

Shikotsu-Toya

5 Day Hiking Tour



Explore a stunning national park a stone's throw from Sapporo, Hokkaido's capital city. You'll hike through steaming volcanic landscapes, past lakeside vistas and hidden forest oases... and of course, take a dip in some of Hokkaido's best hot springs!

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About the Tour

Start	Finish	Grading	Season
Lake Toya	Chitose	Relaxed Hiking	May, 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 landscape that makes this national park perfect for adventure travel. As well as hot springs, it is also home to rich forests, fascinating geological hikes and incredible wildlife. The trails that open up in spring allow the adventurous to experience the unique sight of fuming volcanoes and explore forests, hidden away from the hustle and bustle of Hokkaido's nearby capital city.

Tour highlights

- Witness the power of the Earth as we take in views of several active volcanoes and pass by steaming fumaroles.
- Bathe in natural hot springs heated by the volcanoes of Shikotsu-Toya National Park.
- Experience Hokkaido's natural forests, home to diverse flora and fauna.
- Visit the Upopoy National Ainu Museum, Japan's largest facility dedicated to celebrating the indigenous Ainu and educating visitors about their culture and history.
- Get a taste of hiking in Hokkaido's National Parks, just a stones throw from Sapporo City.

What is the hiking like on this tour?

This is our easiest hiking tour and is a great introduction to hiking in Hokkaido. On average, we cover 8 km / 5 mi a day on easy easy going smooth trails. There is less than 500 m / 1,640 ft elevation gain most days, with the tour building up to the most challenging climb on the last day. The pace each day will be relaxed, with plenty of time to take in the flora and fauna as we walk. As such, this tour is perfect for new hikers as long as you are comfortable on your feet for a whole day. If you have done the popular Kumano Kodo or Nakasendo Trails then you will find the hiking on this tour comfortable, whereas the trails on our intermediate and advanced hiking tours are more rugged.

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Itinerary at a glance

Day	Activities	Km	Miles	Meals ¹
1	Meet at Lake Toya, Hike Kompira-Nishiyama Trail & Visit Mt. Usu	7.3	4.5	D ▾
2	Hike on Nakajima Island at Lake Toya	8.8	5.5	B, D ▾
3	Hike in Poroto Forest & Visit Upopoy National Ainu Museum	7.7	4.8	B, D ▾
4	Hike Mt. Tarumae & Hike Kaedesawa Moss Corridor	9.6	6.0	B, L, D ▾
5	Farewells in Chitose	-	-	B ▾

Accommodation

Day	Type	Location	Ensuite Toilet	Ensuite Shower	Onsen	Laundry
1	Lodge ▾	Lake Toya	✓	✓		
2	Ryokan ▾ ²	Noboribetsu Onsen	✓		✓	
3	Ryokan ▾	Lake Shikotsu	✓		✓	✓
4	Ryokan ▾	Lake Shikotsu	✓		✓	✓

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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Travel style

This hiking tour is a series of day hikes; either return or loop. We always come back to our van at the end of the day and transfer to our accommodation. This means your overnight luggage can stay in the van and you can experience the best of Shikotsu-Toya National Park with just a light day pack!

Adverse weather

While we try to organise everything, mother nature is out of our control. If the weather is too bad to safely hike, such as a typhoon or sudden storm, we will travel to the next inn in our support vehicle. Along the way we will still stop at local restaurants and visit indoor facilities, so you can still experience the charm of the area while travelling safely and comfortably.

What's included

- 4 nights accommodation on a twin share basis
- 4 breakfasts, 1 lunch & 4 dinners
- Entry to Volcano Science Museum at Lake Toya
- Cable car return trip on the Mt. Usu Ropeway
- Ferry to and from Nakajima Island
- Entry to Upopoy National Ainu Museum
- All transport as described in the itinerary
- English speaking local guide(s)

What's not included

- Airfare
- 3 lunches
- Any optional activities
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses
- Drinks with included meals

When do you run this tour?

We run this tour in June and October and anytime during these months is the perfect time to go! Being further south, you can expect all snow to have disappeared from the trails on this tour by May. In October, autumn colours start to spread down to this southern region, creating dazzling scenery for hikers to enjoy, ablaze with yellows, oranges and reds.

