

The 10 Best things to do in Kushiro and Lake Akan in spring

DISCOVER YOUR ADVENTURE

HOKKAIDO

Various outdoor activities can be experienced in Kushiro area and Lake Akan during spring time.
What would you like to do?

01

Glide through the spring landscape of Kushiro Wetland in a canoe.



Kushiro Wetland is the largest wetland area in Japan. Take a tour on a canoe with a guide to immerse yourself in the enormous wetland, feeling the soft spring breeze as you glide across the surface. The fresh green buds along the shore look bright and beautiful. Water is abundant and the view stretching wide in spring raises your anticipation to spot tancho red-crowned cranes, white-tailed eagles, Yezo sika deer and other wildlife.

03

Enjoy Kushiro's unique local gourmet dishes.



Kushiro is famous as a treasure chest of Hokkaido foods. Other than the seafood that puts Kushiro on the map, there are many unique local dishes found only here. Particularly popular dishes include zangi, deep-fried chicken uniquely flavored by each restaurant; robata-yaki, a variety of grilled seafood; and the spa-katsu, a spaghetti and pork cutlet combo served on a hot plate. You won't be able to decide which one to try first!

02

Revel in eating local food and shopping for local goods at Kushiro Washo Ichiba (market).



Just a minute's walk from Kushiro Station, Kushiro Washo Ichiba is one of the three largest markets in Hokkaido along with Hakodate Morning Market and Sapporo Nijo Market. There are some 60-odd shops plying fresh seafood, processed marine products, dried foods and more, right here where Kushiro locals gather to shop. The market is bristling with fun things to do on top of shopping for fresh food and chatting with shopkeepers about the food of the season.

04

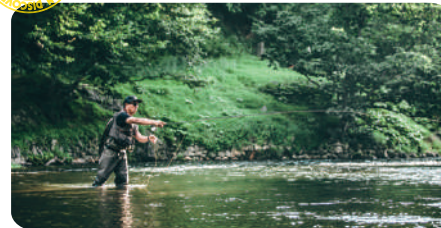
Immerse yourself in retro atmosphere of Kushiro Akayoko (food stalls).



Evoking the feel of the Showa Era (1926-1989), you'll find Kushiro Akayoko (Akachochin-Yokocho) around 1 km from JR Kushiro Station. The oldest place of food stalls in Hokkaido, there are about 25 unique izakaya (Japanese pub) and other eateries nestled along a narrow alley. Share time with shopkeepers and other customers for a memorable and delightful experience. You're bound to find your favorite among them.

05

Experience rainbow trout fishing along the Akan River that flows through primeval forest.



The Akan River is eastern Hokkaido's prime spot for rainbow trout. The fact that it flows through a beautiful primeval forest with its variation of scenery is charming in itself. The primitive beauty of the natural environment around the river remains untouched by man. Another appealing aspect is that the water's flow is stable except after very heavy rains.

07

See and appreciate skunk cabbage as it announces the arrival of spring.



Every year from late April to mid-May, the white flowers of skunk cabbage bloom across the wetlands behind the Akankohan Eco-museum Center to announce the arrival of spring. The round, white part of the skunk cabbage flower is the bud, called butsenho (spathe). The bud, which is the upper grainy part of the stick-shaped structure, holds seeds.

09

Feel the power of an icebreaker on the Lake Akan Icebreaker Cruise.



The Lake Akan sightseeing cruise starts operating from late April to early May of each year. The first week of operation doubles as an icebreaker cruise, when you'll experience the rare thrill available only on Lake Akan as the cruise ship crushes the ice on the lake's surface as it pushes through. Magnificent views of Mt. Meakan, Mt. Oakan, and Lake Akan provide a spectacular backdrop to the ride, and the chill in the air will pass by unnoticed as you surge ahead through the ice, feeling it crack and crunch as you go.



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06

Feel the breathing of the earth from Bokke.



Bokke means "boiling" in the Ainu language, and refers to the mixture of heated mud and volcanic gas bubbles from underground. The mud is approximately 97 degrees, inspiring the name "mud volcano." The perfect spot to observe this natural phenomenon is from the Bokke Walking Trail behind Akankohan Eco-museum Center. It's the perfect nature spot to feel the earth breathing.

08

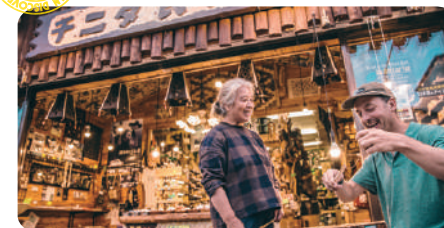
Enjoy a stroll through Akanko Onsen Town.



