HOKKAIDO DRIVE GUIDE 2019

From magnificent views to delicious food, enjoy dynamic, fascinating Hokkaido in any season.
The expressways of Hokkaido
Basic Hokkaido knowledge

The four seasons in Hokkaido

Spring with its fresh verdure and beautiful flowers, pleasant and invigorating summer, autumn with its abundant crops and colorful leaves, and winter swathed in snowscapes. In Hokkaido, which has four particularly distinct seasons even for Japan, there is magnificent charm in each of them.

Hokkaido Spring

Hokkaido, where cherry blossoms bloom beginning in late April, has the latest cherry blossom viewing season in Japan. The best time to see such blossoms is Yoshino cherry and Sargent’s cherry is early to mid-May. In addition to cherry blossoms, flowers you can see in Hokkaido in spring include moss phlox, tulips, and daisies. Lovely wildflowers like dogwood, violet, and Corydalis ambiguous also begin to bloom in the fields.

Hokkaido Summer

The best time to see such flowers as lavender, blue, sunflowers, and crape myrtle in Hokkaido is summer. Summer is the outdoor season when you can be active and enjoy nature. Examples of summer outdoor activities include rafting down a river in a large rubber boat and going for a leisurely hike amid beautiful scenery. There are also beer gardens held all over Hokkaido, where you can hold a beer in one hand while tasting delicious Hokkaido specialty dishes.

Hokkaido Autumn

Daisetsuzan Volcanic Group and Mount Asahi are the first places in Japan where the leaves begin to change color in the fall, in Hokkaido in autumn. Not only can you enjoy viewing colorful leaves quite early, but also cherry blossoms are in full bloom between early September and late October. Autumn is the season for harvesting various crops from the vast farmlands of Hokkaido, and during this time of year you can partake of apples and grape picking in orchards. Seafood is also in season in the fall, including salmon, the most famous Hokkaido fish.

Hokkaido Winter

Events related to snow and ice are held throughout Hokkaido in winter, including the world-famous Sapporo Snow Festival. For scenery you can only see in Hokkaido in winter, don’t miss the drift ice in the Sea of Okhotsk. Hokkaido is said to be perfect for skiing and snowboarding because it has less humidity and better quality snow than Honshu. Winter activities are wildly popular in Hokkaido, including of course the classic winter sports, but also such sports as snowshoeing and dog sledding.

Temperature and snowfall in major cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Spring (May)</th>
<th>Summer (Aug.)</th>
<th>Autumn (Oct.)</th>
<th>Winter (Feb.)</th>
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*Sapporo: Sapporo Meteorological Observatory 35-2017. Snow depth measured on the 10th of each month (5-year average)

Clothing advice

April-June

This time of year the sun’s rays get warmer but the winds are often still cold. It sometimes suddenly gets cold in the morning or at night, so it’s a good idea to keep a light coat or jacket with you.

July-Sept.

You can be comfortable wearing a lightweight thin shirt during the day, but after midday, the temperature suddenly drops in the evening and you get cold. When you visit coastal areas and have an evening drink, take a light jacket with you and you will feel your peace of mind.

Oct.-Nov.

During this season, it gradually gets colder in the morning and evening, and the temperature extremes during the day get wider. Have a thin down jacket or thin coat at the ready.

Dec.-March

Choose a jacket or coat made with an emphasis on protection against cold. Layers that are easy to take off and put on and footwear with good traction. Scarves, gloves, and hats are effective for keeping out the cold.
Hokkaido foods

Delicious food may be the thing you look forward to most when you take a trip to Hokkaido. The prefecture is full of appetizing offerings including dishes made using seafood and mountain vegetables, local dishes such as ramen and Jingsukan (grilled mutton with vegetables), and sweets made from fresh dairy products.

Soup curry

This is a spicy soup-type curry born in Sapporo in the 1970s. This dish is characterized by smooth soup and dynamic ingredients such as large pieces of vegetables and whole chicken legs, and there are many restaurants that specialize in it. Most people put rice in the soup and let it soak up.