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Why hike in Hokkaido?

Diverse trails

Our mountains nationwide are covered with hiking trails which date back to Shugendo culture, Japan's ancient mountain asceticism. The trails were built over the years to reach the most prominent and sacred peaks. Information about these trails, however, remains untranslated to a great extent, especially so in rural areas. Together with our experienced local guides, you'll hit the road less travelled and explore hiking trails which date back centuries!

Flora & fauna

Hokkaido has evolved in its own unique way for millennia which has given rise to its unique flora and fauna. In the last ice age, Hokkaido was separated from mainland Japan but retained its connection with the Russian island of Sakhalin. Due to this, there are many species found only here within Japan, including brown bears, squirrels and chipmunks. Hiking in Hokkaido provides plenty of opportunities to spot these unique species.

Culture

There's no better way to experience Japanese culture than hiking with a local guide. Bathe in natural hot springs, savour the fantastic fresh seafood, local vegetables, fruit and even ice cream. And to complete your day as a Japanese adventurer, fall into a well earned sleep in futon bedding on tatami floors. It doesn't get any more Japanese than this!

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How to book this tour?

We will send you a link to our online sign up form, where we ask for the travel information of all the members travelling with you.

Once we receive this, we will send you a payment link 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 for both options, and you must use one of the payment links provided by us.

Wise payments are available in Japanese Yen only and require you to have a Wise account (Wise-to-Wise transfer only). You must pay any currency exchange or transfer fees yourself.

Flywire payments allow credit card payment or domestic bank transfer converted to your home currency. Credit card payments via Flywire incur an additional service charge of 1.5%, while domestic bank transfers via Flywire do not incur this service charge.

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

What does the Minimum Number mean?

This is a mixed group tour and **we accept bookings for this tour from one person up**. However, our scheduled group tours require a minimum number of bookings for us to guarantee the departure of the tour, and to offer the tour at the price quoted. **The minimum number of booked guests to guarantee this tour is four people.**

If you book with less than four people, we will hold your place on the tour and wait for another group to join the tour. If the number of guests has not reached the minimum number by 60 days prior to departure, we will give you the option to cancel or to upgrade to a private departure. If you choose to cancel, we will refund the amount in Japanese Yen that you have paid us. You're welcome to check with us at any time about the status of bookings.

Please be advised that we will not be liable to compensate for any inconvenience or incidental expenses that might have incurred to you, including airline tickets.

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Single Supplement

Our tours are priced on a twin share basis. Those travelling by themselves will need to pay an additional supplement for use of a single room. If you are happy to share a room with another guest – of the same gender – then let us know at the time of booking. If we match you with another solo traveller then we can discount the single supplement for both of you.

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.

Travel to the Meeting Point

On Day 1, we will meet at **9:00 am at Toya Station** or **9:30 am at your hotel in Lake Toya Onsen** village. Upon booking, please share your travel plans so we can confirm your specific meeting arrangements.

The closest airport is New Chitose (CTS). Due to the early start, we recommend staying in Sapporo or Lake Toya the night before. **From CTS:** Transfer at Minami Chitose for Toya Station. The 07:02 departure arrives at 08:43 (JPY 5,460). **From Sapporo:** A direct train departs at 06:53, arriving at Toya Station at 08:43 (JPY 6,690).

You can search train timetables in English on [Japan Transit Planner website](#).

If traveling to Lake Toya earlier, there are four daily direct buses from Sapporo (JPY 3,700 / 2.5 hours) and a local bus connecting Toya Station to the lake (JPY 400 / 25 minutes).

