



HOKKAIDO & TOHOKU: THE ROAD NORTH

with Dr Kathleen Olive

Discover the path less travelled in northern Japan over its moderate summer, exploring diverse histories, indigenous culture, serene temples and exquisite natural beauty

HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore contemporary art and sculpture in Sapporo and Aomori
- Encounter the now-protected Ainu culture and its traditional crafts, at the Upopoy National Ainu Museum
- Admire the spectacular gold-covered Konjikido pavilion and elegant beauty of Chuson-ji temple
- Understand the influence of the West following Japan's era of isolation, at Sapporo and Hakodate
- Savour fresh seafood from Hokkaido's pristine waters and sample artisanal cheeses and wines created in Furano
- Experience the annual Nebuta Festival, with lantern floats, *taiko* drummers and dancers parading through Aomori
- Discover the pine-clad islands and Zen temples of iconic Matsushima Bay

IN A NUTSHELL

DATES: 22 July – 07 August 2024

ITINERARY:

Sapporo (4n), Furano (2n), Noboribetsu (1n), Hakodate (2n), Aomori (3n), Ichinoseki (Hiraizumi) (1n), Matsushima (2n), Tokyo (1n)

PRICE: \$13,950pp twin share

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$1,950 for sole use of a double room

FITNESS: Above moderate

GROUP SIZE: max. 16 places



Limelight Arts Travel Pty Ltd
Level 6, 84 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000
(02) 8599 4201
www.limelight-arts-travel.com.au

LIMELIGHT
ARTS—TRAVEL

OVERVIEW

The island of Hokkaido and Tohoku region offer a side of Japan not experienced by most travellers, as poet Bashō noted centuries ago in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Hokkaido's scenery forms a stunning backdrop for the indigenous Ainu culture, and the island offers art from the traditional to the contemporary, as well as exceptional seafood and locally-grown produce. Tohoku, in northern Honshu, is similarly diverse, from the vibrant Nebuta Festival, when enormous lantern floats parade through Aomori's streets, to serene and UNESCO-listed mountain temples and celebrated views across Matsushima Bay.

This new itinerary commences in Sapporo, best known as a winter holiday base but with a mild summer perfect for exploring its modern history and spectacular scenery. Travelling into Hokkaido's interior, fields of bright flowers form a backdrop to our visits, as we encounter the Ainu village at Noboribetsu and Hakodate's historic sites.

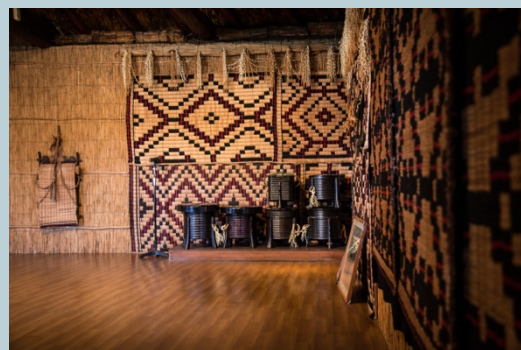
Crossing the Tsugaru Strait by ferry, we explore Japan's ancient past at a well-preserved Jomon archaeological site and celebrate in festive Aomori. At Hirosaki, we survey the samurai district and castle before travelling to Chuson-ji, the site of World Heritage-listed temples that exemplify the historical relationship between Buddhism and feudal lords. After discovering Matsushima's Zen temples against an iconic backdrop of pine-covered islands, we travel by Shinkansen to Tokyo to conclude our tour.

The experience is rounded out by Japan's refined and regional cuisine, and by the expertise of tour leader Dr Kathleen Olive, who is well-known for her courses on Japanese art and history.

TOUR LEADER

Dr Kathleen Olive is a well-known cultural tour leader, with over twenty years' experience leading tours to Europe, North America, Australasia and Japan.

While Kathleen is particularly known for her expertise in Italy, she has recently pursued a longstanding interest in Japanese art, aesthetics and design. Since 2017 she has led eight sold-out tours to Japan and presented regularly on its history and art in popular lectures and online classes.



