

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. Hokkaido's seasons are sharply distinct from one another, even for Japan. Each season has its own unique and wonderful beauty.



Shimukappu



Kamikawa



Otaru

Winter driving memo

In a typical year in Hokkaido, snow begins falling in mid-October and there is sometimes still snow on the roads in May. During this season be sure to put snow tires on your car and be extra careful when driving on snowy roads.

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.



Asian fawnlily / *Corydalis ambigua*

Sargent cherry

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.



Trekking

Sapporo Odori Beer Garden

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. Seafood is also in season in the fall, including salmon, the most famous Hokkaido fish.



Salmon chan-chan yaki (Steam-fried salmon with vegetables and miso paste)

Grape picking

Snowshoe trekking

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.



Drift ice

Temperature and snowfall in major cities

(*1)	May		Aug.		Oct.		Feb.		Average snowfall (depth) (*2)			
	High temperature (°C)	Low temperature (°C)	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March						
Sapporo	17.9	9.0	26.4	19.1	16.4	8.0	0.4	-6.2	7	31	52	33
Hakodate	17.0	8.0	25.9	18.9	17.1	7.8	1.8	-5.7	3	12	15	0
Obihiro	18.2	6.2	25.4	16.5	15.9	5.3	-0.2	-12.0	2	18	30	21
Kushiro	12.6	5.4	21.5	15.7	15.1	6.1	-0.1	-9.4	0	5	20	2
Asahikawa	18.8	6.1	26.6	16.9	14.9	4.4	-1.7	-11.8	24	42	58	48

(*1) Japan Meteorological Agency (1991-2020), average observed values over a 30-year period
(*2) Japan Meteorological Agency (2019-2021), snow depth on the 15th of each month (3-year average)

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

*National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (2021)

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-sleeve shirt during the day, but after mid-August the temperatures suddenly drop in the morning and evening, so be careful. When you visit cool mountains and lakes, taking a light jacket with you will give you peace of mind.

Oct.-Nov.

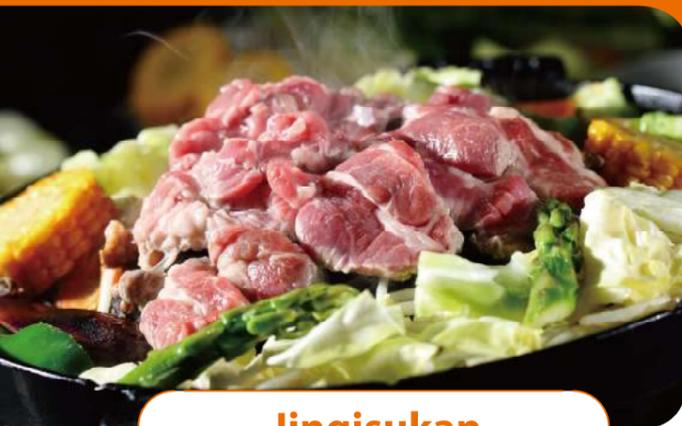
During this season, it gradually gets colder in the morning and evening, and the temperature extremes during the day get wider. Have a thin down jacket or thin coat at the ready.

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 Jingsukan (grilled mutton with vegetables), and sweets made from fresh dairy products.



Jingsukan

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

Sushi

In Hokkaido, which has plenty of delicious seafood, sushi made using seasonal ingredients must not be missed. You can enjoy all sorts of fresh 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.



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.

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!



Column

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.



Soukyo 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 may 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.



Manners in bathhouses and hot springs

- Do not enter drunk.
- Absolutely never run inside the bathhouse or hot springs.
- 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 When washing, ensure that you do not splash water around yourself.
- ⑤ 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.
- ⑥ Before entering the water of the hot springs, pour water on yourself. (This is called kakeyu.)
- ⑦ Even if the hot water is high in temperature, it is considered bad manners to cool it down by adding cool water.
- ⑧ Before returning to the dressing room, dry your body with a towel.

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 settlement hunted, fished, and gathered plants in set locations in the mountains, rivers, and ocean surrounding the *kotan*.



