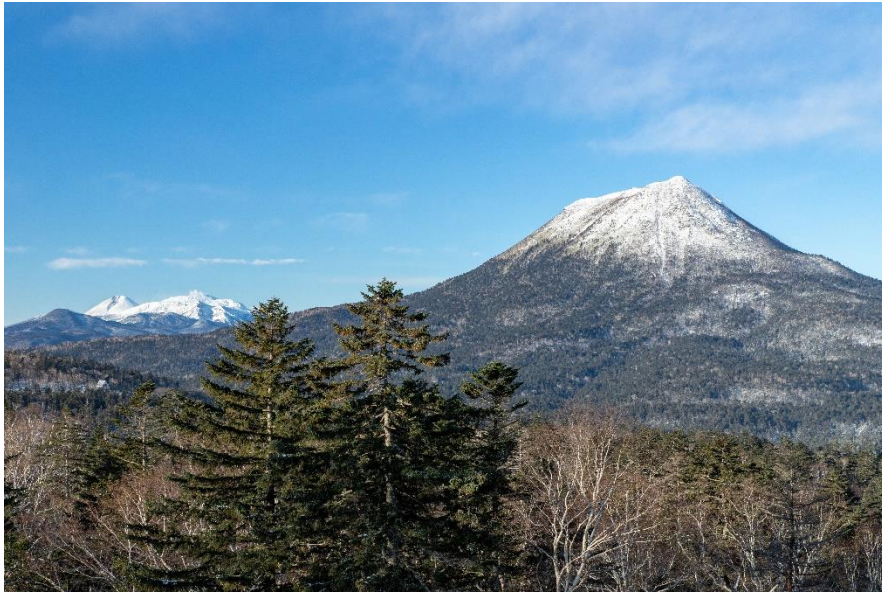


Winter Adventure in Akan, Hidden Lakes and Volcanoes



Akan-Mashu National Park is one of the oldest national parks in Hokkaido, most of which is covered with subarctic coniferous virgin forest. Lake Akan has long been worshiped as a sanctuary by the Ainu people. It is also the significant sanctuary with a mysterious Marimo Legend. Lake Akan is known as one of the habitats of the special natural monument "Marimo" or the spherical green algae, the origin of "Himemasu" or Kokanee salmon, and the Ramsar Convention registration site.

On this tour, we explore this area in winter by ski, the season when everything is get rested under deep snow, all creatures live the most modestly and it's the time the most quiet. The tour is included unique activities such as ski touring on hidden lakes and climbing two mountains of Mt. O-Akan (1,371m) and Mt. Me-Akan (1,499m), the extinct volcano and active so respectively.

Those mountains are both volcanoes, among those, Mt. Me-Akan is still raising the eruptions lively now. We'll have extraordinary experiences such as sneaking into two hidden lakes which can hardly be accessed in summer, and, we challenge skinned skiing or hiking probably using crampons as well, up to the top both of Mt. O-Akan and Mt. Me-Akan towering in the heart of this sacred area overwhelmingly.

Highlights:

- Unique winter activities in one of the significant holy sites worshipped by Ainu people
- Exploring and sneaking into two hidden lakes which are hardly accessible in summer
- Cutting tracks all the way by touring skis and confront summiting two volcanoes
- Warming a chilled body with high quality natural hot spring water of Onsen Resort

Location:

Akan-Mashu National Park is located in the northern part of Kushiro City, the central city of Kushiro Subprefecture, one of the 14 prefectures existed in Hokkaido. The area is covering 90,481 hectares (904.81 km²), it is exactly equal to the national land area of Luxemburg. There are active volcanoes in the national park such as Mt.Me-Akan (1,499m) and Atosa-Nupuri (520m), as well as other active fumaroles near Lake Akan and Lake Kussharo.

Main Activity: Ski Touring and Climbing

Difficulty: 4 (Vigorous)

Tour Dates: January to March

Pax: Minimum 2 Maximum 6

Price: JPY280,000

[Route map](#)

[Day-by-day Itinerary](#)

[What's included](#)

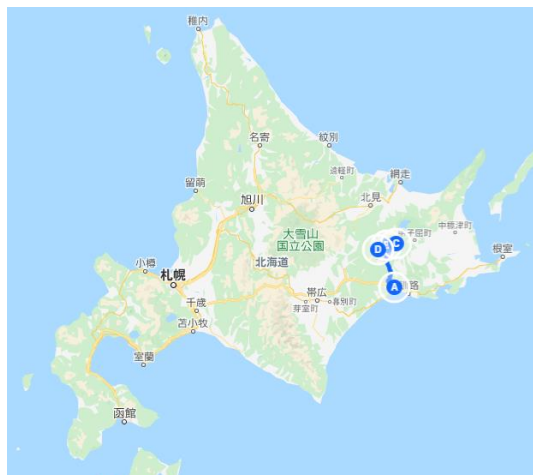
[We provide & What to bring](#)

