened on September 30, 2023



# A Trail We All Nurture Together

More than 200 workshops were held to create this trail together with local communities.

Even now, we work with local people on conservation and maintenance, connecting people and the trail.

## A trail decided through everyone's discussions

Over 200 workshops were held, shaping the trail with community input.



## Volunteers involved in maintenance

From mowing grass to setting up trail markers, local volunteers support the trail.

## Finally welcoming the full opening

After more than six years from concept to realization, 1,000 km of trail was completed in partnership with local communities.



## A boat captain who ferries hikers on a key route

An essential ferry route, this ferry also connects hikers with the local area.

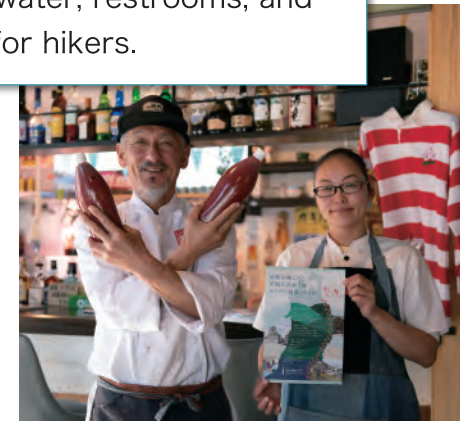


## Interactions between hikers and local communities

Through walks or taking part, conversations and connections emerge, offering opportunities to learn about local culture and lifestyles.

## Supporters

Local residents who offer campsites, water, restrooms, and other help for hikers.



## Companies participating in cleanup activities

Taking part in CSR efforts to protect the local environment and community.



## Local residents providing lodging

Inns, guesthouses, and other accommodations warmly welcome hikers.



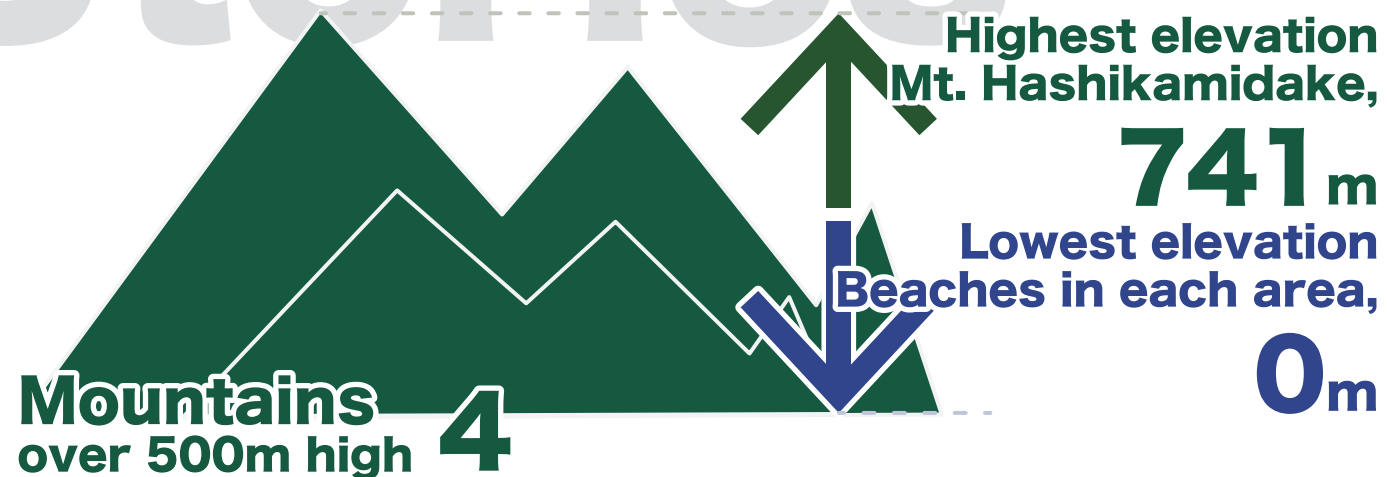
Charter6. The trail will welcome all who love to walk and will develop with everyone's help.

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# MCT by the Numbers

Full opening: June 9, 2019



**80 Lighthouses**  
A lighthouse along the trail

**Islands reached by boat 6**  
Kinkasan Island  
Ajishima Island  
Tashirojima Island  
Katusra-shima Island  
Sabusawa-jima Island  
Nono-shima Island

**Number of rivers (Class A River) 4**

And, there are countless rivers and streams flow from the mountains to the sea.

