

TRAVEL HOKKAIDO

DESTINATION MAGAZINE

DISCOVER JAPAN'S NORTH ISLAND

Travel off the beaten track
and have the Japanese
adventure of a
lifetime.



8

INSIDE WINTER SEASON

Hokkaido is a winter wonderland - but it doesn't end with skiing and snowboarding. Step outside your comfort zone this season!



18

CULINARY EXPLORATIONS

Discover why Hokkaido's food is some of the best in the world with seasonal delights and culinary activities.



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HOKKAIDO BUCKET LIST

Your guide of things that are not to be missed on your north island travels. There's so much to do in every season!



live wild
TRAVEL HOKKAIDO

Travel Hokkaido are a registered travel agent who offer support and tours for solo travelers, couples, families and groups. We love adventure, and value supporting the environment and local community as we travel.

yourtravelhokkaido.com

CONNECTING WITH LOCAL ACTIVITY PROVIDERS, ARTISANS AND COMMUNITIES

TRAVEL HOKKAIDO BELIEVES IN DIRECTLY SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH OUR TRAVEL PLANS - SO WE CONNECT AND COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL PROVIDERS AND ARTISANS TO PROVIDE THE CONTENTS OF OUR TOURS.

ENSURING THAT OUR TRAVEL IS SUSTAINABLE AND COMMITTED TO PROTECTING HOKKAIDO FOR THE FUTURE

TRAVEL HOKKAIDO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT PROTECTING HOKKAIDO FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS AND FOR THAT REASON WE ARE COMMITTED TO TAKING STEPS AND MAKING CHANGES TO INCREASE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR TRAVEL PLANS AND INCREASING THE POSITIVE IMPACT THAT WE CAN HAVE ON THE LOCAL AREA AND ENVIRONMENT.

IF YOU ALSO SHARE A PASSION FOR SUSTAINABILITY WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.



WELCOME TO THE NORTH ISLAND



WHEN IT COMES TO EXPLORING JAPAN, HOKKAIDO IS FULL OF ADVENTURES AND DISCOVERIES. CULTURE, FOOD, NATURE, AND THE FRIENDLIEST LOCAL PEOPLE MAKE FOR A WARM NORTHERN WELCOME.

From city breaks, bustling festivals and vibrant streets, through to the surpassing peace and natural beauty of the great outdoors - our Japanese north island has everything you could hope for and more.

From hot springs and the setting to retreat, relax and refresh, through to some of the most exciting adventure activities in the world.

From the deep powder snow of winter, to the seemingly endless flower fields of summer, Hokkaido has so much to do in every season.

The ski and snowboard conditions are famous, but snowshoeing, ice fishing, dog sledding and family friendly activities are also on offer to make the most of the magical winter at any experience level.

A late spring brings stunning cherry blossoms with less crowds and more unknown spots to discover, along with the phenomenal pink moss of east Hokkaido in late May.

Summer is the season of road trips, camps and perfect hiking weather.

Water sport lovers take to the lakes and oceans, and those looking for a more peaceful or family-friendly experience can enjoy lavender, wildlife, sunflowers and gentle outdoor activities.

Autumn heralds the most phenomenal colours, perfect for the last of the hiking and cycling season. And fall also brings us some of the most delicious food to be enjoyed.

Whenever you visit Hokkaido, the warmest welcome awaits you. If the people make the place, then Hokkaido is overflowing with reasons to visit.

Whatever your travel style or budget, we encourage you to think outside the box and get off the beaten track when you travel here. Whether that's making fresh mochi with a local farmer, trying horse riding in central Hokkaido, or participating in Ainu dance for the first time at Akan Ainu Village - we hope that this destination guide will help you to think creatively about your travel!

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INSIDE WINTER SEASON

If you're a snow-lover (or a soon-to-be snow-lover) and want to explore the ultimate winter wonderland, then these pages are for you.

Of course, the skiing and snowboarding are world class, but there are also so many family friendly and accessible activities if this is your first winter trip.

Seasonal festivals, snow camps, road trips to unforgettable places, and delicious food to enjoy along the way. Wrap up warm and enjoy the magic of Hokkaido this winter!

10



INSIDE SPRING SEASON

Spring is our transition season. From spring skiing, and the fastest (and coldest) rafting rapids - right through to cherry blossom, plum blossom, Hokkaido's pink moss and the Sapporo Lilac Festival.

12



INSIDE SUMMER SEASON

Mountains, lakes, beaches, flower fields, and fruit farms are all waiting to be enjoyed. Whether you're looking for a hiking adventure, a water sports experience, or just some gentle activities to enjoy in the warm summer.

14



INSIDE AUTUMN SEASON

The colours of fall in Hokkaido are out of this world, and the weather is perfect for enjoying the outdoors. It's also a dream season for food lovers with many some incredible seasonal dishes to enjoy.

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TRAVEL HOKKAIDO SERVICES

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101 THINGS TO DO IN HOKKAIDO



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Maruyama Park, Sapporo

FAVOURITE FOOD?

SOUP CURRY



FAVOURITE PLACE?

LAKE TOYA



SHIRETOKO



**QUICK FIRE
TEAM
RECOMMENDATIONS**



WELCOME TO TRAVEL HOKKAIDO

OUR TEAM **TRULY LOVE HOKKAIDO.**

We *believe* that this island is the **perfect** combination of modern cities, spectacular nature, delicious food and activities for every age and interest. We're all either from Hokkaido, or have chosen to live here intentionally.

We're backpackers by experience. We run local hostels, and we love the vibrancy of staying in **community** and meeting new people. We *love* events, fun, music, the great outdoors and bringing people together. These are the reasons that we got into running a travel company in the first instance.

We love learning. About new cultures and people and places. We believe that great *adventures* involve great cultural experiences. Stepping out of our comfort zones is where the magic happens.

We think traveling with family and friends is amazing. As our families have grown we've had a lot of practice juggling plans and priorities, and we want to help you to feel cared for and supported as you do the same. Whether you're a solo-traveler, or wanting to come with others – **we can help.**

We started this company because we wanted to both build a **traveling community** and introduce the place we love most in the world.

We started this company to help you meet Hokkaido.

We also have a passion for protecting Hokkaido and our world for the future and so we're committed to creating travel that gives back every step of the way.

We can't wait to meet you!

Happy Hokkaido-traveling!

FAVOURITE ACTIVITY?

STAND UP PADDLE BOARDING



SHUNSUKE & PETA OHATA

Directors, Travel Hokkaido



INSIDE HOKKAIDO



2 OTARU & YOICHI



Otaru, famous for its seafood, sweets, glassware and beautiful canal.

Visit with an empty stomach and enjoy a relaxing day in this picturesque seaside town.

45 MINUTES FROM SAPPORO

2 OTARU & YOICHI



The winery centre of Hokkaido, Yoichi is a hidden gem of vineyards and culinary experiences. The Nikka whiskey museum also makes for a fun afternoon.

1 HOUR FROM SAPPORO

17 REBUN & RISHIRI ISLANDS

3 SHAKOTAN



Shakotan Blue and Cape Kamui are stunning hikes from spring through to autumn. You can also enjoy them by kayak if you want to see the blue waters up close. And the famous sea urchin is worth trying!

2 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

1 SAPPORO



The capital of Hokkaido with so much to do and be enjoyed. From parks and gardens, festivals, and your choice of foods and activities, it's a great start or end to your Hokkaido adventure.

1 HOUR FROM NEW CHITOSE AIRPORT

4 NISEKO



Niseko area is world famous for its powder snow, and skiers and snowboarders flock here between December and March.

Off ski season it's also a wonderful outdoors spot though!

