

The Ainu are an indigenous people of Japan.

Discover the unique culture of the Ainu

living in the shores of Lake Akan.



# Anytime, Ainu time!

An adventure around Lake Akan together with the Ainu



In the hustle and bustle of daily life,  
There are some things you may have forgotten.

Taking the time to listen to the forest,  
And taking the time to appreciate  
All the living beings in this earth.

The Ainu way of life gently reminds us  
Of the importance of these simple things.

So come and meet the Ainu people  
And experience their rich culture.  
It will surely enrich your own life.

Experience an extraordinary time with

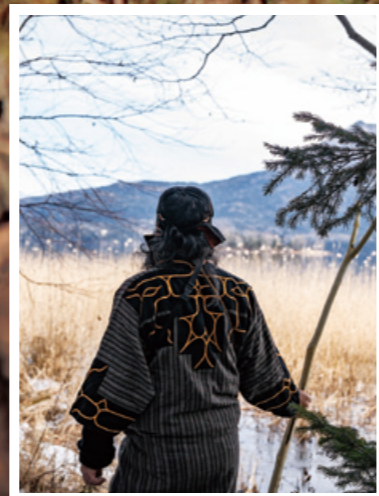
*Anytime, Ainu time!*

## Concept Anytime, Ainu time! Cultural Guides

The Ainu believe that life is possible through the blessings we receive from everything that surrounds us, including the forests, rivers, and lakes, as well as family and friends. That is why they always respect nature, value their possessions, and interact with others with a caring heart.

Anytime, Ainu time! offers tour programs led by Ainu guides (and Lake Akan Ainu Kotan residents) who share their culture on three different aspects: the forest, the lake, and craft-making. You can experience Ainu culture firsthand through traditional Ainu crafts or the Ainu way of life while enjoying the nature of Lake Akan.

By learning the Ainu way of life, you may find yourself suddenly wanting to thank someone in your life, or sharing more heartwarming moments with them. Through these tour programs, it is our hope that you will discover something that will enrich your life. We also sincerely hope that these life lessons from the Ainu will serve a purpose in your life, even after you return to your daily grind.



## The Ainu People

Prior to the modern history of Japan, Hokkaido was mainly inhabited by an indigenous people distinct from the "Wajin" people of the mainland. These indigenous people called themselves the Ainu. In the Ainu language, the word "Ainu" means "human".

The Ainu lived a lifestyle that made full use of the blessings of nature through hunting and fishing. They had no written language, and they passed down their history and cultural heritage orally, but they have developed a unique spiritual culture and a rich tradition that includes epics, songs, and dances.



## The Ainu Spirit

The Ainu believe that everything in nature is inhabited by a divine spirit called "kamuy". This includes animals, plants, fire, and water, and even objects essential to their daily lives, such as the tools they use. It also includes phenomena humans cannot control such as the weather. They revere these things as manifestations of kamuy who have come to the human world. They believe that interactions between humans and kamuy are the basis of this world, which is why they value coexistence and harmony with nature above all else.

A deep respect and appreciation for the nature that we humans live in. It is something we all can learn from the spiritual culture of the Ainu.

### Ainu words used during the tours

#### 「Irankarapte」

A word that literally means "Allow me to touch your heart gently". It is commonly used as a greeting equivalent to "hello".

#### 「Kuwa」

A staff or walking stick used by Ainu men when they go into the forest. They use it to provide stability while walking, or use the Y-shaped end to hang objects and pick fruits and nuts from trees.

#### 「Onkami」

A word meaning "to worship". It is also a form of ritual greeting performed to show appreciation and share one's heart to the spirits of nature.

#### 「Kamuy-nomi」

A word meaning "pray to the gods". It is a ritual performed to communicate with the kamuy (gods) to show respect and gratitude or ask favors.

#### 「Huci, Ekasi」

Huci is a term of respect for one's grandmother or a female elder, while Ekasi is a term of respect for one's grandfather, a male elder, or a male ancestor.

#### 「Mukkuri」

A traditional Ainu mouth harp made from bamboo. It is played to express the sounds of nature, and is usually played solo or as an accompaniment to traditional dances.

#### 「Iyayraykere」

An Ainu word meaning "thank you".

#### 「Suy unukaran ro」

An Ainu word meaning "good bye".

#### 「Tonkori」

A traditional Ainu stringed instrument. Its shape is said to represent the female body, and it contains a glass bead that represents the soul. It is commonly used in performances onboard Lake Akan sightseeing boats and in the Iomante Fire Ritual performance in the Lake Akan Ainu Theater Ikor.