**Traditional performing arts over 2,000**

**Number of supporter facilities 193**

**Population along the Trail (4 prefectures, 29 cities/towns/villages)**  
**Total: 2,111,554 people**

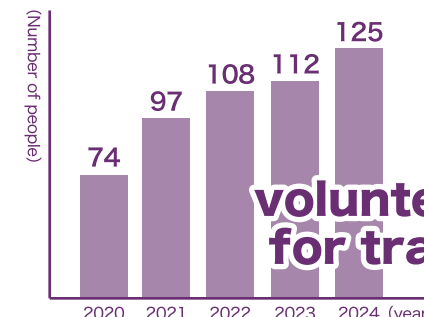
**Aomori Pref.: 230,919 (1 city, 1 town)**  
**Iwate Pref.: 216,612 (5 cities, 4 towns, 3 villages)**  
**Miyagi Pref.: 1,623,600 (9 cities, 4 towns)**  
**Fukushima Pref.: 40,423 (1 city, 1 town)**  
Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (as of January 1, 2024)

**Land area as of the end of March 2025 Sanriku Fukko (Reconstruction) National Park 285.4 km<sup>2</sup>**

**Fishing ports 251**  
Fishing port along the trail

**Number of outlying islands (Domestic ranking)**

**Aomori Pref.: 264 (18th)**  
**Iwate Pref.: 861 (4th)**  
**Miyagi Pref.: 666 (6th)**  
**Fukushima Pref.: 18 (36th)**



**Number of volunteers registered for trail maintenance 125**

**Visitor Center etc. 9 total**

**Number/types of signs 1,843/15**

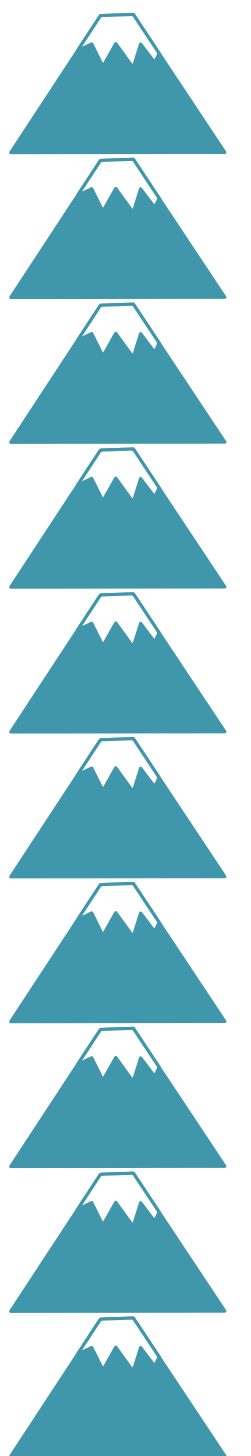
**Number of memorials and learning facilities about the disaster 88**

