SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

www.samuraitours.com

Best of Hokkaido



15 Days / 14 Nights

Best of Hokkaido

Tour Overview

The Best of Hokkaido tour focuses on the northernmost of the main islands, Japan’s last frontier. Hokkaido is a natural wonderland of mountain ranges, deep caldera lakes, active volcanoes, numerous thermally-heated mineral springs and virgin forests. The attitudes of the inhabitants are akin to those of the pioneers of the American West, but still unmistakably Japanese.

Destinations

Tokyo, Sapporo, Sounkyo Onsen, Abashiri, Utoro Onsen, Shiretoko National Park, Lake Akan, Lake Akan Crane Center, Kushiro Marshland, Kushiro, Noboribetsu Onsen, Upopoy Ainu Museum, Hakodate

Tour Factors

Cultural Immersion

★★★☆☆

Pace

★☆☆☆☆

Physical Activity

★★☆☆☆

Tour Details

Among the Japanese, Hokkaido has become synonymous with sensational food, stunning scenery and some of the best onsens in Japan. Because of this, Hokkaido has become a popular vacation destination for the Japanese. We slow the pace down on this tour to allow you to relax and to really enjoy and appreciate Hokkaido to its fullest.

You'll enjoy Sapporo, Hokkaido's largest city and host to the 1972 Winter Olympics, with its many fine restaurants. You will tour Sounkyo Gorge in the middle of the beautiful Daisetsuzan National Park with its soaring mountain ranges, visit Noboribetsu Onsen, one of Japan's largest and most popular hot springs resorts. Learn about Hokkaido's original inhabitants, the Ainu, whose culture almost disappeared until recent efforts of restoration. You will visit the Akan International Crane Center where research is being done to bring the cranes back from the brink of extinction. And walk through the Kushiro Marshland, the natural habitat of the cranes.

You will tour Akan National Park with its numerous caldera lakes. And visit the Furano and Biei areas in the center of Hokkaido known for its pleasant and picturesque landscapes. And you will visit Otaru, once a major herring port in the late 19th century.

Tour Highlights	✔ Sapporo, the Host of the 1972 Winter Olympics ✔ Grilled Lamb Dinner at the Sapporo Beer Garden ✔ Otaru ✔ Akan National Park ✔ Lake Akan ✔ Akan Crane Center ✔ Kushiro Marshland ✔ Sounkyo Onsen ✔ Furano/Biei ✔ Noboribetsu Onsen ✔ Upopoy National Ainu Museum
Tour Inclusions	✔ Travel Guard Gold Policy (for American tour members only) ✔ Domestic Airfare from Tokyo to Sapporo and Return ✔ Meeting service at the arrival airport ✔ Sending service to the appropriate train station ✔ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History
Tour Exclusions	✖ International airfare is NOT included. ✖ A printed itinerary is not included ✖ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Map

Tour Destinations

Tokyo
Sapporo
Sounkyo Onsen
Abashiri
Utoro Onsen
Shiretoko National Park
Akan National Park
Lake Akan
Akan Crane Center
Noboribetsu Onsen
Upopoy Ainu Village and Museum
Hakodate

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo

After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met at Tokyo's Narita Airport by a Samurai Tours meeting staff member. They will then purchase a limousine bus ticket for you and help you board the bus to the hotel. After checking in, the evening is free. No meals are included.

Travel: 1-1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 2 Fly to Sapporo; Grilled Lamb Dinner at the Sapporo Beer Garden

After breakfast, we will travel to Tokyo's Haneda airport and you will fly to Sapporo's New Chitose Airport. We will then travel into Sapporo, the largest city on Hokkaido and the host of the 1972 Winter Olympics. In the evening, we will have dinner at the Sapporo Beer Garden, located next to the original Sapporo Beer Brewery where you can try the local specialty of grilled lamb, cooked yourself at the table. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 3 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 3 Sapporo - Ainu Museum, Odori Park, Sapporo TV Tower, Nijo Fish Market, Tanuki Shopping Arcade

