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like steamed potatoes with butter. It may be forgotten are the rice and grains being produced in great quantities in Hokkaido as well. Biei, Furano, and Tokachi are big on wheat cultivation, and as a result, local wheat-based products like bread and pasta are widely available and very popular here. Speaking of the Tokachi area, the towns of Shintoku and Horokanai are famous buckwheat producers, so they may be worth checking out if you're a soba noodles-person. Fans of Japanese rice will love the high-quality rice available here as well, including such premium brands as Yumejirika and Nanatsuboshi. Fruits And, of course, no list of Hokkaido foods would be complete without mentioning the fruit most people associate it with - the melon! Of course, you may immediately think of the Yubari King premium melons, but there are plenty of other melon-producing places in Hokkaido as well if you take some time to explore a little. The sourish but refreshing blue honeysuckle (also known as haskap berries) is another fruity Hokkaido delicacy you should try. These berries can be enjoyed as-is or through one of the many snacks made with their juices. Cherries, apples, and prunes are a few other fruits that serious fruit hunters will be on the lookout for during a trip to Hokkaido. Do some research on what delightful local specialty each area is famous for before your trip, and complete your trip with a fantastic local meal! Must-try Mouthwatering Hokkaido Food: Robotayaki, Jingsukan and More! 8. What Hokkaido souvenirs should I buy? retirementbonus / Shutterstock.com Confectionery You can't go wrong with Ishiya Seika's "Shiroi Koibito," an exquisite and delectable langue de chat cookie snack. Other popular items to look out for are Hokkaido confectionery giant Rokkatei's "Marusei Butter Sandwich Cookies," Royce' raw chocolate, Ryugetsu's "Sanpouroku" layer cake, and Kitakaro's "Kaiseki Okaki" baked mochi flakes. LeTAO is another reliable manufacturer of confectionery souvenirs. They're most famous for their "Double Fromage" snacks. Still, most of their other baked goods and chocolate products travel well and are very suitable for bringing home as souvenirs. Processed food Visitors from abroad love Hokkaido's chinmi. The term literally means "rare flavor," and it covers a variety of uncommon snacks and processed food such as saketoba (preserved salmon) and scallop eyes. Chinmi can be readily found in almost every supermarket in Hokkaido. Dairy products Besides cheese and butter, ice cream is also a popular souvenir. You'll be spoilt for choice as there are plenty of farm brands and dairy manufacturer products available for purchase. Alcohol Each region in Hokkaido has its own special local sake. Some of the more famous examples of brands would be Mashiko Town's Kunimare, Sapporo's Chitosetsuru, and Kuriyama Town's Kobayashi Shuzo. Of course, there's also no end to unique craft beer for the adventurous, including a particular drift ice beer that is as refreshing as it is an attractive shade of blue! Hokkaido is also a wine-producing region, with white grapes such as Kerner and Niagara, and red grapes like Yamasachi and Pinot Noir, being the main cultivated varieties. General goods The range of lavender-based products available in Furano comes highly recommended, as there are plenty of useful products to choose from, including things like essential oils and bath soap. Along the same vein, the mint-based products from Kitami are must-buy items for those who enjoy the herb's energizing fragrance. Several Hokkaido cosmetics brands have been garnering more attention in recent years as well, so keep your eyes peeled for them too! All items mentioned above can be found in specialist shops, department stores, train stations, airport shops, souvenir stores, or convenience stores at some tourist hotspots. 9. What Hokkaido festivals and events can I join? Photo courtesy of YOSAKOI Soran Festival Organizing Committee The internationally renowned Sapporo Snow Festival is one event you should definitely look out for, but there are also other fun and exciting festivals to join throughout the year, even if you won't be visiting in winter. Here's a quick and fun list! · Early May: Hakodate Goryokakusai (Hakodate City) Held in Goryokaku Park. The impressive Imperial Parade is one of its highlights. · Early June: YOSAKOI Soran Festival (Sapporo City) A dance parade held in Sapporo City with teams of participants dishing out high-energy dances over a few days. · Late July: Hokkaido Heso Matsuri (Furano City) An amusing festival where participants dance around with exposed stomachs painted to look like faces. · Late July: Otaru Oshio Matsuri (Otaru City) The main event of this festival is the massive dance parade through town. On the final day, there will be a fireworks show. · August 9 - 11: Ubagami Daijingu Togoyosa (Esashi Town) A traditional festival that has been designated as one of Hokkaido's Intangible Folk Cultural Property. · Late August: Noboribetsu Jigoku Matsuri (Noboribetsu City) An intimidating float of King Enma, lord of the underworld in Japanese folklore, is paraded through the hot spring town. · September: Kushiro Samma Matsuri (Kushiro City) Samma, or saury fish, is the main feature of this festival. Visitors can look forward to enjoying charcoal-grilled saury and taking part in exciting events like a saury-grabbing contest! Needless to say, there are plenty of other festivals and events as well, so do some research on which ones will be held during the dates of your visit and drop by for a healthy dose of cultural immersion. 