



Stories of the Land, Nature, and People Connected by Bandai-san Geopark



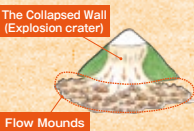
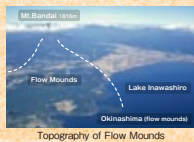
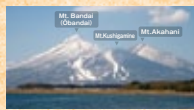
The Growth and Collapse of Mt. Bandai



The Hidden Past Behind its Graceful Shape, the Mt. Fuji of Aizu

Mt. Bandai is a volcano formed of andesite magma. As this kind of magma has moderate stickiness, the volcano's eruption becomes explosive and expels lava. This type of eruption can include the releasing of volcanic ash. Because of these features, the volcano becomes a beautiful stratovolcano as it grows.

However, an eruption which occurred about fifty thousand years ago led the southwest part of Mt. Bandai to collapse and cause a debris avalanche which formed flow mounds at its foot. This debris avalanche also dammed up rivers which flowed into the Aizu basin in the west, and created Lake Inawashiro. The only island, Okinashima, in Lake Inawashiro is also one of those flow mounds.



Nature and Water Environment of Lake Inawashiro



The Fascination of Lake Inawashiro, the Mirror Reflecting Heaven

① The largest blooms of the Asaza Lily left in Japan

Asaza [fringed water-lily] is an aquatic plant which used to be seen in plenty of lakes and marshes, but is now designated as an endangered species in Japan.

Asaza is said to have the effect of purifying water, prevention of erosion, and fish preservation. The scenery it creates is enjoyed as a key attraction of Lake Inawashiro.



② Swans and their visiting places on Lake Inawashiro (a National Natural Treasure)

Every year more than 2,000 swans visit the northern coast of Lake Inawashiro, and spend the winter from early October to early April. Inawashiro Town set up "Conservation Society for Nature of Lake Inawashiro" in 2000 (Heisei 12) and has worked on the conservation of the environment.



Continuing Belief at the Foot of Mt. Bandai



An Anchor for One's Spirit

Mt. Bandai used to be called 'Mt. Iwa-hashii' because it was as if a ladder [梯子: hashi-go] of rock [磐: Iwa] extends to heaven. A local deity, Bandai Myōjin is enshrined at the summit of the mountain, and you can visit the Iwahashi Shrine at the foot of the mountain.

In the Hanitsu Shrine, Hoshina Masayuki, the First Aizu Lord, is apotheosized as a guardian god of Aizu. The ruin of Enichi-ji Temple, Enichi-ji Temple founded by a priest 'Tokuitsu', is Buddhist temple built at the foot of Mt. Bandai, can be seen in the east. It is said the temple was founded in 807, and it was abandoned in the early years of the Meiji period (1868).

The establishment of these shrines and historic spots are deeply related to locations of Mt. Bandai. The existence of mountains of belief have been an anchor for our spirits.



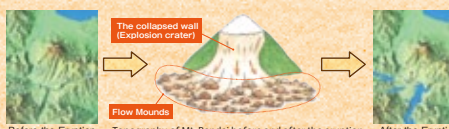
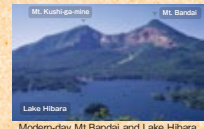
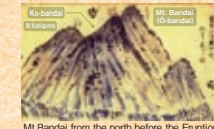
Mt. Bandai Which Shows Inside the Volcano



Ko-bandai's Collapse and Formation of Lakes and Ponds

The peak of Ko-bandai [Little Bandai] erupted due to a phreatic explosion that caused the body of the mountain to collapse (debris avalanche) and flow down the valley.

477 people lost their lives and this was the biggest volcano disaster after the Meiji Restoration. In the north side of Mt. Bandai (Urabandai Highland), the debris avalanche dammed rivers and formed lakes, including Lake Hibara



Nature Recovering from Wasteland



Various Ecosystem Succeeded Since 1888

The 1888 (Meiji 21) eruption of Mt. Bandai made most parts of the old and rich forests into a wasteland at once. You can meet the ecosystem at various levels of its changing into stable forests. This process took over a hundred years in Urabandai.



