

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



Travel off the beaten track to the northern tip of Japan, home to Rebun and Rishiri islands. Explore the region's varied trails along rugged coastlines and clifftops. Refuel with seafood at local restaurants and hot spring soaks.

[**View Departure Dates & Prices**](#)

[**View Gallery**](#)

Prepared by [Adventure Hokkaido LLC.](#)

Travel Agency Licence No. 2-789

Email: info@adventure-hokkaido.com

Tel: +81-50-3528-8243

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



Contents

About the Tour.....	3
About Rebun-Rishiri-Sarobetsu National Park.....	3
Tour highlights.....	3
Who is this tour for?.....	3
Itinerary at a glance.....	4
Accommodation.....	4
What's included.....	5
What's not included.....	5
Travel style.....	5
When do you run this tour?.....	6
Why travel self-guided in Hokkaido?.....	6
Getting around by public transport is fun and green.....	6
You are the guide.....	6
...but you are not alone!.....	6
How to book this tour?.....	7
Travel Insurance.....	7
Travel to the Starting Point.....	8
Tour map.....	9
Day-to-Day Itinerary.....	10
Day 1 - Arrive in Wakkanai.....	10
Day 2 - Ferry to Rebun Island & Hike Momoiwa Trail.....	11
Day 3 - Hike Capes Trail, Rebun Island.....	12
Day 4 - Ferry to Rishiri Island.....	13
Day 5 - Climb Mt. Rishiri.....	14
Day 6 - Explore More of Rishiri Island.....	15
Day 7 - Travel to Wakkanai & Onwards.....	15
Preparing For Your Tour.....	16
SIM Card.....	16
Translation.....	16
Navigation.....	16
Weather.....	17
Staying Safe While Hiking.....	17
Cash.....	17
Our recommended reading.....	17
Elevation profiles.....	18

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



About the Tour

Start	Finish	Grading	Season
Wakkanai	Wakkanai	Advanced Hiking	Late May, Late Aug to Sep

About Rebun-Rishiri-Sarobetsu National Park

This tour is perfect for adventurers who dream of deep exploration into remote corners of Japan that most travellers would never have the opportunity to visit. Mountains meet the ocean on these unique islands.

The tour takes place in the Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park, which sits at the very top of Hokkaido and is the northernmost national park in Japan. The southern tip of Sakhalin Island (Russia) is only 40 kms / 25 miles away - this is as far north in Japan as you can get!

The islands have a distinct ecosystem with striking Siberia-like landscapes in close proximity to the ocean. Leave the sticky heat behind and enjoy some refreshing summer hiking in this subarctic region!

Tour highlights

- Hike along the cliff-lined coast of Rebun Island, where alpine flowers overlook the ocean.
- Challenge the 1,721 metre Mt. Rishiri, an extinct volcano floating in the Sea of Japan.
- Visit the northernmost point of Japan, where Sakhalin is visible on a clear day!
- Experience Japanese hospitality in one of the most remote corners of the country.

Who is this tour for?

- Active travelers who enjoy hiking full days in the mountains on rough trails, averaging 9 km (5.6 mi) per day with elevation gains up to 1,000 m (3,280 ft).
- Curious travellers who enjoy a mix of activities, sightseeing and learning about the regions they visit.
- Adventurous travellers who enjoy rural hospitality, staying in Japanese style accommodations with natural hot springs on site.
- Independent travellers who like being their own guide and touring at their own pace.

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



Itinerary at a glance

Day	Activities	Km	Miles	Meals ¹
1	Arrive in Wakkanai	–	–	– ▾
2	Ferry to Rebun Island & Hike the Momoiwa Trail	6.0	3.7	B, D ▾
3	Hike the Capes Trail (Misaki-Meguri Trail)	14.2	8.8	B, D ▾
4	Ferry to Rishiri Island	–	–	B, D ▾
5	Climb Mt. Rishiri	13.0	8.1	B, D ▾
6	Explore more of Rishiri Island	–	–	B, D ▾
7	Ferry to Wakkanai	–	–	B ▾

Accommodation

Day	Type	Location	Ensuite Toilet	Ensuite Shower	Onsen	Laundry
1	Hotel ▾	Wakkanai	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Hotel ▾	Rebun Island	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Hotel ▾	Rebun Island	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Hotel ▾	Rishiri Island	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Hotel ▾	Rishiri Island	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Hotel ▾	Rishiri Island	✓	✓	✓	✓

We may change the facility options if our preferred accommodation is unavailable.