The forest is a source of life.  
From hunting wild animals  
To gathering plants for food  
The Ainu have lived in harmony with the forest.

◆ tour 1 **Forest Time**  
Forest Walk Short Course

For the Ainu in Lake Akan, the forest was a place essential to their lives. It was a source of their food, their clothing, and their tools. They lived in harmony with the forest, always showing their appreciation to the many kamuy inhabiting it. In "Forest Time", you will take a walk inside the "iwor" (living territory) forest on the shore of Lake Akan together with an Ainu guide. You will also get to try playing a traditional Ainu musical instrument called "mukkuri".

Fee  
adult/child **¥7,000** per person (tax incl.)

- Available period | June to March
- Start time | 13:30 ~
- Duration | 1 hour 30 minutes
- Participants | Minimum 2, maximum 10
- Age limit | 7 years old and up
- Included in fee | Guide fee, activity fee, mukkuri, tax (plus snowshoe rental in case of snow)
- Things to bring | Comfortable clothes and shoes, rain gear (or cold weather gear in winter)
- Schedule

The tour is conducted only in Japanese or English. If you wish to avail of guidance in English, please select it in the reservation form. An additional fee will be charged.

- ① Meetup at Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor
- ② Traditional AINU prayer experience
- ③ Guided walk in the iwor forest (short course)  
\*Snowshoe trek in case of accumulated snow
- ④ Mukkuri performance in the forest
- ⑤ Picture-taking with AINU traditional clothes
- ⑥ Finish at Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor

Scan here for details and reservations



◆ See how the AINU interact with the forest

This tour takes place in the iwor forest located not far from the Akanko Onsen area. Before entering the forest, the AINU will perform a traditional prayer ritual to pray for safe travels inside the forest. You can participate in this ritual together with the AINU guide. While walking inside the forest, the guide will tell you all about the folklore and beliefs of the Lake Akan AINU surrounding this area.

\*You will walk with snowshoes in case of accumulated snow.



◆ See the majestic stature of Mt. Oakan

The walking course in this tour is relatively short in distance, with little uphill or downhill slopes. As you walk along, you will eventually reach the shore of Lake Akan. Through the trees, you can catch a glimpse of Mt. Oakan, captivating you with its majestic beauty. As you stop to take a deep breath, you can listen to the legends of the Lake Akan AINU surrounding this imposing mountain.

\*Depending on the weather for the day, you may be unable to see Mt. Oakan.

◆ Listen to the sound of the mukkuri inside the forest

In a small clearing at the edge of the forest, the AINU guide will teach how to play the mukkuri. The mukkuri is a type of jaw harp made from bamboo that produces sound by pulling a string and vibrating the reed while holding it against your mouth. The AINU used the mukkuri to express the sounds of nature, such as the wind or the cries of animals. They also used it as a musical accompaniment for their traditional songs and dances. Hearing it resonate in the middle of the quiet forest gives you the feeling that humans are indeed a part of nature.



Forest Time Course Map



Fee adult/child **¥10,000** per person (tax incl.)

Available period | June to March

Start time | 10:00 ~

Duration | 2 hours 30 minutes

Participants | Minimum 2, maximum 10

Age limit | 7 years old and up

Included in fee | Guide fee, activity fee, mukkuri making kit, tax (plus snowshoe rental in case of snow)

Things to bring | Comfortable clothes and shoes, rain gear (or cold weather gear in winter)

Schedule

- ① Meetup at Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor
- ② Mukkuri making
- ③ Traditional AINU prayer experience
- ④ Guided walk in the iwor forest (long course)  
※ Snowshoe trek in case of accumulated snow
- ⑤ Mukkuri performance
- ⑥ Picture-taking with AINU traditional clothes
- ⑦ Finish at Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor

Lake Akan is one of the famous caldera lakes in Eastern Hokkaido surrounded by forests and volcanic mountains. The lake, forests, and mountains create a unique environment with majestic scenery. In "Lake Time", you will experience carving a traditional AINU musical instrument called "mukkuri", then take a walk inside the "iwor" (living territory) forest along the shore of Lake Akan, ending up at a clearing with a stunning view of the lake and Mt. Oakan. Here you can take a short rest and play the mukkuri while listening to the stories of the AINU guide.

The tour is conducted only in Japanese or English. If you wish to avail of guidance in English, please select it in the reservation form. An additional fee will be charged.