[About us](#)

[Information and Requirements](#)

[Reservation & Cancellation policy](#)

Route map



Day-by-day Itinerary

Day 1 – Transfer from Airport to Lake Akan

You will meet a guide at Kushiro Airport, the regional airport that connects to Tokyo Haneda Airport or other airports with considerable number of daily flights. An hour drive with a private van will take you to Lake Akan, one of the principal Onsen Resorts in Akan Mashu National Park. In the afternoon, you will be guided to one of Ainu cultural facilities such as Lake Akan Ainu Kotan, Ainu Tradition Creation Center and Ainu Life Memorial Hall, it takes about two hours.

Activity – Visiting cultural facility(ies) | Time – 2 hours

Accommodation – Akanko Onsen | Hotel | Private room with ensuite | Onsen Spa

Included meals – Dinner

Activity: Cultural Facility(ies)

Difficulty: 1 / 5 (Relaxed/Social)

Day 2 – Guided Ski Climbing at Mt. O-Akan

After breakfast, we drive to southern foot of Mt. O-Akan and start climbing from the point at 450m in elevation. Using skinned-skis we steady gain the elevation on the ridge with mixed conifer and broadleaf forests. You may hear the screaming of Kumagera (Black Woodpecker), or you may witness them as well.

When the ridge is getting steeper, we are already above the tree line at altitude 1,100m, and Lake Akan is vesting under your feet. Around the summit crater, you may need to put crampons if it's very icy surface. From the summit at 1,370m in elevation, you will look down hidden twin lakes which you will be tracing the following day. Mt. Me-Akan raising the eruption lively will be seen on the opposite side.

How skiing down is nice or not depends on the snow condition but you have 900m slopes left for descending, so let's enjoy tree-run as much as possible!

Activity – Climbing | Distance – 9km | Time – 6 to 7 hours | Elevation – 920m

Accommodation – Akanko Onsen | Hotel | Private room with ensuite | Onsen Spa

Included meals – Breakfast , Dinner

Activity: Mountain Climbing

Difficulty: 4 / 5 (Vigorous)

Day 3 – Guided Ski Touring around Twin Lakes

After breakfast, we take a half hour drive to get to Sogakudai (Twin Peaks Lookout) situated at an elevation of 750 meters. Our adventure today starts from there, at first, we ski down through the virgin forest to the eastern shore of Lake Penke-Toh, ‘upper lake’ in Ainu, at an altitude of 500 meters. This is already a very special place which can hardly access other than snowy season. Sticking climbing skins on your ski soles, then wandering as looking up at Mt. O-Akan which rises with an overwhelming presence, you will pass through natural forest of Yezo spruce and Todo fir, pass through on the frozen lake, then reach the northern end of Penke-Toh, where a narrow creek called Ibeshibetsu (‘Sufficient Foods River’) outlets. Then, we continue to hike down to the South End of another hidden lake Panke-Toh (‘Lower Lake’ in Ainu), at altitude of 450 meters, which is over nine times larger than upper lake. Crossing vast white snow fields we will hike around in the middle of genuine nature. There almost soundless, also, it’s often extreme cold, will surely be your unforgettable experience. The air temperature may sometimes drop to minus 20 degrees Celsius or lower. You will recognize why this site has been worshipped as the one of sacred

Activity – Ski Touring | Distance – 10km | Time – 6 to 7 hours | Elevation – 350m
Accommodation – Akanko Onsen | Hotel | Private room with ensuite | Onsen Spa
Included meals – Breakfast , Dinner

Activity: Ski Touring

Difficulty: 4 / 5 (Vigorous)

Day 4 – Guided Ski Climbing at Mt. Me-Akan

After breakfast, we take a half hour drive to Nonaka Onsen where the trail head for climbing another holy mountain Mt. Me-Akan (1,499m), located at elevation of 700 meters. Sticking the climbing skins on your ski soles, then start climbing in the forest, then we reach to tree line at around 950 meters in elevation. The vast slope of the active volcano awaits your challenge for climbing and skiing. If condition permits, you could have an additional chance to try the noticeable peak called Akan-Fuji (1,475m) which stands like an apostle next to Mt. Me-Akan.

