**Okawa Elementary School**

Okawa Elementary School in the village of Kamaya is one of the most poignant and sobering monuments to the lives lost in the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami on March 11, 2011. On that fateful day, 74 of the school’s 108 students and all but one of its 11 teachers lost their lives when the tsunami’s massive waves rushed up the Kitakami River and destroyed the school.

To convey the magnitude of the disaster, the wreckage of the school has been preserved, and the grounds—now covered in green grass and dotted with wildflowers—are open to visitors. Informative exhibits have been installed throughout the premises, including photographs of the school before the quake and in its immediate aftermath. Perhaps the most moving feature is the Angel of Hope, a statue that stands in front of the school as a testament to the community’s resilience and strength as it looks to the future.