Enjoy Summer in Hokkaido
The Drive route for a day trip

A comfortable feeling

Deepening encounters

Journey among flowers

Circles of friendship blossom
Journey among flowers. Circles of friendship blossom.

In Hokkaido, cherry blossoms and plum blossoms bloom at once. For this reason, there are gardens that can only be found here. The amount of light, the unique color, and the focus of life together celebrate a fleeting summer. Finally, the first hint of summer that will free the flora has arrived in the northern land. Laugh like small flowers that sway in the gentle breeze. The person we heard the story from delivers a gentle memory of the land through gardening.
This garden is the place one returns to at the end of one’s days.

Have you seen the TV drama series “Kaze no Garden” (Garden of Wind) that was aired in 2008? It was written by Sou Kuramoto, who is known for his other works such as “Kita no Kunikara”. It is a human drama, set in Furano, Hokkaido and is about a man who be at death’s door and returns to his estranged family. Not only was the setting a topic of interest, but the gardens that were being grown by the family of the main character were also highly spoken of. This is because the gardens and the flowers within that change and bloom according to each season were somewhat similar to the transience of human life, and added depth to the story.

The person who was put in charge by Kuramoto himself to design the garden and who took 2 years to plant and nurture the garden is Sayuki Ueno, our heroin this time.

“I was really surprised when Mr. Kuramoto suddenly appeared at the Ueno Farm. I remember my mother and I were very nervous as we gave him a tour of the garden.”

In our interview later, we found that Mr. Kuramoto was particularly fond of the garden at his favorite restaurant, and asked the owner who the gardener was, and reached the Uenos, and visited the Ueno Farm on his way home from the restaurant.

“In those days, I was new at the job, and we were just at the point when after a few years of hard work finally, the Ueno Farm was just beginning to take shape. Upon hearing that I would have to plan and plant and raise a garden in just two years, which would then be the stage for a TV series put much concern and pressure on me.”

But, to rise to the challenge is the Ueno style. You can get a glimpse of her philosophy from her reasons for entering this work world. “Once I decide to take on a task, I try not to think too deeply about it. This was true when I decided to study gardening in England as well. I only knew what English I had learned when I went to English conversation classes during my days as an office worker, and I didn’t even know many names of flowers when I set out.”

Flowers show their natural beauty in suitable environments.

The Uenos come from a long line of rice farmers since 1906 in Asahikawa. They were the first to sell rice on the farm, something that is now ordinary, and their farm was somewhat the center for socializing. For this reason, Sayuki’s parents sought ways to make the farm more attractive by planting flowers along the farm paths and gardens, and also committed to raising herbs.

“I went to study abroad in England hoping that would somehow be useful in helping my parents. England is the sanctuary of English gardens. Because I had no special knowledge of gardening, I stayed with a family that owned gardens and became the understudy of the official gardener of those gardens. I worked by day, and at night dictionary in hand, reviewed everything I had learned.”

“Upon my return to Japan, I began to plant English gardens here on the Ueno Farm with seeds that I ordered from England. However, this is Hokkaido, and what’s worse, Asahikawa, where the difference in temperature between summer and winter is sometimes as much as 60 degrees!”

Many plants couldn’t make it through the harsh winters. I realized that even if I applied all the knowledge gained from my studies in England, it would not be exactly the same. This was why I had some reserves about people referring to the Ueno Farm as “English type gardens”. It was at this time that a visitor from out of Hokkaido once asked “Why do these flowers bloom at the same time?” or “I guess same flowers have a different color when they bloom in Hokkaido.”

These words erased Ms. Ueno’s indecisiveness. The climate and land of Hokkaido make it possible to express a different combination of blossoming seasons, and the difference in temperature attributes to the change in color of various flowers, in other words, this is a unique garden possible only in Hokkaido.
A garden that cannot be found anywhere else in the world, not even in England.

Charming gardens that are unique to Hokkaido.

The gardens at Ueno Farm follow the example of English gardens, yet are altered and planned according to climate and landscape of the area thus creating a “Hokkaido Garden”, says Ms. Ueno. “While most visitors think of lavender and sunflowers as being Hokkaido’s typical flowers, here, many kinds of flowers are blooming side by side, supporting each other, coloring the garden. Especially flowers that are considered alpine flowers in Honshu here bloom in the flat lands, and I am not sure if it is because of the drastic difference in temperature that seals and sets the colors, but the blue flowers in Hokkaido are very brilliant.”

June in Hokkaido is a quick sprint into Summer. The sun draws closer, and in the same way that we humans stretch ourselves toward the sky, the flowers also face the sunlight and stretch their stems. “During this season plants grow with amazing speed, and flowers and plants that are taller than humans bloom and adorn the gardens.” On the premises, there is what we call a “mirror border”, a border of flowers that are planted symmetrically to give a mirror image and circular borders where flowers are divided according to group or kind. Little rabbits and ducks wander freely among the beautiful gardens.

