

Characteristics of Tourism in Tateyama : Tourist Area in the Southern Region of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the tourism resources, tourist dynamics, and tourism strategies of the local government in Tateyama City in Chiba Prefecture and its surrounding areas, clarifying the regional characteristics of tourism in the southern area of the Tokyo metropolitan area. Since the Minamiboso area including Tateyama City does not have any volcanic hot spring resources, and the development of a public transport system has also been rather slow, the development of tourism has been slower than with the southwest area of the Tokyo metropolitan area of the Miura Peninsula through to the Shonan coast and the Izu Peninsula. However, with the opening of the Tokyo Bay Aqualine in 1997 and the Tateyama Expressway in 2007 traffic access from Tokyo, Yokohama, and Chiba has dramatically improved. The improved proximity to the metropolitan area has increased the number of day trip visitors to Tateyama, whereas the number of overnight visitors still declines. With the decline in number of beachgoers due to the diversity of tourism and leisure activities now available Tateyama is looking for a new direction for tourism, such as agricultural and fishing tourism utilizing its natural scenic beauty, cultural tourism based on the sites of the Satomi Family, and historical war sites, in addition to the traditional swimming at the beach, marine sports, and flower picking. Tourism courses that cannot be visited just in day trip will need to be continued to be set up, the value of them established, and a system developed that makes visitors want to stay overnight through linking guesthouses to local merchants.

Key words: tourist site, tourism resource, tourism strategy, Tokyo metropolitan area, Tateyama City

1. Introduction

Tourism is expected to grow more and more important in the 21 century in Japan. Tourism can have a big economic ripple effect: estimated to have accounted for 5.6% of GDP (53.1 trillion yen) and 6.9% of total

employment (4.41 million people) as of 2007 (The Japan Tourism Agency 2009). This reveals that tourism could be of great significance as a leading industry in the future, in particular in the Tokyo metropolitan area, which has the largest leisure population in Japan, and is an important place for leisure activities and recreation (Kureha 2009). The fringes of the Tokyo metropolitan area are characterized being Tokyo's backyard, with many tourist and recreation areas having been developed there since the Meiji Period. A wide variety of tourism resources are distributed throughout the Tokyo metropolitan area: the Southern region has tourism attractions related to beaches/the ocean and the warm months while the Northern region mainly has those related to mountains, snow, and the cold months.

Yamamoto (1991) classified the spatial structures of the Tokyo metropolitan area with regard to tourism and leisure activities into "tourism spots inside large cities," "one-day tourism spots around large cities," and "overnight tourism spots on the fringe of large cities," and chose swimming at beaches in summer and skiing in winter as being a couple of the characteristics of tourist spots on the fringe of the Tokyo metropolitan area. He then pointed out that a number of tourist facilities had opened on the Izu Peninsula and the Boso Peninsula during the 1960s to 1970s as accommodation for family beachgoers, thus promoting the change from being rural communities concerned with agriculture, forestry and fishing into tourist sites. Tanno (2006) focused on the tourist activities and destinations of the large number of tourists originating in the large urban areas of Japan, roughly classifying Japanese tourist sites into five different types. According to him the Tokyo metropolitan area has two of them: the southern area belonging to the "suburban beach tourism type," and the mountainous areas from the northern to western areas belonging to "suburban hot spring tourism type." The "suburban beach tourism type" includes the coastal areas around the three major metropolitan areas in Japan that are located near large city areas and which offer excellent views of coastal landscapes and swimming at beaches in summer for a day or overnight trip. The Tokyo metropolitan area has increased access to the Uchibo area of the Boso Peninsula and the Miura Peninsula, with in addition it being said that the Sotobo area, Kujukurihama beach, Kashima-ura, the Shonan coast, and the Izu

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Peninsula also being more readily accessible thanks to the development of railways and roads, along with inexpensive tourist accommodation.

The suggestions made by Kureha, Yamamoto, and Tanno pose important matters for discussion when considering the characteristics of tourism sites on the fringe of the Tokyo metropolitan area, but at the same time it has been estimated that day trip tourist zones have also expanded and the characteristics of tourist sites changed with the dramatically shortened time needed to get from the center of Tokyo and the fringes of the Tokyo metropolitan area with the establishment of high-speed traffic systems through the development of expressways and the Bullet Train.