¹ B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



What's included

- 6 nights accommodation
- 6 breakfasts and 5 dinners
- Daily cue sheets to help you get around using public transport
- Full English speaking phone support

What's not included

- Transportation costs
- Airfare
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses
- Drinks with included meals

Travel style

Going self-guided means being your own boss– you have complete control over the day's schedule, from what to eat to how long to spend at a destination. This tour is therefore perfect for independent travellers who love the flexibility that comes with travelling alone. It also makes a great self-guided extension to any of our more involved guided tours!

You will travel by public transport on this tour. Hokkaido is a fairly vast land with most residents relying on cars and much of the infrastructure has been built with this in mind. While this means that more intensive trailheads are a little out of reach of public transport, there are still a number of very accessible, leisurely day and loop hikes that can be reached by train, bus or taxi ([Read our guide to using public transport in Hokkaido](#)). Our self-guided tours showcase the very best of these smaller routes.

Being your own boss does of course mean that you must take responsibility for yourself to a certain degree. This includes making sure you have enough funds on you to pay for public transport and meals, getting yourself from A to B in a timely manner, keeping on top of train and bus timetables and looking after your own luggage.

A luggage transfer service is not included in this tour, so you will need to carry it with you when travelling. Between hikes, we recommend that you leave your luggage either with your accommodation front desk or at coin lockers in stations. You can also use [Yamato's](#) amazing luggage-forwarding service to send larger, more bulky luggage ahead to other destinations (though note that this is not a same-day service – please allow up to 72 hours for your luggage to arrive).

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



When do you run this tour?

This tour is available on set dates in May, August and September. Having fixed start dates allows our small team to provide the level of support, planning and troubleshooting we'd like. June and July are the busiest months on the northern islands of Rebun and Rishiri, attracting many domestic visitors. Travelling during the quieter months means you'll have more opportunity to experience the peace present in our natural environment and make better connections with the locals as they are not overwhelmed by visitors. We believe this is key to making tourism sustainable for all.

Why travel self-guided in Hokkaido?

Getting around by public transport is fun and green

Hokkaido is the northernmost prefecture in Japan and also has the lowest population density. The island of Hokkaido is full of vast, scenic landscapes which you can take in while enjoying a slow ride on local trains and buses. Finding the right bus stops and paying the correct fares in coins can be challenging if you do not speak the language. However, we believe that travelling alongside local people makes for a fun adventure. People from Hokkaido can be shy when it comes to speaking English, but they are warm at heart and are willing to help visitors in any way they can.

You are the guide...

Travelling independently allows you to enjoy freedom and flexibility during the day. Although we pre-arrange your accommodation (and some activities with guides) as well as suggest things to do and places to see, what you actually do during the day is up to you. You are your own guide, deciding where to go, what to eat and what to do during the day. You are free to set your own daily schedule. **Having a smartphone equipped with a local SIM is indispensable**, as it will serve as your capable assistant, helping you with navigation and translation ([Read our guide on how to set up your phone for travel in Hokkaido](#)).

...but you are not alone!

We are here to support you throughout the planning process and while you are travelling. We make reservations for the accommodations with included meals as described. We will arrange dinner with hotels where dining out is not an option, especially in remote villages. Activities that require bookings in advance will be arranged by us.

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



We provide daily cue sheets and vouchers for each day. The cue sheets provide information about the details of public transport you need to take each day; where and what time the bus or train departs and arrives, and how much it costs. The vouchers are to be handed in to receptionists or guides at check-in, just to avoid any confusion or lost-in-translation moments. In an emergency, we are just a phone call away– whether you've missed your transport, gotten lost or are unwell. You can travel independently with the peace of mind that you have a local friend ready to help you out if things don't go quite to plan.

How to book this tour?

We will send you a link to our online sign up form, where we ask for the travel information of all the members travelling with you.

Once we receive this, we will send you a payment link for your tour deposit, which is JPY 50,000 per person. **We will confirm your booking upon receipt of your deposit payment.**

The deposit is treated as a part of the tour price. Payment of the balance will be reminded by email, which is generally 5 weeks prior to the tour departure date.

We accept payment via **Wise** or **Flywire**. We will send you payment links for both options, and you must use one of the payment links provided by us.

