Lake Towada & Oirase Map & Area Guide

1.Oirase Area

Warning: Oirase Gorge is designated as a Special Protection Zone. You cannot take any rocks or plants home with you. Please stay on clearly marked paths to protect the environment.

Why Oirase Gorge is So Unique

The charm of Oirase Gorge lies in its stable water source and gentle flow. It hardly ever floods in Oirase, which allows moss to grow on the many scattered rocks and trees along the mountain stream, creating a green landscape, unlike other similar environments. In addition, all walkways are well-maintained within the forest. The stability of water levels is again another reason why it is possible to build walkways at the same height as the river itself, which is another feature of the gorge.

Rent-a-Cycle *Cycle in comfort and style*

Experience the refreshing feeling of cycling through the gorge by bicycle! With pedal assist, climbing hills is a breeze! Oh, the places you'll go...
*Height restrictions (140cm or above). Identification required.

- **Bicycle rental locations**
  1. Oirase Keiryu-kan 2. Ishigedo Rest Area
  3. Nenokuchi Station (JR Bus Tohoku) / JR House Nenokuchi
- Opening Hours: 8:30–16:30
- Rental Fees
  Fees: Bicycle with pedal assist (3-speed) 1,500 yen (4 hours)
  City Cycle (6-speed) 1,000 yen (4 hours)
  Additional fees: 300 yen every 30 minutes (per bicycle)
- Oirase Keiryu-kan 0176-74-1233

Reasons Why Oirase Hardly Ever Floods

Lake Towada acts as a huge natural dam and can hold water in the lake in even the heaviest of rains, suppressing the amount of water discharged to the gorge. The gentle slope of the Oirase Gorge is another factor that helps stabilize the flow of water.

Mossball Workshop

Moss is the source of Oirase's natural beauty. Roll up this beautiful piece of nature with your own two hands and take a small piece of Oirase with you. Reservations available for one or more and the experience takes about 30 minutes. The workshop costs 2,000 yen/person.
- Oirase Mossball Workshop (Inside Oirase Keiryu-kan)
  0176-74-1233
  http://www.mossball.jp/

❷ Kudan-no-taki Falls

As the name suggests, Kudan-no-taki Falls (lit. "nine-stair waterfall") slides down gradually over several rocky steps. While there is not much water in the 15-meter-high falls, the walkway at its base is well-maintained and is a great photo opportunity.

❸ Shiranuno-no-taki Falls

A solid, white sheet of water flows generously in this beautiful waterfall.

⓫ Matsumi-no-taki Falls

Selected as one of Japan's top 100 waterfalls, Matsumi-no-taki Falls is indisputably Hakkoda's greatest. However, at six hours on foot, this round-trip journey requires proper climbing equipment. *Please beware of sudden drops and rock fall.

❻ Samidare-no-nagare Current

It is said that this stream was named for its three currents that tumble downstream. Its flow remains gentle despite its large volume of water, so it is a good place to observe the many faces of Oirase. Samidare-no-nagare Current is also a perfect point to see some quintessential views of Oirase, such as the blankets of moss and plants growing on rocks in the river.

❼ Oirase Yusui-kan (Oirase Water Museum)

A taste of nature in each sip of Oirase's own bottled water—Oirase Genryusui. Get a glimpse of production through the glass at this facility that manufactures it. There is also a snack bar and café space on the second floor.

❽ Oirase Keiryu-kan (Oirase Stream Museum)

Excluding winter

Located in Yakeyama at the entrance to Oirase Gorge, Oirase Keiryu-kan is home to exhibits and displays and sells souvenirs and products related to the gorge. Try your hand at making a moss ball at an Oirase Mossball Workshop or conveniently rent a bicycle to explore the gorge. Or drop by for a cup of coffee made with fresh water from the gorge or for bright green, moss-themed ice cream.

