Photo Journey through Hokkaido

NEXCO EAST publishes images of beautiful scenery changing colors in each of the four seasons, vast nature scenes in which you can feel the spirit of the earth, urban scenes with beautiful decorative lighting, and other photos that make you feel as though you are traveling across Hokkaido. Please enjoy the journey.

Access the website here
https://www.driveplaza.com/trip/area/hokkaido/event/traveling.html

HOKKAIDO DRIVE GUIDE

Published by East Nippon Expressway Company Limited, January 2022
Hokkaido's four seasons

Spring, fresh green and beautiful flowers. Summer, refreshing and comfortable. Autumn, with its bountiful harvests and beautiful colors. And of course, the all-encompassing snowscape of winter. Each season has its own unique and wonderful beauty.

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 as 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 lilacs. Lovely wild flowers like dogtooth violet and Corydalis ambigua, also begin to bloom in the fields.

Hokkaido Summer

The best time to see such flowers as lavender, lilies, sunflowers and sage 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 cosmos 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 apple and grape picking in orchards. Seaweed is also in season in the fall, including salmon, the most famous Hokkaido fish.

Hokkaido Winter

The world-famous Sapporo Snow Festival and other snow- and ice-themed events are held throughout Hokkaido. You also have to see the drift ice of the Sea of Okhotsk, scenery unique to the Hokkaido winter. Hokkaido snow is high quality by international standards and is considered ideal for skiing and snowboarding. In addition to classic winter sports, other winter activities such as walking in snowshoes and dog sledding are also popular.

Temperature and snowfall in major cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sapporo</th>
<th>Hakodate</th>
<th>Obihiro</th>
<th>Kushiro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sunrise and sunset times (Sapporo)

- Spring, May: Sunrise 4:11, Sunset 18:51
- Summer, August: Sunrise 4:40, Sunset 18:38
- Autumn, October: Sunrise 5:48, Sunset 16:52
- Winter, February: Sunrise 6:33, Sunset 17:06

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 short-sleeved shirt during the day, but after mid-August the temperatures suddenly drop in the morning and evening, so be careful. When you visit cool mountain and lakes, take a thin outer garment you will give you 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 Jingisukan (grilled mutton with vegetables), and sweets made from fresh dairy products.

Ramen

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

Sushi

In Hokkaido, which has plenty of delicious seafood, sushi made using seasonal ingredients must not be missed. You can enjoy all sorts of sushi toppings ranging from standards like sea urchin, salmon roe, scallop and Hokkigai to seasonally available ones such as Pacific saury and herring. Whether eating sushi at a restaurant with a professional sushi chef or at a casual conveyor belt sushi place, you may find more satisfaction than you imagined.

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 it up.

Sweets

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

Hokkaido onsen

There are many hot springs in Hokkaido, a prefecture blessed with a vast and sprawling natural environment. Hokkaido has 246 hot springs in total, the most of any prefecture in Japan. It is also second in Japan for the volume of spring water it produces. These hot springs come in a variety of different types, depending on the region, and they constitute one of Hokkaido’s biggest tourist draws. Please mind proper manners and protocol when using the hot springs. Be comfortable and enjoy!

Jingisukan

About 100 years ago, Jingisukan was created as a dish to use the meat of sheep raised in Hokkaido to produce wool. There are two types of Jingisukan — that 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.

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Must-visit hot springs in Hokkaido

Tokachigawa Hot Springs (Otofuke)
A precious moor onsen, a hot spring that contains high volumes of organic plant matter.

Noboribetsu Hot Springs (Noboribetsu)
One of Hokkaido’s top hot springs villages, where visitors can find nine different types of hot springs.

Sounkyo Hot Springs (Kamikawa)
A hot springs village in which visitors can enjoy the beauty of Hokkaido’s gorges as they change from season to season.

