

Access to Namie

By train

From Tokyo	About 3 hours 10 min.
Ueno Station	JR Joban Line Limited Express "Hitachi" Namie Station
From Sendai	About 1 hour 10 min.
Sendai Station	JR Joban Line Limited Express "Hitachi" Namie Station

By car via expressway

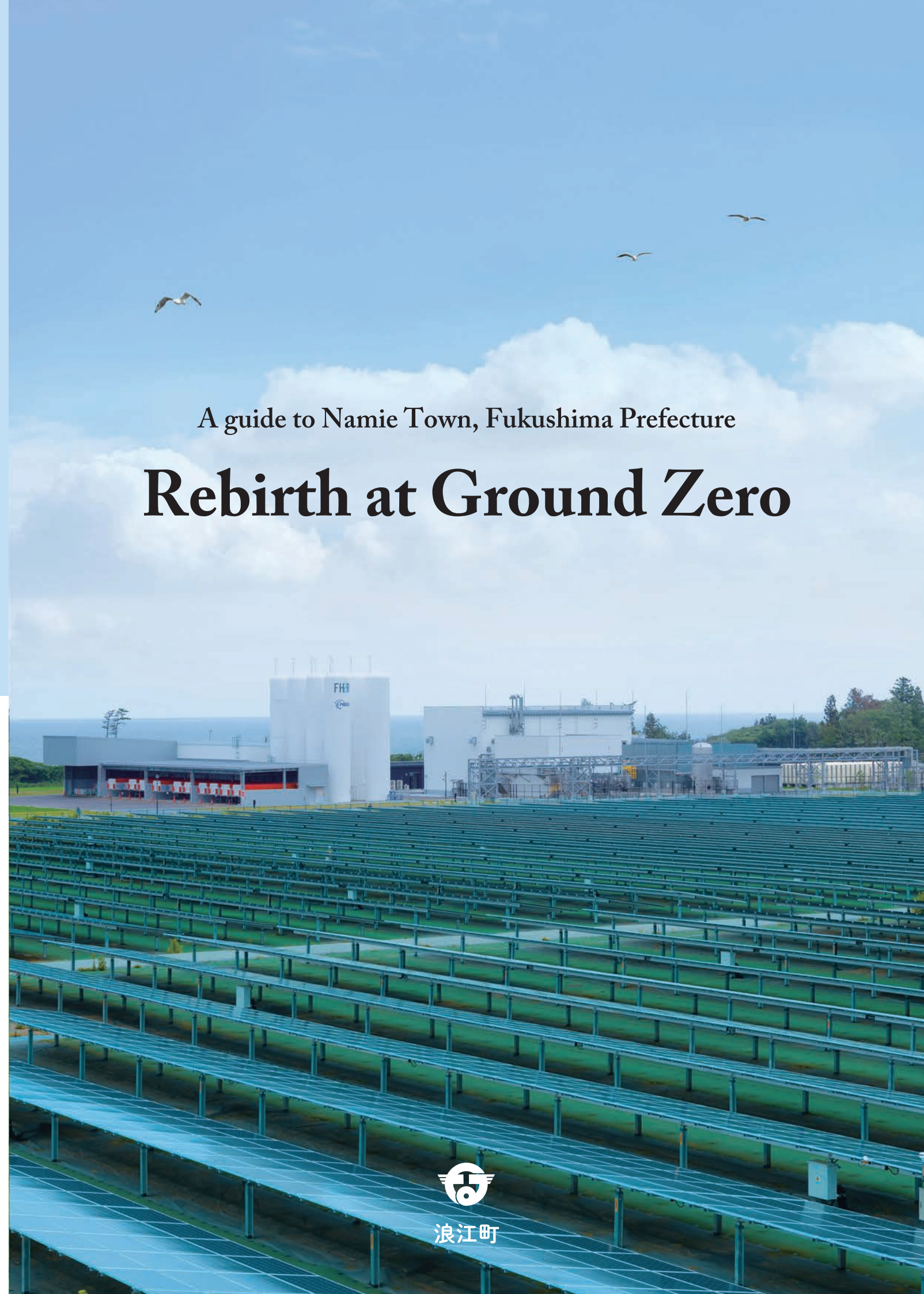
From Sendai	About 1 hour 30 min.
Sendai Minami Entrance	Sendai Nanbu Road and Sendai Tobu Road and Joban Expressway Namie exit
From Iwaki	About 1 hour
Iwaki-Chuo Entrance	Joban Expressway Namie exit

