

## **Turning Lake Towada into a Top Tourist Destination**

### **A Long Journey into the Public Eye**

Straddling the boundary between Akita and Aomori Prefectures, Lake Towada is the jewel in the crown of Towada Hachimantai National Park. Towada Shrine, which sits at the foot of the lake's Nakayama Peninsula, had attracted pilgrims for centuries, but poor roads and the absence of any large town long prevented the lake itself from becoming a popular tourist spot. It was not until the writer Omachi Keigetsu (1869–1925) published an account of his visit there in the first decade of the twentieth century that Lake Towada achieved widespread recognition. [94]

Wainai Sadayuki, who came to be known as the father of Lake Towada tourism, left his job with the local mining company in 1897 to devote himself to breeding fish. That same year he opened Kankoro, a traditional inn in Ginzan, at the lake's northwest corner, and generally took the lead in promoting Lake Towada to tourists. After 1905, when his kokanee hatchery business proved a success, Wainai dedicated even more of his energy to developing the area for tourism, supporting the construction of hotels and other infrastructure, as well as the improvement of transport links. [100]

### **Top of the Top Three**

The publication in 1908 of Omachi Keigetsu's account of his visit to Lake Towada in the popular magazine *Sun (Taiyo)* brought the lake to the attention of a national audience. The opening in the same year of the Kosaka Railway and of Wainai's second traditional inn, Juwankaku, made the area more accessible and convenient. In 1909 a sightseeing guide was published, and an outlet was established in nearby Kosaka to sell Lake Towada kokanee. Wainai also began inviting groups of Tokyo-based journalists to the area to introduce them to the lake and its picturesque surroundings. A pair of pleasure cruisers went into service on the lake in 1911. The Wainai Towada Hotel opened its doors in 1916, the year that the Central Japan Newspaper company chose Lake Towada as the best of Japan's top three places to escape the summer heat, propelling the area to new heights of fame. **[140]**

### **[Photos]**

The newly rebuilt and relocated Kankoro inn at Oide (1913)

The Juwankaku inn at Hakka

The launching of the *Nanso-maru* pleasure cruiser (1914)

The Wainai Towada Hotel