



HokkaidoWilds.org 2020 Annual Report



Posted on Apr 14, 2021
by The Hokkaido Wilds



Reading time: 9 min

The 2020 fiscal year for HokkaidoWilds.org has been a busy one, with 74 new routes posted, a slew of new website features, and a number of offline appearances at public symposiums and forums. Unsurprisingly, website visitor numbers dropped significantly due to the pandemic. Access to the outdoors here in Hokkaido has remained relatively unaffected however, so we've been able to continue documenting established outdoor routes throughout the year. Social media engagement has also been higher this year, suggesting a user-base as keen as we are to hit the Hokkaido backcountry. *HokkaidoWilds.org is a non-profit unincorporated volunteer association, providing outdoor information in English for Japan's northern-most island of Hokkaido and surrounding regions.* [日本語の報告書はこちら→](#)

Featured image by Shigeo Kobayashi

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PRINT: [English](#) | [Japanese](#)

[Posts Added](#)

[Website Edits](#)

[Outreach](#)

[Goals](#)

[Web Stats](#)

[Finances](#)

PREAMBLE

2020 is HokkaidoWilds.org's second full year of operation. Despite a global pandemic, we've managed to continue churning out Hokkaido-related outdoor information at a hectic rate. [Rick](#) has written up a number of previous hikes while he's been stuck in lockdown in England, while [Rob](#) and [Haidee](#) have been on the ground in Hokkaido, COVID-cautiously continuing to explore Hokkaido's canoe routes and ski touring routes. All the while, we've been having far too much fun here while [Chris](#) has been cooped up either in Singapore or New Zealand or Switzerland; but sadly, not Japan.

With the Adventure Travel Trade Association's *Adventure Travel World Summit* (ATWS) slated to take place in Sapporo in September 2021, we've been quite heavily involved in some national-, prefectural- and local-level initiatives to develop adventure tourism options here in Hokkaido.

KEY POINTS

COVID-19

Hokkaido **only had one official stay-home request** in early 2020, and that was only directed at residents of Sapporo City. Hence, **we've been relatively free** to continue documenting routes in fiscal year 2020, with COVID precautions in place.

OUTREACH

We gave a keynote address at a **Ministry of Environment** Symposium, a symposium with the Hokkaido Development Engineering Center, and have had **a number of media appearances** in 2020.

WEBSITE FUNCTIONALITY

We've introduced new **ski tour routes filters** (e.g., primary aspect), as well as more **detailed difficulty ratings**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

We'd like to start by thanking all the organizations and individuals who have supported our activities in various ways in 2020. Organizations: the Japan [Ministry of the Environment](#) Hokkaido Branch, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Hokkaido Development Engineering Center, the Hokkaido Outdoor Forum, and [Nakagawa Tourism Association](#), [Guide House Canoe](#), [MRS Packrafts](#). Individuals: [Greg](#), [Mari](#), [Taku](#) and [Mibo](#) (canoe and occasional ski buddies), [Saoka](#), [Gerry](#), [Madoka](#) and [Tim](#) (thanks to Tim for occasional web advice!). Thank you also to the many others who have assisted with advice and feedback. And of course the MVP of the year: [Chris](#)'s orphaned Honda Elysion van, duly driven all over Hokkaido this year by Rob and Haidee.

POSTS ADDED OVER THE YEAR (from April 1st 2020 till March 31st 2021)

27

Ski Tour Routes

110 routes
Running total

0

Cycle Routes

42 routes
Running total

32

Hiking Routes

80 routes
Running total

19

Canoe Routes

42 routes
Running total

7

Huts

40 huts
Running total

SKI TOURING ROUTES

We published a total of 27 established ski touring routes over the last year. Like last year, there's nothing new under the sun when it comes to winter peak exploration in Hokkaido; the majority of these routes are outlined in the [Hokkaido Yuki-yama Guidebook](#), published by Hokkaido Newspaper Press. We have, however, started to venture out into bigger terrain. Ashibetsu-dake 芦別岳 (1726m) was a clear highlight, underscoring the respect-inspiring grandeur of the Yubari range near Furano.