Birds of Oirase Gorge

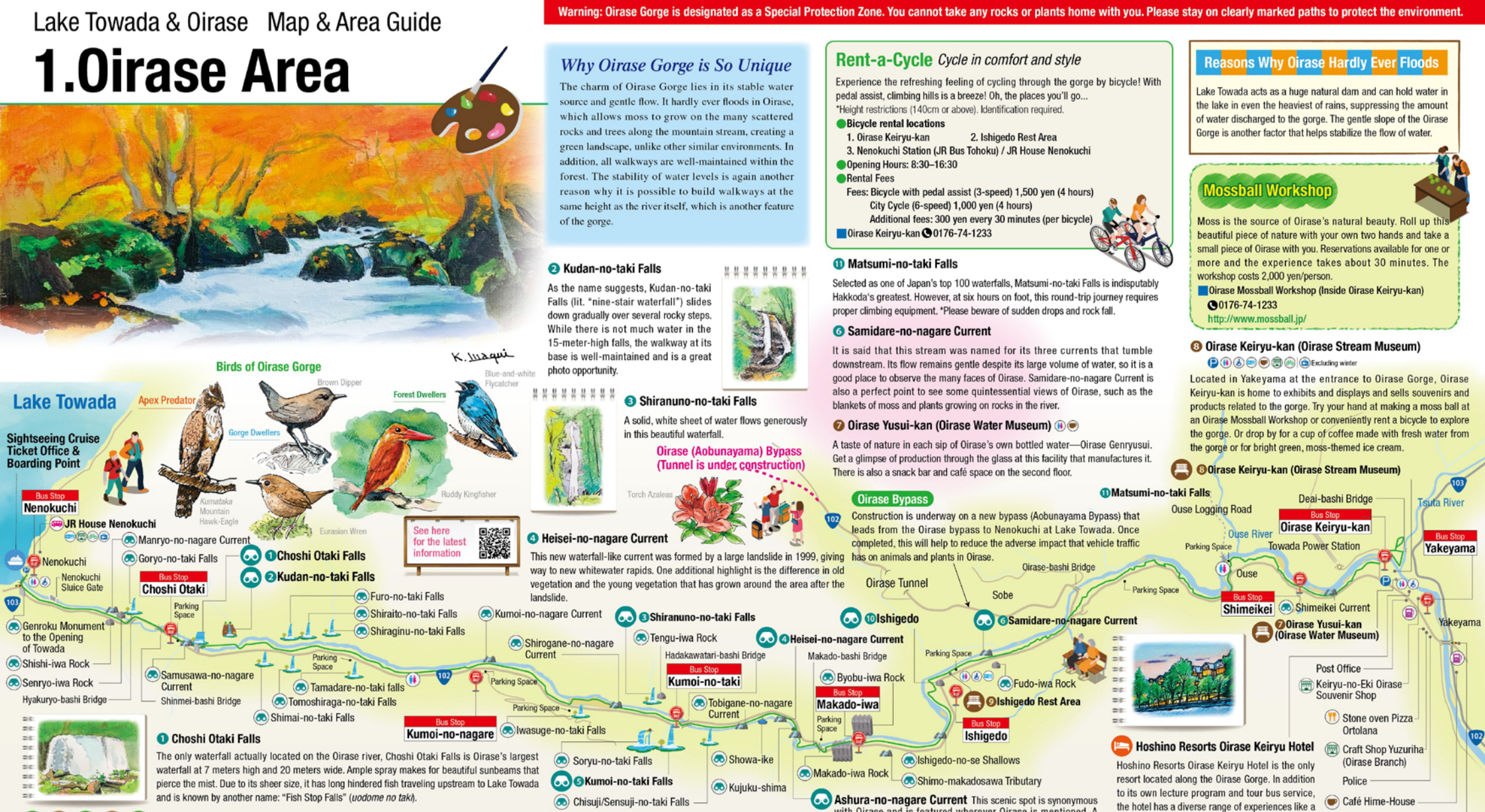
Oirase (Aobunayama) Bypass (Tunnel is under construction)

Oirase Bypass

Construction is underway on a new bypass (Aobunayama Bypass) that leads from the Oirase bypass to Nenokuchi at Lake Towada. Once completed, this will help to reduce the adverse impact that vehicle traffic has on animals and plants in Oirase.