Living with the Volcano

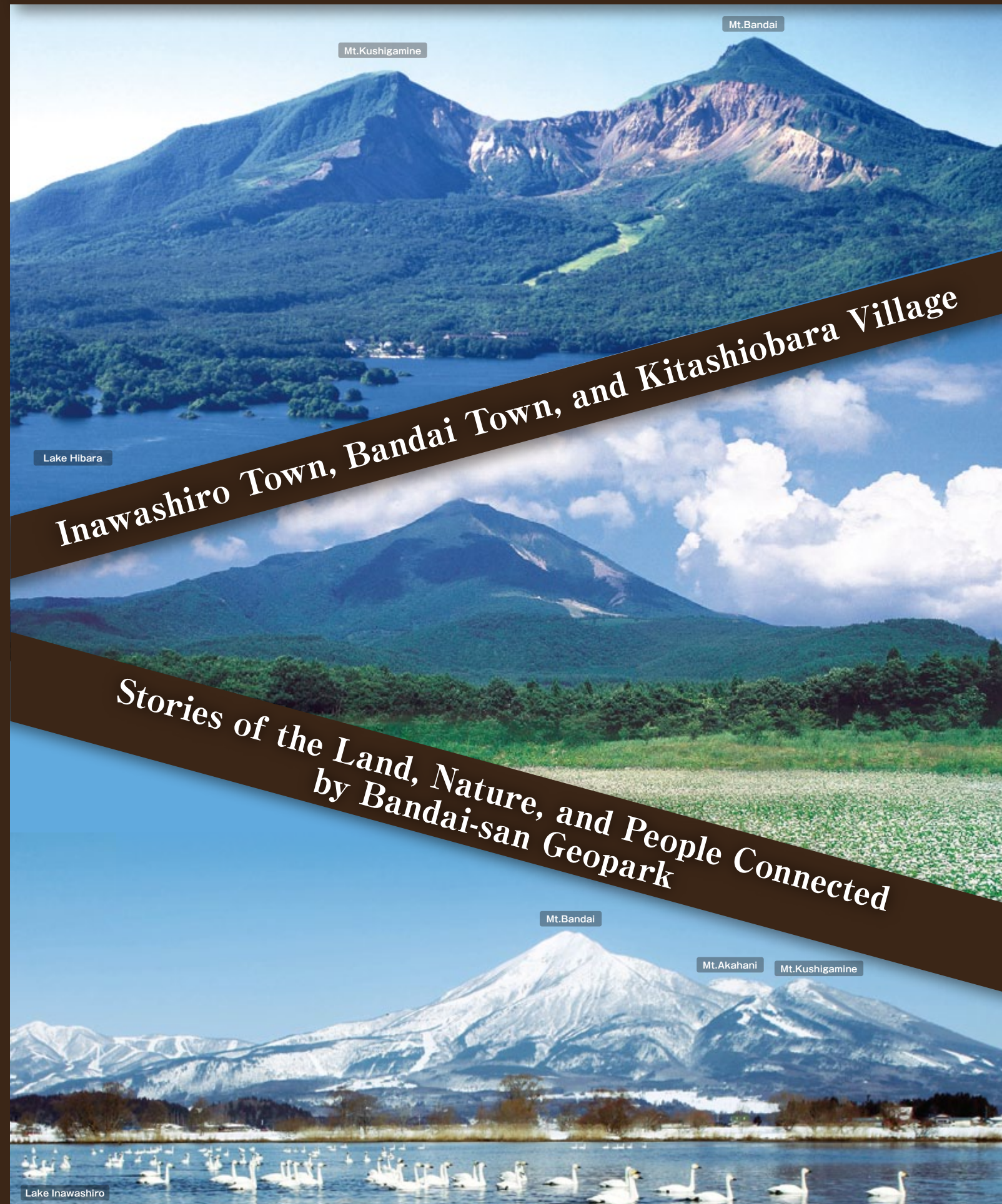


Proof of the Recovery from the Volcano Disaster

Judging from the illustration of the mountain drawn right after the 1888 (Meiji 21) eruption, people must have not expected that vegetation would recover in a short period on the Urabandai Highland. However, with the help of a policy of the government at that time, many people started a reforestation project for this devastated area. Endō Jūjirō (Genmu) is the one who succeeded in reforestation, among those who tried. He planted over one hundred-thousand trees including Japanese red pines in the devastated land. Forests in Urabandai show both the recovering power of nature and the history of our predecessors who worked hard for this recovery.



Welcome to Bandai-san Geopark



Debris Avalanche, Flow Mounds, Lakes and Ponds: A Mountain of Treasures, Forever and Ever



Welcome to Bandai-san Geopark

Inawashiro Town, Bandai Town, and Kitashiobara Village



What is a Geopark?
A geopark is called "a park of the land" where you can enjoy and learn world-wide valuable geographical features and about the nature of the soil, the history, and culture of animals, plants, and people living on the land. Moreover, from it we can learn its connections to and stories about local specialties and places like hot springs, etc..



Mt. Bandai

Mount Bandai is called "Mt. Fuji of Aizu" in the book Nihon Hyakumeizan (One Hundred Mountains of Japan), and is familiarly known as a mountain of treasures in a folk song: "Aizu-Bandai-san". The highest peak is Bandai-san (also called as O-bandai, or Big Bandai) with an altitude of 1816m. There used to be Ko-bandai (Little Bandai) until the eruption in the Meiji era.



Historic Spot: The Ruin of Enichi-ji Temple

Enichi-ji temple, founded by a priest Tokuitsu in the early Heian period, is one of the largest temples in the eastern part of Japan, and prospered as the birthplace of Aizu Buddhism culture. It has been designated as a National Historic Site.