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



HIKING ROUTES

Once again this year [Rick Siddle](#) has been busy penning overviews for a number of hikes he did a number of years ago here in Hokkaido, with a busy tally of 23 routes this year. Ostensibly, he's now splitting his time between Hokkaido and his hometown of Nottingham in the UK, but the pandemic scuttled plans for a Hidaka documentation trip this past year. Fingers crossed he'll be able to get across to Hokkaido this coming summer season.

(Photo by [Kaydi Pyette](#))

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



CANOE ROUTES

Haidee and Rob have been busy this summer season shooting for the ambitious goal of 50 canoe routes documented in three years. This past summer season was year two, and they've made great progress towards the goal with an extra 19 routes added to the tally. It has been great to be sharing trips with [Greg and Mari](#), [Taku and Mibo](#), and other keen paddlers here in Hokkaido.

(Photo by [Shigeru Kobayashi](#))

See all the canoe routes here: <https://hokkaidowilds.org/water>



OTHER POSTS

With a global climate crisis ongoing, we've dedicated significant bandwidth exploring ways we can reduce our emissions here at Hokkaido Wilds. Part of this process was hiring 100% electric Nissan Leaf cars for a few of our backcountry ski trips this winter season, to explore the feasibility of electric vehicles for forays deep into the Hokkaido outdoors. The charging network in Hokkaido requires some adjustment to trip planning, but is surprisingly workable – we'd be confident to take an electric car anywhere in Hokkaido, including in winter. However, currently, Hokkaido's electricity is some of the dirtiest in the developed (and undeveloped) world, so this hampers their climate impact, even when accounting for planned decarbonization of the grid. See [Post 1](#), [Post 2](#), and [Post 3](#).



WEBSITE FEATURE UPDATES

Ski Tour Route Difficulty Categories

We received some great feedback this year on our ski tour route difficulty ratings. Previously, we would only have one rating for a ski tour route, out of ten. "For newbie readers, they may struggle to realise that a high difficulty rating can equal a high possibility of death," was the particular feedback that pushed us to make the difficulty rating scale more transparent. So, we have adapted the difficulty rating rubric developed by the Hokkaido Shinbun Press in their popular [Hokkaido YukiYama Guidebook](#). These difficulty ratings are available on all ski tour routes now.

Muine-yama Toyoha Motoyama Route Difficulty Rating		
CATEGORY	GRADE	POINTS
Strenuousness		
Vertical Gain	B	35
Time ascending	B	6
Technicality		
Altitude	A	10
Hazards	C	6
Navigation	A	20
TOTALS		77/100
GRADES range from A (very difficult) to D (easy). POINTS are weighted: Vertical Gain contributes the most to a total difficulty score, followed by Hazards and Navigation, then Altitude and Time Ascending. Hazards include exposure to avalanche risk, exposure to consequential falls, and technicality of climbing. More details here		

NEW FILTER: Ski Tour Route Aspect Filter

We've added the ability to filter ski touring routes by main aspect. This should make it easier for planning ski touring trips, using this aspect information in conjunction with local avalanche advisory bulletins, weather observations, and route planning. To each post, we've added a 'Main Aspect' and 'Secondary/other aspects'.

REGION

BEST MONTH(S)

ROUTE TAGS

MAIN ASPECT

SEARCH BY LOCATION

Enter location

30 km

Search

☐ N (26)

☐ NE (11)

☐ E (18)

☐ SE (11)

☐ S (23)

☐ SW (5)

☐ W (7)

☐ NW (9)

NEW FILTER: Ski Tour Route Freeride vs. Skitour Filter

This filter allows users to filter ski touring routes by whether they're "more about the skiing" or "more about the walking". It's a bit difficult to pin down good keywords, but we're calling it the Freeride vs. Skitour filter. Is a route more of a walk than a ski? Or more of a ski than a walk? This is important, as there are routes which are essentially 'hiking routes' on skis. Some people love that sort of stuff. But some people put skis on to downhill ski, and only suffer the uphill climb for the downhill. This filter is for the freeride world tour wannabe in all of us.

ADVANCED FILTERS

FREERIDE/SKITOUR

Search

☐ Freeride (52)

☐ In-between (29)

☐ Ski tour (29)

OUTREACH

1	4	1	1	4
Committee Role	Invited keynotes	Forum workshop	Advisory role	Media Appearances

Ministry of the Environment Commemorative Symposium (18th March 2021)
Rob was invited to be the keynote speaker at a Ministry of the Environment Symposium to commemorate the re-organization of the Daisetsuzan National Park Council.

