

Lakes & Volcanoes

8 Day Self-Guided Tour



Discover hidden natural beauty just hours from Sapporo City. Visit the hot spring towns of Jozankei, Lake Toya and Noboribetsu and get up close and personal with the lakes, mountains and volcanoes of Shikotsu-Toya National Park.

[**View Departure Dates & Prices**](#)

[**View Gallery**](#)

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About the Tour

Start	Finish	Grading	Season
Sapporo	Sapporo	3, Moderate	Late Apr to Jun, Late Aug to mid Oct

About Shikotsu-Toya National Park

Shikotsu-Toya National Park lies close to Sapporo and is home to a number of spectacular caldera lakes and steaming active volcanoes. The volcanoes concentrated in the region have of course given rise to several natural hot springs, meaning that it is popular among domestic Japanese visitors for its many resorts. For us, however, it is not the resorts that we are interested in but the amazing landscapes that make this national park perfect for adventure travel. As well as the warm hot springs, it is also home to rich forests, fascinating geological hikes and incredible wildlife. In summer, mountain trails allow the adventurous to experience the unique sight of fiery volcanoes and pure blue caldera lakes.

Tour highlights

- Refresh in Jozankei, the idyllic hot spring town in the mountains just outside Sapporo City, Japan's 5th largest metropolis.
- Wander through a volcanic crater and soak in the hot springs of Noboribetsu.
- Explore an oasis of wildlife on Nakajima, an island in the middle of Lake Toya.
- Get to know the history of the Indigenous people at the Upopoy National Ainu Museum.

Who is this tour for?

- Active travellers who enjoy walking & hiking for more than 5 hours a day.
- Curious travellers who enjoy a mix of activities, sightseeing and learning about the regions they visit.
- Adventurous travellers who enjoy rural hospitality, staying in Japanese style accommodations with natural hot springs on site.
- Independent travellers who like being their own guide and touring at their own pace.

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Itinerary at a glance

Day	Activities	Km	Miles	Meals ¹
1	Arrive in Sapporo	4.7	2.9	- ▾
2	Transfer to Jozankei & Hike in Jozankei	4.2	2.6	B, D ▾
3	Transfer to Lake Toya & Hike the Konpira Trail	5.5~8.6	3.4~5.3	B, D ▾
4	Hike on Nakajima Island, Lake Toya	8.2	5.0	B, D ▾
5	Transfer to Noboribetsu & Hike the Hell Valley	3.2	2.0	B, D ▾
6	Transfer to Shiraoi & Visit the Upopoy Museum	-	-	B, D ▾
7	Hike Mt. Monbetsu & Transfer to Sapporo	10.0	6.2	B ▾
8	Depart Sapporo	-	-	B ▾

Accommodation

Day	Type	Location	Ensuite Toilet	Ensuite Shower	Onsen	Laundry
1	Hotel ▾	Sapporo	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Hotel ▾	Jozankei Onsen	✓	✓	✓	
3	Hotel ▾	Lake Toya	✓	✓	✓	
4	Hotel ▾	Lake Toya	✓	✓	✓	
5	Ryokan ▾ ²	Noboribetsu Onsen			✓	
6	Hotel ▾	Lake Shikotsu	✓	✓	✓	
7	Hotel ▾	Sapporo	✓	✓	✓	✓

We may change the facility options if our preferred accommodation is unavailable.

¹ B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

² Ryokan is a traditional Japanese inn.

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What's included

- 7 nights accommodation
- 7 breakfasts and 5 dinners
- Daily cue sheets to help you get around using public transport
- Full English speaking phone support

What's not included

- Transportation costs
- Optional guided tours
- Airfare
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses
- Drinks with included meals

Travel style

Going self-guided means being your own boss– you have complete control over the day's schedule, from what to eat to how long to spend at a destination. This tour is therefore perfect for independent travellers who love the flexibility that comes with travelling alone. It also makes a great self-guided extension to any of our more involved guided tours!

You will travel by public transport on this tour. Hokkaido is a fairly vast land with most residents relying on cars and much of the infrastructure has been built with this in mind. While this means that more intensive trailheads are a little out of reach of public transport, there are still a number of very accessible, leisurely day and loop hikes that can be reached by train, bus or taxi ([Read our guide to using public transport in Hokkaido](#)). Our self-guided tours showcase the very best of these smaller routes.