Scan here for details and reservations

The mountains and lakes are living beings inhabited by kamuy. Explore the symbolic lake and mountain surrounding them. And learn about the unique AINU legends surrounding them.

tour 2 **Lake Time**  
Forest Walk Long Course & Mukkuri Making



Make a mukkuri and march into the forest

In this tour program, you will first make your own mukkuri, a traditional AINU musical instrument. It is a type of jaw harp made from bamboo that produces sound by pulling a string and vibrating the reed while holding it against your mouth. The AINU used it to express the sounds of nature, such as the wind or the cries of animals. You will get to carve the reed and attach a string to finish the mukkuri. After making the mukkuri, you will enter the iwor forest located not far from the Akanko Onsen area. Before entering the forest, the AINU will perform a traditional prayer ritual to pray for safe travels inside the forest.

※ You will walk with snowshoes in case of accumulated snow.



Experience the culture of the Lake Akan AINU

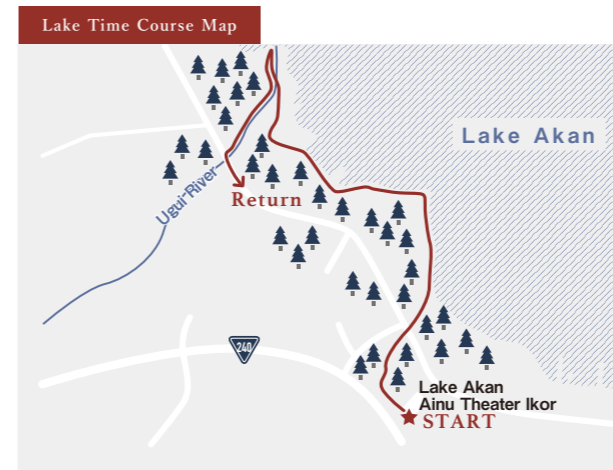
Together with the AINU guide, you will go into the depths of the forest. For the AINU in Lake Akan, the forest was a place essential to their lives. It was a source of their food, their clothing, and their tools. Making full use of the blessings of nature has become an important part of their culture that has been handed down through generations.

While taking a rest in a clearing inside the forest, the guide will tell you all about the folklore and beliefs of the Lake Akan AINU surrounding this area. You will also get to play the mukkuri that you made earlier. Hearing it resonate in the middle of the quiet forest gives you the feeling that humans are indeed a part of nature.

See a breathtaking view of the lake and Mt. Oakan

The walking course in this tour is fairly easy, with little uphill or downhill slopes. But unlike the course in the "Forest Time" tour, you will advance further out of the forest to a wharf on the lake shore. The sightseeing boats going around Lake Akan have always been a popular attraction in this area. As you catch a glimpse of the boats that have taken many visitors on board over the years, you will eventually arrive at a large clearing on the lake shore. Here you can enjoy a magnificent view of the lake backed by the imposing figure of Mt. Oakan. You can also listen to the unique AINU legends surrounding the place. It is a blissful time that will bring you closer to the culture of the AINU.

※ Depending on the weather for the day, you may be unable to see Mt. Oakan.





Using the blessings provided by the kamuy,  
They carefully create their traditional crafts  
With a prayer to protect their loved ones.

### ◆ The Ainu and embroidery

In Ainu society, embroidery was the domain of women, and it was passed down from mothers to daughters. Girls started learning it from an early age, mastering the techniques as they grew up. Ainu patterns were embroidered to many different things, most commonly to clothing and headbands called “matampus”. To express their fondness for a man, Ainu women usually gave an embroidered hand ornament called “tek-un-pe”, putting their feelings with every stroke of the needle as they make it.



### ◆ Putting their feelings into embroidery

In the past, objects embroidered with Ainu patterns were used in rituals and other special occasions. Nowadays, the patterns are used in everyday items and clothing. When Ainu women create embroidery, they think about its future bearer with every push of the needle into the cloth. Ainu embroidery is made with a wish for happiness or a prayer for protection.

Creating something with a wish for someone in your heart. This simple idea may be the foundation of all craftsmanship. And it is something you can learn and apply through this tour program.



### ◆ The expansive world of Ainu patterns

Ainu motifs feature basic patterns that resemble forms found in nature, such as the swirly “morew” and the thorn-shaped “ay-us”. These basic patterns can be connected with each other to form an endlessly expansive pattern. In this tour program, you will make use of an embroidery kit that includes a cloth with pre-drawn lines, so even beginners can easily embroider the pattern. Come and experience the joy of embroidery and the Ainu culture that has been passed down through generations.



