

Shikotsu-Toya 5 Day Hiking Tour



Explore stunning national parks 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
Otaru	Chitose	2, Easy-Active	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 summer 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.
- Visit the Upopoy National Ainu Museum, Japan's largest facility dedicated to celebrating the indigenous Ainu and educating visitors about their culture and history.
- Walk along the top of dramatic sea cliffs where the mountains meet the sea.
- Experience the wild side of Niseko, an internationally known resort.

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 8km / 5 miles a day on easy easy going smooth trails. There is less than 500m / 1640ft 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	The group assembles in Otaru Hike Otamoi-Akaiwa Nature Trail	5.6	3.5	L, D ▾
2	Hike Kagami Pond in Niseko & Hike the Kompira-Nishiyama Trail at Lake Toya	4.2 4.9	2.9 3.0	B, L, D ▾
3	Hike on Nakajima Island at Lake Toya & Hike in Noboribetsu Hell Valley	8.4 3.2	5.2 2.0	B, D ▾
4	Hike the Poroto Recreation Forest & Visit Upopoy National Ainu Museum	7.5	4.7	B, L, D ▾
5	Hike Mt. Ichankoppe, Depart from Chitose	7.1	4.4	B ▾

Accommodation

Day	Type	Location	Ensuite Toilet	Ensuite Shower	Onsen	Laundry
1	Hotel ▾	Niseko	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Hotel ▾	Lake Toya	✓	✓	✓	
3	Ryokan ▾ ²	Noboribetsu Onsen			✓	
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, 3 lunches & 4 dinners
- 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
- Any optional activities
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses
- Drinks with included meals

When do you run this tour?

We run this tour in May 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 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](#).

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.

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.

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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.

