

Iwaki Vision



**Spring has
Sprung!**

Celebrating all nature
has to offer in Iwaki

Cherry Blossom Viewing

It's that time of year again! The days are getting brighter and warmer, and Iwaki's cherry blossoms have begun to bloom. Bearing COVID-19 safety measures in mind, we have assembled a guide to our five most recommended viewing spots so you can enjoy hanami (cherry blossom viewing) to the fullest!

Shinkawa Riverside



Alright, given that City Hall is right next to this location we are admittedly a little biased...but the beauty of Shinkawa's riverside cannot be overstated. With the lower bank walkway's recent reopening, this spring is the perfect time for a relaxing stroll under the long row of cherry blossom trees. Those with a knack for photography may want to capture the scene of petals floating delicately in the breeze towards the glistening shallow water...this location is simply not to be missed! (If you're lucky you might also be able to snap a photo of the friendly neighbourhood cats, often spotted sunbathing by the riverbank).



Address: 〒973-8411, Fukushima, Iwaki, Ojimamachi, 3 Chome-1 3-1.

Ogawa Suwa Shrine

If you're looking for a smaller, quieter spot to enjoy hanami, look no further than Ogawa Suwa Shrine. A beauty all year round, the shrine is especially stunning below this tree's cascading blossoms. We find this area particularly alluring after sunset, when the fading light casts a more lilac tone on the petals.

Address: 〒979-3122, Fukushima, Iwaki, Ienomae-140, Ogawamachi, Takahagi.



Matsugaoka Park

Moving north-east, Matsugaoka Park is ideal for those wishing to take their time and explore a much vaster area. We recommend wearing comfortable walking shoes, as sections of this park weave through steep hills, wooden stairs and stunning bridges. If you are bringing children, they can have fun on the park's swing sets, slides and more!

Address: 〒970-8026, Fukushima, Iwaki, Yakuojidai-3, Taira.



21st Century Forest Park

For those visiting with children, we also highly recommend visiting the 21st Century Forest Park, close to Yumoto Station. With trees and flora aplenty, this modern park is also home to striking architecture such as the Iwaki Green Stadium, as well as a skate park for more sporty cherry-blossom enthusiasts.

Address: 〒972-8311, Fukushima, Iwaki, Ryugasawa, Jobanmizunoyamachi.

Kashima Senbonzakura Park

Last but by no means least, if you only have for one hanami trip in Iwaki, Kashima Senbonzakura Park is this author's personal recommendation. The park boasts one of Iwaki's most densely cherry blossom-populated areas, hence its name (senbon = thousand trees, zakura/sakura = cherry blossom). At night, each tree is lit up with pink lanterns – a warm glow which enhances their natural beauty.

Address: 〒971-8133 Fukushima, Iwaki, Kashimamachi Komoda.



Strawberry Picking

Strawberry picking is another of this author's favourite springtime activities in Iwaki. While often considered expensive, the quality of Japan's strawberries is unmatched. Below is an introduction to each of Iwaki's four strawberry picking gardens to enjoy this season.



Helena Strawberry Land

Iwaki's newest strawberry farm opened its doors in December last year. Neighbouring the Helena International Country Club and Villa, this area makes for the perfect family outing. With a maximum price of just 1400 yen for 90 minutes, visitors can feast upon the aisles full of Benihoppe, Akihime, Tochiotome and Mouikko strawberries. Visitors can also enjoy café-style drinks and desserts, including strawberry waffles and daifuku. It is approximately an 8-minute taxi ride from JR Ueda Station, or a 10-minute taxi ride from JR Yumoto Station.

Location: 〒974-8202 Fukushima, Iwaki, Soenomachi, Zukindaira 66-3.

Opening Hours: Mon-Sun, 10am-4pm. **On-Sight Parking:** Available. **Tel:** 0246-88-9181.

* Admission for 90 Minutes	
Until May 31 st	
Adults (middle schoolers and above)	1400 円
Elementary Schoolers	1200 円
Younger than Elementary school or Ages 70 and over	900 円
Ages 3 and Under	Free



*** To be paid in cash**



Agri Park Iwaki

Just a stone's throw from the ocean, the irresistibly sweet and fragrant strawberries grown at Agri Park are among this author's favourites. One unique feature of this park is that there are two levels of height for reaching the strawberries, making it ideal for children, adults and wheelchair users. It offers four varieties of strawberries including Fukuharu-ka, a variety cultivated and sold exclusively in Fukushima.

Location: 〒970-0101 Fukushima, Iwaki, Tairashimokabeya, Minaminaiki-25.

Opening Hours: Tues - Sun, 10am - 4pm. **On-sight Parking:** Available.

Tel: 0246-68-7203.