The theme of the symposium was 'getting the public involved in management of the national park'. I.e., exploring the potential for a user-pays system of park use. Due to the pandemic, the event was live-streamed on Youtube ([see the recorded version here](#)). See details (in Japanese) [here](#).

Other Keynotes

A key concern in the wider Hokkaido tourism industry at present is the question of how to communicate Hokkaido's adventure tourism opportunities to inbound visitors from overseas. This is partly motivated of course by the fact the Adventure Tourism Trade Association's (ATTA) Adventure Travel World Summit will be held in Sapporo in September 2021. Since HokkaidoWilds.org is one of the only sites in Hokkaido that regularly posts Hokkaido outdoor information in English, we get regular requests to share our thoughts on how to do just that.

- Hokkaido Development Engineering Center's *Cycle Tourism Workshop 1* (3rd August 2020)
- Hokkaido Development Engineering Center's *Cycle Tourism Workshop 2* (19th August 2020)
- Hokkaido Development Engineering Center's *Daisetsuzan-Tokachi Range Tourism Product Development Project Workshop #2* (16th September 2020)
- Nakagawa-cho Adventure Tourism Symposium (2nd November, 2020)

Advisory Role – Daisetsuzan Grand Traverse (23rd August, 2020) | Related to the above issue of communicating and preparing the Hokkaido outdoors for inbound adventure travelers, we took part in a six day *monitor tour* this past summer to walk the Daisetsuzan Grand Traverse. [It got rained out part way through](#), but we enjoyed sharing our thoughts on what might best be done in the Daisetsuzan National Park to make the trails and facilities world class.

Media Appearances

Perhaps Hokkaido was having a slow news-year this year, but a few local outlets picked up on what HokkaidoWilds.org has been doing with mapping and information.

- [Minichi Shimbun Newspaper](#) (31st Jan, 2021)
- [2020 Geo Activity Contest Special Interview](#) (Ministry of Land, Transport, Infrastructure and Tourism)
- [Hokkaido Development Engineering Center DEC Monthly Newsletter](#) (1st Aug, 2020)
- [Hokkaido Shimbun Newspaper](#) (12th May, 2020)

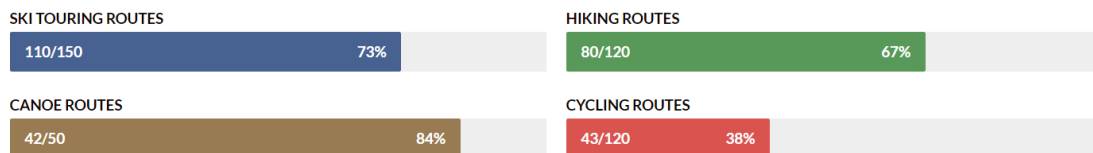
Committee Work – Hokkaido Outdoor Forum | Rob continues to contribute time to helping with the running of the annual Hokkaido Outdoor Forum: an annual gathering of over 200 people involved in the wider Hokkaido outdoor industry. In addition to being part of the organizing team in 2020, he also facilitated a panel discussion with the four keynote speakers ([see it on Youtube here](#)).

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

In our [overall mission statement document](#), we say "by 2025, our goal is to have written detailed online route overviews 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."

Below is our current progress towards those goals. We're doing pretty well on the ski touring routes and canoe routes. Fingers crossed 2021 will allow [Rick](#) back over here to Hokkaido so we can get stuck in with documenting some more hiking routes. As for the cycling routes...[Chris](#) has been working overtime on Google-Satellite scouting some epic gravel routes for when he can get back over here to Hokkaido.