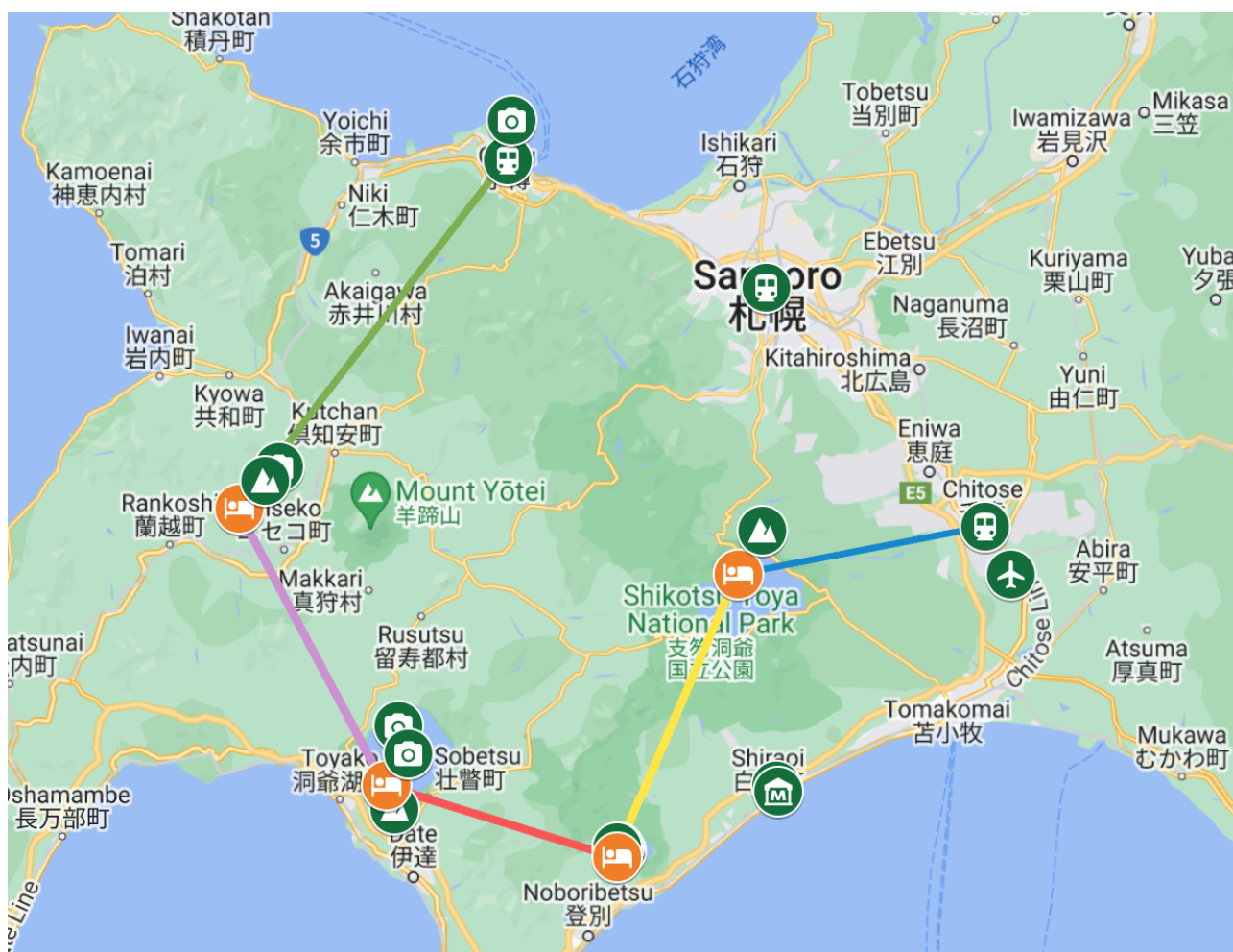
Travel to the Meeting Point

We will meet at Otaru Station at 10:00 am on the first day. The closest airport to Otaru is New Chitose Airport (CTS) and you can reach the city via a direct train in 1hr 15mins (1,910yen). You can also reach Otaru easily via a direct train ride from Sapporo (35-50 mins depending on the train you catch, fare 750yen). Given this tour's early start time, you may wish to make arrangements to stay a night in Sapporo or Otaru the day before the tour begins.

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

Tour map

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



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Day-to-Day Itinerary

Day 1 – The group assembles in Otaru & Hike Otamoi-Akaiwa Nature Trail

Our tour begins in central Otaru, a historic canal city a short distance from Sapporo. Once everyone is assembled this morning, we'll head off to our first hike, the Otamoi-Akaiwa Nature Trail. We'll get to know each other along the way and go over everything you can expect to look forward to on this tour.

The Otamoi-Akaiwa Nature Trail is a beautiful coastal walk running through Niseko-Shakotan-Otaru Kaigan Quasi-National Park. This popular trail is a great warmup for the hikes to come later on our adventure! We'll ascend through lowland forest to the clifftops, where we'll be greeted with magnificent views of the Sea of Japan and Hokkaido's dramatic, rugged coastline. The view is particularly beautiful in autumn, when the forest bursts into colour.



After we've enjoyed the walk, we'll make our way to Niseko, where we'll be staying this evening. We'll continue to get to know each other over dinner tonight, which is sure to include fresh farmland produce from the agricultural land surrounding Niseko.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
L, D	5.6 km / 3.5 miles	387 m / 1270 ft	Hotel in Niseko

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Day 2 – Hike Kagami Pond & Hike the Kompira–Nishiyama Trails

After breakfast at our accommodation this morning, we'll make our way to the first hiking route of the day. Although Niseko is renowned as a popular skiing destination in winter, it offers some wonderful hiking opportunities in summer, too. This morning, we'll enjoy a gentle hike to the stunning Kagami Pond (4.2 km / 2.6 mile). "Kagami" means "mirror" in Japanese, so as you can imagine this pond offers some amazing reflections of Mt. Annupuri reflected on its surface on a still day. This is a well-maintained and relatively short trail.

After we enjoy views of Kagami pond, we'll enjoy a local lunch before travelling to Lake Toya, a beautiful caldera lake created by explosive volcanic activity many centuries ago. This activity still continues to this day, with a dramatic eruption on Mt. Usu as recently as 2000. We'll walk the Kompira & Nishiyama routes this afternoon (4.9 km / 3.0 mile), which takes us up past public housing that was damaged by the eruption, and along a highway now buried in volcanic mud. You can also peek into craters formed around the base of the mountain. This route then follows on to the start of the Nishiyama route, which takes you along a cracked and buckled road that shows the full force of the eruption.



After appreciating the more forceful side of tectonic forces, we'll head to our accommodation for this evening where we can enjoy the more gentle aspect of these eruptions... natural hot springs! Another delicious dinner will be served at our accommodation today, too.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, L, D	9.1 km / 5.6 miles	403 m / 1322 ft	Hotel in Lake Toya

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Day 3 – Hike on Nakajima Island & Hike in Noboribetsu Hell Valley

This morning we'll catch a ferry to the island of Nakajima in the centre of Lake Toya. 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!