By car via ordinary road

From Sendai	About 3 hours
From Sendai	Route 6
From Fukushima City	About 1 hour 30 min.
From Fukushima City	Route 114
From Iwaki	About 1 hour 30 min.
From Iwaki	Route 6



Namie Town Hall Industrial Promotion Division
 7-2 Rokutanda, Kiyohashi, Namie Town, Futaba-County,
 Fukushima Prefecture 979-1592 Tel.0240-34-0247
<https://www.town.namie.fukushima.jp> (available in Japanese only)



A guide to Namie Town, Fukushima Prefecture

Rebirth at Ground Zero



浪江町

That day, we lost everything

The photo on this page shows Ukedo Elementary School near the beach, whose entire first floor was destroyed by the tsunami. The students escaped and were safe, but the building remained unattended for years. The structure has been preserved as a memorial and soon will open to visitors interested in learning lessons from the disaster.

MAP 6 Ukedo Elementary School

What happened was a tragedy

Namie may have been just another small rural town, but we were happy and content with our peaceful lives, enjoying the abundant gifts from the mountains, rivers, and the sea. Then the Great East Japan Earthquake struck on March 11, 2011. The huge magnitude 9 earthquake was followed by a massive tsunami that engulfed the coastal area of the Tohoku region. In Namie, the wave reached as high as 15 meters, sweeping away the lives of more than 180 of our townspeople.

But the disaster did not end there. The subsequent accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plants, just a few kilometers south of Namie, forced us to flee our hometown the next morning, not knowing that we would have to wait six years before we would be allowed to return to our homes.

We first evacuated towards mountains away from the coast, but in a few days had to leave there too. Because of the winds, the radiation was actually higher in the mountainous area than on the seaside, something we did not know at the time. To this day, that initial evacuation area remains an evacuation zone.

But we won't let it end as tragedy

More than 21,000 Namie townspeople had to disperse all over the country during the course of the evacuation. Many evacuees, mostly elderly, have lost their lives due to the prolonged stress. Nonetheless, none of us gave up hope of rebuilding Namie. We faced unimaginable hardships, but every resident contributed, in their way, to restoring our town, determined to make it even better than before.

At the end of March 2017, the evacuation order was finally lifted for part of the town. People have been gradually returning to their hometown and starting to grow rice, catch fish, run shops, and manufacture goods. We are regaining our way of life, slowly but surely.

Indeed, Namie Town is not only returning to its original form; but also has begun to attract new investments and new people who find great potential in our extraordinary experience in overcoming the triple disaster.

Today's Namie is an exciting, unique place where the traditional living of a rural town and cutting-edge developments co-exist. We welcome everyone to come see and feel its dynamism first-hand.



Remaining evacuation zone (in red)

People's activities are back in town

Roads and buildings alone do not complete a town; it is through the people that a town comes alive — perhaps no one knows this better than the residents of Namie. While no one knew when the evacuation order would be lifted, some of our townspeople resolutely commuted to Namie from temporary residences to maintain their houses and farmlands, and to prepare for new lives after the end of the long evacuation. Those who could not travel, supported them, equally longing for the day they would all be allowed to return home. These resilient people, together with new residents, who are equally committed to the town's future, form the bedrock of today's Namie.



School education resumed

There used to be nine public schools in Namie, but only three were able to continue operation at out-of-town temporary sites during the evacuation. Finally, in April 2018, a new elementary school and a junior high school opened in town with an initial combined enrollment of ten, all of whom were the children of the returnees. The small class size enables the schools to conduct a unique style of education, actively involving local communities in the programs.