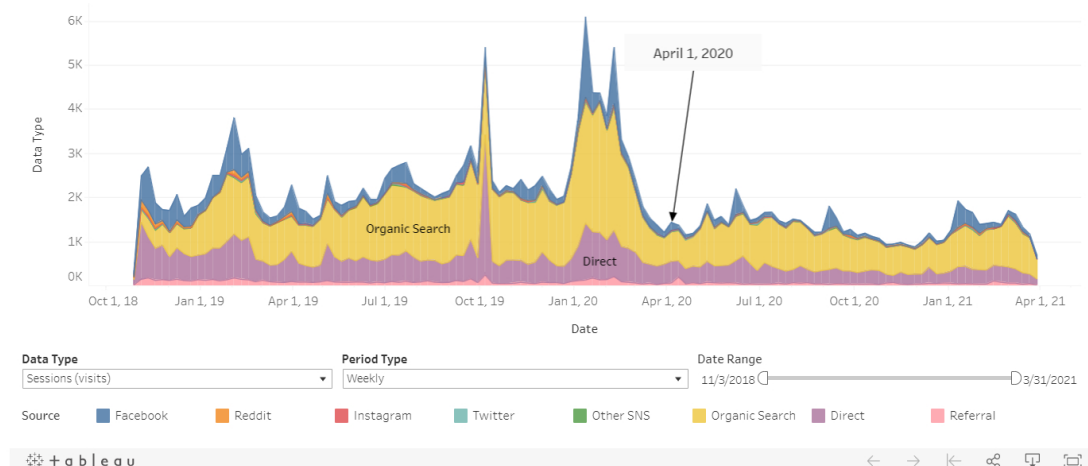
Progress towards 2025 Goals



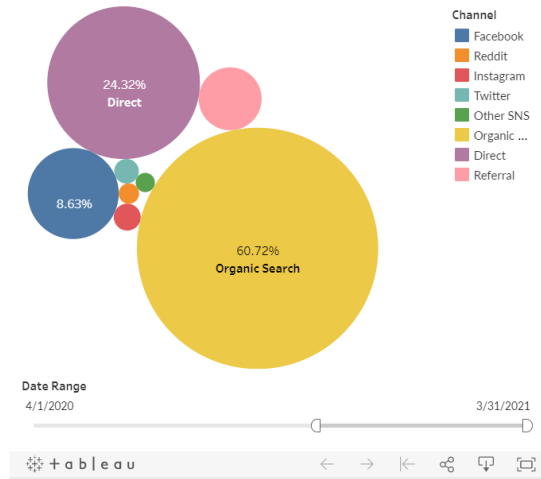
WEB ANALYTICS

Here's some insight into HokkaidoWilds.org access numbers over the last year. Hardly surprising, access numbers to the site are way down from last year, with no winter season spike to speak of. We put this down to a) a 99.9% drop in inbound visitors to Hokkaido this year due to the pandemic and b) with international travel to Japan all but impossible, very few people are searching for information about travel to Hokkaido.

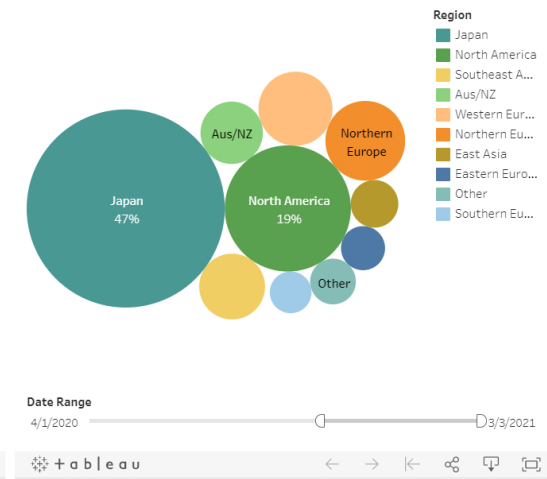
Website access by source



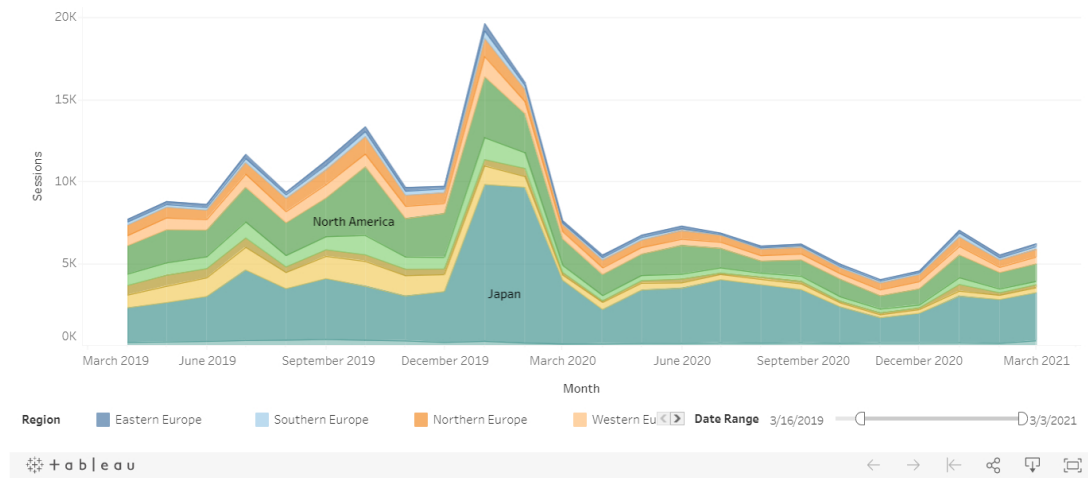
Sessions by source (Nov-Mar)