Being your own boss does of course mean that you must take responsibility for yourself to a certain degree. This includes making sure you have enough funds on you to pay for public transport and meals, getting yourself from A to B in a timely manner, keeping on top of train and bus timetables and looking after your own luggage.

A luggage transfer service is not included in this tour, so you will need to carry it with you when travelling. Between hikes, we recommend that you leave your luggage either with your accommodation front desk or at coin lockers in stations. You can also use [Yamato's](#) amazing luggage-forwarding service to send larger, more bulky luggage ahead to other destinations (though note that this is not a same-day service – please allow up to 72 hours for your luggage to arrive).

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When do you run this tour?

This tour is available from late April to June, and from late August to mid October. Many of the activities in the itinerary are not possible during winter.

July to August is the busiest time of year for tourism in Hokkaido and many of the prime destinations become overcrowded. Taking this tour in the quieter months allows you to enjoy the area's natural beauty without the crowds and to also have more intimate experiences with your hosts, local guides and local residents. We believe that the levels of tourism seen in peak season are unsustainable.

Why travel self-guided in Hokkaido?

Getting around by public transport is fun and green

Hokkaido is the northernmost prefecture in Japan and also has the lowest population density. The island of Hokkaido is full of vast, scenic landscapes which you can take in while enjoying a slow ride on local trains and buses. Finding the right bus stops and paying the correct fares in coins can be challenging if you do not speak the language. However, we believe that travelling alongside local people makes for a fun adventure. People from Hokkaido can be shy when it comes to speaking English but they are warm at heart and are willing to help visitors in any way they can.

You are the guide...

Travelling independently allows you to enjoy freedom and flexibility during the day. Although we pre-arrange your accommodation (and some activities with guides) as well as suggest things to do and places to see, what you actually do during the day is up to you. You are your own guide, deciding where to go, what to eat and what to do during the day. You are free to set your own daily schedule. **Having a smartphone equipped with a local SIM is indispensable**, as it will serve as your capable assistant, helping you with navigation and translation ([Read our guide on how to set up your phone for travel in Hokkaido](#)).

...but you are not alone!

We are here to support you throughout the planning process and while you are travelling. We make reservations for the accommodations with included meals as described. We will arrange dinner with hotels where dining out is not an option, especially in remote villages. Activities that require bookings in advance will be arranged by us.

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We provide daily cue sheets and vouchers for each day. The cue sheets provide information about the details of public transport you need to take each day; where and what time the bus or train departs and arrives, and how much it costs. The vouchers are to be handed in to receptionists or guides at check-in, just to avoid any confusion or lost-in-translation moments. In an emergency, we are just a phone call away– whether you've missed your transport, gotten lost or are unwell. You can travel independently with the peace of mind that you have a local friend ready to help you out if things don't go quite to plan.

How to book this tour?

Please make an enquiry at least 90 days prior to the date you'd like to start travelling with us. We will confirm the availability of accommodation and experiences and send you a link to our online sign up form, where we will ask for the information of all members travelling with you. Once we receive this, we will send you an invoice for your tour deposit, which is JPY 50,000 per person. **We will confirm your booking upon receipt of your deposit payment.**

The deposit is treated as a part of the tour price. Payment of the balance will be reminded by email, which is generally 5 weeks prior to the tour departure date.

We accept payment via Wise or Flywire. We will send you payment links, which you can use to send payment directly to ourselves (you don't need to create a Wise or Flywire account to send the funds). When paying via Wise, payment is available in Japanese Yen only, and you must pay any currency exchange or transfer fees by yourself.

For credit card payment or domestic bank transfer converted to your own currency, we use Flywire, which will incur an additional transaction fee of 1.5%.

By paying for a deposit or full amount, you confirm that you have read, understand and agree to these [Terms and Conditions](#).

Is the website price final?

Our prices displayed on our website for our self-guided tours are the base rate. **The final price is subject to availability of accommodation and high season surcharges may apply.** We will confirm the final price before you make the deposit payment.