Wise payments are available in Japanese Yen only and require you to have a Wise account (Wise-to-Wise transfer only). You must pay any currency exchange or transfer fees yourself.

Flywire payments allow credit card payment or domestic bank transfer converted to your home currency. Credit card payments via Flywire incur an additional service charge of 1.5%, while domestic bank transfers via Flywire do not incur this service charge.

By paying for a deposit or full amount, you confirm that you have read, understand and agree to these [**Terms and Conditions**](#).

Travel Insurance

All guests joining our tours are required to have travel insurance. Please make sure you have valid travel insurance, covering the kind of activities you are undertaking during our tour, cancellations, loss of personal belongings, and any unforeseen circumstances while travelling.

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



Travel to the Starting Point

The closest airport to the starting point of this tour is Wakkanai Airport (WKJ). Central Wakkanai is easily accessible from the airport with local buses that are scheduled to match up with flights arriving from Sapporo and Tokyo. The one-way trip into town from the airport is 800 yen per person.

If travelling to Wakkanai from Sapporo, a more eco-friendly alternative to flying is to travel by train (Japan Railway, abbr. JR). There is only one direct train from Sapporo to Wakkanai per day (Limited Express "Soya") which leaves Sapporo Station at 7:30 am and arrives in Wakkanai at 12:42 pm. A one way ticket will cost 11,420 yen for a reserved seat. The journey is covered by the Japan Rail Pass. Later trains will require a change in Asahikawa, Hokkaido's second-largest city. You can see English train timetables on the [Japan Transit Planner website](#).

It is also possible to travel by express bus from Sapporo to Wakkanai. There are five departures a day.

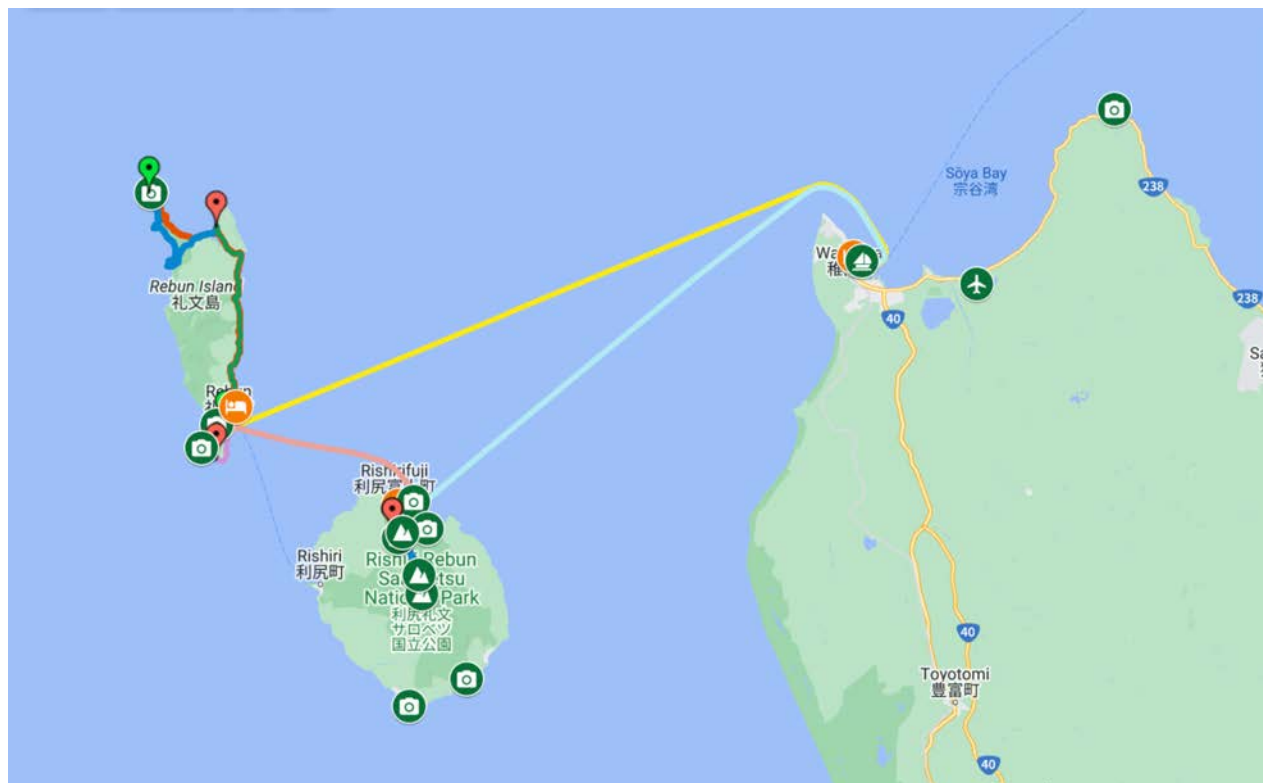
If you are combining two or more of our self-guided tours or a self-guided tour with a guided tour and you need to get to Wakkanai from Sapporo, Asahikawa or Kushiro, we will provide the necessary information on public transport between the cities. You are welcome to make your own hotel arrangements between tours, or you can ask us to make the arrangements for you. In this case, we will get a quote for the cost of any extra accommodation and add the cost to your travel packages.

