

A bald eagle is shown in flight, soaring through a bright blue sky filled with soft, white clouds. The eagle's wings are fully extended, revealing the intricate patterns of its feathers. Its head is turned to the left, showing its sharp yellow beak and keen eyes. The eagle's talons are visible, gripping the air. The overall scene conveys a sense of freedom and power.

Trip Itineraries



picchio
WILDLIFE RESEARCH CENTER



Karuizawa multi-day tour itineraries

※ The following itineraries are just examples. They can be adapted in any way to suit client's interests. They can also be extended in order to incorporate more chances to see certain wildlife.

軽井沢
Karuizawa



Nestled among the sprawling mountains of Nagano prefecture, Karuizawa is home to a variety of wildlife and natural wonders. Sometimes it is not possible to see everything you want during a single tour so we put together a few sample itineraries which suggest the best tours for each season.

Spend a few days getting to know the wildlife of central Japan. Whether it be trekking deeper into the forests to find more elusive species like the mysterious Japanese serow, or simply wandering through the woods soaking up the fresh air and abundant bird song, there's a way for everyone to enjoy the nature of Karuizawa.

Being a popular resort town, Karuizawa also has an abundance of quaint cafes, restaurants and shops to satisfy your Japanese food cravings and souvenir needs.



Escape the heat cool summer in the mountains



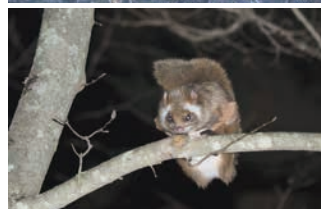
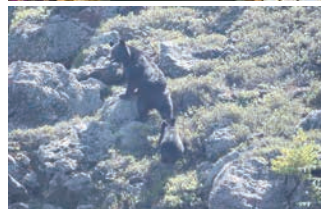
Day 1 Arrival

Leaving the stifling heat of Tokyo, you will enter into Karuizawa's cool forest oasis in the late afternoon. Check into the hotel and jump straight into the wildlife watching by joining one of our evening tours. Or simply take the time to relax into your new, luxurious surroundings.



Day 2 Bears and squirrels

Setting off early, we head first to Picchio's visitor centre for a brief introduction to bears! After this, it's straight to the mountains where we will hike for approximately 40minutes to our observation point. Here we will eat a specially prepared bento lunch and wait with scopes at the ready for the elusive bears to appear on the opposite slopes. After returning to base, there's time for dinner and a soak at the hotel before departing once again for the flying squirrel watching tour.



Day 3 Old Nakasendo and night safari

Another early start today as we head back into the mountains to hike the famous Nakasendo trail. Filled with history and intrigue, this path is also a treasure trove of wildlife just waiting to be discovered. Keep your eyes peeled for Japanese squirrels, serows, deer and the elusive copper pheasant. We will finish the day on a night safari, searching for nocturnal wildlife.



Day 4 Wild Bird Forest stroll and shopping

Start the day with a leisurely stroll through Karuizawa's National Wild Bird Sanctuary Forest with one of our nature guides and discover all sorts of fascinating flora and fauna. Alternatively, you can explore the local Harunire terrace and its many shops and cafes before heading back to Tokyo in the afternoon.



Autumn

End of September
— November

Serows and scenery the colourful autumn forest

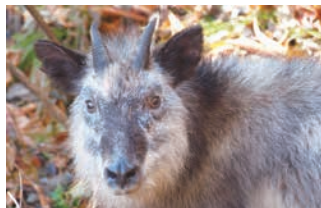
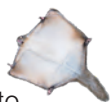
Day 1 Arrival

You will arrive in Karuizawa late in the afternoon and, depending on the season, be greeted by a vista of autumnal beauty (end of October is the best for autumn leaves). Check into the hotel and jump straight into the wildlife watching by joining one of our evening tours. Or simply take the time to relax into your new, luxurious surroundings.