Cafe sweets

Hokkaido is also a kingdom of sweets, having a basically good selection of ingredients for making them, including fresh milk, butter, cheese, and other dairy products, as well as wheat, egg, and adzuki beans. You can eat interesting sweets at various establishments throughout the prefecture, be they soft serve ice cream, pudding or cheesecake.

Jingsukan

About 100 years ago, Jingsukan was created as a dish to use the meat of sheep raised in Hokkaido to produce work. There are two types of Jingsukan—those made from the meat of lambs a year old or younger and that made from mutton—and there are two ways of eating it: dipping it in sauce after grilling it or seasoning it before cooking it.

Ramen

In addition to the big three Hokkaido ramens—Sapporo miso, Hakodate salt and Aomori soy sauce—local variations are popping up throughout the prefecture. As they shrimps miso, curry or another kind, by all means try the ramens of Hokkaido, which feature a variety of soup, noodle and topping types.

Hokkaido onsen

Hokkaido is sometimes referred to as an onsen paradise. There are popular onsen towns throughout the prefecture with unique water properties, abundant hot spring water, atmospheres that vary with the four seasons and magnificent views. Why not try relaxing in a hot spring bath at the end of a day of travel?

Noboribetsu onsen, the ‘onsen department store’

Noboribetsu onsen, which has 10,000 tons of water output per day, is the most famous hot spring town in Hokkaido. Noboribetsu, which is sometimes called the ‘onsen department store,’ because it has more types of hot spring water than visitors can go around and try different types of hot spring water. The water sources that support Noboribetsu onsen, such as Jigokudani and Dynamic, are also popular tourist destinations.

Dynamic geysers

Geysers are hot springs that spout from the ground periodically. At Shikabe Kanketsu Park in Shikabe, you can see a highly unusual geysers. Watch the geysers that spout 500 liters of water 15 meters high every 12 minutes while soaking your feet in a foot bath.

The only one in the world! An open-air hot spring bath atop ice

Shikabe hot spring, the highest-latitude natural hot spring in Hokkaido, completely freezes over in winter. At Shikabe Hot Spring (Shikabe), which appears atop the lake, you can experience an open-air hot spring bath on the surface of the ice that is said to be one of a kind. The open-air bath amid clear snow scenery is something you should definitely try.

An internationally rare moor hot spring

Takachiho onsen in the Tokachi region is a moor hot spring, which means it has a type of water with plant-derived sediment that rare throughout the world. The hot spring water, which wells up through peat, is mild and dark reddish brown. Because it doesn’t irritate the skin and contains plenty of natural ingredients, it is popular among women as beauty-enhancing water that gently adapts itself to the skin.
Learn about Ainu culture

The Ainu people, who have lived in Hokkaido in harmony with nature since before the Japanese arrived, have their own rich culture that includes their own language, rituals, literature, and traditional etiquette. Even today, their precious culture continues to be handed down, such as through a ceremony to welcome new salmon and an Ainu language speech contest.

Appreciate Ainu dance, which conveys a high level of spirituality

Akanko Ainu Theater Ikoro

This is a facility where you can watch traditional Ainu dance, which is registered by the Japanese government as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property and by UNESCO on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Ainu dance, which expresses respect and appreciation for ancestors and gods, has a simple power and mystical beauty, and it resonates in the heart of the viewer.

Address: 746, Akanko-cho, Akanko, Chitose
Closed: Annual closures. Details for details:
http://www.akanko.jp

Come into contact with the culture and life of the Ainu people

Sapporo Ainu Cultural Promotion Center ‘Sapporo Pirka Kotan’

Because you can take photos and touch Ainu traditional handicrafts, clothing, and the like at this facility, you can get closer to the Ainu people. There are also Ainu cultural workshops available for a fee, reservations required. They include embroidery with Ainu designs and making muskuri (Ainu mouth harp).