For this reason this paper aims to examine the tourism resources, tourist dynamics, and tourism strategies of the local government in Tateyama City in Chiba Prefecture and its surrounding areas, clarifying the regional characteristics of tourism in the southern area of the Tokyo metropolitan area. Tateyama City is located at the southwest end of the Boso Peninsula, about 70 km from Chiba City and 100 km from central Tokyo (Fig.1). It was once the territory of the Satomi Family, warring lords, from the middle period through to the early modern age. It is also renowned for being the scene of an important piece of Edo literature, Nanso Satomi Hakkenden, and still has many historical sites associated with the Satomi Family. From the Edo period on it was developed as a marine transportation base, and then as a military base from the Meiji Period on due to its geopolitical location (entrance of Tokyo Bay), with the construction of a number of navy facilities having taken place. It was then developed as the central city of Minamiboso following World War II.

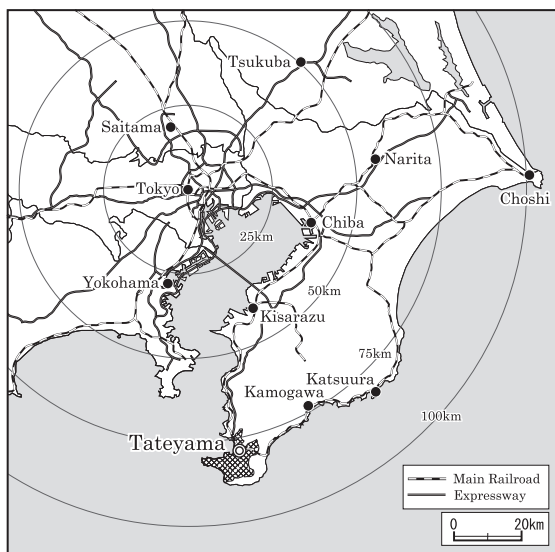


Fig.1 Location of Tateyama City.

It is still the center of the Minamiboso area because of its distribution of commercial facilities and administrative agencies, as well as number of employment opportunities, but with the recent development of an aging society with a falling birthrate its population is only about 50,000. Due to its mild climate with an annual mean temperature of 16°C, the area produces large numbers of flowers and strawberries, and at the same time is a base for marine recreation and rural tourism in the south of the Tokyo metropolitan area (Misawa 2003).

2. Trends in tourism in Tateyama City

Tateyama has long attracted tourists due to its warm climate. It first prospered as a resort, and has been recreationally visited by many people since the Edo Period. Some of the visitors included authors and artists such as poets and novelists, who used their experiences in the landscapes of Tateyama in their works, thus leading to the city being rather well known (Tateyama City Museum ed. 1997). The availability of steamships and the opening of railroads that occurred in the Meiji Period through to the early Showa Period then lead to an increase in the number of tourists. Beachgoers started to appear during this period, with the construction of accommodation facilities commencing. Many guidebooks introducing Tateyama were also published, and the city became firmly established as a resort, centering on swimming at the beach. In 1951 the area from Tomiura to Tateyama, Shirahama, and Chikura was designated as a prefectural park for South Awa, with it then becoming the Minamiboso national park in 1958. In 1956 Tateyama City declared an initiative to create a tourism based town. However, with the increased availability of transport for tourists and the shortened time from Tokyo enabled by the development of railroads, tourists, who had usually stayed overnight, gradually started to visit the city in day trips. From 1965 on tourism development took place with the aim of the change of sea bathing tourism at the beach in summer to being travel tourism.