Ainu gods

To the Ainu people, gods are those things that are an 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. Whichever god to whom they pray, they always pray first to the god of fire to ask that their prayers properly reach the gods.



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 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 unaccompanied 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 by 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.



Source: The Foundation for Ainu Culture, "Together with the Ainu: History and Culture."

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 "Akan-Yukar - Lost Kamuy", a new program begun in March 2019 that blends digital art and traditional Ainu dance.

[Location] 4 Chome-7-84 Akancho Akanko Onsen, Kushiro [Closed] Irregular days [Hours] Please inquire.
<https://www.akanainu.jp/> ☎ 739 341 725*52



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 main facilities

◆ The Ainu Museum

The first national museum centered on the Ainu indigenous peoples. Through a variety of exhibits, this museum describes the history and culture of the Ainu people from their perspective.

◆ National Ainu Park

A participatory open-air museum where visitors can experience Ainu culture through traditional dance performance and various participatory programs.

◆ Memorial Site

Established on the high ground on the east side of Lake Poroto, this facility serves as a place where the Ainu people can perform their memorials with dignity.



*Image is for illustrative purposes only.

[Location] 2-chome 3 Wakakusa, Shiraoi
 Closed: Mon. (or the next day if Mon. is a holiday)
 New Year's holidays (Dec. 29 to Jan. 3) [Hours] Please inquire.
 [Admission fee] Adults: ¥ 1,200 (¥ 960)
 Senior high school students: ¥ 600 (¥ 480)
 Junior high school students and younger: Free
 *Prices in parentheses are group rates (for groups of 20 or more)
 Check the official site for more information.
<https://ainu-upopoy.jp/> ☎ 545 194 852*20

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 "Moreu," which is focused on Ainu patterns and designs.

[Location] 55 Nibutani, Biratori [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. [Hours] 9:00 - 16:30 [Admission fee] Adults: ¥ 400 Primary and junior high school students: ¥ 150
<http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/> ☎ 442 799 127*75



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 Shiretoko 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.

Shiretoko Peninsula Cruising

[Location] 51 Utorohigashi, Shari Town (Gojiraiwa Sightseeing)
[Dates] Late April to late October ☎ 894 854 261*63



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.

Tsurui-Ito Tancho Crane Sanctuary

[Location] Nakasetsuri-minami, Tsurui Village
[Open] Oct. - Mar. (Closed Apr. to Sept.)
☎ 556 535 006*13



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.



Yezo sika deer

The Yezo sika deer can be found living throughout Hokkaido. Its meat is also a popular dish in recent years. Drivers 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 the mountainous parts of Hokkaido!



White-tailed eagle

Steller's sea 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.

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.