A leisurely stroll is one way of enjoying Akanko Onsen Town. The town has three zones: Akanko Ainu Kotan, Koun-no-Mori Shopping Street and Marimo-no-Sato Shopping Street, and together the three zones offer over 60 souvenir shops and eateries. What's more, you'll encounter a fascinating collection of wood-carvings and other craft products, and you can watch the masterful skills of artisans up close.

10

Sense the Ainu culture through Akanko Ainu Kotan.



The Ainu Kotan, located in Akanko Onsen Town, features over 20 shops selling craftwork and souvenirs. It's a place where you can feel close to Ainu culture through the flavors of Hokkaido and Ainu dishes. Akanko Ainu Theater <Ikor>, where you can watch traditional Ainu dances, offers a new program called Akan Yukar "Lost Kamuy" draws together old dance, new dance and digital art.



Various outdoor activities can be experienced
in Kushiro area and Lake Akan during summer time.
What would you like to do?

01

Canoeing down the Kushiro River
through 'Kushiro Marshland'.



Down the Kushiro River through the "Kushiro Shitsugen" with an experienced guide. Kushiro Shitsugen National Park is the largest marshland of all Japan and is home to about 1,300 species of wild animals such as Red-crowned crane (Tanchō crane), White-tailed sea eagle, and Ezoshika deer.

03

Socializing with the locals at
'Ganpeki Robata'



Kushiro is the birthplace of "Robatayaki" cooking style, where various kinds of seafood are grilled on the charcoal barbecue stoves. During summer season, various robotayaki stalls are set on the Kushiro Port, which is called "Ganpeki Robata" where you can savor local specialty accompanied with quality sake looking at the renowned beautiful sunset and chatting with local people. It'll be a precious time for you.

02

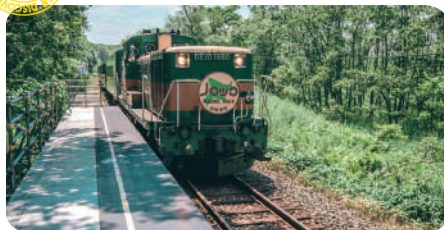
Enjoy the view of marshland from
'Kushiro City Marsh Observatory'



You'll have a spectacular panoramic views of marshland from the upper deck. And then you can enjoy walking along with wooden trails to observe the marshland at close range. In the observatory building, they provide a wide range of exhibitions and explanations related to the marshlands. There is a small café and our best recommendation is "Tanchō Crane shaped soft ice cream".

04

Ride on the 'NOROKKO TRAIN'



"NOROKKO TRAIN" is a sightseeing trolley train which is operated from April through October. The train runs through "Kushiro Shitsugen". You'll have an open views of the marshland and when the train slows down, you might see some wild animals in a relaxed posture. There is a little store on the train that sells bento lunch boxes which feature local specialties.

05

Take a stroll in the 'Light Forest' and
meet the giant trees of 800 years old



"Light Forest" walking tour give you a privileged opportunity to enter the primeval forest near the Lake Akan. A tour with a special licensed guide allow you to enter the private area which is closed to ordinary people. The 800 years old Japanese Judas tree and the volcanic mud pool called "Bokke" are the highlight of the tour. You might share the emotion that the owner of this forest would feel under the sunlight shining through the leaves of trees.

07

Visit Akanko Ainu Kotan (Ainu Village)
and experience Ainu culture.



The Ainu are Japan's indigenous people who live in Hokkaido. They worship and thank the nature as the god for its grace. Akanko Ainu Kotan at the Lake Akan offers a variety of handicrafts with Ainu patterns passing down from the ancestors, such as wood carvings, embroideries, and traditional dishes.

09

Climb up Mt. Meakan.



Climbing Mt. Meakan (1,499m), is like walking between Heaven and Earth. The ecological changes according to the seasons and the unique landscapes of the active volcano on the way will all make you feel the rhythm and vitality of the earth. When you reach the top of the mountain, the magnificent scenery that stretches into the sky will be a beautiful memory.

06

Take a tour boat at Lake Akan
and observe mysterious "marimo".



The sightseeing boat takes you to the most scenic places in the Lake Akan. You'll have breathtaking views of Mt. Oakan and Mt. Meakan. The boat make a round trip and lastly stops at the Churui Island where you can observe 'semi-wild' marimo at Marimo Exhibition and Observation Center.