“Because there is little rain during June in Hokkaido, you can plant in close proximity and not worry about the roots rotting. For this reason, we combine flowers of different height and flowers of different kinds to create a gradation of color.” Furthermore, take cosmos for example. In the capital area of Southern Japan, they bloom through October and November, but they begin blooming in August in some areas of Hokkaido. Typical fall flowers bloom during the summer in Hokkaido and can be viewed simultaneously with the vitamin color flowers. The attraction of “Hokkaido Garden” seems to be found in such differences in the anthesis stage of various flowers and dynamic planting designs.

“I myself am continually trying other garden designs, and can say that the Ueno Farm will continue to change in the future. You could say that each scene you encounter here is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that never recurs.”

Gardens that were once just random dots are finally connected into one road.

Ueno Farm came into being from a promise made by a family to create an “attractive farmland scene”. It has become a popular garden sight where over 40 thousand people visit every year. “I believe that participating in the “Open Garden” system was the key to attracting many visitors, and by doing more than just selling plants and flowers, such as adding cafes and hosting garden concerts, I am realizing the vast amount of possibilities that a garden possesses.”

“A garden is not just a flower bed, it brings unexpected encounters, and is also a place to share community information and culture”, says Ms. Ueno. The Hokkaido Garden Road is a tangible realization of these ideas.

Asahikawa, Furano and Tokachi are areas where many gardens that represent Hokkaido are concentrated. The president of the “Tokachi Millennium Forest”, of who I had the pleasure of meeting, also has been working on creating a Hokkaido Garden, and our agreement to cooperation has further propelled our efforts.” The road from Asahikawa, where the Ueno Farm is to Tokachi is approximately 200km. Along this one road, the climate and culture of the landscape are quite different in each area.

“Yes, in Tokachi, there are the Shichikhu Gardens which were created by the pioneer of gardening in Hokkaido, Akizo Shichikhu and the Manabe Gardens, the first Comifer Garden in Japan, gardens that are of a different taste from the Ueno Gardens. Furthermore, Tokachi is well known for its dairy products such as cheese and various confections. In Furano melons and wine are locally produced, so we urge visitors to take advantage of the great tastes and activities of the area while garden hopping.

The Hokkaido Garden Road that was opened in the year 2009 is gathering attention, and already tours to the area are being planned. “Flowers invite people, and people invite more people. It was this connection between people who grow flowers and plant gardens that gave birth to the Hokkaido Garden Road. It is our hope that this circle of movement will continue to grow and eventually consume the entire island, making Hokkaido one large Garden Island.”

The commanding and proud manner in which Ms. Ueno spoke reminds one of the Lupines which bloom straight toward the great sky.

* Open Gardens began in England. An open garden means to decide a season and date and invite travelers into one’s private garden.
Hokkaido Garden Road
The Hokkaido Garden Road is a road of gardens 200km long with 7 types of gardens. In succession between Asahikawa, Furano and Tokachi. It is now a new tourist route where you can stroll through gardens in each area and experience the beautiful scenery, culture and local food.

The Hokkaido Garden Road Ticket
With this reasonable ticket, you can view 4 of the 7 different gardens. Tickets are 1,600 yen per piece.
Offer is valid through Sept. 30, 2010. Tickets are sold at each garden.
Hokkaido Garden Road Homepage http://www.hokkaido-garden.jp

Manabe Gardens
The first conifer garden in Japan. Here you can view ancient trees that have been here since before the pioneering days of Hokkaido, as well as samples of the newest gardening tools, materials, and original plants.
Location: 6 Banchi, Higashi 2 Sen, Inada-Cho, Obihiro
Season: Apr. 24 – Nov. 30, Open: 8:00 – 17:00
Open every day during the open season.
Admission: Adults 500 yen, elementary and junior high 200 yen
TEL 0155-42-2120

Tokachi Millennium Forest
Located where the Hidaka Mountains and the Tokachi Plains meet, this is a place where you can really experience the vast grandeur of Hokkaido nature. On the premises there are 4 gardens that are created with the Hokkaido Garden concept.
Location: Minami 10 Sen, Haichi, Shimizu
Season: Apr. 24 – Nov. 3, Open: 10:00 – 17:00
Open every day during the open season.
Admission: Adults 800 yen, junior high and high school students 400 yen, elementary and under are free of charge.
TEL 0156-63-3400

Kaze-no-Garden
The garden where Sou Kuramoto’s television series was staged. The flowers that sway in the breeze and bloom in succession promise to heal and bring joy to those who walk among them.
Location: Nakagoryo, Furano
Season: Apr. 29 – Oct. 17, Open: 8:00 – 16:00 (Last admission 15:30) subject to change according to season. Open every day during open season.
Admission: 500 yen per person.
TEL 0167-22-1111 (New Furano Prince Hotel)
Enjoy Summer in Hokkaido.
The Drive route for a day trip.

If you are visiting Hokkaido in the summer, you must experience the mysterious "Shakotan Blue" ocean, and fresh sea urchin! Hokkaido's signature gourmet dining! Hokkaido scenery you can actually feel! This time, we will introduce a delicious and beautiful drive route you can easily enjoy from Sapporo. Come, let's begin a day trip that will awe and satisfy you!