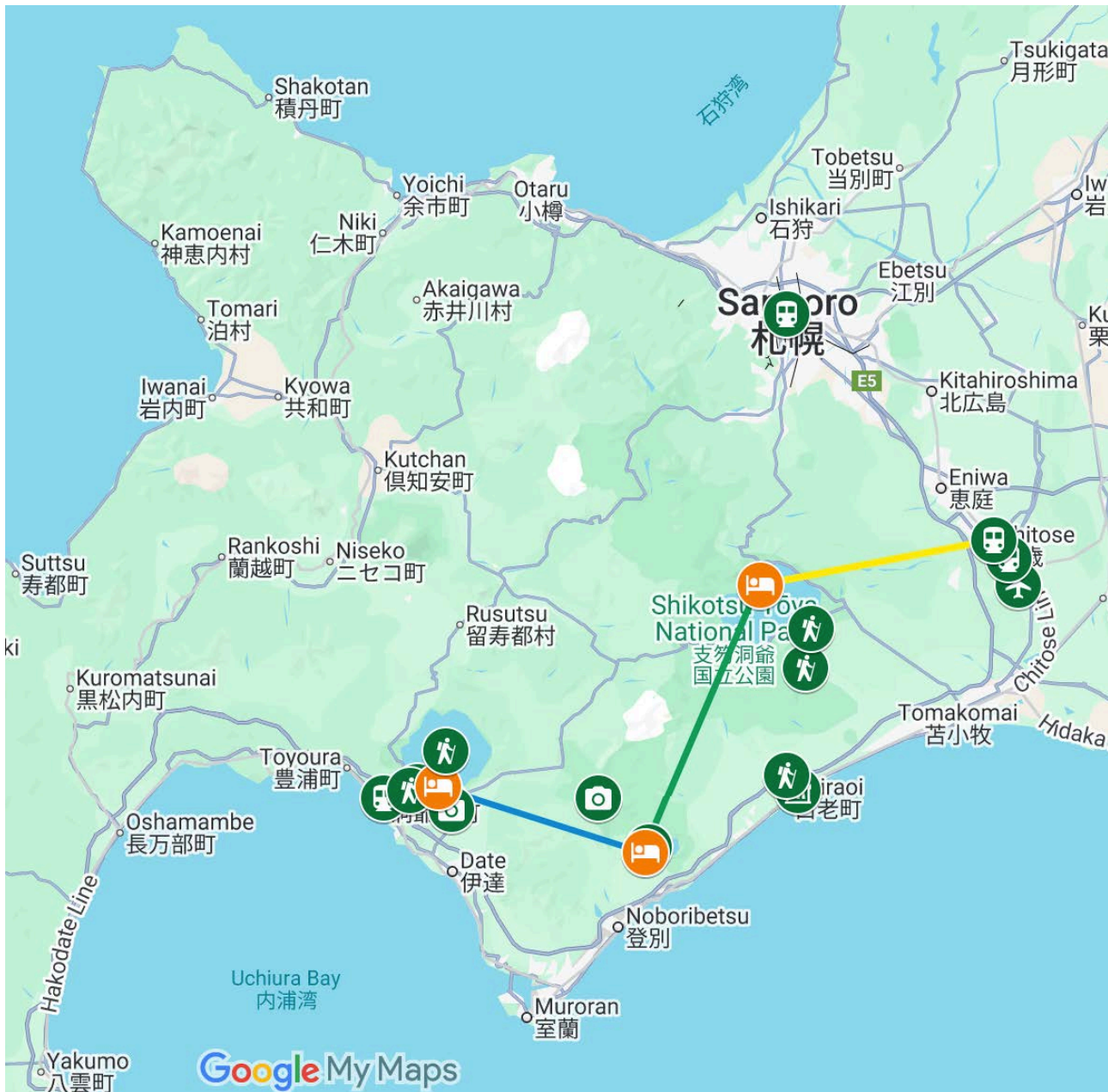
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Tour map

To view the route on Google My Maps, [click here](#).



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Day-to-Day Itinerary

Day 1 – Meet at Lake Toya, Hike Nishiyama –Kompira Trail & Visit Mt. Usu

Our hiking adventure begins at Lake Toya, a scenic caldera lake located southwest of Sapporo. We'll arrange to pick you up from your hotel in Lake Toya at 9:30 am, or alternatively, we can collect you from Toya Station at 9:00 am if you are staying in Sapporo or Chitose the night prior.