Above, from top: Hirosaki Castle, now surrounded by a large park with over 2000 cherry trees; Hokkaido Government Office, Sapporo, a visual reminder of nineteenth-century Western influence; Ainu arts and crafts, protected and showcased in the new Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park.

Below, tour leader Dr Kathleen Olive



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LIMELIGHT
ARTS — TRAVEL

DETAILED ITINERARY

MONDAY 22 JULY – ARRIVAL (D)

An arrival transfer from New Chitose Airport Sapporo is included for all participants; contact us for further information. Meet your tour leader Dr Kathleen Olive and fellow travellers at 5.00pm in the lobby of our hotel in Sapporo, before departing by coach for **Mount Moiwa**. Here the Mount Moiwa Ropeway takes us three quarters of the way up the mountain, where we complete our journey to the summit by cable car. We enjoy a welcome dinner and admire panoramic views of Sapporo and the Ishikari Plain, before returning to the hotel. Overnight Sapporo.

TUESDAY 23 JULY – HISTORIC SAPPORO (B, L)

Originally a simple trading post with the indigenous Ainu people, Sapporo city was established by the Meiji government and by 1868 had replaced Hakodate as the capital of Hokkaido. The city's grid-pattern streets and avenues are modelled after Kyoto, as we understand on our **walking tour** this morning. We pass by the historic **Clock Tower**, the American neo-baroque **Hokkaido Government Office** and the **Botanic Garden**. We continue to the **Hokkaido Museum** for an overview of the history, culture and natural environment of Hokkaido, and of its Ainu people. After lunch, we explore the **Historical Village of Hokkaido**, an open-air museum consisting of 52 relocated and restored historic buildings of the Meiji and Taisho Periods (1861–1926). The village is divided into four distinct areas – the Town, Fishing Village, Farm and Mountain Villages – to illustrate the lifestyle and industries of that time. Returning to the hotel by coach, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Sapporo.

WEDNESDAY 24 JULY – ART IN SAPPORO (B, L)

This morning we travel to **Sapporo Art Park**, where the **Sapporo Sculpture Garden** and **Sapporo Art Museum** nestle in a verdant forest location. The Art Museum's collection holds work by artists closely associated with Hokkaido, while the sculpture garden displays pieces by leading Japanese and international sculptors that sit sympathetically in the natural environment. We explore the museum and 7.5-hectare sculpture garden before lunch in the museum cafe. After lunch, we return to the city for an afternoon and evening at leisure. Overnight Sapporo.



THURSDAY 25 JULY – OTARU (B, L)

Today we head to **Otaru**, a small harbour town and an important fishing port since Hokkaido's late nineteenth-century colonisation. Cobblestone streets line the historic canal where old warehouses have been restored as shops, restaurants and museums. We visit the **City General Museum**, housed in the old Otaru warehouse, and adjacent **Canal Building**, with its perspective on regional history and nature from the settlement by the Ainu to the Edo-era herring industry. Like Venice, Otaru is a city of canals, maritime trade – and glassmaking, producing floats for fishing nets and oil lamps. We visit the **Kitaichi Venetian Art Museum**, modelled in Italian marble after Venice's Palazzo Grassi and with over 3,000 pieces of Venetian glass, furniture and art. There is time for lunch and to wander among the well-preserved Western-style merchant buildings on **Sakaimichi Street**. The climate and natural features around Otaru are similar to the Scottish Highlands, providing an ideal environment for whisky production. Masataka Taketsuru, the founder of Nikka Whisky, was first Japanese person to master the art of whisky-making in Scotland, returning to Japan to establish the **Yoichi Distillery** in 1934. We tour the distillery and enjoy a wee dram before returning to Sapporo for an evening at leisure. Overnight Sapporo.

FRIDAY 26 JULY – WINE & CHEESE (B, L, D)

We check out and travel east to **Furano**, an agricultural region in central Hokkaido known for its dairy, wine and abundant fresh produce. At the **Furano Cheese Factory** we observe the production of local Camembert-style cheeses and sample a black cheese coloured by squid ink. Wine has been produced in Furano since 1972 when the Furano City Grape and Fruit Tree Research Institute was established to investigate the viability of cultivating local grape varieties. We enjoy a guided tour of the vineyard at **Furano Winery** and sample a selection of wines before lunch at **Furano Wine House**, featuring delicious local produce. After lunch we head to our hotel and check in. Dinner is in the hotel. Overnight Furano.