## ◆ tour 3 Craft Time Embroidery making

◆tour 3A Embroidery making  
Fee  
adult/child ¥6,000 per person (tax incl.)



Scan here for details and reservations

Available period	All year round	Included in fee	Guide fee, activity fee, craft making kit, tax
Start time	①11:00 ~ ②13:30 ~	Schedule	① Meetup at Lake Akan Ainu Theater Ikor ② Embroidery making experience ③ Finish at Lake Akan Ainu Theater Ikor
Duration	1 hour		
Participants	Minimum 2, maximum 10		
Age limit	7 years old and up		This tour is conducted only in Japanese, but non-Japanese speakers can also join.





◆ tour 3  
**Craft Time**  
Wood carving

◆ tour 3B Wood carving  
Fee adult/child **¥5,000** per person (tax incl.)



Scan here for details and reservations

Available period	All year round
Start time	① 11:00 ~ ② 13:30 ~
Duration	1 hour
Participants	Minimum 2, maximum 10
Age limit	10 years old and up
Included in fee	Guide fee, activity fee, craft making kit, tax

Schedule	① Meetup at Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor ② Wood carving experience ③ Finish at Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor
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The tour is conducted only in Japanese or English. If you wish to avail of guidance in English, please select it in the reservation form. An additional fee will be charged.

Trees are kamuy that hold the earth.  
Be grateful for the privilege of carving their wood,  
And carve out your very own AINU pattern.

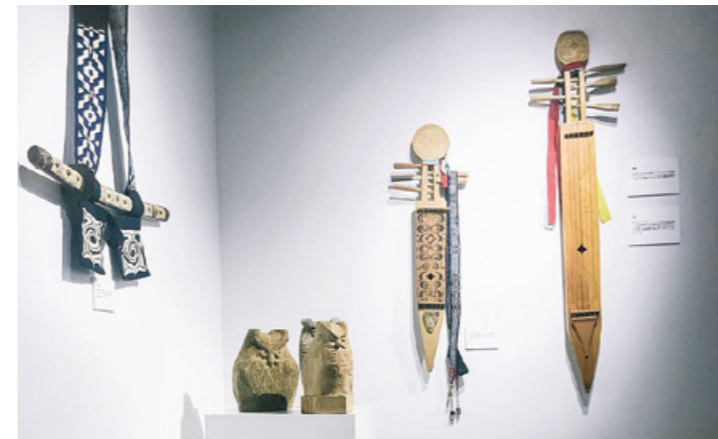


Located in the Akanko Onsen area, the Lake Akan AINU Kotan is a village of AINU arts and crafts. It features several shops and food establishments standing side by side. Visit one of the handicraft shops and you will find a wide variety of wood crafts, including accessories, cutlery, and ornaments. What makes these wooden accessories and cutlery unique are the patterns carved on them. These are traditional AINU patterns that have been passed down through generations.

In "Craft Time (Wood Carving)", you will make a wooden charm in the shape of a "tonkori", a traditional AINU musical instrument. You will get to carve out an AINU pattern into the wood.

◆ Learn about AINU spirituality through wood carving

The tour program begins with a lecture on how to use the chisel and the technique for carving. You will also get to learn about AINU spirituality. To the AINU, they do not simply "carve the wood", but rather "receive the privilege of carving the wood". This is to show reverence to the spirit of the trees, known in the AINU language as "sir-kor-kamuy" meaning "the god who holds the earth". They believe that the trees protect the ground, enabling smaller plants and animals to live. You will see how such words in the AINU language reflect their spiritual culture.



◆ The tonkori, a traditional musical instrument

In this tour program, you will create a lucky charm in the shape of a tonkori, a traditional string instrument of the AINU. Originally an instrument of the Sakhalin AINU, it is also commonly used by the Lake Akan AINU in performances onboard sightseeing boats and in the Iomante Fire Festival performance in the Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor. You should go and watch these performances if you want to hear the real sound of a tonkori.

◆ Wood carving in AINU society

In AINU society, wood carving was the domain of men. They carved intricate patterns onto various items such as bowls and knives called "makiri". One of the most important wood items of the AINU is the "ikupasuy", a ceremonial stick carved with beautifully elaborate designs. It is used by AINU men when they make prayers and offerings to spirits in rituals called "kamuy-nomi".