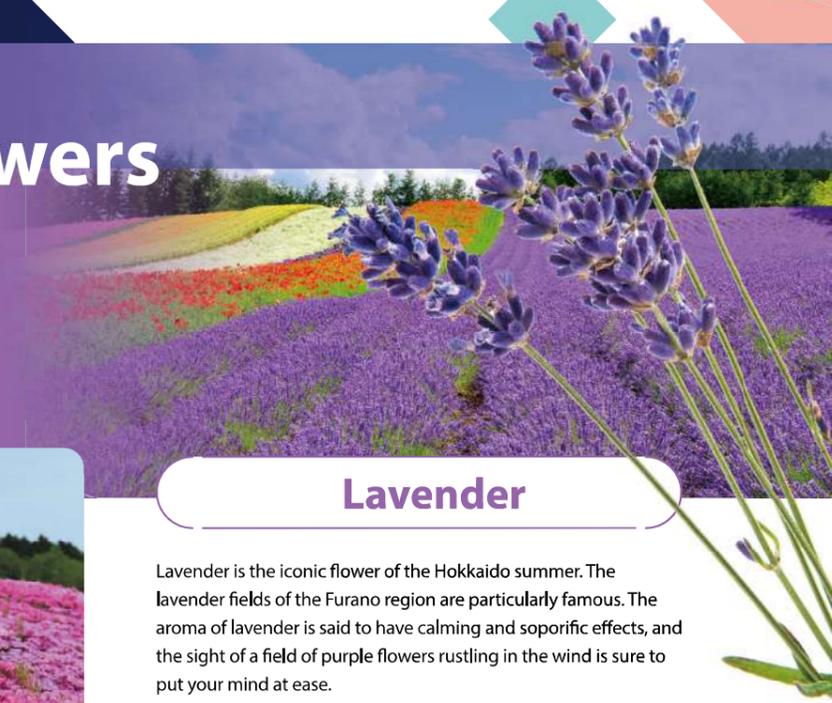
Drift Ice Bird Watching

[Location] 27-1 Honcho, Rausu Town (Shiretoko Nature Cruise)
[Dates] Jan. - Apr.
☎ 757 353 796*62



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.

Farm Tomita

[Location] #15 Kisenkita, Nakafurano Town
[Best time to visit] Early July - Early Aug. ☎ 349 276 837*25

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.

Shibazakura Takinoue Park

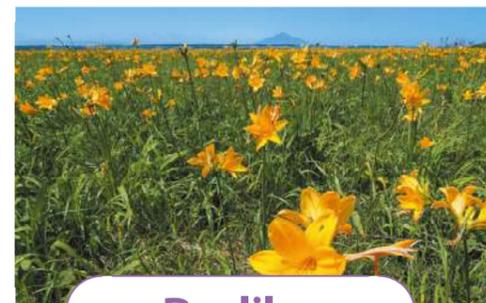
[Location] Motomachi, Takinoue Town
[Best time to visit] Early May - Early June
☎ 570 699 352*08

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 marshy grassland or natural flower patch 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.

Sarobetsu Primeval Flower Garden

[Location] 8662 Kami-Sarobetsu, Toyotomi Town
[Best time to visit] Mid-June - Mid-July
☎ 736 667 559*60



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.

Himawari no Sato (Sunflower field)

[Location] 143- 2 Itaya, Hokuryu Town
[Best time to visit] Late July - Mid-Aug. ☎ 763 569 747*68



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 en masse. Taiyo-no-Oka Engaru Park in the town of Engaru is known for being one of Japan's largest cosmos fields.



Taiyo-no-Oka Engaru Park

[Location] Marudai, Engaru Town
[Best time to visit] Late Aug. - Mid-August
☎ 404 181 764*58

Lilac

Lilacs have a distinctively sweet and gentle aroma that is so popular it's used for perfumes and room fragrances. In 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.

Odori Park

[Location] 1-Chome to 12-Chome, Odorinishi, Chuo Ward, Sapporo
[Best time to visit] Mid-May - Early June
☎ 9 492 780*17





Recommended sightseeing spots in Hokkaido

Hokkaido is a treasure trove of natural wonders. Beautiful scenery that changes colors with the seasons can be found all over Hokkaido. This includes natural phenomena that can only be seen in winter and one-of-a-kind, picturesque scenery that makes for wonderful photos. If you're traveling through Hokkaido, you also have to see its historic buildings that bring history life.

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 >



Blue Pond

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.

[Location] Shirogane, Biei Town
[Hours] Parking lot: 7:00 - 19:00 (May to October), 8:00 - 21:30 (November to April) *There is a fee to use the parking lot.
[Access] Approx. 40 km from downtown Asahikawa City, or approx. 60 min. by car
[URL] <https://www.biei-hokkaido.jp/ja/sightseeing/shirogane-blue-pond/>
☎ 349 569 814*43



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.

[Location] Kuranuma Higashi-asahikawa-cho, Asahikawa City
*Zoo hours and zoo opening/closure dates differ from year to year. Refer to the website for more information.
[Access] Approx. 10 km from downtown Asahikawa City, or approx. 30 min. by car
[URL] <https://www.city.asahikawa.hokkaido.jp/asahiyamazoo/> ☎ 79 358 812*26



Otaru Canal

Sightseeing spot with historic warehouses made of stone that is especially popular even in Otaru. This nostalgic and atmospheric scenery is beautifully picturesque when shot from any angle. After nightfall, 63 gas lights turn on to illuminate the path and cast the canal and warehouses in a romantic mood.