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 mile) 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 continue to our next destination, Noboribetsu Onsen. Upon arrival, we'll set off for a 3.2 km (2.0 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 our hike, we'll head to our hotel for dinner and relax in the famous hot spring waters of Noboribetsu.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, D	11.6 km / 7.2 miles	515 m / 1690 ft	Ryokan in Noboribetsu

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Day 4 – Hike the Poroto Recreation Forest & Visit Upopoy National Ainu Museum

After breakfast this morning, 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.



Lake Poroto is a small but bountiful lake, surrounded by a lush forest through which runs a leisurely walking route. This forest was once a sapling nursery where Hokkaido's native trees - like fir trees and the Hokkaido spruce - were cultivated for being re-planted on deforested mountains. After its designation as a recreational forest in 1976, it was left to grow wild and other native species popped up naturally, such as the Japanese oak and elm. As such, a walk through the forest here is a great way to discover Hokkaido's native flora. Animals have made their homes here too and as we explore the forest, we'll keep our eyes peeled for wild birds and cute squirrels.

After the hike, we'll spend some time exploring 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. After immersing ourselves in Ainu culture, we'll leave Shiraoi with a much more profound understanding of the region's history as we 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, L, D	7.5 km / 4.7 miles	275 m / 902 ft	Hotel at Lake Shikotsu

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Day 5 – Hike Mt. Ichankoppe, Depart from Chitose

Today is our last day together and we'll end this tour with a challenge! After checking out of our accommodation, we'll make our way to Mt. Ichankoppe.

The 829m / 2720 ft mountain is located on the edge of Lake Shikotsu's caldera, which means that it offers some pretty stunning views of Lake Shikotsu and its surrounds. Fresh verdures make the trail a delight in spring while in autumn, stunning red foliage transforms the landscape. Although the trail offers a few challenges, it is a relatively short and light hike and the trail is well-maintained.



We'll enjoy a picnic lunch at the summit before we descend the mountain and return to our van. The trail can become very slippery after or during rain, so if weather does not permit us to enjoy this hike, we will visit some other hikes of interest nearby instead.

We'll say our goodbyes enroute to Chitose, where the tour will disband. If you are heading to Sapporo, your guide can drop you off at Chitose Station to catch the train into town. Or, if your next destination is beyond Hokkaido, you can be dropped at New Chitose Airport.

Make sure you haven't left anything in the van and have a safe onward journey!

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B	7.1 km / 4.4 miles	655 m / 2149 ft	-

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Our recommended reading

[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 \(like a local!\)](#)

[Vegan & Vegetarian in Hokkaido](#)

[Hokkaido Travel Tips & Common Questions](#)

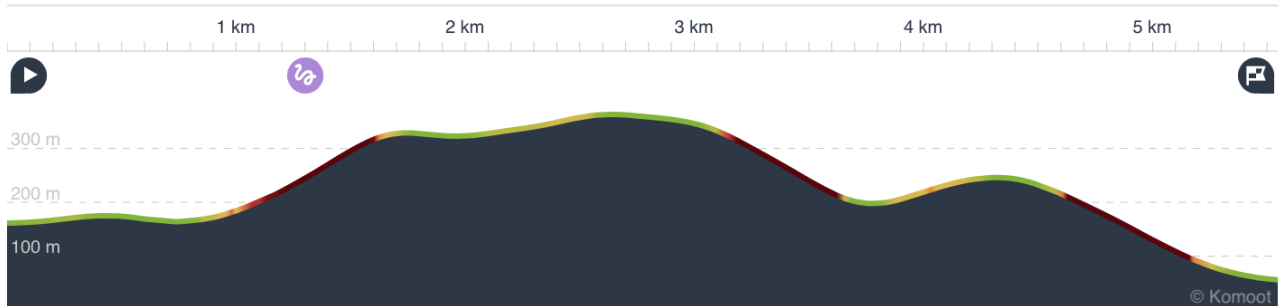
[The Ainu, from a Hokkaido local's perspective](#)

