

Lavender Fields by Day, a Steaming Hell Valley by Night — A 7-Day Hokkaido Itinerary

Seven days through Japan's northernmost island, built around a rental car rather than a rail pass: Sapporo's neon ramen alley and 1890s beer brewery, a day trip to Otaru's lamp-lit canal and hand-blown glass workshops, the cobalt Blue Pond and Farm Tomita's lavender rows around Biei and Furano, and a final soak in Noboribetsu's sulfur-steamed Hell Valley — with real hotels, a real rental-car route, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION	BEST TIME TO GO	FROM
7 Days	Late June – Early August Farm Tomita's lavender peaks in the second half of July, and Biei's flower fields run from late June through early August; summer also brings Hokkaido's mildest, least humid weather of the year, well before the region's heavy winter snowfall.	\$1,450 USD / person for 2 people, incl. 6 nights' lodging, a 6-day compact rental car, and admission to Shikisai-no-Oka

Day 1

Arrival in Sapporo & Susukino's Ramen Alley

Touch down at New Chitose Airport and ride the rails into Hokkaido's capital for a first night built around its famous ramen alley.

Airport Transfer — New Chitose Airport to Sapporo Station

~37 minutes · JR Rapid Airport train, ¥1,150 (~\$8 USD) one-way

The JR Rapid Airport service runs direct from the arrivals level to Sapporo Station roughly every 15-20 minutes, the fastest and cheapest way into the city center; a taxi covers the same ride for around \$65-75 USD.

Odori Park & the Sapporo TV Tower

~1 hour, self-guided · tower observation deck ~\$7 USD / person

A 1.5-kilometer green spine running through downtown Sapporo, host to the Snow Festival each February and open-air beer gardens each summer; the 147-meter TV Tower at its east end gives an easy first orientation over the city grid.

Dinner — Sapporo Ramen Yokochō

~1 hour · ~\$9-13 USD / person

A narrow, neon-lit alley in Susukino packed with roughly a dozen tiny ramen counters, several open since the 1950s, serving the butter-and-corn miso ramen style Sapporo made famous — pick a stall with a line and expect to eat shoulder-to-shoulder with strangers.

Overnight — Sapporo Grand Hotel

From \$150-190 USD / night, for 2 people

Hokkaido's oldest Western-style hotel, open since 1934 a few minutes' walk from Odori Park, with old-fashioned service and a central location that beats most of the newer towers for convenience.

Sapporo Grand Hotel · North 1, West 4, Chuo-ku, Sapporo

Day 2

Sapporo Sightseeing: Beer, Seafood & a Night View

A full day in the capital, from a 19th-century brewery to a seafood breakfast market and a ropeway view after dark.

Sapporo Beer Museum

~1.5 hours, self-guided · museum free, tasting lounge ~\$5-8 USD / person

Japan's only beer museum, set in a red-brick 1890 brewery building that traces Sapporo Beer's history back to Hokkaido's earliest days of Western-style development; the ground-floor Star Hall tasting lounge pours a Hokkaido-only Classic lager.

Sapporo Beer Museum · sapporobeer.jp

Nijo Fish Market Breakfast

~1 hour, self-guided · ~\$15-25 USD / person

A compact seafood market running since the early 1900s, its stalls grilling fresh scallops and crab legs and ladling out uni and salmon-roe rice bowls for a standing breakfast a few blocks from Odori Park.

Mt. Moiwa Ropeway Night View

~2 hours round trip · ropeway + cable car ~\$14 USD round trip

A two-stage ropeway and mini-cable car climb to the 531-meter summit of Mt. Moiwa, rated one of Japan's three best night views — the city grid and Sapporo Dome spread out below once the lights come on.

Overnight — Sapporo Grand Hotel

From \$150-190 USD / night, for 2 people

A second night in the same Odori Park-area rooms.

Day 3

Otaru Canal & Glassblowing Day Trip

A short rail hop west to a 19th-century port town built around a lamp-lit canal and a long tradition of hand-blown glass.