10 Must-See Hokkaido Events and Festivals (Spring/Summer) Hokkaido Events Calendar: Exciting Autumn and Winter Festivals and Events! 10. Any tour packages I can take to enjoy Hokkaido to the fullest? DG PhotoStock / Shutterstock.com Yes, there are a variety of Hokkaido vacation packages. Our recommendation is any one of the nature tours, all of which have been carefully designed to appeal even to those who are not used to outdoor activities, complete with explanations about highlights to look out for during the tour. Many of these guided tours can be found in the Niseko or eastern Hokkaido areas, but if you do a little bit of research beforehand, you're likely to find some in other regions of Hokkaido as well! More information can be found on the homepages of individual tour packages, many of which support bookings and reservations in multiple languages for the convenience of non-Japanese visitors. So consider adding a tour or two to your itinerary to enrich your Hokkaido experience! There are also bus tours that bring you on a fixed route to a few mainstream tourist destinations. These tours are efficient ways of hitting most of the well-known hotspots without needing to plan your own schedule, so the convenience will undoubtedly appeal to some. In addition, some travel agencies organize their own tours, while others are provided by bus companies. Book Now ► Browse activities and guided tours in Hokkaido 11. How can I get to know Ainu culture better? Photo credit: The Foundation for Ainu Culture The Ainu are indigenous to the northern region of Japan, especially the island of Hokkaido island. As a people, they have deep respect for the natural world around them, and thus the common thread that can be seen in their lives is that of harmony with nature, which has also influenced the culture of the people of Hokkaido. There are several places in Hokkaido where you can get to know Ainu culture better. Upopoy (National Ainu Museum and Park) opened in 2020 and serves as the main base in efforts to revitalize and expand Ainu culture. Here, you'll find historical and cultural exhibits and artifacts related to the Ainu being displayed in a way that makes them easy to learn from. Mukkuri (a kind of mouth harp), traditional dances, and traditional arts are performed on stage from time to time, and Upopoy has activities that visitors can take part in to understand Ainu food culture better or make their own traditional craftworks. Experience Ainu Culture at Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park 12. Where can I find the best city nightscapes in Hokkaido? City sights at night in Hokkaido are as beautiful as the day, but with an added mystique! One of the more popular night scenes can be found in Hakodate, atop Mount Hakodate. Touted as one of Japan's three most beautiful city nightscapes, the sight of the land beneath sparkling with lights against the deep darkness makes it seem as if the terrain itself were floating upon nothing. The night view of Sapporo is also considered one of Japan's three most beautiful city nightscapes, and there are a few places you can go to enjoy this electrifying sight. There's the easily accessible Sapporo JR Tower, or the observation decks in Sapporo TV Tower, Mount Moiwa, or Mount Okurayama. Other places of note are Asahiyama Memorial Park and the rooftop Ferris wheel of the NORBESA building in the Susukino district. For extra comfort when enjoying the night views, book a room at JR Tower Hotel Nikko Sapporo and get an exclusive view of the city's night lights all to yourself for the duration of your stay! Otaru and Mount Tenpu are other places you can visit for a fabulous night scene. For something unique, try to catch a glimpse of the fantasy-like factories of Muroran at night! 13. Is it true you don't need a map to get around Sapporo? The truth is, because Sapporo's buildings are designed in a grid-like pattern, you can indeed get around without a map if you remember certain key points. One such key to remember is that the city is organized into sequentially numbered blocks clearly indicated on street signage. Therefore, it's relatively simple to use these numbers as a reference to get to your destination. The grid system of the city reflects its origin. Sapporo was established in 1869 during the Meiji era (1868 to 1912) and the city structure was based on the streets of Kyoto, which has a similar system for its plots of land. Currently, the city is divided into cardinal directions along Minami 1 Jo-dori Avenue and the Sosei River. To the north of this division is the administrative district, the south houses the residential district, whereas factories are located to the east. Odori Park sits in between the north and south regions of the city as a firebreak. Sapporo City developed into what we now see with those elements as its foundation. 