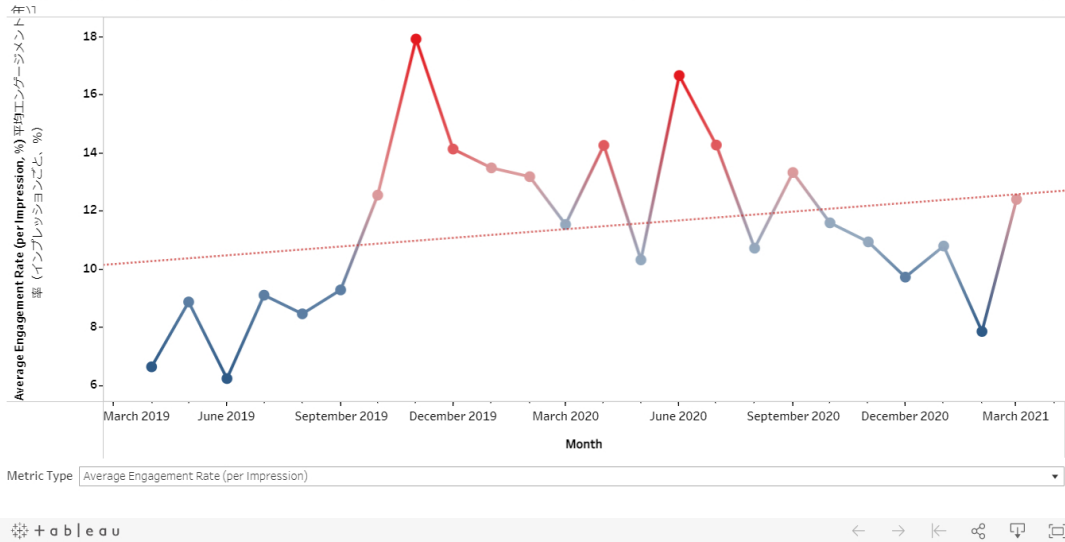
Sessions by region (Nov-Mar)



Sessions by region

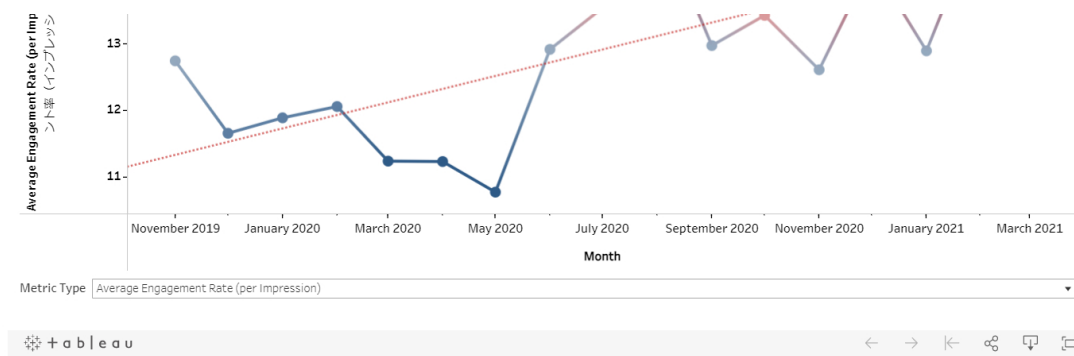


Monthly HokkaidoWilds.org Facebook Engagement (2019~2020) [HokkaidoWilds.org月間Facebookエンゲージメント (2019~2020年)]