Bathhouse and hot springs rules

- You must not be able to enter the hot springs if you have a tattoo.
- You cannot enter if you are menstruating.
- Do not enter while wearing a bandage or supporter.
- In general, men and women cannot enter the same hot springs.
- You cannot bring your cell phone into the hot springs or take photographs.
- You cannot bring food or drink into the hot springs.
- You cannot swim or dive in the hot springs.
- Do not wash yourself in the hot springs.
- Do not use a loud voice or be noisy.
- Absolutely never run inside the bathhouse or hot springs.

Manners in bathhouses and hot springs

- Do not enter drunk.
- Do not enter while wearing a bandage or supporter.
- Do not use a loud voice or be noisy.
- Do not swim or dive in the hot springs.
- Do not wash yourself in the hot springs. (Wash yourself before entering the hot springs.)
- Do not put a towel in the hot springs.

Procedure: Follow the steps below when entering the hot springs.

1. Remove all underwear in the dressing room.
2. Before entering the hot springs water, go to the washing area and clean your head and body.
3. Sit down on the chair or stool before washing yourself.
4. If the washing area lacks a shower, use a wash bowl to ladle hot water onto your head and body to wash the dirt and filth away.
5. Before entering the water of the hot springs, pour water on yourself. (This is called kakeyu.)
6. Even if the hot water is high in temperature, it is considered bad manners to cool it down by adding cool water.

Get your fill of Hokkaido

Soup curry

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Learn about Ainu culture

The Ainu, the indigenous people of Hokkaido, lived in nature throughout their history and possess a rich and unique traditional culture. Although modern Ainu lifestyles are the same as those of people elsewhere in Japan, they continue to carry on valuable cultural events such as traditional seasonal ceremonies and Ainu language speech contests.

Ainu Settlements

The Ainu people chose to build their houses and settlements along rivers and the ocean in areas with easy access to food and water as well as low risk of natural disaster. Such settlements are called kotan and may consist of anywhere from a few to over a dozen houses. Organized by the village leader, the people of the kotan hunted, fished, and gathered plants in set locations in the mountains, rivers, and ocean surrounding the kotan.

Ainu Diet

The Ainu people sought food in nature, and they spent the majority of the year looking for food. Seasonal wild plants, animals, and seafood were eaten by families as they could be found in that season, and some food was also stored for the long winter and to prepare for potential droughts. They prepared their food by boiling, roasting, and cooking.

Ainu gods

To the Ainu people, gods are those things that are indispensable part of life or beyond the Ainu people’s control. The plants and animals that serve as nourishment and sustenance are generally good gods, while events that threaten livelihoods, such as infectious disease and natural disasters, are considered to be evil gods. Whatever happens in life, the Ainu people pray to the gods. Whenever gods to whom they pray, they always pray first to the god of the fire to ask that their prayers properly reach the gods.

Ainu song and dance

The Ainu people almost always danced and sang during ceremonies, gatherings of friends and relatives, or when working. All of these dances were accompanied by instruments, and accompaniment was instead provided by the dancers or spectators’ singing and clapping. To the Ainu people, dance is an activity that is enjoyed by the dancers as well as the gods, who dance together with them.

Ainu clothes

There are two types of clothes worn by the Ainu people in daily life: everyday clothes and formal dress worn for special ceremonies. This type of clothing is decorated in what are called Ainu designs, swirling and thorny patterns made from embroidery and patches.

Facilities at which visitors can come in contact with the Ainu lifestyle and culture

Lake Akan Ainu Theater <Ikor>

At this facility, view traditional Ainu dance, which has been registered as both a national Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property and UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. You must also be sure to see “Ikor: Utuk- Lem Kama,” a new program began in March 2019 that blends digital art and traditional Ainu dance.

Lake Akan Ainu Theater <Ikor>

[Location] 4 Chome-7-84 Akancho Akanko Onsen, Kushiro
https://www.akanainu.jp/
[Hours] Please inquire.
[Admission fee] Adults: ¥1,200 (¥1,000 for children)
[Closed] Open every day from Apr. 16 to Nov. 15. Closed Mondays from Nov. 16 to Apr. 15. Extended closure from Dec. 16 to Jan. 15. Please inquire.

Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum

Enjoy approximately 4,000 exhibits across four zones: “Ainu,” a collection of everyday articles from traditional Ainu life that are now considered folk art; “Kamuy,” which is focused on prayer, faith, and the spiritual culture; “Moshiri,” which pertains to agriculture, hunting, and funerals; and “Muras,” which is focused on Ainu patterns and designs.

Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum

[Location] O5 Nibutani, Biratori
[Closed] Open every day from Apr. 16 to Nov. 15. Closed Mondays from Nov. 16 to Apr. 15.

Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park

These facilities serve as national hubs of Ainu cultural restoration and development, protecting the culture as a valuable and endangered national treasure. On the banks of Lake Poroto, surrounded by the area’s rich natural environment, visitors can encounter the diverse beauty of Ainu culture.

Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park

[Location] 2-chome 3 Wakakusa, Shiraoi
https://ainu-upopoy.jp/
[Hours] Please inquire.
[Admission fee] Adults: ¥960 (¥700 for children)
[Closed] Mon. (or the next day if Mon. is a holiday)
*To enter Upopoy or the National Ainu Museum, you must make an appointment for them beforehand.

Learn about Hokkaido

HOKKAIDO DRIVE GUIDE
Hokkaido wildlife

Hokkaido is home to wildlife not found anywhere else in Japan. Some of these animals are classified as special protected species and endangered species. We need to enjoy observing such animals without disturbing their lives.

Brown bear
The brown bear can be found living almost anywhere in Hokkaido. There are cases of drivers encountering brown bears in Shiribetsu and other parts of Hokkaido, but it is extremely dangerous to leave your car to take photos or video. When cruising around the Shiretoko Peninsula, you can safely spot wild brown bears from the sea. It has been said that there is an over 90% chance of spotting a brown bear on this particular type of tour.

Red-crowned crane
The red-crowned crane is the only species of crane that breeds in Japan, and it is classified as a special protected species. Although these cranes can famously be found throughout the Kushiro Marsh, you can view them up close in the feeding area of the Tsurui-Ito Tancho Crane Sanctuary from November to March, where feed is provided because the natural prey of red-crowned cranes becomes scarce in winter.

Yezo sika deer
The Yezo sika deer can be found living throughout Hokkaido. Its meat is also a popular dish in recent years. Driven in the mountains and forests of Hokkaido often come across wild Yezo sika deer, and sometimes the cars collide with them in accidents. Drive carefully in nature-rich areas or from the car when driving through the mountains. But be sure you don’t touch an ezo red fox: you may get infected with the Echinococcus parasite.

White-tailed eagle
Native to northern Eurasia, Steller’s sea-eagle and the white-tailed eagle migrate to the Sea of Okhotsk for the winter in January through April. In Rausu, where fishing takes place even in the drift ice season, eagles can easily find fish to eat. Legions of photographers and tourists come from throughout Japan and the world to film and photograph the eagles fluttering over the sea and resting their wings on the drift ice.

Steller’s sea eagle

What distinguishes the Steller’s sea eagle from the White-tailed eagle is their beaks. The Steller’s sea eagle has a vibrant yellow beak, while the white-tailed eagle’s beak is a paler yellow. Moreover, the Steller’s sea eagle has a black body while the white-tailed eagle is a brownish grey.

Ezo red fox
The ezo red fox can also be found throughout Hokkaido and even spotted in urban areas. It’s common to see these foxes in especially nature-rich areas or from the car when driving through the mountains. But be sure you don’t touch an ezo red fox: you may get infected with the Echinococcus parasite.

Cosmos
Cosmos is an iconic autumn flower, but some varieties begin blossoming in summer. Although a simple flower alone, cosmos are overwhelming beautiful when they blossom in mass. Taiyo-no-Oka Engaru Park in the town of Engaru is known for being one of Japan’s largest cosmos fields.

