

Welcome to Yokote Snow Festival

《Kamakura》

Date: February 15,16
Hours: 6pm – 9pm

《Bonden》

Date: February 16,17
Hours: 9:30am – noon(16th)
10am – noon(17th)

《Yatai Village》

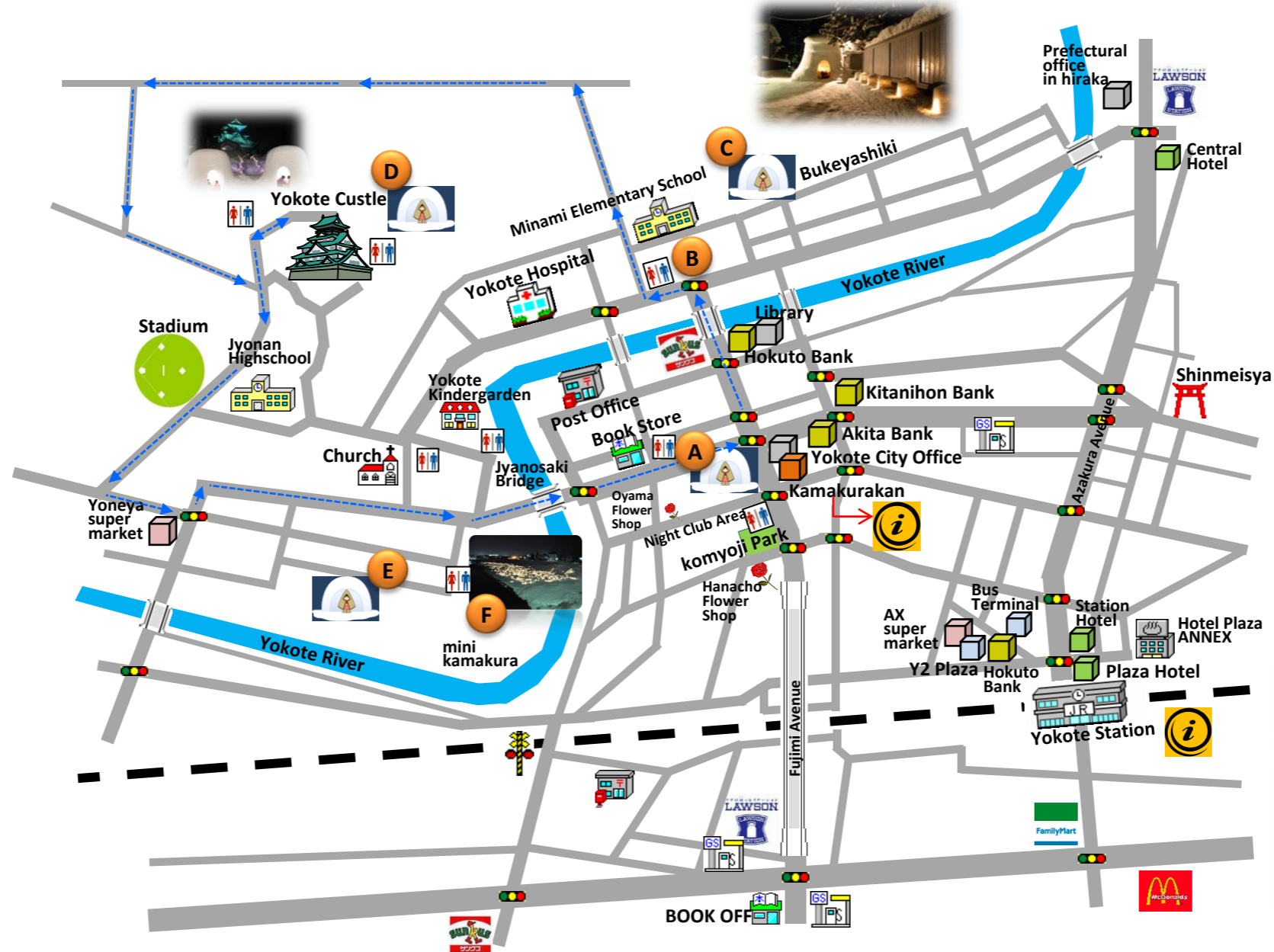
Date: February 15,16
Hours: 11pm – 9pm

《Yokote castle》

Light up: 5pm – 10pm

《circular bus(Flee bus)》

Bus stop A → B → D → E



【Kamakura】



【Bonden】



【Kamakura】

Yokote is one of the snowiest areas in Japan. In Yokote, Kamakura is a folk event that has 420 years of history.

Inside a Kamakura, which is about 4m high and 3.5m in diameter, a holy seat is set to worship the water god, and children drink amazake (sweet sake) and grill mochi (rice cake) there.

During the Edo period, in Uchimachi where the samurai lived, people would make square snow walls, put sacred charms and offerings inside, and burn them to pray for children's well-being and luck.

This was called the Sagicho Kamakura, and the god "Kamakura Daimyojin" was being worshipped.

On the other hand, in Sotomachi where the merchants lived, people would dig a hole in the snow by the well,

and prayed Oshizu-no-Kamisan (the water god) that they be blessed with good and abundant water. These customs, mixed with various snow games played by children, are thought to be the origin of the Kamakura today.

【Bonden】

Bonden is a *heisoku*, one of many tools used in Shinto rituals.

With various wishes such as rich harvest, town residents' well-being, and business prosperity, it is dedicated to Asahiokayama Shrine on February 17 every year.

The length of a Yokote-no-Bonden rod ("Bonden of Yokote") is about 4.3m. A cylindrical bamboo basket which is 90cm around is attached on the tip of the rod.

Vivid colored silk cloths like Yuzen and Habutau, as well as hemp yarn, are hung from it.

In addition, shimenawa(sacred straw rope)and hachimaki(bandana) are attached, making an elaborate headpiece for the rod. With the headpiece, the entire rod becomes 5m in length, and weighs 30kg.

On the day of the Bonden dedication, which is February 17, a kick-off ceremony is held at 10am, at the festival square in front of the Yokote City Office.

Young men of the town proceed to Asahiokayama Shrine calling out "Joyasa! Joyasa!" and singing the "Bonden song."

They climb the approach to the shrine; and as they arrive, the call "Joyasa! Joyasa!" becomes louder and louder, and the men start pushing and shoving each other.

One group tries to charge towards the main shrine carrying the Bonden, and the other group tries to counter them. The battle becomes so heated that you can literally see steam filling the air.

"When Bonden is over, spring will arrive..." Bonden is a precious event that calls in spring for the people of Yokote, who endure the long winter.