After breakfast we will visit the Sapporo Botanical Garden to visit a small but excellent Ainu Museum. The garden also has a virgin forest that shows what the surrounding area looked like more than 150 years ago. We will walk along Odori Park, the venue for the world famous Sapporo Snow Festival held annually in early February. At the end of Odori Park, we will visit the observation deck of the Sapporo TV Tower. The observation deck offers nice views of the park and the surrounding city. The tower is just under 150 meters tall, and the observation deck is at an elevation of 90 meters. Next, we will visit the Nijo Fish Market where locals visit to shop for fresh local produce and seafood such as crabs, salmon eggs, sea urchin and various fresh and prepared fish. We will continue with a lunch at a fresh seafood rice bowl ("kaisendon") lunch. After lunch, you will have free time to explore the Tanuki Shopping Arcade. The unique aspect of this mall is that you will find traditional merchants selling kimonos, tea or incense side-by-side with modern stores specializing in computers, software or state-of-the-art electronics. The evening is free. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: Heavy

Day 4 Travel to Otaru; Otaru - Aoyama Family Herring Mansion, Free Time; Return to Sapporo

Today we will take a day trip to Otaru which once thrived as a major trade and fishing port. We will start our tour by visiting the preserved Aoyama family villa, documenting the time when the herring industry played a major role in Otaru and Hokkaido's history and development. After lunch, you will have some free time to explore the Canal area lined with Meiji period warehouses, and the Sakaimichi street with its Music Box Museum and Glass workshops. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 5 Travel to Abashiri

We travel with all bags only to the city of Abashiri on the northeastern coast of Hokkaido. Today will be a long travel day. But we will be making stops at Michi no Eki (road stations) along the way. Michi no Eki are the ideal way to recharge your batteries and learn about the area you're passing through on your journey. These roadside stations offer far more than service stations you may be used to, usually showcasing their area with a sampling of delicious regional produce. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 6 Abashiri - Ice Flow Drift Museum, Northern People's Museum, Abashiri Prison Museum; Shell Mound Museum

We start the day by touring the Ice Flow Drift Museum. Every winter, and huge ice flow from a Russian river slams into the northeastern portion of Hokkaido. Next, we will visit the Northern People's Museum. Here, we will learn more about the Ainu culture as well as other similar indigenous cultures of the northern hemisphere. Next, we will visit the Abashiri Prison Museum. Abashri Prison was initially constructed in the late 19th century, but the prison gained national fame through yakuza movies in the 1960s and became known as the Alkatraz of Japan. The museum illustrates the daily life of prisoners and has more than a dozen buildings and structures from the old prison. To finish the day we will visit the Shell Mound Museum. The "Moyoro Shell Mound Museum" is a facility that unravels the mystery of the "Okhotsk people", a northern people who suddenly appeared and disappeared 1300 years ago..Breakfast at the ryokan and buffet dinner at the hotel included.

Travel: 1 Hour; Walking: Heavy
Travel: 1 Hour; Walking: Heavy

Day 7 Akan National Park - Lake Masshu, Iozan, Lake Kussharo

We will start by visiting Lake Mashu. Lake Masshu is considered by many to be Japan's most beautiful lake. Lake Mashu is also one of the country's deepest lakes, and while it is appreciated for its clear blue water, it is also famously and frequently blanketed in heavy fog. Next we will visit Iozan, also known as Sulpher Mountain. It is easy to understand how it got its name. Next we will visit Lake Kussharo, Japan's largest caldera lake. We wil visit the Ainu Folklore Museum, featuring Interesting displays and artifacts that highlight various aspects of Ainu life, language and culture. We will check into the hotel on the shore of Lake Kussharo. Breakfast at the ryokan, and dinner at the hotel is included.

Travel: 2 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 8 Travel to Lake Akan - Akan Crane Center, Kushiro Marshland

After breakfast, we will drive to the Akan Crane Center.

We will start the day at the Akan Crane Center. Japanese Cranes were thought to be extinct in Japan due to overhunting and habitat destruction. However, in 1956 a group of about 20 birds was discovered in the marshes around Kushiro. With conservation efforts they have since made a dramatic recovery and now number almost 2000 birds. The Kushiro Marshland was designated as a national park in 1987 in order to preserve the country's largest wetland and marsh habitat which supports the only known population of endangered Japanese Cranes. In the afternoon, we will drive to Lake Akan, another caldera lake. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the ryokan is included.