2 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

7 ESASHI

Water shrines, coastal walks and the oldest sweet shop in Hokkaido! Our secret recommendation!

4 HOURS FROM SAPPORO



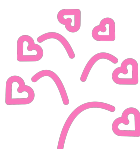
7

5 NOBORIBETSU & LAKE TOYA

Hell Valley, stunning onsens, and unique landscape make up the Noboribetsu area. It's also only a short journey from the awesome Lake Toya and neighbouring volcano Mount Usu.

2 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

6 HAKODATE & MATSUMAE



Cherry blossom lovers adore this area from late April to early May, where the cherry blossoms are some of the most beautiful in Japan. Matsumae Castle and Goryokaku Tower are some of the most popular.

5 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

6 HAKODATE

Picturesque harbour views, Onuma fish market and the most beautiful

5 HOURS FROM SAPPORO



8 YUBA

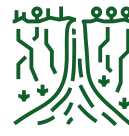




14 ASAHIDAKE, KURODAKE & SOUNKYO

The Daisetsuzan range is a hikers paradise. Not for the fainthearted and worth using a local guide if you don't have lots of experience, but there are many spectacular routes.

2.5 HOURS FROM SAPPORO



14 SOUNKYO

Ginga and Ryusei waterfalls are spectacular, and the onsen locally makes for a peaceful retreat.

2.5 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

12 BIEI BLUE POND

Biei's Blue Pond is famous for its striking colour, which is visible from spring through to autumn. In the frozen winter months the site is illuminated at night so still worth a visit.

2.5 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

13 ASAHIKAWA

There's something to do in Asahikawa in every season - from the zoo, and great food all year round, to the sunflower fields of summer and the snow festivals of winter.

2 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

18 ABASHIRI

Drift ice in winter and a natural wonderland all year around. Also worth checking out the local museums.

4.5 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

21 SHIRETOKO PENINSULA

You have to visit Shiretoko in person to believe it. Nature cruises, hiking trails, drift ice, and the most beautiful views in every season. Well worth the eastern journey.

6 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

22 NOTSUKE PENINSULA

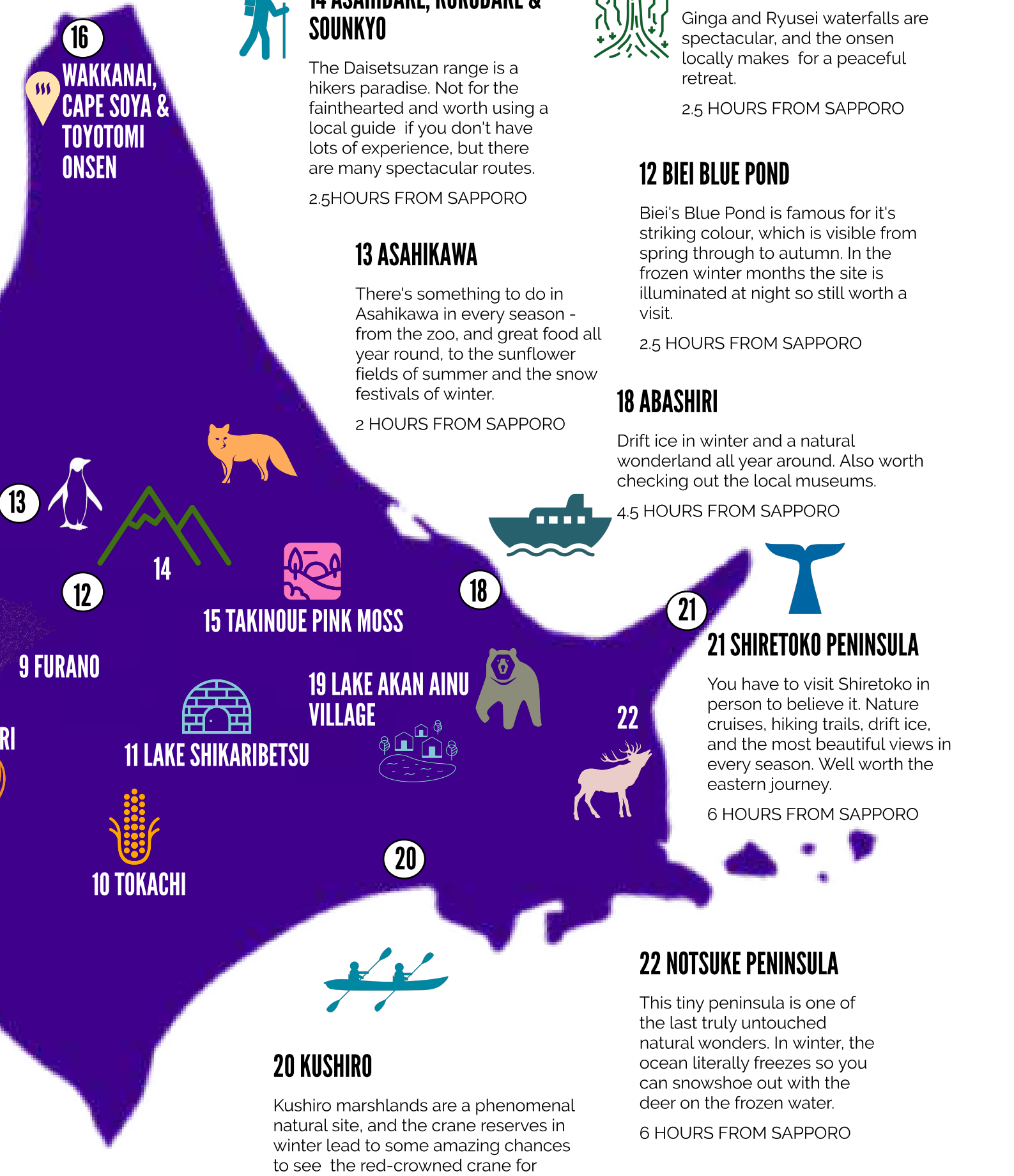
This tiny peninsula is one of the last truly untouched natural wonders. In winter, the ocean literally freezes so you can snowshoe out with the deer on the frozen water.

6 HOURS FROM SAPPORO

20 KUSHIRO

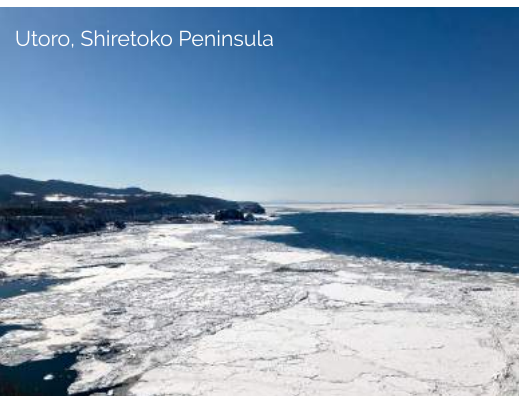
Kushiro marshlands are a phenomenal natural site, and the crane reserves in winter lead to some amazing chances to see the red-crowned crane for yourself. Canoeing, cycling and other outdoor activities are amazing.

4 HOURS FROM SAPPORO



Park, a wonderful nightview!

INSIDE WINTER SEAS



DRIFT ICE ACTIVITIES

If you head over to east Hokkaido then you are in for some stunning winter scenery in drift ice season.

Take a drift ice cruise in Mombetsu or Abashiri - or head on down to Shiretoko Peninsula for the chance to snowshoe on the drift ice and immerse yourself in it's freezing depths (in a dry suit of course!)

AVAILABLE: MID-JANUARY - FEBRUARY

SNOWSHOEING

Whether you're a beginner to snow, or someone looking to enjoy the winter landscape in a different way, snowshoeing is a great option.

