



# Sapporo & Hokkaidō

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Menya Saimi (p584)
- ➔ Kikuyo Shokudo (p639)
- ➔ Niseko Loft Club (p592)
- ➔ Robata Chidori (p618)
- ➔ Poronno (p630)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Marukibune (p632)
- ➔ Momoiwa-sō Youth Hostel (p618)
- ➔ SappoLodge (p582)
- ➔ Lodge Nutapukaushipe (p610)

## Why Go?

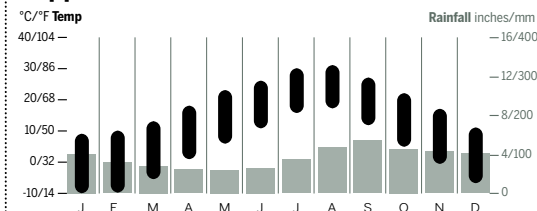
Hokkaidō (北海道) is the Japan of wide-open spaces, with 20% of the country's land area but only 5% of its population. There are large swathes of wilderness here, with primeval forests, tropical-blue caldera lakes, fields of alpine wildflowers and bubbling, in-the-rough hot springs. In the summer, all this (plus the cooler, drier weather) draws hikers, cyclists and strollers.

Winter is a different beast entirely: cold fronts from Siberia bring huge dumps of light, powdery snow, which has earned Hokkaidō a reputation as a paradise for skiers and snowboarders; there are international-level resorts here, but also remote back-country opportunities.

The island's stunning natural scenery and the promise of outdoor adventure tend to overshadow everything else Japan's northernmost island has to offer, which is a lot: there is excellent food, especially seafood; a vibrant capital city; and a compelling history, starting with the legacy of Hokkaidō's indigenous people, the Ainu.

## When to Go

### Sapporo



**Jun–Aug** Hiking season reaches its peak during the holidays of July and August.

**Sep & Oct** A brief but intense autumn is marked by changing leaves.  
**Dec–Mar** Subzero chill and Siberian

snowfalls herald the ski season.

# Sapporo & Hokkaidō Highlights

## 1 Daisetsuzan

### National Park

(p609) Charting a path through the wilderness in Japan's largest national park, nicknamed the 'rooftop of Hokkaidō'.

## 2 Niseko (p589)

Carving fresh tracks in the famous powder of Asia's top ski destination.

## 3 Sapporo (p577)

Getting your urban fix in the restaurants and bars of Susukino and drinking Sapporo beer straight from the source.

## 4 Noboribetsu

**Onsen** (p598) Saying goodbye to stiff muscles in steaming baths of natural hot spring water.

## 5 Rishiri-Rebun-

### Sarobetsu National Park

(p617) Taking the ferry to the remote islands of Rishiri-tō and Rebun-tō for hiking and *uni* (sea urchin).

## 6 Hakodate

(p636) Strolling through 19th-century streetscapes of a historic port city.

## 7 Shiretoko

**National Park** (p623) Heading to the 'end of the world' at this Unesco World Heritage Site.

## 8 Akan National

**Park** (p627) Learning about Hokkaidō's indigenous people, the Ainu, in the park's lakeside *kotan* (village).