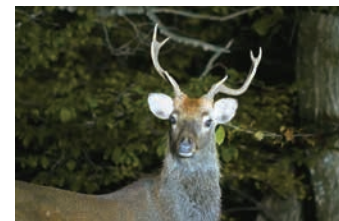
Day 2 Serows and squirrels

Setting off early, we head straight to the mountains to begin our trek. We will make our way through a variety of terrains before reaching our observation point, the aptly named “serow flats”. We will settle here and observe the opposite slopes while enjoying a specially prepared bento lunch. After returning from our hike, there will be time for dinner and a soak at the hotel before departing to the Picchio visitor centre for the flying squirrel watching tour.



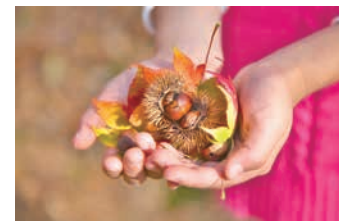
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Day 4 Wild Bird Forest stroll and shopping

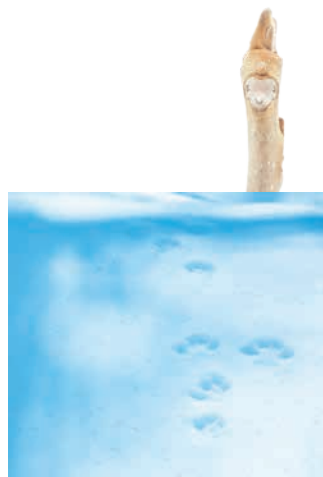
Start the day with a leisurely stroll through Karuizawa’s National Wild Bird Sanctuary Forest with one of our nature guides and fully immerse yourself in the classic Japanese 紅葉 (autumn leaves). Alternatively, you can explore the local Harunire terrace and its many shops and cafes before heading back to Tokyo in the afternoon.



Wrap up warm a vibrant winter landscape

Day 1 Arrival and animal trail walking

After arriving in chilly Karuizawa and checking into the hotel, we will depart on an afternoon exploration of the local forest. Following the tracks of wild animals, you will traverse the winter forest and learn the tell tale signs of a variety of species. After a break for dinner, you will return to the visitor centre for a bout of star-gazing on Picchio's pond turned skate rink.



Day 2 Jigokundani monkey park

Set off for the distant town of Yamanouchi where "hell valley" (literal translation of jigokudani) can be found. In this secluded valley the hot springs play host to a horde of Japanese macaques who enjoy a good soak. The best time to visit is January or February when the snow provides a picturesque backdrop to these frolicking monkeys. Return to Karuizawa for the evening.



Day 3 Skating and waterfalls

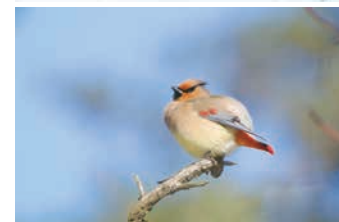
Start the day with a spot of ice skating on Picchio's half-natural skate rink. Alternatively, you can take this time to explore more of the local area and grab a hot drink from one of the cafes. In the afternoon, we will depart on a small hike to explore a frozen waterfall with a chance of spotting Japanese serow. From January to March there is an option to join a night safari after dinner and try and spot some nocturnal animals.



Day 4 Wild Bird Forest stroll and shopping

On your final day, we will take a look at Karuizawa's National Wild Bird Sanctuary Forest. A nature guide will help you spot some tell-tale winter species such as horde of Japanese macaques who enjoy a good soak. The best time to visit is January or February when the snow provides a picturesque backdrop to these frolicking monkeys.

Return to Karuizawa for the evening. as wild mistletoe and the winter migrating Japanese waxwing. Alternatively, you can explore the local Harunire terrace and its many shops and cafes before heading back to Tokyo in the afternoon.

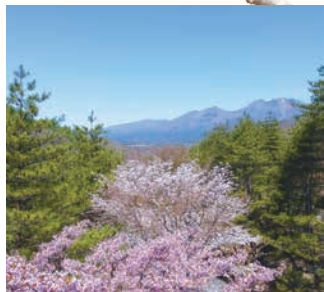


Nature awakens

the sights and sounds of spring

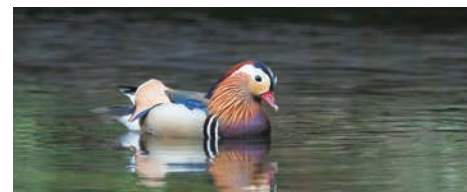
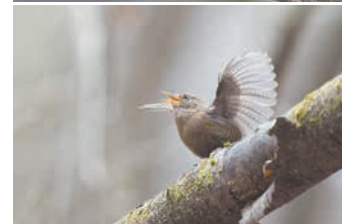
Day 1 Arrival and flying squirrels

Arrive in a Karuzawa that is regaining its colour and warmth after winter with fresh leaves and cherry blossoms (April) abound. After checking into the hotel, you will join Picchio's signature flying squirrel tour. In May or June, there is the chance to see these squirrels with their new born babies. Then return to the hotel for an early night.



