



# **SAMURAI TOURS**

*Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan*

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## **Backroads of Tohoku and Hokkaido**



15 Days/14 Nights

# Backroads of Tohoku and Hokkaido

## Tour Overview

Leave behind the busy, modern city of Tokyo as you slowly travel further and further north exploring all that Northern Tohoku and Western Hokkaido have to offer. Tohoku is the northern part of Honshu, the main island of the Japanese archipelago. Tohoku is known as a remote and scenic region, and for its numerous traditional onsens, and welcoming and friendly people. You will end up on Japan's northernmost island, Hokkaido. Among the Japanese, Hokkaido has become synonymous with sensational food, stunning scenery and some of the best onsens in Japan.

## Destinations

*Tokyo, Aizu-Wakamatsu, Nyuto Onsen, Kakunodate, Akita, Aomori, Hakodate, Noboribetsu Onsen, Sapporo, Sounkyo Onsen, Lake Akan Crane Center, Lake Akan, Abashiri, Shiretoko*

## Tour Details

Northern Tohoku and Western Hokkaido are rich in history and traditional Japanese culture. In Aizu-Wakamatsu you will have the opportunity to explore an old Samurai city full of history and tradition. Relax in the hot springs at traditional Nyuto Onsen and travel to the former castle town of Kakunodate. Journey along the coast on the Resort Shirakami before arriving at Hakodate where

you will be amazed by its enchanting night view, all before arriving at Noboribetsu Onsen with its world famous hot springs.

After overnighiting in Sapporo, the largest city on Hokkaido and the host of the 1972 Winter Olympics, you will travel to Sounkyo Onsen, where you will have your first opportunity to experience traditional outdoor onsens, along with the opportunity to hike in the Daisetsuzan National Park. Then, we will travel to Akanko, which has plenty of entertainment to offer, including fishing, boat cruises, and other water sports. Or just enjoy the Ainu Village located at Akanko. After visiting the International Crane Center in Akanko you will go to the northeastern coast of Japan and visit Abashiri. Here, you will be visit the Abashiri Prison Museum before moving onto the quiet town of Utoro Onsen, gateway to Shiretoko. A hiking tour of Shiretoko Goko will help you experience the outdoors and nature before departing back to Sapporo or Tokyo, where the tour will end.

# Destinations

- Tokyo
- Aizu WakamatsuTsuruga Castle, Samurai Bukeyakushi, Nishin Samurai School, Sazedo Pagoda, Ilmoriyama
- Nyuto Onsen
- KakunodateDenshokan Museum, Aoyogi Samurai Home, Ishiguro Samurai Home
- Akita
- AomoriNebuta Warasse Festival Museum
- HakodateHakodate Ropeway, Morning Market
- Noboribetsu Onsen
- Sapporo
- Sounkyo OnsenSounkyo Onsen Ropeway, Ginga no Taki and Ryusei no Taki Waterfalls
- Lake AkanFree Time
- Akan Crane Center
- AbashiriNorthern People's Museum, Abashiri Prison Museum
- ShiretokoShiretoko Peninsula Cruise
- Shiretoko Goko Nature Walk

# Map



# Itinerary

## **Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo**

You will be staying overnight in the city of Tokyo. You will travel on your own to Tokyo and check into the hotel. We will leave a message for you at the hotel informing you of the meeting time for the next day. No meals included.

**TBD; Walking: TBD**

## **Day 2 Travel to Aizu-Wakamatsu; Aizu-Wakamatsu - Samurai Mansion; Overnight Higashiyama Onsen**

Before leaving Tokyo, you will need to prepare your luggage for transfer to Aizu-Wakamatsu. We will be traveling to Aizu-Wakamatsu with an overnight bag only. Please prepare your overnight bag for 2 days and 1 night. After breakfast you will start the day with a Welcome/Orientation meeting, and then travel to Aizu-Wakamatsu. Aizu Wakamatsu is a former castle town with a long Samurai tradition. After arriving at Aizu Wakamatsu and dropping off our luggage, we will visit the Aizu Bukeyashiki (Samurai Mansion). This was the home of an important Samurai, and therefore is very large with dozens of different rooms and sections including gardens, guest rooms, a tea house, an archery range, and a rice mill. Breakfast at the hotel and dinner at the ryokan included.

**Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium**

## **Day 3 Aizu-Wakamatsu - Sazaedo Pagoda, Nisshin Samurai School, Tsuruga Castle**

Today we will further explore the Samurai city of Aizu Wakamatsu. We will start at the Sazaedo Tower. Completed in 1796, the wooden Sazaedo temple isn't huge but what makes it unique is its double helix staircase on which the people going up and the people going down never pass each other. Next, we will tour the Samurai School where the children of the Samurai attended. In the afternoon we will visit Tsuruga Castle, originally built in 1384. Tsuruga Castle was one of the last strongholds of the Boshin War. However, it was destroyed by Samurai still loyal to the Tokugawa Shogunate after the Boshin War of 1868, a rebellion against the newly formed Meiji government. The castle was rebuilt as a concrete reconstruction in the 1960s, and in renovation works completed in 2011 the color of the roof tiles was changed from grey to the original red tiles. The inside of the castle houses a museum with displays depicting the history of the castle and the Samurai lifestyle. After touring the castle, we will return to the ryokan to retrieve your main luggage. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at the ryokan included.