Travel Insurance

All guests joining our tours are required to have travel insurance. Please make sure you have a valid travel insurance, covering the kind of activities you are undertaking during our tour, cancellations, loss of personal belongings, and any unforeseen circumstances while travelling.

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Travel to the Starting Point

The starting point for this self-guided tour is Sapporo, Hokkaido's capital city. By air, you can reach Sapporo via a flight to New Chitose Airport. There are multiple flights a day from both Tokyo Haneda and Narita Airport, operated by JAL, ANA and a number of low-cost airlines.

There are also plenty of flights daily between New Chitose and Osaka's Kansai and Itami Airports, again with multiple airlines. For other regional airports in Japan, flights may be limited to just a few departures a day with major carriers JAL and / or ANA. Please check with the airline of your choice.

From New Chitose Airport, you can take a train directly to JR Sapporo Station (40 mins, 1150 yen per person).

If you are combining two or more of our self-guided tours or a self-guided tour with a guided tour and you need to get to Sapporo from Wakkanai, Asahikawa or Kushiro, we will provide the necessary information on public transport between the cities. You are welcome to make your own hotel arrangements between tours, or you can ask us to make the arrangements for you. In this case, we will get a quote for the cost of any extra accommodation and add the cost to your travel packages.

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Day-to-Day Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrive in Sapporo

Welcome to Sapporo, Hokkaido's bustling capital! If you arrive with some time to spare, we recommend taking the opportunity to explore the city.

We recommend that you take the subway to Maruyama-Koen for a day of urban exploration. After a short walk (1 km / 0.6 miles) from the subway station you will reach [Hokkaido-Jingu](#), the largest Shinto shrine in Hokkaido.



Take in the serene atmosphere of the shrine before starting your hike of [Mt. Maruyama](#) (3.7 km / 1.6 miles). The trail to the summit of Mt. Maruyama takes you through old-growth forests that coexist next to the urban sprawl of Hokkaido's capital city. After your hike, take the subway back into town and check into your hotel.

For dinner, our recommendation is to explore the [Ramen Yokocho Alley](#) in Susukino, [Tanukikoji Shopping Arcade Street](#), or [Noren Yokocho](#) near Nijo Seafood Market. You will have countless options ranging from ramen stalls, sushi bars, izakaya bars and more!

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
-	4.7 km 2.9 miles	180 m 590 feet	See "Travel to the Starting Point"	Hotel in Sapporo

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Day 2 – Travel to Jozankei Onsen & Hike in Jozankei

After enjoying breakfast at the hotel, you'll wave goodbye to the big city and hop on a bus bound for [Jozankei Onsen](#) in the morning.

Jozankei gets its name from Jozan, a monk who heard rumours of a hot spring in the mountains that had the power to heal sick and injured deer. He hiked from the coast of Otaru into the mountains with the help of the local Ainu until he stumbled across the hot springs that would become Jozankei Onsen.



Over 150 years later, Jozankei has become a popular resort for Sapporo locals and tourists alike, as it offers the charm and calm of a secluded mountain town without leaving the Sapporo city limits! The town also lies within the boundaries of Shikotsu-Toya National Park.

This afternoon, we recommend a hike up [Mt. Asahi](#). While hiking you can leave your luggage at the hotel. "Mt Asahi" translates to 'Sunrise Mountain', its name coming from the fact that it is the first mountain the sun hits in the morning. The start of the trail passes by Iwato Park, home to wildlife like squirrels and woodpeckers – you'll really start to feel like you're in a national park!

The hike is just over 2.5 hours (round-trip) and has some steep inclines up through lush forests. However, the trail is very narrow and can be slippery when wet or covered in fallen leaves – watch your step and be careful. If you are not confident about the narrow path, it is always better to head back than to push on and risk getting stuck.

After your hike, re-energise yourself with one of the many foot baths (*ashiyu* in Japanese) in town. The town is also home to a number of statues of the Kappa, a supernatural creature appearing in Japanese folklore. While legends of the Kappa can be found throughout Japan, the legend of a Kappa living in the waters of Jozankei came about in the last century, making it a bit of an oddity that doesn't seem out of place.

Tonight, enjoy the healing hot springs and relaxing dinner at your lodging.