There are courses for all levels and abilities, and it's easy to jump straight into for a half day or day course. More locally to Sapporo, we recommend Otaki Ice Cave near Lake Toya, whereas out east, Lake Mashu is a wonderful spot.

There are so many fabulous local guides who will provide equipment and take you to beautiful places.

AVAILABLE: DECEMBER - MARCH

SNOW ACTIVITIES

Dog sledding in central Hokkaido, snowmobiling on the frozen ocean, winter hot air ballooning, viewing the Kushiro cranes, fat-biking in east Hokkaido, snow-play for kids (and maybe larger kids), sledging and tubing fun, drinking in an ice bar or even relaxing in hot springs whilst the snowflakes gentle fall around you - there really is no end to the list of fun winter activities you can try in Hokkaido.

There's even an entire festival for snowball fighting!

Whatever your snow level experience, we encourage you to make the most of Hokkaido in this magical season. Whether it's on a rest day from your snowboarding holiday, or just because you're looking for something lighter to introduce you to the snow - there is something for you going on in the Hokkaido winter.

AVAILABLE: DECEMBER - MARCH

SKIING & SNOWBOARDING

Hokkaido's powder snow is world renowned, but the sheer number of great ski spots on the island may astound you.

We love Niseko, but also Rusutsu, Kiroro, Tomamu, Furano, Sahoro & Asahikawa - not to mention the small local slopes that you can find in so many neighbourhoods. It's well worth getting off the beaten track this winter.

Hokkaido is full of great instructors and guides for all levels of experience!

AVAILABLE: DECEMBER - MARCH



ICE FESTIVALS & VILLAGES

Local ice festivals make for an amazing experience to highlight your winter adventure.

From Sapporo's main snow festival (held early February) to the longer and more local festivals, there are so many to explore throughout the island.

We recommend checking out Lake Shikotsu's Ice Festival (January - February), Sounkyo Ice Waterfall Festival (January - March), and Lake Shikaribetsu Ice Kotan (January - March) which are some magical places throughout winter!

AVAILABLE: JANUARY - MID MARCH



ON

ICE FISHING

On frozen lakes and rivers throughout Hokkaido, ice fishing makes for a fun family-friendly event. Join locals within a tented setting to fish through the ice, and then try frying your own breakfast on the lake.

Early morning sessions are some of our favourite - wrapped in blankets with hot chocolate to accompany the environment.

There are so many great spots, but you don't need to stray far from Sapporo if you'd rather stay local to the city, as Barato River is a popular spot. We love Lake Akan out east too!

AVAILABLE: JANUARY - FEBRUARY



Shiretoko Drift Ice Festival



Niseko



Barato River, near Sapporo





CHERRY BLOSSOM

Hokkaido's cherry blossom blooms later than the rest of Japan, so it's normally the last week in April before the blossom arrives in Matsumae and Hakodate to the south of the island.

For Sapporo aim for early May, with the more northern or eastern areas towards mid-May.

AVAILABLE: END OF APRIL - MID MAY

Moerenuma Park, Sapporo

SPRING SKIING/SNOWBOARDING

If you're looking for an off-peak season skiing or snowboarding experience then a late trip might be for you.

In central Hokkaido many of the runs are open throughout April, so it's the perfect chance to enjoy the mountains and also welcome the start of the warmer weather to Hokkaido.

Also worth considering a back-country guide to find some late magic!

AVAILABLE: APRIL



Niseko

SPRING RAFTING

Although you can enjoy white water rafting in Hokkaido in the summer and autumn seasons, spring is when the fresh snow melt has the rivers at their highest and the waters at their fastest.

It's our recommended season to make the most of this activity.

It also means the water is at it's coldest too - but don't fear - you're dry-suited up, so it's not as cold as it should be!

Take an exhilarating ride down one of Hokkaido's rivers and make some unforgettable memories with your friends and family.

AVAILABLE: APRIL-MAY

HANAMI BBQS

Cherry blossom season isn't just about watching the flowers, it's also a time for BBQing in Hokkaido. Pair local meat (especially lamb), with Hokkaido Classic Beer, and a bunch of local people. If you're visiting around cherry blossom season we definitely recommend joining a BBQ party.

AVAILABLE: END OF APRIL - MID MAY

EAST HOKKAIDO'S PINK MOSS

Hokkaido's pink moss or 'shibazakura' blooms from mid May until early June and it has to be seen to be believed.

Fields and fields of endless pink! There is a small park in Niseko area (Mr Mishima's Garden), but for the main fields you need to head far east to Takinoue Shibazakura Park or Higashimokoto.

You'll need a few days to make the most of the trip, but it's well worth it.

AVAILABLE: MID MAY - EARLY JUNE



Tonden, Sapporo

TULIPS & LILAC

Blooming at a similar time to the pink moss are tulips! Both Takino Suzuran Park in Sapporo, and Kamiyubetsu Tulip Park in east Hokkaido are our favourite spots.

And if you're in Sapporo, mid-late May also brings the Odori Park Lilac Festival, which is not just beautiful flowers but a great festival atmosphere in the city centre - a great highlight to your visit!

AVAILABLE: MID MAY - EARLY JUNE

THE START OF CYCLING SEASON

Summer brings the peak season for cycling and mountain biking, but once the snow starts to melt you see more and more bicycles out and about. In the city, and parks like Moerenuma, bicycles are cheap to rent and a great way to explore the cherry blossom.

For longer rides, there are so many trails and routes to map out - from beginner level day trips, through to more advanced multi-day trips - but the cooler weather or spring is definitely worth taking advantage of.

AVAILABLE: MAY - JUNE



Niseko

SPRING SEASON

WATER SPORTS

Warm weather plus lakes, rivers and oceans means an abundance of water sports and a perfect season to try them out. From clear kayaking at Shakotan Blue, to jet-skiing on Lake Toya, to canoeing in Kushiro, to paddle-boarding at Lake Shikotsu, to surfing some of Hokkaido's secret spots - the list goes on and on and is pretty much endless.

If you're a water lover then Hokkaido is the place for you to have some serious fun exploring. Canyoning, snorkeling and even diving can be added to the list of options if you're looking for a memorable combination in some of Hokkaido's most stunning scenery.

AVAILABLE: JULY - SEPTEMBER

INSI

HIKING OR TREKKING

To ensure that the mountains are really snow free, July, August and September tend to be the most popular months for hiking in Hokkaido. (although on lower ground, like the Shiretoko 5 Lakes in this picture, we were fine in June).

Be aware that even in the warmest months, Hokkaido's weather can change quickly, especially if you're anywhere in the Daisetsuzan Range, so in this case, we do recommend looking into a local guide if you're not that experienced, but still want to enjoy some stunning trails in Hokkaido.

There are hikes for all kinds of abilities available here though, so it's worth getting out and enjoying the wonderful nature!

AVAILABLE: JULY - SEPTEMBER

FLOWER FIELDS

Hokkaido's flower fields are a real treat in summer - the most famous being Furano's lavender that blooms throughout July until early August.

For quieter lavender spots we also recommend checking out Horomi Pass or Hill of Buddha in Sapporo, or Minamifurano in central Hokkaido.

Shikisai no Oka in Biei is popular for a variety of flowers, and their iconic fields bloom from early July through until autumn.

Finally, for sunflowers, Hokuriryu Sunflower Village boasts spectacular views throughout August.

AVAILABLE: JULY - EARLY AUGUST



Biei Blue Pond



Minamifurano Lavender Park

THE SUMMER SEASON



FRUIT PICKING

From strawberries in June and cherries and blueberries in July, all the way through melon season to apple, pears and grapes in the early autumn, Hokkaido is a fruit lovers dream.