Address: 27 Kogen-cho, Minamikita-ku, Sapporo
Closed: Mondays, holidays, the last Tuesday of every month and during the New Year and New Year holidays (Dec. 15 to Jan. 10)
Operating hours: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (except Sat. & Sun.)
http://sapporopirka.koto-net.or.jp/

Learn about the history of Hokkaido’s settlement

When the new Meiji government was established in 1868, Yezo was renamed Hokkaido, and in 1886, the Hokkaido Development Bureau was established. The main objective of the Hokkaido Development Bureau was to develop resources for modernization. Because advanced technology in such areas as agriculture, architecture, and public works was needed to develop Hokkaido, officials invited foreign engineers from the United States and elsewhere. At first, the Hokkaido Development Bureau was located in Hakodate, which was a hub of interaction with foreign countries because it had one of Japan’s first ports. However, in consideration of geographical balance, a decision was made in 1871 to move its base of operations to Sapporo. Otani, which is a port and is near Sapporo, flourished at this time. Otani, which grew as a stopover for maritime transportation, was called the “Wall Street of the North” because of the rapid development of its financial industry. The Hokkaido Government Office was inaugurated in 1886 to replace the Hokkaido Development Bureau, which had been abolished in 1882.

The Hokkaido Government Office building completed in 1888 is now the Red Brick Office. The development of Hakodate involved a succession of hardships. The efforts of pioneers who overcame unfamiliar nature and cleared primeval forest built the cornerstone of the Hokkaido of today.

A brick building that symbolizes Hokkaido’s pioneer era

Former Hokkaido Government Office (Red Brick Office)

This is a famous Sapporo tourist destination located near JR Sapporo Station and Odori Park. Built in 1888, the building features an American-style Romanesquearchitectural style that was cutting-edge at the time. It contains an archive and a Kanadoro-Sakahito related resource library, which are open to the public.

Address: Nah 4-chome 1-2-3, Chuo-ku, Sapporo
Closed: During the year-end and New Year holidays
Operating hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
http://www.hokkaido.or.jp

Many various display items that teach about Ainu life

Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum

The museum is dedicated to four elements: “Kotan,” a collection of everyday items that have been used by “Ikoro,” where you can see Ainu folklore culture such as prayer and faith, “Makiri” which relates to farming, hunting, fishing and the like, and “Mexico,” which focuses on Ainu designs. In total, about 4,000 items are on display.

Address: 59 Mimato-cho, Sapporo
Open: every day except Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
http://www.nibutani.hokkaido.jp/nibutani/nibutani/

Retains the appearance of Otani from when it was a financial center

The Bank of Japan Otaru Museum

The Bank of Japan Otaru Museum retains the appearance of Otani from the days when it was called the “Wall Street of the North.” Today it is open to the public as a financial museum that teaches about the role of the Bank of Japan and financial mechanisms. It is a popular section where you can experience how heavy (180 million yen) is.

Address: 15 C-1, Otaru-chuo, Otaru
Closed: Mondays, holidays, during the New Year and New Year holidays (Nov. 27 to Jan. 10) and during occasional temporary closures
Operating hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Open on the 16th, between December and March)
http://www.bih.go.jp/otarusu/

Take a trip back to the historical village of Hokkaido

Historical Village of Hokkaido

This outdoor museum teaches about industry, life, and culture during Hokkaido’s pioneer era. This site is large, takes half a day to tour at a leisurely pace. Historical buildings from all over Hokkaido have been dismantled and relocated here, where they are being preserved. We recommend you go around by horse-drawn train in the summer and horse-drawn sled in the winter.

Address: Satoyama 15-1, Akabetsu-cho, Akabetsu, Sapporo
Closed: Open every day except Mondays, October to April Closed for the year-end and New Year holidays (Dec. 23 to Jan. 3)
Operating hours: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Except in late September, the last day of October, and early January)
http://www.hokkaido.jp

Finds itself in a historical port that flourished as an international trade port

Former British Consulate in Hakodate

This is a building that was built in 1913 and used as the British Consulate until 1934. Since 1992, it has been open to the public as a museum to commemorate the opening of the port, and you can enjoy tea time in the OldFront tea room while gazing at an English garden.