After carving the wooden charm, you can choose to attach beads and a leather cord to make a pendant, or a ring and chain to make a keychain. Take it home as a memento of your time with the AINU in Lake Akan.





tour 4  
**Craft Time**  
Wood carving

Receiving the blessings of nature is a precious thing.  
We should not let it go to waste.

Fee  
Adult **¥6,000** per person (tax incl.)  
Child **¥5,000** per person (tax incl.)

Available period | June to March  
Start time | 11:00 ~  
Duration | About 2 hours 30 minutes (including eating time)  
Participants | Minimum 3, maximum 8  
Age limit | 10 years old and up  
Included in fee | Guide fee, activity fee, ingredients  
Menu  
• Cep ohaw (soup with salmon)  
• Amam (rice cooked with beans or millet)  
• Rataskep (boiled pumpkin mash)  
• Cisiru imo (potato dumplings)  
• Kumazasa tea

Schedule  
① Meetup at Lake Akan Ainu Theater Ikor  
② Ainu Cuisine Cooking Lesson  
③ Finish at Lake Akan Ainu Theater Ikor  
This tour is conducted only in Japanese, but non-Japanese speakers can also join.



Scan here for details and reservations

The Ainu have lived a life of harmony with nature, taking only what they need from their environment across the seasons and not wasting any part of it.

In Cooking Time – Ainu Cuisine Cooking Lesson, you will experience making typical Ainu food. By making the food yourself, you will get an understanding of Ainu life and culture, and how they received the blessings of nature. This program takes place at the Onne Cise, an Ainu cultural facility in the Lake Akan Ainu Kotan. After cooking the food in the kitchen, you can enjoy it by sitting around an irori hearth.



◆ The dishes you will make

The program begins outside the kitchen, as you will first pluck three blades of “uras” (bamboo grass). You will roast the grass in a frying pan to make kumazasa tea. You will also make a soup called “ohaw”, a boiled vegetable mash called “rataskep”, “amam” rice cooked with beans or millet, and fried potato dumplings called “cisiru-imo”.

The mothers of the Lake Akan Ainu Kotan will guide you step-by-step as you cook the food, so even beginners and children can take part in the program.



◆ The Ainu philosophy of valuing nature and not wasting anything

The Ainu took only what they needed from nature, making use of the resources available for each season. For the food you will make in this program, you will not use sugar, adding only a little salt to let you enjoy the natural flavors of the ingredients. The Ainu also believed in the idea of not wasting any part of the blessings they receive from the kamuy. This program lets you learn these aspects of the Ainu way of life.

In this day and age, you can buy almost anything in a supermarket. But if you look closely at the environment around you, you can find plenty of nature’s blessings, such as the bamboo grass that you can easily make into a refreshing tea. With nature providing us with countless blessings every day, it is important to always show respect and gratitude. This program can remind you of these important things that you may have forgotten in your daily life.



## Option Food Time

Fee adult/child **¥3,500** per person (tax incl.)

※Food Time cannot be reserved by itself.



※Menu may change depending on the season.

Using the wisdom passed down to them,  
They bring out the essence of the ingredients  
And turn them into gentle flavors.

The Ainu people lived a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, obtaining their food from the nature around them, including the forests, rivers, and lakes. In Food Time, you will visit the Traditional Ainu Food Cafe Poronno or Marukibune to enjoy AINU cuisine made from the blessings of nature. This program can be included as an option to the tours offered on this site (Forest Time, Lake Time, Craft Time – Embroidery Making and Craft Time – Wood Carving) so you can get a deeper experience of the AINU way of life. AINU food is seasoned simply so you can taste the natural flavor of the ingredients.

### Menu

- Amam (rice cooked with beans or millet)
- Choice of Yuk ohaw (soup with deer meat) or Cep ohaw (soup with salmon)
- Kapacep ruype (frozen himemasu salmon sashimi)
- Mehun (salted and fermented salmon kidney)
- Rataskep (mashed pumpkin)
- Konpu sito (dumplings with kombu kelp sauce)
- AINU tea



## Premium Half-Day Plan

Fee adult/child **¥14,600** per person (tax incl.)

The "Experience AINU Culture together with AINU Guides!" Premium Half-Day Plan is a tour program that combines the contents of "Forest Time", "Craft Time (Wood Carving)", and "Food Time", plus an additional AINU welcoming ritual experience inside a traditional AINU house called "cise". You can get a deeper understanding of the culture of the AINU by experiencing it from various angles, including nature, handicrafts, food, and rituals.