[Location] Minatomachi, Otaru City
[Access] Approx. 40 km from downtown Sapporo City, or approx. 40 min. by car
[URL] <https://www.city.otaru.lg.jp/docs/2020100900367/>
☎ 493 690 444*66



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 sightseeing ship to see the sight of 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.

[Location] 1 Kaiyoken, Mombetsu City
*Reservation required to board the ship. Check the website for the service period, departure times, fees, and other information.
[Access] Approx. 6 km from Okhotsk Monbetsu Airport, or approx. 10 min. by car
[URL] <https://o-tower.co.jp> ☎ 801 585 794*68



Sapporo Clock Tower

A popular sightseeing spot that serves as a symbol of Sapporo. Designated an Important Cultural Property by the national government, the toll of the tower's bell has struck at noon for Sapporo City residents for over 130 years. Inside the tower, visitors can examine the reverberating bell and learn about the history of Hokkaido's development and the clock tower itself.

[Location] 2-chome Kita 1 Jonishi, Chuo Ward, Sapporo City
[Hours] 8:45 - 17:10 (Entry allowed until 17:00)
[Fee] ¥ 200 for adults; free for senior high school students and younger
[Closed] New Year's (January 1-3)
[Access] Approx. 1 km from downtown Sapporo City, or approx. 3 min. by car
[URL] <http://sapporoshi-tokeidai.jp> ☎ 9 522 206*01



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 Furepe 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.

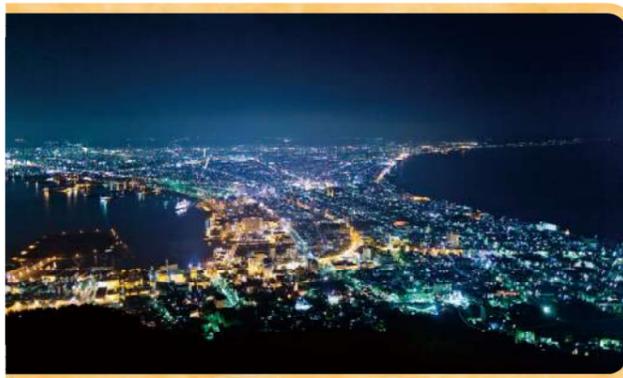
Shiretoko National Park Nature Center
[Location] Iwabetsu 531 Onnebetsumura, Shari, Shari District
[Hours] 8:00 - 17:30 (Apr. 20 to Oct. 20); 9:00 - 16:00 (Oct. 21 to Apr. 19)
[Access] Approx. 80 km from downtown Abashiri City, or approx. 90 min. by car
[URL] <http://center.shiretoko.or.jp> ☎ 757 603 607*38



Mount Hakodate

The Hakodate City nightscape 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.

Mount Hakodate Ropeway
[Location] 19-7 Motomachi, Hakodate City
*Hours vary from year to year. Refer to the website for more information.
[Fee] Round trip: 1,800 yen for adults (Junior high or older); 900 yen for children
[Access] Approx. 2 km from downtown Hakodate City, or approx. 5 min. by car
[URL] <https://334.co.jp> ☎ 86 041 004*66



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.

[Location] Otsu Motomachi, Toyokoro Town
[Access] Approx. 50 km from downtown Obihiro City, or approx. 60 min. by car
[URL] <https://www.toyokoro-kankoh.com/>
☎ 511 078 059*27



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How to use expressway

1 Learn road signs

Entrance signs

These signs are placed near where freeway entrances and ordinary roads intersect.

Route number
Route name
Entrance number and name

Exit signs

These signs are placed near freeway exits.

Numbers of the roads connected from the exit
Name of exit/entrance
Name of city accessible from the interchange
Exit/entrance number

Rest facilities sign

Types of facilities available
Rest stop name

Available facility types
Dining Fuel Snacks Information

2 Maintain a safe speed.

Also, remember that speed limits are generally lowered in times of inclement weather or Poor 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.