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour

Tour map

To view the route on Google My Maps, [click here](#).



Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



Day-to-Day Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrive in Wakkanai

Irankarapte! Welcome to Wakkanai, the northernmost city in Hokkaido, and by extension, Japan! The city is the access point for Rishiri and Rebun islands.

Should you arrive in Wakkanai in time for lunch, what better than fresh, Hokkaido seafood? As a city by the sea, Wakkanai has a plethora of options for fresh seafood from sushi to robata-yaki – seafood grilled on an open flame.

Dinner is not included in your hotel reservation, but the hotel is located in a district full of local izakaya bars and small restaurants.

Meals	Activity	Travel	Accommodation
–	–	See "Travel to the Starting Point"	Hotel in Wakkanai

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour

Day 2 – Ferry to Rebun Island & Hike Momoiwa Trail

This morning you'll head to the Wakkanai Ferry Terminal to catch the ferry to Rebun Island. "Rebun" means "island far from shore" in the native Ainu language, a fitting name as the ferry takes roughly 2 hours.

After you arrive, you'll leave your luggage in a coin locker at the ferry terminal, or with the hotel, and then take off for the trails. Today's hike is known as the Momoiwa Trail and takes you across the southern half of the island.

There is a brief walk through the town of Kafuka to reach the trailhead at Reika-ji, a buddhist temple at the edge of town.

After about 45 minutes of moderate uphill hiking, you'll reach the lookout point for [Momoiwa](#), which literally translates to "Peach Rock". The sight of Momoiwa is one of the most popular views on the island due to its unique shape and massive size.

From Momoiwa you'll head south towards [Motoji Lighthouse](#). The trail winds along the clifftops, flanked on one side by rolling hills and by the sea on the other. Depending on visibility, you'll be greeted with panoramic views of Mt. Rishiri and the surrounding ocean. From Motoji Lighthouse, the trail descends to the small settlement of [Shiretoko](#). From here you can catch a local bus back to the ferry terminal or make the journey on foot back to either the ferry terminal or the hotel where you left your luggage.

After your first day of hiking in Hokkaido, consider winding down in the hotel's hot spring after dinner.



Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	6 km 3.7 mi	250 m 820 ft	Ferry (¥3,950 / 1h55m) Wakkanai → Rebun Island Bus (¥340 / 0h08m) Shiretoko → Rebun Ferry Terminal	Hotel on Rebun Island

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour

Day 3 – Hike Capes Trail, Rebun Island

This morning you will take a local bus bound for the northern tip of Rebun Island to hike the "Misaki-Meguri Trail". Literally meaning "touring the capes", this 14.2 km (8.8 mile) trail starts at [Cape Sukoton](#) and winds its way along the coast, over impressive seaside cliffs and through quaint fishing villages.

Before hiking, be sure to take in the view of Todo Island, one of the few breeding grounds of sea lions in Japan – but be careful of Cape Sukoton's notoriously strong winds!



From Cape Sukoton, the trail briefly follows a paved road before breaking away towards [Cape Gorota](#). From Cape Gorota you have a unique opportunity to see the trail you walked from Cape Sukoton to the north and get a sneak peek of where the trail is heading to the south. From here you'll be walking amongst a variety of alpine flowers, some of which are found only on Rebun Island.

The trail continues down towards Teppu, a small settlement home to a free restroom and a vending machine. From here it's only one more climb before the descent to the final cape on the trail, [Cape Sukai](#). There is a small shop selling souvenirs and hot foods, which make it the perfect spot to fill up before the walk back to the bus stop.

