Feature

The other side to Biei in the fall

Encounter scenes both miraculous and soothing

Northern travel calendar
Autumn in Biei, another countenance

Encounter scenes both miraculous and soothing

Aside from the topics of power spots, the newfound beauty of Biei, such as the blue pond, is sure to captivate all. Add hot springs and autumn colors of the Tokachidake Hot Springs to pottering on the Biei Refresh line to fully enjoy autumn in Biei.
Power spots and wonders of the natural world are attractive aspects of Biei.

One may imagine nothing but hills when they hear “Biei.” But recently, ever since a famous spiritual counselor introduced Biei Shrine, it has been drawing attention as a power spot where especially women have begun visiting.

The Biei Shrine is located on Route 966 that leads to Shirakaba Street. To receive more power, it seems that praying in the morning has a greater effect. As you walk through the Torii, a gateway at the entrance to a shinto shrine, the well-managed grounds spread before you. The shrine grounds are rather new and as you walk around you can feel the energy surge in you.

However, locals say “Biei Shrine is not the only power spot in Biei. There are many power spots all over Biei, such as the Blue Pond.

The Blue Pond is especially gaining popularity. It is a man-made pond, the by-product of anti-erosion work on the Biei River where wizened Japanese larches stand in place creating a mystical scene. Although at first it was only a site visited by locals, rumors of the beautiful blue spread and now, like the Patchwork Hill, it’s one of the major sightseeing spots. When you actually see it up close, as you gaze upon the cobalt blue water, you feel like your soul is changing into a transparent blue. The Misato Fudoson, Fudo Falls and Shirahige Falls of Shirogane Hot Springs near the Blue Pond are all power spots. There is still untold beauty here in Biei that has not been introduced in guide books.

The hills of Biei show a different but beautiful appearance after the rain, not to mention on a sunny day. When autumn arrives, the skies in Biei become higher, and rainbows can be clearly seen. When you see a rainbow, pay attention to the other side as you may see an “angel’s ladder.”

An “angel’s ladder” is when rays of sunshine appear to spiral down through a break in the clouds. Just as its name “angel ladder”, the mysterious scene gives one an illusion that angels are ascending and descending the ladder of light from heaven. There is a higher probability of seeing the ladder in early morning or in the evening between autumn and winter when the air is clear.

Again, when the evening sunlight hits Mt. Oputateshike, one of the mountains of the Tokachi Mountain Range, a pink heart appears on the side of the mountain, and photographers come all the way to Biei just to take photos of the scene.

Beautiful landscapes of Biei discovered by photographers.

Autumn in Biei is often expressed not with red foliage but yellow foliage. Wheat planted in fall sprouts vivid green, larches that have turned color shine gold and in the back the white snowcapped Tokachi Mountain Range creates a magnificent view incomparable to any other.

The scenery in Biei changes and expresses itself differently with each season, which is why the flow of photographers, who try to capture each scene throughout the year, never ceases.

Speaking of photographers, the photographer who made the beautiful scenery of Biei known to the nation is Shinzou Maeda, a landscape photographer. Through his work piece “Bakushu Senretsu”, Biei drew attention and became the location for many photos and commercials. If he did not take photos of Biei, there may never have been as many tourists as now who visit Biei.

Seasonal ingredients and local dishes you’ll want to enjoy in Biei in the autumn

From August to September, harvest reaches peak season in Biei. At Biei Senka, an antenna shop for Biei produce run by JA Biei, seasonal produce is sold at the “Senka Market.” Also, jelly rolls made with Erino Azuki grown in Biei, and other sweets made with local vegetables can be bought at the “Senka Factory” for takeout. From September the “Pure White”, an ingredient made from white corn, is added to chestnut pumpkin pudding and the pudding is available for sale for a limited time. The pudding brings out the flavor and texture of the added ingredient to its fullest, and is definitely a sweet that tastes of autumn.

Besides the mentioned items, other popular items include Biei cider made in the image of the Blue Pond and wheat fields, locally brewed beer made with Biei wheat and potato shochu liquor. You should try the potato shochu liquor mixed with the Biei cider.
Puttering along
The Refresh Line in autumn

Do you know the word “puttering?” It is a Japanese-English word referring to the act of moseying around sightseeing spots on a bicycle. Any bike, even a city bike is sufficient. All you need is to dress casually and comfortably.