Lake Toya was forged by explosive volcanic activity, forces that are still very much alive today—Mt. Usu erupted as recently as 2000! We'll spend our morning exploring the Nishiyama & Kompira routes (4.1 km / 2.5 mi) along the mountain's foothills. This fascinating trail takes us past public housing damaged by the eruption and along a highway now buried in volcanic mud. You'll even be able to peek into craters formed around the base of the mountain and walk along cracked, buckled roads that display the full force of nature. We'll pause for a picnic lunch amidst this unique landscape.



Our morning hike leads us directly to the local Visitor Centre. Here, we'll take some time to deepen our understanding of the seismic events that reshaped this area. You'll learn the local saying, "Mt. Usu never lies," and discover how the community lives confidently in the shadow of such a restless volcano.

To cap off the afternoon, we'll catch the ropeway up to the summit plateau to get a closer look at the volcano. We will take a walk around the crater basin, covering roughly 3.2 km / 2.0 mi depending on our time and pace. Leaving the rugged crater behind, we'll head to our accommodation situated at the mountain's base. Our accommodation is nestled in the shadow of the volcano rising above, providing a testament to how the locals understand Mt. Usu's personality and live alongside the mountain. We'll recount the day's adventures over a delicious home cooked dinner served at our accommodation.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
D	7.3 km / 4.5 mi	380 m / 1250 ft	Lodge at Lake Toya

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Day 2 – Hike on Nakajima Island at Lake Toya

This morning we'll catch a ferry to the island of Nakajima in the centre of Lake Toya. After a day packed with dramatic volcanos, the island will feel like a peaceful oasis. Other than the well maintained trails, museum and dock, Nakajima is untouched by humans, or Hokkaido's brown bears, which do not live on the island! Phew!

We'll pick up some food for a picnic lunch before we hop on the ferry to Nakajima. The crossing takes roughly 25 minutes and once there, we'll explore the loop hike around the island which takes roughly 3 hours (8.4 km / 5.2 mi) and passes through the beautiful Daiheigen, where you may have the chance to see Mt. Yotei in the distance on a clear day.



After taking the ferry back to the mainland, we'll take the scenic route to our next destination, driving over Orofure Pass. This winding mountain road is lined with beautiful white birch trees and offers sweeping views as we make our way toward Noboribetsu.

Noboribetsu is Hokkaido's most famous *onsen* town and like Lake Toya, its history is defined by volcanic activity. The main source of the town's potent waters is *Jigokudani*, literally "Hell Valley." This dramatic crater is a stark contrast to the lush forests we saw earlier; here, the valley is devoid of trees, featuring vibrant, exposed bedrock dotted with hissing steam vents and sulfurous fumaroles. Our hotel is a short walk from Jigokudai and you are free to visit after check-in if you fancy an evening stroll.

Tonight, we stay in a lovely, intimate *ryokan* (traditional Japanese inn) nestled amongst the larger tourist hotels. Upon check-in, you'll experience the warm welcome of traditional Japanese hospitality before soaking in the mineral-rich hot spring waters. Dinner is as central to the *ryokan* experience as the baths, and tonight you can look forward to an elaborate meal that is a feast for both the eyes and the palate.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, D	8.8 km 5.5 mi	270 m 890 ft	Ryokan in Noboribetsu

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Day 3 – Hike in Poroto Forest & Visit Upopoy National Ainu Museum

After breakfast this morning, we'll make a short visit to the steam vents of *Jigokudani* (Hell Valley) if we didn't manage to visit yesterday. Next, we'll make our way to Shiraoi, a coastal town home to a number of prominent Ainu sites as well as the Upopoy National Ainu Museum, Japan's first national museum dedicated to the Ainu indigenous group.

We'll spend some time exploring the 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. After gaining a much more profound understanding of the region's history we pick up a picnic lunch and head out to the neighbouring Poroto Recreation Forest.



This forest was once a sapling nursery where native trees—like firs and the Hokkaido spruce—were cultivated for replanting on deforested mountains. Since its designation as a recreational forest in 1976, it has been left to grow wild, allowing other native species such as Japanese oak and elm to thrive naturally. This makes our walk a fantastic way to discover Hokkaido's native flora. Animals have made their homes here too, so as we explore, we'll keep our eyes peeled for wild birds and cute squirrels.