Address: 33-1 Motomachi, Hakodate
Open: 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., seven days per week
Operating hours: 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (Closed at 5:00 p.m. from November to March)
https://hakodate-kankou.com/brtukh/
Enjoy Hokkaido as depicted in stories

Hokkaido is the setting of various movies, TV dramas and anime, with its beautiful, magnificent scenery, atmospheric buildings and other features. Become the character and set out on a dramatic trip to weave a story of your own.

The Doto Area

"If You Are the One"

The setting for the bitter half of the Chinese movie "If You Are the One," when the story reaches its climax, is the Doto area of Hokkaido. The film impressed the minds of many people with the quiet, beautiful scenery of such places as Kushiro, Abashiri, Shari and Akkeshi and set off a boom in Chinese tourism to Hokkaido.

Dairy sweets

Locally made baked goods, cheese sweets and chocolate made using high-quality Hokkaido ingredients such as fresh dairy products. Hokkaido having a thriving dairy farm industry, adzuki beans, wheat flour and sugar are essential gifts for back home when visiting Hokkaido.

Lake Toya

"Gin Tama"

In "Gin Tama," the anime whose live-action film version was a smash hit, the wooden sword of the main character has the characters for "Lake Toya" carved into it. This wooden sword is an extremely popular souvenir and gift among visitors to Lake Toya. The Toyako Mangawaku Festival is held every June at Lake Toya, and nearly 50,000 people attended in 2018.

Kushiro Shitsugen National Park

"When Marnie Was There"

The anime film "When Marnie Was There" was based on a children's novel of the same name by British novelist Joan G. Robinson. The setting of the story shifts from England to Hokkaido, but the main setting is the Kushiro wetlands. The location of the old Westonbury house Marnie lived in is said to be modeled on Lake Mashūgū.

Otaru

"Love Letter"

The love story "Love Letter" which impressively depicts the streets of Otaru in winter, still enjoys deeply rooted popularity more than 20 years after its release. Why not take a walk through Otaru to check out the locations used in the movie — Mount Tengó, the Former Otaru Branch of Nihon Yosen Co., Canal Plaza Otaru City Hall and more — while remembering scenes from the film.

Abashiri Prison Museum

"Golden Kamuy"

In the adventure survival story "Golden Kamuy," which achieved in Hokkaido in the late days of the Meiji era (1868-1912), it is Abashiri Prison that has the key to the buried gold that is central to the story. The prison is open to the public as Abashiri Prison Museum. Overlooking and self-service buildings are designated as important national properties.

Recommended gift for back home

Kitsune is a famous pepper pickled and made from a certain pepper. More than 70 percent of the world's pepper is produced in this region, which makes it ideal to enjoy compared to other regions, as you get to enjoy the taste of the pepper.

Recommended gift for back home

Lupin the Third spot

"Lupin the Third"

The city of Kitapū, which is the home of original "Lupin the Third" creator Monkey Punch, also was the setting for the TV special "Lupin III: Heir of the Fog." In Kitapū, you will find many familiar characters from the manga around town. Take some photos with lupin and other characters.

Address: Kitapū, Hamamasu-cho, Phone: 0135-46-2111
Lupin the Third Takarajima Mōdo Pia http://www.hamanasku-kitapu.com/
Sample Itineraries for the Northern/Eastern Areas

Northern Area
Sample itinerary

The natural environment, which is severe even for Hokkaido, created the wild, beautiful scenery. Seafood reared in the northern sea and produce and dairy products raised on abundant, vast land are delicacies that can only be tasted here.

Eastern Area
Sample itinerary

The magnificent scenery everyone imagines when they hear the name Hokkaido can be found here. Fully experience the charms of travel through the Eastern Area’s world-famous nature, delicious food, unique and abundant hot springs and more.
How to use expressway

1. Learn road signs

- Entrance signs:
  - Route number
  - Route name
  - Entrance number and name

- Exit signs:
  - Route number
  - Route name
  - Name of city accessible from the interchange
  - Exit/entrance number

Rest facilities sign:
- Types of facilities available:
  - Dining
  - Fuel
  - Snacks
  - Information

Available facility types:
- Dining
- Fuel
- Snacks
- Information

2. Obey the speed limit

- The legal speed limit is 100 km/h, but when there is a speed limit specified on a sign, you may not exceed it.

