

JIM GREENWOOD'S MOSTLY FOOD GUIDE TO SAPPORO (WITH HELP FROM KENICHI ABE)

I've been going to Hokkaido University regularly since 2007, and my favorite airline carrier for these trips tells me my lifetime mileage from US to Japan is now equal to 0.5 roundtrips to the Moon. In other words, I've made around 20 trips to Sapporo in the last decade. Here are a few tips to make your trip to Sapporo more enjoyable!

Getting to and leaving Sapporo:

Train: If you decided to take the Shinkansen, be aware that it only goes to Hakodate, in the south of Hokkaido, with completion to Sapporo in 2022 or 2023. That means that ½ of your journey time will be on local trains in Hokkaido.

New Chitose Airport: Most of you will arrive through here. Best way to downtown is the train. The trains are downstairs after you leave baggage. You must buy a ticket at the machines. You don't need a reserve seat, as you are the first stop. If you want a reserve seat, you must still buy the ticket for transport, and then the reserve seat. If you are successful at this, please let me know, as I have failed every time for the last decade. You must put your ticket into the turnstile to open the gates, and retrieve your ticket on the other side. When you leave the station, the turnstile will keep your ticket in Sapporo.

To return to CTS, you can check the schedule in the station, and buy your ticket ahead of time (like the day before). You may want to get the reserve seating for the return journey. Be warned, the first train at 6am is very crowded with people who have been up all night.

Getting around Sapporo:

Due to the interminable snow in winter, they have built an impressive underground passageway system connected to the Sapporo station filled with shops and restaurants. It can also be quite bewildering. If you end up in Poletown, get out. But you can go underground from Sapporo station to the Odori, under the main drag. There are also some local craft sellers in the Sapporo-Odori underground passage.

Subway: You probably don't need it unless you failed to get a hotel room near the meeting venue. If you do need it, you need a ticket. The lowest price ticket will probably be all you need, but you can check that with the machines and signage. There is usually an English ticket machine or button. There are 1 day

passes that might include the streetcar if you want to explore. You put your ticket into the turnstile to enter, and put it in the turnstile to leave. If your journey has ended, it will eat your ticket. If you messed up the fare, there is always a fare adjustment machine nearby where you can input your ticket and the requisite money to exit the station.

Taxi: You will need if you decide to go to the Sapporo Brewery. They're great! White-gloved drivers and all. You can have your hotel call you one, or they are lined up at the Sapporo station and nearby hotels. They are also at a taxi stop at the Sapporo Brewery. There is no Uber in Japan.

Bus: They go places subways don't. I think I've taken city buses zero times around Sapporo. Though I took one to the airport in February (Chuo bus) from my hotel, and it was very long, with like 20 stops. I will not do that again.

Streetcar: Nice for a ride around town, or to go to Mt. Moiwa.

In Sapporo

Meeting Venue: At the entrance to Hokkaido University, several 100 meters from the North exit of Sapporo station. Very accessible. Hopefully you have a hotel room somewhere near Sapporo station, or the Odori. The Odori area is about a 10-15 minute walk. Susukino maybe 15-20 minute walk (2 minute subway ride, 2 stops to Sapporo station)

Hotels: If you don't have a room yet, stop reading this and book it immediately. 10 years ago, Sapporo was a sleepy summer town; now it is almost impossible to get accommodation due to the influx of tourists from China. Sapporo was always a popular destination for many Asian tourists, so it can be more multicultural than you might expect, but my last trip to do research in summer, I had to stay in a part of town I had never been to before.

Restaurants: Hokkaido is famous for the freshest seafood in Japan, miso ramen, and soup curry. I recommend you try all three. Most restaurants have picture menus, so that can be very helpful. English menus are a bit harder to come by.

Restaurants, Sapporo Station, Daimaru, JR tower, Esta, and Tokyu: The Sapporo station is anchored by two department stores: Daimaru on the west end, and Esta on the east end. In between is JR tower and Stellar Place. There are over 130 restaurants in this complex. Restaurants are on the top floors of the station and these department stores. The bottom floors are food courts and markets, also a

good option for food on the go or quick lunch. **The restaurants above Daimaru all have English-language menus**, all doing various regional specialities or cuisines. The Daimaru are a little pricier than elsewhere, as Daimaru is the top department store in Japan. At the top of Esta, you have the Sapporo Ramen Kyowakoku, where you have 8 famous ramen shops from Hokkaido and Japan all with little shops (cash only). Also, across the street is the Tokyu department store, which also has restaurants and food court. And the fish market across the street from the main Sapporo station entrance is a treasure (Sato Saipan?).

The easiest Sushi shop is at the top of Stellar Place (6F), right outside of Daimaru, which is Rotary Sushi, a conveyor belt sushi shop. You just take what you want off the belt, and they charge you by the plates afterwards. You just need to learn to say Sumimasen! and then Beeru (Biru) for the wait staff and you should be all set. Warning: This place is superpopular, so there may be a wait at most times. Alternatively, you can just walk into any sushi shop you see and hand signals will probably work. The other restaurants on the same floor as Rotary Sushi are very good I'm told; there is some sort of cold noodle shop (summer specialty), as well as a good Tonkatsu shop (fried pork cutlet).



Hokkaido Uni at Rotary sushi

Akarenga Terrace area: This is a new development project in the last decade finished a few years ago. Really nice looking restaurants and shops in this complex. On the main drag south of the station on the way to the Odori.