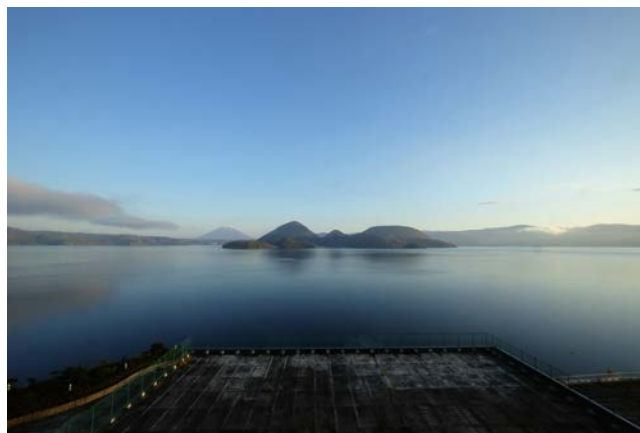
Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	4.2 km 2.6 miles	420 m 1378 feet	Bus (¥960 / 1h00m) Sapporo Station → Jozankei Onsen	Hotel in Jozankei Onsen

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Day 3 – Transfer to Lake Toya & Hike the Konpira Trail

After you enjoy breakfast at your hotel, you'll board a bus bound for Toyoura and get off at [Toyako Onsen](#) (Lake Toya Onsen). Lake Toya is a stunning crater lake protected both as a National Park and a UNESCO Global Geopark.



After you arrive, leave your luggage at your accommodation and drop by the [Lake Toya Visitor Centre](#). Here, you can learn all about Lake Toya's volcanic past, including a recent, powerful eruption that took place in 2000. The

museum also educates about the local flora and fauna. As fascinating as the museum is, try not to spend too long there as you have some hikes to look forward to today, too! (We recommend leaving the museum no later than 2pm.)

After visiting the museum, you'll head out to enjoy two back-to-back hiking trails around active, volcanic ground which will both give you an insight into the destructive power of [Mt. Usu's](#) 2000 eruption, which you will have learned about at the museum earlier today. The first is the Konpira route (4.8 km / 2.9 mile loop), which takes you up past public housing that was damaged by the eruption, and along a highway now buried in volcanic mud. You can also take a peek into Mt. Usu's volcanic crater for yourself. This route then follows on to the start of the Nishiyama route, which takes you past human sites damaged by the force and heat of the blast.

You'll witness roads torn apart by tectonic forces, a landscape pock-marked by new craters and abandoned and submerged vehicles and buildings left behind as residents fled the scene. Both routes together take around 3hrs 30mins to complete.

Note: The trails for both routes close at 4pm in October. October visitors should choose only the Konpira route.

Tonight, appreciate the less-explosive side of volcanic forces as you relax calmly in a hot spring and experience traditional Japanese hospitality at Lake Toya Onsen!

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	5.5 ~ 8.6 km 3.4 ~ 5.3 ml	130 ~ 170 m 427 ~ 558 ft	Bus (¥2450 / 1h50m) Jozankei Onsen → Lake Toya	Hotel at Lake Toya

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Day 4 – Hike on Nakajima Island, Lake Toya

This morning you'll catch a ferry to the island of [Nakajima](#) for a day of open-ended exploration. Other than the well maintained trails, museum and dock, Nakajima is untouched by humans, making it an oasis for wildlife... except for Hokkaido's brown bears, which do not live on the island! Phew!



The ferry to Nakajima takes roughly 25 minutes and once on Nakajima you are free to explore the many trails on the island. Please note that the trail gate closes at 4pm and the last entry time is 2:30pm, so make sure you give yourself ample time to complete the hike today. The longest trail is the 8.2 km (5.0 miles) loop hike around the island which takes roughly 3 hours and passes through the beautiful Daiheigen, where you may have the chance to see Mt. Yotei in the distance on a clear day.

The museum on the island is home to a plethora of information about its history as well as a small cafe with light meal options that makes for a great place to pass the time until the next ferry. If you'd like a more in-depth and personal experience, the option of exploring Nakajima with a local guide is available for an additional fee.

