



Hokkaido Trails

A Journey through Japan's Outback

NEW DATES! September 26 – October 5, 2011

Plan your arrival in Sapporo, Japan for September 25, 2011

Plan your departure from Memanbetsu for October 5, 2011

Join us on this trip to Japan's northern island of Hokkaido. Among the Japanese islands, Hokkaido may be lacking in the cultural monuments so often associated with Japan, but it offers an abundance of wide-open spaces, wilderness landscapes, and the best opportunities for outdoor activities in the country. (Hokkaido accounts for one-fifth of the total Japanese landmass, but only 5% of Japan's population lives there!) On this trip we'll sample the mountain trails of four national parks—Shikotsu-Toya, Daisetsuzan, Akan, and Shiretoko.

Pre-trip day

Overnight in Chitose

Dinner included

Arrival at Sapporo (Chitose Airport). Overnight accommodations and dinner at or near Chitose Airport for this evening are included.

Day 1

Overnight in Niseko

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

Travel from Chitose to the shores of the Shikotsu Lake (Shikotsu-ko) in the heart of the Shikotsu-Toya National Park (支笏洞爺国立公園). Hike up the volcanic ash slopes of the Tarumae-san volcano. From the crater rim, enjoy a stunning view of the volcano's lava dome. Ascend to the summit of the west peak of Tarumae-san before returning to the trailhead. Later, enjoy a stroll up the "Moss Gorge" (Koke-no-domon) where thirty different species of moss are said to grow. Transfer to Niseko and overnight.

Day 2

Overnight in Niseko

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

Hike the Niseko Circuit, a hiking route that will take you through a now verdant, volcanically-created landscape including a traverse of the volcanic peaks of Nitonupuri and Chisenupuri. An alternative is to hike via a switchbacking trail to the summit of the symmetrical Yotei-zan volcano (known as the Mount Fuji of Hokkaido). Overnight in Niseko.

Day 3

Overnight in Asahidake Onsen

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

Transfer to Asahidake Onsen on the western slopes of Hokkaido's magnificent Daisetsuzan range. Above the small settlement of Asahidake Onsen rises 7,500 foot tall Mount Asahidake, the highest peak on Hokkaido.

Day 4

Overnight in Sounkyo

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

From Asahidake Onsen, ascend into the mountains by cable car (called a "ropeway" in Japan). From the cable car's upper station near the Sugatami Pond, begin a hike across the Daisetsuzan National Park (大雪山国立公園) whose name translates as "big snow mountain." This full-day trek across wild, alpine landscapes offers expansive vistas

across the “roof of Hokkaido.” At days end, descend the northern flanks of Daisetsuzan and lodge for the evening at Sounkyo Onsen, set in the bottom of a dramatic, waterfall-lined gorge.

Day 5

Overnight in Daisetsu-Kogen Onsen

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

Enjoy a second day of hiking in the Daisetsuzan National Park. A hike to the Daisetsu Kogen ponds, or the summit of Midori-dake (“Green Mountain,” known for wildflower displays) are options. Enjoy the quiet comfort of a mountain lodge at Daisetsu-Kogen Onsen where you’ll spend the night.

Day 6

Overnight near Akan National Park

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

In the morning, enjoy a short hike to the So-baku-dai viewpoint from where you’ll view two spectacular waterfalls that grace the walls of the Sounkyo gorge. Later, travel to the Akan National Park (阿寒国立公園). Three lovely “crater lakes” are protected within its boundaries. One of these crater lakes, Lake Akan (阿寒湖, Akan-ko), is known for the unusual balls of the marimo algae that grow in the lake. Overnight in Akan-kohan on the shores of Akan-ko.

Day 7

Overnight near Akan National Park

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

From the picturesque lake of Onneto, hike up to the mountain “saddle” between Mount Me-akan (Meakan-dake) and Akan Fuji. Continue to the summit of Meakan-dake (an active volcano) before descending back to Onneto. It’s also possible to hike to the summit of Akan Fuji. Enjoy a second night in Akan.

Day 8

Overnight in Utoro

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

After breakfast, travel to the pristine caldera lake of Mashū-ko (摩周湖) which some consider the most beautiful lake in Japan. See if you agree! There’ll be time to enjoy the classic beauty of this lake as well as to stretch your legs on a hike to a bamboo-lined trail to a dramatic vantage point high above Lake Kussharo, another of Akan National Park’s caldera lakes. Continue to the Shiretoko Peninsula, one of the wildest areas in Japan, named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in July 2005. We’ll spend the evening in the coastal town of Utoro overlooking the Sea of Okhotsk and a gateway to the Shiretoko National Park (知床国立公園).

Day 9

Overnight in Utoro

Breakfast, lunch & dinner included

Hike from Iwaobetsu Onsen to the summit of Mount Rausu (Rausu-dake) from where you’ll enjoy a glorious vista down the volcanic spine of the Shiretoko Peninsula. Return to Utoro for the evening and enjoy a farewell dinner!

Day 10

Departure from Memanbetsu

Breakfast included

After breakfast, travel by vehicle from Utoro to Memanbetsu from where you can catch a train back to Sapporo. The vehicle will continue to Memanbetsu Airport for those planning a departure from the area by air. Please do not plan your departure from Memanbetsu for earlier than 1:00 PM. Your lodging for this evening is not included in the trip price. See “Departing Memanbetsu” below for further information.

Other Details about this Trip

Trip Dates: September 26 – October 5, 2011

Price: \$4,895

Single Room for entire trip: \$500

Trip Begins: Sapporo/Chitose, Hokkaido, Japan

Trip Ends: Memanbetsu, Hokkaido, Japan

Accommodations: Ten nights in small hotels/inns. Please note that we plan to overnight at traditional Japanese ryokan on two or three evenings. At these inns those traveling in pairs can expect to have a private room; those traveling as singles may need to “double up” though we will endeavor to secure you private rooms as well. At ryokan bathing and toilet facilities will be shared. There are separate bathing rooms for men and women with showers and a hot water tub (*ofuro*) intended for use only after showering. On other evenings you can expect private hotel rooms (either Western or Japanese-style) with private bath facilities.

Meals: Ten breakfasts, ten lunches (packed lunch or restaurant depending on the day), and ten dinners are included and will normally be Japanese-style. There are limited Western-style food options at some of the hotels.

Departing Memanbetsu: There is daily rail service to Sapporo from Memanbetsu. Journey time is about five and a quarter hours and costs about \$90 for a reserved seat. Daily non-stop air service by jet aircraft from Memanbetsu (airport code MMB) to Sapporo is offered by Japan Airlines. Cost is approximately \$200 for a one-way trip. Please do not plan your departure from Memanbetsu before 1:00 PM on October 5. If you are purchasing a trans-Pacific air ticket, we suggest you consider an “open-jaw” ticket flying from your U.S. gateway to Sapporo and returning to your U.S. gateway from Memanbetsu.

Other Resources

- One traveler’s experience of traveling in Hokkaido is recounted in “The End of the Earth,” an article published in the November 2006 issue of Travel & Leisure Magazine.
- The Asahidake Ropeway site (wakasaresort.com/eng/index.html) contains information on the sights and features made accessible by the ropeways. The Asahidake Ropeway site has a great little section on Daisetsuzan wildflowers!
- Browse through a comprehensive selection of Japanese topographic maps on-line at <http://watchizu.gsi.go.jp>. The detail is great, but navigating the site can be a great challenge because it’s all in Japanese! Happy browsing!