Hokkaido’s flowers

Enjoy the many types of flowers that bloom across Hokkaido between spring and summer in Hokkaido’s vast fields. Come see the unique landscapes full of majestic scenery and colorful flowers that only that season can achieve.

Lavender
Lavender is the iconic flower of the Hokkaido summer. The lavender fields of the Furano region are particularly famous. The aroma of lavender is said to have calming and soporific effects, and the sight of a field of purple flowers rustling in the wind is sure to put your mind at ease.

Moss phlox
Moss phlox beautifully decorates the slopes of mountains and hills in spring. Moss phlox’s small flowers resemble cherry blossoms in shape, and they bloom in great numbers that cover the ground like a lawn of flowers. Relatively durable to heat and dryness, these flowers also help to prevent ground soil from being washed away.

Sunflower
Large yellow sunflowers are cultivated for viewing pleasure, but in Hokkaido the seeds are also eaten and used to make oil. Sunflowers are also grown to make green manure. The vast sunflower fields of rural Hokkaido are a classic symbol of the Hokkaido summer.

Daylily
The daylily is a perennial plant of the lily family that grows en masse on meadows and wet plains next to the coastline. The sight of daylilies bringing a wave of orange to a manly grassland or natural flower path is truly a sight to behold. Daylilies blossom in the morning and wither by night, so try to visit during the day to fully enjoy the view.

Drift Ice Bird Watching
(Locations) 271-1 Monchi, Rausu Town (Shiretoko Nature Cruise) (Dates) Jan - Apr
175 353 78972

Shibazakura Takinoue Park
(Locations) Motomachi, Takinoe Town (Best time to visit) Early May - Early June
570 690 352108

Himawari no Sato (Sunflower field)
(Locations) 143-2 Haya, Hayato Town (Best time to visit) Late July - Mid Aug
763 563 74798

Odori Park
(Locations) 1-Chome to 12-Chome, Odori-ku, Chuo-ward, Sapporo (Best time to visit) Mid-May - Early June
9 492 783717

Lilac
Sapporo, the lilac is beloved as the city’s official flower and can be seen blooming in Odori Park, Nakajima Park, and other parks in the city center.
Hokkaido is a treasure trove of natural wonders. Beautiful scenery that changes colors with the seasons can be found all over Hokkaido. In spring, the pond sparkles a green-blue color, and in summer and autumn, the vivid flora strike a beautiful contrast. In winter, the blue-tinted water surface and snowscape strike a mystical tone. Hokkaido is a treasure trove of natural wonders. Beautiful scenery that changes colors with the seasons can be found all over Hokkaido. In spring, the pond sparkles a green-blue color, and in summer and autumn, the vivid flora strike a beautiful contrast. In winter, the blue-tinted water surface and snowscape strike a mystical tone. Hokkaido is a treasure trove of natural wonders. Beautiful scenery that changes colors with the seasons can be found all over Hokkaido. In spring, the pond sparkles a green-blue color, and in summer and autumn, the vivid flora strike a beautiful contrast. In winter, the blue-tinted water surface and snowscape strike a mystical tone.

**Asahiyama Zoo**
Japan’s northernmost zoo attracts crowds of tourists from throughout Japan. It is especially popular for its “behavioral exhibits” that bring out animals’ natural qualities, and visitors can see animals like polar bears and lions at close quarters. There’s also an adorable “Penguin Walk” event in winter.

**Mount Hakodate**
The Hakodate City nightlife is counted among one of the Three Major Night Views of the World, and the view from the observation deck reached via ropeway at the summit of Mount Hakodate is one of the most stellar. In addition to its nighttime view, Mount Hakodate is also beautiful during the day. Enjoy the sight of cherry blossoms blooming in spring and the changing colors of the leaves in autumn.