Fig.2 gives the transition in the number of tourists to Tateyama City between 1967 and 2008. The number of tourists started to increase in the 1970s, with day trip visitors accounting for about 60% of all visitors at that time. In 1977 the number of both overnight and day trip visitors decreased because of the cool summer of that year, but the annual number of tourists remained at the level of about 1.5 million in the 1980s. In the 1980s there were slightly more overnight visitors than day trip visitors. The number of both overnight and day trip visitors then started to increase in 1989, marking a record high in 1994. However, the number of overnight visitors started to decline in 1995 with a decrease in number of

long-term tourists due to the economic recession, the extension of the Tateyama Expressway and the Futtsu Tateyama Road, and the developed expressway networks directly connecting Tateyama with the center of Tokyo, which includes the Tokyo Bay Aqualine that opened in 1997. Conversely, the number of day trip visitors did not decrease very much overall, remaining at the level of about 1.1 million. The number of both overnight and day trip visitors also decreased in 2003 because of the cool summer that year, but the completion of the Futtsu Tateyama Road to Tomiura in 2005 resulted in a large increase in the number of day trip visitors. The Tateyama Expressway fully opened in 2007, with the number of day trip visitors then further increasing due to the expressway directly connecting Tateyama to Tokyo and Kanagawa. The number of day trip visitors accounted for 75.1% of all tourists in 2008.

also those in which tourists can enjoy themselves through actual experiences and historically and culturally. A wide

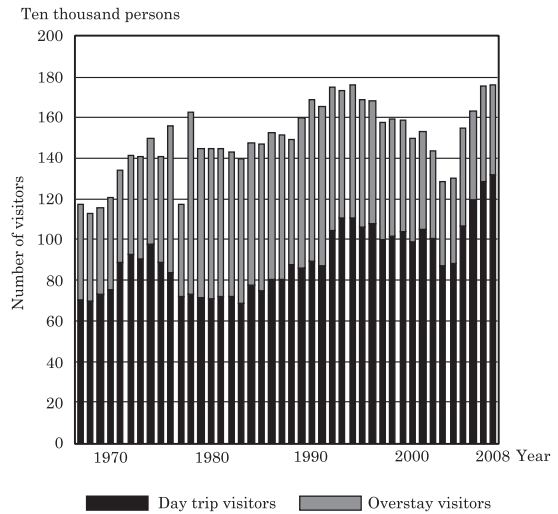


Fig.2 Change in number of visitors to Tateyama City, 1967-2008. Source:Statistic of Tateyama City.

3. Diversification of tourism in Tateyama City

Tourism activities in Tateyama include not only those related to the sea, for example swimming at the beach, but

