

Horses, farms and Ainu culture: A 4-day glimpse into life in Tokachi

— Experience Tokachi's rich culture and warm sunshine through cycling —



Location	Obihiro City, Otofuke Town, Shikaoi Town
Main Activities	Walking, cycling
Difficulty	1 / 5
Duration	4 days 3 nights
Member Limit	MAX.8

Highlights

- Witness the bond between man and horse in action through *banei* horse racing, a unique racing culture where agricultural horses pull heavy sleds with a 140 year history developed in horse country Tokachi.
- Visit a kindergarten that embodies the ideals of missionary John Batchelor and meet members of Hokkaido's indigenous Ainu community.
- Learn about the continuously evolving farming industry in Tokachi that draw from Western methods.
- Taste irresistible local favorite dishes prepared from top quality local ingredients.
- You will be led by a veteran guide who has lived around the world and knows everything about Tokachi.



● *Banei* racing



● Traditional Ainu dance performance



● Development-era farming



● A farm in Tokachi

Overview

This tour takes place in Tokachi, an area of southeastern Hokkaido surrounded by national parks. Led by a guide who knows all about the area, you'll take easy cycling and walking trips through Tokachi's abundant nature, get a glimpse of life in Tokachi and experience the history and culture woven by Tokachi's people in the 140 years since the development era.

Experience Tokachi's horse culture

While horses have long been a mainstay in Western farming, they were historically rarely used in Japan, as its main agricultural product was rice, which is grown in fields flooded with water. It wasn't until the late 19th century that plowing took root, with Hokkaido's developers learning the technique from Westerners. Fast forward to today and Hokkaido farmers can't imagine working without horses. The Tokachi-Obihiro region is Japan's top farming areas, and a festival started by the developers to show off their prize horses continues today in the form of the world's only race where horses pull their jockeys on sleds (*banei*). This tour brings you face to face with an equine history unlike anywhere else.

Experience Ainu culture

British missionary John Batchelor studied Ainu culture and was one of the first people to share it with Western society. He also began teaching Ainu children in Hokkaido, and one of his former students, Ms. Ume Usuda, followed in his footsteps as a teacher at Tokachi-Obihiro Futaba Kindergarten. Here you'll learn about relations between Hokkaido's indigenous Ainu people and the West, and enjoy traditional dances and other facets of Ainu culture that have been passed down through generations of Ainu people.

Itinerary

9/15 (Fri.)	Arrive in Obihiro (train departs JR Sapporo at 10:33am and arrives at 1:12pm) — Travel in tour bus — Local café: welcome snack and briefing — Travel in tour bus — Hokkaido Hotel: welcome dinner (<i>kaiseki</i> course meal)
9/16 (Sat.)	Depart hotel — Walk (1.5km/20 min.) — Obihiro Centennial City Museum: listen to a talk about the development era, horses and Ainu people in Tokachi — Walk (2.5km/30 min.) — Local restaurant: lunch — Walk (1km/15 min.) — Former Futaba Kindergarten: tour the facility, watch traditional Ainu dancing and enjoy a welcome party — Travel in tour bus — Local restaurant: dinner — Travel in tour bus — Arrive at hotel
9/17 (Sun.)	Depart hotel — travel in tour bus — Sumiyoshi Shrine: Shrine tour — Lunch — Cycling (3.2km/20 min.) — Higashi-Shikari Shrine — Cycling (17.4km/90 min.) — Kanda Nissho Memorial Museum of Art: admire the art — Travel in tour bus — Obihiro Racecourse: Watch <i>banei</i> horse racing and talk with the organizers — Travel in horse-drawn carriage — Arrive at hotel
9/18 (Mon.)	Depart hotel — Cycling (10km/40 min.) — Yotsuba Milk Products Tokachi Factory: Tour factory and try yogurt, etc. — Lunch: share thoughts about tour — Travel in tour bus — Tokachi Obihiro Airport (arrive at 2:30pm)

Accommodations

Day	Area	Facility Type	Room Type	Onsen/Spa	Wi-Fi
1	Obihiro	Hotel	Twin for single use	Onsen	✓
2	Obihiro	Hotel	Twin for single use	Onsen	✓
3	Obihiro	Hotel	Twin for single use	Onsen	✓