



Newsletter



Welcome to Yamagata City

the riverbanks watching beautifully coloured leaves in autumn, and winter sports amid the *Jyuhyo* - famous Zao snow monsters - in winter.

Located in the Tohoku region, in the northern part of Japan, Yamagata City was established as the capital of Yamagata Prefecture on 1 April 1889. The city is surrounded on all sides by magnificent mountains, and a variety of rich resources and regional culture have been cultivated to date.

In Yamagata, you can enjoy attractions of the city in every season: viewing the cherry blossoms in full bloom at the historical castle in spring, the traditional Yamagata *Hanagasa* festival where people dance along the main street in summer, *Imoni* (taro and beef soup) festival on

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Welcome to Yamagata City

You can enjoy its unique natural beauty, delicious local foods and the traditional culture of Yamagata City all year round.

In addition, the city can be described as a hot spring capital because there are many hot spring spots that you can enjoy during any season. Yamagata City is truly a hidden gem in Japan, as a place to eat, play and rest. Yamagata City sincerely wishes people in Australia and New Zealand would come to visit one day.

▪ 40th Anniversary of sister city relationship

In 1980, Yamagata City formed a sister city relationship with Swan Hill City in Victoria, Australia. Since then, the two cities have been conducting friendly exchanges. After a few years' halt due to the pandemic, the two cities resumed mutual exchanges by residents of each other's cities in 2024 and celebrated the 40th anniversary of their relationship. When a delegation from Swan Hill visited Yamagata City in April, the cherry blossoms were in full bloom just in time for them, and participants were able to experience the Japanese tradition of viewing cherry blossoms while eating *dango* – a traditional Japanese dessert - and rice balls.

They also deepened their relationship through additional activities such as Japanese flower arrangement, tea ceremony, *Haiku*, wearing *Samurai* armour, and a hot spring foot bath. Yamagata City also hosted an event - An Evening with Australian Wine - where people from the two cities met and greeted each other while enjoying a special dish of Australian lamb and carefully selected Australian wines. It was a great opportunity to strengthen the bond at the local level.

In October, a delegation led by Yamagata City Mayor visited Swan Hill Rural City, and they spent a meaningful time experiencing the Australian daily life and culture through the exchange programs featuring inspections of large-scale farms, Australian food, and dancing *Hanagasa* dance all together with the hosting party.

▪ Yamagata Garden

The Swan Hill Yamagata Garden on the bank of the Little Murray River in Swan Hill Rural City was opened to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the sister city relationship. The garden was architecturally designed and built by Swan Hill Rural City with some advice from Yamagata City, and includes a couple of elements resembling the essence of Yamagata City in honour of the relationship between the two cities. For example, almond trees are used to represent the Yamagata cherry blossoms, and the history of the sister cities is expressed in the Japanese-style stone pathways.

During this visit, Yamagata City presented Swan Hill Rural City a plaque which is specially made with Yamagata *Imono* - traditional metal casting, and the plaque was placed in the garden. Yamagata metal casting is made of copper which will age nicely with rustic colours, and it is said to last a thousand years. Please check out the garden and



the plaque if you have a chance to visit Swan Hill.

▪ Cross-generational exchange

The main exchange is the short-term school exchange program with homestays for high school students. Over 600 students from both cities have experienced daily life and the culture of each other's city to date. Some of them even chose careers in international relations because of this experience, which shows that this program due to their sister city relationship has an important role in the education field of Yamagata City and contributes to cultivating global awareness amongst the people of Yamagata City.



Moreover, there are exchanges that go beyond generations, for example, some members of the host families for the program later participated in the residents' delegation visits. In fact, the current mayor of the Swan Hill Rural City Council was one of the students who took part in the exchange program and stayed in Yamagata City before.

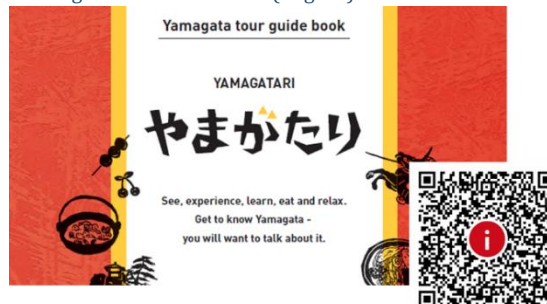
▪ Yamagata City is looking forward to your visit!

Yamagata City, having a close relationship with Australia as mentioned above, wishes that the friendship with Swan Hill Rural City will further deepen through the continuation of the sister city exchange, and is committed to hand over this wonderful international bond to the next generation. Yamagata City also hopes that people visiting Japan extend their visit to explore Yamagata. You can surely encounter the beautiful natural scenery which changes colours in every season, delicious cuisine and warm-hearted people in Yamagata City who have cherished the international friendship with Swan Hill.