It is easier to tour the beautiful landscapes of Biei and power spots on a bicycle rather than walking because you can cover more ground, and see more of the greatness of Biei.

Biei brings to mind Patchwork Roads, Panoramic Roads and other typical sightseeing spots, but this time the Refresh Line where Biruken Forest, Blue Pond and Shirogane Hot Springs are located, is the recommended “Puttering Course.” It is also an area scattered with the fore mentioned power spots.

“The 4km Shirakaba Road between Biei and Shirogane Hot Springs was chosen as one of Hokkaido’s 100 Natural Selections, and boasts the largest scenic spot in Japan. The most beautiful part of this road is known as the Refresh Line. The view of the snow capped Tokachidake Mountain Range right in front and accented by the golden birch trees that line the road is an awesome sight that moves even a local like myself, no matter how many times I see it”, explains Mr. Akio Ogata, a volunteer guide. Born and raised in Biei over 70 years, he is a trueborn Biei man.

Quickly begin puttering the Refresh Line by starting at Shirogane Tourist Information Center, and riding 10 minutes toward downtown Biei and stop at the Misato Fudoson.

As soon as you cross the red bridge over the clear stream, the Fudoson, the God of Fire, is enshrined, and spring water flows from there. The water contains mineral called vanadium, and there is a tap for drawing water where many people come one after the other to draw water. Taste the water and it is soft and very nice to drink. There is a waterwheel and statue of a “Kappa” nearby that give one a feeling that the water is spiritually effective.

After you leave Misato Fudoson and head toward Shirogane Hot Springs, there is a power spot waterfall just before Shirogane Hot Springs. As you walk a few minutes along the little path the 25m waterfall comes into view. Get close to the waterfall basin and suddenly the surrounding air feels clearer. You certainly understand why locals call it a power spot.

Enter Shirogane Hot Springs and view the Shirahige Falls that are one of many falls in the nation created by underground spring water surfacing and then falling. When seen from the Blue River Bridge, depending on the season and weather the water, like the Blue Pond appears cobalt blue.

There are many moments in Biei when one can encounter scenery that can only be called miraculous, says Mr. Ogata.

“There is a great possibility that you will miss such sights when you are driving, so I really suggest putting around the sights. Also, if you just take a day trip its over in a blink of an eye, so I really would like people to stay a few days. The reason being, there is a greater chance to see mystical scenery that is out of this world such as the “Angel’s Ladder” early morning or at sundown.”
Taking in the beauty and hot springs along the Tokachidake Skyline Route

The Tokachidake Skyline Route connects Biei Shirogane Hot Springs and Tokachidake Hot Springs. The view of autumn foliage on the Tokachi Mountain Range where the trees change color the earliest in Japan is magnificent and worth at least one glance. Take the skyline route and enjoy both hot springs and autumn colors.

Golden Biei and Brocaded Tokachi Mountain Range mesmerized by the finest fall foliage

Autumn colors in Biei are characteristic of turning the entire town golden, but from Biei Shirogane Hot Springs to Tokachidake Hot Springs they show a different side, with more deep red and gold, like brocade.

Route 966 which connects Biei Shirogane Hot Springs to Tokachidake Hot Springs, also known as the Skyline Route is a popular drive course where you can see the dynamic nature of the Tokachi Mountain Range up close. The landscape changes drastically from splendid mountains to delicate forests and so forth.

Especially during the autumn when the trees change color, breathtaking scenery continues. At an altitude of 930 meters, a 360 degree panoramic view of the Tokachi Mountain Range, Biei and Furano can be seen from the lookout point, and on a sunny day, Shikanbetsu Mountain Range in Rumoi can be seen in the distance. After the first snowfall on the mountain tops, the contrast of autumn foliage against the pure white mountain tops is absolutely gorgeous.

The season for autumn foliage differs with each year, but usually begins mid-September and peaks around early October.

Also recommended is visiting the two famous hot springs both at Biei Shirogane Hot Springs and Tokachidake Hot Springs. Soaking in a hot spring while gazing at fall colors, is truly a luxurious moment. Also, the skyline route is closed for the winter beginning in mid-October, so it would be best to confirm with the tourism association before you take this route.

