

# How to Enjoy Hokkaido

How to enjoy Hokkaido on the cheap! Tips for visitors from abroad!



## Milk of the Sea

In Japan, *kaki* (oysters) are sometimes called *umi-no-miruku* (milk of the sea) because, like milk, they are so good for you. Oysters are low in calories but high in *biryou eiyouso* (micronutrients). They're a particularly good source of vitamin B12, which is important for keeping the brain healthy. They are also a rich source of vitamin D and of micronutrients such as *dou* (copper) that help prevent bone loss. Nevertheless, I suspect that for people who love this "superfood", what they love most is the flavor! Many areas in Japan produce oysters, but *Saroma-ko* (Lake Saroma) is known for the exceptionally delicious oysters that are raised there. To understand why, we need to look at the geography. Lake Saroma is a *raguun* (lagoon) located in Abashiri Quasi-National Park. Originally, this lake was a bay that faced the Sea of Okhotsk. Little by little, a sandbar was formed. It is about 25 kilometers long but only up to several hundred meters wide! Completely cut off from the sea, the bay became a lake. Today, the lake is again connected to the Sea of Okhotsk through two artificial openings in the sandbar. Lake Saroma is thus a mixture of mostly *kaisui* (seawater) and some *tansui* (fresh water). The seawater is rich in *purankuton* (plankton), and the fresh water adds nutrients from mountains and wetlands. This produces delicious oysters! Visitors to Hokkaido can enjoy these fresh oysters from November through approximately January or so. One-year oysters are smaller, while two-year oysters are slightly larger, but both have a rich flavor. Visitors to Hokkaido at this time of year should be sure to try fresh Hokkaido oysters in at least one type of dish. *Muki-gaki* (shucked oysters) are popular when fried or when added to a *nabe* (hotpot). *Karatsuki-kaki* (in-shell oysters) are popular when grilled or steamed in sake. Isn't it wonderful when something that is so delicious is also a superfood? If you are in the area, visit the *Saroma-ko Tenboudai* (Lake Saroma Observation Deck) at the top of Mt. Horoiwa. This is the only mountain overlooking the lake. Since its opening in 1989, the observation deck has been popular with tourists and mountain climbers. The magnificent view is known for its gradation of blues—the sky, the Sea of Okhotsk, and the lake's "Saroma blue"—and also for its beautiful sunsets. J

### おいしさの秘密は水質。「牡蠣」を食べるなら今がおすすめ

豊富な栄養価と、身が乳白色であることから「海のミルク」といわれる牡蠣。北海道では北東部に位置するサロマ湖で育った牡蠣が特においしいと評判です。その秘密は水質。サロマ湖は元々オホーツク海とつながる湾でしたが、少しずつ砂が堆積して砂州が出来上がり湖へと変化。現在は2つの人口開口部を通じて一部が海とつながり、海水と淡水の中間の塩分をもつ汽水湖となりました。それによりプランクトンが豊富に含まれる海水と、山や湿地からの栄養分が流れこむ淡水でおいしい牡蠣が育ちます。旬の時期は11月～1月。殻付き牡蠣は焼きや酒蒸しで、むき身牡蠣はフライや鍋で楽しめます。冬ならではの濃厚な味わいをお楽しみください。

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