



## **SAMURAI TOURS**

*Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan*

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# **Northern Tohoku and Western Hokkaido Winter Self Guided**



8 Days/7 Nights

# Northern Tohoku and Western Hokkaido Winter Self Guided

## 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 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 the country. These areas are blessed with natural scenery, but when you add snow to these already slower-paced regions, you get a beautiful and relaxing visit.

## Destinations

*Tokyo, Zao Onsen, Nyuto Onsen, Kakunodate, Akita, Aomori, Hakodate, Noboribetsu Onsen, Sapporo*

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## Tour Details

Northern Tokoku and Western Hokkaido are rich in history and traditional Japanese culture. Touring these areas in the wintertime gives you the opportunity to really experience this history

and culture. Smaller crowds, world famous onsens, warm sake, and savory foods will enrich your experience. In Zao Onsen you will have the opportunity to participate in winter sports and see the famous “snow monsters” both during the day and lit up at night. 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 Hakadote where you will be amazed by its enchanting night view, all before arriving at Noboribetsu Onsen with its world famous hot springs. The tour will end in Sapporo, the largest city on Hokkaido and the host of the 1972 Winter Olympics.

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|-----------------|---|
| Tour Highlights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Zao Onsen Ski Area and Snow Ghosts</li><li>✓ Nyuto Onsen</li><li>✓ Resort Shirakami Train with Tsugaru Shamisen Performance</li><li>✓ Noboribetsu Onsen</li></ul>   |
| Tour Inclusions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Reserved Seat Tickets on all trains</li><li>✓ Meeting service at the arrival airport</li><li>✓ Baggage transfer from city to city</li><li>✓ Electronic version of Tour Handbook and Japanese History</li><li>✓ Detailed, easy-to-follow directions on how to travel between cities and locations</li><li>✓ Bi-lingual maps, addresses and phone numbers for all your lodging</li><li>✓ English-speaking emergency contact number in Japan</li></ul> |
| Tour Exclusions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ International airfare is NOT included.</li><li>✗ A printed itinerary is not included</li><li>✗ Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included</li></ul>   |

# Map



## Tour Destinations

- 📍 Tokyo
- 📍 Zao Onsen
- 📍 Nyuto Onsen
- 📍 Kakunodate
- 📍 Akita
- 📍 Aomori
- 📍 Hakodate
- 📍 Noboribetsu Onsen
- 📍 Sapporo

# Itinerary

## **Day 1 Arrive in Tokyo**

You will travel on your own to Tokyo, and check into the hotel. No meals are included.

**Travel: TBD**

## **Day 2 Travel to Zao Onsen; Tour Zao Onsen**

Today, your main luggage will be transferred to Zao Onsen. After breakfast you will travel to Zao Onsen. Zao Onsen sits at an altitude of about 900 meters (3,000 feet) on the slopes of Mount Zao, an active volcano. During the winter months, Zao is one of Japan's leading ski resorts. Zao Onsen's trees become glazed with ice, making them into "snow monsters". After checking into the ryokan you can go to the snow monster lighting to see these "creatures" lit up at night.

**Travel: 3 1/2 Hours**

## **Day 3 Free Day at Zao Onsen**

Today is a free day in Zao Onsen. Use this day to go skiing, take a snowshoe tour, or check out the snow monsters. Retrieve your main luggage at the ryokan.

**Travel: N/A**

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

Transfer your main luggage to Akita. Today you will travel by train and public highway 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.

**Travel: 5 Hours**

## **Day 5 Travel to Kakunodate; Tour Kakunodate; Travel to Akita**

After breakfast you will travel by Shinkansen 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. You will have the opportunity to 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 there. You will also have the opportunity to visit 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. You will then depart Kakunodate and travel to Akita by train. You will retrieve your main luggage after checking into the hotel.

**Travel: 2 Hours**

## **Day 6 Resort Shirakami Train to Aomori; Tour Aomori; Travel to Hakodate; Tour Hakodate**

Today you will transfer your main luggage to Noboribetsu Onsen. After breakfast you 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 recommend stopping 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 you will travel to Hakodate. Hakodate was one of the first cities open to the West after the Meiji Restoration. In the evening we suggest taking a cable car to the top of Mt. Hakodate where you can enjoy a panoramic view of Hakodate's night lights, or walk through the Motomachi District of Hakodate to enjoy the nighttime lightup.