Day 2 Bird watching and nature trails

Join one of our guides for an early morning (5am) stroll around the Karuzawa National Bird Sanctuary Forest. Karuzawa is a hot spot for many spring migrating birds and with foliage still limited, they're easy to spot. With a quick break for breakfast, we'll then head to a slightly higher elevation and hike back down via waterfalls and forest paths. This nature packed day has the option of ending with a night safari and a search for nocturnal wildlife.



Day 3 More forest strolls and shopping

On your final day, we will head back into the wild bird forest for a general exploration of the flora and fauna to be found there. A nature guide will help you spot some iconic spring species and maybe you'll see some babies here or there. Alternatively, you can explore the local Harunire terrace and its many shops and cafes before heading back to Tokyo in the afternoon.



Shiretoko and beyond: multi-day tour itineraries



Japan's northern island of Hokkaido is home to a diverse array of wildlife and their habitats. While the Shiretoko peninsula is a UNESCO World Heritage Site for good reason, with its abundance of enigmatic species and endless natural beauty, the rest of Hokkaido is not without its marvels.

The sample itineraries we have put together not only encompass some of Picchio's favourite tours but also travel further afield in order to explore more of Hokkaido's spectacular nature. Spend a few days soaking in Japan's most primeval landscape as you journey between volcanoes, marshlands, lakes and coastlines and discover some of Japan's most iconic wildlife.

Whether it's red crowned cranes preening in the winter snow or brown bears foraging along the coast in summer, each season has something different to offer.



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Large mammals of the land and sea
the Shiretoko summer coast

welcome
to
Shiretoko!



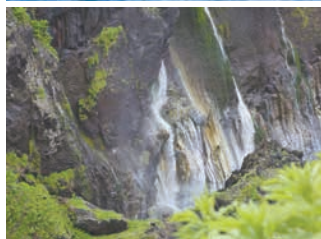
Day 1 Arrival into Hokkaido

You will arrive into Memanbetsu airport in the afternoon and then travel towards Picchio's base in Shiretoko via Tofutsu lake. This place is a good chance to spot a variety of bird life. After checking into the hotel in Shiretoko, you have the option to join a night safari and look for nocturnal animals.



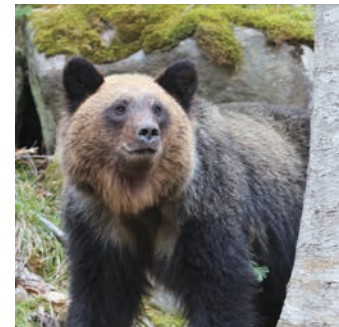
Day 2 Whale and waterfalls

We will take an hour drive to the town of Rausu from where we can board a boat and there will be the chance to see whales including orcas and sperm whales depending on the month. After lunch, we'll return to Utoro and explore off the beaten track through Shiretoko's primeval forest, ending up at one of the park's most iconic waterfalls.



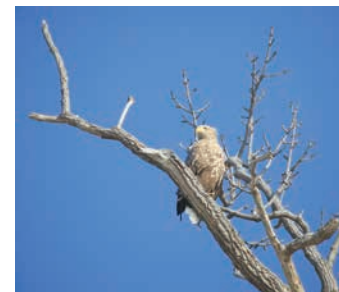
Day 3 Brown bears by boat

Today we will also take the hour journey to Rausu, this time boarding a boat that will give us the chance to see brown bears along the coasts. After what will hopefully be a very memorable experience we will head inland towards our lodging for the night in Kawayu, searching for the majestic red crowned cranes as we drive.



