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!

View Departure Dates & Prices

View Gallery

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Information correct as of 8 Nov 2026 for departures in 2027

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About the Tour

Start	Finish	Grading	Season
Lake Toya	Chitose	Relaxed Hiking	Jun & 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 9.5 km / 6.0 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 longest hike on the last day. 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 Toya then Hike the Nishiyama, Konpira & Yosomi Trails	7.6	4.7	D
2	Hike on Nakajima Island & Mt. Usu at Lake Toya	8.0	5.0	B, D
3	Hike Hell Valley, Hike Poroto Forest & Visit Upopoy Ainu Museum	9.9	6.2	B, D
4	Hike Mt. Monbetsu & Kaedesawa Moss Corridor	12.4	7.7	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.

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!

Your guides are with the group throughout. Having a guide lead the way means you can relax and take in the scenery. They are also there to provide context on the local landscape and help navigate the dishes served in the evenings.

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.

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!

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.

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 and from the tour

Getting to Lake Toya

We will pick you up at **10:15 am if you are already staying in Lake Toya Onsen** or at **10:45 am at Toya Station** village. Upon booking, please share your travel plans so we can confirm your specific meeting arrangements.

New Chitose Airport is the closest airport to Lake Toya. The nearest train station is Toya Station. Lake Toya Onsen village is about 7 km from the station.

To travel between New Chitose Airport and Toya Station, take the train via Minami Chitose. The fastest connections take about 1 hour and 40 minutes and cost around JPY 5,460, including a seat reservation. Between Toya Station and Lake Toya Onsen, there is a direct bus service that takes about 25 minutes and costs JPY 400.

There are direct train services between Sapporo and Toya Station that take about 2 hours and cost around JPY 6,690, including a seat reservation. There are also buses between Sapporo and Lake Toya Onsen with about 4 departures per day, taking around 2 hours 40 minutes and costing JPY 3,700. These buses are reserved seats only, so please book in advance.

You can search schedules and fares in English on Japan Transit Planner website.

Onward travel from Chitose

On the last day, after breakfast at our accommodation at Lake Shikotsu, we will drop you off at either Chitose Station at around 9:15 am or New Chitose Airport at around 9:30 am. If you need to catch an earlier flight, we can help you book a taxi to get you there, but an earlier drop off is not possible as it prevents the whole group from having breakfast.

The closest airport is New Chitose Airport (CTS), with direct flights to and from a number of international airports and most major airports in Japan, including Tokyo Haneda (HND), Tokyo Narita (NRT), Osaka Itami (ITM), and Osaka Kansai (KIX).

Rapid Airport trains run regularly between CTS, Chitose, and Sapporo. The journey takes 6 minutes between CTS and Chitose Station (fare JPY 290) and 40 minutes between CTS and Sapporo Station (fare JPY 1,230). The journey between Chitose and Sapporo takes approximately 30 minutes and costs JPY 1,040.

Tour map

To view the route on Google My Maps, click here.



Day-to-Day Itinerary

Day 1 - Meet at Toya then Hike the Nishiyama, Konpira & Yosomi Trails

We will meet between 10:15 and 10:45 am, depending on where we pick you up. Once we have everyone, we pick up our picnic lunch and head for our first hike, around the foot of Mt. Usu to Lake Toya.



The Toya caldera was formed by powerful volcanic eruptions. Mt. Usu, overlooking the town of Toya Onsen, is still active – it last erupted in 2000! We will see the impacts of the eruptions on today's hikes.

The Nishiyama & Kompira trails (4.1 km / 2.5 mi) take us through the site of the 2000 eruption and showcase the full force of nature. We travel along roads buckled by uplift, peek into craters now full of water, and see buildings pockmarked by flying rocks. En route, we'll pause for a leisurely picnic lunch amidst this unique landscape.

Our hike leads us directly to the local Visitor Centre. Here, we learn more about the volcanic events that reshaped this area.

If we still have enough daylight after the visitor centre, we will walk the Mt. Yosomi trail (3.5 km / 2.2 mi), which takes us around a crater from an earlier eruption. Here, we see how nature reclaims the landscape and calm returns after the fury of an eruption.

The hike finishes at our accommodation, a family-run lodge nestled in the shadow of Mt. Usu. Living here requires an understanding of the volcano's personality, reflected in the local saying, "Mt. Usu never lies." We recount the day's adventures over a delicious home-cooked dinner served at the lodge.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
D	7.6 km 4.7 mi	+ 380 m + 1,250 ft	Lodge at Lake Toya

Day 2 - Hike on Nakajima Island & at Mt. Usu at Lake Toya

After checking out, we drive to the nearby ferry terminal for the 25-minute crossing to Nakajima Island in the centre of Lake Toya. In contrast to yesterday's encounters with the destructive power of Mt. Usu, Nakajima Island feels like an oasis floating in the middle of the lake. The island is largely undeveloped and is home to lush native forest.