Activity – Climbing | Distance – 5km | Time – 6 to 7 hours | Elevation – 800m
Accommodation – Akanko Onsen | Hotel | Private room with ensuite | Onsen Spa
Included meals – Breakfast , Dinner

Activity: Mountain Climbing

Difficulty: 4 / 5 (Vigorous)

Day 5 – Transfer to Airport

After breakfast, an hour drive with private van will take you to Kushiro Airport.

Time – 1 hour

Included meals – Breakfast



Accommodations :

Day	Location	Type	Room	Spa
1	Lake Akan	Hotel	Private room ensuite	Onsen Spa
2	Lake Akan	Hotel	Private room ensuite	Onsen Spa
3	Lake Akan	Hotel	Private room ensuite	Onsen Spa
4	Lake Akan	Hotel	Private room ensuite	Onsen Spa

Food & Accommodation

Breakfast & Dinner

All breakfasts and dinners on this tour are included. Both will be served at a hotel as a set menu or a buffet, it depends on the day and subject to an accommodation. In many cases, it will mainly be served basically 'Washoku', Japanese cuisine, and some other dishes like Western or Chinese cuisines may also be included. If you are not good at using chopsticks, cutlery can easily be requested. Any kind of dietary requirements will happily be accepted, or if it's not, the proper substitutes must be provided, so please feel free to tell us your requirements in advance.

Purchasing Backpacking Food

Winter outdoor, we shouldn't take a time for eating a packed lunch or similar, because, the air temperature is normally around zero degree or less even in the daytime. So, you'd better take high energy food regularly also quickly, whichever you're hungry or not. You have a time to buy something at a local convenience store like Seicomart, which has wide range of foods and beverages such as cooked sandwiches, chocolates, energy bars, high caloric snacks, mixed nuts, sports drinks etc. Please buy them and pack it in your backpack.



The Airport

Our guide is waiting for you at Kushiro Airport (KUH), the regional airport located at suburb of Kushiro City. The distance to Lake Akan is approximately 60 km and it takes about a hour by van. Number of flights between Kushiro airport and Tokyo Haneda airport are daily operated, as well as flights for other airports are also available. Tell us your flight details in advance.