SATURDAY 27 JULY – FIELDS OF FLOWERS (B, L)

During summer, the fertile fields around Furano are carpeted with blooms grown for commercial use. This morning we visit **Farm Tomita**, where the lavender creates a colourful spectacle against the backdrop of the Tokachi Mountains. We continue to the **Goto Sumio Museum** to view the works of Sumio Goto, illustrator and master of *Nihonga* or traditional Japanese painting. Reflecting the pre-eminence of nature on Hokkaido, the monumental works are painted with pigments extracted from natural minerals and ores such as lapis lazuli, crystal and malachite. At nearby Biei we drive along the spectacular **Patchwork Road**, fields laid out in squares to resemble an enormous quilt, and stop to admire the scenery at the **Hokusai Hills Observatory Park**. After lunch, we take a stroll through a larch forest to the **Blue Pond**. Named for its deep hue, formed by minerals dissolved in the water, it forms part of an erosion control system for Mount Tokachi. Returning to Furano, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Furano.



SUNDAY 28 JULY – AINU CULTURE (B, L, D)

After checking out, we travel south to the **Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park**. Here we enjoy a lunch in the museum restaurant that fuses traditional Ainu ingredients with modern cooking techniques. In the new museum, we learn about the Ainu people of Hokkaido, Sakhalin and Kuril Islands. A distinctive group with an ancient language and culture unrelated to Japanese, the Ainu have been ignored and at times suppressed. Here, the oral traditions of their way of life, history, spiritual beliefs, arts and crafts, and traditional dance are now being carefully recorded. Following our exploration of the museum and parklands, we travel along the foreshore to the *onsen* town of **Noboribetsu**, where after dinner you may enjoy the soothing waters of the three types of hot springs available at the hotel. Overnight Noboribetsu.

MONDAY 29 JULY – TO HAKODATE (B, L, D)

This morning after checking out, we depart for **Hakodate**, one of the first Japanese ports opened to Western trade during the Meiji Restoration. After lunch in Hakodate, we visit **Fort Goryokaku**, a large fortification built at the end of the Edo Period to counter Western military threats. Based on a French design, the fort's five-pointed star allowed for increased gun battlements and greater fire power, and it witnessed the final battle in the Civil War between Shogun and Emperor in 1869. The fort was soon turned into a public park, with over 1,000 cherry trees along its moats. After checking in to our hotel, there is an excursion up Mount Hakodate by ropeway to enjoy the views over dinner at the summit restaurant. Overnight Hakodate.

TUESDAY 30 JULY – HAKODATE (B)

An early start today allows us to experience the bustling atmosphere of the **morning market**, with a vast range of seafood and fresh produce from across the island. After breakfast at the hotel, we embark on a **walking tour** of the Hakodate Bay waterfront and explore the remaining red-brick warehouses of early international traders. The late nineteenth century brought an influx of merchants to Hakodate from the West, Russia and China, as we see in **Motomachi's** Russian Orthodox Church, Old British Consul and Chinese Memorial Hall demonstrate. We return to the hotel after our tour, for an afternoon and evening at leisure. Overnight Hakodate.

WEDNESDAY 31 JULY – TO AOMORI (B, D)

Today we depart by ferry, crossing the Tsugaru Strait between Hokkaido and Honshu to Aomori, a journey of 3 hours and 40 minutes. Following disembarkation at Aomori Port Ferry Terminal, we transfer to the hotel and check in. There is a group dinner this evening. Overnight Aomori.