**Travel: 7 1/2 Hours**

## **Day 7 Tour Hakodate; Travel to Noboribetsu Onsen**

Early in the morning we recommend visiting the Hakodate Morning Market where the sellers can prepare the specialties of Hakodate (crab, sea urchin, and squid) fresh from their stalls for breakfast. You 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.

**Travel: 2 1/2 Hours**

## **Day 8 Sayonara**

After breakfast you will have some free time in Noboribetsu Onsen. In the afternoon you will travel by express train to Sapporo. After arriving in Sapporo you will continue around Japan on your own, or fly home.

**Travel: 1 Hour**

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## **Dates & Pricing**

### **Low Season-**

**\$1,729.00** (per person, based on double occupancy)

January 6 - February 28

June 16 - August 5

August 18 - August 31

November 16 - December 24

### **Regular Season-**

**\$1,874.00** (per person, based on double occupancy)

March 1 - March 14

May 7 - June 15

September 1 - October 14

### **Peak Season-**

**\$1,999.00** (per person, based on double occupancy)

March 15 - May 6 (Cherry Blossom & Golden Week)

August 6 - August 17 (Obon Holiday)

October 15 - November 15 (Fall Foliage)

December 25 - January 5 (New Years)

### **Adjustments for 2020 Tours**

There will be an additional 5% charge for 2020 tours

The following dates will also be peak season due to the 2020 Olympics

July 10th - Aug 23rd

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## 📌 Inclusions

- Accommodations in 3 Star hotels including all taxes, fees and breakfast every morning (contact us regarding accommodation upgrades)
  - Tokyo: Western-style hotel such as Shinagawa Prince Hotel
  - Hirayu Onsen: Japanese-style ryokan such as Hirayukan
  - Takayama: Western-style hotel such as Takayama Ouan
  - Kanazawa: Western-style hotel such as Dormy Inn Kanazawa
  - Yudanaka: Japanese-style ryokan such as Hotel Shirogane
- Detailed, easy-to-follow directions on how to travel between cities
- Bi-lingual maps, addresses and phone numbers for all your lodging
- 7 Day Ordinary Car JR Rail Pass
- English-speaking emergency contact number in Japan
- Meeting service at the airport
- Train tickets to and from Nagano and Yudanaka
- Nohi bus tickets on the following segments:
  - Matsumoto to Hirayu
  - Hirayu to Takayama
  - Takayama to Shirakawago
  - Shirakawago to Kanazawa
- Airport transfers
- Suggested train schedules including train schedules for 2 hours prior and 2 hours after the suggested time to allow you to choose your own times
- Breakfast every day
- Electronic version of itinerary
- A copy of our “Gaijin on Getas” tour handbook (this is the same popular handbook our escorted tour members receive) which contains 180 pages of Japan travel tips, Japanese language tips, Japanese customs and etiquette and Japanese history to prepare you properly for your trip and allow you to enjoy Japan even more after you arrive.
- Baggage transfer forms (we will provide the necessary forms in Japanese to transfer your main baggage ahead, allowing you the freedom of traveling light. The service provided will only work overnight, so you will need to travel with an overnight bag. The actual transfer fees are not included and will be paid by you at the time of transfer. These fees normally run between 1,250 Yen and 1,750 Yen)

## What's Not Included

- Airfare is not included
- Local transportation (subways, buses, taxis, etc.)
- All admission fees
- Lunches and dinners (except where noted)
- Desserts at any included meals (except where noted)
- Drinks other than water and tea at any included meals (except where noted)
- A printed itinerary is not included



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## Contact Samurai Tours

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### MEMBERSHIPS/ASSOCIATIONS

Better Business Bureau  
American Society of Travel  
Agents  
National Tour Association  
Japan National Tourist  
Organization  
JNTO-approved Japan Travel  
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