

THE UNIQUE CUISINE OF HOKKAIDO

Thanks to its unspoiled landscape and prime location, Hokkaido has become renowned throughout Japan for its high-quality produce. From classic dishes such as seafood and Genghis Khan through to more modern trends such as whisky and wine, this culinary tour will give you a taste of the very best that Hokkaido has to offer.

Four hours from Tokyo on the Shinkansen, you'll find Hakodate, a historic city and foodie paradise in southern Hokkaido. While many of Hokkaido's cities have humble beginnings, Hakodate has a long history as a flourishing trading port for goods such as kelp, which is shipped from Hokkaido to supply the Japanese mainland. Before learning about the area's history at the star-shaped fort of Goryokaku and the Hakodate Magistrate's Office, fuel up with this bustling port city's mouth-watering range of seafood. Many restaurants and markets offer sneak peeks and even samples of the raw ingredients, and offer a great chance to get to know friendly locals. After exploring the city, hop on a train to the scenic Lake Toya, where you can recharge in one of the area's rejuvenating hot springs.

After strolling around the 110,000-year-old caldera of Lake Toya and admiring the volcanic activity in Toya-Usu Geopark from the top of the ropeway, wash down your lunch with some mineral water produced by this volcanic region. That same mineral-rich water also enhances the produce and seafood you'll enjoy.

Then head to Sapporo where you can enjoy Genghis Khan, a popular mutton barbecue dish. Genghis Khan is a classic example of how earlier generations of Hokkaidoites made the most of their circumstances – it began as a by-product of the domestic wool industry that emerged during the modernization of agriculture in Hokkaido and is now widely enjoyed at family meals and parties alike. Why not spend the night in Otaru, a seaside town just 40 minutes from Sapporo?

35 minutes from Otaru is Yoichi, where you can enjoy Scotch whisky just like the real thing thanks to the similar climate. You can even tour the Nikka Whisky distillery and learn all about the history and how the whisky is made (with samples, of course!)

For lunch, head back to Otaru for a feast of sushi. You'll even find classes where you can try making your own! No culinary tour in Japan is complete without sake, so don't miss Tanaka Shuzo Brewery, where you can try over 10 different sakes and watch the brewing process.

Then head back to Sapporo for a traditional Japanese dinner. Notice the use of kelp – this ingredient gives dishes the mild umami taste for which Japanese cuisine is renowned, and with Hokkaido supplying 90% of Japan's kelp, Japanese food culture as we know it would not be the same without Hokkaido's influence. After dinner, take a stroll through Susukino.

Take a train to Iwamizawa and tour the Sorachi area's wineries. Hokkaido's cold climate was said to be unsuitable for vineyards, but through local wineries' determination and innovation, European grapes were successfully introduced and the region is now the top wine producer in Japan. Toast the end of an enjoyable tour!



Bullet train from Tokyo Sta. to Shin Hakodate-Hokuto Sta.

Lunch at Asaichi Market, Hakodate

Sightseeing in Hakodate

Stay at Toyako Onsen

Toya-Usu UNESCO Global Geopark

Sightseeing in Sapporo

Ghenghis Khan lunch at Sapporo Beer Garden

Stay in Otaru

Nikka Whisky and Yoichi Winery, Yoichi

Sushi-making workshop in Otaru

Sightseeing in Otaru

Traditional Japanese dinner in Sapporo

Stay in Sapporo

Sorachi Winery, Iwamizawa

Return flight from New Chitose Airport