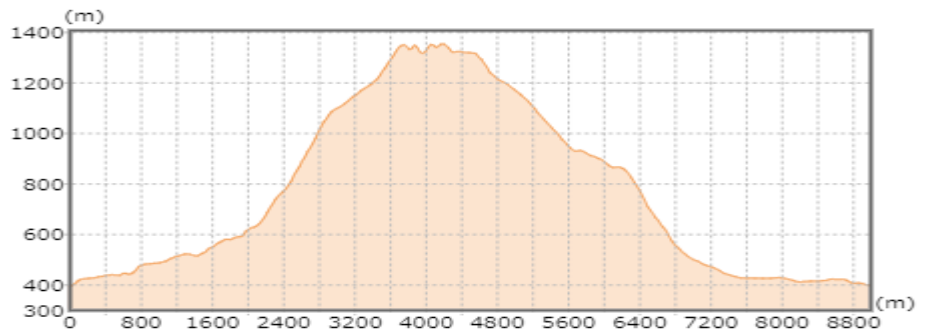
Elevation Profile

Day 2

Distance 9 km

Time - 6 to 7 hours

Elevation: - 920m

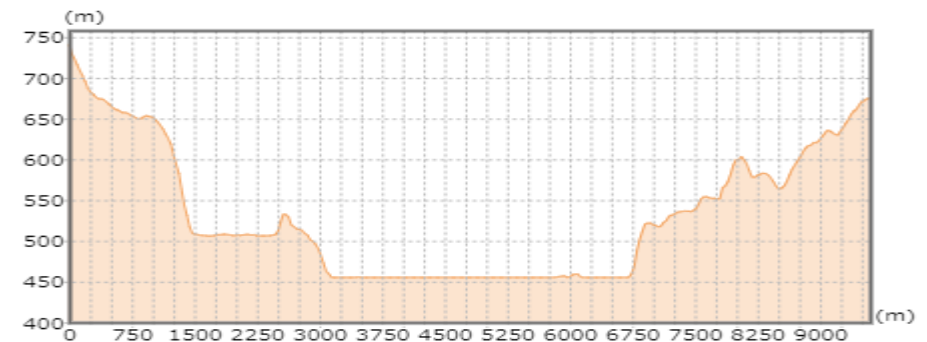


Day 3

Distance 10 km

Time - 6 to 7 hours

Elevation: - 350m

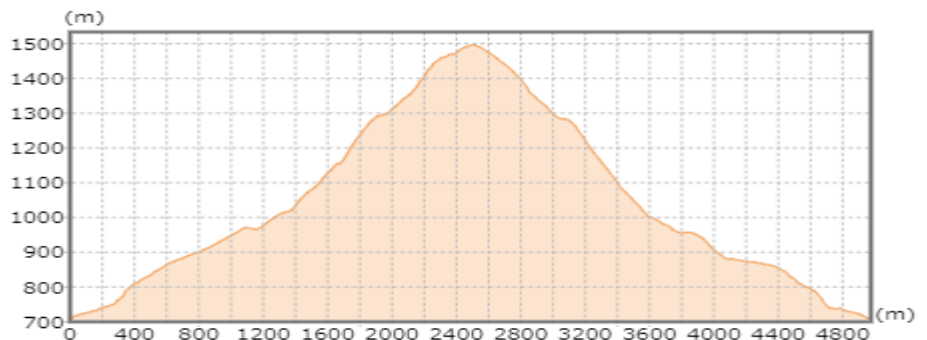


Day 4

Distance 5 km

Time - 6 to 7 hours

Elevation: 800m



What's included

- 4 nights accommodation with 4 breakfasts and 4 dinners
- All transportations as described in the itinerary
- English speaking Japanese guide, assistants upon group size

Not included

- Drinks, lunches & personal expenses.
- Equipment for backcountry skiing ; skis with tour bindings, boots, climbing skins, couteaus, ski poles, and other suitable items for backcountry skiing.

We provide & What to bring

We provide

- First-aid kit
- Safety equipment and maps

What to bring

Essentials

- Skis with alpine touring bindings (with heel free function)
- Ski boots, climbing skins, cousteaus/mountings, ski poles
- Avalanche beacon, probe and shovel
- Gore-Tex jacket and pants suitable for mid winter
- Base layers top and bottom
- Thermal Layers top and bottom
- Fleece or down jacket
- Woolen gloves and windproof outer gloves
- Balaclava or Bienne, neck warmer
- Sun glasses and sun screen
- Water bottle of more than 1 L
- Quick dry hand towel
- Toiletries
- Personal Medications
- Backpack suitable for all items
- Travel insurance
- Passport
- Cash in Japanese Yen. Local restaurants and shops often don't accept credit cards. You can withdraw cash from an ATM at the post office and 7/11 convenience stores
- Rations/Lunches (you will have time to purchase them at local shops)

Recommended items

- Cell phone power bank
- Dry bags
- Extra snacks/energy bars
- Camera

What's 'Marimo' and Marimo Legend

'Marimo' is a type of algae that inhabits Lake Akan, and its English name is generally 'green algae'. The shape of it is round like a ball and colour is dark green, they are habitating at relatively shallow bottom of the lake for photosynthesis. Similar species can be found in lakes and marshes in Japan and around the world, but Lake Akan's are the only ones in the world that grows larger than a fist and grows in group. Marimo Legend has been oral traditioned by Ainu people, but some opinion points that it was created on purpose by Japanese, anyway, overview of the story is as follows.

Once upon a time, there were a plenty of Pekampes existed at Lake Akan, but the god of Lake Akan didn't like them. Pekampes asked for keeping to live there, but then the god disgusted and said, "As long as you are here, humans come for picking you. The more humans come, the more dirty lake water is. So you must get out from here!" Since then, Pekampes had been bearing for while, but one day they finally couldn't stand it and plucked the grasses around the lake then threw them into the lake. Then, Pekampes were disappeared. The thrown grasses became Marimos afterwards.*

**Pekampe: Water Chestnut, also called Water Caltrops or Trapa Nut. Water chestnut is an aquatic annual herb that grows in ponds or marshes with its roots in the muddy soil at the bottom of the water and with its upper leaves floating on the water surface.*