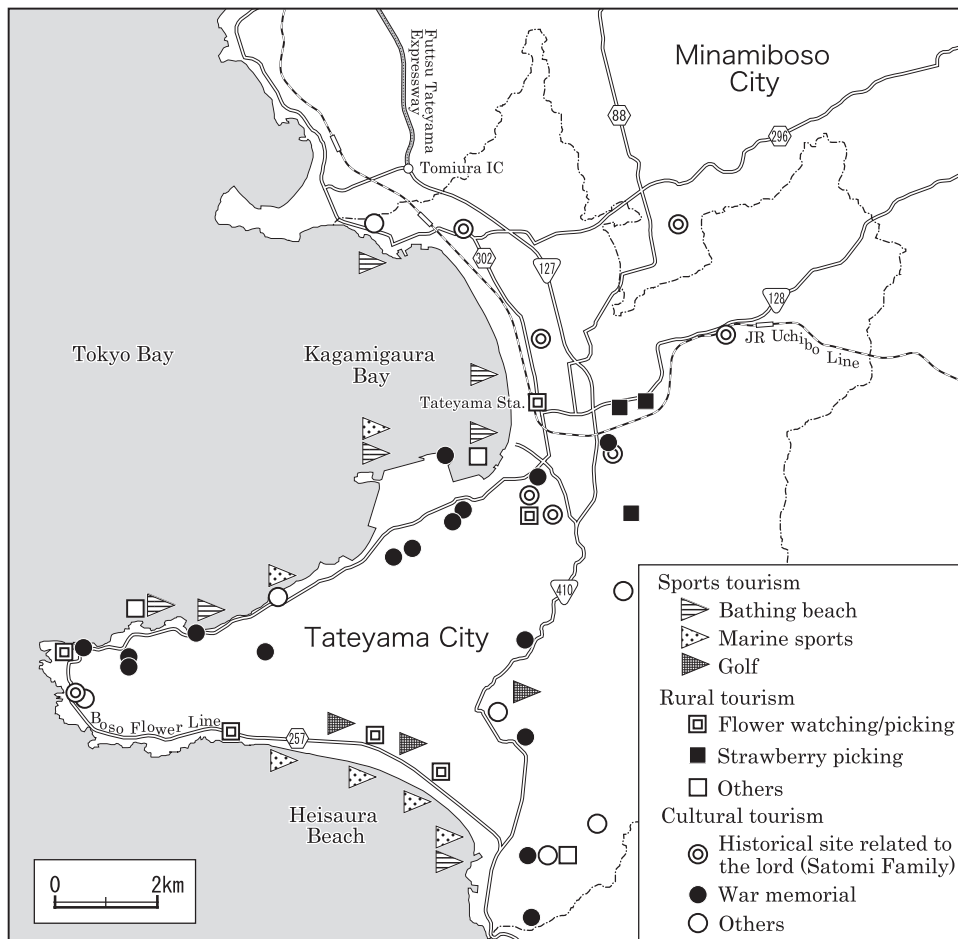


Fig.3 Distribution of tourism resource,2009. Source:Tateyama City office.

variety of tourism resources are scattered throughout the city, which can be classified by purpose. In this section the tourism activities in Tateyama will be classified as sports tourism, rural tourism, or cultural tourism (Fig.3).

3.1. Sports tourism

Sports tourism in Tateyama includes swimming at the beach, marine sports, and golf. There are seven swimming beaches within the city: six of them face Kagamigaura and other located at the southern end of the city. The swimming beaches are open for use between mid-July and the end of August, with many seaside shops then being established during that period. Marine sports are represented by snorkeling, diving, and surfing. People can enjoy snorkeling and diving at Kagamigaura and surfing at Heisaura (Fig.4). The Okinoshima island area, which is located on the south side of Kagamigaura, in particular is the northern limit of the habitat of coral, and thus also a diving spot. In addition Kagamigaura is located inside a bay with gentle waves, thus making it very suitable for

swimming at the beach, snorkeling, and diving. Snorkeling and diving are made available by a number of private organizations and NPO corporate bodies, with people being able to acquire licenses after participating in classes. Heisaura faces the Pacific Ocean and thus has large surf, thereby attracting many surfers, but with no facilities such as surf shops having been constructed in the area. The southern area has three golf courses.

3.2. Rural tourism

The main rural tourism in Tateyama involves hands-on tourism, which can be represented by flower and strawberry picking. Tourists visiting the city with flowers in mind mainly go to Nanbo Paradise and Tateyama Family Park. The former is a botanical garden while the latter is a facility aimed at people picking flowers (Fig.5). Both facilities are located facing Heisaura in the south, and operated by the limited company of Ocean Veil Tateyama, which has its headquarters in the city. The company owns



Fig.4 Heisaura beach.
(taken by the author, August 29, 2009)



Fig.5 Nanbo Paradise.
(taken by the author, August 29, 2009)

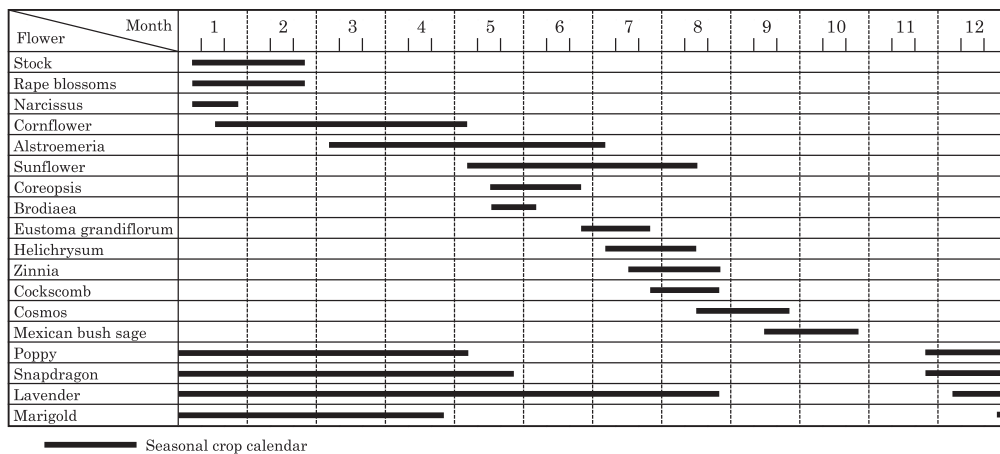


Fig. 6 Seasonal crop calendar in Tateyama City,2009.
Source:field survey.