Travel: 3 Hours 45 Minutes; Walking: Heavy

Day 9 Free Day at Lake Akan

Today is a free day to enjoy scenic Akan-ko. Take a sightseeing boat cruise around Akan-ko where you will stop to see Marimo, the unique globe-shaped algae that only grows in Lake Akan. Visit the Ainu Village with its many souvenir shops and restaurant selling authentic Ainu cuisine, and attend an authentic Ainu Dance Demonstration at the Ainu Village. Go hiking in the medieval forests surrounding the lake, or climb one of the nearby dormant volcanoes. Buffet breakfast and dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: N/A; Walking: TBD

Day 10 Travel to Sounkyo Onsen - Waterfalls and Kurodake Ropeway

We travel to Sounkyo Onsen where we will find two beautiful waterfalls, Ginga no Taki (Milky Way Falls) and Ryusei no Taki (Shooting Star Falls), which cascade down the 100 meter high cliffside. Next we will travel to the Kurodake Ropeway which provides visitors easy access into the higher parts of Daisetsuzan National Park. From here, you will be able to view the surrounding mountain ranges (weather permitting). We will retrieve the luggage upon arrival at the lodging. Buffet breakfast and dinner at the lodging are included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 11 Travel to Furano - Blue Pond, Farm Tomita

We will start the day by driving to Furano. Furano, in the center of Hokkaido, is known for its pleasant and picturesque rural landscapes. The best time to visit is July, when the lavender fields are in bloom. We will start by visiting the Blue Pond. The Blue Pond is named after its deep blue color which it owes to natural minerals dissolved in the water. Next, we will visit Farm Tomita, the best spot to view the flower fields with the Tokachi mountain range as backdrop are spectacular. The popular farm is free to enter and besides the flower fields has cafes and shops that sell a wide range of lavender related products. We will be staying overnight in Furano. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at the hotel.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 12 Travel to Shiraoi - Upopoy National Ainu Museum; Travel to Noboribetsu Onsen

First, we will drive to Upopoy, the foremost place in Japan to learn about the Ainu, the indigenous people of northern Japan. Located in Shiraoi City in Hokkaido, not far from Noboribetsu, the park consists of the National Ainu Museum and several other facilities to learn about and experience Ainu culture. Next, we will drive to Noboribetsu Onsen, the largest onsen on Hokkaido. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the ryokan is included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 13 Free Day at Noboribetsu Onsen

Today is a free day to enjoy the many hot springs or walk around the Jigokudani (Hell Valley) where you will find many steam vents and thermally heated pools and small geysers, including a natural thermally-heated mineral water footpath. Or just enjoy one of the 17 separate baths at the ryokan. Buffet-style breakfast and dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: N/A Walking: TBD

Day 14 Travel to Chitose Airport; Fly to Tokyo

We will travel to Chitose Airport, and fly back to Tokyo. In the evening, we will have our Sayonara dinner. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 15 Return Home

It is time to say Sayonara. You will meet the sending service in the lobby of the hotel, and they will help you board the appropriate transportation to the airport. Breakfast at the hotel included.

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Walking level descriptions:
Light – 0 to 2 miles on level ground
Medium – 2 to 4 miles on level ground or 0 to 2 miles on hilly ground
Heavy – 4 to 6 miles on level ground or 2 to 4 miles on hilly ground

Dates & Pricing

Dates	Price (land only) / Single Supplement (All prices are per Person)	Status
Jul 4, 2027 - Jul 18, 2027	$6,272.70/ $941.42	Available
Oct 3, 2027 - Oct 17, 2027	$6,527.11/ $941.42	Available

Add-On Tours

Our tours and tour itineraries are the best, but as the saying goes, “you can’t make everyone happy all of the time”. There may a specific destination or a specific experience you may want to include in your visit to Japan that may not be included your tour. Choose from our Add On tours to include your interests and make your Japan tour even better.