Strawberry-picking requires booking in advance, whereas later in the season the other fruits are often available by walking into somewhere on the day.

Choose from walk and eat options through to taking home baskets to your hotel for later.

AVAILABLE: JUNE - OCTOBER

Ohashi Cherry Farm



CAMPING

Whether you are a true camper who carries your tent with you, or looking for something a little more kitted out, Hokkaido has an abundance of camping sites, log cabins, and camper van rental.

Although winter camping is also available in some places, the most popular season for enjoying a night under the stars is definitely summer.

Campsites in Hokkaido are situated in some of the most spectacular scenery - with lakeside sites being some of our favourites.

Local campsites often partner with local onsens here to give you free or discounted entrance too.

AVAILABLE: JUNE - OCTOBER

Takibi Camp Site, Makkari



INSIDE AUTUMN SEA



FALL LEAVES



Ningle Terrace, Furano

Hokkaido's fall leaves tend to start to change at the end of September (especially in early areas like Sounkyo and Kurodake), and the colours continue over the island through until late October.

From greens, to yellows, to oranges to reds - you can pretty much come at any time in this month and be blown away by some spectacular colours.

Closer to Sapporo, Jozankei, Otaru, Niseko and Sapporo's Nakajima Park are some of our favourite spots.

In central Hokkaido, we love Asahidake and Kurodake, as well as the autumn colours of Biei, Furano and Tokachi areas.

Over to east Hokkaido we recommend Lake Akan, Kushiro and Shiretoko.

AVAILABLE: MID SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

The fall leaves are also one of the most beautiful seasons to try onsen or hot springs in Hokkaido. The beautiful colours make for a wonderful setting to enjoy the outdoor baths - especially in Jozankei or Lake Shikotsu areas where the views are breathtaking.

Shikisai No Oka, Biei



SON

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Although autumn is cooling off, it's still a great season for kayaking, cycling, walking, camping and some final BBQs. before the weather changes for winter. When the sun shines, it's time to get outdoors!

Autumn is definitely the hidden-gem of a season in Hokkaido. There is truthfully so much to do, but you can avoid the crowds and travel reasonably in these couple of months.

We recommend planning an itinerary that combines a variety of activities , and if you have the time, cover a variety of places. There's a lot to do close to Sapporo city, but also to the south, north an east where you can easily spend a few days renting bicycles, enjoying the lakes and rivers, and some final lower level hikes before the snow arrives.

AVAILABLE: SEPTEMBER - MID NOVEMBER



Asari Dam

FARM STAYS

Visiting or staying overnight at a Hokkaido farm is a wonderful experience if you're looking to really immerse yourself in the local lifestyle and meet wonderful people at the same time. .

Farm stays are actually open throughout the summer and autumn, but they are a popular option from later in the summer because of the chance to try so many delicious vegetables. (did anyone say Hokkaido pumpkin?!)

A day trip to a farm can include harvesting and eating a picnic of fresh produce, whereas an overnight stay can see you relaxing into the evening, making homemade pizza on an outdoor oven and hearing local stories as the sun goes down.

Both are great options depending on the size of your group and what kind of accommodation you are looking for (farm stay accommodation is often on the more simple side if you're used to higher range hotels)

This is one of our most recommended activities, purely because we believe that people and connecting over food can help us create some of our most treasured memories of traveling!

So for foodies and adventurers, this is definitely one for the memory books!

AVAILABLE: MAY - OCTOBER





Japanese Paper Making, Sapporo

PAPER MAKING

Traditional Japanese paper making is a beautiful activity, and you can build your own postcard or letter paper by hand with instruction from a local paper artisan.

Japanese paper is called 'washi' and is made using fibres from the inner bark of certain types of local trees or shrubs. The pulp of these fibres is mixed with water and scooped onto a screen, then shaken to ensure that the fibres are distributed evenly.

Create paper to write on, or design a postcard using local nature products and create beautiful souvenirs to take home, whilst learning about the art of this traditional craft at the same time.



Indigo Dyeing, Date

INDIGO DYEING

The art of indigo dyeing or 'aizome' has a rich history and influence in Japan. The characteristic colours come from the leaves of the Japanese Indigo Plant, where in a long process, the plant is grown, the leaves dried, fermented and then tended to and moistened to enrich the colours.

In an indigo dyeing workshop, you will receive instruction on how to design unique patterns using your own ideas, and choose whether to create smaller items like a bandanna or handkerchief, or larger items such as a bag or t-shirt.

Making white patterns on your product in the dyeing process is done from simple or more complex folding, or through tying shapes into the fabric before immersing it in the dye multiple times.

It's harder than it looks, but a lot of fun - and it definitely gives you a new appreciation when you see the intricate and beautiful designs in local kimono or products.



Ebetsu

POTTERY

Try your hand at Japanese ceramic art, and create an item that you will receive posted back to you a few weeks or a couple of months after your trip.

It's such a special way to create a memory of Hokkaido that can remind you of your travel on the island!

Most local providers offer this experience with 1kg of clay to use to design a small bowl, teacup or decorative piece of your own creation - but staff are also on hand to offer instruction and guidance in the method and to explain some of their own designs and experiences too.

A wonderful experience for all ages and abilities.



RAMS Chocolate

GLASS BLOWING

Otaru, Niseko and Lake Toya areas are all famed for their glassworks - which makes them the perfect location to try the local craft of glass blowing for yourself.

You can choose from a full glass blowing experience, where you will visit the workshop with a local artisan and get to see a demonstration and try for yourself - or you can choose a lighter option where you blow sand onto the surface of the glass to create the design.

In authentic glass blowing you dip a long tube into molten glass and then blow into the tube to inflate the glass into the shape or design that you wish.

Most local activity providers offer multiple colours to choose from - and you are then able to pick up your item later in the day or the following day.



Noguchi Senpo, Sapporo



Furano

CHOCOLATIERE EXPERIENCE

This could also fall into culinary experiences, but this chocolate is an artisan product all of it's own!

In the northern city of Asahikawa, there is a wonderful local chocolatiere, RAMS, who use fully local ingredients as the flavours of their products.

See handmade chocolate being created in front of you, and with advance booking, have a personalised experience with them.

Try local flavours, such as blue cheese, peanut, roasted tea, sake and honey in a beautiful cafe setting, and enjoy some of the finest in Hokkaido flavours and design.

AINU CRAFTS

If you are visiting Lake Akan, the Ainu Village there is a wonderful location to try your hand at all kinds of traditional crafts, and have a really wonderful experience of traditional Hokkaido culture.

You can experience wooden crafts, where you try wood carving your own item under the instruction of a local craftsman who can also teach you about the traditional techniques.

There is also the opportunity to learn Ainu embroidery - making an original coaster as a souvenir to take home with you. These patterns were traditionally passed from mother to daughter and were said to ward off evil - so there is a rich cultural heritage in the patterns.

Finally, you can try making your own small mouth harp or 'mukkuri' to take home.

They also have a lesson option where you can learn to play the mouth harp, which might be a good option if you are interested in this!

MUSIC BOX CREATION

Otaru is famous for it's music box museum, but there is also a workshop next door to the main museum where you can create your own personalised music box.

To create a box, you first of all choose from a selection of over 100 songs, finding one that you like or that triggers some beautiful memory for you.

You then choose your outer box - whether wooden, clear, on a pedestal or with a hand winder.

Finally, you can accessorize with the top with any small items that you like - flowers, dolls, animals or other small objects.

It's a unique experience!



