



# Hokkaido Wilds 2019 First-year Report



Posted on Nov 22, 2019  
by The Hokkaido Wilds



Reading time: 11 min

Hokkaido Wilds's vision is to be "a non-profit website that exists to inspire people to explore and enjoy Hokkaido and the surrounding areas' extraordinary outdoors by ski, bicycle, foot and canoe in an informed and responsible way." We launched the site on the 1st of November 2018, so it's about time we looked back on this year to see how we've done in relation to living up to that vision. We've got a whole lot of work still ahead of us, but we think we've done pretty well this year. Here's our first-year 'Annual Report'.

## REPORT QUICK LINKS

Posts Added	Team Members	Future Goals	Web Stats	Finances
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## WHERE WE STARTED (from Nov 1st, 2018)

38	35	13	0	14
Ski Tour Routes	Cycle Routes	Hiking Routes	Canoe Routes	Huts

We launched HokkaidoWilds.org on the 1st of November, 2018. At that point, we already had a 'stock' of a number of route guides and content, all schlepped over to HokkaidoWilds.org from Rob's old 14degrees.org site.

When we launched Hokkaido Wilds, we had about 380km worth of ski touring routes, 6,044km of cycle routes, about 130km of hiking routes, and 14 huts. We hadn't yet even thought about adding canoe routes to the site.

## KEY POINTS

### ROUTE POSTS

Over the last year, we've **added 73 route guides** to the site, plus an extra **16 hut posts**. This brings us to a total of 550km of ski touring routes, over **6,500km of cycling routes**, almost 550km of hiking trail, and **340km of canoe routes**.

### OUTREACH

We've been striving to include **Ainu place names** in our route posts. We've also been **invited to speak** at a number of local Hokkaido events, conferences and workshops.

### WEBSITE STATS

76 thousand people visited the site over the last year – almost **6,500 people per month** on average. The site **earned no revenue**, but we covered web costs with income from sponsored posts.

## POSTS ADDED OVER THE PAST YEAR (from Nov 1st till Oct 31st)

16	10	30	17	16
Ski Tour Routes	Cycle Routes	Hiking Routes	Canoe Routes	Huts
170km Ave. 11km	565km Ave. 56km	400km	340km 19 days	383yen Ave. hut fees 32 pax Ave. size

Standing out from the rest are the 30 hiking routes we've added over the last year. The majority of these were penned by Hokkaido Wilds author Rick Siddle. During his time living in Hokkaido, Rick hiked many of the major (and minor) peaks in Hokkaido. He continues to write up his experiences for Hokkaido Wilds in the form of route guide posts.

See all the hiking routes here: <https://hokkaidowilds.org/hike>



#### Cycle Routes

A few of the 10 cycle routes we've added were penned by new Hokkaido Wilds author [Chris Auld](#). He's steadily making his way through a list of gravel-grinding mountain bike routes in his neighborhood of Rankoshi near Niseko. Arguably the highlight of the cycle routes added this year was a write-up of our 2018 summer attempt to cycle across Hokkaido entirely (or as much as possible) on gravel roads. Suffice it to say we're [back to the drawing board](#) on that one.

See all cycle routes: <https://hokkaidowilds.org/cycle>



#### Canoeing Routes

Chris Auld was also instrumental in making the canoeing section of Hokkaido Wilds happen. Hokkaido Wilds founder [Rob Thomson](#) had always harbored vague inklings of adding canoe routes to the Hokkaido Wilds repertoire, and when Chris introduced himself to the Hokkaido Wilds team as a whitewater expert (plus skiing wizard and mountain-biking fanatic and data-mad scientist), Hokkaido Wilds very quickly took him on board.

Now, since our first canoeing trip in early July, we've documented 340km-worth of canoeing and packrafting routes in Hokkaido. All of the routes are well-known, locally established routes published in [Japanese canoe touring guidebooks](#). This would not have happened with as much gusto had it not also been for the very generous support of Naoki Matsuzawa from [Guide House Canoa](#) at Lake Shikotsu. Naoki gave us two brand new Novacraft Prospector 16 all-round canoes for our [canoeing project](#). MRS Packrafts also provided a packraft for the project, which has seen action on three trips so far.