Available period	June to March	Duration	4 hours
Start time	10:20 ~	Participants	Minimum 2, maximum 15
Age limit	7 years old and up		
Included in fee	Guide fee, activity fee, lunch, tax, snowshoe rental (in case of snow)		
Things to bring	Comfortable clothes and shoes, rain gear (or cold weather gear in winter)		
Schedule	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① Meetup at Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor</li> <li>② Guided walk in the iwor forest</li> <li>③ Lunch of AINU cuisine</li> <li>④ Welcoming ritual experience in a cise</li> <li>⑤ Mukkuri performance</li> <li>⑥ Finish at Lake Akan AINU Theater Ikor</li> </ol>		

※ To reserve the Premium Half-Day Plan, contact the JTB Reservation Center or visit a JTB branch/JTB dealer in Japan.

## Other programs where you can learn about the AINU

### ◆ KAMUY LUMINA

Kamuy Lumina is an interactive multimedia night walk experience that takes you on a journey inspired by AINU legend. Explore an enchanted world of lights, soundscapes, and video projections.



### ◆ LOST KAMUY

Artists in various fields such as digital art, sound design, and dance come together in Lake Akan to bring you Lost Kamuy, a performance that combines ancient AINU dance, contemporary dance, and digital art.



### KAMUY LUMINA + LOST KAMUY Bundle Ticket

Price	<b>KAMUY LUMINA + LOST KAMUY Bundle Ticket</b> Adults (age 12 and up) 4,700 yen Children (age 7 to 11) 2,100 yen
Where to buy	Bundle ticket sold at the Kamuy Lumina ticket booth, hotels around Lake Akan, and online.



# Access



## Access from Japan

Narita Airport	Peach	→	Kushiro Airport	→	Lake Akan
	About 2 hours				
Haneda Airport	JAL · ANA · AIRDO	→	Kushiro Airport	→	Lake Akan
	About 1 hour 45 minutes				
Kansai International Airport	Peach	→	Kushiro Airport	→	Lake Akan
	About 2 hours 30 minutes				
Itami Airport	ANA (seasonal)	→	Kushiro Airport	→	Lake Akan
	About 1 hour 55 minutes				
Chubu Centrair International Airport	JAL (seasonal)	→	Kushiro Airport	→	Lake Akan
	About 1 hour 55 minutes				

## Kushiro Airport to Lake Akan

Akan Bus	About 1 hour 5~20 minutes	About 2 hours
Car	About 1 hour (59.4 km)	About 1 hour 30 minutes (70.1 km)
Taxi	About 1 hour (59.4 km)	About 1 hour 30 minutes (70.1 km)

## Kushiro Sta. to Lake Akan

Akan Bus	About 1 hour 5~20 minutes	About 2 hours
Car	About 1 hour (59.4 km)	About 1 hour 30 minutes (70.1 km)
Taxi	About 1 hour (59.4 km)	About 1 hour 30 minutes (70.1 km)

## JR Train

Sapporo Sta.	Limited Express Ozora	→	Kushiro Sta.	→	Lake Akan
	About 4 hours				
Obihiro Sta.	Limited Express Ozora	→	Kushiro Sta.	→	Lake Akan
	About 2 hours				
Abashiri Sta.	JR Senmo Main Line	→	Kushiro Sta.	→	Lake Akan
	About 3 hours 30 minutes				
Kitami Sta. (via Abashiri Sta.)	JR Sekihoku Main Line/JR Senmo Main Line	→	Kushiro Sta.	→	Lake Akan
	About 4 hours 30 minutes				

## Car

Sapporo	via Doto Expressway	→	Lake Akan	→	Kushiro	via National Route 240	→	Lake Akan
	About 4 hours 14 minutes (299 km)					About 1 hour 30 minutes (70.1 km)		
Asahikawa	via National Route 39	→	Lake Akan	→	Hakodate	via Hokkaido Expressway/Doto Expressway	→	Lake Akan
	About 4 hours 10 minutes (221 km)					About 7 hours 6 minutes (538 km)		
Obihiro	via Doto Expressway	→	Lake Akan	→	Kitami	via Hokkaido Route 27/National Route 240	→	Lake Akan
	About 2 hours (120 km)					About 1 hour 25 minutes (68.8 km)		
					Abashiri	via National Route 240	→	Lake Akan
						About 1 hour 44 minutes (88.8 km)		

## Meetup location for all tours: Lake Akan Ainu Theater Ikor



Inquiries/Reservations  
 Visit the website for tour details and reservations (except for Premium Half-Day Plan)  
<https://anytimeainu.com>

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