CULINARY EXPERIENCE



HARVESTING ON A LOCAL FARM

Some of the best local food we've eaten comes fresh from the farm! Try your hand at harvesting local vegetables or fruits, and then get the opportunity to prepare and eat food with local people. Learn about local culinary techniques and how real Hokkaido people eat real Hokkaido food.

You can also learn about how to grow your own food, and ask behind the scenes questions about how to ensure flavour and freshness.

SOBA MAKING

Learn how to make your own soba noodles from scratch.

Soba noodles are made from a combination of buckwheat and wheat flours, and are thinly sliced. They are either served cold with a dipping sauce, or warm in a broth.

Learn how to knead, roll and cut your own soba from a professional, and then enjoy eating your handiwork in a delicious lunch.



CES

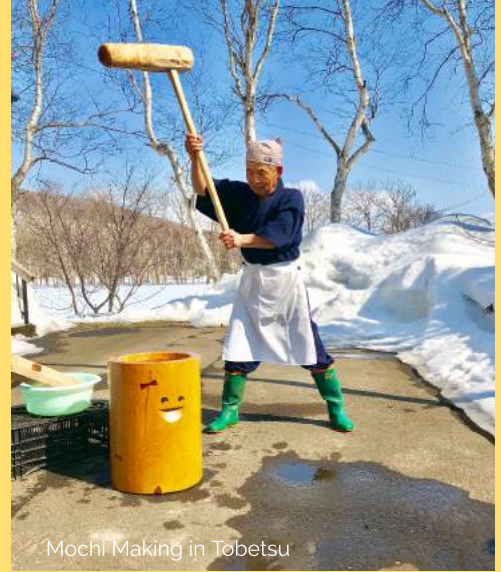
MOCHI EXPERIENCE

Mochi is one of Japan's traditional foods, a Japanese rice cake made from pounding glutinous rice into a paste and molding it into a shape with a variety of fillings.

Try making two kinds of mochi and the fillings for yourself - mochi with a red bean filling, and mochi covered in soy bean powder.

The traditional mochi pounding takes some strength, but it's such a fun and unique experience.

We can even try 'ozoni' afterwards, a traditional Japanese mochi soup that is normally eaten as part of the New Year celebration.



Mochi Making in Tobetsu

SUSHI WORKSHOP

Sushi is one of the first types of food that comes to mind when you think about Japan, and Hokkaido's seafood is known as some of the finest - but how about learning how to make sushi for yourself?

Visit a traditional sushi store, and receive instruction from a trained sushi chef who can teach you about cutting the fish, how to ensure the balance between fish and rice is just right, and how to create that famous sushi shape!

It definitely takes some practice - and many professional sushi chef train for years in order to master the skill - but it's a fun and delicious way to start your own sushi journey.



Mochi and 'Ozoni'

HOMESTEAD EXPERIENCE

Nestled in the stunning Date area, overlooking Mount Usu and Showashinzan, is the wonderful Hokkaidian Homestead.

This is a unique and luxurious setting where you can try a deluxe culinary workshop which is unique in Hokkaido. All ingredients are sourced locally, and the head chef is professionally trained.

Choose from a half day or full day session and eat your way through a full course meal - with breaks to enjoy the land and views - and the chance to try your own hand at preparing some of the meal.

We are not exaggerating when we say that the food here is some of the best we have ever eaten - fresh seafood, vegetables, meat, and even drinks made from locally harvested berries.

If you're a foodie, you will want to put this on your list.



Rankoshi

WINE, WHISKEY, BEER & SAKE

Hokkaido has a vast reputation when it comes to great alcohol and there are a number of experiences that you can try which take you behind the scenes into tasting, and sometimes even making your favourite kind of alcohol.

Yoichi's Nikka Distillery and Sapporo's Beer Museum are more well known, but you can also try local craft beer and make your own Sake in Otaru, have a sake experience near Biei, and visit a number of local wineries in Yoichi.

If you're a Japanese alcohol appreciator, of any type, it's definitely worth putting some of these places on your travel list.

Yoichi is a particularly wonderful place if you like wine and are interested in getting behind the scenes as well as just tasting - as it has a large number of different wineries, some of which are open for tours as well as tasting. The local community here have really embraced being a 'fruit town' growing grapes, as well as apples and pears - and the openness of the local farmers make for a very special experience when visiting.



Makkari



Lost Kamuy, Lake Akan Ainu Village

TEA CEREMONY

Japanese tea ceremony involves the ceremonial preparation of matcha, powdered green tea.

The practice has a deep history in Japan and was originally influenced in development by Zen-Buddhism - there are still different schools and methods of practicing the ceremony.

For visitors to Japan, the tea ceremony will typically take place in a traditional tatami room, sometimes with low entrance that you bow to pass through (symbolising humility), and guests normally sit in a seiza (kneeling) position on the floor. The host will prepare the tea using a number of items specific for the occasion.

You won't be expected to know the intricacies of the tea ceremony in detail so don't panic, but as an overview:

You will be served a traditional Japanese sweet to eat before drinking your tea, and you pick up your tea with your right hand, and then place it on your left palm. Using your right hand, you turn the cup clockwise 90 degrees and drink the tea in a few sips before returning it to the tatami. And remember to bow afterwards!

It's a unique Japanese cultural experience, so if you are interested in understanding this more for yourself, it's worth finding a local opportunity.



Japanese Tea Ceremony, Sapporo

KIMONO EXPERIENCE

Japanese kimono are beautifully created, and often worn for formal occasions, public holidays and festivals in Japan. If you would like to try for yourself, we recommend visiting a professional kimono store who can help you to choose the right garment and support you with the dressing process - as there are a number of layers and elements.

It's a wonderful experience to visit a local park, shrine or just a beautiful place and have the chance to take some memorable pictures in traditional Japanese dress.

If you are visiting a Japanese summer festival, 'yukata', a more casual form of kimono, are often worn. These are a little easier to put on and can even be bought locally if you wish to purchase some Japanese style clothing to take home.



Traditional Ainu Dance at Lake Akan

JAPANESE FESTIVAL

One of the things we love most about Hokkaido are the amount of local festivals. Winter and summer are definitely the peak seasons, but throughout the year, it's worth checking out local areas and seeing if there's something seasonal taking place.

Get ready for some festivals that might be what you are expecting and others that might make you do a double take. For instance, we fully recommend the Furano Bellybutton Festival, where people process down the streets with faces painted on their stomachs, and Noboribetsu's summer Hell Festival, which is not at all evil, but involves lots of friendly people and local street dancing.

When you go to a local festival, get involved! If there's dancing, give it a shot - if there are local food stalls, try something new - if you get the chance to wear a yukata, go for it!

Hokkaido people are very friendly, and they'll be delighted to see you there enjoying yourself!



Kimono at Hokkaido Shrine



CULTURAL EXPERIEN

AINU CULTURE

The Ainu are the indigenous people of Hokkaido, and traditional Ainu culture is quite different from Japanese culture. Within Hokkaido there are still some Ainu villages, settlements and museums where aspects of Ainu culture can be learned about and experienced, and we definitely recommend taking the time to visit and explore these on your Hokkaido travel.

There are lots of places and activities that are not only interesting to visit - but also a whole lot of fun!

Lake Akan Ainu Theatre is a wonderful location where traditional Ainu dance and song has been performed for many years. Since 2019 the theatre have also developed a new kind of performance, 'Lost Kamuy' (kamuy is the Ainu word for 'god'), which combines traditional songs and dances with contemporary dance and digital imagery - and it's an amazing production! It introduces a beautiful story which is strongly influenced by Ainu religious beliefs, but it's done in such a captivating way and we fully recommend it as an evening activity if you have the chance to stay at Lake Akan.