See all canoe routes: <https://hokkaidowilds.org/paddling>



#### Ski Touring Routes

The ski touring routes were all penned by Rob, with the highlight being a 10-day spring ski trip to Rishiri Island at the north of Hokkaido and Shiretoko Peninsula in the far east. The trip coincided with one of the driest Februaries in recorded history, so the snow was average. But [the views](#) were out of this world. We were also joined on this trip by our good Belgian friend [Quentin Moreau](#).

See all ski tour routes: <https://hokkaidowilds.org/skitour>



#### Other Posts

One of the bigger undertakings early on this year was setting up the [Hokkaido Search and Rescue Report English Database](#). At the end of each summer and winter season now, we take the Hokkaido Police SAR Reports, semi-automatically translate and collate them into a database on the site, and make them available for searching

and nitering.

## OTHER NOTABLE HAPPENINGS

44	2	1	4	2	1	4
Ainu place names	Invited keynotes	Forum workshop	Sponsored posts	Advisory roles	Magazine project	Header graphics

### Ainu Place Names

For all new routes we've posted on the site since around July, we've been striving to include the Hokkaido indigenous Ainu place name of the main destination in the route post. This applies to ski touring routes and hiking routes (mountain names), and canoeing routes (lake or river names). We still need to go back and add Ainu place names to older posts.

### Keynotes and other speaking engagements

- **FOSS4G Hokkaido Conference Keynote (13th July)**  
Hokkaido Wilds founder Rob Thomson was invited to speak as the keynote speaker at the 2019 FOSS4G Hokkaido conference in Sapporo on the 13th of July, 2019. He was invited to speak about the TOPOMAP+ PDF topographical maps we have on the site, created using the free [QGIS software](#) and the [Geospatial Authority of Japan map data vector files](#). Slides here: <https://hokw.jp/foss4g>
- **Montbell Sea to Summit Asahikawa 2019 Event Keynote (Aug 24th)**  
Hokkaido Wilds was invited by the Sea to Summit organizing committee to speak [Asahikawa Sea to Summit event](#) on the 24th of August, 2019. Rob spoke about his travels around the world by bicycle and skateboard, as well as some theories about why humans seek adventure. Slide here: <https://hokw.jp/sea2summit>
- **Hokkaido Outdoor Forum Workshop (Oct 29th-31st)**  
We were keen to build networks and friendships within the broader local Hokkaido outdoor industry here in Hokkaido, so Hokkaido Wilds submitted a proposal for an 80-minute workshop during the call for proposals for the [2019 Hokkaido Outdoor Forum](#). We were stoked to be selected to facilitate the workshop, focused on getting inside the minds of the typical 'Western' adventure tourist, and how to use the web to communicate Hokkaido as a destination for adventure tourism. Workshop slides here: <https://hokw.jp/hof2019>

### Sponsored posts – Higashikawa Tourism Association Tie-up (Aug 21st till 26th)

We were approached by the Higashikawa Tourism Association early in 2019, asking if we'd like to come to Higashikawa and write up some route guides for activities within the town limits. In the end, we spent about five days documenting routes there. Of course it was a pleasure to do so – Higashikawa is one of our favourite towns in Hokkaido. Higashikawa Tourism Association kindly covered our costs for the trip, plus extra. This has allowed us to open up an 'operation account' which helps us cover web costs.

### Monitor Tour Participation

We've worked with Live Environmental Planning as well as the Hokkaido Development Engineering Center as advisers. Both these organizations receive third-party funding to research various aspects of access to and promotion of the Hokkaido outdoors, particularly to English-speaking visitors to Hokkaido.

### Pure Powder Magazine Hokkaido Tour

We were thrilled to be able to throw our support behind the [Pure Powder](#) team's Hokkaido camper-ski trip in February 2019. They spent a lot of time exploring Hokkaido's free-riding offerings on their own, but we managed to join them for a few hut trips, and were happy to have been able to help them out with finding a campervan for their month-long journey.

