

HOKKAIDO's Lavender Tour 2020- #2
"An explosion of color"
July 9th – 17st, 2020



The Hokkaido summer stage is alive with color
7nts/9days fr: \$3895 triple \$3995 double \$4795 single
Reserve by February 1st-Save \$50 per person

The panorama of Hokkaido's summer scenery is about to unfold. At the peak of summer, the green hills along the Tokachi Mountain Range turn purple and the air is thick with the spicy-sweet perfume of lavender.

Witness this explosion of color, over 500 alpine flowers blooming throughout the season. Summer would not be complete without a pilgrimage to Hokkaido for lavender viewing.

We will be visiting some of the most scenic summer spots of this north island, Tokachi Hills, Manabe Garden, the red-crowned Crane Nature Park, Lake Akan, Biei Blue Pond, Shikisai no Oka (panoramic flower garden), the lavender fields at Tomita farms and so much more.

Our tour ends in Sapporo, Hokkaido's capital and one of Japan's most cosmopolitan cities. Its wide streets and tree lined boulevards give the city an almost European feel. Enjoy two nights at the Century Royal Hotel, best location, right by the JR Sapporo Station and direct access to underground shopping and dining.

We didn't forget to include onsen visits, 2 sake breweries, each offering their exclusive brands. There's also fruit picking, ice cream and cookie making experiences! Shopping time, yes, a complete free day in Sapporo! Come, join us on this popular summer tour.

Itinerary/Details

Day 1 – July 9th, 2020 Thursday– Depart from Honolulu

Hawaiian Airlines #441 Departs Honolulu 1:35 pm – Arrive Chitose 5:00 pm

Please meet the Panda Travel representative at the Hawaiian Airlines international check-in counters located in Terminal 2, Lobby 4, a minimum of 3 hours prior to the flight time. If you are traveling from the neighbor island, proceed to the international departure gate and meet up with him there.

Day 2 – July 10th, 2020 Friday– Chitose-Sapporo

On arrival in Chitose, please make your way to the baggage claim area as we need to clear immigration and customs. Free luggage carts are available. We suggest that you use one as there is a short walk to our hotel, Air Terminal Hotel.

It's a great spot for our first night here in Hokkaido. The Chitose Airport offer quite a variety of dining and shopping options, all just steps from your hotel.

Once we have checked in your guide will escort you to the shopping and dining area as well point out the 24-hour Family Mart on the ground level. Enjoy free time to dine and shop.

Accommodations: Air Terminal Hotel



Day 3 – July 11th, 2020 Saturday – Chitose-Obihiro (B/L/D)

After breakfast at our hotel we will head out for a full day of touring. Please meet your guide in the lobby by 8:30am as we make our way to Obihiro, Japan's sixth largest city. Nestled in-between the Hidaka and Daisetsuzan mountain ranges, Obihiro is known for its beautiful gardens, historical building, the popular dish, butadon (pork bowl) as well as its variety of delicious confectionary items.

The drive time is approximately two hours including a rest stop along the way. **Our luggage will be sent to Furano, please prepare one bag to travel with you while the 2nd will be sent by truck.**

Once here, we begin the day with a stop at Ryugetsu Sweetpia Garden, a confectionary heaven! If you enjoy Japanese sweets, this is the place. Approximately 200 delicious, high-quality, freshly made sweets are offered. Do take the elevator to the third floor and observe the sweet-making process and production line.

Besides some free time to shop and find a few items to bring home or enjoy during this trip, we have added a hand-on cookie making experience and factory tour.

From here we are off to lunch at a local restaurant.

Many associate Hokkaido with beautiful landscapes and gardens and our afternoon begins with a visit to Tokachi Hills, which highlights some of the best. Flower and garden enthusiasts from all around flock here every year to view it seasonal colors, colorful garden plants and lush greenery. Enjoy free time to wander around and enjoy the wonder and beauty.

From here we are off to Manabe Garden. This "fairy-tale land" of a garden is known for many remarkable "first in Japan" and "best in Japan" features. The conifer garden here is Japan's first -- and largest. Composed of a Japanese garden, western-style garden, and landscaped garden components, Manabe Garden is a hidden paradise unknown to most tourists.

The garden combines both Japanese and European style architecture amid splendid lush greenness. At times, you will feel like a Japanese emperor on vacation at a lovely summer resort, while at other moments, a European noble taking a walk in the garden!