THURSDAY 01 AUGUST – AOMORI ART & CULTURE (B, L)

Today we survey local art and history, beginning at the **Aomori Museum of Art**. It showcases contemporary works by artists from the Aomori Prefecture in a striking building designed to resemble the adjacent World Heritage Jomon-era site. A huge room with 19-metre-high ceilings houses Marc Chagall's enormous backdrops designed for Massine's 1942 ballet *A/eko*. Nearby, the **Sannai Maruyama Archaeological Site** is one of the Jomon Period's best preserved and most complete villages (13,000–300BCE), discovered by accident during surveys for a baseball field and now offering recreations of some 700 pit-dwellings, long houses and burial pits. Jomon material culture is on display in the **Sanmaru Museum**, from inventive clay figurines to large ritualistic jade beads. After lunch, we visit the **Nebuta Warasse Museum**, where we learn about the annual Nebuta Matsuri. This 300-year-old traditional festival, with its carefully crafted floats, is one of Japan's most famous and the museum allows us to experience the sights and sounds of the parade at close quarters. Returning to the hotel, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Aomori.

FRIDAY 02 AUGUST – HIROSAKI & THE NEBUTA FESTIVAL (B)

This morning we travel inland to **Hirosaki**, the capital of the Tsugaru region during the Edo Period. Surrounded by a large park planted with 2000 cherry trees, **Hirosaki Castle** (1611) was a five-storey fortification with defensive walls, a moat and watch towers. It was rebuilt in 1810 after a lightning strike. We depart the seat of the feudal lord for the former samurai district, to visit the simply furnished and unadorned **Iwata Family Residence** and the well-appointed **Ito House**, residence of the Shogun's doctor. There is time to relax back at our hotel before we attend the **Nebuta Festival** this evening. The largest of the three great festivals of the Tohoku region, the Nebuta Matsuri is a Japanese fire festival held every August and is a highlight of our tour. From our seats lining the parade route, we view the spectacular lantern floats depicting mythical figures, ancient warlords, gods and Kabuki actors. Painstakingly constructed by locals over the course of a year, the floats are accompanied by *taiko* drums, musicians – and colourful dancers chanting *rassera rassera*, an invitation to join the festivities! Overnight Aomori.

SATURDAY 03 AUGUST – HIRAIZUMI WORLD HERITAGE SITE (B, L, D)

We check out and travel by Shinkansen to **Hiraizumi**. After lunch, we explore the town's eleventh and twelfth-century temples. A forest path leads to **Chuson-ji**, where the **Konjikodō** is covered in gold leaf and inlaid with mother of pearl in homage to the Amida Buddha. We continue to the garden of **Motsu-ji**, created in the eleventh century in a *sakutei* style to represent Paradise. Centred around a large pond with two stone islands, it evokes a serene coastline. Calling in at **Takadachi Gikeido**, we learn the tragic story of hero Minamoto Yoshitsune before we visit the **Hiraizumi Cultural Heritage Centre**. There is dinner this evening. Overnight Hiraizumi.

*Please note that today you travel with your **carry-on luggage only**; your large suitcase will be shipped to our Matsushima hotel, so please pack clothing, toiletries and supplies (including medication) for our one-night stay without your main luggage.*



SUNDAY 04 AUGUST – TO MATSUSHIMA (B)

Today we check out and depart by coach for Matsushima, whose bay of pine-clad islands has been named as one of Japan's three most scenic views. On arrival, we follow the long straight path, flanked by cedar trees, to **Zuiganji Temple**, known for its blend of Kamakura and Zen architectural styles. Its beautifully gilded and painted *fusuma* (sliding doors) are held in the small **Zuiganji Art Museum**. Next door is **Entsuin Temple**, built to honour the untimely death of Mitsumine Date, grandson of a legendary samurai, and with a stone garden that symbolises the islands of Matsushima Bay. The **Mausoleum** houses a statue of the young Lord Date on a white horse, surrounded by the retainers who committed ritual suicide upon his death. The interior is decorated in gold leaf, with ornate patterns and Christian symbols such as crosses, hearts and spades – and even a painting of a rose brought back from papal Rome. After free time for lunch, we check in to the hotel and enjoy an evening at leisure. Overnight Matsushima.