Day 4 Crater lake and river canoeing

From Kawayu, we will move to Japan's largest crater lake, Kussharo, and search for a variety of birds including eagles. In the afternoon, we will embark on a more adventurous venture and canoe along the Kushiro river with more chances to see the amazing white tailed eagles.



Day 5 Marshlands and shopping

Your final day in Hokkaido will give you time to explore the marshlands of the Kushiro national park where many animals make their home. After this, we will head to the city of Kushiro for a spot of lunch and souvenir buying before catching a flight back to Tokyo from Kushiro airport.



Sea otters, seals and salmon
a colourful autumn in Shiretoko



Day 1 Arrival into Hokkaido

You will arrive into Kushiro airport in the afternoon and then travel to Kiritappu cape where we will hopefully be able to catch a glimpse of the small sea otter colony living there. After checking into the local pension accommodation, there will be time to explore more of the surrounding marshland and look for other wildlife.



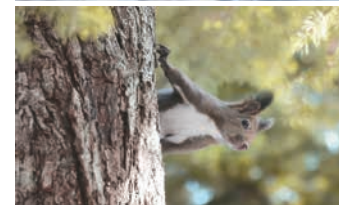
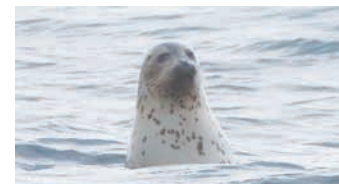
Day 2 The dead forest of Notsuke

We will first take a look at the saltwater lake, Furen, and see if we can spot any of the 240 bird species that make their home there. Then, after lunch, we will move to the Notsuke peninsula and marvel at the “dead forest”, a natural phenomenon caused by the sinking of the peninsula into the ocean.



Day 3 Look for seals

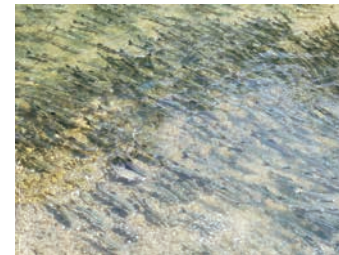
Jumping on a boat first thing, we will try and spot some of the seal species common to the waters of the Notsuke bay. The shallow waters and abundant eel grass that grows here makes this bay the perfect resting place for them. We will then journey onto Utoto and spend the afternoon trekking around the five lakes of Shiretoko and look for wildlife such as ezo squirrels.



Day 4 The salmon run



In the morning we will explore the hidden trails of the primeval forest. After lunch, we will head back out to the rivers in order to observe the annual salmon spawning event and potentially even catch a glimpse of a brown bear coming to feed on the fish.



Day 5 Bird watching at the lake

On this final day, you will set off for Tofutsu lake in search of migrating birds including cranes. Then you will stop by Abashiri for lunch on your way to Memanbetsu airport to catch a flight back to Tokyo.



From volcanoes to drift ice
exploring Japan's winter paradise

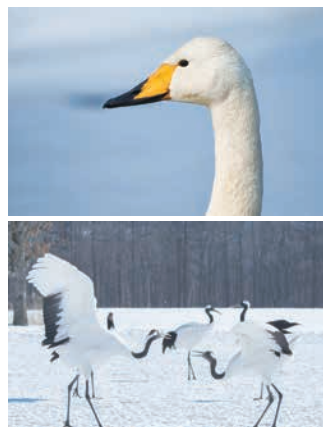
Day 1 Arrival into Hokkaido

You will arrive into Kushiro airport in the afternoon and then travel to the Kushiro marshlands at Onnenai which is home to around 1300 species of animals. After some leisurely time exploring this area, we will move to our accommodation for the night.



Day 2 Observing red crowned cranes

We will start in Tsurui which is famous for its crane sanctuary and valiant efforts to preserve important breeding habitat for these endangered birds. Then, after lunch, we will move to Kussharo lake which freezes in winter except for its edges. These remain unfrozen due to the thermal energy and hundreds of whooper swans gather here to take advantage of the warm waters.