We'll follow a well-maintained trail through the forest, giving us a chance to see the variety of trees that grow here and perhaps spot some resident birds up in the canopy. Our goal is a beautiful clearing at Daiheigen, where the forest gives way to serene grassland. We will then retrace our steps to the ferry, a total of 3.3 km (2.1 mi) return.

Our lunch plans are flexible. Depending on the weather, we might eat at the island café, stop at a restaurant back in Toya Onsen, or enjoy another picnic.

After lunch, we head to our next destination: the summit crater rim of Mt. Usu. Having explored the craters around the foot of the volcano yesterday, today we get a different perspective on its rocky peak. We start by taking a cable car up to the rim before hiking a 4.7 km (2.9 mi) return route around the crater's edge to the southern viewpoint. The summit crater dwarfs the previous craters we have seen, and the jagged rocks of the peak are a dramatic crown. On a clear day, we will also be treated to views stretching over the towns at the foot of the volcano and out to the Pacific Ocean.

After catching the ropeway back down, we will drive to Noboribetsu Onsen, another popular hot spring town. Tonight, we stay in an 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 carefully prepared and beautifully presented.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, D	8.0 km 5.0 mi	+ 410 m + 1,350 ft	Ryokan in Noboribetsu

Day 3 - Hike Hell Valley, Poroto Forest & Visit Upopoy Ainu Museum

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 features vibrant, exposed bedrock dotted with hissing steam vents and sulfurous fumaroles. After breakfast this morning, we'll walk from our hotel to see this landscape first hand (2.1 km / 1.3 mi).



Next, we'll make our way to Shiraoi, stopping to pick up a picnic lunch and then on to the Poroto Recreation Forest for today's hike.

Poroto 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 (7.8 km / 4.9 mi) 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.

Shiraoi has a long connection to the Ainu, Hokkaido's indigenous people, and hosts the Upopoy National Ainu Museum, Japan's first national museum dedicated to the Ainu. After our hike, we will 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 exploring the museum, we'll head to our destination tonight - Lake Shikotsu, a stunning caldera lake surrounded by 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	9.9 km 6.2 mi	+ 250 m + 820 ft	Ryokan at Lake Shikotsu

Day 4 - Hike Mt. Monbetsu & Kaedesawa Moss Corridor

Today we tackle the longest hike of the tour, a 10.2 km (6.3 mi) return journey up Mt. Monbetsu. The route follows an access road, steadily climbing 550 m (1,800 ft) as the trees thin around us. On a clear day, the views open up as we approach the summit, revealing Lake Shikotsu and the rugged peaks of the surrounding caldera. Among them is the active Mt. Tarumae, with its distinctive pudding-like summit still steaming. Several transmission towers also occupy the summit, taking advantage of the same unobstructed position that gives us such expansive views.



After our hike, we return to the lakeside town for a sit-down lunch and a chance to rest before heading out for our final hike of the tour: the relaxed Kaedesawa Moss Corridor.

Kaedesawa sits at the foot of Mt. Tarumae, an active volcano. However, it feels a world away from the rugged volcanic peak. This narrow gorge is sheltered by trees, creating a damp climate that allows many varieties of moss to carpet the gorge walls. The result is a lush green corridor. Our out-and-back hike will take us through the twists and turns of this velvet-green landscape. We finish the hike on the shores of Lake Shikotsu. We then head back to our hotel for a final celebratory dinner and a soak in the hot springs.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Accommodation
B, L, D	12.4 km 7.7 mi	+ 650 m + 2,140 ft	Ryokan at Lake Shikotsu

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.