- This sign doesn’t mean there is no speed limit. It means the limit is 100 km/h.

- Note: Speed limit signs refer to km/h.

3. Cars normally drive in the left lane (cruising lane)

When there are multiple lanes, the left lane must be left open for passing. Do not change lanes thoughtlessly.

4. No stopping in main lanes

- Stopping or parking an automobile on a freeway is against the law. Unless you are parking in a parking area or similar facility or stopping because of a traffic jam or breakdown, you may not stop your car on a freeway.

5. No driving on the shoulder

- Cars may at times be forced to stop on the shoulder because of a breakdown, and police cars, ambulances and other emergency vehicles may have to drive on the shoulder at times. When the shoulder is blocked, it hinders the work of such emergency vehicles, so never drive on the shoulder, even during times of traffic congestion.

6. Don’t drive into oncoming traffic!

- If you see the opposite-direction lane to your left, you are going the wrong way! Pay attention to traffic signs, guidance signs and markings on the road surface.

- Stop in a safe place and turn on your hazard lights.

7. Wear a seatbelt in all seats

- The fatality rate when not wearing a seatbelt is about 14 times that when wearing a seatbelt. Wearing a seatbelt is required in all seats.

- A child seat is required for children ages 5 and under.

8. Maintain a safe distance between cars

- Leave about 100 meters between your car and the one ahead of you when driving 100 km/h and 80 meters when driving 90 km/h. Double that distance is necessary when the road surface is wet from rain. On ice and snowy roads, normally leave 2 to 4 times that distance between your car and the one ahead of you.

9. Do not cut in front of another car

- Drivers who are cut off sometimes suddenly turn the steering wheel or put on the brakes, which can result in accidents.

- You may not pass on a segment of freeway with just one lane in each direction.

10. Park in proper parking spaces

- If a standard-sized vehicle parks in a large space or a large vehicle parks in a standard-sized space, it may inconvenience other drivers. Please park properly within a parking space appropriate for the size of your vehicle. (An attendant may direct you to a suitable parking space.) Drive slowly in the parking area. Watch out for pedestrians and other cars.

11. Avoid inattentive driving

- Inattentive driving is often the direct cause of accidents. Do not look at scenery or use your mobile phone while driving.

12. If you have an accident or breakdown...

1. Pull over onto the shoulder of the road
   - Pull over onto the shoulder and turn on your hazard lights. When your car has stopped, use the fire pots or warning reflexion to signal to cars behind you.

2. Report it
   - There are two reporting methods, shown below.

3. Get to a safe place
   - To avoid collisions with cars approaching from behind, do not stay in your car, but instead get all the way off the shoulder.

Emergency telephone

1. Dial 110 or 119 using your mobile phone or smartphone
   - 1. Open the door
   - 2. Pick up the receiver
   - 3. Press the button corresponding to your situation (breakdown, accident, emergency, or fire)

For detailed information on expressway

Go here for other detailed information

Information on safety while traveling in Hokkaido
http://safety-travel.jp/
How to pass through a toll booth

1. **Entry toll booth**
   - When you’re driving a car with ETC:
     - Enter at less than 20 km/h and drive slowly through the ETC lane. If the word “STOP” is displayed, do not back up. Turn on your hazard lights and wait where you are until a clerk arrives.

2. **Exit toll booth**
   - When you’re driving a car with ETC:
     - Enter at less than 20 km/h and drive slowly through the ETC lane. If the word “STOP” is displayed, do not back up. Turn on your hazard lights and wait where you are until a clerk arrives.

   - When driving a car without ETC:
     - Stop at the entrance to the toll booth, and take a toll ticket from the automated ticket machine. You will pay when exiting the expressway.

   - When exiting, hand your toll ticket to the attendant and pay the toll in cash or by credit card.

3. **What’s the “electronic toll collection system” (ETC)?**
   - This expressway toll payment system allows you to pass through the tollgate and pay the toll without stopping. Simply insert your ETC card (or IC card) into the ETC device in your vehicle. When the device transmits your ETC data to the revenue at the toll booth, your toll is paid and the tollgate opens.

