SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

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Eastern Hokkaido Winter Mini Tour



8 Days/7 Nights

Eastern Hokkaido Winter Mini Tour

Tour Overview

On the Eastern Hokkaido Winter tour, seeing the eastern side of Japan’s northernmost island, Hokkaido, in the winter is an experience in of itself. Among the Japanese, Hokkaido has become synonymous with sensational food, stunning scenery and some of the best onsens in Japan. The abundance of scenery offered in Eastern Hokkaido is enhanced when covered in pristine white snow, and at the same time provides numerous opportunities for winter sports. Eastern Hokkaido is the prime location to explore Japan in the winter.

Destinations

Sapporo, Sounkyo Onsen, Lake Akan, Akan Crane Center, Abashiri, Shiretoko National Park

Tour Factors

Cultural Immersion

Pace

Physical Activity

Tour Details

After arriving in Sapporo, you will travel to Sounkyo Onsen where you will have your first opportunity to experience traditional outdoor onsens in the winter. You will also have the opportunity to attend the Sounkyo Ice Waterfall Festival which features large, multi-story ice and snow structures. We will then travel to Akanko, a destination offering an abundance of winter sports and entertainment including snowmobiling, skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and the cultural experience of the Ainu Village. After visiting the International Crane Center in Akanko, you will go to the northeastern coast of Japan and visit Abashiri. Here you will be able to board an Ice Flow Cruise before going on to the quiet town of Utoro Onsen, gateway to Shiretoko. A snowshoe tour of Shiretoko Goko will help you experience the tranquility and serenity of the area in winter before departing back to Sapporo where the tour will end.

Tour Highlights	✔ Sounkyo Onsen Ice Festival ✔ Lake Akan Winter Festival ✔ Akan Crane Center ✔ Abashiri Ice Flow Cruise ✔ Snowshoe Tour in Shiretoko National Park
Tour Inclusions	✔ Travel Guard Gold Policy (for American tour members only) ✔ Baggage transfer from city to city ✔ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History ✔ Domestic Airfare to Sapporo or Haneda at the end of the tour
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

Sapporo

Sounkyo Onsen

Lake Akan

Akan. Crane Center

Abashiri

Shiretoko National Park

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive in Sapporo

You will be staying overnight in the city of Sapporo. You will travel on your own to Sapporo and check into the hotel. We will leave a message for you at the hotel informing you of the meeting time for the next day. No meals included.

TBD; Walking: TBD

Day 2 Travel to Sounkyo Onsen; Sounkyo Onsen Ice Festival

Before leaving, you will transfer your luggage to Lake Akan. You will need enough for 2 days and 1 night in your overnight bag. After breakfast you will meet the guide at the specified time and start the day with a Welcome/Orientation meeting. We will then begin our journey by traveling to Sounkyo Onsen, located in a steep-walled canyon surrounded by 200 meter rock cliffs. Here, we will enjoy the Sounkyo Onsen Ice Festival with its beautiful ice sculptures. At night, the ice is illuminated, giving the sculptures a completely different look. Breakfast at the hotel and kaiseki-style dinner at the ryokan are included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 3 Travel to Lake Akan; Free Time at Lake Akan

After breakfast we will travel by local public bus to Akanko. In addition to lakefront vistas and hot springs, Akanko is known for two things: marimo, a rare kind of algae that forms oddly perfect spheres, and its Ainu Village. After checking into the ryokan and picking up your main luggage, you will have free time to explore Akanko. You may use this opportunity to take advantage of the many winter sports that Akanko has to offer, including snowmobiling, skiing, ice fishing, or a visit to the Ainu Village with its many souvenir shops and authentic Ainu restaurant. You may also want to attend an Ainu Dance Demonstration at the Ainu Village. We will return to the ryokan for a buffet dinner. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokans included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 4 Akan Crane Center; Free Time at Lake Akan

After breakfast we will travel by local public bus to Akan International Crane Center. Here we will learn about the Red-Crowned Crane, indigenous to this area of Japan. It was once thought that the cranes were extinct. However, about 70 years ago, a few cranes were found and extensive efforts were made to bring them back from the brink of extinction. While much work remains to be done, the crane population has stabilized and is even growing. You will have some free time at the Crane Center before we return to Akanko by local public bus. Once we return to Akanko you will have free time to do any of the activities that you did not get to do the day before. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 5 Travel to Abashiri; Abashiri - Ice Flow Museum

Before departing for the day you will need to prepare your main luggage to be sent to Shiretoko. You will travel to Abashiri and Shiretoko with an overnight bag only. You will need to prepare your

overnight bag for two days and one night. After eating breakfast at the ryokan, we will travel by local public bus to Kitami. Upon arrival in Kitami, we will board a train to Abashiri. Abashiri, on the northeastern coast of Hokkaido, is known for the drift ice on its coast. In the afternoon we will visit the Ryuhyo (Drift Ice) Museum. After checking in, you can enjoy the baths before we have dinner at the ryokan. Breakfast at the hotel and kaiseki-style dinner at the ryokan or dinner at a local restaurant.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 6 Abashiri - Ice Flow Cruise; Travel to Shiretoko

After breakfast we will board an ice-breaker boat where you can get a close-up view of the ice flow that clogs the Abashiri harbor every winter as the boat breaks its way through the ice. After the cruise we will travel by bus to Shiretoko, located in the remote and beautiful Shiretoko National Park. Shiretoko is an ancient Ainu word meaning ‘edge of the world’. Shiretoko National Park is famous for its beautiful scenery and abundant wildlife including deer, bear, and fox. We will enjoy a buffet dinner at the ryokan after checking in and picking up your main luggage. Breakfast at the ryokan and buffet dinner at the hotel included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 7 Shiretoko Snowshoe Tour

This morning is free to explore Shiretoko after breakfast at the ryokan. In the afternoon we will take a snowshoe tour exploring the Shiretoko Goko Lakes area, experiencing the tranquility and serenity of the area in winter. We will return to the ryokan where you can warm up in the onsen before a buffet dinner. Breakfast at the ryokan and buffet dinner at the ryokan included

Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy

Day 8 Travel to Sapporo's Chitose Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport

This morning we will travel by bus to Membanbetsu Airport where we will fly to Sapporo Chitose Airport or Haneda Airport (your choice). After the flight, you will continue around Japan on your own. Breakfast at the ryokan included.

Travel: TBD; Walking: TBD

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

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 – $100
    - 75-79 – $125
    - 80-84 – $200
    - 85+ – $300
  - **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.
- All transportation from Sapporo to Sapporo as described in the itinerary
- Lodging for 7 nights in Japanese-style ryokans or western-style hotels
- Meals:
  - Breakfast every morning from Day 2 through Day 8 of the itinerary
  - Six 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)
- Baggage transfer from Sapporo to Akanko
- Baggage transfer from Akanko to Shiretoko

Each tour member receives an electronic copy of our tour handbook. This handbook is full of tips and suggestions taken from our Japan travel 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. (Domestic flight from Membanbetsu Airport to Sapporo Chitose Airport IS included)
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included
- Transportation to Sapporo at the beginning of the tour
- Transportation from Sapporo at the end of the tour
- 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.

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MEMBERSHIPS/ASSOCIATIONS
Better Business Bureau
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JNTO-approved Japan Travel Specialist