**Otaru Canal**
A picturesque spot where the blue water surface and withered Japanese larch trees create a storybook landscape. In the spring, the pond sparkles a green-blue color, and in summer and autumn, the vivid flora strike a beautiful contrast. In winter, the blue-tinted water surface and snowscape strike a mystical tone.

**Icebreaker Garinko**
Between roughly January and March of every year, the Sea of Okhotsk around Hokkaido is fully covered in drift ice that extends south from Siberia and elsewhere. It is highly recommended that visitors take a ride on an ice-sailing ship to see the white ice completely covering the ocean surface, and you can also enjoy a powerful cruise through the waters as the ship breaks up the ice in its path.

**Shiretoko**
Shiretoko is a UNESCO World Heritage Site full of untouched nature. See animals such as brown bears and yezo sika deer, as well as countless breathtakingly beautiful spots such as Europa Falls and Lake Rausu. The various activity tours are recommended for sightseeing, and information on those can be picked up at the Shiretoko National Park Nature Center and elsewhere.

**Jewelry Ice**
This stunning sight can be seen only between mid January and mid February on the sandy beaches near the estuary of the Tokachi River in the town of Toyokoro. Clear ice washed up all across the coast sparkles under the sun’s light, making it look just like so many gems. This location is inaccessible using public transportation, so a guided tour is recommended.

**Recommended sightseeing spots in Hokkaido**

**Access the website here**
1. Learn road signs

Entrance signs

These signs are placed near where freeway entries or ordinary roads intersect.

- Route number
- Route name
- Entrance number and name

Exit signs

These signs are placed near freeway exits.

- Name of exit/entrance
- Name of city accessible from the interchange
- Exit/entrance number

2. Maintain a safe speed.

Also, remember that speed limits are generally lowered in times of inclement weather or Peer road conditions. Pay attention to the posted speed limit and drive at a safe speed suitable for road conditions.

3. Generally drive in the left lane (the cruising lane)

If there are multiple lanes, the right lane must be left open because it is the passing lane. Do not change lanes excessively or recklessly.

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. Do not drive in the breakdown lane.

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. No reversing

There have been several serious accidents caused by cars reversing on the expressway. Only drive on the expressway in the indicated direction. Pay close attention to traffic signs, guidance signs, and road markings.

7. Wear a seatbelt in all seats

Death rates for non-seatbelt wearers is twenty times that of seatbelt wearers. Please use your seatbelt, even in the back seat. Children younger than six must be placed in a child seat.

8. Maintain a safe distance between vehicles.

Leave about 100 meters between your car and the one ahead of you when driving 100 km/h and 80 meters when driving 80 km/h. When roadways are wet due to rain or other cause, over twice the normal distance must be maintained between vehicles. On ice and snowy roads, normally leave 2 to 4 times that distance between your car and the one ahead of you.


Cutting in front of another vehicle will cause the driver of that vehicle to swerve or break suddenly and could result in an accident. Always make sure there is plenty of space between your vehicle and the one behind you when changing lanes.

10. Park squarely in parking spaces.

When stopping in service or parking areas, be sure to park your vehicle squarely in a parking space. Also, be sure to match the size of the parking space you choose to the size of your vehicle: small parking spaces for small vehicles and large parking spaces for large vehicles.

11. Keep your eyes on the road.

At a speed of 100 km/h, your vehicle moves roughly 28 meters every second. Do not look at scenery or use your mobile phone or smartphone while driving.

12. What to do when there has been an accident or breakdown

① Stay in one place! Do not walk around!

Many serious traffic accidents on expressways involve vehicles hitting people.

② Provide warnings to the vehicles behind you!

Help make other drivers aware of the situation.

When setting up warning signals, stay off the roadway and behind the guardrail or median strip when moving toward the rear of your vehicle.

*Most can have a holder for road safety flares in the footwell of the front passenger seat.

③ Move to a safe location before reporting accidents!

There are some places to report accidents in Japan.

Dial 1-1-9 from any landline.

Use one of the emergency freeway telephones that are installed along the freeway.