[【Video】 The Many Monsters of Yamagata \(English\)](#)



[Yamagata Tour Guide Book \(English\)](#)



Yamagata factsheet		
City Population	Approximately 250,000	
City Area	Approximately 381 square kilometres (equals 114 times of Uluru)	
Flower of City	Safflower	
City Mascot	<i>Hanagata Beni-chan</i>	
Japan's top-level Yamagata area specialities, etc.*	• Fruit	Highest production of cherries in Japan (2023)
	• Soba (buckwheat)	Highest numbers of producers in Japan (2020)
	• Ramen Noodles	Highest consumption in Japan (2024)
	• Hot Springs	Every municipality in the prefecture has natural hot springs
	• Air quality	Lowest PM2.5 (air pollutant) level in Japan (2021)
	• Rice	Ratio of the first grade rice in the total production - third highest in Japan (2024)
	• Sake	Highest numbers of brands awarded the best prize at the Annual Japan Sake Award (2023) Nationally recognised sake production area
	• <i>Imoni-kai</i>	An event cooking Yamagata taro and beef soup by the river to share with family and friends In the 2018 Festival of Japan's Best <i>Imoni-kai</i> , it achieved the Guinness World Record for 'Most soup served in 8 hours', using a huge pot (6.5 metres in diameter and weighs 4 tonnes)
*Yamagata area: Yamagata City and Yamagata Prefecture		



News from CLAIR Sydney

School Exchange Opportunities

To support cultural exchange between schools in Japan and Australia/New Zealand, CLAIR Sydney has a dedicated page on our website that lists schools in Japan that are interested in initiating cultural exchange with schools in Australia/New Zealand. Please click on the link or scan the QR code below for more information on the respective schools.

Should you be interested in a particular school, please get in touch with them!



[Schools interested in exchange opportunities - CLAIR Sydney \(jlgs.org.au\)](https://www.jlgs.org.au)



Announcement from Tsumagoi Village in Gunma Pref.

Please see below announcement from Tsumagoi Village.

Sign up for the 17th Tsumagoi Highland Cabbage Marathon (Registration is now open!)



We are excited to announce that the 17th Tsumagoi Highland Cabbage Marathon will be held on 29 June in Tsumagoi Village, Gunma Prefecture.

Known as one of Japan's toughest road races, the intense out-and-back course of the Tsumagoi Highland Cabbage Marathon is sure to thrill any marathon enthusiast! Every year, we receive over 3,000 entries from around the world, all eager to take on this challenge!

Don't wait! Join us now for a fun and memorable experience in the vast cabbage fields!

Registration closes on 15 May (JST).

Website: <https://runnetglobal.com/.../smp/competitiondetail.do...>

Contact: cabbage-marathon@vill.tsumagoi.gunma.jp

Scan to register →



CABBAGE MARATHON 17 TSUMAGOI HIGHLAND JUNE 29 2025

EVENT INFORMATION

Date June 29, 2025	Opening Ceremony 8AM
Venue Tokai University Tsumagoi Kogen Training Center Multipurpose Ground	
Course Baragi Highland Panorama Line Northern Route	

Getting to the Venue

By Train (From Tokyo - Takasaki - Tsumagoi)
 Tokyo Station ▶ Joetsu/Hokuriku Shinkansen (50 min) ▶ Takasaki Station ▶ JR Agatsuma Line (1 hr 30 min) ▶ Manza-Kazawaguchi Station ▶ Shuttle to the venue

By Train (From Tokyo - Kanazawa - Tsumagoi)
 Tokyo Station ▶ Hokuriku Shinkansen (1 hr 10 min) ▶ Kanazawa Station ▶ Bus to Manza-Kazawaguchi Station (60 min) ▶ Shuttle to the venue

Shuttle Service
 For the convenience of our runners, a free shuttle bus service will be available within Tsumagoi Village both the day before and on race day (no reservation required). However, please note that there will be NO shuttle buses or trains available at Manza-Kazawaguchi Station before 8:00 am on the race day, while the check-in counter closes at 8:00 am. If you plan to travel by train, we strongly recommend arriving the day before the race and staying overnight at a nearby hotel. For more information, please scan the QR codes.