Hundreds of exotic tree species, imported from northern Europe and Canada, as well as garden trees are planted among seasonal flowers and plants. Enjoy free time to walk around and enjoy this relaxed and peaceful atmosphere. In summer, tables are set up on the café terrace where you can enjoy a drink and snack.

Now off to our hotel for this evening, Hotel Nikko Northland Obihiro, conveniently located adjacent to JR Obihiro Station. Our arrival will be by 5:15pm, followed by a Japanese dinner at 6:30pm.

After dinner, the remainder of the evening is free. Enjoy this opportunity to get out and explore some of Obihiro City. With the rail station so close by, many of the shop and eateries are usually open late.

Being that Obihiro is known for its confectionary items, this might be the perfect time to stock up on omiyage items. Some of the more popular include the Marseille butter sandwich and strawberry chocolate produced by Rokkatei. Another is Takahashi

Manjuyu, long established and offering up Japanese muffins filled with sweet bean jam or cheese, served hot. One other to consider is Cranberry, founded in 1972 and famous for its sweet potato cakes and other specialty sweets.

Accommodations: Hotel Nikko Northland Obihiro



Day 4 – July 12th, 2020 Sunday – Obihiro-Kushiro-Lake Akan (B/D)

After breakfast, please meet your guide by 8:00am as we are off on another full day of touring.

The morning begins with a drive to Kushiro, known as "the town of mist," is situated in the southeastern part of Hokkaido, facing the Pacific Ocean. The drive time is just under two hours.

Once here we will be stopping for a visit at the Kushiro Red-crowned Crane Nature Park. The red-crowned crane, tall, slim, long-legged, and always elegant is a popular icon in Japan. They symbolize longevity, good luck, and happiness. In fables, it is written that the crane lives for 1,000 years.

From airlines to sake bottle labels, from wedding kimonos to elevator doors and chopsticks, so many different things are decorated with them. Many of Japan's shrines are frequently draped with thousands of origami cranes, like a colorful lei.

In 1926 there were only 20 Japanese cranes in existence in Kushiro. Today, due to steps taken to preserve them, 2000 are known to exist in the world, and more than half are here in Hokkaido.

The Kushiro Marchland was designated as a national park in 1987 to preserve the country's largest wetland and marsh habitat which supports the only known population of the endangered Japanese cranes. The park offers bird watching, nature viewing and walking trails. The cranes can be viewed year-round and a delight for photographers.

From here we are off to the historic Washo Market, a collection of over 60 shops located in this portside marketplace. The famous local dish is the "Katte Don". You first purchase a bowl of rice and then walk along the rows of shops selecting your favorite ingredients as toppings. Once you finished shopping, sit down, and enjoy your meal. Enjoy free time here for lunch on your own.

This afternoon we are off to Lake Akan for a sightseeing boat cruise around the lake. Enjoy viewing the unspoiled primitive forest in its natural beauty.

The cruise will make a short stop at the Spherical Moss Exhibition and Observation Center on Churui Island where you can view real Moss Ball known as Marimo, a natural treasure in Japan.

From here we make our way to our hotel for the evening, Akanko Tsuruga Wings, a "New Style" – stylish and contemporary - hot spring Ryokan. Many indigenous or local artworks are on display at the gallery on the lobby floor. This onsen hotel is ideally situated along the town's main street so that after dinner if you choose to take a stroll, many of the shops are open late into the evening.

Tonight, enjoy a buffet dinner at the hotel beginning at 6:00pm. After dinner a short walk over to Akan Ainukotan Village and the theater for a fire dance show. Enjoy this traditional Ainu show which expresses their lifestyle with wildlife, nature, hunting played out through song and dance.

After the show, a short walk back to our hotel and the remainder of the evening is free.

Accommodations: Hotel Lake Akan Tsuruga Wings



Day 5 – July 13th, 2020 Monday – Lake Akan-Furano (B/L/D)

After breakfast at the hotel, please meet your guide by 8:00am as we journey out for another one of a kind touring day.

The morning begins with a drive to Biei, a small town surrounded by a picturesque landscape of gently rolling hills and vast fields. The drive time is approximately four hours and we will be making rest stops along the way.