Admission for 60 Minutes			
From April 5 th - May 9 th		From May 11 th - June 30 th	
Adults (middle schoolers and above)	1400 円	Adults (middle schoolers and above)	1200 円
Elementary Schoolers	1200 円	Elementary Schoolers	1000 円
Ages 4 - Elementary school and 70 and over	900 円	Ages 4 - Elementary school and 70 and over	700 円
Age 3	400 円	Age 3	300 円
Under Age 3	Free	Under Age 3	Free



Tabito Strawberry Garden

Tabito Strawberry Garden specializes in the Akihime variety – sweet, soft and especially popular with children. Since they tend to bruise easily, they are not suitable for transportation and are best enjoyed directly at the facility. Tabito Strawberry Terrace also sells homemade Strawberry Gelato, perfect for cooling down in the warmer weather.

Location: 〒974-0152 Fukushima, Iwaki, Shimohiraishi-70, Tabitomachi, Tabiuto.

Opening Hours: Thurs-Mon, 10am – 4pm.

On-sight Parking: Available.

Tel: 0246-69-2448.



Admission for 30 Minutes			
*Until May 9 th		From May 10 th	
Adults (middle schoolers and above)	1400 円	Adults (middle schoolers and above)	1100 円
Ages 3 and over	1100 円	Ages 3 and over	900 円
Under Age 3	Free	Under Age 3	Free

* **【Closed for Golden Week】**



Ono Strawberry Garden

Oh no! We've reached our final recommendation. Fear not, however, it is just as enjoyable – if not more – than the aforementioned fruit havens. Just a short drive from Wonder Farm Iwaki and Tomato Land Iwaki, Ono Strawberry Garden features aisles at a height of 130cm, ideal for children and wheelchair users. Tomatoes are also sold directly at the facility for those who do not have time to include a tomato picking trip in their itinerary.

Location: 〒979-0216 Fukushima, Iwaki, Moriuchi-23, Tamayama, Yotsukuramachi. **Opening Hours:** Mon-Sun, 10am-4pm.

On-sight Parking: Available. **Tel:** 0246-33-3434.

Admission for Unlimited Time			
From April – May 10 th		From May 11 th – June 10 th	
Adults (middle schoolers and above)	1400 円	Adults (middle schoolers and above)	1100 円
Elementary Schoolers	1100 円	Elementary Schoolers	900 円
Ages 70 and over	900 円	Ages 70 and over	700 円
Under Age 3	Free	Under Age 3	Free

Please note that for each location, early closures may occur on the day if there are no more strawberries!

Certain areas of each facility are pollinated by busy bees. Avoid visiting if you are allergic.

Guide to Iwaki's Strawberries

Confused over Japan's many varieties of strawberries? *Don't lose Beni-hoppe!*

Finally, if you're new to strawberry-picking in Japan, we've got you covered. Of the approximately 312 different types, Iwaki is famous for Benihoppe, Akihime, Tochiotome, Amaou, Mouikko and Fukuharu-ka!



Benihoppe (紅ほっぺ)

Originating in Shizuoka Prefecture, this variety gives off a mostly sweet yet *slightly* acidic taste. Beni (紅) means deep red, while hoppe (ほっぺ) means cheek. The name comes from the Japanese expression 'hoppe ga ochiru', meaning 'your cheek will fall', a way of describing how it feels to eat something delicious. They tend to be fuller towards the root and flatter towards the end, and just so happen to be this author's favourite!

Akihime (あきひめ)

Usually written in hiragana, the name of this variety combines the words *aki* (あき) meaning autumn, and *hime* (ひめ) meaning princess. They are not usually grown in autumn, however – the name actually comes from their original grower, Hagiwara Akihiro. He gave half of his own name “Aki/章” and “Hime/Princess/姫” in reference to his daughter. These strawberries are rounder in shape and sweet throughout with no acidity, unlike their Benihoppe counterparts. They are quite delicate and therefore unsuitable for transportation, picking directly is the best way to enjoy them.



Tochiotome (とちおとめ)

This sweet berry provides a balanced flavour similar to the Benihoppe variety. Despite their typically smaller size, they pack a tasty punch! They are in season from November to June and originate in Tochigi Prefecture, hence the name Tochi (とち), combined with otome (おとめ), meaning “young lady”.

Amaou (あまおう)

Another sweet-sour blend, this well-rounded strawberry is native to Fukuoka prefecture. Its name is a combination of amai (sweet), marui (round), okii (big) and umai (tasty). At their peak, they are typically much larger than most other strawberries available in Iwaki.



Mouikko (もういっこ)

Another of the more balanced variety, this strawberry hails from Miyagi Prefecture. Its sweet yet tart flavour will leave you wanting one more, as its Japanese name (“one more”) suggests! With a lighter inner flesh, Mouikko strawberries offer a particularly rich taste.

Fukuharu-ka (ふくはる香・福春香)

This Fukushima-exclusive strawberry is said to contain a hint of peach. It is renowned for its exceptionally clean, refreshing flavour and bright, white centre. Although commonly written in hiragana, its name combines the “fuku” from Fukushima, the word “haru” for spring and the “ka” for aroma.



Don't forget – the redder the better!



A Word from the Editor

That's it for now! I hope you enjoyed reading my very first issue of Iwaki Vision. Iwaki is a truly beautiful city with much to offer, especially during springtime. I look forward to bringing you even more seasonal content in the next issue.

Aideen Singleton

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