08

「KAMUY LUMINA」 OPEN in the
night forest in Lake Akan 2019 Jul



KAMUY LUMINA is an enchanted multimedia night walk experience that will take visitors on an interactive journey to the land of Kamuy (Ainu gods) from the lakeside forests of Akan. Using lighting effects, soundscapes and projections, this unique interactive experience will highlight the importance of coexistence with nature through the mythology of the Ainu, the indigenous people of Hokkaido.

10

Visit the 'Five Color Lake Onneto'



Lake Onneto is a dammed lake formed by the eruption of Mt. Meakan. It's known as a mysterious lake, whose water color changes such as clear blue and emerald green depending on the seasons, times of the day, and the angles from which it is viewed.



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01

Savor the authentic Japanese Sake produced by “Fukutsukasa Shuzo”.



With its name which means “blessing”, this time-honored brewery started its business in 1919. Its most popular “Junmai-Ginjo” is made from best selected locally sourced rice with naturally filtered river bed water. If you are the beginner, it’s the best to start with to learn how the real flavor & taste sake is.

03

Participate in the Ainu ritual “Thousand Torches Parade”.



The “Thousand Torches Parade” is held every year in September and October in Akanko Onsen. Hundreds of torches are raised as an expression of strong determination to protect the abundant nature of Lake Akan, which nourishes the Marimo as well as to give thanks to the Ainu goddess of fire, Ape Kamuy, and to the great northern lands. From the hot spring district to the Ainu Kotan Village, the countless dancing flames indicate the path for the gods to travel.

02

Visit the old merchant house museum “Yonemachi Furusatokan”.



This building was constructed in 1900 as a marine products store with residence, which is the oldest wooden house in Kushiro. Stepping inside, you immediately feel as if you traveled back in time when the fishery trade was booming in Kushiro. Displays include vintage photographs of the Meiji and Taisho periods. Let’s be time travelers!

04

Relish Autumn Leaves at “Takimi Bridge”.



The bridge is perfectly located at 5 min. drive from Akanko Onsen to view magnificent waterfalls coming out of the Lake Akan and Lake Taro. From late September to early October, colorful leaves of Japanese maples and Japanese Judas trees in reds and yellows hang over the vigorous waters and create spectacular scenery. This is one of the natural work of art. Best place to take great photos!

05

Climb up “Mt. Hakuto”.



Mt. Hakuto lies to the south of the Lake Akan, reaching a peak height of 950 m. It offers points of interest such as autumn leaves, flowing river, “bokke” mud volcano vents, etc. From the observatory at the peak, you can get the panoramic view of Lake Akan and Mt. Oakan at the north side and Mt. Meakan at the other side.

07

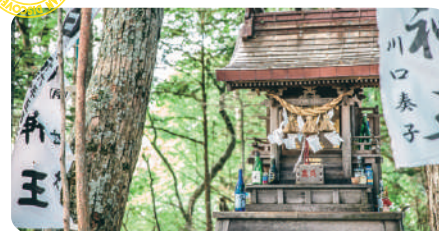
Enjoy a leisurely moment at Akanko Onsen.



As the air gets colder in fall, soaking in a onsen will be a precious moment. Akanko Onsen, which is on the shore of Lake Akan, is well-known for its quality across Hokkaido. Many hotels have open air onsen where you will have breathtaking views of the lake and surrounding mountains.

09

Visit the Hakuryu Shrine to feel the divine power.



The Hakuryu Shrine is on the Yaitai Island in Lake Akan. So you take a boat ride to land on the island. With a perimeter of 300m, this inhabited island has Hakuryu Shrine, which is said to be able to feel sacred power of deities. It will be an unforgettable experience to look out at the majestic mountains of Mt. Meakan, Mt. Oakan and Mt. Fuppushi in such a spiritual field.

06

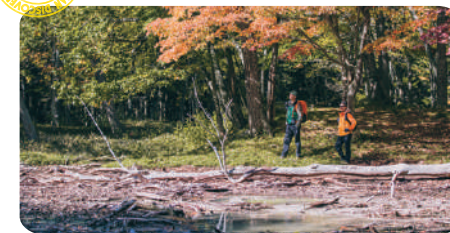
Appreciate the nature of Lake Akan in “Canadian canoe”.



Canoeing in Lake Akan, surrounded by the primeval forest with a special guide. With the dreamy lakeside scenery reflected on the water, and rare wild birds such as White-tailed sea-eagle, Osprey, etc., both adults and children will have the great fun.

08

Take a stroll in the private forest “Hikari-no-Mori”.



“Hikari-no-Mori” Walking Tour gives you the privilege to enter the primeval forest near Lake Akan. A tour with a special licensed guide allows you to enter the private area which is closed to ordinary people. The 800 years old Japanese Judas tree and the volcanic mud pool called “Bokke” are the highlights of the tour. It’s a delightful moment to see colorful foliage and all kinds of mushrooms growing under the feet.