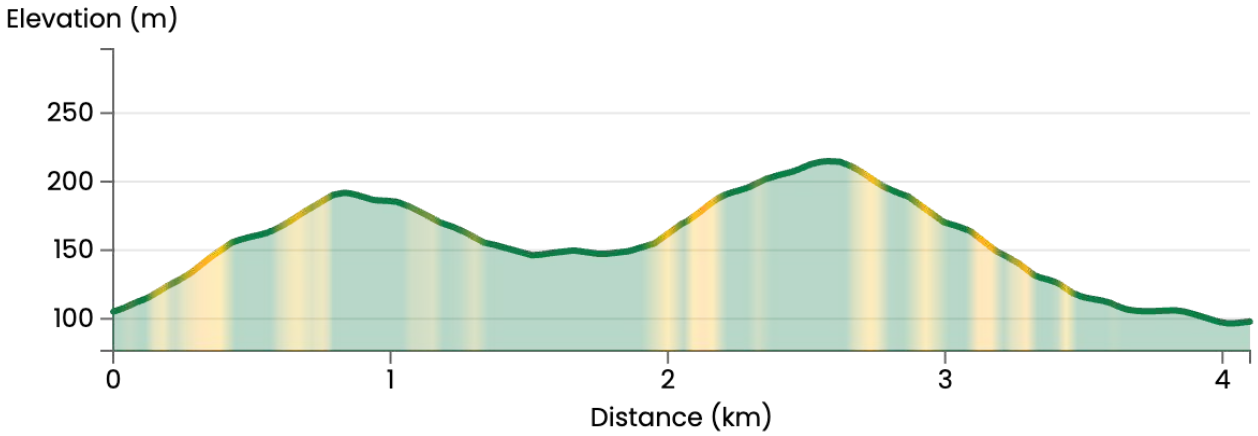
We will drop you off at Chitose Station, where regular trains connect to New Chitose Airport in under 10 minutes. If you are extending your stay in Hokkaido, trains from Chitose Station can take you both north to Sapporo and south towards Hakodate.

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	-	-	-

Elevation profiles

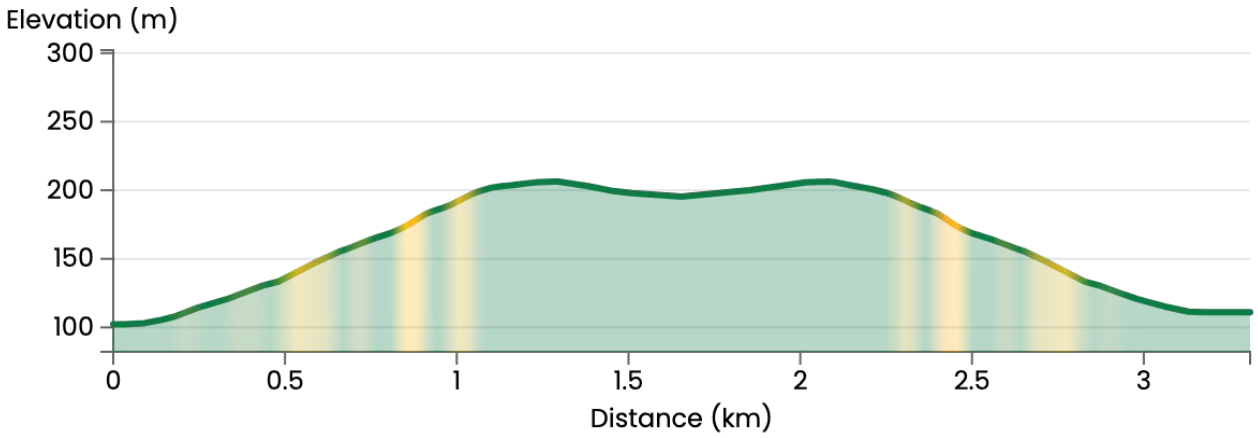
Day 1 - Nishiyama to Kompira Traverse **Distance** - 4.1 km / 2.5 mi **Ascent** - 170 m / 559 ft



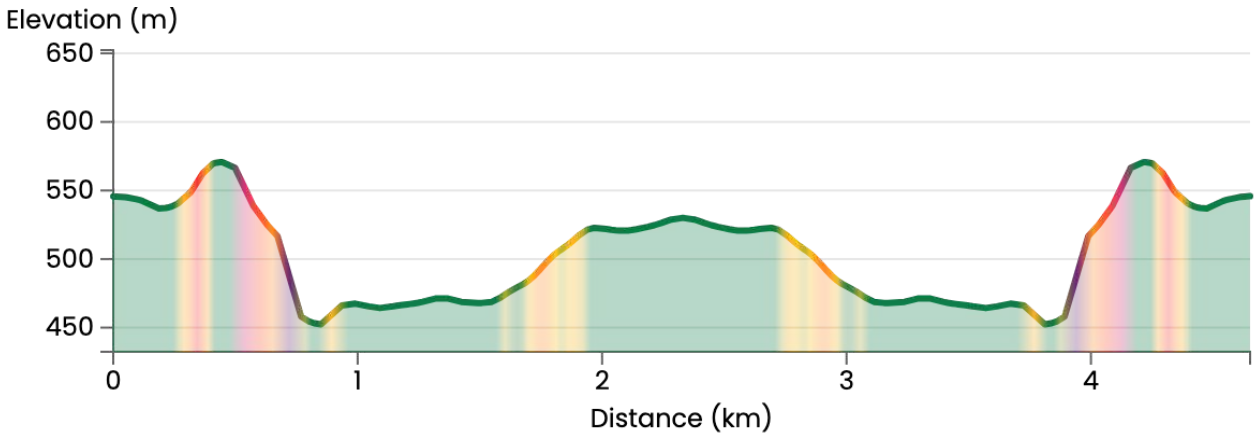
Day 1 - Mt. Yosomi **Distance** - 3.5 km / 2.2 mi **Ascent** - 210 m / 689 ft