After the hike, we'll head to our destination tonight – Lake Shikotsu, a stunning caldera lake surrounded by active volcanoes. We'll have dinner at our accommodation again this evening and of course, you can look forward to more natural hot springs!

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, D	9.8 km 6.1 mi	230 m 750 ft	Ryokan at Lake Shikotsu

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Day 4 – Hike Mt. Tarumae & Kaedesawa Moss Corridor

For our final day on the trails, we've saved a challenge! Today features two deeply contrasting hikes: the rugged, active volcano of Mt. Tarumae and the lush Kaedesawa gorge.

The 1,041 m (3,415 ft) peak of Mt. Tarumae is one of Japan's most active volcanoes. The harsh landscape lacks vegetation—good news for us, as it guarantees unobstructed views! However, these are hard earned; the initial climb gets the heart pumping, gaining 300 m (1,000 ft) over just 1.3 km (0.8 mi) as we ascend from the forest onto the volcanic plateau. We'll traverse around the active summit cone, seeing sulphur vents and the lava dome with amazing vistas of Lake Shikotsu and the Pacific Ocean. In total, we cover 7.4 km (4.6 mi).



The downside to these open views is that the peak feels the full force of the weather. If conditions make the climb unsuitable, we will visit the protected Mt. Monbetsu or *Yacho-no-mori* instead.

After conquering the volcano, we will return to the small town at Lake Shikotsu for a well-deserved sit-down lunch. After a break and some delicious local food, we will head out for our final hike of the tour: the relaxed Kaedesawa Moss Corridor.

While Kaedesawa sits at the foot of the rocky and barren Mt. Tarumae, it feels a world away. This narrow gorge is sheltered by trees, creating a damp climate that allows many varieties of moss to carpet the gorge walls, transforming it into a lush green corridor. Our out-and-back hike will take us through the twists and turns of this velvet-green landscape, winding down from the day's earlier exertions before we head back to our hotel for a final celebratory dinner and a soak in the hot springs.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, L, D	9.6 km 5.9 mi	630 m 2,000 ft	Ryokan at Lake Shikotsu

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Day 5 – Farewells in Chitose

After another hearty breakfast—and perhaps one last morning dip in the hot springs—we will check out and assist with your onward travel.

We will drop you off at Chitose Station, where regular trains connect to New Chitose Airport in under 10 minutes. If you are extending your stay in Hokkaido, trains from Chitose Station can take you both north to Sapporo and south towards Hakodate.



Whatever your onward plans, we hope you leave with a taste of the incredible hiking Hokkaido has to offer and a deeper appreciation for the culture and geology of our unique island. Safe travels!

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B	–	–	–

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Our recommended reading

[Shikotsu-Toya National Park – Adventure Awaits on Sapporo's Doorstep](#)

[When is the best time to hike in Hokkaido?](#)

[Hiking Safely in Hokkaido](#)

[What to pack for Hokkaido?](#)

[What is a disposable toilet bag?](#)

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

[A Local's Guide on What to Expect When Staying in Hokkaido](#)

[Vegan & Vegetarian in Hokkaido](#)

[Hokkaido Travel Tips & Common Questions](#)

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

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Elevation profiles

Day 1 – Nishiyama-Kompira **Distance – 4.1 km / 2.5 mi** **Ascent – 170 m / 560 ft**



Day 1 – Mt. Usu **Distance 1-4 km / 0.6 – 2.5mi** **Ascent 90-270 m / 295 – 885 ft**



Day 2 – Nakajima Island **Distance – 8.8 km / 5.5 mi** **Ascent – 280 m / 920 ft**



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Day 3 – Poroto Recreation Forest **Distance** – 7.7 km / 4.8 mi **Ascent** – 200 m / 660 ft



Day 4 – Mt. Tarumae **Distance** – 7.4 km / 4.6 mi **Ascent** – 530 m / 1770 ft



Day 4 – Kaedesawa Moss Corridor **Distance** – 2.2 km / 1.4 mi **Ascent** – 90 m / 295 ft