14. Do people in Hokkaido speak Japanese? Yes - Hokkaido-ben! The people in Hokkaido speak a slightly accented version of standard Japanese along with a number of local vocabulary quirks that often slip casually into normal conversations. So if you have to ask, "Was that Japanese?" then it's most probably something from the Hokkaido-ben dialect! Here's a quick list in case you're curious. · Namara Used as an intensifier, similar to words like totemo (very) or sugoku (extremely). Use "Namara umai ssho," to tell someone that the food was very delicious! · Azumashii This adjective describes something comfortable or calming. The negative plain form of this adjective is azumashikunai. · Nanmo nanmo For when you want to reassure someone thanking you profusely that what you did was "no problem at all." · Menkoi Used to describe something or someone cute or adorable. The negative plain form of this adjective is menkokunai. · (Gomi wo) nageru In standard Japanese, nageru (throw) is mostly used in the context of throwing something around, such as a ball. In the Hokkaido dialect, it specifically means to dispose of something. · Tobiki The Hokkaido-ben word for corn (tomorokoshi). You'll also hear a lot of -dabe or -dabesa when talking to people in Hokkaido, as those are sentence-ending particles peculiar to the region of Hokkaido that serve the same purpose as -desu or -desho. If you speak some Japanese, try replacing your standard sentences with some of these words to give the locals a pleasant surprise and make their day. Hokkaido-Ben: Useful Words from the Hokkaido Dialect to Spice Up Your Trip *Information in this article is accurate as of June 2024. English translation by: Huimin Pan Foreign Residents Tel All: 5 Hidden Gems in Hokkaido! Book Now ► JR Hokkaido Rail Pass — Unlimited 3 / 4 / 5 / 7 Day Pass Written by: Minna no Kotoba Sha is a production company founded by an editor with extensive experience in editing local magazines in Sapporo. For over 20 years, our team has conducted research and written articles across Hokkaido, with Sapporo as our primary hub. Our diverse portfolio includes the production of various books such as travel guides, informational magazines, and collections showcasing the picturesque landscapes of Hokkaido. Comprised entirely of women, the team at Minna no Kotoba Sha boasts diverse interests, including a passion for travel, culinary delights, and alcoholic beverages. The scope of our communication efforts spans a wide range, covering everything from introducing notable restaurants to providing coverage of local events and sharing stories of leisure experiences. *This information is from the time of this article's publication. *Prices and options mentioned are subject to change.*Unless stated otherwise, all prices include tax. Hokkaido is huge, and it has so many attractive places to choose from. Are you feeling overwhelmed and don't know where to go?No worries. As a local who's traveled around Hokkaido for over 20 years, I'm here to help you decide the best destinations for your trip. In this guide, I will walk you through 12 major destinations in Hokkaido. You will learn everything you need to know about each place, from things to do, local food and day trip ideas to recommended hotels. Don't miss the FAQ at the end! I will answer some of the most common questions I received from over 100 travelers I helped with their itineraries. There's a good chance your question is covered too. Now, let's find the Hokkaido destinations you'll love! This post contains affiliate links that at no additional cost to you, I may earn a small commission to enjoy a cup of coffee on my trip» Japan's northernmost island, Hokkaido is known for its beautiful landscapes, fresh seafood and produce, outdoor activities, onsen hot springs and many more.If you are planning a trip to Japan and visiting busy places like Tokyo and Kyoto (or anywhere in the rest of Japan!), Hokkaido is a great destination to add to your itinerary. Here's a quick overview of the places that I recommend for different types of travelers. Which one are you?For nature lovers: Shiretoko, Akan, Lake Kussharo & Lake Mashu areaFor onsen lovers: Akan, Utoro, Noboribetsu, Lake KussharoFor foodies: Sapporo, Obihiro, Kitami, HakodateFor families: Sapporo, Asahikawa, Abashiri, HakodateFor culture & history lovers: Sapporo, Otaru, Hakodate, AsahikawaNow, let's look into each destination. Sapporo is the biggest city and the capital of Hokkaido, home to nearly 2 million people. It has a good mixture of touristy spots and local gems that can be found in the city life. There are plenty options for shopping, restaurants, cafes and izakaya (japanese-style bars).The city provides many seasonal attractions as well, such as Sapporo Summer Festival, Sapporo Snow Festival, and many spots for cherry blossom and autumn leaves across the city.It is also the travel hub — the main airport of Hokkaido, New Chitose Airport is nearby. You can access most of other major Hokkaido cities by direct train, bus or flight. Whether you are going on a road trip across Hokkaido (