After taking the ferry back to the mainland, the rest of the day is yours to enjoy to your liking. Enjoy a walk along the lakeside or unwind at a cafe before heading back to your hotel for dinner and a soak in the natural hot springs.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	8.2 km 5.0 miles	367 m 1204 feet	-	Hotel at Lake Toya

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Day 5 – Travel to Noboribetsu & Hike the Hell Valley

This morning you will say goodbye to Lake Toya and board a bus bound for Toya Station. From there you will transfer to an express train to Noboribetsu Station. Once you reach Noboribetsu Station, we suggest stretching your legs and enjoying a spot of lunch before you transfer to another local bus for [Noboribetsu Onsen](#).



After you arrive, drop off your luggage at your hotel and take off for a 3.2 km (1.9 mile) walk through the Noboribetsu Hell Valley. A wooden walkway is built atop the crater, allowing you to walk through the sulphuric landscape and take in the otherworldly atmosphere. From the Hell Valley, you'll hike north towards [Oyunuma](#), a lake formed above a volcanic crater that spews out sulphuric gas. The bottom of the lake is as hot as 130°C (266°F), with blue-grey water on the surface reaching highs of 50°C (122°F). The waters of Oyunuma flow out into the Oyunuma River, which form a natural [ashiyu](#) (foot bath) where you can soak your feet in the flowing river.

After your hike, return to your hotel for dinner and relax in the famous hot spring waters of Noboribetsu.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	3.2 km 2.0 miles	148 m 485 feet	Bus (¥340 / 0h21m) Toyako Onsen → JR Toya Station Train (¥2970 (reserved-seat fare) / 0h39m) JR Toya Station → JR Noboribetsu Station Bus (¥350 / 0h13m) JR Noboribetsu Station → Noboribetsu Onsen	Ryokan in Noboribetsu Onsen

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Day 6 – Travel to Shiraoi & Visit the Upopoy National Ainu Museum

This morning you will take a local bus back to Noboribetsu and take an express train to Shiraoi. Shiraoi is a coastal town home to a number of prominent Ainu sites as well as the [Upopoy National Ainu Museum](#), dedicated to preserving Ainu heritage and culture. Here you'll be able to learn about the indigenous people who lived in Hokkaido long before it became a part of modern Japan.



The museum is also home to three different restaurants, where you can enjoy Japanese meals with Ainu influence, as well as some more traditional Ainu options. The museum is a short walk from the station and offers coin lockers on site to store your luggage while you explore the museum. In the evening you will take another express train as well as a bus to reach [Lake Shikotsu](#), a stunning caldera lake surrounded by active volcanoes.

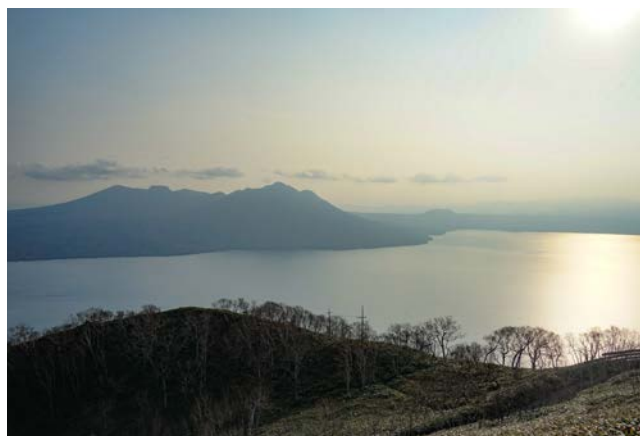
Meals	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	<p>Bus (¥350 / 0h12m) Noboribetsu Onsen → JR Noboribetsu Station</p> <p>Train (¥760 / 0h12m) JR Noboribetsu Station → JR Shiraoi Station</p> <p>Train (¥1760 / 0h13m) JR Shiraoi Station → JR Minami-Chitose Station</p> <p>Bus (¥950 / 0h53m) JR Minami-Chitose Station → Lake Shikotsu</p>	Hotel at Lake Shikotsu

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Day 7 – Hike Mt Monbetsu & Travel to Sapporo

This morning you will hike [Mt. Monbetsu](#), an 866m (2,906ft) peak that borders Lake Shikotsu. The trail follows a maintenance road on a gentle incline all the way to the summit, where you'll be greeted by a panoramic view of Lake Shikotsu and its surrounding volcanoes – Mt. Eniwa and Mt. Tarumae.