Remember that you can also book a range of activities with Ainu artisans at Lake Akan too.

If you are interested in learning more about Ainu culture, Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum in Biratori, Hidaka is also worth visiting - they have many everyday articles that were used by Ainu people, including clothing and instruments - and it's also possible to take part in some Ainu crafts.

A new National Ainu Museum at Shiraoi will also reopen in April 2020, and this is due to have a fully recreated Ainu village as well as the space to try lots of experiential activities related to Ainu culture.

ONSEN

Japanese hot springs take some getting used to if you're from a culture that isn't used to public bathing, but we definitely recommend giving an onsen a try on your Hokkaido trip.

Onsens are separated by gender, but you do have to enter without a bathing suit (although you get a little towel).

Regardless of your initial reaction, Japanese hot springs are a big part of the culture here, and they are also so incredibly relaxing.

Worth getting out of your comfort zone for!

Furano Bellybutton Festival



STUDY ABROAD



ADVENTURE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Hokkaido Adventure Leadership Program (ALP) is a Japanese language, culture and adventure program aimed at young people aged 10 – 18.

We believe that not all classrooms have four walls, and so our intensive, 2-week, residential package is a mixture of practical Japanese study, real-life cultural experiences, team-work activities and a whole lot of fun!

Our trained and experienced bilingual staff team provide full-time support for each participant, and our unique ALP program means that everything from housing, to meals, to activities is completely included in the plan.

Get ready for 14 days and 12 nights of learning, fun and adventures. Each ALP tribe (that's what we call each group) is made up of between 10 and 20 young people. There are a mixture of ages, nationalities and personalities – but we will do our best to match you with a group if you are traveling by yourself, or we can accommodate siblings, friendship groups, youth groups or classes wishing to travel together.



High Ropes, Niseko

WE LEARN TOGETHER

Every weekday we'll have two 45 minute intensive Japanese lessons that will give you some of the phrases, vocabulary and grammar that you're going to need for the day.

We believe that if we can keep the Japanese you are learning linked to your daily activities, it will help you use, remember and retain what you learn more easily than simply doing exercises in a textbook.

WE EXPERIENCE TOGETHER

Every weekday we'll have either a cultural or social activity. You might be making some kind of Japanese food, playing sports, taking a trip out to the local park or taking part in some teamwork activities. We believe learning also takes place though having a lot of fun - so get ready to get out and about and enjoy the season and local area!

We will also be taking some bigger day trips to really enjoy Hokkaido at it's best. Depending on which places are best at the time of year you come, we'll be jumping into our own bus and getting into Hokkaido for some of our own adventures. Most evenings we'll cook together. We'll introduce some Japanese dishes, but on some nights we'd love it if you could introduce a dish from your home country too.

We'll also have time to chill out in the evening, watch some movies, visit a local games centre and play some competitive board-games.

If you are a teacher or youth leader wishing to bring a group of 8 or more young people for specific dates at any time of year, please get in touch!

We can accommodate whole groups throughout the year and work out an activities schedule to suit you.



Snowshoe near Sapporo

BECAUSE NOT ALL CLASSROOMS HAVE 4 WALLS



BE THE CHANGE

Be The Change Hokkaido (BTC) has three main aims:

- ✓ To help you to create and achieve personal goals.
- ✓ To provide an environment for intense growth and development.
- ✓ To offer you a Japanese cultural immersion experience.

BTC is a way to discover Hokkaido, whilst discovering yourself at the same time. This is a unique 12 week program combining Japanese classes and cultural experiences, community living, workshops, mentorship, and a real-life internship in a Japanese setting.

Aimed at participants who are 18-29 years old, we believe in the power of community, group learning, and giving back. We love Japanese language and culture, but we know that whilst traveling or studying is great, an immersive experience is even better.

If you're looking to explore Japan and practically improve your Japanese, whilst also discovering a career you love and thinking about your next steps – this could well be the program that you are looking for.

STAGE 1

6 WEEKS OF LIVING IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Japanese classes | Entrepreneurship training | Cultural activities | Hokkaido travel and road trips | Regular team building events & activities with local people (language exchange, night tours).

STAGE 2

5 WEEKS OF INTERNSHIP + 1 FINALE WEEK

Internship with a Hokkaido company | Chance to use Japanese and your native language | Volunteer opportunities based in urban or rural contexts, supporting local businesses | A final week to reflect on our journey and enjoy together.

BTC Teambuilding, Sapporo



DAY TRIPS OR HALF-DAY TRIPS

If you're solo traveling, traveling in a couple or with a small group of friends, jumping into one of our day or half day tours is a great option. These are reasonably priced, with a maximum group of 12 and an English speaking guide, so they're a great way to keep the flexibility in your travel, whilst meeting some like-minded people and getting to places that can be difficult by public transport.

Our day tours include some well known and some lesser known sites, normally leaving around 8am and returning between 6-7pm.

Our night tours include everything from food-hopping in Sapporo city, to trying night onsen in Jozankei - and they're perfect if you want something fun to do in the evening but don't know where to start!

We list our weekly and seasonal trips on our website, so take a look around and get in touch!

PRIVATE OR GROUP TOURS

Sometimes you're looking for something a little more personalised, or you're traveling with a larger group of family and friends and hoping for something specific for your group.

We can help plan day or multi-day tours for any number of people, and we can support you to organise any or every part of your travel. Itineraries, transport, guides, activities, hotels, restaurant bookings and anything else you may need.

We support everything from private and couples tours, all the way up to groups of 50+, and work with you every step of the way to make sure that your trip goes as smoothly as possible.

ACTIVITIES

Sometimes our guests just need a little support booking and finding activities, especially in rural areas where English isn't always widely available. The activities page on our website has lots of ideas, and we are happy to help support your planning and arranging - even putting a translator into your activity if needed.

We can also help to connect you with local activity guides - whether you're looking for a local guide to support ski lessons or snowshoeing in the winter, right through to hiking guides for the summer. Get in touch and we can help!

TRANSPORT SUPPORT

We also run a fully licensed charter bus company, Social Bus, and so are happy to help arrange direct transport support for your group.

We often use our own buses to support our day trips and private tours, but any of our vehicles are also available for direct hire with a driver - especially suitable for groups who already have a firm itinerary and are primarily looking for affordable transport for groups of 6 to 40 members.

Guide services are easy to add if required, but otherwise we will agree daily plans in advance and your driver will look after you for the duration of your travel, working to the times and itinerary we've agreed with you.

SELF-GUIDED TOUR SUPPORT

Some of our guests are self-guiding and driving Hokkaido by rental car or RV. In this case, they often get in touch with us to help them plan a realistic itinerary, and for recommendations about places to stay, eat or just make sure they visit.

We are always happy to help with itinerary creation, and support any bookings and accommodation arrangements that are required.

Self-guiding is great - but if you can have the pressure taken off in a few of the arrangements and have someone to help with translation by phone in a fix - it can definitely make for a more enjoyable experience.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

Finally, we're always here for the little extra things!

We work incredibly hard to ensure that all of our guests on any of our tours or travel plans have the best time possible - but we also know that some groups need some additional supports.

If you are traveling with group members who require disability assistance, or who have additional support needs - we are here to help and will do everything we can to support your travel. We hope that you will find Hokkaido as accessible and welcoming as possible.



