

Join Photographer Yukinori Otsuka, a Resident of Hokkaido, on a Special Photo Tour to Capture the Winter Nature and Wildlife of Eastern Hokkaido!



Yukinori Otsuka, who is an experienced mountain guide and photographer, will take you to his recommended spots for photographing nature, birds, and wild animals.

He has been captivated by Hokkaido for 20 years, ever since his relocation to the region in his early 20s and will share its charm with the tour group.

In the winter season of eastern Hokkaido, which boasts a high percentage of sunny days, we will observe the foraging behavior of Blakiston's fish owls (shima-fukuro), a rare species found in Shiretoko's well-preserved natural environments. We will also seek to spot white-tailed sea eagles (ojiro-washi) foraging on drift ice at sunrise, and Eurasian flying squirrels (Ezo-momonga) inhabiting an urban park, demonstrating that in Hokkaido wildlife is even present in the city.

The tour ensures ample time for photography, making it a highly satisfying experience for photography enthusiasts.

Highlights:

- Capturing stunning views of the sunrise at the Bihoro Pass and Lake Kussharo
- Photographing the mystical 'Mashu Blue' on the frozen Lake Mashu
- Taking pictures of white-tailed sea eagles (ojiro-washi) and steller's sea eagles (o-washi) on drift ice at sunrise
- Photographing the foraging behavior of Blakiston's fish owls (shima-fukuro), a rare species found in protected natural environments
- Getting up close to unique birds and wild animals native to Hokkaido, such as the long-tailed tit (shima-enaga) and Eurasian flying squirrels (Ezo-momonga)

Location:

East area of Hokkaido, Bihoro pass, Lake Kussharo , Lake Mashu,
Shiretoko Peninsula , Rause , Cape Shiretoko , Abashiri.

Main Activity: Photographing the nature scenery, wildlife, in east of Hokkaido

Difficulty: 2 Easy

Tour Dates: Early February to Early March

Pax: Minimum 8 Maximum 10

Price: JPY 286,000. ～

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Day-by-day Itinerary

Day 1 – Meet up at Kushiro Airport and travel to the accommodation in Teshikaga

We will gather at Kushiro Airport, where we will also meet up with the nature photographer, Yukinori Otsuka.

In the afternoon, we will head to Teshikaga and stay at Masuya, an inn for travelers and nature photographers.

As long as time and weather permit, we will observe nature and take photos in the surrounding forest.

During dinner, the host will share stories about the local nature, birds, and wild animals. Mr. Otsuka will also tell us about his relocation to Hokkaido, the appeal of Hokkaido's beauty of nature, and show examples of his own photographic works.

Dinner

Japanese set menu

Day 2 –Photography of natural landscapes such as the morning glow at Bihoro Pass, and the mystical Lake Mashu

We will get a move on early in the morning to capture the winter natural landscapes in the early light, such as the morning glow at Bihoro Pass and the scenery of Lake Kussharo below. We can easily see the contrast between the outer mountain and the huge caldera that created the lake.

After the shoot, we will move on to Lake Mashu and capture the mystical lake from the first observation deck of Lake Mashu. It may be completely frozen or show a deep azure known as 'Mashu Blue' due to its high transparency, depending on the season.

In the afternoon, we will head to Mt. Io, where snow does not accumulate even in winter. We will witness the ongoing volcanic activity and the experience standing in the middle of the volcano, feeling the geothermal heat and the smell of sulfur.

If we have time in the evening, we will do astrophotography at the Lake Mashu observatory, and capture the overwhelmingly beautiful starry sky.

Morning / Lunch / Dinner

Breakfast:Japanese set menu

Lunch: Ration (resistant to freezing and nutritious)

Dinner: Japanese set menu

Activity: Photographing the nature scenery

Difficulty: 2 Easy

Day 3 – Backup for Day 2 or observation of red-crowned cranes and wildlife in the Kushiro Wetlands

This is a spare day for Day 2, and will be used as a backup for shooting around Lake Kussharo and Lake Mashu. If we are able to hit our photographic goals on Day 2, then we will move on to Tsurui village to observe and photograph red-crowned cranes (tancho). In the afternoon, we will visit the Kushiro Wetland Wildlife Protection Center to learn about the surrounding wildlife and ecosystem.

The photography tour involves many early morning, evening, and nighttime shoots. Since winter photography with cold temperatures can be physically demanding, rest time will be provided based on the condition of the participants.

Morning / Lunch / Dinner

Breakfast: Japanese set menu

Lunch: Ration (resistant to freezing and nutritious)

Dinner: Japanese set menu

Activity: Photographing the nature scenery

Difficulty: 2 Easy

Day 4 – Backup day in the morning and Rausu in the Shiretoko Peninsula in the afternoon

The morning will be used as spare time for Day 2 activities.

In the afternoon, we will make a move to Rausu in the Shiretoko Peninsula.

If there is an opportunity, we will take photos of the nature and wildlife of Eastern Hokkaido that can be seen on the way.

Once we arrive, we will check into Washi no Yado, a lodging where Blakiston's fish owls regularly hunt, allowing us to observe and photograph their hunting behavior at night.

Morning / Lunch / Dinner

Breakfast: Japanese set menu

Lunch: Ration (resistant to freezing and nutritious)

Dinner: Japanese set menu

Activity: Photographing nature scenery , wildlife

Difficulty: 2 Easy

Day 5 – Take a drift ice cruise to Shiretoko Cape and photograph large birds of prey from the boat

We will depart early in the morning to catch the Shiretoko Nature Cruise to see the drift ice. During the cruise to Shiretoko Cape, we can photograph large birds of prey such as white-tailed and steller's sea eagles foraging on the drift ice with the sunrise as our background.