Ainu and Japanese

Ainu people who don't have any letters have handed down their traditions of ethnic group by oral tradition, therefore, their history and culture can hardly be known from written sources. The confirmation of settlement in Hokkaido by Ainu people is dating back to around 12th century, at the time Hokkaido was called 'Ezo' which means Ainu's Land, the existence of them were already known by Japanese. In mid-15th century, Japanese were getting to dominate Ainu's district and they settled in the southern part of Hokkaido, then they built the local government office in Matsumae. Although, both were often conflicted, they needed each other and kept relationship mainly by trading. After the name of Ezo has replaced to 'Hokkaido' in 1869, Japanese government sent a lot of pioneers into the wilderness, then they ended up settling and building number of hamlets in this promising island. The place of Ainu's residence has decreased, and mixed blood with Japanese has progressed, as a result, the number of pure blood of Ainu people has rapidly reduced. However, tradition of Ainu culture has been still handed down and maintained by the efforts of both Japanese and Ainu people so far. The life style of Ainu people was based on nature. They worshiped and paid respect to any part of nature, all resources from the nature were used properly and effectively, for instance, salmon skin was transformed to their shoes, Aconite was used for bear hunting...etc. The life was carried out by labor such as hunting and collecting plants. After they knew cultivation brought by Japanese, simple farming had also begun. Currently, the population of Ainu in Hokkaido is said to be about 13,000, and they're living as Japanese citizens.



About us

Nomad

Nomad Co Ltd established in 1987 in Sapporo, the principal city of Hokkaido Prefecture in Japan, We've been dealing various types of nature related tours over 35 years, and now we ended up had various experiences and useful knowledge those all provided from our valued guests and nature.

Initially, we were dealing various kind of travel related products and materials such as simply air tickets , hotel bookings, train/bus/rent-a-car bookings, visas, group tours for academic conventions, travel arrangements for inbound groups/individual into Hokkaido, and many more. That is, we dealt everything a person needs to move.

Many periods so far, we have been producing nature relating tours, as if trekking/hiking tours and mountaineering tours. We actually had a guiding section called 'Alpine Guide Nomad' as well, therefore, we have been guiding mainly Japanese hikers, trekkers and climbers to various mountains in domestic and overseas.

As same as others, we had to be facing this pandemic, the overseas tours have suspended. Then we have been getting to focus our home ground Hokkaido since March 2020.

In result, unexpectedly, we were reminded again how our home Hokkaido is filled with amazing nature, and there still are unlimited target places to explore existed, and also those places are luckily accessible without big effort relatively. Therefore, we are recognized that our next mission is obviously inviting nature lovers from all over the world warmly, and take them into genuine and dense Hokkaido's nature, and provide them a great opportunity with unforgettable experiences by unique and active enough adventurous activities.

If you wish to touch and explore the genuine nature of Hokkaido, give us a chance to support you on exciting adventure. See you in Hokkaido!

Guides

Yu Sato (YOU)



‘YOU’ was born in a small village, situated at eastern Hokkaido, as a family member of a big farm who generates various crops and local specialties of produces. He grew up in an ideal nature-filling environment, where the eastern foot of a great mountain group called Hidaka Mountain Range, a magnificent huge uplift with a total length of 150 km, also considered as a backbone of Hokkaido. He have learned in his daily life, how to deal with nature or how to walk in a dense forest as well as how to avoid an unexpected encounter with a wild bear. He moved to Sapporo City when he was 18 years old to learn outdoor guiding, and after that he has worked in Nomad, then brushed up his guiding skill. He has been guiding our guests to various locations in and outside Hokkaido, also to the mountains abroad such as Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Annapurna Sanctuary in Nepal, and many more. He’s recently started his own guiding office ‘Your Time’ which propose you various adventures. HMGA official Mountaineering Guide Stage-1 and Ski Guide Stage-2, Hokkaido official Outdoor Guide (All seasons).

Michiko Aoki (Michiko)



Michiko, born in Sapporo, the principal city of Hokkaido, she has started skiing from her early age. After she studied the international development at the University of Calgary, AB, Canada, had worked as a park-ranger at Daisetsuzan National Park in Hokkaido, and then gained a two year experience in the Republic of Kenya as a JICA Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer. After returning to Japan, she had experienced as an assistant guide in Hokkaido for a while, then she had again been to Canada and learned higher guiding skill at the Mountaineering course in Yamnuska Mountaineering School, Canmore, AB. In 2014, she started her own mountain climbing guide firm “Mountain Flow”, and has been guiding a lot of domestic and international guests so far. The certainty of her guiding is undisputed, but more than that her cheerful personality and mindfulness attracts all the customers coming from any location of the world. HMGA official Hiking Guide Stage-2 and Ski Guide Stage-1, CAA ATS Level-2, JAN Level-1, Wilderness First Aid.