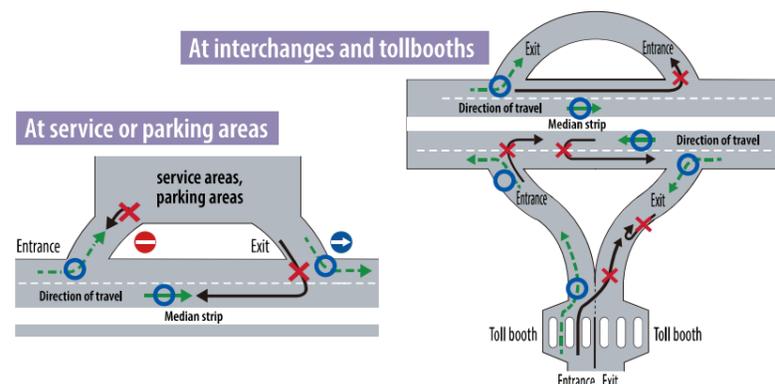


5 Do not drive in the breakdown lane.

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-seat belt wearers is **twenty times** that of seat belt wearers. Please wear 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.



9 Don't cut in front of other vehicles.

Cutting in front of another vehicles 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/hr, 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 cars have a holder for road safety flares in the footwell of the front passenger seat.

Three kinds of warning signals

- 1 Turn on your hazard lights
- 2 Light safety flares and place them in the road
- 3 Set up emergency warning triangles or other safety markers.

③ Move to a safe location before reporting accidents!

There are two ways to report accidents in Japan

- 1 Dial 1-1-0 from any land line
- 2 Use one of the emergency freeway telephones that are installed along the freeway*1



*1 Emergency freeway telephones are located every kilometer along the freeway and every 200 meters in tunnels. Just pick up the receiver to be connected immediately 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 vehicles: 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]

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.

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]

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.

Non-ETC vehicles

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 "一般 精算機" and pay using the self-operated toll machine.



The toll between Sapporo-nishi and Sapporo-minami ICs is a flat fee.

Otaru IC⇄Sapporo-nishi IC The Sapporo-nishi Interchange entrance has no toll booth, so drivers will pay the toll at the exit.

2 ETC★ (Electronic toll collection)

This expressway toll payment system allows your vehicle to pass through the tollgate and pay the toll without stopping. Securely insert your ETC card (an IC card) into the ETC device in your vehicle. When the device transmits your ETC data to the receiver at the toll booth, your toll is paid and the tollgate opens.

- If your vehicle is ETC-equipped, use an ETC lane "ETC専用" or a lane open to both ETC "ETC一般" and non-ETC vehicles.
ETC専用 ETC一般 Look at the signage in the lane to determine what type of lane it is.
- There are boom barriers installed at entrance and exit lanes. If there is some problem with the wireless ETC signal, the roadside display will flash "STOP" and the barrier will not be raised.
- If the ETC lane is 閉鎖中, use the non-ETC lane.
• If the entrance is 閉鎖中, take a toll road ticket in the non-ETC lane; and 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 the exit is 閉鎖中, use the non-ETC lane and hand over your ETC card. Signs and signals indicating whether a lane is ETC専用 ETC一般 can be found above each lane.
- If you accidentally enter the ETC lane in a non-ETC vehicle, turn on your hazard lights and wait in place for a service member to respond.

ETC precautions

- **Is your ETC card properly inserted into the ETC device?**
If you forget to insert your ETC card into the device or if it is only partially inserted, the barrier will not rise. Ensure that the card is properly inserted into the on-board device while driving.
- **Stay a reasonable distance behind the vehicle in front of you.**
The vehicle driving in front of you may suddenly come to a stop. Stay a reasonable distance behind the vehicle in front of you and remain under 20 km / hr.
- **Absolutely never put your vehicle in reverse in the lane!**
Even if you have stopped your vehicle in the ETC lane, putting your vehicle in reverse may result in you running over service staff or crashing into the vehicle behind you. Please simply wait for a service member to come to your vehicle.



3 Regarding Smart ICs

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

- Wattsu Smart Interchange and Sunagawa 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.