After a morning of hiking, take the afternoon to enjoy all that the lakeside has to offer.

Restore your energy with a contemporary western meal or try *Shikotsu-ko Chippu* (Kokanee Salmon), which was introduced into Lake Shikotsu over 100 years ago and has since become a local delicacy. In the evening, you'll say *sayonara* to Lake Shikotsu and board the bus back to Chitose. From there your journey comes to a close as you board one final train to Sapporo Station.

Once again, dinner is at your leisure tonight to allow you to experience the best of Hokkaido's cuisine.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
B	10.0 km 6.2 miles	635 m 2083 ft	Bus (¥950 /0h38m) Lake Shikotsu → JR Chitose Station Train (¥970 /0h30m) JR Chitose Station → JR Sapporo Station	Hotel in Sapporo

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Day 8 – Depart Sapporo

Congratulations for completing this self-guided tour of Hokkaido! Our tour arrangements end with breakfast at the hotel.

If you have an extra day to spare in Sapporo, you can visit the [Sapporo Beer Museum](#), the [Botanic Garden](#) (admission ¥420), or the [Hokkaido University Museum](#) located on the Hokkaido University Campus.

But, if you want to squeeze in one last hike, consider the trek up to [Mt. Moiwa](#), home to a wonderful view of Sapporo. Starting your hike from the beautiful [Asahiyama Memorial Park](#), you'll hike along secluded trails (3.1 km / 1.9 miles) to reach the summit of Mt. Moiwa, where you'll be greeted by a lookout deck where you can look out over the whole city. There are dining options available at the ropeway station for you to enjoy lunch with a view before taking the ropeway back down to the city below, and a bus back into central Sapporo.

Please check that you have nothing left behind in Hokkaido before departing. *Itterasshai!*

Meals	Hike	Descend	
B	3.6 km 2.3 miles	400 m 1312 feet	

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Recommended apps

Google Maps

[Apple](#) | [Android](#)

This is an excellent free app for navigating your way around local areas. It is also very useful for finding places to eat and reviewing the opening hours and English support of such institutions. In a pinch, you can also use Google Maps to orient yourself should you become lost. This is why we strongly advise investing in a data SIM to use during your time in Hokkaido.

Google Translate

[Apple](#) | [Android](#)

English-speakers in Japan are fewer than you might think, especially in rural Hokkaido. Fortunately, Google Translate's reputation has improved in recent years thanks to developments in AI technology and this free app is now considered an essential travel tool. While it of course cannot compare to a human interpreter, it is quite useful for reading signage, menus and other basic information. Thanks to the new Google Lens feature, you can simply hold your smartphone camera up to text and the phone will translate it for you on the spot! It also has a text-to-speech function– very handy when you need to ask locals around you for help, directions or your food order!

Windy.com

[Apple](#) | [Android](#)

Windy.com is a weather app recognised by the World Meteorological Association and highly recommended for outdoor activities such as hiking. It offers detailed and real-time looks at the weather that pre-installed or free weather apps simply cannot. This app will allow you to see weather fronts coming in before they arrive– essential in Hokkaido's mountains, where the weather can change on a dime– and to give you the time you need to reroute or decide to call it a day. The basic app is free, but you can upgrade to a premium version to see more options.

Yr.no

[Apple](#) | [Android](#)

This is another fantastic free weather app, developed by the Norwegian Meteorological Institute. It uses slick animations to simulate the day's weather conditions so that you can get a feel of how the sky above you may change throughout the day! It also shows you nearby webcams to help you get a feel of the weather where you may be going. Of course, it also contains other essential information about the day's weather, such as wind direction, the likelihood of rain, UV index and more. It also has a handy alert system that you can set up to send you push notifications of the day's weather when you wake up!