Information and Requirements

Dietary Restrictions

Before pandemic, 150 million foreign tourists enjoyed Hokkaido every year. Of course, since they come from all parts of the world, it's not surprising that there are dietary restrictions for health or religious reasons, and we've grown to accommodate them. Currently, many accommodations and dining facilities are able to accommodate or have closer alternatives to your dietary restrictions, such as vegetarian, halal, and MSG allergies. We too will do our best to accommodate you, even if it is a camp in the mountains. If you have dietary restrictions, please do not hesitate to fill out the pre-departure questionnaire.

Emergency Response Plan

We prepare the well-organised first-aid kit, and those will be carried by our guides who are well-experienced and qualified. The qualification, for instance, Mountain Guide Stage I / Ski Guide Stage II, which are certified by the Japan Mountain Guide Association (JMGA), and Hokkaido Outdoor guide Qualification (HMGA). As you know, nature doesn't promise us 100% safety, Especially our tour is consisted with activities in deep nature. Guides always consider the safety first, and lead the team correctly, however, unexpected cases could always be happened. Although, our guides are well trained, but if any cases, they try finding the best solution as sufficient as possible, also guides are sometimes carrying a satellite phone to call an emergency rescue. If necessary, they may carry a bear spray just in case even in winter.

Weather Conditions in Winter

Winter, of course, it's cold and sometimes forcing severe condition, but it gives us magnificent scenery to see. Hokkaido is situated at 41 – 45 North Latitude. Despite being at the northern tip of Japan, Hokkaido is located on similar latitudes to major American and European cities, for instance, cities at the same latitude as Sapporo(43N) are Toronto, Canada, Milwaukee, USA and Marseille, France. Snow covering period in mountain area in Hokkaido is roughly from October to May, but real winter could be said as from the middle of December to the early of March. The weather in mid winter is subject to typical winter-type pressure distribution and strong northwesterly winds, once it's under this winter type system, it tends that the northwest side of Hokkaido is snowy and windy, but southeast area is sunny and calm. The temperature in mid-winter often drops to minus 15 to 25 degrees Celsius inland.

Natural Hot Springs - 'Onsen'

It makes sense that there are uncountable hot spring points existed entire Japan which is consisted with considerable number of active volcanoes. Unexceptionally, Hokkaido as well, there are a plenty of Onsen sites are seen, and the majority of those hot springs are the grace either from the volcanic activities. In fact, more than 10 obvious active volcanoes have been identified, and they are constantly in volcanic activity. In other words, Even in mid-winter, you have a benefit of enjoying natural hot spring anytime, anywhere. This will especially be an unignorable advantage for those who have spent a day for outdoor activities in winter cold air.

To enjoy Onsen, here are some tips you'd better know in advance.

1. No swimwear is required, you can bathe naked, nobody care about each other.
2. Before you soak in the bath, clean your body at a shower booth then rinse soap off.
3. To keep hot water always clean, do not soak your towel in the bath.
4. To prevent wet the floor, wipe roughly your body before going back to the changing room.

Onsen Hotels

Accommodations situated at Onsen resort are commonly called Onsen Hotel or Ryokan (旅館). The guestrooms are usually traditional Japanese style with tatami floor, you will sleep in a Futon set on the floor instead of a bed. However, the western style bed rooms are also widely provided these days. Despite both room types, you can find 'Yukata' in the room. It's a traditional Japanese night robe looks as if simple kimono, and it's normally allowed to go with wearing Yukata wherever inside the facility even at the dinning room.



Reservation & Cancellation Policy

Reservation

When we receive your reservation request, we will ask for your contact details and personal information such as your height and dietary requirements etc., in order for us to adequately organize and arrange the tour service. Once the Registration Form is completed, you will be taken to the payment (Deposit/Full) to secure the booking.

Payment Methods

We require the Deposit of 50,000 yen or Full Payment to secure your booking. The Deposit is treated as a part of the Tour Price. You will receive an email reminder about payment of the balance, which is generally due 30 days prior to the tour departure date. We accept payment by credit card in our local currency, Japanese yen. If you prefer to pay by bank transfer, we will give you our bank details and the amount of bank fees that should be added to the Tour Price.

Cancellation

If you wish to cancel a tour reservation, please notify us in writing. Our Cancellation Policy is as follows.

- Cancelled more than 31 days prior to departure : zero fees
- Canceled between 30 and 15 days prior to departure : 20% of the Tour Price
- Canceled between 14 and 8 days prior to departure : 30% of the Tour Price
- Canceled between 7 and 3 days prior to departure : 50% of the Tour Price
- Canceled 2 days prior to departure or later : 100% of the Tour Price
- **No refunds will be given after the tour has commenced**