Winter freeway 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 blown on 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, 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!

In the typical year, road accidents spike around the beginning of winter in November. Winter roads become covered in snow and ice, making them extremely slippery. Driving on such roads in the same way as you would in summer -- at the same speeds and with the same handling -- is extremely dangerous. Always pay close attention when driving, and always think about what "might" happen on the road.

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

<p>Ahead of a curve Decelerate before a curve and never suddenly brake or turn the steering wheel</p>	<p>Long descents Your speed can increase without you realizing it. Remember to slow down and maintain a safe distance between cars.</p>	<p>Shaded road surfaces Shaded locations are cold and easily freeze.</p>	<p>On bridges Bridges are exposed to the wind and easily freeze. Be careful not to slip.</p>	<p>Tunnel entrances/exits Strong winds and sudden snowfalls. Roads freeze easily inside tunnels.</p>	<p>Interchange entrances/exits Slow down before entering the ramp at interchange entrances and exits.</p>
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- Safe Driving Tips on Winter Roads**
- 1) Don't be overconfident in your driving skills or your vehicle's performance
 - 2) Always anticipate what's on the road ahead
 - 3) Don't push too hard
 - 4) 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 days, to ensure that the expressway is 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.



Passing other cars is not allowed while this work is underway.



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.



Safety first: never 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.

You may pass a vehicle that is performing anti-icing work (salt roads), but be very careful when doing so, because you may spray salt onto other vehicles.