In order to provide photographic opportunities, the ship will take considerations such as cutting off the engine and moving slowly, allowing us to photograph wild birds that cannot be observed from land.

In the afternoon, a rest period is scheduled. We can also take photos of small birds and wildlife such as long-tailed tits around the inn. At night, we can also observe and photograph the hunting behavior of Blakiston's fish owls.

Morning / Lunch / Dinner

Breakfast: Japanese set menu

Lunch: Ration (resistant to freezing and nutritious)

Dinner: Japanese set menu

Activity: Photographing wildlife on cruise boat

Difficulty: 2 Easy

Day 6 – Morning as backup and transfer to Abashiri in the afternoon

The morning of Day 6 is kept as a backup for Day 5 activities, with a second chance for photography from the cruise ship.

In the afternoon, we will move to Abashiri.

If we can photograph to our satisfaction on the cruise on Day 5, we will start the day early and take photos of natural scenery such as Mt. Shari on the way to our next destination.

Morning / Lunch / Dinner

Breakfast: Japanese set menu

Lunch: Ration (resistant to freezing and nutritious)

Dinner: Japanese set menu

Activity: Photographing wildlife on cruise boat

Difficulty: 2 Easy

Day 7 – Photograph Eurasian flying squirrels at a park in Abashiri

We will observe and photograph Ezo momonga, Eurasian flying squirrels, a species native to Hokkaido, at a park in Abashiri city.

Through this experience, we hope to appreciate the richness of Hokkaido's nature, even in urban areas.

After taking our time photographing the squirrels, we will head to Memanbetsu Airport, where the tour will conclude.

Morning / Lunch

Breakfast: Japanese set menu

Lunch: Local restaurant serving mainly dishes made with local ingredients. Customers can choose

Activity: Photographing at a park in Abashiri city

Difficulty: 2 Easy

Accommodations :

Day1 : Masuya Inn Western style with bed

Day2 : Ditto

Day3 : Ditto

Day4 : Washi no yado Inn : Japanese Lodge style

Day5 : Ditto

Day6 : Abashiri Western style with bed

What's included

- Accommodation as per itinerary in a double / twin bed room. Single supplement applies for the single room accommodation.
- Transportation as per itinerary.
- English speaking licensed guide throughout the whole tour.
- Meals as listed in the itinerary.
- Program Participation Fee as per itinerary.

We provide & What to bring

We provide

- Advice during filming

What to bring

A list of equipment necessary for the tour will be made and distributed in advance. The list may include the following:

- Photography equipment
- Hiking boots suitable for 3-seasons or severe winter conditions
- Mountaineering backpack
- Outerwear, middle wear, underwear (top and bottom for each)
- Gloves, over-gloves
- Warm clothing (sweaters, fleece, down jackets, etc.)
- Socks for mountaineering
- Long spats (gaiters)
- Sunglasses, goggles
- Cap, beanie, balaclava
- Headlamp
- Compass, map
- Toilet paper
- Personal medical supplies
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle (insulated bottle)
- Health insurance card
- Plastic bag
- Trail foods, snacks

About us

Alpine Tour Service is the tour company in Japan, specialized in the adventure trips which feature hiking, trekking & birding all over the world. We are the one of the oldest tour companies in Japan with more than fifty years of history.

Guides



大塚友記憲（おおつか・ゆきのり）

Yukinori Otsuka

Born in Chiba prefecture in 1979, after graduating highschool he studied in the US. After a few years, he began living and working at an inn in Asahidake Onsen in Hokkaido, gradually beginning regular visits to the Daisetsu range when he was 20 years old. In 2010, after finishing the pro photography course at the Shoto School of Arts in Tokyo, he returned to Hokkaido, obtained a qualification as a mountain guide while working in the tourism industry, and continued to photograph Mt. Daisetsu. In 2018, he published his first photo book, Bravo! Daisetsuzan. In March 2021, he was in charge of the photography for the photo books Kita no Zansho and Nupurikoro Kamuynomi. He is one of the few photographers who continue to photograph Mt. Daisetsu throughout the year.

<http://yukinori.net>

- Tour leader: Certified English speaking mountain guide as well as a tour leader.
Japan Mountain Guides Association (JAMG)
Mountain Guides Stage 1
certified first aid

Information and Requirements

Dietary Restrictions

All meals will also offer a vegetarian menus.

Emergency Response Plan

A first-aid kit will be carried by your tour leader and hiking guide at all times. All those tour leader and hiking guide have finished authorized first-aid course. A support car accompanies throughout the cycling activity. In case of major injuries, contact Fire and Disaster Management and transport to the nearest medical facility.

Reservation & Cancellation Policy

Payment Methods

Credit card (VISA MASTER)

Cancellation

Deposit

To secure your itinerary we require an initial non-refundable deposit as a booking confirmation fee.

Deposit amount and conditions will be confirmed case by case at the time of travel planning and quoting.

Deposit will be treated as part of the planning fee, tour fee, cancellation fee or penalty fee.

Payment

Payment of the travel invoice is due no later than 60 days prior to commencement of travel. When settling

the travel invoice, the payment will be reduced by the amount of the deposit.

Where a booking is made within 60 days of commencement of travel, the total trip cost is required at the

time of booking. A travel invoice will be issued and will be immediately payable.

Disclaimer

Organizers reserve the right to cancel or change the itinerary of the tour at their own discretion.

Organizers are not responsible for compensating any additional costs that may result from any changes.

Tour Operator / Contact

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/ Hirofumi Kobayashi TEL. 043 290 9699 EMAIL. kobayashi@alpine-tour.com