   - When you drive through the tollgate, see either an ETC Main Gate (ETC-MG) or a combined gate that can be used by either ETC or cash-paying vehicles (ETC-CA). If you are using an ETC device, the roadside display monitor will show that you are “ETC” and have paid. If you are using a cash-paying device, the roadside display monitor will show “STOP” and the gate will not open.

4. **Regarding Smart ICs**
   - Watsuz Smart Interchange and Sunagawa SA Smart Interchange only use ETC. A vehicle with an ETC card but no ETC transponder can only use Smart IC gates. ETC only works at this gate when the vehicle is stopped. The gate will not open if you do not stop your vehicle. Be sure to stop.

Winter freeway awareness

1. **In winter, slowing down and maintaining a safe distance between cars are absolute requirements when driving on expressway!**

   - Watch out for blizzards and snow blown over the ground by winds from the northwest. Even if the weather is relatively good, visibility can suddenly worsen. To be able to cope with sudden weather changes, be mindful of gathering information on driving conditions.

   - Be careful about accidents in Hokkaido in the winter between spring and fall! Accidents suddenly increase around November in a typical year. In the winter, roads are covered in snow and ice, and are extremely slippery, so it is extremely dangerous to drive on them with the same speed and handling as in summer. Always think about the worst case scenario and drive with great care.

2. **About twice as many accidents take place in Hokkaido in the winter than between spring and fall!**

   - Snow and ice countermeasures are taken 24 hours per day so drivers can drive more safely and comfortably on roads. Depending on road conditions, work may continue even after the weather has improved.

   - Do not pass snowplows during snow removal work.

3. **Various snow and ice countermeasures**
   - **General snow removal**
     - We clear snow using three snowplows and one sign vehicle that moves at 50 km/h or slower. Drive with plenty of distance between cars.

   - **We temporarily halt work so customers’ cars can proceed**
     - Passing is prohibited during snow removal work. We periodically stop that work for a set period of time, and move our snowplows to the side of the road to allow customers to pass.

4. **To customers using ETC**
   - We do snow removal work 24 hours per day, so if you would like an ETC time period discount to be applied, allow extra time.
Hokkaido Expressway Pass

Unlimited use of Hokkaido's expressways at a fixed price!

With the Hokkaido Expressway Pass, enjoy unlimited use of Hokkaido's expressways, for one fixed price!

Be sure to rent an ETC card for the Hokkaido Expressway Pass with your vehicle.

3 advantages

1. Fixed price for peace of mind!
   Peace of mind, as no matter how far you travel by expressway in Hokkaido, the price is fixed.

2. No need to Speak or Read Japanese!
   When you use ETC, there's no need to come to a complete stop at toll booths. And you need not worry about communication in Japanese. *Please pass through the ETC gate at more than 24 km/h.

3. Save more time!
   Hokkaido is huge: It's about 300 km from New Chitose Airport to Hakodate, and about 450 km to Shiretoko. By using the expressways, travelling times can be shortened.

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*The rental charges for the vehicle and ETC card are not included.
*Only valid for vehicles classified as "ordinary passenger cars" according to expressway rules.

For example—Normal expressway toll:
New Chitose Airport IC → Sapporo-kita IC (Sapporo) → One way ¥1,410
New Chitose Airport IC → Otaru IC (Otaru) → One way ¥2,220
New Chitose Airport IC → Asahikawa-Takasu IC (Asahikawa) → One way ¥4,730
New Chitose Airport IC → Onuma Ken IC (Hakodate) → One way ¥5,430

*Normal toll on expressways in Hokkaido are calculated at approximately 23 yen per kilometer plus a ¥199 yen terminal charge (may differ on sections in central Sapporo and other areas).

How to use:

1. Contact the rental car company.
   Please confirm which branches offer the service beforehand.

2. Apply along with the car rental application

3. Receive the ETC card

4. Insert the card into the device in the car and you're ready to go.

Companies offering the service:
Get access to the URL or QR code to check for a list of participating offices.
Please cooperate by answering a questionnaire after using the Pass.


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