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Our recommended reading

[What to pack for Hokkaido?](#)

[A Local's Guide to Using Public Transport in Hokkaido](#)

[Hiking Safely in Hokkaido](#)

[How to onsen \(like a local!\)](#)

[How to Set Up Your Phone for Travel in Hokkaido](#)

[Vegan & Vegetarian in Hokkaido](#)

[Hokkaido Wildlife Guide](#)

[Hokkaido Travel Tips & Common Questions](#)

[The Ainu, from a Hokkaido local's perspective](#)

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Elevation profiles

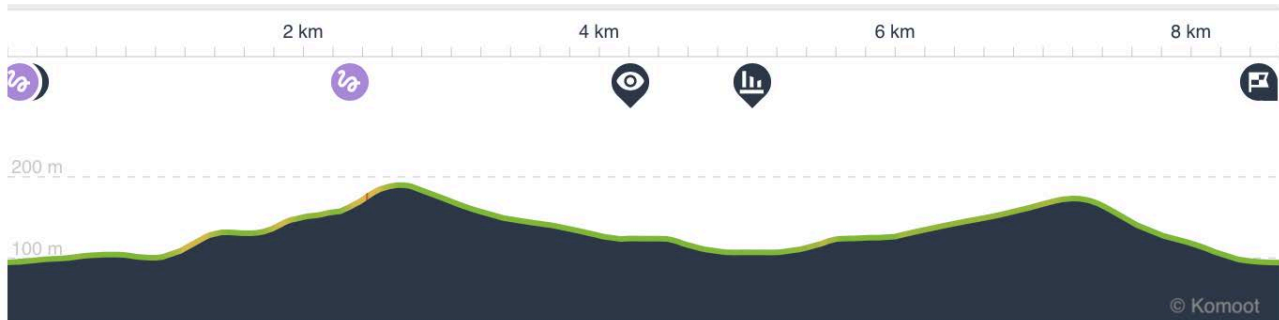
Day 1 - Mt. Maruyama & Hokkaido Jingu **Distance** - 4.7 km / 2.9 miles **Ascent** - 180 m / 590 ft



Day 2 - Mt. Asahi, Jozankei **Distance** - 4.2 km / 2.6 miles **Ascent** - 420 m / 1378 ft



Day 3 - Konpira & Nishiyama Trails, Lake Toya
Distance - 5.5 ~ 8.6 km / 3.4 ~ 5.3 miles **Ascent** - 130 ~ 170 m / 427 ~ 558 ft



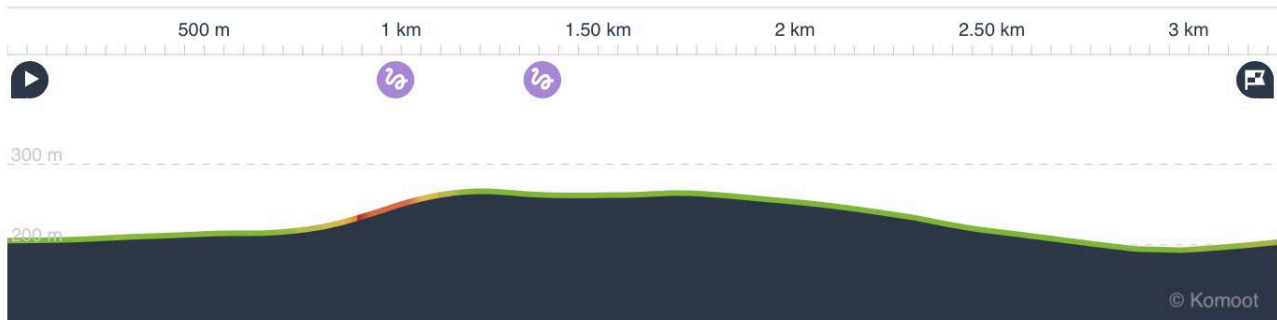
Day 4 - Nakajima Island, Lake Toya **Distance** - 8.2 km / 5.0 miles **Ascent** - 367 m / 1204 ft



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Day 5 - Noboribetsu Hell Valley **Distance** - 3.2 km / 2.0 miles **Ascent** - 148 m / 485 ft



Day 7 - Mt. Monbetsu, Lake Shikotsu **Distance** - 10.0 km / 6.2 miles **Ascent** - 635 m / 2083 ft



Day 8 - Mt. Moiwa, Sapporo **Distance** - 3.6 km / 2.3 miles **Descent** - 400 m / 1312 ft