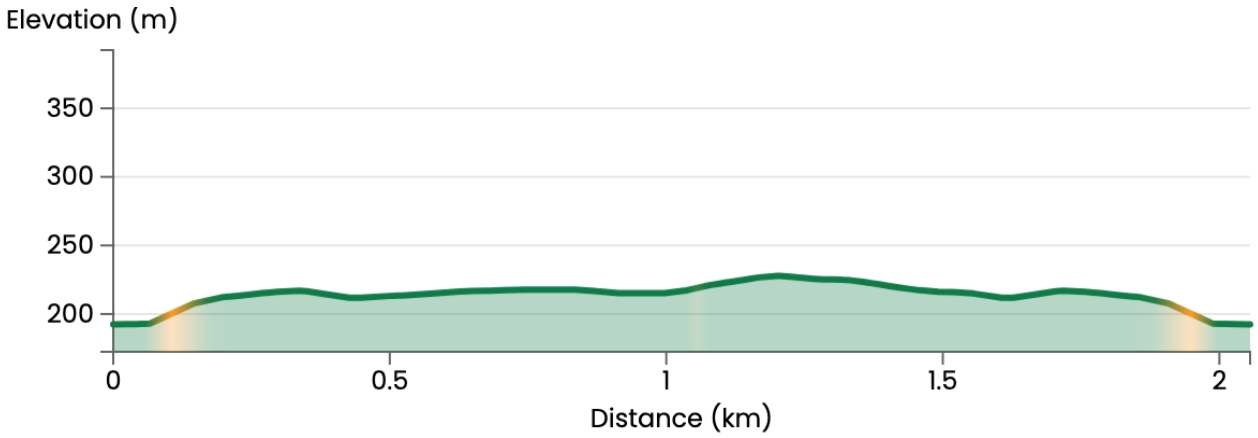
Day 2 - Nakajima - Daiheigen **Distance** - 3.3 km / 2.1 mi **Ascent** - 117 m / 384 ft



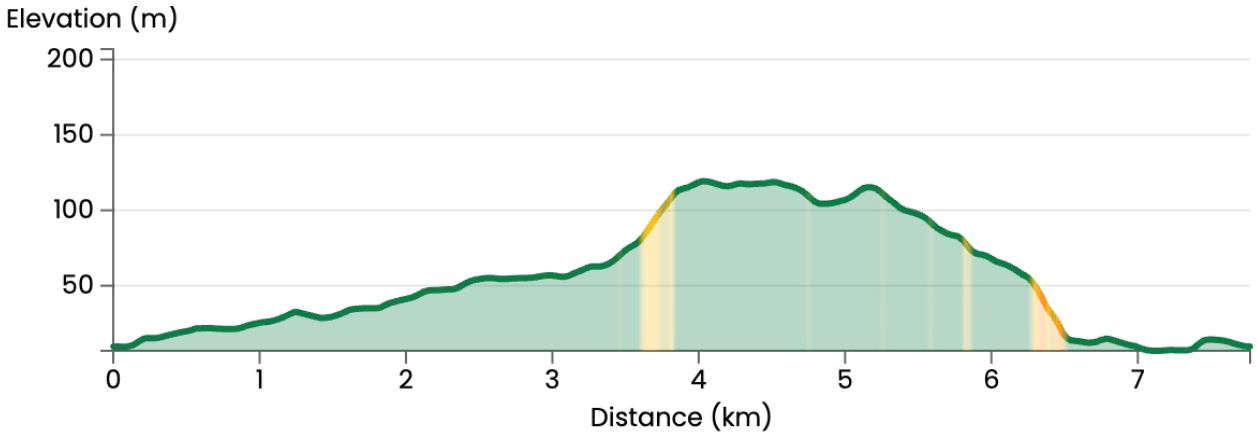
Day 2 - Mt. Usu **Distance** - 4.7 km / 2.9 mi **Ascent** - 296 m / 971 ft