A spa village at the foot of the Tokachidake Mountain Range

Biei Shirogane Hot Springs

Mt. Oputateshike, Biei Fuji, Biei, Tokachidake and Furano-dake make up the Tokachidake Mountain Range. Biei Shirogane Hot Springs is located right at the foot of the mountains. There are six spa hotels in all, and all of them are equipped with natural flowing spring water. The favorite is the brown spring water containing iron.

The spa is often used as a base camp for climbers to Tokachidake, Biei-dake and Biei Fuji, who can heal their weary bodies in the hot springs. Ending your pattering with a nice soak in the hot spring may be a great idea.

A renowned hotel with differing springs that is unknown to many

Tokachidake Hot Springs

Tokachidake Hot Springs is nestled on the hillside near the foot of the Tokachidake Mountain Range. All facilities have springs with differing minerals and qualities, and the views from the outdoor baths are different, so we suggest you spa hop during the season for autumn foliage.

Besides the spa hotels, there is a free mixed outdoor public bath called Fukiage, which was used in the scene from the TV drama series “Kitano Kunikara”, where Rie Miyazawa bathed, and later became famous for this reason. The hot spring is mixed bathing with no changing rooms, so for women, it would be best to prepare a swim suit.

Tokachidake Spa Autumn Foliage Campaign

Sept. 26 – Oct. 2, 2011 (Drawing held on Oct. 1st, and 2nd)

During the campaign, a drawing to win bath discount tickets and local favorite “Kami Furano Curry” stamp rally sponsored by the spa village will be held. For those who complete the stamp rally, Kami Furano Park will be presented to each contestant.

For Information concerning autumn foliage and hot springs please contact

Biei Tourist Association 0166-92-4378
Kami Furano Tokachidake Tourist Association 0166-45-3150
Northern travel Calendar
Hokkaido, where the great outdoors and frontier spirit are deeply rooted
Discover the culture and food nurtured by the land and the people,
as you embrace the four seasons of the north

Northern Hokkaido

Sightseeing

Tenninkyo

Be the first to delight in autumn at Tenninkyo, which lies at the foot of the magnificent Mt. Asahidake

Tenninkyo, located on the eastern side of Higashikawa Town, is one of many famous spots in Hokkaido for viewing autumn colors. Tenninkyo is also known for its columnar joints, one of the most typical being the “Shichifuku Iwa”, a strange rock formation upstream on the Chubetsu River. The appearance of seven sharp columnar joints that stand in line in the midst of the great outdoors is spectacular. Especially from early to mid October during the season for autumn foliage, the maples and Japanese rowan adorn the sheer cliffs transforming the area into a beautiful ravine painted in vivid autumn colors.

One of the greatest features of Tenninkyo is the Hagaromo Falls. The Hagaromo Falls are recognized as a “Hokkaido Scenic Cultural Asset”, “One of the 100 Water Falls of Japan” and is the most famous waterfall in Hokkaido. Water cascades from a height of 270 meters over seven tiers of rock giving onlookers an illusion of an angel dancing with her gown flowing about her and giving the falls its name Hagaromo, which means “angels’ raiment.” The Japanese lime, Maple and katsura trees which grow among the cliffs turn vivid colors, allowing the angel’s dance to be seen even more beautifully and gracefully than in any other season.

Approximately 30 minutes by car from Tenninkyo is Mt. Asahidake, a renowned spot where the earliest in the season, autumn foliage can be seen. Every year peak season arrives between early September and the beginning of October. If you take a “walk in the sky” on the Asahidake Ropeway, the ravines, garnished in gold and reds, spread below. At the summit, near “Cheval Glass Pond”, you can even see the Avenian Aven change color. After you have indulged your senses with beautiful autumn colors, take a bath in the Tenninkyo Hot Springs, nestled among the Tenninkyo Ravine, and heal your tired body.

—Higashikawa Tourist Association (Tel. 0166 - 82 - 3761)

Meoto Ai-no-Kane

Make a wish and ring the bell as you watch the sun disappear into the Sea of Japan

Along the sea on Route 232 is the “Meoto Ai-no-Kane.” Through the open heart shaped monument you can see Teuri and Yagishiri islands, also called the “Meoto” or “husband and wife” islands, and if you ring the bell while you gaze at these it is said that you will have a good marriage and be blessed with offspring. The bell stands on a hill that overlooks the Sea of Japan, and promises a spectacular sunset. On a sunny day Rishiri Fuji can also be seen. Behind you is the Uehira Green Hill Wind Farm, the largest wind power plant in Japan. The scene of rows and rows of massive windmills is dynamic and is one of the view points of Tomamae.