From Cape Sukai you will follow a paved road to reach the bus stop in the small village of [Funadomari](#). Funadomari is home to a few restaurants and a shop to pick up a drink or snacks before catching a return bus to Kafuka. The bay around Funadomari, as well as Cape Kaneda just north of Funadomari, are popular spots for viewing harbour seals as well.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	14.2 km 8.8 mi	260 m 853 ft	Bus (¥1,400 / 0h49m) Rebun Ferry Terminal → Cape Sukoton Bus (¥1,070 / 0h44m) Funadomari Honcho → Rebun Ferry Terminal	Hotel on Rebun Island

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour

Day 4 – Ferry to Rishiri Island

This morning, you'll depart from Rebun Island and take a short ferry ride over to Rishiri Island. Today you have the flexibility to explore the island in a way that suits you best.

After leaving your luggage at your accommodation, you can explore the town of Oshidomari, including the walk up to [Cape Peshi](#), which looks out over the town. From atop Cape Peshi you'll be greeted by a panorama of the island, with the quaint town of Oshidomari contrasted against Mt. Rishiri in the background.



If you're up for a longer walk, consider taking a local bus to [Himenuma](#), a pond formed in 1917 when 3 smaller lakes were flooded with spring water to form one large lake.

While technically a man-made pond, the area is a treasure trove of plants and wildlife, with a well-maintained walkway surrounding it. If you're blessed with low winds, you'll be able to see Mt. Rishiri reflected perfectly in the pond as well.

To get back to town from Himenuma, you can return via bus or take the roughly 5.5km (3.4 mile) walk along the elevated cycling path back to town. The elevated cycling path was created as an escape route in case of a tsunami. Thanks to its height, walkers and cyclists can enjoy beautiful ocean views from a number of [viaducts](#) built over valleys.

Meals	Activity	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	–	Ferry (¥1,800 / 0h45m) Rebun Island → Rishiri Island	Hotel on Rishiri Island

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour

Day 5 – Climb Mt. Rishiri

Today you'll take on the challenge of the 1,721 m (5,646 ft) Mt. Rishiri, one of the 100 Famous Mountains of Japan. The trail starts off in the pristine (and bear-free!) forests of Rishiri Island. Within 10 minutes of walking from the trailhead, you'll pass by "[Kanro-Sensui](#)", flowing with natural spring water.

Once you reach the mid-way point, you'll be above the tree line and greeted by views of the ocean below. From here the trail gets much steeper as you climb towards Mt. Chokan, a sub-peak on the ridge. From Mt. Chokan the trail levels out for a bit, but the ridgeline is exposed and Mt. Chokan is a sensible point to turn around if the weather is bad. As you push on you will pass the shelter hut and start climbing once again. It's another steep climb to the summit, but once you pull through you'll be standing atop one of Japan's northernmost mountains. Enjoy the views from the summit and take your time returning to the trailhead.



For climbing Mt. Rishiri, please allow at least 11 hours, starting at the crack of dawn like local hikers do. The lower section of the trail is rough and rooty, so plan to be back before dark. Besides, this is a small island community where everyone looks out for each other and your hosts will also start to worry if you are late! Your accommodation provides a courtesy shuttle at around 5am to the trailhead upon request. A lunch of rice balls (onigiri) can also be arranged with your accommodation as long as you request it the night before.

After your hike, congratulate yourself with a soak in the hot springs back at your inn.

Meals	Hike	Ascent	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	13 km 8.1 mi	1440 m 4725 ft	-	Hotel on Rishiri Island

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



Day 6 – Explore More of Rishiri Island

Today is left relatively open-ended to give those who summited Mt. Rishiri a chance to rest and explore the island at a relaxed pace. Having a day in reserve also gives you a second chance to attempt the climb if the weather on the previous day was bad – the weather on the island is notoriously fickle!

If you are up for another morning of hiking, consider hiking up to [Mt. Pon](#), a hike that follows the same trail as yesterday but branches off to a much smaller summit, giving you the chance to enjoy the forests of Rishiri at a much slower pace. Along the way you'll once again pass the Kanro-Sensui spring, where you can fill up your water bottles with the island's famous spring water, known for its unique sweetness.

