

After living through the long Hokkaido winter, it's no surprise that the residents of Hokkaido, be they expats or born and raised *dosanko*, leap at the chance to go outdoors. The summer is short, and many make the most of the warm weather by going camping.

I personally spend almost every weekend of the summer sleeping outdoors, and I wouldn't have it any other way! Camping allows me to see landscapes and scenery that I wouldn't be able to if I only stayed in hotels. In this edition of the Red Brick Bulletin, I'll introduce some of my favorite places to camp in Hokkaido.

Photos will have the location, date the photo was taken, and photographer. Let's explore Hokkaido!

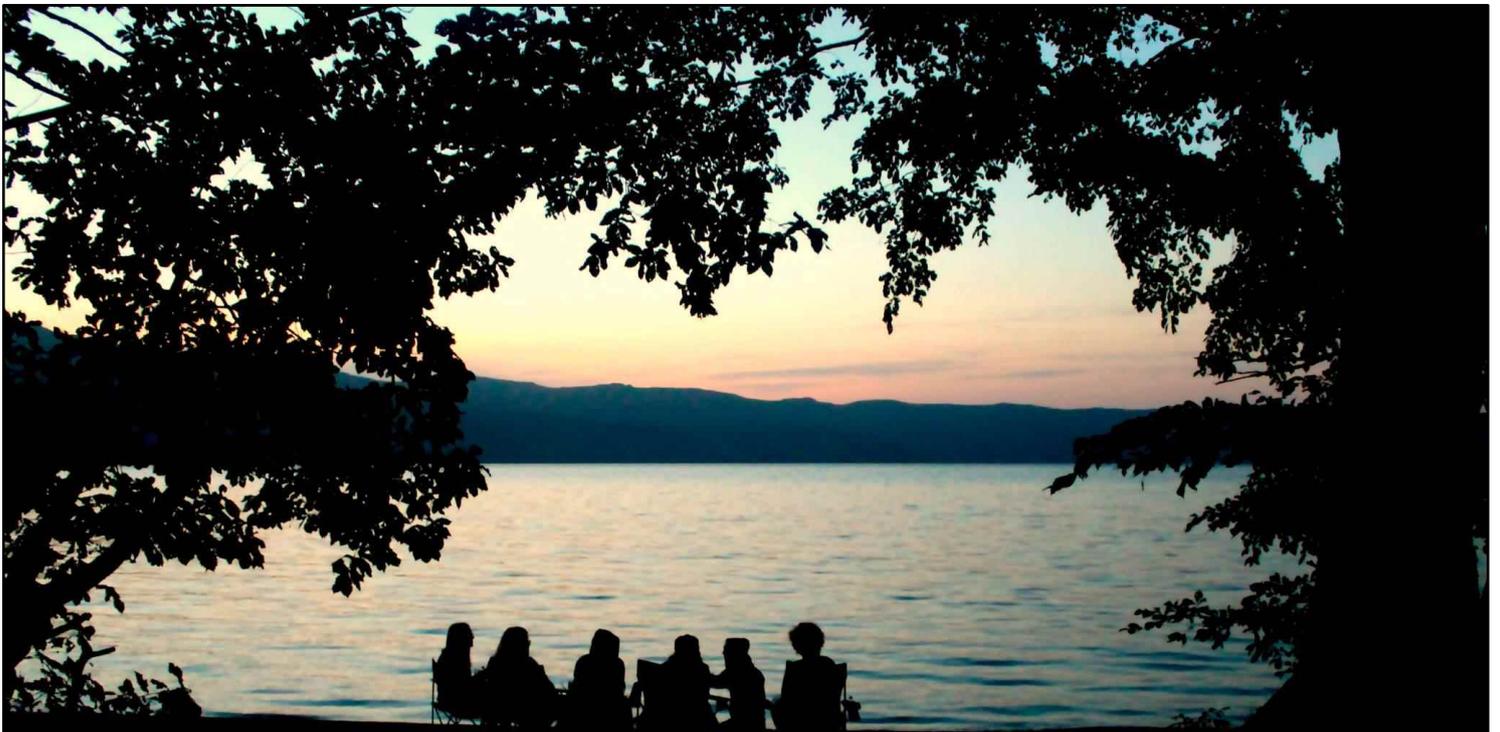
Otaru Shizen no Mura, 2014, Emily Schuster

## SHIRETOKO PENINSULA



Shiretoko Five Lakes, 2014, Hannah Louise Schuster

Even on a foggy, cold day in September, Shiretoko Peninsula manages to take your breath away. Whether you want to take a hike up one of the tallest mountains in Hokkaido, Mt. Rausu, or stroll around the beautiful Five Lakes walking course, Shiretoko never disappoints. In my time there I came across deer, foxes, and even a tanuki (an animal native to Japan). If you take a boat cruise along the peninsula, you can even see bears in their natural habitat. Camping in Shiretoko allows one to feel close to nature that is still wild, free, and full of mystery.