Monthly HokkaidoWilds.org Instagram Engagement (2019~2020年) [HokkaidoWilds.org月間Instagramエンゲージメント (2019~2020年)]





Hokkaido Wilds Top Pages (Nov '19 - Mar '20) : Apr '20 - Mar '21

Ranking	Pageviews	Page
1	9238	https://hokkaidowilds.org/
2	7118	https://hokkaidowilds.org/hike
3	6842	https://hokkaidowilds.org/cycle
4	6507	https://hokkaidowilds.org/skitour
5	5527	https://hokkaidowilds.org/shimano-alfine-8-speed-internal-gear-hub-oil-bath
6	4702	https://hokkaidowilds.org/自転車のダイナモハブに使う自作 (diy) のusb充電器
7	4176	https://hokkaidowilds.org/diy-bicycle-dynamo-usb-charger-for-smartphones-and-battery-packs
8	3796	https://hokkaidowilds.org/シマノ8段内装ギア (アルフィーネ) の分解/手入
9	2945	https://hokkaidowilds.org/huts
10	2116	https://hokkaidowilds.org/japan-road-laws
11	2093	https://hokkaidowilds.org/bears-in-hokkaido
12	2028	https://hokkaidowilds.org/about
13	1947	https://hokkaidowilds.org/tern-verge-s27h-folding-touring-bicycle-gravel-road-review
14	1808	https://hokkaidowilds.org/paddling

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS (Apr '20 – Mar '21)

Hokkaido Wilds has two accounts – a 'foundation' account and an operational account.

1. Foundation Account: The foundation account is a fund intended for donation to Hokkaido volunteer groups working towards a sustainable, safe, and accessible Hokkaido outdoors – see full details about the unofficial Hokkaido Wilds Foundation here. This fund is funded through direct revenue earned on the site via affiliate links etc. The vision here is to allow visitors to and residents of Hokkaido to indirectly contribute to sustaining the outdoor places they visit, through using our site. The main sorts of revenue-earning links we have are Amazon affiliate links (mainly links to Japanese ski touring and hiking guidebooks), GeoPDF map bundle sales, and an affiliate agreement with Explore-Share.com.

- **We've posted no income for the Foundation Account in 2020** | We're still not surprised that we're not raking in great hoards of cash – we're currently well below any affiliate link thresholds to get a payout. Tim Moss has written about this, and even top-shelf adventure websites such as bikepacking.com struggle despite having very clear advertising on the site. That said, as we continue to round out our content on the site, we'll continue to work with Explore-Share.com and others to work on ways to unobtrusively utilize the site to give back to the outdoor community in Hokkaido.

2. Operational Account: The operational account is funded through indirect revenue, such a speaker's and consulting fees etc. We use these funds primarily for web and administrative costs at the moment.

FOUNDATION ACCOUNT		OPERATING ACCOUNT	
Affiliate Link Income	0	Income	
Total HokkaidoWilds Fund Income	0	A) Carried over Apr 1, 2020	202,069
HOKKAIDOWILDS FOUNDATION FUND OUTGOINGS		Donations (HokkaidoWilds.org-related committee, consulting, and speaking fees paid to Rob)	365,550
Total HokkaidoWilds Fund Outgoings	0	B) Total income	365,550
		Expenses	
		Web (plugin licenses and hosting)	96,243
		Map Data Download	1,958
		Admin (association seal)	11,880
		Equipment (replacement 14mm lens)	98,000
		C) Total expenses	208,081
		YEAR-END NET ASSETS as of 2021/3/31 (A+B)-C	359,538



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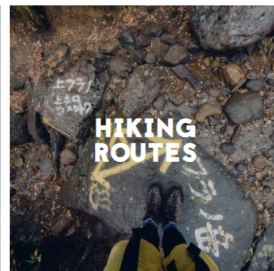
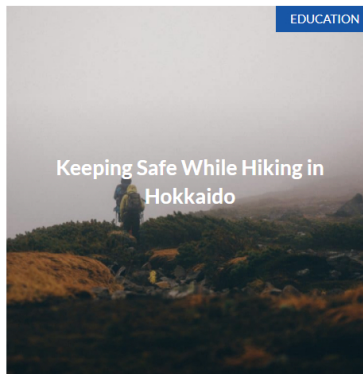
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