### New header graphics

HokkaidoWilds' amazingly talented (and award-winning) graphic designer is [Dominika Gan](#), from Gdansk, Poland. She had created some amazing graphics for the ski, hike, and cycle overview pages on the site when we first launched, but this was before she'd ever been to Hokkaido. In February this year she joined a bunch of other friends from Poland for a month-long ski trip (see the [Pure Powder Magazine](#) tour above). With a new appreciation for the Hokkaido landscapes, she created some stunning new header illustrations. We love the depth and boldness of the colors!



## THE HOKKAIDO WILDS TEAM

We launched the Hokkaido Wilds website with only two authors – [Rob and Haidee Thomson](#). Soon after the launch Rob and Haidee's long time friend and adventure-mate [Rick Siddle](#) came on board, mainly writing up hiking trips he's done over the ten or so years living in Hokkaido. Then around April, [Chris Auld](#) became involved in Hokkaido Wilds first as an adviser for the new paddling section of the website, and then as an author.

- **ROB THOMSON** (New Zealand) – Rob is a New Zealander, and initially founded The Hokkaido Wilds as a space on the web for his Hokkaido adventure stories, originally posted on his personal travel blog [14degrees.org](#). He still holds the Guinness World Record for the Longest Journey by Skateboard (12,159km). He also previously cycled 12,000km from Japan to Switzerland. He holds a Ph.D. in Behavioral Science, and currently works at Hokusei Gakuen University in Sapporo City as an assistant professor in media and communications (specializing in Internet psychology).
- **HAIDEE THOMSON** (New Zealand) – Haidee is a Kiwi, and has lived in Hokkaido for almost 10 years, having lived and worked in Sapporo, Niseko, Muroran, and Chitose City. Keen on the outdoors and birdwatching, Haidee planned most of the multi-day cycle touring routes on The Hokkaido Wilds, including campgrounds, daily distances, and onsen hotspots. Haidee is an assistant professor of applied linguistics at Hokusei University Junior College.
- **RICK SIDDLE** (UK) – Rick is originally from the UK and has lived and worked in Japan for 20 years, 10 of those in Hokkaido. In that time he has hiked, biked and skied over much of the island. He's also an anthropologist who spent his early career working with the Ainu indigenous people of Hokkaido.
- **CHRIS AULD** (New Zealand/UK) – Chris is a data scientist with Microsoft Asia, but he's also originally from New Zealand. As a whitewater kayaker, mountain biker and skier with a cabin in Hokkaido he's keen to share both high adventure and family fun trips on Hokkaido Wilds. Chris is a qualified ski guide, avalanche and whitewater rescue technician, outdoor first-aider and he makes a mean backcountry jet-boil wagyu shabu-shabu.
- **Greg (Canada) and Mari (Japan)** – Greg and Mari are one of the most prolific Canadian canoeing couples in Hokkaido, with a host of multi-day canoe trips under their belt. Hokkaido Wilds leans heavily on their experience and knowledge when planning canoe trips.
- **Dominika Gan** (Poland) – Domi is an award-winning graphic designer, based in Poland. She's also a passionate outdoors-person. She created the look-and-



## GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

As far as adding new content goes, we'll just keep doing our thing – writing up our trips we do here in Hokkaido in a format that allows others to enjoy those places too. But there are some loose, arbitrary goals we have for content on the site. On our [overall mission statement document](#), we say “by 2025, our goal is to have written detailed online routes guides for the following in Hokkaido and surrounding areas: 150 ski touring routes, 120 hiking routes, 50 canoe routes, and 120 bikepacking/cycle touring routes.” Also, “our aim is for at least half of those routes to be multi-day routes.”

So, how is our progress so far?