Once here we will be visiting the panoramic flower gardens of Shikisai-no-oka. Enjoy the spectacular views across fifteen hectares of land on Oka-no-machi Biei. It is a paradise of seasonal blossoms from spring through to fall, in which several dozen different species of flowers and grasses flourish. Why not come and enjoy the beautiful fragrance of the blossoms amid spectacular panoramic scenery?

The name Shikisai-no-Oka is a combination of two words, “Shikisai (color)” and “Shiki (four seasons)” Carpeted with flowers from April to October, enjoy the colors and fragrance of several dozen different flowers such as tulip, lupine, lavender, salvia, sunflower, dahlia, and Japanese anemone according to the season.

There is free time here to enjoy the scenery followed by lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon we begin with a visit to Takushin kan, an exhibition hall with beautiful landscape photography by renowned photographer Maeda Shinzo and his eldest son Akira. The exhibition displays landscape photographs from across Japan with an emphasis on photos from the local Biei region.

The photo gallery displays about 80 pieces of artwork and allows you to enjoy viewing the beauty of Biei in all seasons. Unfortunately, you are not allowed to take photographs inside the gallery.

Our last stop on this touring day is at Farm Tomita. Until the snow falls in October, Tomita’s fields are covered in a rainbow array of flowers. With the Daisetsuzan National park as a backdrop, this is one of the most photographed spots in Hokkaido.

Open to the public from sunrise to sunset, enjoy viewing lavender and various colorful flowers planted on this farm. Enjoy free time here so that you can walk around and take in the beauty. Among the facilities here include a display area for flower arrangements, a photo gallery exhibiting the four seasons of flowers displayed on the farm, a distillery house where lavender essential oil is extracted, gift shops and cafes.

Now, we make our way to our hotel for the evening, New Furano Prince Hotel. Our arrival will be by 5:00pm followed by a Japanese style dinner at 6:30pm.

Before and after dinner, enjoy the hot springs here as well as several other activities in the neighborhood. Just a 2-minute walk from the hotel is Kaze no Garden, and English garden complete with an authentic cottage. There are 365 varieties of flowers and a total of 20,000 plants in the garden.

Two other areas to consider visiting include the Furano Dorama Kan, a shop with a selection of paper works and goods related to 3 dramas that were filmed in the area. The shop is a replica of the Furano Station built in 1942.

The other spot is the Ningle Terrace, a shopping area located in the green forest. The shops are in the form of wood cabins. Enjoy the cool breeze as you walk through the area.

Accommodations: New Furano Prince Hotel



Day 6 – July 14th, 2020 Tuesday – Furano-Biei-Asahikawa (B/L)

Please meet your guide by 8:00am as we are off on a full day of touring. **Please prepare a small overnight bag as our larger pieces will be sent by truck and meet us on arrival in Sapporo.**

The morning begins with a short drive to the Furano Cheese Factory where you can observe the production process of the local camembert type cheese. Cheese samples, including those of a black cheese colored by squid ink, can be tasted in the factory shop.

Besides the cheese factory, there is also an ice cream parlor and a pizzeria. While here, enjoy a hands-on ice cream making experience. Best yet, is that you get to eat the fruits of your labor.

Our next stop is at Blue Pond, getting its name from the unnaturally bright blue hue of its water. With tree stumps protruding from the surface of the water, the Blue Pond has an ethereal and enchanting appearance.

The blue color of the pond has not been fully explained but is attributed to the presence of aluminum hydroxide in the water that reflects the shorter wavelength blue light the same way the earth's atmosphere does. The color of the pond also changes depending on what angle you look at it from and even at different times of the day. Although the water appears blue when viewed from the land, the color is not found in the water itself.

Lunch time, at a local restaurant.

This afternoon we will be driving along the scenic northwest area of the Biei, "Patchwork Road", so named for the appearance of its fields.

Over the years, the area's beauty has attracted the attention of marketing professionals, and some trees were used in commercials or for package label designs. Among these famous trees are a row of larch trees on the Mild Seven Hill (from a cigarette commercial), a poplar named Ken and Mary Tree (from a car commercial) and the Seven Star Tree (which appeared on cigarette packages). A group of oak trees is known as the Parents and Child Tree.

Other sites of interest in the Patchwork Road area are the Hokusei Hill Observatory, a pyramid structure that offers nice views over the fields of Biei and the Zerebu Hill, a flower park.

You will be astonished by the magnificent views of colorful flowers such as lavenders, sunflowers, poppies, cosmoses, and purple salvias, blooming just like beautiful patchworks. You can walk through these flowers at some locations. One of the best viewpoints is where you can see poplars and oaks standing imposingly on a vast green field.

