



Susukino – all the fun and the fare

Written by Phred Kaufman

Not officially the name of a district of Sapporo, Susukino is the name given to the area around the Susukino Station on Sapporo's Namboku Subway line, and the Susukino streetcar stop. It has often been called "Disneyland for adults," due to the entertainment that's available there amid the neon lights after dark.

Of all the famous drinking areas in Japan, Susukino is indeed the king. It is rumored that the success of the bid for the 1972 Winter Olympic Games was in no small way thanks to the hospitality shown to the members of the selection committee, after hours. During the "bubble" period of the 1980s, there were said to be over 5,500 eating, drinking and other entertainment establishments within the confines of an area of less than one square kilometer. The subsequent economic downturn has seen that figure drop to around 3,500, but that and the fact that the "population" of Susukino each night is said to be around 80,000 people, it's still more than enough to satisfy even the most prolific of bar crawlers. What's more, Susukino is still one of the safest such places in the world, and one where not only men but women too can walk the streets alone at any time of day or night.

In Tokyo and other large cities, different nighttime entertainment districts located in different parts tend to cater for different crowds, but in Susukino everything is here in one place: everyone – students, office girls, manual workers, executives, senior citizens, tourists, straights, gays, you name it – can choose how they spend the night. From 4-seat bars to 400-seat "cabarets"; from fast food to fine cuisine; from theme pubs to bowling alleys; from early evening to the early hours. Expensive French restaurants next to hostess bars that are a stone's throw from inexpensive yakitori joints over basement clubs; red lanterns of the tiny oden and sake bars, or neon lights that

lure the crowds. Cold and wet outside? Then stay indoors and hop between bars and restaurants located within the confines of single high-rise buildings, some of which contain more than 100 establishments.

Ramen

Both Ramen Yokocho (Ramen Alley) and Shin Ramen Yokocho (New Ramen Alley) are lined with small noodle bars specializing in the local ramen dishes. Whether it's the traditional Sapporo *miso*, Asahikawa *shoyu* (soy sauce) or Hakodate *shio* (salt) flavored soups, or one of the many new takes on Hokkaido's hearty dish, you're sure to find something to suit your taste here, whatever time of day or night. The original Ramen Yokocho dates back to 1951, when eight ramen shops opened up on South 5 West 3. Shin Ramen Yokocho, also known as *mogura* (mole) *yokocho*, in South 4 West 3 was established much later, in 1976, but both are popular among visitors and locals alike, with many people finishing off a night on the town with a bowl of piping-hot ramen.

Of course, other Hokkaido foods such as sushi, genghis khan, crab and soup curry are also easily found in Susukino, or for those looking for a taste of something further afield then Susukino has resident nationals from Nepal, India, China, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Thailand and many other countries, waiting to share the food and culture of their countries.



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Ferris Wheel

To the purists, South 3 West 5, the block to the north of Route 36 is not strictly “Susukino,” but as it’s a mere stone’s throw from the neon lights of the famous Susukino junction, and as the Norbesa Building there boasts a Ferris wheel that gives more credit to the “amusement” theme, we’ll turn a blind eye. Officially called Noria, the Ferris wheel is 45.5 m in diameter and stands 75 m above the ground on the roof of the Norbesa building, which houses boutiques, restaurants, cafés and a games arcade. During the daytime the wheel provides views of the city and mountains beyond, but at night it’s a great place to experience the neon lights and buzz of Susukino, below.

Safe and Accessible

Sapporo is often referred to as the “biggest village in Japan,” perhaps due to the fact that despite the city’s size, everyone tends to be drawn to its center between Sapporo Station, Odori and Susukino, and more often than not you bump into someone you know. This helps make Susukino a safe and accessible place. Locals from all walks of life head to the bars and restaurants from the nearby subway station, streetcar stop or bus stops, and Susukino is even accessible in the rain or snow, on foot from Sapporo Station via an underground passageway and shopping mall. After a night on the town, the last thing you need to worry about is the time of the last train, so don’t! Many of the city’s hotels are within walking distance of Susukino, and taxis are always easy to find on the streets. Better still, find yourself another bar or club and keep on partying ‘till the subways start again the next day!

