



SAMURAI TOURS

Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan

www.samuraitours.com

Hokkaido Rail and Drive



15 Days / 14 Nights

Hokkaido Rail and Drive

Tour Overview

The northernmost of the main islands, Hokkaido is Japan's last frontier. It 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, Abashiri, Utoro Onsen, Shiretoko National Park, Akan National Park, Lake Akan, Lake Akan Crane Center, Kushiro, Noboribetsu Onsen, Lake Toya, 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 and the secluded beauty of the Shiretoko National Park. 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 and walk along the rim of an active volcano at Lake Toya. You will explore the morning market of Hakodate, where you can have the local specialties of crab, sea urchin or squid prepared for you for breakfast, and 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.

Rail and Drive Tours

The Japan public transportation system in Japan is one of the best, if not the best in the world. However, if you want to travel to the remote areas of Japan, public transportation is sometimes either non-existent, too infrequent or too slow to be practical. Automobiles are the best way to access these remote areas. Our Rail and Drive tours are a convenient combination of public transportation and chartered taxis or chartered vans, allowing us to really get "off the beaten path". And because we keep the group sizes smaller, it allows us to go where tour buses cannot. (Because of seat limitations, these tours are limited to a maximum of 8 people.)

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Sapporo, the Host of the 1972 Winter Olympics
- ✓ Grilled Lamb Dinner at the Sapporo Beer Garden
- ✓ Ramen Lunch at Sapporo's Ramen Alley
- ✓ Shiretoko Goko Nature Walk
- ✓ Ainu Village and Dance Performance
- ✓ Akan Crane Center

Tour Inclusions

- ✓ Travel Guard Gold Policy (for American tour members only)
- ✓ Domestic Airfare from Tokyo to Sapporo
- ✓ One Ride on a Shinkansen (bullet train)
- ✓ Meeting service at the arrival airport
- ✓ Sending service to the appropriate train station
- ✓ Baggage transfer from city to city
- ✓ 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
- 📍 Abashiri
- 📍 Utoro Onsen
- 📍 Shiretoko National Park
- 📍 Akan National Park
- 📍 Lake Akan
- 📍 Akan Crane Center
- 📍 Kushiro
- 📍 Shiraoi
- 📍 Noboribetsu Onsen
- 📍 Lake Toya
- 📍 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; Sapporo - JR Sapporo Tower, 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. After checking in, we will visit the JR Sapporo Tower where you will be able to get a bird's eye view of Sapporo while also getting your bearings. 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 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 3 Sapporo - Nijo Fish Market, Odori Park, Tanuki Shopping Arcade, Sapporo Ramen Alley

Today we will visit 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. On our way to the market, we will walk along Odori Park, the venue for the world famous Sapporo Snow Festival held annually in early February. We will also walk along 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. Next we will visit Susukino. Susukino is Japan's largest entertainment district north of Tokyo. It is packed with stores, bars, restaurants, karaoke shops and pachinko parlors. We will have lunch at Ramen Yokochō, a narrow lane lined with shops serving Sapporo's famous miso ramen. From there we will tour the old government building and clock tower. The evening is free. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 1/2 Hour;; Walking: Heavy

Day 4 Travel to Abashiri

We travel with overnight bags only to the city of Abashiri on the northeastern coast of Hokkaido. Upon arrival, we will check into the ryokan where we will be staying in Abashiri. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at the hotel included.

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 5 Abashiri - Hokkaido Northern Peoples Museum, Ice Flow Museum, Abashiri Prison Museum; Travel to Utoro Onsen (Shiretoko National Park)

We start the day by touring the the Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples. Here, we will get our first exposure to the Ainu culture as well as other similar indigenous cultures of the northern hemisphere. Next, we will stop at Ice Flow Drift Museum. Every winter, and huge ice flow from a Russian river slams into the northeastern portion of Hokkaido. Here, at this museum, we will learn about this fascinating natural phenomenon. We will finish our visit to Abashiri at the Abashiri Prison Museum. Abashiri 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 Alcatraz 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 travel to Utoro Onsen, the gateway to Shiretoko National Park, where we will be staying for the next two nights. Before leaving the hotel in Abashiri you will prepare your luggage to transfer to Lake Akan and will travel with an overnight bag only. You will prepare your overnight bag with enough items for 3 days and 2 nights. Breakfast at the ryokan and buffet dinner at the hotel included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 6 Shiretoko National Park - Oshinkoshin Waterfall, Shiretoko Peninsula Cruise; Shiretoko Goko Nature Walk

Today we will explore the remote and beautiful Shiretoko National Park. Shiretoko is an ancient Ainu word meaning 'edge of the world'. Shiretoko National Park is famous in Japan for its beautiful scenery and abundant wildlife including deer, bear and foxes. In the morning, we will start with a quick stop at Oshinkoshin Waterfalls, included in the list of 100 Best Waterfalls in Japan. Next we will take a sightseeing cruise along the Shiretoko peninsula where we can see the dramatic and spectacular coastline with its tall cliffs and waterfalls and the mountains in the background. In the afternoon, we will take an easy 3km (2 mile) hike around the Shiretoko-go-ko area. (PLEASE NOTE: Depending on weather conditions, the boat cruise may be cancelled. The walk around Shiretoko Goko is flat, but the trails are not paved.) Buffet breakfast and buffet dinner at the hotel included.