As of the end of March 2025/Geospatial Information Authority of Japan map

**125 Number of Shinto shrines**

**118 Sanriku Geopark Number of Geosites**

The cumulative elevation of the MCT is 10 Mount Fuji's



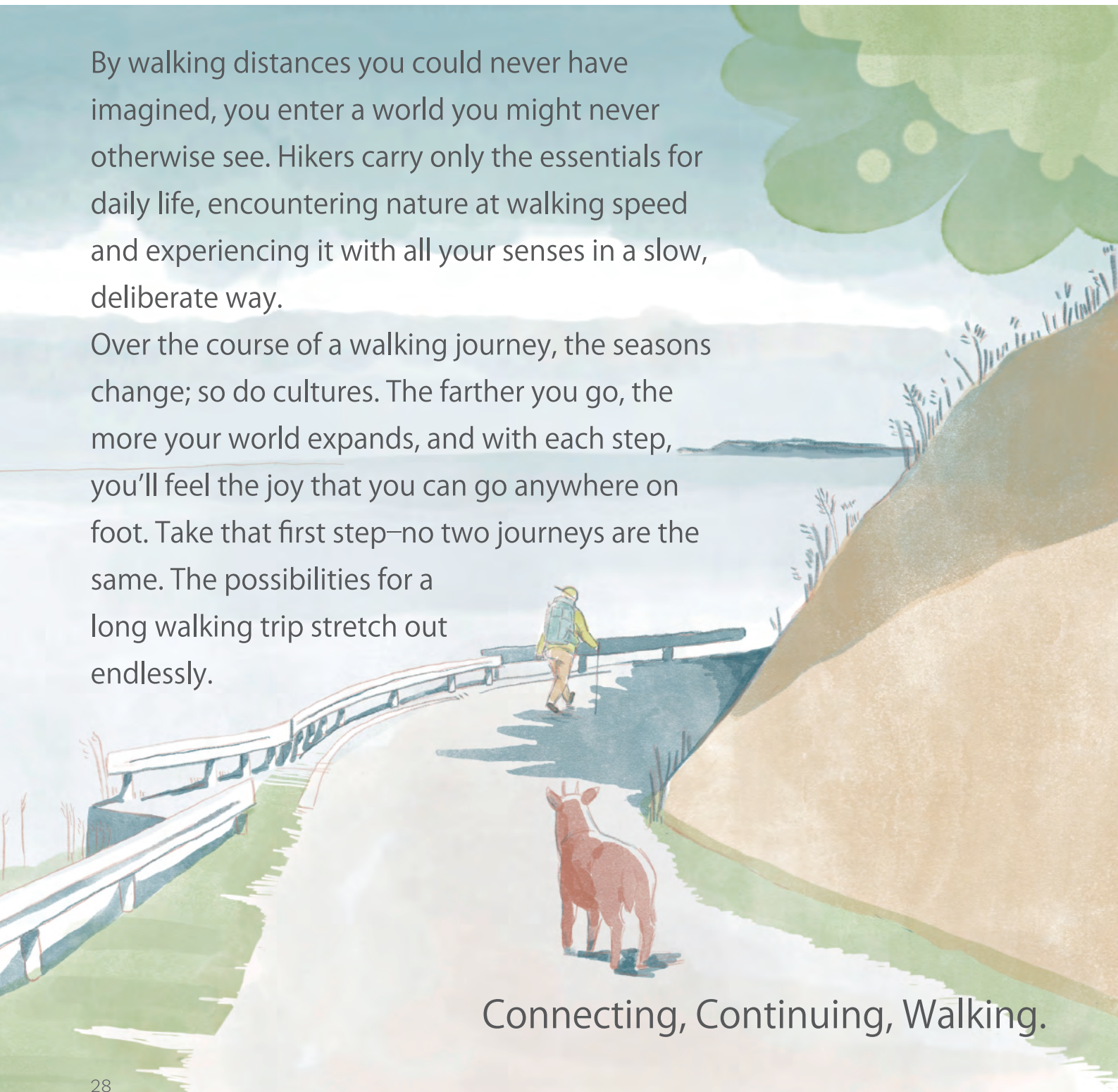


# Walking Long Distances

**At a pace of 3 km per hour, you begin to see things during many days on foot.**

By walking distances you could never have imagined, you enter a world you might never otherwise see. Hikers carry only the essentials for daily life, encountering nature at walking speed and experiencing it with all your senses in a slow, deliberate way.

Over the course of a walking journey, the seasons change; so do cultures. The farther you go, the more your world expands, and with each step, you'll feel the joy that you can go anywhere on foot. Take that first step—no two journeys are the same. The possibilities for a long walking trip stretch out endlessly.



Connecting, Continuing, Walking.



Charter for this page

*Charter3. The trail will leave lifelong memories of nature's kindness and harshness.*

## Leave No Trace: The 7 Principles

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surface
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be Considerate of others



Leave No Trace is one way of enjoying the outdoors while minimizing your impact on nature. Through Leave No Trace, hikers start to become aware of how their actions affect the environment. Even a little consideration can help pass on abundant nature to future generations—50 or 100 years from now.





# Japan's Long- distance Trails

Out of the world's aprox. 200 countries, Japan's stats:  
Land area: 61st largest  
Coastline length: 6th longest  
Forest area ratio vs. total land: 3rd highest  
Population: 12th largest

A long-distance trail bring  
new flows of people to the area.  
The trail will welcome all  
who love to walk and will develop  
with everyone's help

When walking long distances in Japan, you alternate between nature and human settlements. One unique and appealing aspect is that you can experience changes in culture over relatively short distances.

Geographically, Japan is an island nation with limited land area but a very long coastline and a great deal of elevation variation—around 70% of the country is mountainous or hilly. Small basins lie in the mountains, and plains stretch along the coasts; people tend to live in these plains and basins.