### Progress towards 2025 Goals

#### SKI TOURING ROUTES

56/150 36%

#### HIKING ROUTES

43/120 36%

#### CANOE ROUTES

17/50 34%

#### CYCLING ROUTES

43/120 38%

## On the To-Do list

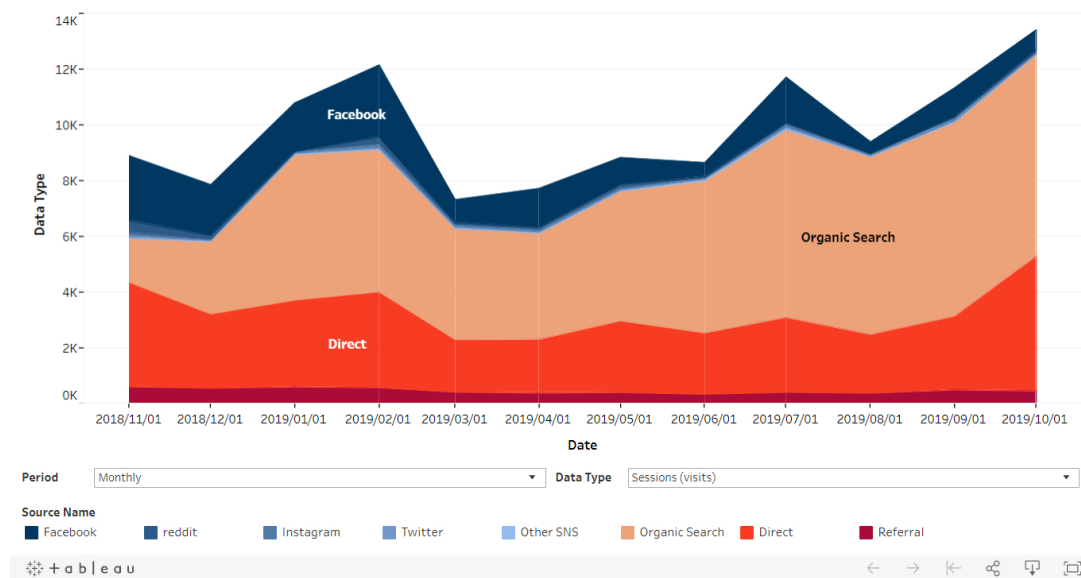
As well as adding new routes to the site, we've also got a long list of to-do items.

- ✓ **Update old printable topomaps** - We launched the printable TOPOMAP+ A4 maps in March 2019. Posts prior to this only had rough Japanese-only printable maps extracted directly from the [GSI web interface](#). And then in the first week of November 2019, we added GeoPDF functionality. We need to go back and update the 90 or so posts that don't have these maps available.
- ✓ **Set up non-profit incorporated association** - In April 2019, we announced our pledge to [give away all revenue generated from the Hokkaido Wilds website](#). As part of this was the idea to set up a non-profit incorporate association (非営利型一般社団法人 *hieiri-gata ippan shadan hojin*), to give a more formal structure to this side of the endeavor. We haven't got around to setting up the association, however, so that's something we need to work on.
- ✓ **Make the switch to WordPress 5.0** - We still haven't upgraded the site to Wordpress 5.0...this may or may not be a nightmate. Watch this space. For end users, this is not relevant.

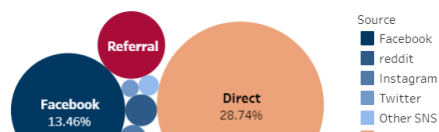
## WEB ANALYTICS

Generally, it appears that over the last year, the site was most popular during the winter ski season months. The hiking season of July/August gets some fairly solid visit numbers also though. If you change the period to 'Day' or 'Week', you'll see a prominent spike on the first week of October. This was driven by direct traffic from electric vehicle forums – we posted an article about [our experiences driving a 2019 Nissan Leaf with two Canadian canoes strapped to the roof](#). It was by far the most popular article on the site this year.