Story: Junji Fujita

You will want to stop at many places on the way to Shakotan, but, here you must be patient and remember your first priority!

The day trip begins in the largest city in Hokkaido, Sapporo. If your goal is to eat sea urchin donburi in Shakotan, you should allow for a little extra time and leave around 10AM. First take the Sasson Expressway from the Sapporo West IC to Otaru. You will arrive in Otaru in approx. 40 minutes.

As you pass the glass factories and sweet shops along the Otaru Canal and the streets of Otaru, you will continue on Route 5 further west for about 30 minutes until you reach Yoichi. If you need to take a break, time wise, this is a good spot.

Stop in at the Rood station "Space Apple Yoichi" where you can experience the mysteries of space and look for souvenirs, or stop at the Nikka Whiskey Distillery where you can catch a tour and taste Nikka whiskey. As the big hand on your watch approaches 12PM, your hunger should be beginning to reach its peak, so hurry on to enjoy sea urchin donburi (rice bowl)!
Sea urchin is in season between mid June and the end of August. The taste of sea urchin here is unique. This is real, raw, sea urchin donburi!

By the way, did you know that there are two types of sea urchin that live in the waters of Hokkaido? One is called the “purple sea urchin”, purplish black and covered in long thorns, and the insides are white. The other one is known as the Bafun sea urchin which is brown with short thorns. The edible part on the inside is orange. This one is sweeter and less in number, making it more expensive, but the taste is worth it! It is a difficult decision as to which one you should choose to eat.

Fishing season for sea urchin in Shakotan opens in June. Now is definitely the perfect time to taste it!

There are many restaurants in Shakotan that serve delicious fresh sea urchin, most of which are run by the fisherman. Just from this fact alone, you will understand that freshness is guaranteed! It might be a good idea to check with the local tourism associations or ask someone on the street which restaurant they recommend.

After you have satisfied your taste buds with the taste of sea urchin that melts in your mouth, it is time to drive along Route 229 with the blue ocean on your side.

There is an outdoor bath that has a commanding view of the Shakotan Blue and the setting sun. Spend your summer in Hokkaido in Shakotan.

The Shimamui coast and Cape Kamui are located on the tip of the Shakotan Peninsula where you can see the mysteriously blue ocean. When you step out of the tunnel that is wide enough for just two people to stroll side by side, you are welcomed by the awesome scenery of the Shimamui shores, which are also chosen as one of the 100 most beautiful shores in Japan. Through the extremely clear water, large rocks can be seen, and during the summer the cliffs are colored with Ezo licorice. At Cape Kamui, you can take a walk on the Charenka path, a path along the tops of the cliffs with the Sea of Japan on both sides, all the way to the tip of the cape. From the tip of the cape, the 300 Degree horizon that lies before you appears round. Once you have seen Cape Kamui and the Shakotan Blue which is registered as a Hokkaido Heritage, you will surely be glad you took the time to venture here.

For the finale of your drive, we recommend “Misaki-no-Yu Shakotan” hot spring. Dip in the hot spring and relax your tired muscles while you gaze at the sun setting behind Cape Shakotan on the right and Cape Kamui on the left. The reddish glow of the sky melting into the ocean is sure to heal a tired body and soul. Head safely back to Sapporo, taking with you the sweet memories of the sea urchin you ate to your heart’s content, the sparkling blue of the Shakotan sea, and the gorgeous sunset from the bath.

http://www.kanko-shakotan.jp/
Okhotsk Romance
Whales dance in the Northern sea, spraing and twisting in the waves.
Great eagles soar, as if embracing the Northern landscape.
The land and sea are equally divided, both raise their heads to the Northern sky.
The romantic tale of the ancient peoples who bravely raced through the Northern skies unfolds here.

A new facility opens on the Okhotsk Resort where one can come face to face with the fascinating ideology of the ancient peoples of the Northern sky.

Hokuten no oka Esthetics Room & Renewal Guest Room Information

Hokuten-no-Oka Esthetic Wing
Spa and Treatment “Faura”

New guest rooms with an air of Okhotsk culture.
Tower Wing Japanese-Western Rooms 8F; Star, 9F; Sky

Sofas made in the image of Northern animals welcome guests, while the cathodic rooms are of the image of a Northern resident. Relish the healing touch of Northern nature in an all new style of spa treatment.

Inquiries pertaining to tourism in Hokkaido.

Hokkaido Tourism Organization
Ino Kuro Bldg., Kita 4 in Nishi 4 Chome Chuo-ku, Sapporo Hollkaido, Zip 060-0804
TEL: 011-231-9941
Visit Hokkaido: http://en.visit-hokkaido.jp/

Hokkaido Sapporo Food and Tourism Information Center
Jr Sapporo Sta. 1F West Concourse North East
Kita 6 in Nishi 4 Chome Kita-ku, Sapporo, Zip 060-0806
TEL: 011-213-5088

Hokkaido Economic Affairs Department Tourism Bureau
Kita 3 Jo Nishi 6 Chome Chuo-Ku, Sapporo Zip 060-8588
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