—Commerce and Tourism Section, Planning and Promotion Dept, Tomamae Town (Tel. 0164 - 64 - 2212)

Nayoro Burger

Buns made with Hakucho rice, grown in Nayoro, are characteristic of this local burger

Two years ago, through trial and error, local restaurants finally came up with this local cuisine that uses famous Nayoro mochi rice. In order to be called “Nayoro Burger”, buns made with Hakucho rice, grown in the largest rice paddies in Japan, must be used, to ensure a moist and fluffy texture that also fills the stomach. The ingredients that go inside the burger are local vegetables, meats and condiments, all original recipes of the participating shops. Try this delicious and voluminous dish filled with the greatness of Nayoro.

—Nayoro Burger Office (Tel. 01654 - 2 - 0507)
**Sightseeing**

**Onuma Quasi-National Park**

Selected as one of the three new most beautiful sceneries of Japan, the autumn colors, dancing on the blue surface of the lake, are gorgeous.

Onuma Quasi-National Park lies at the foot of grand Mt. Komagatake, and is one of the best places for autumn foliage in southern Hokkaido. The vast park covers an area of 9083 square meters within which are three lakes, Onuma, Konuma and Junsai Numa. The area is surrounded by lush forests where many small birds live, and in the autumn the entire lake area is decorated with the brilliant colors of Ezo and other maples.

Every year, from early October, Onuma enters the season for autumn foliage. Lake Onuma, Mt. Komagatake which stands on the shores of this leisurely spread out lake, and the trees stained with gold and reds are a stunning sight. During peak season, locals and visitors from afar come to get a glimpse of this awesome scenery.

There are 126 islands, both big and small, in Lake Onuma, and there are 18 bridges and trails that allow for easy leaf viewing around the lake, either on foot or by bicycle. Stores around JR Onuma Koen Station carry rental bicycles for 1,000 JPY per bike, so you can enjoy cycling. The scenery from the lake is different, so viewing the autumn colors from the lake is also recommended. You can also make use of rental canoes and boats, cruiser and motor boat rides. One popular ride is the “Island Tour Course”, a cruise which takes about 30 min, and gives you a tour of Onuma and Konuma lakes. From the lake a full view of Lake Onuma and Mr. Komagatake can be seen. At the height of the season, the trees along the road turn bright red, creating a tunnel of color. This is a spot you want to lock down between mid October and late October.

The Onuma Koyo Matsuri is held on October 15th (Sat.) and 16th (Sun.). At the festival, signature agricultural products from Nanae, Shikabe and Mori, the three towns that straddle Onuma, are sold. It is a popular event where you can enjoy great food while you enjoy beautiful autumn foliage.

- Nanae Onuma International Tourism Convention Association
  (Tel. 0138 · 67 · 3020)

**Kijihiki Highlands**

A secret view spot in Hokuto

Experience a 360 degree panoramic view

At an altitude of 560m, on the hillside of Mt. Kijihiki lies Kijihiki Highlands. It is a representative sightseeing spot for Hokuto and is equipped with a panorama observation deck and camp site. The Kijihiki Highlands Panoramic Observation Deck is especially a secret scenic spot in the southern Hokkaido area. On a clear day toward the northeast you can see Ono Plains and Mt. Hakodate. Anywhere you look, beautiful scenery spreads before you. If you climb upward from the camp site there is a farm where over 1000 cattle graze, and you can enjoy the pastoral scenery.

- Hokuto Tourist Association
  (Tel. 0138 · 73 · 2408)

**Experiences**

**The 7th Hakodate Yunokawa Onpaku**

Discover again the attraction of the city through various programs.

Yunokawa Onpaku is an event centered in the hot spring village that offers hands-on programs, such as cooking classes, guided tours and others. The program was created with the hope of re-discovering and rebuilding awareness of the beauty and attraction that Yunokawa Hot Springs and Hakodate possess, and has been a popular local event. This year is the seventh and is scheduled to take place from October 29th (Sat.) to November 6th (Sun.). The Yunokawa Hot Spring History Tour is aimed at tourists staying in the vicinity, and is provided by a guide who takes you through the Yunokawa Hot Spring Village.