There is also the option to rent a car or a bicycle near the ferry terminal to loop around the island and visit some of the more remote sights, such as the scenic [Oatomari Swamp](#) or the [Senhoshi-Misaki Park](#), a breeding ground for Black-tailed Gulls. The southern half of the island is also accessible via local buses, which offer a 1-Day Unlimited Pass to ride the bus as many times as you'd like for a set price.

Meals	Activity	Travel	Accommodation
B, D	–	–	Hotel on Rishiri Island

Day 7 – Travel to Wakkanai & Onwards

Congratulations on completing this self-guided tour of Hokkaido! Our tour arrangements end with breakfast at the hotel. Once you've eaten, you'll say goodbye to the island of Rishiri and take the ferry back to the mainland. For those flying back to Tokyo, there is a bus that operates between the ferry terminal and Wakkanai Airport, stopping at Wakkanai Station along the way.

For travellers heading to Sapporo, you can take a direct highway bus from Wakkanai to Sapporo. For those heading toward Asahikawa, you can take an express train from Wakkanai station directly to Asahikawa.

Transport on and off the wild islands is very weather dependent, so make sure you have plenty of time for the connections. Please check you have left nothing behind in Hokkaido before you depart. Please check you have left nothing behind in Hokkaido before you depart. *Itterasshai!*

Meals	Activity	Travel	Accommodation
B	–	Ferry (¥3,590 / 1h40m) Rishiri Island → Wakkanai	–

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



Preparing For Your Tour

Exploring unfamiliar territory is one of the thrills of self-guided travel. While Adventure Hokkaido is here to support you, you'll be navigating streets and mountains, browsing restaurant menus, and finding your own way day-to-day. Here are our tried-and-tested tips for overseas travellers visiting Hokkaido.

SIM Card

Having access to the internet is indispensable for this tour. It will allow you to look up information and get in touch with us if needed. Many of the apps we recommend below rely on an internet connection. There are a number of data sim options when visiting Japan, see our [blog on setting up your phone for travel](#) for more details.

Translation

English is still not widely spoken in Japan, especially in rural Hokkaido. Fortunately, **Google Translate's** ([Apple](#) | [Android](#)) performance has improved in recent years thanks to developments in AI technology and this free app is now an essential travel tool. The **Google Lens** feature allows you to simply hold your smartphone camera up to text and the phone will translate it for you on the spot! While it of course cannot compare to a human interpreter, it is quite useful for reading signage, menus and other basic information. It also has a text-to-speech function— very handy for getting to know (or getting help from) the locals!

Navigation

For day-to-day navigation around town, **Google Maps** ([Apple](#) | [Android](#)) works well in Hokkaido. The QR codes in the cue sheets provided link directly to Google Maps, making navigation effortless.

However, Google Maps isn't ideal for hiking. We recommend **Gaia GPS** ([Apple](#) | [Android](#)) for trail navigation—it's the app many of our guides trust. It offers excellent English-language topographic maps and easily imports the GPX route data we provide. The only downside is that saving the maps to be viewed offline requires a paid upgrade.

For a fully offline alternative, try **Organic Maps** ([Apple](#) | [Android](#)). While the hiking maps aren't as detailed as Gaia's and urban navigation isn't as current as Google Maps, the complete offline functionality makes this free and open-source offshoot of Maps.me perfect for remote adventures.

Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour



Weather

The weather in the mountains is often quite different to town and we find that most general purpose weather forecasts underestimate the wind and cold at altitude. Make sure you check a mountain-specific forecast. We find [Metoblue.com](https://www.metoblue.com) (also available as an app [Apple](#) | [Android](#)) to be reliable in the mountains here. Pay close attention to the temperature and wind speeds and make sure you pack a spare warm layer – better to have it and not need it than not have it and need it! Finally, you don't have to do all the activities in full. Turn back early if conditions are unsuitable – remember, it's supposed to be fun!

For general weather during your trip we also recommend [Yr.no](#) ([Apple](#) | [Android](#)). The [short term rain forecast](#) from Japan's Meteorological Agency is a great guide for if you should expect to get wet while out and about.

Staying Safe While Hiking

On top of navigating the route and making sense of the weather forecast, you are also responsible for keeping yourself safe while hiking. The hazards on Hokkaido's hiking trails include exposure to the weather, poison ivy, bears, hornets and the trails themselves – they can be quite rough. We recommend having a read of our [blog on staying safe while hiking in Hokkaido](#). While experienced hikers will be familiar with much of the advice, take note of what might be different here compared to where you may have hiked before. We are all hikers ourselves, so feel free to ask any specific questions you have!