❹ Heisei-no-nagare Current

This new waterfall-like current was formed by a large landslide in 1999, giving way to new whitewater rapids. One additional highlight is the difference in old vegetation and the young vegetation that has grown around the area after the landslide.



❶ Choshi Otaki Falls

The only waterfall actually located on the Oirase river, Choshi Otaki Falls is Oirase's largest waterfall at 7 meters high and 20 meters wide. Ample spray makes for beautiful sunbeams that pierce the mist. Due to its sheer size, it has long hindered fish traveling upstream to Lake Towada and is known by another name: "Fish Stop Falls" (*uodome no taki*).

Hoshino Resorts Oirase Keiryu Hotel

Hoshino Resorts Oirase Keiryu Hotel is the only resort located along the Oirase Gorge. In addition to its own lecture program and tour bus service, the hotel has a diverse range of experiences like a winter-only frozen waterfall *onsen*, all of which are sure to enrich your time in Oirase.

❺ Kumoi-no-taki Falls

Kumoi-no-taki Falls is 20 meters high and has plenty of water, making it one of the most breathtaking waterfalls along the gorge. It was named for the fine, cloudy spray that rises when the water crashes on the rocks below. The waterfall is located just off the road along a path that leads directly to the foot of the falls, where you can feel its roaring power up close.

❾ Ishigedo Rest Area

This rest area is equipped with a parking space as well as a corner shop and a small restaurant for light meals. At the visitor center adjacent to the shop, you can spot the highlights of the gorge in a miniature model installed inside. Ishigedo is often used as a jumping-off point for strolling the gorge thanks to its restrooms and vending machines.

❿ Ishigedo

"Kedo" means "hut" in the local dialect of the Akita *matagi* hunting people. A huge, monolithic slab of rock one meter thick and ten meters across leans against a *katsura* tree, forming a natural rock shelter. Legend has it that a female bandit used to terrorize travelers here.

Walking Plan

Upstream
From the mouth of the gorge near Lake Towada(Nenokuchi) to Kumoi-no-nagare Current, cliffs tower on both sides, which makes for more magnificent, canyon-esque views. So much so that upstream of Oirase Gorge has gained the nickname "Waterfall Way" for its numerous waterfalls that line the walls of the gorge from the lake to the area around Tamadare-no-taki Falls. Recommended for those who want to enjoy the rich variety of Oirase's waterfalls, most of which are concentrated in this area.

Midstream
There is a flood of scenic highlights in this portion of Oirase, which extends from Kumoi-no-nagare Current to the entrance of the Oirase Bypass. Additionally, two particularly beautiful forests are located downstream of Ishigedo and along the right banks of Shirogane-no-nagare Current, recommended for those who want to enjoy the beauty of the gorge.

Downstream
This area extends from Yakeyama to the entrance of the Oirase Bypass. The stream widens here, especially when compared to mid- and upstream. Within this tamer part of the gorge are beautiful beech and horse chestnut forests, perfect for those who want to enjoy Oirase's impressive landscape.

Bus Stop Nenokuchi — 30min 1.5km — Bus Stop Choshi Otaki — 60min 2.7km — Bus Stop Kumoi-no-nagare — 35min 1.8km — Bus Stop Kumoi-no-taki — 35min 1.5km — Bus Stop Makado-iwa — 25min 1.3km — Bus Stop Ishigedo — 85min 4.2km — Bus Stop Shimeikei — 20min 1.0km — Bus Stop Oirase Keiryu-kan — 10min 0.5km — Bus Stop Yakeyama

Approximate walking times for each section.

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