Click HERE **to view all of the Add-On Tours.**

Or, use the arrows to scroll though the recommended list of Add-On Tours for this tour.
















金龍山
門
ホテル雷門





Inclusions

- Local, licensed, English-speaking, Japanese guides

- **Travel insurance from Travel Guard**, one of the world's largest travel insurance providers, will be provided to everyone from the United States. All others will receive a $100 per person credit and will be responsible for obtaining their own travel insurance in their own home country. (The insurance provided by Samurai Tours will cover the land portion only. Insurance to cover airfare and other additional expenses is the tour member's responsibility.)
  - Exact coverage dependent on state
    - For residents of the following states please click here for your available plan. FL, KS, MN, MO, MT, NY, and WA
    - For all other states and the District of Columbia click here
  - **Travel Insurance Surcharge:** Depending on your age at the time the travel insurance is purchased, you may be subject to the following surcharge for your travel insurance. Travel insurance surcharges will be due at the same time as your tour deposits. (the surcharge itself is not insured)
    - Up to 69 – $0
    - 70-74 – $104
    - 75-79 – $180
    - 80-84 – $356
    - 85+ – $545
  - **Travel Insurance Opt-Out:** If you would prefer to opt out of the travel insurance, please note this at the time of registration. You will receive a $100 credit per person, which will be reflected on your invoice. In the event that you would need to cancel your tour, cancellation penalties may apply. See the Terms and Conditions page for the Cancellation Fees Schedule.

- Meeting service at Tokyo's Narita Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport and transfer to the hotel
  - The meeting service will meet you at the airport and provide you a transfer to the hotel near the airport
  - Meeting service can only be provided between 8am and 9pm. If you arrive at a time outside of these hours, we will need to provide alternative directions for you to get to the ryokan on your own.

- Sending service to the closest train station in Tokyo and transfer to Tokyo's Narita Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport
  - The sending service will escort you to the train station and make sure you board the correct train. The sending service will not accompany you to the airport.
- For those requiring meeting or sending services on other than the scheduled arrival/departure dates, there will be a $100 fee for the meeting service from the airport into Tokyo or the sending service to the Tokyo train station.
- Lodging for 14 nights in Japanese-style ryokans or western-style hotels

- Meals:
  - Japanese-style or Western-style breakfast every morning (Please Note: Some ryokans offer Japanese breakfasts only.)
  - Two Japanese-style lunches
  - Eleven Japanese-style or Western-style Dinners
- All transportation costs when traveling with the group. (Transportation costs during scheduled free times are the tour member's responsibility)
- Electronic version of itinerary
- Admission fees to the destinations and activities listed in the Tour Highlights column on the right (Itinerary specifics subject to change.)
- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour

Each tour member receives a tour handbook. This handbook is full of tips and suggestions taken

from our Japan experiences that allow you to better plan and prepare for your trip, and therefore enjoy your trip even more. The tips and suggestions included cover everything from how to save while exchanging money, what to pack, some basic Japanese-language tips, general etiquette do’s-and-don’ts, ryokan customs, etc.

Exclusions

- Airfare is NOT included
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included
- A printed itinerary is not included

Thank you for downloading this PDF version of our tour. Please visit our website at www.samuraitours.com/tours for the most current dates, prices and information.

Contact Samurai Tours

WEBSITE/EMAIL
www.samuraitours.com
info@samuraitours.com

USA CONTACT INFO
Toll-free: 1-866-316-SAMURAI
or 1-866-316-7268
Fax number: 720-210-5423

Samurai Tours
7900 East Union Ave, Suite 1100
Denver CO 80237

JAPAN CONTACT INFO
Call us: 075-361-7303

Samurai Tours
307 Yodokizu
Fushimi
Kyoto 613-0911 Japan

Kyoto-fu Chijitoroku Ryokogyo 3-576/
Japanese Travel Agency License:
Kyoto Prefecture #3-576

MEMBERSHIPS/ASSOCIATIONS
Better Business Bureau
American Society of Travel Agents
National Tour Association
Japan National Tourist Organization
JNTO-approved Japan Travel Specialist