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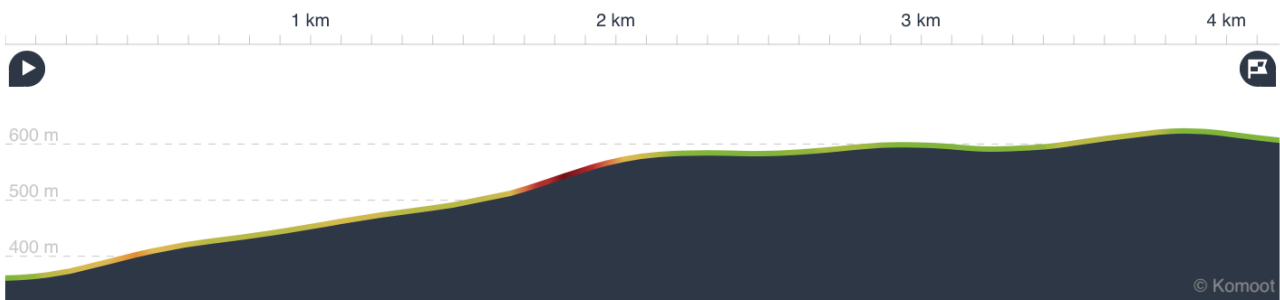


Elevation profiles

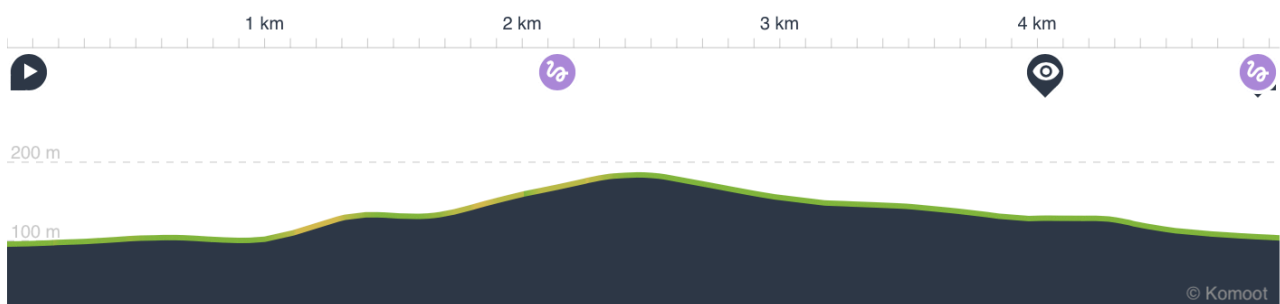
Day 1 - Otamoi-Akaiwa Nature Trail **Distance** - 5.6 km / 3.5 miles **Ascent** - 387 m / 1270 ft



Day 2 - Kagami Pond **Distance** - 4.2 km / 2.9 miles **Ascent** - 313 m / 1027 ft



Day 2 - Kompira-Nishiyama Trails **Distance** - 4.9 km / 3.0 miles **Ascent** - 90 m / 295 ft



Day 3 - Nakajima Island **Distance** - 8.4 km / 5.2 miles **Ascent** - 367 m / 1204 ft

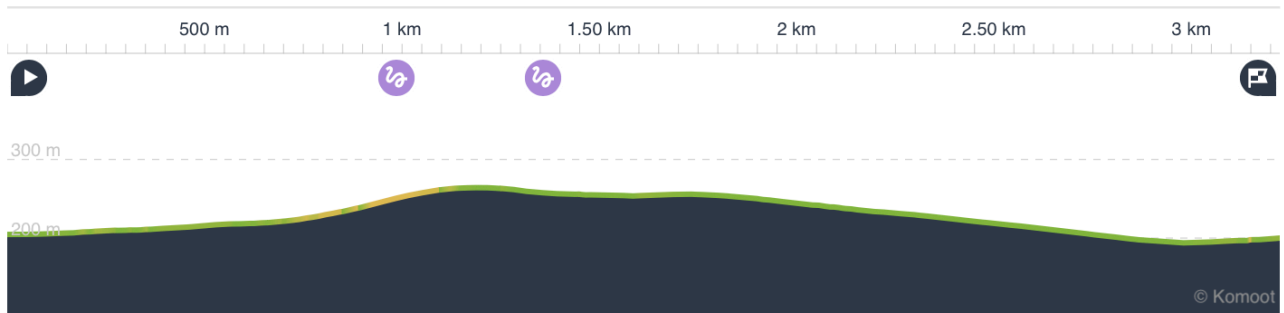


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Day 3 - Noboribetsu Hell Valley

Distance - 3.2 km / 2.0 miles **Ascent** - 148 m / 486 ft



Day 4 - Poroto Recreation Forest

Distance - 7.5 km / 4.7 miles **Ascent** - 275 m / 902 ft



Day 5 - Mt. Ichankoppe

Distance - 7.1 km / 4.4 miles **Ascent** - 655 m / 2149 ft