*1 Emergency freeway telephones are located every 1 kilometer along the freeway and every 200 meters in tunnels. Just pick up the receiver to be connected immediately to a traffic control center. Emergency telephones are equipped with pushbuttons that will enable you to request emergency response for a mechanical failure, an accident, an injury, or fire without speaking.
How to use toll booths

1. Toll booth lanes
   - ETC vehicle lane
   - Lane for both ETC vehicles and non-ETC vehicles
   - Non-ETC vehicle lane

   ETC vehicles equipped with ETC. ETC vehicles can use entrances and exits without stopping.
   Non-ETC vehicles: Vehicles not equipped with ETC. Non-ETC vehicles must take a toll road ticket at the road entrance and pay by cash or credit card at the exit.

   [Entry toll booth]
   Enter at least 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 until a clerk arrives.

   Non-ETC vehicles
   Stop at the entrance toll booth and take a toll ticket from the automated ticket machine. You will pay when exiting the expressway.

   [Exit toll booth]
   Enter at least 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 until a toll clerk arrives.

   Stop at the exit and hand over your toll road ticket at the exit toll booth. Pay the toll road ticket in cash or with a credit card. Use the lane marked "ETC" and use the self-operated toll machine.

   Winter freeways awareness

   In the winter season, you absolutely must ensure that you slow down and that you maintain a reasonable distance between vehicles.

   Watch out for blizzards and snow blizzards on the ground caused 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, slowing down and maintaining a safe distance between cars.

   Be careful!
   About twice as many accidents take place in Hokkaido in the winter than between spring and fall!

   Winter expressways: Pay especially close attention in spots like these!

   - Ahead of a curve
   - Sharp descent
   - Bent corner
   - Bent road return
   - Dead ahead
   - Snowplow
   - Snowplow
   - Snowplow

   Safe Driving Tips on Winter Roads
   - Don’t be overconfident in your driving skills or your vehicle’s performance.
   - Don’t push things too far.
   - Always anticipate what others are doing.
   - Prepare early for winter conditions.

   Requests: Anti-icing and snow removal work

   Anti-icing and snow removal work are performed around the clock. 24 hours per day, to ensure that the expressways are safe and comfortable for driving in the winter.

   1. Snow removal work
   Snow removal trucks form a column formation to safely remove snow from the road.
   Snowplows will periodically stop snow removal operations and allow the vehicles behind it to pass.

   Do not pass a snowplow while it is performing snow removal operations.

   2. Anti-icing work
   Roads are salted (with sodium chloride, or salt) to prevent road surfaces from freezing over.
   If you drive through a road that is being maintained by anti-icing work, do be careful when doing so because you may spray salt onto other vehicles.

   Regarding Smart ICs

   A Smart Interchange (Smart IC) is an interchange that is only open to ETC vehicles. There are two Hokkaido Smart ICs: Hokkaido Watta Smart IC and Sapporo SA Smart K.

   Wattu Smart Interchange and Sapporo SA Smart Interchange only use ETC.
   (A vehicle with an ETC card but no ETC transponder can’t use a smart IC gate.)

   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.

   ETC precautions
   - Be sure to use your ETC card properly inserted into the ETC device.
   - If you forget to insert your ETC card into the device or it falls out, your vehicle will not be detected. Should the ETC card properly inserted into the on-board device while driving.
   - Find the "classification" lane and enter it. If the lane is not classified, use the lane for the non-ETC vehicles.
   - If the exit is "ETC", use the lane for the non-ETC vehicles.
   - If you need to take a toll road ticket at the non-ETC lane, then at the exit, make sure that you use the non-ETC lane and hand over your ETC card. (You cannot use the ETC lane to exit the expressway.)
   - If you accidentally enter the ETC lane in a non-ETC vehicle, turn on your hazard lights and wait for a service member to help you.

   National Expressway Information Site

   E-NEXCO Drive Plaza
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   Five languages

   Access

   Entrance to English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Korean, Thai, etc.