Travel: 1 Hour; Walking: Heavy

Day 7 Travel to Lake Akan

After breakfast, we will travel to Lake Akan (Akan-ko). After arriving at Akan-ko and checking-in, the evening is free. Buffet breakfast and buffet-style dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: 4 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 8 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 9 Travel to Izoan (Sulphur Mountain), Lake Masshu, Akan Crane Center and Kushiro

After breakfast, we will travel to Izoan (Sulphur Mountain). As soon as we arrive, you will discover

how it got its name. Next we will travel to Lake Masshu, considered by many to be one of Japan's most beautiful lakes because of its clear, deep blue water. But the lake is shy, and is often shrouded by fog. After Lake Masshu, we will travel to the Akan Crane Center. It was once thought the cranes were extinct. However, about 50 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. Because of the location, Kushiro is considered one of the best ports in Japan for seafood. In the evening, we will enjoy dinner at one of the many seafood restaurants in Kushiro. You will prepare your overnight bag with enough items for 2 days and 1 night. Buffet breakfast and dinner at a local restaurant are included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light

Day 10 Travel to Shiraoi; Shiraoi - Shiraoi Ainu Museum; Travel to Noboribetsu Onsen

In the morning, we travel to the Shiraoi Ainu Museum. Here we will learn more about the original inhabitants of Japan: the Ainu. We will also enjoy a traditional Ainu dance performance. Later, we will travel to Noboribetsu Onsen. Buffet breakfast and buffet-style dinner at the ryokans included. (Note: there is a swimming pool at the hotel in Noboribetsu, something not found at many hotels in Japan. You may want to pack your swimsuit to swim on your free day.)

Travel: 5 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 11 Free Day at Noboribetsu Onsen

Today is free to explore the Noboribetsu Onsen area. 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 12 Travel to Lake Toya; Lake Toya - Showa Shinzan, Usuzan, Toya Volcano Museum

Before leaving Noboribetsu you will prepare your luggage to transfer to Tokyo and will travel with an overnight bag only. You will prepare your overnight bag with enough items for 3 days and 2 nights. We travel to Lake Toya, one of the largest and deepest volcanic caldera lakes in Japan. After checking in to the ryokan, we will visit Usu-zan and Showa-shin-zan, both active volcanoes located at Lake Toya. We will take a cable car to the top of Usu-zan, which last erupted in 2000. Here you can walk to the rim of the volcano through the barren, moon-like landscape. Afterwards, we visit Showa-shin-zan. In 1944, a surprised wheat farmer found Showa-shin-zan growing out of his field instead of wheat, and it has been growing larger ever since then. We will also visit the nearby Lake Toya Volcanic Museum. Amazingly, when Usu-zan last erupted in 2000, no one was killed. But there was a lot of damage from the eruption, and much of it is preserved at the museum and illustrates the sheer power of geothermal activity and documents the volcano's turbulent history. Buffet style breakfast and dinner at the ryokan included.

Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 13 Travel to Hakodate; Hakodate - Goryokaku Fort, Motomachi District, Mt. Hakodate Ropeway

After breakfast, we travel to Hakodate. Hakodate was one of the first cities in Japan open to

foreigners after the Meiji Restoration. After arriving in Hakodate, we will visit the Goryo-Kaku, Japan's first western-style fort. Built in 1864 by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the shape of a five-pointed star, it was designed to trap attackers in a deadly crossfire. We will go to top of the Goryo-kaku tower next door to the fort, providing a view of the fort and the surrounding city. We will also visit the Moto-machi historic area. Overlooking the western bay at the foot of Mount Hakodate, there are numerous sloping streets lined with 19th century churches, consulates, shops and homes of the foreigners who first opened this area of Japan to commerce. In the evening, we take a cable car to the top of Mt. Hakodate, where we will enjoy a panoramic view of Hakodate's night lights. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium

Day 14 Hakodate - Hakodate Morning Market; Travel to Tokyo

In the morning, we visit the Hakodate Morning Market, where the sellers can prepare the specialties of Hakodate (crab, sea urchin and squid) fresh from their stalls for breakfast. In the afternoon, we will board the new Hokkaido Shinkansen to return to Tokyo. In the evening, we will have our Sayonara dinner. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at a local restaurant included.

Travel: 5 1/2 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
May 31, 2020 - Jun 14, 2020	¥761,695/ ¥111,428	Available
Jul 12, 2020 - Jul 26, 2020	¥801,835/ ¥111,428	Closed
Aug 23, 2020 - Sep 6, 2020	¥761,695/ ¥111,428	Available
Sep 20, 2020 - Oct 4, 2020	¥761,695/ ¥111,428	Available
Oct 4, 2020 - Oct 18, 2020	¥801,835/ ¥111,428	Available
May 30, 2021 - Jun 13, 2021	¥801,835/ ¥111,428	Available
Jul 11, 2021 - Jul 25, 2021	¥801,835/ ¥111,428	Available
Aug 22, 2021 - Sep 5, 2021	¥801,835/ ¥111,428	Available
Sep 19, 2021 - Oct 3, 2021	¥801,835/ ¥111,428	Available
Oct 3, 2021 - Oct 17, 2021	¥838,764/ ¥111,428	Available

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. CO, FL, IN, 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 6am 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
 - Thirteen Japanese-style or Western-style Dinners (including four gourmet kaiseki dinners at the ryokans)
- 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
- Baggage transfer from Tokyo to Abashiri

- Baggage transfer from Abashiri to Lake Akan
- Baggage transfer from Lake Akan to Noboribetsu
- Baggage transfer from Noboribetsu to Tokyo

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.

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MEMBERSHIPS/ASSOCIATIONS

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