From here, we are off to Asahikawa, Hokkaido's second largest city. A city of water, Asahikawa sits on the confluences of the Ishikari, Biei, Chubetsu and Ushibetsu rivers. There are over 700 bridges in the city, the most famous of which has become an attraction, the Asahibashi over the Ishikari River, completed in 1932.

Accommodations for this evening are at the JR Inn Asahikawa, directly connected to the JR Asahikawa Station and AEON Mall. This hotel is perfect for our evening in Asahikawa. Arrival will be by 3:45pm.

Besides its location, the hotel offers a public bath for men and women in a semi-outdoor setting, rooms with views of the surrounding countryside, and a direct elevator down to the AEON Mall. There is no need to bundle up as you shop and dine the evening away.



JR Inn Asahikawa- room, public bath, and view from many of the rooms

Accommodations: JR Inn Asahikawa



Day 7 – July 15th, 2020 Wednesday – Asahikawa-Sapporo (B)

Please meet your guide by 8:30am as we are off once again on a full day of touring visiting some of Asahikawa's sights and then onto Sapporo.

Our morning begins with a visit to the Otokoyama Sake Brewery and Museum. Otokoyama is one of the most internationally renowned sake brands in the world.

The complex includes a sake museum, a beautiful Japanese garden filled with flowers from May to September, a garden-side shaded rest area as well as a tasting room and gift shop.

The museum covers all facets of Otokoyama's rich sake brewing heritage, including ancient sake-related literature and art. In fact, one of Japan's most famous Ukiyoe painters, Utamaro, portrayed Otokoyama sake in a few of his works, forever affording Otokoyama a place in both the sake brewing and art histories of Japan.

The production of Otokoyama sake is said to have started 340 years ago in the Edo Period (1603-1867) at Itami in western Japan. It grew popular in Edo, and sake with the name "Otokoyama" was eventually produced nationwide. The sake produced in Asahikawa follows the tradition preserved since the Itami years

The tasting room and gift shop allows you to sample some of the most famous sake in the world, as well as the opportunity to purchase magnificent sake sets, and cups amongst others.

Now, off to a fruit picking experience at a local farm, followed by a stop at the Sunagawa Highway Oasis, where you can enjoy shopping and tasting local specialties. This is a good spot for omiyage shopping. Please enjoy lunch on your own at the food court or sit-down restaurant.

The shops and cafeteria are operated by major manufacturers from this region. It is possible to find many of Hokkaido's specialties here including melons, boxes of potatoes, whole crabs, famous stuffed squid from Hakodate, Royce chocolates and other Hokkaido chocolate confections.

You will also find a wide variety of Japanese sweets and a vast assortment of packaged food items. As well other souvenirs items, such as T-shirts and wooden animals, notably owls and bears: Owls and bears were and remain very special animals for the local Ainu people.

A fun stop, bustling and full of energy!

Now off to Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido and Japan's fifth largest city. Sapporo was once synonymous with winter, thanks to its annual snow festival, its famed snow crab and the white powder that reliably blankets the surrounding mountains. But much has changed since the city hosted the 1972 Winter Olympics. It now offers a variety of shops, galleries, and exciting new restaurants as well as green urban parks and an outdoorsy spirit.

Along the way, a stop at Okurayama Ski Jump Stadium. Constructed in 1931, the stadium was featured in the 1972 Winter Olympics, when it was home to the 90m ski jump competition. It is still used for ski jump competitions throughout the year.

A five-minute ride on the ski lift brings you to the top of the mountain, during which time you can catch a glimpse of what it's like to be a ski jumper. The viewing lounge at the far top of the mountain comes steadily closer, and the steeply sloping approach stretches out along one side. Seeing the takeoff point at such a close distance will surely give you a taste of what it's like to ski jump, as well as what it feels like to be an athlete.

Looking back once you have reached the top of the lift, you can enjoy panoramic views of the city of Sapporo. This refreshing experience will probably make you wish that the climb would last forever!



Now off to our hotel for our last two nights on tour, Century Royal Hotel Sapporo, ideally situated, adjacent to the shopping zone in front of JR Sapporo Station, and directly connected via an underground passage. Our arrival will be by 5:15pm and after checking in, a free afternoon and evening.