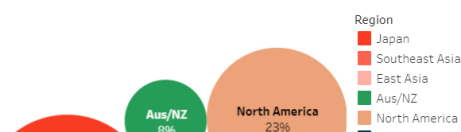
### Website access by source



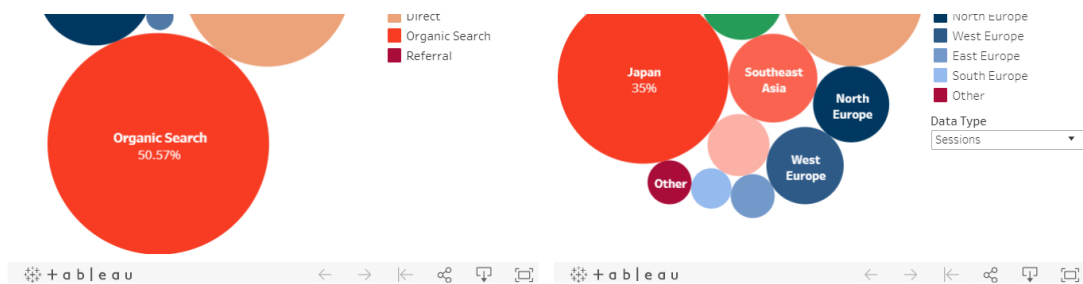
### Sessions by source (annual)



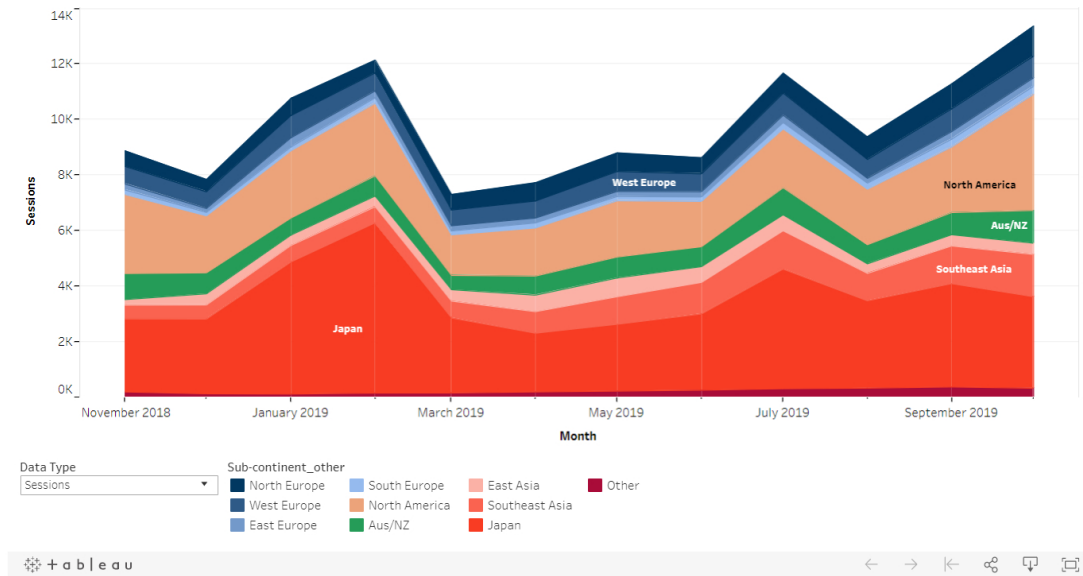
### Access by region (annual)







## Access by region



## Most popular posts/pages

Here's a list of the most popular pages and/or posts on the site over the first year (Nov 1, 2018 till Oct 31, 2019). The most popular page was the [ski touring overview page](#), followed by the [cycle touring overview page](#), [site landing page](#), and the [hiking overview page](#). The [huts page](#) was also well visited. The three most popular posts weren't even about Hokkaido – the [English](#) and [Japanese](#) versions of the post about switching a Shimano Alfine internal gear hub from grease to oil has always been popular, as has the [DIY bicycle dynamo smartphone charger post](#).