Cash

Finally, Japan is still a cash culture. Cards and smartphone payments are seldom accepted, especially in the more rural parts of Hokkaido that you will be exploring. You can withdraw cash using international cards from ATMs at 7-Eleven and Lawson convenience stores, as well as Japan Post Office ATMs. Make sure you always have ¥20,000 – ¥30,000 with you, which will be enough to cover your daily expenses for a few days between ATMs.

Our recommended reading

[What to pack for Hokkaido?](#)

[A Local's Guide to Using Public Transport in Hokkaido](#)

[A Local's Guide on What to Expect When Staying in Hokkaido](#)

[A Local's Guide to Eating Out in Hokkaido](#)

[How to onsen \(like a local!\)](#)

[Hokkaido Wildlife Guide](#)

[The Ainu, from a Hokkaido local's perspective](#)

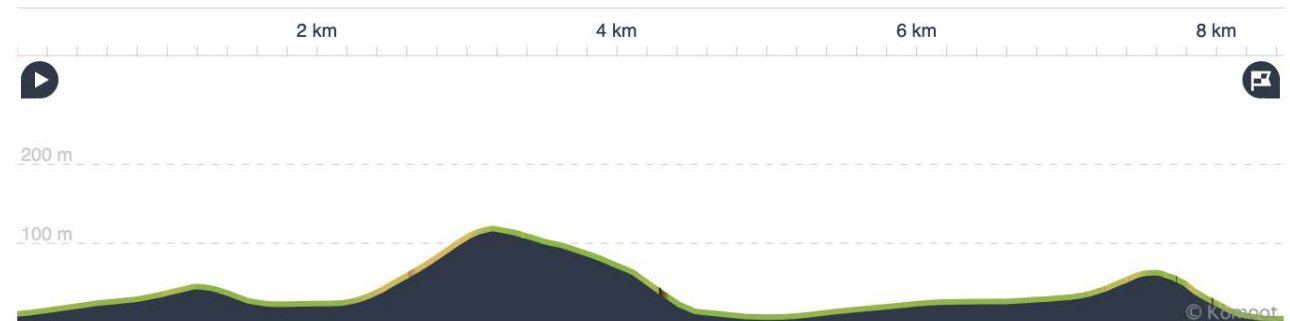
Northern Islands

7 Day Self-Guided Tour

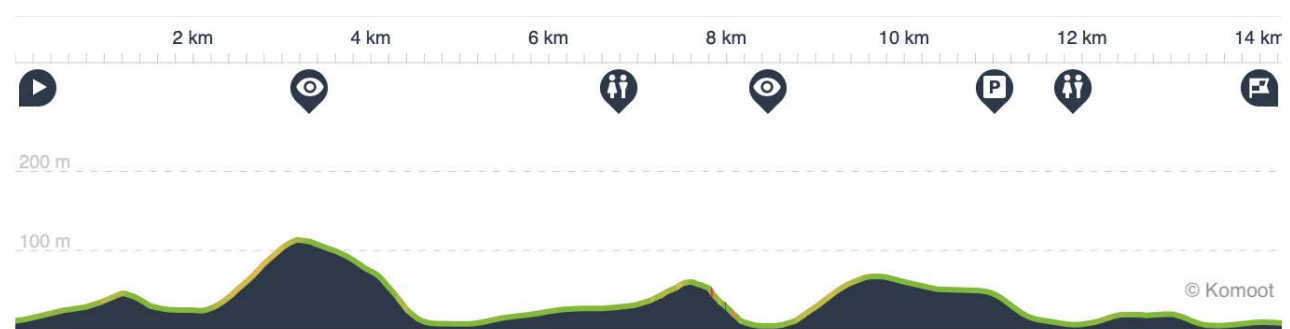


Elevation profiles

Day 2 – Momojiwa Trail on Rebun Island **Distance** – 6 km / 3.7 mi **Ascent** – 250 m / 820 ft



Day 3 – Cape Trail on Rebun Island **Distance** – 14.2 km / 8.8 mi **Ascent** – 260 m / 853 ft



Day 5 – Mt. Rishiri **Distance** – 13 km / 8.1 mi **Ascent** – 1,440 m / 4,725 ft