TRAVEL HOKKAIDO



YOUR HOKKAIDO BUCKET LIST

101 THINGS TO DO



1. GO CLEAR KAYAKING AT LAKE SHIKOTSU AND TAKE IN THE PHENOMENAL CLEAR WATERS.

2. Take a northern road trip to Cape Soya in Wakkanai - the most northern point of Hokkaido!
3. Watch over 30,000 dancers participate in Yosakoi Soran Festival (held every June)
4. Walk through the sunflowers at Hokuryu Town (in August).
5. Watch winter fireworks at Lake Shikotsu Hyoto Festival.
6. Check out -41° temperatures at Kamikawa Ice Pavilion.
7. Take a picture at Hitsujigaoku Observation Hill.
8. Make ice cream at Lake Hill Farm in Toya area.
9. Visit Kami no Ko Pond next to Lake Mashu - the lesser known blue pond of Hokkaido, but a peaceful and stunning location.
10. Take a craft workshop at Sapporo Art Park.
11. Try pounding your own mochi.
12. Go white water rafting in Niseko.
13. Take the steam train connecting Kushiro and Shibecha.
14. Go paragliding in Bibai.
15. Try the literal outdoor ice onsen at Lake Shikaribetsu Ice Village Festival (January - March)
16. Buy fresh sweetcorn in the summer from Odori Park.
17. Catch your own breakfast at Hakodate morning market and eat the freshest seafood imaginable.
18. Try Sapporo Classic Beer (if you're over 20 of course!)
19. Meet the alpacas at Ecorin Village.
20. Take the outdoor slide at the top of Tengu Mountain in Otaru (open late spring until autumn)
21. Go bridge swinging over the Saru River.
22. If you like hiking, try the traverse hike between Asahidake and Kurodake! (July - September) If you're not a hiker, take the ropeway and enjoy the views anyway!
23. Pick and eat fresh cherries at Sakuranbo Mountain (peak season throughout July)

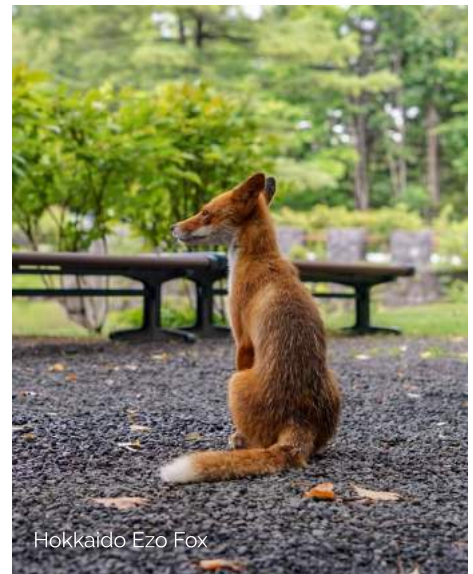
24. Capture a great picture of a Hokkaido ezo red fox.
25. Go shopping at Ningle Terrace in Furano.
26. Visit Unkai Cloud Terrace in Tomamu and be literally above the clouds.
27. Go to see Taushubetsu River Bridge (only visible through winter and spring)
28. Stay at Lake Akan and immerse yourself in some Ainu cultural experiences.
29. Try snowboarding in the best conditions in the world at Niseko, Rusutsu, Kiroro, Furano, Tomamu or Sahoro Resorts!
30. Eat Santa's Beard Ice Cream in Furano (a half melon with Hokkaido soft cream on top).
31. Go snow tubing at Takino Suzuran Park (January - February)
32. Enjoy an all you can eat Shabu Shabu dinner with friends'
33. Make your own pizza on a farm in Rankoshi (near Niseko)
34. Eat oysters at Akkeshi Cherry Blossom and Oyster Festival (early May)
35. Visit the Winter Olympic Museum when you check out the views at Okurayama.

37. VISIT ONE OF THE MOST REMOTE PLACES, NOTSUKE PENINSULA, AND SEE THE DEER UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL.

38. Take the ice slide at Tomamu Ice Village (December - early March)
39. Go dog sledding in Minami Furano (late December - early March)
40. Try making cookies at Shiroyo Chocolate Factory.
41. Eat a cheese tart at Kinotoya.
42. Take an adventure to Rishiri and Rebun Islands, off the north coast of Hokkaido and get ready for some phenomenal scenery.
43. Make your own soba in Tobetsu.
44. If you're a skier/snowboarder, get a local guide and take a backcountry tour at Mount Yotei or Asahidake.
45. Eat soup curry and plenty of it.



Cape Soya, Wakkanai



Hokkaido Ezo Fox



Kami No Ko Pond



Shabu Shabu in Furano



Deer at Notsuke Peninsula

46. Take a short hike up Moiwa Mountain to watch the sunset (rope way is also available!)

47. Try immersing yourself in the drift ice in Shiretoko for an exhilarating and freezing experience (even though you're in a dry suit!)

48. Take a stroll through the autumn leaves in Nakajima Park.

49. TAKE A PICTURE WITH A SNOW PILE TALLER THAN YOU ARE!

50. Visit the Snowflake Museum in Asahikawa and take some memorable pictures in the romantic atmosphere!

51. Take part in the local Furano 'Heso' (bellybutton) Festival, and enjoy a truly local experience (end of July).

52. Go to see the Kushiro red-crowned cranes in the wild (winter season only) or at Kushiro Tanchozuru Natural Park all year round.

53. Try picking fresh Hokkaido asparagus for yourself and then prepare lunch with this as one of the main ingredients!

54. Eat a famous Pork Rice Bowl (Butadon) in Obihiro!

55. Ride Norbesa Ferris Wheel and take in the city views from a different perspective.

56. Take in the vibrant colour of Biei's Blue Pond (in winter the pond is frozen and covered in snow, but there are illuminations in the evening).

57. Go for a gentle hike in the legendary 'Hell Valley' at Noboribetsu. Try the foot onsen there (and a real onsen too!)



Winter in Sapporo City

58. Eat local delicacy 'Ghenghis Khan' Lamb BBQ.

59. Try wake-boarding at Lake Toya.

60. Make sure to indulge in Hokkaido Miso Ramen at least once on your trip. Try Sapporo's Ramen Alley, or Asahikawa's Ramen Village for lots of choice and variety.

61. RENT BIKES FOR THE DAY AT MOERENUMA PARK AND EXPLORE THE BEAUTIFUL SETTING AND SCULPTURES.

62. Go on a segway tour at Tokachi Millennium Forest and enjoy the amazing scenery from a new view!

63. Go sea kayaking at Shiretoko Peninsula and be overwhelmed by natural beauty like you've never seen before. Shiretoko's nature is just perfection!

Mount Moiwa, Sapporo



64. Take the journey south to Matsumae Castle, the most northern castle in Japan, but one of the most southern points in Hokkaido.

65. Visit Esashi and check out the water torii that stands in front of Heishi Rock at Kamome Island.

66. Enjoy an outdoor picnic at Itadekimasu Company in Tokachi - the freshest food and nicest people!

67. Take a hot air balloon ride in Furano.

68. Walk amongst fields and fields of never ending pink moss at Takioue and Higashimokoto Parks.

69. Go on a winery tour in Yoichi and enjoy some of Hokkaido's finest!

70. Visit Kamifurano's Lavender Festival in July.

71. Enjoy the spectacular views at Shirehige Falls in Biei on your way to see the Blue Pond. Stunning in every season, which an awesome onsen next door as well.