National Expressway information site

ドラぷら E-NEXCO Drive Plaza

Five languages

English, traditional Chinese, simplified Chinese, Korean, Thai

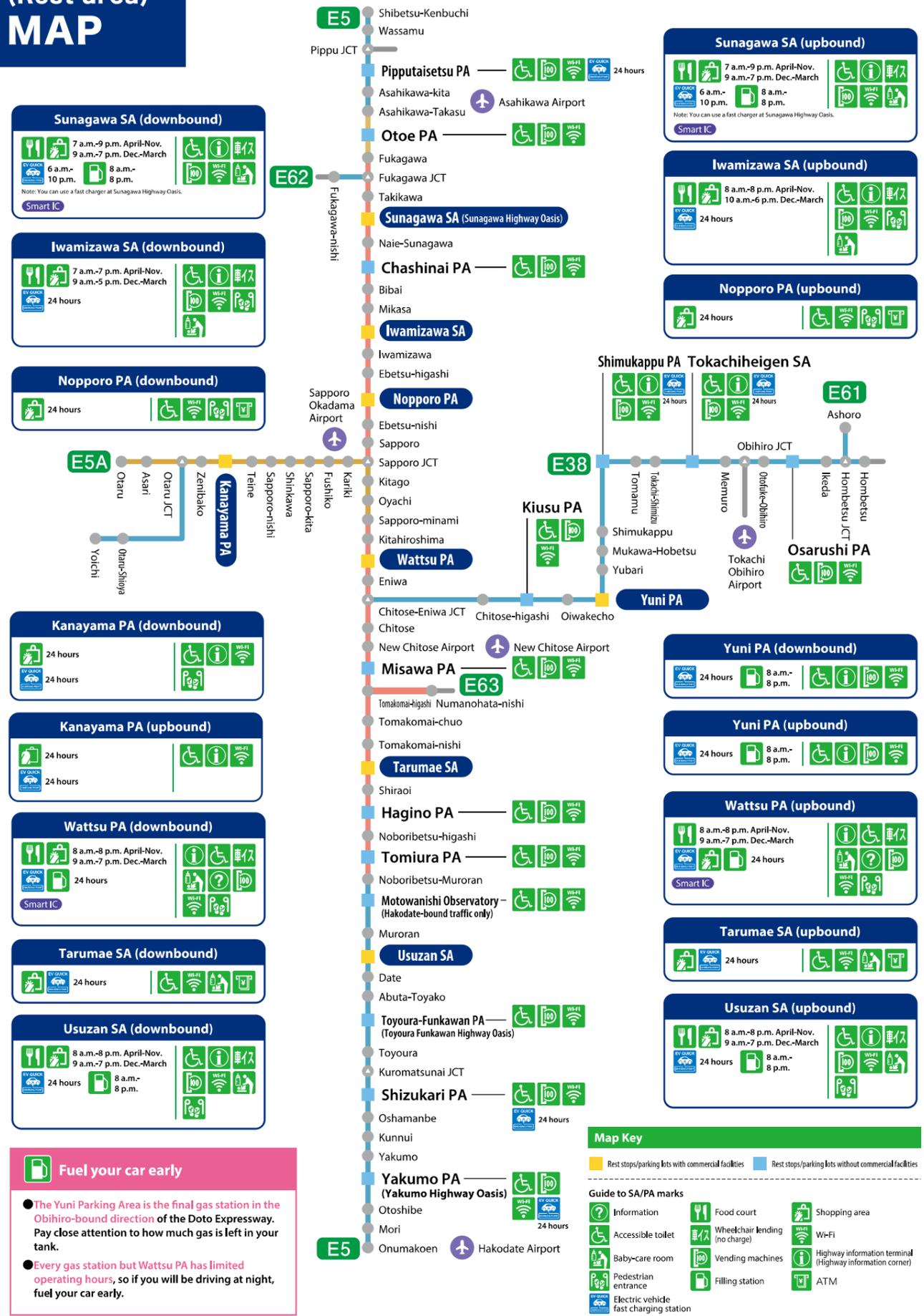
Access



SA·PA (Rest area) MAP

Hours are subject to change from those listed in this guidebook. Refer to DoRaPuRa for up-to-date hours.

Speed-limit segment	70 km/h speed limit	80 km/h speed limit	100 km/h speed limit



Fuel your car early

- The Yuni Parking Area is the final gas station in the Obihiro-bound direction of the Doto Expressway. Pay close attention to how much gas is left in your tank.
- Every gas station but Wattsu PA has limited operating hours, so if you will be driving at night, fuel your car early.

Rest facilities for enjoying long-distance drives in Hokkaido

Michi-no-Eki (Roadside Rest Areas)



*The photos shown are of roadside stations placing #1 in a 2019 Ranking of Hokkaido Roadside Stations by Travelers Who Visited Them All.
 *For the 2020 Ranking of Hokkaido Roadside Stations by Travelers Who Visited Them All, see the URL below.
<https://www.hkd.mlit.go.jp/ky/release/slo5pa0000050th-att/slo5pa000000cgfz.pdf>

These are rest areas for long drives in vast Hokkaido. Michi-no-Ekis (roadside rest areas) offer various services to support pleasant driving.

- Rest area** Free parking and toilets are available 24 hours a day. They are also used as disaster-mitigation facilities.
- Information** You can get information on roads and tourism in various ways: from live videos feeds, guides, and Wi-Fi. The hours depend on the location.
- Local products and foods** Enjoy specialties at dining areas. The hours depend on the location.

24 hours

P Parking **♿** Toilets **☎** Telephone **i** Information **📶** Free Wi-Fi **🛍** Shop **🍴** Restaurant **☕** Coffee

Official website 'Kita no Michi no Eki' Compatible with smartphones. <http://www.hokkaido-michinoeki.jp/en/>
 This page is in English.

Scenic Byways Hokkaido

Scenic Byway Hokkaido is a regional resident-led project in which community members collaborate with companies and governments to build "vibrant regional communities," "beautiful scenic areas," and "attractive sightseeing spaces." The project's Scenic Byway "First-Rate Routes" initiative works to bring together a collaboration of various stakeholders to maintain and build both "hard" and "soft" scenery and further enhance those spaces as tourism resources, and drawing in more sightseers who drive through the promotion of those resources.

Shikotsu-Toya Niseko Route
Welcome Hokkaido Area
National Route 453, Chitose City

Tokachi Scenic Byway
Tokachi Heiya-Sanroku Route
National Route 273, Kamishihoro Town

Teshiogawa River Scenic Byway
National Route 275, Town Road Shinnaru Minami Route 3 / HeiwaKisen, Horokanai Town

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