Agriculture revitalized

Agriculture has traditionally been one of Namie's most important industries and is central to our revitalization process. Native veteran farmers, newcomers, and corporations, who believe in the future prospect of Namie are all working hard to produce high quality crops, such as rice, vegetables and flowers.

New places to unite people

After the evacuation order was lifted, there were few places in town for returnees to casually meet and chat over coffee. In 2018, a woman responded to this need and opened a small cafe. (MAP ③ OCAFE) That venue has become a popular exchange spot in addition to holding various community events. In August 2020, the long-awaited roadside station (Michi-no-eki) opened. Its main goal is to serve as a gathering place for people. In addition to its shops and food court, the station has an all-purpose tatami room where you can relax with your family and friends.

The sea and the port are back to life

In Namie, our new year starts with welcoming the first sunrise from the sea horizon and praying for people's safety throughout the year. The sea has always been an integral part of our lives. On 3/11, this beautiful ocean transformed into the terrifying tsunami and the once bustling Ukedo fishing port was inundated with rubble. The beach remained a no-go zone for a long while due to the nuclear accident. Nevertheless, our fishermen never gave up. After many years of tireless efforts, including extensive testing to prove that our seafood is safe from radiation, Ukedo is again bustling with life with more than 20 fishing boats proudly setting sail from the port and auctioneers enthusiastically marketing each fresh catch.

Operations and traditions resuming

In 2020, reconstruction of cargo handling facilities was completed and auctions for freshly caught marine products such as *shirasu* (whitebait), flounder, and surf clams finally restarted. With the fishing industry reviving, Ukedo's New Year tradition, called *dezomeshiki*, has also resumed. The sight of the colorful flag-fluttering fishing fleet leaving the port at sunrise is quite spectacular.

Marketing and sales recovering

Fish and shellfish are especially abundant off the coast of Fukushima Prefecture and the catch from that fishing ground has been called "*joban mono*" in the Tokyo market, a synonym for high-quality fresh seafood. Seafood landed at Ukedo in Namie is known to be of top quality. The catch is sent directly from the port to local restaurants and supermarkets as well as to outlets outside Fukushima Prefecture. A rebuilt processing factory has made it possible to market Namie's seafood in various forms other than fresh.

MAP ④ Ukedo Fishing Port



Preserved traditions are back home

Tradition is not just about form; it is about passing down its spirit. Old festivals and performing folk arts are deeply rooted in the history of the land and it was extremely challenging for us to preserve them while we were isolated from our homeland. But the spirit guided us and we managed. Now the festivals and arts are finally returning home, ready to pass on to the next generation.



Amba Matsuri festival in February

At *Kusano Shrine* near the beach, a rice-planting dance was traditionally performed by children to pray for a good harvest and a big catch for the year. The shrine was washed away by the tsunami and the area was evacuated. For seven years we continued to hold this annual event remotely, it has finally returned to its original location.



Shineha-go Nomaoui in July

Soma Nomaoui is a sacred ritual with a thousand-year tradition. Horse-riding warriors from five ancient districts called *Go*, gather at the festival grounds in Minamisoma City (north of Namie) to hold parades, horse races, and sacred flag competitions. Although the main festival has continued uninterrupted, revival of the departure and the triumphant return ceremonies in Namie, *Shineha-go's* headquarters, were suspended for eight years after the 2011 disaster. They have now been reinstated.

For more information on *Nomaoui*, please check this site:
<http://soma-nomaoui.jp/en/top-page/>

Specialties



Kabocha manju (Pumpkin bun)

This cute yellow steamed bun filled with sweet pumpkin paste was originally born in the Tsushima district in western Namie. It is a popular treat that you can buy only at limited outlets.



Namie Yakisoba (Fried noodle)

It's a simple dish (thick noodles, sliced pork, bean sprouts, and a special gravy) long loved by the locals and now well-known nationwide as an inexpensive yet delicious local delicacy.



Shirasu (Whitebait)

Shirasu landed at Ukedo Port has long been one of Namie's top natural specialties. Other than fresh, the seafood can be enjoyed in different forms such as dried and boiled. A processing facility has been re-established to make such products and the distribution system restored to deliver them nationwide.