- Hakodate Yunokawa Onpaku Office
  Hakodate Yunokawa Hot Springs Cooperative Union
  (Tel. 0138 · 57 · 8988)

**Experience the first western castle in Japan; Goryokaku Tour**

With Hakodate Bugyo-sho as the stage

An introduction to the castle and a picture scroll of the history that followed

Goryokaku Tour is a guided tour that explains the history of Goryokaku and is held in Goryokaku Fort, home to the Hakodate Government Hall which was reconstructed in July, 2010. Inside the government hall (admission separate) you will find a true representation of what life was like at that time in the “Reproduction Zone”, or historical material and exhibitions on Goryokaku, Bugyo-sho, and the Battle of Hakodate in the “Historical Discovery Zone.” You will also receive an introduction to Ayasaburo Takeda, the architect and construction director of Goryokaku, also known as a Japanese Da Vinci, and Toshizo Hijioka, vice-commander of the Shinsengumi special police force, both deeply connected with Hakodate. The tour takes about 2 hours, and the tour price is 3500 JPY per person (tours for two persons or more).

- Hakodate Tourism Concierge Center
  (Tel. 0138 · 26 · 0300)

**Sightseeing**

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- Hokuto Tourist Association
  (Tel. 0138 · 73 · 2408)
Central Hokkaido

New

Tottari Yuttari Set Plan

Sobetsu

A special set plan made possible only in a town known for its fruit!

Since June, 2011, Sobetsu town, known as a famous fruit producer, has been implementing a set plan called “Tottari, Yuttari”, which means “picking and relaxing”, in order to enjoy fruit picking, a day trip to a hot spring and a lunch. It is a limited plan for the discounted price of 2,500 JPY, where you can enjoy 3 different activities that usually cost 4,000 JPY. The day trip hot spring includes Yukata and towel, so you don’t have to worry about bringing anything. You also get access to a private room which you can use for two hours (between 11:00 – 14:00), so you can enjoy a leisurely bath and lunch. Tickets are available at the “Sobetsu Jokukan Road Station” Sobetsu Tourist Association Information Counter. Adults are 2,500 JPY, children, 2,100 JPY. (Reservation necessary if you have a group of more than 11)

NPO Sobetsu Tourist Association (Tel.0142 - 66 - 2750)

Eastern Hokkaido

Sightseeing

Taiyo-no-Oka Engaru Park

Engaru

Niji Hiroba and Cosmos Park

Engaru

Cosmos of every color bloom gloriously under blue Okhotsk skies

A huge cosmos park where over ten million bulbs of 20 varieties of cosmos bloom across the vast premises. Between late August and early October, yellow and multi-colored cosmos begin to bloom, followed by red, white and pink cosmos that spread a colorful carpet throughout the large park. Between August 20th and October 10th, the Cosmos Fair is held. There are fireworks on August 27th to announce anthesis, (held at Wakibetsugawa banks, Sesaragi Square), and exciting events, such as the Cosmos Festa on September 4th (Sun.) and 11th (Sun.). At the second Cosmos Festa held on the 11th, there will be the “Cosmos Wedding” where ladies can try on wedding dresses designed especially for the event by the new and rising wedding dress designer, Hany Ito.

Engaru Tourism Association (Tel. 0158 - 42 - 8306)

Gourmet Dining

Farm Restaurant

Chitose

Go! To the New Chitose Airport area where many farm owned restaurants are located

In areas 30 to 40 minutes from New Chitose Airport, there are many farm owned restaurants. They serve all kinds of pasta and sweets made with vegetables and fruit grown right there on the farm, and also offer harvesting and sausage and butter making experiences.

Chitose Tourist Association (Tel. 0123 - 24 - 8818)

Sightseeing

Sankaidaki Park

Date

The powerful plunge of the falls and colorful weave of vivid autumn foliage

A park located on the Sankaidaki River, a tributary to Osarugawa. Due to the large water volume, the Sankaidaki Falls inside the park are powerful and the spray from the falls is awesome. It is the favorite sightseeing spot in Otaki for autumn foliage, and during the season for autumn colors the contrast of powerful waterfalls against the red and gold leaves of the maples is absolutely breathtaking.