Train — Sapporo to Otaru

~32 minutes · JR Rapid train, ~¥660 (~\$4.50 USD) one-way

A quick, frequent JR Hakodate Line ride west along the coast, with Otaru Station's own stained-glass lamp displays setting the tone before you've even left the platform.

Otaru Canal Walk & Warehouse District

~1.5 hours, self-guided · free

A stone-paved towpath along a 1923 canal once used to unload cargo ships by hand, its restored brick warehouses — now cafes and shops — and 63 gas lamps giving the waterfront the look it had a century ago.

Glassblowing Workshop — Kitaichi Glass

~45 minutes · workshop experience from ~\$25-40 USD / person

Otaru has produced hand-blown glass since the herring-boat-float days of the early 1900s, and Kitaichi Glass's Sakaimachi Street workshop lets visitors blow and take home their own cup or small vase under a glassblower's guidance.

Kitaichi Glass · Sakaimachi-dori, Otaru

Lunch — Otaru Sushi-dori

~1 hour · ~\$20-35 USD / person

Otaru's own sushi street, a few dozen counters within a couple of blocks of each other, running on uni, scallops, and salmon landed that morning at the nearby fish port — noticeably cheaper than the same cuts in Tokyo.

Day 4

Rental Car Pickup & the Blue Pond

Furano Ropeway, Mt. Kitanomine

~1.5 hours round trip · ~¥1,800 (~\$12.50 USD) round trip

A quick ropeway ride up Furano's ski-resort mountain for a wraparound view over the Furano Basin's checkerboard fields, with the Tokachi mountain range filling the horizon on a clear day.

Dinner — Furano Curry & Cheese, on your own

~1 hour · ~\$15-22 USD / person

Furano's dairy-country roots show up on every menu — curry rice finished with a slab of local cheese is the dish to order, and the town's handful of cheese-and-wine shops make an easy post-dinner wander.

Overnight — Furano Natulux Hotel

From \$130-170 USD / night, for 2 people

A second night in the same Furano Station-area rooms.

Day 6

Drive to Noboribetsu & Hell Valley at Dusk

A longer driving day south to one of Japan's most famous hot-spring towns, built around a valley the Edo era named for the underworld.

Drive — Furano to Noboribetsu

~3.5 hours · ~220 km via Doto Expressway and Route 453

The longest drive of the trip, cutting back through Sapporo's outer expressway loop before turning south to the Pacific coast and the hot-spring valley above it.

Jigokudani (Hell Valley) Walking Trail

~1 hour, self-guided · free

A volcanic crater of bubbling, sulfur-yellow ground right at the edge of town, its boardwalk trail circling steam vents and hot streams that still feed every onsen bath in Noboribetsu — best walked right at dusk, when the steam catches the last light.

Overnight & Kaiseki Dinner — Noboribetsu Grand Hotel

From \$280-340 USD / night, for 2 people, incl. kaiseki dinner & breakfast

A large onsen resort with indoor and outdoor baths fed directly by Hell Valley's springs, and a sprawling multi-course kaiseki dinner served the traditional way as part of the overnight rate.

Noboribetsu Grand Hotel · Noboribetsu Onsen-cho, Hokkaido

Day 7

Last Soak & the Drive to the Airport

One more hot-spring soak before returning the car and flying out.

Morning Onsen Soak

~1 hour · included with overnight stay

A last unhurried bath before checkout, indoor or outdoor depending on the morning weather — most Noboribetsu ryokans allow a late checkout specifically for one more soak.

Drive & Rental Car Return — Noboribetsu to New Chitose Airport

~50 minutes · ~75 km via Doto Expressway, return at the airport counter

A short final leg north to the airport, with the rental counter inside the domestic terminal for a drop-off that takes only a few minutes.

Departure — New Chitose Airport

Variable · allow 2-3 hours before an international flight

New Chitose's terminal has its own hot-spring bath and a ramen theme park for travelers with a long layover before the flight home.