



[place] *Square in the centre of Hokkaido, Asahikawa has long been a centre for trade and commerce in the region, and is known for its excellent seafood and Asahikawa-style ramen*

## In a Nutshell

The **second-largest city in Hokkaido**, with a population that has remained roughly consistent at 350,000 since 1980, **Asahikawa** lies in between the northern fishing cities and the southern port and capital of **Hakodate** and **Sapporo**, respectively, and has for most of its history served as an **important regional transport and commerce hub**. The region is strongly associated with both the **farming** and **food processing industries**, and a number of **distilleries** also operate in the area.



## What to See

**Asahiyama Zoo** is the northernmost zoo in Japan, and famous for its "habit displays" of polar animals, including penguins, polar bears in semi-realistic environments. There is a hot springs resort at **Asahidake Onsen**, from which the lower steam vents of **Mt.**

### **Asahidake**

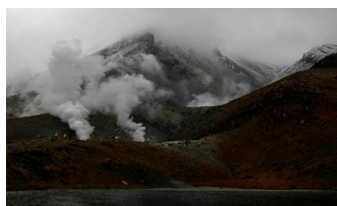
(Mount Asahi - the highest point in Japan, at 2,291m above sea level) can easily be accessed by

### **cable car**

. There is also a clustered

### ▣ **shopping area**

, with restaurants and large department stores, right in front of JR Asahikawa station.



## What to Eat▣

**Asahikawa ramen** is a distinct style of shoyu-based ramen which typically uses an unusual dashi made from **chicken, fish and pork bone**, as well as **thinner and wavier ramen**

with a low water content for soaking up more flavour. As a central hub for trade in Hokkaido, linked with the major fishing cities along the northern and eastern coasts, it is purportedly also a place for

### **excellent seafood**

. A local item known as "

### **Jun Dog**

" - fried food wrapped in rice, like an elongated onigiri - is also very popular within Asahikawa.



## Getting There

Trains run roughly **every 30 minutes** (1 hour at night) from Sapporo, with the limited express trains taking approx. **1 hour 20 minutes each way** and **starting from ¥4,170** (£30.80 / \$48.50) for an unreserved seat.



## Transport

The **main shopping area** is right in front of JR Asahikawa station and accessible by foot. Local buses run frequently from a nearby bus terminal to both **Asahiyama Zoo** and the **Asahidake Onsen**, and to the neighbouring suburbs; please check at the station for details. The **steam vents** at Mt. Asahidake can only be accessed from the Asahidake Onsen area by **cable car**, plus a further 1km walk.



## Recommendation

Although I enjoyed my time in Asahikawa, as with most of Hokkaido most of the development here is relatively recent, and it **lacks a certain... something**. The buildings are uniformly timid, and featureless - there's **neither**

**rowdy neon sign nor ancient Shinto temple**

- and after a while it really could have been anywhere in Korea, or Hong Kong, or Taiwan, for that matter. But the

**food is decent**

, and with both the

**zoo**

and

**Mount Asahi**

there's a decent amount to do here, which is more than can be said for some other places I visit later on. Still... well. It's a nice place, but I'm not the biggest fan.



## More Information

[Asahikawa Sightseeing & Tourism Association](#)

*What do you think of Asahikawa? Been to the zoo, or Mt. Asahidake? Ever tried Asahikawa ramen?* [Send in an e-mail](#) , comment below or Twitter [twitter.com/foodjapan](#)