Ryugasawa Spring Water

The Ryugasawa Spring is a representative spring of the 'Spring water sources at the western foot of Mt. Bandai' which have been designated as one of the 100 Best Natural Waters of Japan. Based on a story that the spring water never dried up even during a drought, the Aizu-Han [Domain] would pray for rain at this place.



Mine-no-Oishi

Mine-no-Oishi [Mine's Huge Stone] is an andesite boulder carried along by the mud flow caused by the eruption of Mt. Bandai in 1888 (Meiji 21). This is a national natural treasure, and still shows the power of the eruption.



Hanitsu Shrine

The Hanitsu Shrine is a shrine that enshrines Masayuki Hoshina, the first domain lord of Aizu. The stone monument on which his achievements are inscribed is one of the largest in Japan. The shrine is located in the direction which saves Aizu, and is also a subordinate shrine to the Iwahashi Shrine dedicated to Mt. Bandai.



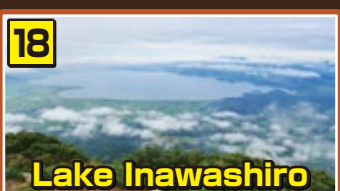
Mt. Bandai's Collapsed Wall and Aka-numa Pond

This is the center of the eruption of Mt. Bandai in 1888 (Meiji 21). The inside of the volcano can be seen because of Ko-bandai's sectional collapse. Also the Aka-numa Pond is the source of the Goshiki-numa [five-colored] Lakes and Ponds.



Oyamazumi Shrine

A torii [the gateway to a shrine] appears only when Lake Hibara's water recedes. This phenomenon tells the fact that there used to be the old Hibara Village which has now sunk and is at the bed of the lake. This was caused by rivers being dammed up by the eruption in the Meiji period.



Lake Inawashiro

Lake Inawashiro is the fourth-largest lake in Japan, and is also called 'Tenkyo-ko [Heaven's Mirror Lake]' since it is like a mirror reflecting the sky. You can enjoy swimming in the lake in the summer. Its surface area is 103.3km² and surface elevation is 514m.