**Travel: 1 Hour;; Walking: Heavy**

## **Day 4 Travel to Nyuto Onsen; Overnight Nyuto Onsen**

Before leaving Aizu-Wakamatsu, you will need to prepare your luggage to transfer to Akita. We will be traveling to Nyuto Onsen, Kakunodate, and Akita with an overnight bag only. Please prepare your overnight bag for 2 days and 1 night. Today we will travel by train and bus to Nyuto Onsen. Nyuto Onsen is a collection of mostly traditional and rustic onsen ryokan in the mountains of eastern Akita Prefecture. The name Nyuto Onsen means "nipple hot spring" and comes from the suggestive shape of nearby Mount Nyuto rather than the milky/cloudy appearance of the area's hot spring water. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at the ryokan included.



**Travel: 4 1/2 Hours; Walking: Light**

### **Day 5 Travel to Kakunodate; Kakunodate - Kakunodate Denshokan, Samurai Homes; Travel to Akita**

After breakfast at the ryokan we will travel to Kakunodate. Kakunodate is a former castle town, and while the castle no longer exists, the samurai tradition is still strong. Today, the samurai district has some of the best preserved examples of samurai homes anywhere in Japan. We will tour two homes: the Aoyogi and the Ishiguro. The Aoyogi home is the largest in Kakunodate, and includes multiple buildings with museum collections documenting the samurai traditions and history in Kakunodate. The area open to visitors at the Ishiguro home is limited because the Ishiguro family still maintains a residence in the home. We will finish our time in Kakunodate at the Denshokan Museum. This museum has numerous local arts and handicrafts on display, the most prominent being items made from cherry tree bark. During the cold winter months, the samurai would earn extra income by making these items. We will depart Kakunodate and travel to Akita by train. You will retrieve your main luggage after checking into the hotel. Breakfast at the ryokan and lunch at a local restaurant is included.

**Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium**

### **Day 6 Travel by train to Aomori with Tsuruga Shamisen Performance; Aomori - Nebuta Warasse Museum; Travel to Hakodate; Hakodate - Hakodate Ropeway**

Before leaving Akita, you will need to prepare your luggage to transfer to Noboribetsu Onsen. We will be traveling to Aomori, Hakodate, and Noboribetsu Onsen with an overnight bag only. Please prepare your overnight bag for 2 days and 1 night. After breakfast we will travel to Aomori by Resort Shirakami. The Resort Shirakami is a sightseeing train along the scenic coastline in northern Japan. Since the train goes through the Tsugaru Peninsula, Tsugaru Shamisen players will board the train for part of the trip. After arriving in Aomori, we will stop at the Nebuta Warasse Museum, dedicated to the city's famous Nebuta Matsuri (Nebuta Festival) held every year in early August. The Nebuta Warasse Museum attempts to capture the spirit of the festival and gives visitors a taste of its lively atmosphere, history, and traditions. From here we will travel to Hakodate. Hakodate was one of the first cities open to the West after the Meiji Restoration. In the evening we will take a cable car to the top of Mt. Hakodate where we will enjoy a panoramic view of Hakodate's night lights. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at a local restaurant included.

**Travel: 4 1/2 Hours; Walking: Medium**

### **Day 7 Hakodate - Hakodate Morning Market; Travel to Noboribetsu Onsen; Overnight Noboribetsu Onsen**

Early in the morning after breakfast we will visit the Hakodate Morning Market where the sellers can prepare the specialties of Hakodate (crab, sea urchin, and squid) fresh from their stalls for breakfast. We will then travel to Noboribetsu Onsen, one of the most popular and famous hot spring resorts in Japan. After arriving at Noboribetsu Onsen and picking up your main luggage, you will have free time to explore places like the Jigoku-dani (Hell Valley) and the other geothermal activity in the area. You will also have time to relax in one of the many hot springs in Noboribetsu Onsen. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan are included.

**Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Medium**

### **Day 8 Sapporo**

After breakfast you will have some free time in Noboribetsu Onsen. You will be escorted to Sapporo, where you will have a free afternoon. Breakfast at the ryokan included.