Category

Distance	Eligibility	Fee	Start time
Half	Male: 16 years old+	¥ 5,500	9 AM
	Female: 16 years old+		
	Male: 16 years old+		
10 km	Female: 16 years old+	¥ 3,300	9:20 AM
	Couple Pair: 18 years old+		
5.4 km	Male: 13-15 years old	¥ 3,300	9:40 AM
	Female: 13-15 years old		
	Female: 16 years old+		
2 km	Male: 6-12 years old	¥ 3,300	9:45 AM
	Female: 6-12 years old		
	Parent & Child (6-12 years old)		

Check-in
 All registered runners will receive a confirmation email upon successful registration to the email address used for registration. You must present the email at the check-in desk to collect your race kit. The check-in desk on race day is expected to be very crowded. We strongly encourage participants to complete their check-in on the day before the race.

Check-in Time
 June 28, 2025: 3PM-5PM | Venue: Tokai University Tsumagoi Kogen Training Center Multipurpose Ground (Check-in desk)
 June 29, 2025: 5AM-8AM | Venue: Center Multipurpose Ground (Check-in desk)

Race Kit
 Race kit includes your bib number, timing chip, safety pin, brochures and other necessary items.

Contact Information
 Tsumagoi Highland Cabbage Marathon Executive Committee
 Email: cabbage-marathon@vill.tsumagoi.gunma.jp | Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tsumagoi.cabbage.marathon>

CLAIR Sydney February Activity Report

Support Activities for Toyama New Industry Organization (7 Feb)



On Friday, 7 February 2025, two staff members from the Toyama New Industry Organization visited the CLAIR Sydney office. The visit was part of a trip to Australia to conduct on-site inspections of the Toyama & Ishikawa Fair, which is being held throughout February at selected Japanese grocery stores in Australia to promote local products.

We provided a briefing on Australia's administrative and economic landscape, sister city exchanges, tourism, and inbound visitors. During the Q&A session, we received numerous questions about Toyama Prefecture's future business development and efforts to expand distribution channels in Australia.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support overseas activities of Japanese local governments that are working to strengthen economic ties with Australia.



Emperor's Birthday Receptions in Australia (Throughout February)

Receptions celebrating the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan were held at the official residences of the Ambassador and Consul-General of Japan across Australia, including Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. The ceremonies were attended by various guests, including government officials and representatives from Japanese companies.



At the Consul-General's residence in Sydney, the CLAIR Sydney office set up a booth, showcasing our initiatives, as well as the Japan-Australia sister city exchanges and the JET Programme. On the day of the event, Mr Philip Mitchell was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to promoting friendship and mutual understanding between Japan and Australia. Additionally, Dr Peter Armstrong received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, for his significant role in popularising sumo wrestling in Australia and fostering Japan-Australia relations.

Building on the success of this reception, CLAIR Sydney remains dedicated to further strengthening local government exchanges between Japan and Australia.



From the Executive Director

Best Practices 2024 Selected from Local Governments in Japan

On Monday 10 March, CLAIR Sydney held the CLAIR Forum 2025 at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and hosted an interactive panel session on the topic of 'Waste Reduction and the Circular Economy' in collaboration with the UTS Institute of Public Policy and Governance (IPPG), where local government members from Japan and Australia introduced and discussed their respective waste management initiatives. Over 50 people attended this forum in person and online, and a very lively Q&A session took place, where participants discussed the pros and cons of using an incinerator versus disposing waste straight to landfill in relation to the differing environmental conditions of Japan and Australia, how organic waste is disposed of differently in each country, among many other insightful topics. By comparing and contrasting the waste management systems in Japan and Australia/New Zealand, participants gained new insights and valuable knowledge that would be sure to stimulate discussions for more effective initiatives moving forward.

On behalf of all the staff of CLAIR Sydney, I would like to thank the two guest speakers, Ms Gemma Dawson from City of Sydney Council and Ms Carla Nemes from Penrith City Council, and everyone who joined us on the day. I would also like to especially thank UTS IPPG for their support and co-hosting the event.

CLAIR aims to support local governments in Japan by contributing to their overseas strategies, and helping them gain public awareness and establish relationships between cities. To achieve this, every year CLAIR collects 'Best Practices' which are some of the leading-edge policies being created by local governments to combat issues affecting Japan on a national scale. CLAIR gathered information on fields of interest to various countries and regions across the globe through our overseas offices, then searched for Japanese Local Government policies related to those fields that have already gained recognition within Japan as exemplary practices. With this information, CLAIR hopes to encourage collaboration and relations with local governments overseas.

In FY2024, 13 practices were chosen for Best Practice 2024 from the categories: environmental preservation; social welfare measures; firefighting, disaster reduction; community building and urban policy; regional revitalisation, tourism, and agriculture and forestry; education and child rearing; utilisation of IT; and other. Please visit the link below for further details.

<https://www.clair.or.jp/e/bestpractice/index.html>



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