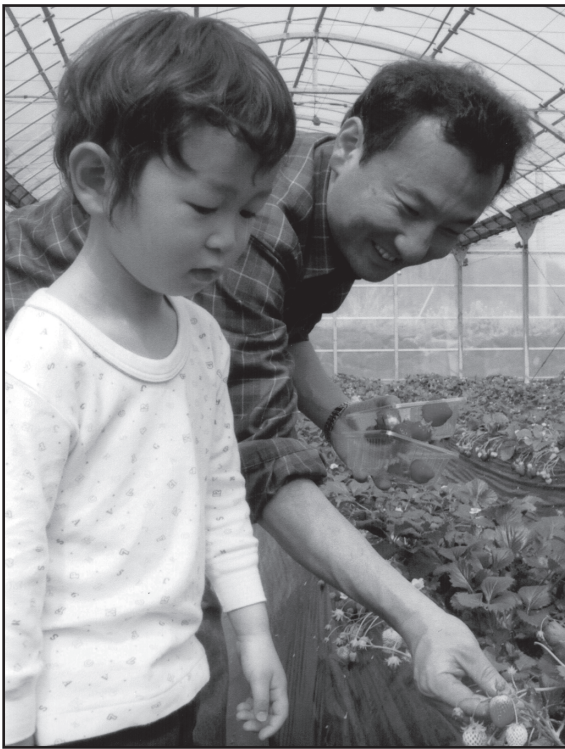


Fig.7 Tourists picking up strawberries in Tateyama Family Park.
(taken by the author's family, March 10, 2005)



Fig.8 Flower garden in front of Tateyama station.
(taken by the author, August 29, 2009)



Fig.9 Landscape of Boso Flower Line.
(taken by the author, August 29, 2009)

two accommodation facilities and golf courses adjacent to both facilities, and aims to develop the Heisaura coast as a comprehensive resort. Many different kinds of flowers get cultivated each season at Tateyama Family Park to ensure that flowers are available for picking all year round (Fig.6 and 7). Prefectural Road 257, which connects the facilities and the center of the city, has been nicknamed the Boso Flower Line, and was also selected as one of Japan's 100 best roads. Seasonal flower gardens have been created at the roundabout in front of Tateyama Station (Fig.8), which is the origin of the prefectural road, the Sunosaki Lighthouse area on the western end of the highway, and both sides of the block of about 4 km from Tateyama Family Park to Nambo Paradise (Fig.9). In addition, cherry blossom viewing parties are held in April at Shiroyama Park, which is located in the center of the city.

The Yamamoto, Aburi, and Oto districts, which are all adjacent to the center of the city, offer strawberry picking. Each of the districts has tourist farms where visitors can pick strawberries between January and May every year. Cultivation of strawberries first commenced in the regions in the 1950s, mainly with the aim of then shipping them to Tokyo. Tourist farms then opened in 1981 in a project with the aim of connecting agriculture to tourism. They are jointly owned by local farmers, and are open to the public

for an admission fee.

Sea firefly observation tours, fixed-net fishing, and bird watching are also available as additional types of hands-on tourism. Sea firefly observation tours are held throughout the year, although mainly on Saturdays. People can participate in hands-on tours involving fixed-net fishing, a representative fishing method, in the Sakata district. The tours are available during May and September, with tourists being able to experience pulling up fixed-nets set in place by local fishermen. Visitors can experience bird watching all year round at the Tateyama Bird Sanctuary, a prefectural park of Chiba.