There are said to be over 3,500 eating, drinking and “adult” entertainment establishments in Susukino, but here are two or three that are a little off the beaten path yet certainly worth the visit.



Mugishutei

For over 31 years Mugishutei or “beer joint” has been a mecca for beer lovers in Sapporo, with over 300 beers, 6 of which are on tap, and over 5,000 different bottles and cans lining the walls up to the ceiling. Not for those seeking Japanese cuisine and culture, but if it’s a burger or chili, table football and darts you’re after, it’s worth a visit. You will definitely find the beer you’ve been looking for. All seating charges waved if you show a copy of HOKKAIDO Walk-a-pedia.

Beers from ¥600

Yoshiya Bldg. B1, Minami 9-jo Nishi 5-chome, Chuo-ku, Sapporo
Tel: +81-11-512-4774

Look for the Chimay sign to the south of the Sapporo Excel Hotel Tokyo
7 p.m. to 3 a.m.

Yakitori Jumbo

Although this is a *yakitori* shop, most people go for the drinks and the music. The owner, Miyake-san has one of the most eclectic collections of CDs on either side of the Pacific. Try the green *tsukune*. Miyake-san claims he uses Martians’ blood to make it green, but if your first three guesses are unsuccessful, he’ll tell you the truth.

Watch your head on the ceiling when you stand up!

From midnight to 3 a.m., Chi-chan takes over. She is a belly dancer so if you request something by Shakira, she may dance your order to you.

Good selection of sake, beer and shouchu starting at ¥ 500

Food starts at ¥ 300

Minami 5-jo Nishi 4-chome, Chuo-ku, Sapporo

(look for a red lantern in a little alleyway)

Tel: +81-11-531-6451 6 p.m. to 3 a.m.



Go Tsubo

A *tsubo* is a unit of measurement, the size of two tatami mats. Go Tsubo is the size of ten tatami. If you are a seafood lover on a budget, this is the place for you. Try the fresh, grilled oysters from Akkeshi, and scallops grilled in their shell with butter for only 100 yen each. The Oyster Stout from Belgium is also recommended. Another favorite item on the menu is potatoes baked in butter and topped with salted squid.

If you can’t get a seat inside you can join the seafood lovers on the sidewalk as they are served from the side window!

Wakashima Bldg., Minami 6-jo Nishi 2-chome, Chuo-ku, Sapporo

Tel: +81-11-551-7220

6 p.m. to 2 a.m. (if the seafood doesn’t sell out before that)



薄野

除了「薄野祭」，還有與札幌雪祭聯合舉辦的「薄野冰之祭典」，以及「YOSAKOI索朗節in 薄野」等多彩多姿的活動皆在這個北海道屬一屬二的繁榮鬧區上演。一到夜晚約有8萬人聚集了在此不夜城——薄野。薄野也以治安良好得到好評，為一個「安心、安全的地區」，令人可以放心地在此享受美食、暢飲歡樂、欣賞美景等，是個能讓人得到全方位滿足的地方。很多店都可以使用外語溝通，並可以在此品嚐到名產札幌拉麵和成吉思汗烤羊肉的美味。

薄野

“薄野节”、与札幌冰雪节联合举办的“薄野冰之盛典”、“YOSAKOI节in薄野”等丰富多彩的活动在北海道首屈一指的闹市举办。薄野这个不眠的地区，夜晚的人口约有8万人。薄野作为因治安良好受到好评的“安心与安全地区”，吃、喝、看，在这里全部都能得到满足。许多店内都可以用外语交流，还可以在这里品尝有名的札幌拉面和烤羊肉。