**Travel: TBD; Walking: TBD**

### **Day 9 Travel to Sounkyo Onsen; Sounkyo Onsen: Ropeway, Ginga no Taki and Ryusei no Taki Waterfalls; Overnight Sounkyo Onsen**

Before departing for the day you will need to prepare your luggage to be sent to Akanko. You will travel to Sounkyo Onsen with an overnight bag only. Prepare your overnight bag for two days and one night. After breakfast we will travel to Sounkyo Onsen. Sounkyo Onsen is a hot spring resort town in the north of Daisetsuzan National Park. This quaint village town is located in a scenic, narrow gorge that is flanked by 100 meter high, forested cliffs. After we check into the ryokan we will board the Kurodake Ropeway which will take us to higher parts of the Daisetsuzan National Park. Next, we will stop at Ginga no Taki and Ryusei no Taki waterfalls cascading down the 100 meter high cliffside. Breakfast and dinner at the hotel included.

**Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light**

### **Day 10 Travel to Lake Akan; Free Time at Lake Akan**

After breakfast, we will travel by local public bus to Akanko. In addition to lakefront vistas and hot springs, Akanko is known for two things: marimo, a rare kind of algae that forms oddly perfect spheres; and its Ainu village. After checking into the ryokan, and picking up your main luggage you will have free time in the afternoon in Akanko. Use this opportunity to take advantage of the many attractions Lake Akan has to offer. Go fishing or take a sightseeing boat cruise. Or you can visit the Ainu Village with its many souvenir shops and restaurants selling authentic Ainu cuisine, or attend an authentic Ainu Dance Demonstration at the Ainu Village. We will return to the ryokan for a buffet dinner. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokans included.

**Travel: 1 Hour;; Walking: Heavy**

### **Day 11 Akan Crane Center; Free Time at Lake Akan**

After breakfast we will travel by local public bus to Akan International Crane Center. Here we will learn about the Red-Crowned Crane, indigenous to this area of Japan. It was once thought that the cranes were extinct. However, about 70 years ago, a few cranes were found and extensive efforts were made to bring them back from the brink of extinction. While much work remains to be done, the crane population has stabilized and is even growing. You will have some free time at the Crane Center before we return to Akanko by local public bus. Once we return to Akanko you will have free time to do any of the activities that you did not get to do the day before. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan included.

**Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Light**

### **Day 12 Travel to Abashiri; Abashiri: Northern People's Museum**

Before departing for the day you will need to prepare your luggage to be sent to Shiretoko. You will travel to Abashiri and Shiretoko with an overnight bag only. Prepare your overnight bag for two days and one night. After breakfast at the ryokan, we will travel to Kitami, and then to Abashiri. Abashiri, on the northeastern coast of Hokkaido, is home to a prison and known for the drift ice on the coast in the wintertime. In the afternoon, we will visit the Northern Peoples Museum documenting the cultures and lifestyles of many different people including the Ainu living in the cold and inhospitable northern areas of the northern hemisphere. After checking in to our hotel,

you can enjoy the baths before dinner. Breakfast at the hotel and kaiseki-style dinner at the ryokan or dinner at a local restaurant.

**Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium**

### **Day 13 Abashiri: Abashiri Prison Museum; Travel to Shiretoko**

This morning, after breakfast we will tour the Abashiri Prison Museum to learn how the inmates lived and the role Abashiri prison played in the history of Hokkaido. After the Prison Museum we will travel to Utoro Onsen, the gateway to the remote and beautiful Shiretoko National Park. Shiretoko is an ancient Ainu word meaning 'edge of the world'. Shiretoko National Park is famous in Japan for its beautiful scenery and abundant wildlife including deer, bear and foxes. We will enjoy a buffet dinner at the ryokan after checking in and picking up your main luggage. Breakfast at the ryokan and buffet dinner at the hotel included.

**Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Medium**

### **Day 14 Shiretoko: Shiretoko Peninsula Cruise, Shiretoko Goko Nature Walk**

This morning we will take a boat cruise along the beautiful Shiretoko peninsula. In the afternoon we will take a walking tour exploring the Shiretoko Goko Lakes area to experience the nature and tranquility of the area. In the afternoon we will take a boat cruise along the Shiretoko coastline with its 100 meter lava-rock cliffs and waterfalls. You may even see seals and dolphins. We will return to the ryokan where you can relax in the onsen before a buffet dinner at the ryokan. Breakfast at the ryokan and buffet dinner at the hotel included.

**Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy**

### **Day 15 Travel to Memanbetsu Airport; Fly to Tokyo; Return Home**

This morning we will travel by bus to Membanbetsu Airport, where we will fly to Tokyo's Haneda Airport. Breakfast at the ryokan included.

Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light

**Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light**

Walking level descriptions:

Light – 0 to 2 miles on level ground

Medium – 2 to 4 miles on level ground or 0 to 2 miles on hilly ground

Heavy – 4 to 6 miles on level ground or 2 to 4 miles on hilly ground



## Dates & Pricing

Dates	Price (land only) / Single Supplement (All prices are per Person)	Status
Jun 14, 2020 - Jun 28, 2020	¥855,394/ ¥96,892	Closed
Jul 19, 2020 - Aug 2, 2020	¥852,131/ ¥96,892	Closed
Sep 20, 2020 - Oct 4, 2020	¥855,394/ ¥96,892	Closed
Aug 23, 2020 - Sep 6, 2020	¥855,394/ ¥96,892	Available
Oct 18, 2020 - Nov 1, 2020	¥936,953/ ¥96,892	Available
Jun 13, 2021 - Jun 27, 2021	¥896,173/ ¥96,892	Available
Jul 18, 2021 - Aug 1, 2021	¥896,173/ ¥96,892	Available
Aug 22, 2021 - Sep 5, 2021	¥855,394/ ¥96,892	Available
Sep 19, 2021 - Oct 3, 2021	¥855,394/ ¥96,892	Available
Oct 17, 2021 - Oct 31, 2021	¥936,953/ ¥96,892	Available

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## Inclusions

- Local, licensed, English-speaking, Japanese guides
- **Travel insurance from Travel Guard**, one of the world's largest travel insurance providers, will be provided to everyone from the United States. All others will receive a \$100 per person credit and will be responsible for obtaining their own travel insurance in their own home country. (The insurance provided by Samurai Tours will cover the land portion only. Insurance to cover airfare and other additional expenses is the tour member's responsibility.)
  - Exact coverage dependent on state
    - For residents of the following states please click here for your available plan. CO, FL, IN, KS, MN, MO, MT, NY, and WA
    - For all other states and the District of Columbia click here
  - **Travel Insurance Surcharge:** Depending on your age at the time the travel insurance is purchased, you may be subject to the following surcharge for your travel insurance. Travel insurance surcharges will be due at the same time as your tour deposits. (the surcharge itself is not insured)
    - Up to 69 - \$0
    - 70-74 - \$100
    - 75-79 - \$200
    - 80-84 - \$350
    - 85+ - \$550
  - **Travel Insurance Opt-Out:** If you would prefer to opt out of the travel insurance, please note this at the time of registration. You will receive a \$100 credit per person, which will be reflected on your invoice. In the event that you would need to cancel your tour, cancellation penalties may apply. See the Terms and Conditions page for the Cancellation Fees Schedule.
- All transportation from Tokyo to Memanbetsu Airport as described in the itinerary
- Lodging for 14 nights in Japanese-style ryokans or western-style hotels
- Meals:
  - Breakfast every morning from Day 2 through Day 15 of the itinerary
  - One Japanese-style lunch
  - Eleven Japanese-style dinners
- All transportation costs when traveling with the group (transportation costs during scheduled free times are the tour member's responsibility)
- Airfare from Memanbetsu Airport to Tokyo
- Admission fees to the destinations and activities listed in the Tour Highlights column on the right (itinerary specifics subject to change)
- Electronic version of itinerary
- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour
- Baggage transfer from Tokyo to Aizu-Wakamatsu
- Baggage transfer from Aizu-Wakamatsu to Akita
- Baggage transfer from Akita to Noboribetsu Onsen
- Baggage transfer from Noboribetsu Onsen to Sounkyo Onsen
- Baggage transfer from Sounkyo Onsen to Lake Akan
- Baggage transfer from Lake Akan to Shiretoko

Each tour member receives an electronic copy of our tour handbook. This handbook is full of tips and suggestions taken from our Japan travel experiences that allow you to better plan and prepare for your trip, and therefore enjoy your trip even more. The tips and suggestions included cover everything from how to save while exchanging money, what to pack, some basic Japanese-language tips, general etiquette do's-and-don'ts, ryokan customs, etc.

## Exclusions

- International Airfare is NOT included.
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT includedA printed itinerary is not included

Thank you for downloading this PDF version of our tour. Please visit our website at [www.samuraitours.com/tours](http://www.samuraitours.com/tours) for the most current dates, prices and information.

## Contact Samurai Tours

### WEBSITE/EMAIL

[www.samuraitours.com](http://www.samuraitours.com)  
[info@samuraitours.com](mailto:info@samuraitours.com)

### USA CONTACT INFO

Toll-free: 1-866-316-SAMURAI  
or 1-866-316-7268  
Fax number: 720-210-5423

Samurai Tours  
7900 East Union Ave, Suite  
1100  
Denver CO 80237

### JAPAN CONTACT INFO

Call us: 075-361-7303

### Samurai Tours

307 Yodokizu  
Fushimi  
Kyoto 613-0911 Japan

### Kyoto-fu Chijitoroku

### Ryokogyo 3-576/

Japanese Travel Agency License:  
Kyoto Prefecture #3-576

### MEMBERSHIPS/ASSOCIATIONS

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