3.3. Cultural tourism

The Awa area centering on Tateyama was governed by the Satomi Family from the mid-1400s until 1614. The Satomi Family can be considered a representative warlord family of the Warring States period, and there are many historical sites concerning them. There are also historical sites associated with the famous novel, "Nanso

Satomi Hakkenden”, which was modeled on the struggles of the Satomi Family that took place during this period. These historical sites are the central resources for cultural tourism in Tateyama. Major historical sites for tourism include the Hakkenden Museum (Fig.10), which was built inside Shiroyama Castle Park, along with temples and shrines and the ruins of Inamura Castle, which is associated with the Satomi Family. The Hakkenden Museum was constructed at the site of ruins of Tateyama Castle in 1982, with the keep of the castle then being rebuilt. Tateyama Castle is the last castle of the lord of the Satomi Family, but since almost no records of the castle remain, the keep was rebuilt using Inuyama Castle as a model. Historical sites associated with the Satomi Family are scattered throughout the city, and also in the adjacent Minamiboso City. Tourism courses in which the sites can be visited by taxi are available. There is also a guided tour concerned with the historical sites.

In addition, sightseeing at historical war sites is recently being promoted. Tateyama is located at the entrance of Tokyo Bay, and hence was an important military base from the Meiji Period on. Many military facilities that include air bases, naval schools, and gun batteries were established in Tateyama between the Meiji Period and World War II. Today, several NPO corporate bodies have taken the initiative in aiming to convert any remaining historical war sites into tourism resources. As part of these activities some tour courses in which the historical war sites can be visited have been set up, with the Akayama Tunnels having been open to the public since 2003. However, no other historical sites have been developed yet, and guidelines on them not even being available.

3.4. Purpose of visit to Tateyama

Fig.11 gives the transition in the number of tourists to Tateyama City by purpose between 1997 and 2008. With



Fig. 10 Hakkenden Museum.
(taken by the author, August 28, 2009)

sports tourism the number of beachgoers has continued to decline, accounting for 18.6% of all tourists in 1997 but only 5.6% in 2008. Conversely, the number of marine sports tourists has tended to increase, accounting for just 0.4% in 1997 but exceeding that of beachgoers in 2007, and currently accounting for 6.1% of all visitors. The number of golfers has remained at the level of about 110,000 annually. With hands-on tourism the number of tourists visiting the city to view or pick flowers accounts for 19.6% of the total number of tourists. The number of those tourists has remained stable since 1997 without any large changes. Strawberry picking is only available between January and May, but about 150,000 people visit during those 5 months. The number of tourists visiting historical sites started to increase in 2003, accounting for 23.8% of the total number of tourists. In 2006 it exceeded the number of tourists visiting to viewing or pick flowers, while visiting historical sites became the primary purpose of a visit to Tateyama.

4. Tourism strategies of Tateyama City

As stated above, Tateyama City is located at the southern end of the fringe of the Tokyo metropolitan area, and has been characterized as a tourist area because of its beautiful natural surroundings and proximity to large cities. The many regional resources in Tateyama have made possible to develop various types of tourism that include marine sports such as swimming at the beach and surfing, resort and villa areas that make the most of its warm climate, distributed training facilities for educational institutions, rural tourism combining the production

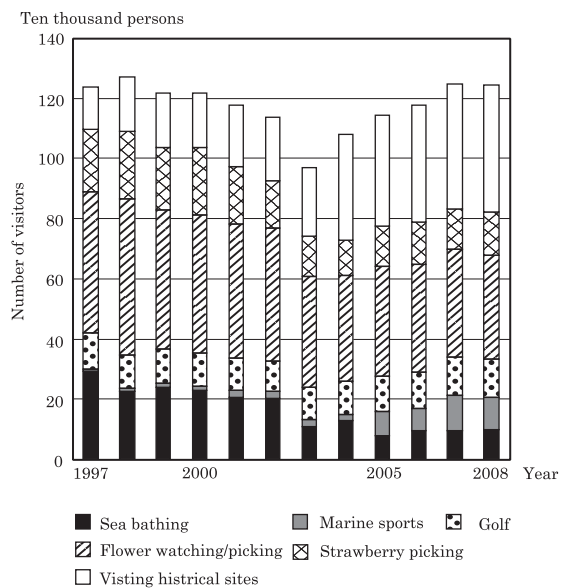


Fig. 11 Purpose of tourists to Tateyama City, 1997-2008.
Source: Statistic of Tateyama City

of fruit/flowers and ornamental plants and viewing/picking them, a “sushi town” that makes the most of the availability of fresh seafood, pilgrimages to historical sites as well as shrines and Buddhist temples associated with the Satomi Family, and tourism of cultural heritage sites utilizing the former sites of battles that remain in the city such as air-raid shelters.