Date Otaki Branch Office, Hokkaido Government (Tel.0123 - 24 - 8818)

Eastern Hokkaido Expressway

Yubari IC – Shimukappu IC

Yubari-Shimukappu

The expressway that connects central and eastern Hokkaido will open on Saturday, October 29th.

Due to the opening of the expressway between Yubari IC and Shimukappu IC, the Eastern Hokkaido Expressway will become whole. Travel from Sapporo to Obihiro will be possible in 3 hours, and is 20 minutes faster than the present route. This will allow access to New Chitose Airport and other major facilities within Hokkaido more conveniently.

NEXCO East Consumer Center (Tel. 0570 - 024 - 024) "Navi Dial"

Sightseeing

Kinsenkyo

Takinoue

Waterfalls of all sizes flow in this area designated as one of the “100 Scenic Spots of Hokkaido”

The ravines along the Shokotsu River, which flows through Takinoue town; the path through the ravines was chosen as one of the “500 beautiful roads in Japan that you want to walk.” It is also a popular spot to enjoy both autumn foliage and the beauty of the ravines. The Walking Path guided tour through Kinsenkyo is also recommended.

Takinoue Tourism Association (Tel.0158 - 29 - 2730)
Summer Gondola
In service through October 10th!
Get to the Niseko Annupuri hillside in just minutes. Besides the great view from 820 meters above sea level, it is a convenient spot to start your hike to the summit, or trekking toward "Kagami Numa."

- Adults 1,000 JPY  Children 600 JPY (Preschool children free)
- On scheduled service days, for the Annupuri Gondola, round trip in any way does not possible.
- Adults 600 JPY  Children 400 JPY
- Service Hours: 9:00 – 16:00
- Opens: Jun. 25 - Oct. 10

Enjoy the great outdoors of Niseko

Nature guide
The nature guide will give lectures on mountain fun and the geography of Annupuri, as well as the eco system in the area. Get in touch with the beauty and wonders of nature.
- 30 Minute Course: Adults 1,000 JPY
- 60 Minute Course: Adults 2,000 JPY
- 90 Minute Course: Adults 3,000 JPY
- Family Discount (Up to 5 persons)
  - 30 Min. 2,000 JPY / 60 Min. 3,000 JPY

Nordic Walking
Nordic Walking is the latest sport that requires you to walk with special poles for support. An instructor will show you how to walk properly so men and women of all ages can safely experience the sport.
@500 JPY per person (minimum 3 people)

In light of Hirafu’s 50th anniversary, the Niseko Grand Hirafu will change!
The new Hirafu Gondola
The new Hirafu Gondola travels at 6 meters per second. Faster, more comfortable and carries up to 8 passengers.

Mountain Center
The new ski center in the Mountain Center now has the best open café. Enjoy a relaxing moment with Mt. Yotei right in front of you.

Kids Area
Niseko Hirafu Ski School has set aside lesson space exclusively for children. Kids will improve skills quickly with the moving carpet.

The online general reservation system has officially begun for the 2011-2012 season.
[Merit]
- Make hotel reservations and rental reservations individually or all at once, it’s your choice!
- Designate where you want to receive your lift tickets!
- Check for vacancy on the screen as well as for total points!
- All transactions are by credit card, so no need for payment hassles!

- Hotel Accommodation Reservations
- Lift and Gondola Ticket Reservations
- Rental Reservations
- Ski School Lesson Reservations

Make reservations for Niseko Grand Hirafu in one batch!
http://www.grand-hirafu.jp/reservation-ja/

Niseko Mountain Resort Grand Hirafu
www.grand-hirafu.jp

Inquiries pertaining to tourism in Hokkaido.

Hokkaido Tourism Organization
1-5-25 Ooishi, Chuo-ku, Sapporo, Hokkaido, Zip 060-0044
Tel: 011-331-0941
Visit: http://en.visit-hokkaido.jp/

Hokkaido Sapporo Food and Tourism Information Center
JR Sapporo Sta. 1F West Concourse North Exit
Kita 6 Jo Nishi 4 Chome Kita-ku, Sapporo, Zip 060-0806
Tel: 011-231-5088

Hokkaido Economic Affairs Department Tourism Bureau
Kita 3 Jo Nishi 6 Chome Chuo Ku, Sapporo
Zip 060-888
Tel: 011-231-4111