Show  Entries

PAGE VIEWS	PAGE
20804	<a href="#">/skitour</a>
17913	<a href="#">/cycle</a>
12240	<a href="#">/</a>
10974	<a href="#">/hike</a>
7731	<a href="#">/huts</a>
5805	<a href="#">/自転車のダイナモハブに使う自作 (diy) のusb充電器</a>
5314	<a href="#">/shimano-alfine-8-speed-internal-gear-hub-oil-bath</a>
4370	<a href="#">/diy-bicycle-dynamo-usb-charger-for-smartphones-and-battery-packs</a>
4299	<a href="#">/hokkaido-snow-statistics</a>
3521	<a href="#">/resources-for-exploring-the-hokkaido-outdoors</a>

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

As mentioned earlier, all revenue generated from the site is being pledged to a fund to make donations to Hokkaido-based volunteer groups and organizations that are committed to sustainable, safe, and responsible access to the Hokkaido outdoors. In March this year, we set up an affiliate agreement with the good folk at [Explore-Share.com](#), whereby we'd get a commission for referrals to their local [Hokkaido guide booking service](#) – mostly on the ski touring routes we have on the site.

We only set this up at the end of the 2018/19 season, so there was no commission action on that front. It'll be interesting to see how things shape up this winter. We're really excited to be working with [Explore-Share.com](#) so that people can indirectly contribute – via booking a guide – to the upkeep of the Hokkaido outdoors.

We have, however, had some very generous support from some local tourism associations and events, which have allowed us to set up an operational account, mainly to cover web costs. If we can continue to receive gigs like these every couple of years, then that will more than cover our web operating costs.

(yen)

HOKKAIDOWILDS FUND INCOME	
Affiliate Link Income	0
Total HokkaidoWilds Fund Income	0

OPERATING FUNDING SOURCES	
Speaker's fees	100,000
Sponsored posts	230,000
Total funding	330,000
OPERATING EXPENSES	
Web hosting (Kinsta.com)	66,678
Documentation Trips	29,503
Total expenses	96,181
YEAR-END NET ASSETS	233,819



## COMMENTS | QUERIES | DISCUSSION

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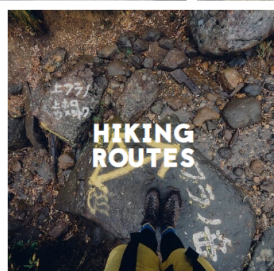
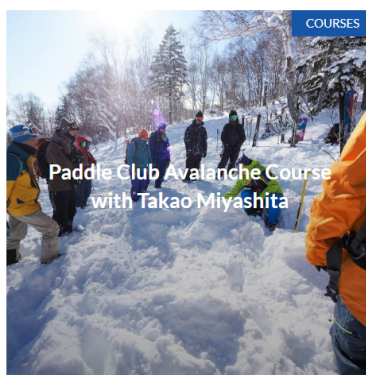
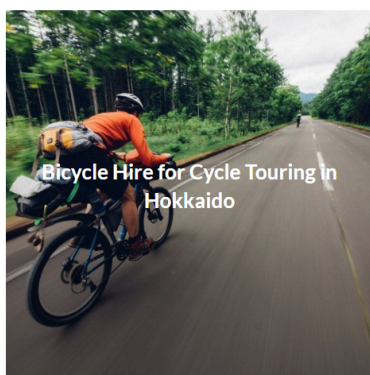
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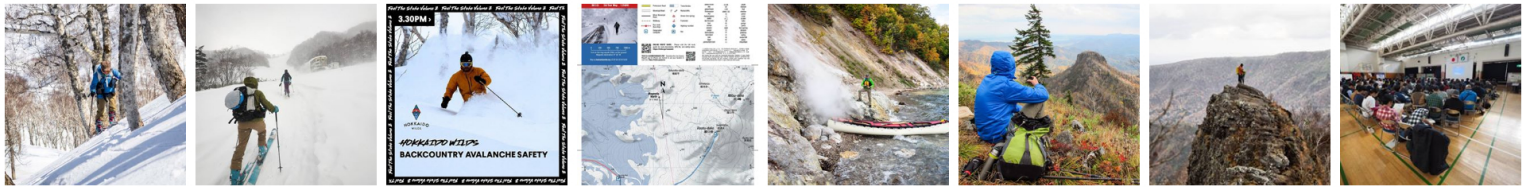
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