When the city was directly connected with central Tokyo via the expressway in 2007, the time needed to travel there from the Tokyo metropolitan area was further shortened, allowing people to visit the city in about two hours from Tokyo. This led to the expectation that there would be an increase in number of tourists, but at the same time the number of overnight visitors would decrease, thus leading to even more promotion of day trip tourism (Fig.2). Increasing the number of overnight visitors, repeat visitors, and moreover permanent settlers, therefore, remains important task for Tateyama City (Tateyama City 2007). To promote overnight tourism providing attractive tourism menus that can only be experienced if tourists stay overnight will be important. Tateyama City is creating a project plan that utilizes the “sea,” “agricultural villages,” and “history and culture.” More specifically, the implementation of the “sea firefly observation tours” at Kagamigaura, the creation of hands-on agriculture and fishing programs, and walking tours of historical and cultural sites, as mentioned above, are being promoted. To ensure the success of these projects it will be also necessary to establish the acceptance of local concerned organizations in addition to utilizing its attractive tourism resources. Tourism should not only be evaluated for its economic effects, but also as a catalyst for the activation of the local economy as a key to successful tourism.

Tateyama City is looking at ways to increase the number of overnight visitors in cooperation with accommodation facilities and eating/drinking facilities. Any decrease in the number of overnight visitors can make running a small-scale guesthouse difficult. There are currently 28 guesthouses in the city, with 23 of them being open all year round, and the remaining 5 only open in summer. Most of them are located next to swimming beaches. The local government commenced work on a project with the aim of extending tourists’ stays in around 2006. Part of that project concerns a campaign to link tourist homes to sushi merchants. Tateyama has a long history of sushi shops with seafood available from local fishing ports (Fig.12). A sushi association was organized from 17 sushi shops in both Tateyama City and Minamiboso City. It is a project that was achieved by being mediated by the Tourism Promotion Office of the Tateyama City Commerce and Tourism Division where people can eat at an affiliated sushi shop for lunch the

day after having stayed at lodging facilities. The plan is to regain overnight visitors through the campaign by including accommodation fees, breakfast and dinner at a guesthouse, and lunch at a sushi shop as a package. It was originally going to be available for a limited period until May 31, 2010, but is scheduled to be continued after that.

5. Conclusion

Since the bubble economy burst, “cheap, near, short trips” have been known to be a feature of the tourism activities of Japanese people. However, some characteristics of recent tourism trends include the following. (1) Since the cost of transportation is generally quite high and tourist sites get crowded on weekends and during the tourist season, people are often travelling in their own car, in particular young people and families. Casual tourism has grown more popular with the development of expressway networks and a recent increase in the number of tourist facilities such as day trip hot spring facilities and theme parks. (2) Cultural and educational tourism, in which people visit world heritage sites, cultural landscapes in agricultural mountain villages, and historical streets and houses in cities, is increasing, but what the Japanese people like most is enjoying at hot springs and natural surroundings (Yamamura 2006).

The fringe of the Tokyo metropolitan area, which is surrounded with natural settings such as beaches and mountains, is located where it can be accessed from the center of Tokyo within a few hours by car, and was developed as a place for tourism and recreational activities for people living in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Its southern area in particular has the characteristic of being an ocean resort that faces the Pacific Ocean, and attracts many resort visitors and tourists, although mainly in summer. Since the Minamiboso area, which includes Tateyama City, does not have any volcanic hot spring resources, and the development of a public transport system has also been rather slow, the development of tourism has been slower than with the southwest area of the Tokyo metropolitan area of the Miura Peninsula through to the Shonan coast and the Izu Peninsula. However, with the opening of the Tokyo Bay Aqualine in 1997 and the Tateyama Expressway in 2007 traffic access from Tokyo, Yokohama, and Chiba has dramatically improved. The improved proximity to the metropolitan area has increased the number of day trip visitors to Tateyama, whereas the number of overnight visitors has continued to decline.