Century Royal Hotel Sapporo

Accommodations: Century Royal Hotel Sapporo



Day 8 – July 16th, 2020 Thursday – Sapporo (B)

After breakfast, a complete free day to enjoy for shopping and sightseeing on your own.

For those who would like to take a walk over to Tanukikoji Shopping Street, a covered arcade in downtown Sapporo, please meet your Panda Travel escort in the lobby by 9:15am. Built in 1873, this covered shopping arcade is the oldest shopping district in Hokkaido. Extending eight blocks from east to west with approximately 200 shops selling a wide variety of merchandise. It is a mixture of shops with a long history among others catering to a younger generation. Among the shops you will recognize here are Don Quijote and Daiso, the 108-yen store.

Nijo Fish Market is also close by and a good spot for purchasing dried fish products. There are also several seafood restaurants surrounding the market that make an ideal lunch spot.

Enjoy free time here to browse and shop. For the return to our hotel, either follow the same easy underground path back or if you have too many purchases, a taxi is inexpensive and can hold 4 persons.

Accommodations: Century Royal Hotel Sapporo



Day 9 – July 17th, 2020 Friday – Sapporo-Otaru-Chitose (B)

After breakfast, please meet your guide in the lobby by 9:00am as we are off on a full last day on tour. Our luggage will be sent separately by truck and meet up with us later on arrival at the Chitose Airport.

The morning begins with a visit to Shiroi Koibito Park, a theme park by Ishiya, a local chocolate company. The company's flagship product is the Shiroi Koibito cookie, which consists of two thin butter cookies and a layer of white chocolate in between. It is one of the most famous souvenirs from Hokkaido.

You will be able to observe the candy production process as well as purchasing some souvenir treats to bring home.

The outside theme park offers many photo opportunities and the flower gardens change with the season. At the appointed time, look up at the tower clock for a musical show.



Shiroi Koibito Park

From here, a short drive to Otaru, a romantic port town steeped in a rich history that dates to its glory days as a major herring center. Otaru was the terminal station for Hokkaidō's first railroad, and today nostalgic warehouses and buildings still line the picturesque canal district.

Our first stop is at the Tanaka Sake Brewery, the most famous local sake brewery in Otaru. Their building built in 1905 during the Meiji Era is designated as a historical architecture. After a short factory tour enjoy tasting 10 brands sake.

Otaru has over the last 100 years developed and prospered as "the sea entrance of Hokkaido" and gained the nickname "Wall Street of the North." The glassworks shops, coffee shops, restaurants and shopping malls along the canal have been converted from stone-built or brick-built warehouses, which were used for storage in the days when commerce flourished, and the canal was crowded with jostling barges. When night falls, oil lamps on the cobbled streets are lit, and the town evokes a gentle, nostalgic mood.

The city is renowned for its glassworks, music boxes, and sweet shops that can be found lining Sakaimachi Street. As you near the end of Sakaimachi Street, look and listen when you come to the vintage steam clock at the front of the charming Music Box Museum. The nostalgic atmosphere inside the main building of the museum takes you back in time. The museum houses almost 15,000 music boxes, ranging from matchbox sized souvenirs to precisely tuned masterpieces. The Music Box Museum has something for everybody, from The Beatles to the latest J-pop hits.

Another must, the Kitaichi Glass Shop where you can enjoy looking and shopping for beautiful glassware. Where they once made a lot of glass buoys and lamps for fishery, now the focus is on products to attract visitors.

For some sweet times we will visit another famous landmark, the Kitakaro confectionary shop. The cake and confectionery store is a popular stop for tourists and locals alike. There is a cult like following of its famous honeyed wheeled layered cakes and there are good reasons why. The layered cakes are delicate and the honey flavored intense, but not too sweet. Sit and enjoy at the small café right in the store. Coffee, tea and ice cream are also available.

Enjoy lunch at one of many restaurants just steps away. Otaru is well known for its beer, and Otaru Beer, next to the canal, is a popular restaurant with a medieval Germanic theme. If sushi is more to your liking, a stroll down to Sushi-dori Street is well worth your time. You will find a collection of some 20 sushi restaurants.



Otaru

From here, we begin the drive to the Chitose Airport. Once there, please claim your bags from the buses and we will begin the check-in process.

Hawaiian Airlines #442 Departs Chitose 7:45 pm – Arrive Honolulu 8:20 am