

Canoeing on the Yoneshiro River

In the former Tenjin elementary school building, a group of canoeing enthusiasts has set up a canoe building workshop for the people of Futatsuimachi. They call their space the Tenjin Workshop, and teach people how to make simple stitch-and-glue plywood canoes and more complicated strip-built canoes. The group also runs a small canoeing program near the Futatsui Parking Area.

Dugout canoes have been built in Japan since prehistoric times, but North American style canoes and kayaks became popular in the 1950s. Canoes were not historically used on the Yoneshiro River; rather, it was the main point of departure for the cedar timber that was harvested in mountains of Akita starting in the 1500s.

In fact, until the middle of the 1950s, rafts of logs would be floated down the river to the sea and then sent across the archipelago. But the only thing that floats down these rivers today are holidaymakers, replacing the logs with their little canoes. In fact, floating down the Yoneshiro River may be one of the best ways to experience Akita. The waters flow between rolling hills and forests, allowing for a unique view of the small towns that border the protected Shirakami Sanchi forest. Masu salmon (*Oncorhynchus masou*) can be seen jumping out of the water sporadically, catching bugs near the surface. Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) and ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) circle overhead, ready to plunge into the water to catch fish that stray close to the surface.