With the decline in number of beachgoers due to the diversity of tourism and leisure activities now available Tateyama is looking for a new direction for tourism, such as agricultural and fishing village tourism based on its

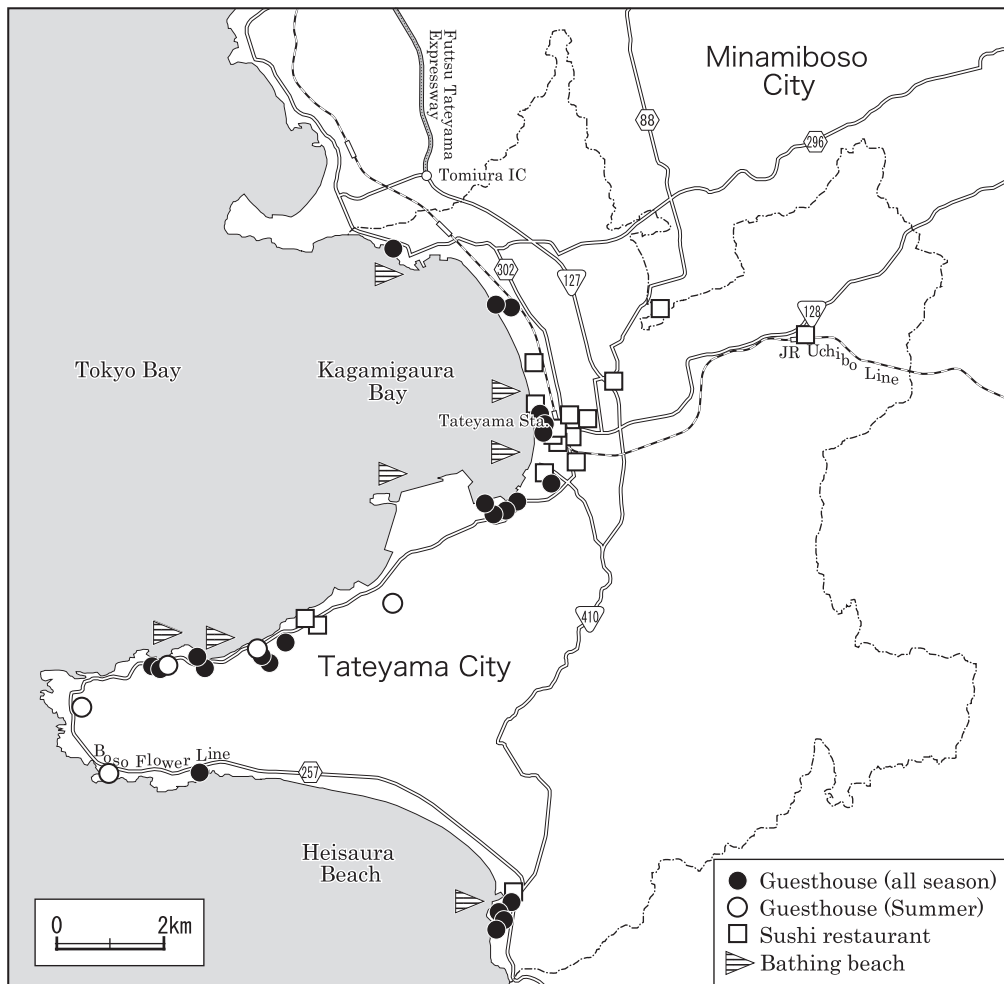


Fig.12 Distribution of guesthouses and Sushi restaurants, 2009.
Source: Tateyama City office

natural scenic beauty, cultural tourism utilizing the sites of the Satomi Family, and historical war sites, in addition to the traditional swimming at the beach, marine sports, and flower picking. Tourism courses that cannot be visited just in day tip will need to be continued to be set up, the value of them established, and a system developed that makes visitors want to stay overnight through linking tourist homes to sushi merchants.

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