10

Learn the Ainu culture and “traditional Ainu dance”.



Designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Heritage of Japan and registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, the traditional Ainu dance shows respect and gratitude to kamui (the gods) and ancestors. Enjoy the traditional dance at Akanko Ainu Theater “Ikor” and then dance together to experience the Ainu culture.



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Various outdoor activities can be experienced in Kushiro area and Lake Akan during winter time.
What would you like to do?



Snowshoe through Kushiro Wetland's wondrous world of snow and ice.



Kushiro Wetland under a thick blanket of snow and ice is a vast, serene and wondrous world. Leisurely snowshoe your way through fields of fluttering snow and diamond dust. Observe the animals active in winter, and if you're lucky you may see tancho red-crowned cranes.



Experience the classic sports of Hokkaido on a skating rink.



Skating is a popular sport in Hokkaido, not to mention in Kushiro. You'll find plenty of skating rinks in Kushiro, where skates for various purposes, including speed skating and ice hockey, are available for rent. Enjoy the freedom and thrill of skating on a wide-open rink or watching a spectacular game of ice sport.



Gliding through Kushiro Wetland in winter in a Canadian canoe.



Kushiro Wetland in winter is enveloped in a silvery white silence. Travel in a guided canoe through headwaters inaccessible on foot or by car. Take in the crisp, clear air with all five senses, see the sparkling rime and encounter Yezo sika deer, white-tailed eagles and other wildlife.



Gaze across the snowy landscape of Kushiro Wetland on the SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen Train.



The SL Fuyu-no-Shitsugen Train is a 90-minute ride through a snow-covered landscape. With its resonating steam whistle and white steam puffing from the smokestack, the old-fashioned exterior abounds with retro charm. Listen to the local guide and peer outside through the window at the silent beauty of straight out of ink wash painting. If you're lucky, you may catch sight of tancho red-crowned cranes, Yezo sika deer and white-tailed eagles.



Relish some Katte-don loaded with seafood.



When it comes to fresh seafood, don't miss the Kushiro Washo Ichiba (market), one of the three largest markets in Hokkaido. Get yourself a bowl of white rice and wander around the market topping it with your favorite seafood as you go. This is what Katte-don is all about! Blue king crab, saury fish, botan shrimp, salmon, scallops, sea urchins, tuna, hairy crab and more are all so mouth wateringly delicious you'll be talking about it for years to come.



Enjoy the Lake Akan Ice Festival on the frozen lake.



The Lake Akan Ice Festival runs from early February to mid-March every year on Lake Akan. Approximately 300 fireworks color the clear winter sky every night. Entertainment for the whole family features traditional Ainu ceremonies, attractions on ice and a host of other fun events.



Appreciate Ainu art and experience Ainu culture.



Akan Yuku no Sato Tsuruga Hotel exhibits many sculptures by Takeki Fujito and Masamitsu Takiguchi, famous artists in the Akanko area. Etched into each of the delicate and elegant hand-carved works is their respect for ancestors and appreciation for nature. Encounter the Ainu culture through these works of art.



Observe nationally protected tancho red-crowned cranes up close at Akan International Crane Center [GRUS].



Akan area has long protected tancho red-crowned cranes, as a Special Natural Monument, at its habitat in this wintering spot as the first artificial feeding ground. Established in 1996, Akan International Crane Center [GRUS] is an observation and research facility specializing in the tancho red-crowned crane. It's where you can see these noble birds in a state as close as possible to their natural state throughout the year, and the center hosts as many as 300 at a time.



Ski down through the magnificent scenery at the Akankohan National Ski Area [UTARA].



The Akankohan National Ski Area [UTARA] boasts outstanding snow quality and treats skiers to the grand landscape of Lake Akan and Mt. Oakan. There are two slopes, one for beginners and intermediate skiers and another for advanced skiers, as well as a board park for snowboarders and a kid's park for snow fun. The area attracts pleasure skiers and competition skiers alike. You'll also find a full line-up of rental items, including full ski and snowboard sets, sleds and snow outfits.



Gently heal in the hot spring waters of Akanko Onsen during winter.



Akanko Onsen is a famous hot spring tourist sight in Hokkaido. Immersing yourself in the warm water of Akanko Onsen in the chill of winter is truly a most pleasant healing experience. Many of the hotels at Akanko Onsen have open-air baths that allow guests like you to enjoy the splendid landscape of Lake Akan and the mountain range spreading before your eyes. It's a supremely blissful occasion to warm your body and mind.



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