## LAKE KUSSHARO

Lake Kussharo, 2015, Christopher Ignacio Santos

## CAPE SHAKOTAN



Cape Shakotan, 2013, Andy Evans

**S**ituated in the Akan National Park in Eastern Hokkaido, Lake Kussharo is one of the most popular camping locations in Hokkaido. With numerous mountains surrounding it, there are plenty of opportunities for hikers of any skill level, from beginners who just want to stroll to more advanced climbers looking to conquer their next summit. My favorite thing about Lake Kussharo, however, is not the hiking, but the *onsen* (hot spring)! Because of the geothermic activity nearby, you can actually dig your own *onsen* in the sand on the lakeside. What better way to take in the views on a chilly summer evening?

**C**ape Shakotan is a little slice of heaven along the coast to the west of Sapporo. With waters so blue you might think you were in Okinawa, Shakotan is a beach-lovers paradise. You can go swimming in the beach, or hike along the coast for views of the uniquely shaped rocks against a backdrop of a spectacular sunset. For those that are a bit tired of the camping and outdoor life, Cape Shakotan isn't far from Otaru, one of the most charming cities in Hokkaido. You can always zip over to the city for a nice lunch along the canal. The best of both worlds!



# HOKKAIDO JET SPOTLIGHT



There are over 200 participants of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme who call Hokkaido home. We come from all over the world and we all have a very unique experience with the island. In each edition of the Red Brick Bulletin, I will introduce a current JET living in Hokkaido. Each has their own story to tell – let’s get to know them!



## MEET ADAM GENTLE...

**BIOGRAPHY:** Adam is entering his 3<sup>rd</sup> year as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) at Mombetsu High School. He was born in Idaho, but during his high school years he lived on a military base in Okinawa. After getting his teaching degree, Adam returned to Japan, this time to the opposite end of the country!



Aibetsu, 2016, Karisa Whelan

### What brought you to Hokkaido?

**A** I had just graduated from university with a degree in Social Studies for Secondary Education, and the job prospects in my home state in the US, Idaho, were looking pretty abysmal. I really liked the idea of being able to go to Japan and share language and culture, because I wanted to be able to tell my future Social Studies students that they should do something similar in their own lives.

Social Studies educators spend a lot of time trying to get kids to think about the rest of the world, its history, and its culture. Something like the JET Programme seemed like an awesome way to set an example for them. Plus, it was a job in education, in a system that is somewhat different from the one in the US, so I hoped I could learn some things I wouldn’t have had the chance to be exposed to if I had just stayed in Idaho.

### How has your experience been so far?

**A** Overall, it has definitely been a defining experience in my life. Getting to see and experience so many new and amazing things has never really let up in the two years I’ve been here. There’s always something else I want to try or see. The hardest part will be leaving one day, I think.

### What has been your most memorable moment in Hokkaido so far?

**A** Man, there have been so many it’s hard to pick. If I was just going to narrow it down to the last few months, it’s still hard, but I’ll give that a shot. Getting to be a Group Leader at HEC (Hokkaido English Challenge)\* was an amazing experience. It was kind of like the encapsulation of the experience most ALTs hope for when they come here, but distilled down to an exhilarating and exhausting five day adventure.

There’s also the three day through-hike I did across Eastern Hokkaido called Kiraway. That was a beautiful way to see and experience the outdoors in Hokkaido, complete with a slightly frightening bear sighting (although no one, including the extremely freaked out bear, was hurt).

### What’s your favorite thing about Hokkaido?

**A** I’m constantly reminded of two things about Hokkaido everywhere I go: the natural environment is incredible, and the people are always so kind. It’s really as simple as that.

\*Hokkaido English Challenge (HEC) – a non-profit organization run by Hokkaido JETs. Every year they put on an all-expenses paid English Camp for 50 lucky Hokkaido students. For more information visit [hec.hajet.org](http://hec.hajet.org).