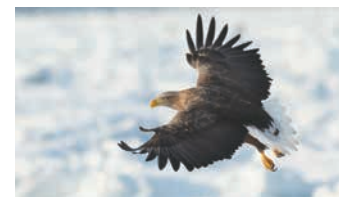
Day 3 From volcano to drift ice

After spending the night in Kawayu, we will start the day by exploring the volcanic wilds of Mt. Iou. After which, we will travel on to Utoro, stopping for lunch on the way. Once in Utoro, you will have the chance to walk among the drift ice and explore a frozen landscape like you've never experienced before. This tour is only available in February and March when the drift ice is at its best.



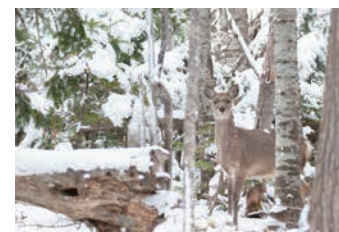
Day 4 The largest eagles in Japan

In the morning we will explore the hidden trails of the primeval forest on snowshoes, searching for wildlife that may only be visible during the winter months such as the ezo flying squirrel (breeding season = Feb-Mar). After lunch, we will head out again and search for the iconic Steller's sea eagle and white tailed eagle which are also best discovered during the winter migration period.



Day 5 Snow shoeing to Furepe falls

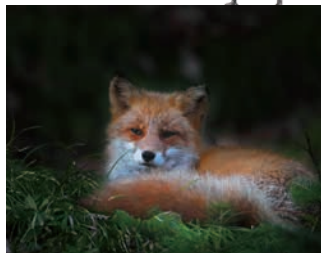
On this final day, you will have another chance to snowshoe in this primeval setting and further explore Shiretoko's winter splendor along a different route. Then, after lunch, you will head to Memanbetsu airport and catch a flight back to Tokyo.



Thawing out

the enchanting scenery of spring

Spring
has
sprung!



Day 1 Arrival into Hokkaido

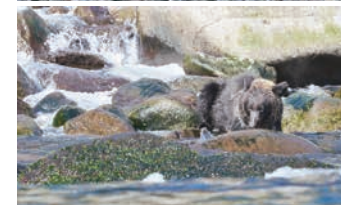
You will arrive into Memanbetsu airport in the afternoon and then travel to Tofutsu lake for a spot of bird watching. Then we will journey onto Utoro, where, after checking into the hotel, there will be the opportunity to spot nocturnal wildlife via our night safari.

Day 2 Spring scenery and wildlife

In the morning, we will trek around the five lakes of Shiretoko and search for wildlife such as deer and ezo squirrels. This hike offers up some absolutely stunning views of the lakes with the snow-capped mountain range reflected in their surface. After lunch, we will head out again to take in some more wonderful scenery, hiking through the primeval forest and eventually reaching the waterfall.

Day 3 Brown bear boat cruise

Hopping on a boat in the nearby town of Rausu, approximately 1 hours drive from Utoro, we will search for brown bears as they begin to forage along the shore after winter hibernation. After lunch, we will drive another hour to the Notsuke peninsula and walk around with the hope of spotting sea birds or even seals out in the water. All while taking in the peninsula's strange scenery of dead trees thanks to the rising salt water.



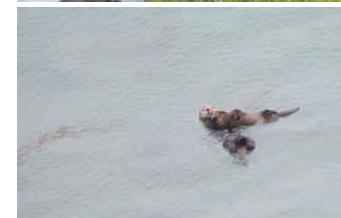
Day 4 Sea otter at the cape

After some more bird watching at Furen lake, we will move to Kiritappu cape in search of sea otters. A small colony has started breeding here in recent years and it can be possible to see them from the cape. We will stay the night in a local pension.



Day 5 Kiritappu marshland and Kushiro city

On this final day, you will have another chance to see the otters and explore more of the Kiritappu marshland which is home to other wildlife. Then after lunch in Kushiro city, it's on to Kushiro airport to catch a flight back to Tokyo.





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For more information on the tours available
in each season, check out our website

Contact us at

Karuizawa : info@m.picchio.co.jp // +81 0267-45-7777

Shiretoko : info-shiretoko@m.picchio.co.jp // +81 0152-26-7839

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a trip itinerary
with us?**

**We will try our best to build itineraries
around what you want to see and
experience.**

Japan's great nature awaits!