Iwaki-kotobuki

Iwaki-kotobuki is the signature brand of the Suzuki Sake Brewery which had been located near the beach. Its buildings were washed away by the tsunami, but the brewer refused to be discouraged and soon found a new location outside the town to resume making the beloved sake. It recently started to use locally harvested rice and water pumped in Namie and is planning to restart brewing back in its hometown soon.



Obori Soma Ware

Originally produced in the 17th century, this traditional craft has been handed down for generations in Namie's Obori district, an area which, unfortunately, is still in the evacuation zone. The pottery's unique features include a crackle glaze, a double-layered structure, and a drawing of a horse. Before the 2011 disaster, there were more than 20 potters, and so far about half of them have resumed operations at various locations around Fukushima prefecture. Check this site for more details:
<https://www.town.namie.fukushima.jp/soshiki/7/26117.html>



◀ Namie Town's Official Mascot, *Ukedon*

This mascot was created by soliciting ideas from the townspeople while we were evacuating, in hope of maintaining our bonds. *Ukedon* has quickly gained popularity among both the townspeople and a much wider audience.

Places to visit



Ukedo-gawa Riverline

The Ukedo-gawa Riverline is a popular tourist attraction that has been selected as one of the 50 most beautiful promenades in Fukushima Prefecture. In spring, you can enjoy the viewing cherry trees blooming over its 1.5 km length.

MAP ②

Ohirayama Community Square

Ohirayama Community Square is located on Ohirayama Hill. Here the beach-front elementary school children escaped to and were kept safe during the 2011 tsunami. In the middle of the square stands a monument on which the names of Namie's more than 180 victims are engraved. With its distant view of the Pacific Ocean and knowing the tsunami reached a point just at the foot of the square, you can feel the magnitude of the disaster, a sobering lesson.

MAP ⑤



Fukushima Prefecture Revival Memorial Park

Fukushima Prefecture Revival Memorial Park is a place to mourn the victims of the 2011 triple disasters. Together with the adjacent Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum in Futaba Town, this park carries a mission to pass on to future generations the lessons learned from this unprecedented catastrophe.

MAP ⑦



Michi-no-eki Namie (Roadside Station)

Michi-no-eki Namie (Roadside Station) is the place where you can see, buy, and eat everything that Namie has to offer. You can also collect information on the current status of the tsunami-affected area and on local tourist attractions.

MAP ③

Fukushima Hydrogen Energy Research Field (FH2R)

Fukushima Hydrogen Energy Research Field (FH2R) aims to demonstrate the technical and commercial feasibility of hydrogen energy. The facility's hydrogen production capacity is among the world's largest. Its 68,000 solar panels (20 megawatts) on site produce the carbon-free energy that is regarded as a key to combating climate change. The hydrogen produced at FH2R is supplied to various outlets in and outside of Fukushima Prefecture.

MAP ①



Accommodations

All information is available in Japanese only.

- ① **Fukushima Ikoi-no-mura Namie**
Tel. 0240-34-6161 <https://www.ikoi-namie.com/>
- ② **Hotel Futaba-no-mori**
Tel. 0240-23-7099 <https://hotelfutabanomori.com/>
- ③ **The Namie Terrace HOTEL**
Tel. 0240-23-4431 <https://www.nami-tera.com/>
- ④ **Niitsuma-so**
Tel. 0240-34-1650
- ⑤ **Business Hotel Oreno-yado**
Tel. 0240-24-0440 <http://hotel-ichihara.co.jp/namie/>
- ⑥ **Hotel Plaisir Namie**
0240-23-5920 <https://www.plaisir-n.com/>

Study tours

Study tours to learn about the past, present, and future of the town are conducted by *Machizukuri Namie*, a company specializing in town revitalization and community rebuilding. Please see the following site for more information. (Japanese only)



Machizukuri Namie
<http://www.mdnamie.jp/>



Events



Please come join our popular seasonal festivals in August (*Natsu-matsuri*) and in November (*Tokaichi*). We also hold a walking event that starts before dawn on New Year's Day to pay respect to the first sunrise.