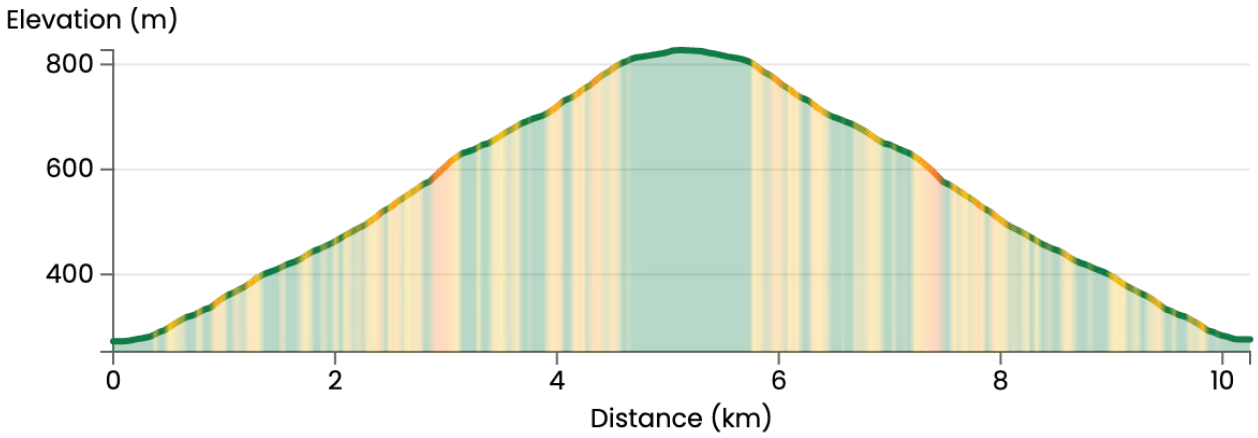
Day 3 - Hell Valley (Jigokudani) **Distance** - 2.1 km / 1.3 mi **Ascent** - 85 m / 279 ft



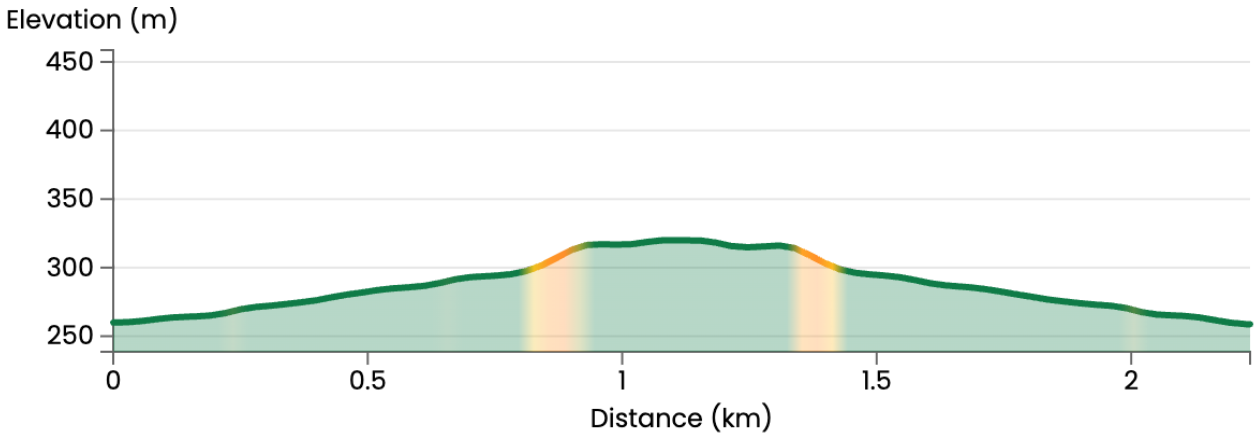
Day 3 - Poroto Forest Loop **Distance** - 7.8 km / 4.8 mi **Ascent** - 164 m / 539 ft



Day 4 - Mt. Monbetsu **Distance -** 10.2 km / 6.3 mi **Ascent -** 555 m / 1,820 ft



Day 4 - Kaedesawa Moss Corridor **Distance** - 2.2 km / 1.4 mi **Ascent** - 96 m / 314 ft



Our recommended reading

A Local's Guide on What to Expect When Staying in Hokkaido

Hiking Safely in Hokkaido

How to Onsen (Like a Local!)

Shikotsu-Toya National Park - Adventure Awaits on Sapporo's Doorstep

Useful Japanese phrases for your adventures in Hokkaido, from “Konnichiwa” to “Keppare”

What is a disposable toilet bag?

What to pack for Hokkaido?

The Ainu, from a Hokkaido local's perspective

Preparing for Your First Hokkaido Adventure Holiday

Going Gluten Free in Hokkaido

Vegan & Vegetarian in Hokkaido