72. Go diving in the clear waters of Lake Shikotsu.

73. Try surfing at one of Hokkaido's many secret spots. If you're a beginner take a fun surf lesson in south Hokkaido.

74. Stargaze at Hokkaido's vast night sky and try to count the stars.

75. Taste fresh bread made with local Hokkaido flour at one of the incredible local bakeries dotted all over the island.

76. Try horse riding at the Northern Horse Park near Chitose.

77. VISIT THE 3000 TREES THAT LINE THE ROAD AT SHIZUNAI CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL.

78. Check out the local night view at Asahiya Memorial Park in Sapporo City.

79. Go to Yubari and eat ALL the melon! Real melon, melon soft cream, melon sweets - you name it, they have it!

80. Drive down Biei's Panorama Road and stop for multiple picture stops along the way.

81. Enjoy autumn in Sounkyo, and catch some of the earliest fall leaves in Hokkaido.

82. Go for a night out in Susukino, and enjoy the best of Hokkaido's bars, restaurants and nightlife.

83. Take the ropeway up Mount Usu and enjoy the views of Lake Toya and Showashinzan .

84. Catch a clear day for the views at Lake Mashu.

85. At least once, check out the ice sculptures at Sapporo Snow Festival.

86. Make sure you see the famous night view from Mount Hakodate.

87. DIG YOUR OWN ONSEN ON THE SHORE OF LAKE KUSSHARO.

88. Watch Kachimai Fireworks Taikai in Tokachi.

89. Visit Lake Furen in Nemuro and see the beautiful wildlife.

90. Stay at Toyotomi onsen in north Hokkaido and try the unique water that has skin healing properties.

91. View the cherry blossom at Goryokaku Park.

92. Head east to see the Okhotsk drift ice and take a cruise in Abashiri.

93. Join a cherry blossom 'Hanami' party at Maruyama Park (and see the shrine and festival at the same time)

94. Go and see the Canola Field Festival in Takikawa in late May. Yellow flowers as far as the eye can see!

95. Try indigo dyeing at Date Village and take home some beautiful and hand-created souvenirs.

96. Try spring rafting in Niseko when the water is at it's fastest and coldest!

97. Drink your fill of fresh spring water straight from the natural source at Fukidashi Park. Bring your reusable bottles and stock up on delicious water for you trip.

98. Try winter camping in Makkari, and experience cosy warmth whilst being surrounded by deep snow outside.

99. Try sunrise ice fishing on Barato River and cook your own breakfast as the sun comes up!

100. Have a drink in an ice bar at Shikaribetsu Ice Village, Tomamu or Shiretoko Drift Ice Festival. Ice glasses are a must!

101. For a fun and easy to try activity, we recommend Stand Up Paddle Boarding (SUP). Available at many river, ocean or lake locations in Hokkaido, this is an awesome way to gently enjoy nature, hang out with your family and friends, and of course, see if anyone is going to fall in!



Matsumae Castle



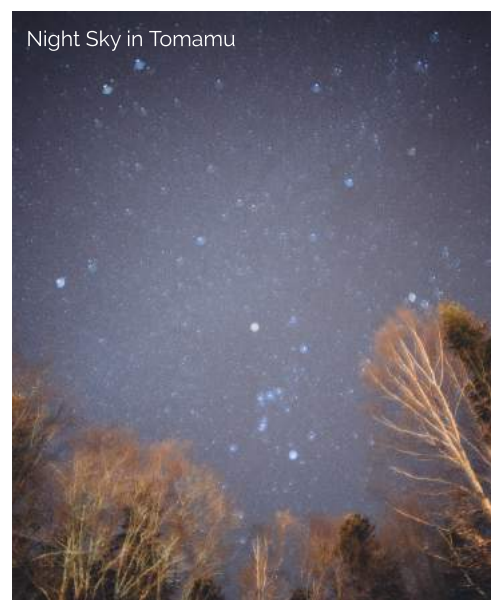
Lake Shikotsu Ice Festival



Shirahige Falls, Biei



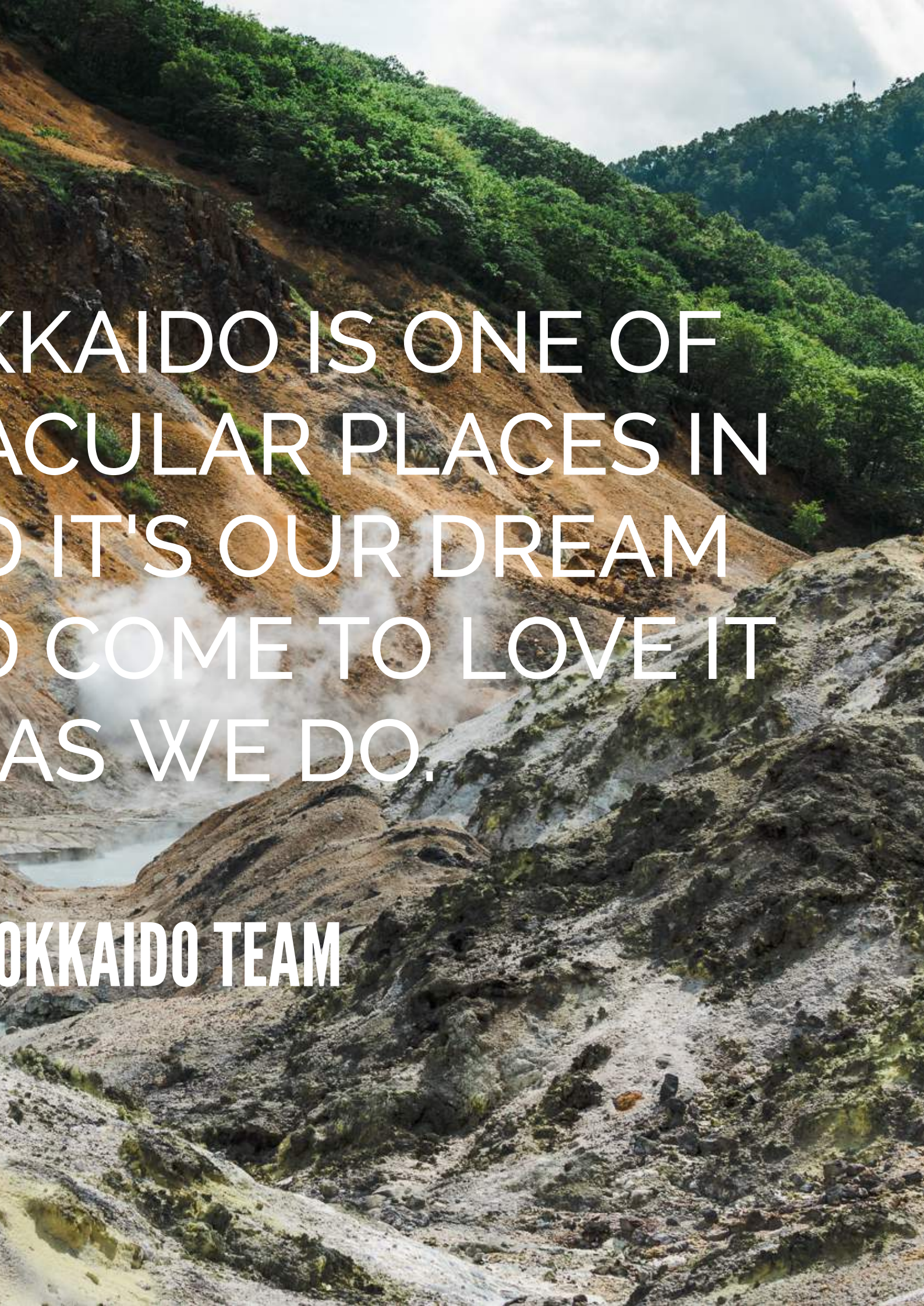
Tomita Farm, Furano



Night Sky in Tomamu

WE BELIEVE HOK
THE MOST SPECTA
THE WORLD, AND
THAT YOU WOULD
AS MUCH

THE TRAVEL HO



OKKAIDO IS ONE OF
ACULAR PLACES IN
D IT'S OUR DREAM
D COME TO LOVE IT
AS WE DO.

OKKAIDO TEAM



live wild
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