MONDAY 05 AUGUST – MATSUSHIMA BAY (B)

This morning we take a cruise to enjoy the incredible natural splendour of Matsushima Bay and its many islands from the water. On a small islet we visit **Godaido Temple**, the symbol of Matsushima and built in 807 CE. While the statues of the Five Great Kings of Wisdom enshrined here are presently housed in the Zuiganji Art Museum, they are returned to the island for display once every 33 years. There are tea and sweets overlooking the bay at the **Karantei Tea House** before we admire the golden *fusuma* (sliding doors) in a reception house for envoys of the shogun, princesses and feudal lords' wives. The small **Matsushima Museum** displays the armour, weapons and other artefacts of this aristocracy. Over a traditional red bridge to **Oshima Island** lie meditation caves carved in the rock, once used as monks' retreats, and an old cemetery. The later afternoon and evening are at leisure. Overnight Matsushima.

TUESDAY 06 AUGUST – TO TOKYO & TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM (B, D)

Today we check out and board the Shinkansen at Sendai for Tokyo, where we transfer to the **National Museum**. The museum holds a staggering series of collections that trace the history, archaeology and culture of Japan's many artforms, adding a valuable perspective to the sites we have seen during our travels. Lunch is at leisure in the museum complex before free time to further explore the collections, from hanging scrolls and calligraphy to kimono, sculpture, Chinese antiquities and woodblock prints. We head to the hotel and check in before gathering for our farewell dinner this evening. Overnight Tokyo.

WEDNESDAY 07 AUGUST – DEPARTURE (B)

Our tour arrangements conclude after breakfast in the hotel. Our partner Mary Rossi Travel would be pleased to assist with your onward travel arrangements, including flights, transfers and international travel insurance.



INCLUSIONS

- 16 nights' accommodation at 4* and 3* Superior hotels
- All breakfasts and 16 lunches or dinners
- All ground transport, boat and ferry transfers, Shinkansen and luggage transfers, guided tours and entrance fees to sites as mentioned in the itinerary, and tipping
- Expertise of and commentary by Australian tour leader throughout, including a set of pre-recorded lectures
- Expertise and assistance of a Japanese-speaking national guide, throughout

HOTELS

The Sapporo Grand Hotel 4* Sapporo, 4 nights

<https://grand1934.com/en/>

Shin Furano Prince Hotel 4* Furano, 2 nights

<https://www.princehotels.com/shinfurano/>

NB: hotel offering an onsen or thermal bathing experience

Noboribetsu Grand Hotel 4* Noboribetsu, 1 night

<https://www.nobogura.co.jp/en/>

NB: hotel offering an onsen or thermal bathing experience

Hakodate Kokusai Hotel 4* Hakodate, 2 nights

<https://www.hakodate-kokusai.jp/en/>

Hotel JAL City Aomori 3* Superior Aomori, 3 nights

<https://www.aomori-jalcity.co.jp/en/>

Bellino Hotel Ichinoseki 3* Superior Ichinoseki (Hiraizumi), 1 night

<https://bellino.jp/> (official website, Japanese only)

Matsushima Century Hotel 3* Superior Matsushima, 2 nights

https://ssl.centuryhotel.co.jp/lg_en/

Asakusa View Hotel 4* Tokyo, 1 night

<https://www.viewhotels.jp/asakusa/>

NB: hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.

A limited number of Japanese-style (i.e. tatami mat) rooms are available on request – contact us at the time of booking.

TOUR DETAILS

DATES

22 July – 07 August 2024

TOUR LEADER

Dr Kathleen Olive

ITINERARY

Sapporo – 4 nights

Furano – 2 nights

Noboribetsu – 1 night

Hakodate – 2 nights

Aomori – 3 nights

Ichinoseki (Hiraizumi) – 1 night

Matsushima – 2 nights

Tokyo – 1 night

PRICE

\$13,950pp twinshare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$1,950 for sole use of a double room

FITNESS

Above moderate: long days; removing shoes at some sites; unfamiliar diet

GROUP SIZE

Maximum 16 places

DEPOSIT

\$1,500pp at the time of booking

FINAL PAYMENT DUE

08 May 2024

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By booking on this tour, you accept our terms and conditions, which can be found on our website:

<https://www.limelight-arts-travel.com.au/terms-and-conditions-tours>



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