Soup Curry: I find soup curry to be one of Hokkaido's most interesting dishes, as I don't really know of an equivalent in other cultures. Only Thai curries come to mind, but they are totally different. You get a shallow bowl, filled with vegetables, meat or fish or not, in a broth that is curried. It is served with a plate of rice, and you eat it with a spoon. You take a spoonful of rice, and then you

can have some soup curry with that bite. It is not to be confused with Japanese curry, which is a thick brown sauce with beef over rice, and very popular throughout Japan (Coco curry is a big chain of regular curry). My favorite soup curry shop is Cocuro. It's two subway stops up from the meeting, or a 15-20 min. walk. I've actually never had bad soup curry (except at school cafeterias), so go to any shop you see (especially if people are queing up).



Cocuro Soup Curry

Other Ramen shops:

Horyu: Horyu is old school Ramen, one of the originals (The soft-boiled eggs are branded with their character). You feel transported back to the 1950's at this place. Has Halal options.



Best Ramen: I don't know the name. Chizu Kato took me here the first time, as she used to work in the upstairs building. This is a businessman's ramen shop that is really good. Can't find it from above ground. Use Exit 8 near the south gates of the Namboku (green) subway line in Sapporo station. Has a bear on its flag above the door. And the ramen machine looks like the one below:



Best Ramen shop Shio ramen



Exit 8



Exit 8 Passageway



Station ramen (Bariki-ya ramen): This is true working ramen, for the workers on the railroad and such. Open until 3am, between station and Yodabashi camera. No English, no credit. You will likely need to know some Japanese to pull this one off. Or just point at the dish of the person next to you.

Soba: There's a really nice Soba restaurant near the meeting site. See the map. And many others.

Sushi: All over. I put a really nice one on the map near the clock tower. Also Rotary sushi (see above). But really, just look for one that looks good to you and sit at the sushi bar and use hand signals. I once ordered something that required

brute force to wrest it from its shell (abalone?). It was an experience to remember. Much of Japan's best seafood comes from the cold waters of Hokkaido. Enjoy!

Crab: If you see the restaurants with the big crab over the door, you can go to a crab dinner. 13 courses of crab. Crab in all dishes: Dessert, sashimi (straight out of the shell), sushi, tempura, and nine other ways to prepare crab. You really need to love crab. I love crab. But I haven't been back in 12 years.

Kaiseki: Traditional Japanese dinner, with multi-courses. Usually expensive. I haven't been to one in a while in Sapporo, so I can't make a recommendation. But no shortage of Kaiseki restaurants.

Izakaya: These are bars with food, usually small plates of traditional Japanese snacks. These are great places to go with a group for food, drinks, and discussion. You can find some very interesting Japanese specialties at Izakaya's. I've had whale sashimi, raw chicken, and more traditional marinated squid guts. Go for the karage-Japanese fried chicken, that is done differently in different parts of the country. Everytime I find one I like, it's out of business by the time I come back, so you'll have to find your own (they are on every block just about).

24hr Izakaya: Closes at 5am, so not quite 24 hr, but good enough at 3am. Next to Hotel RouteInn. Just outside of Sapporo station north exit, across the street from Nippon Rentacar. See map.

Yakuniku: We traditionally celebrate the end of a successful SIMS session with a Yakuniku feast. One of the restaurants we frequent is directly across the street from the main entrance to Hokkaido University and the meeting venue. Yakuniku is charcoal-grilled beef that you make yourself at your table. You decide on the cow parts. Your table has a charcoal grill in the middle and a fume hood above it. They specialize in beef from a different region of Japan every night. You get parts of beef that we no longer see in the US. It is awesome. The only bad part is everything you wear and bring with you becomes charcoal infused. They offer plastic bags to put your belongings in, but you'll need to launder your clothes and yourself afterwards.

Halal: Due to significant numbers of Malaysian and Indonesian tourists, there are Halal options and even Halal food tour (I saw a video on this on one of those long flights). Check the tourist offices in the Sapporo station. Houryu ramen has Halal options. Also, Japanese restaurants do one style of food or cooking typically, so it

is easy to avoid pork (except at Ramen and Tonkatsu places). Yakuniku is only beef, there are only chicken restaurants, seafood only, soba only, etc.

Vegetarian: There is a love of all types of food in Japan, including non-meat and dairy. Don't go to Yakuniku. Kenichi Abe found a vegan Ramen shop. It's in the same building as the Sushi shop on the map (near the clock tower). Kenichi also found a soup curry shop near the station with a vegetarian menu (see map). I seem to recall a vegetarian or vegan restaurant at the top of Daimaru as well (but don't sue me if I'm wrong).

Beer Gardens: On the south side of Sapporo station, outside of Daimaru. Many more beer gardens on the Odori, the street-park a few blocks south of the station. And don't forget Sapporo Brewery. The beer gardens close early (midnight or earlier).

Sapporo Brewery: A really good place to go with a group for dinner and beer. They have beer's there that you can only get there. It is famous for Genghis Khan, which is lamb and vegetables that you cook at your table. There is also lots of other food. I remember we went there once and they had Snow Crab as their special (below). It was incredible. Nice place to sit outside too. Need a taxi to get there and back, or 30-40 minute walk.



Crab at Sapporo Brewery

(Noriyuki Kawasaki and Naoya Sakamoto)

Western food: McDonalds, Starbucks, KFC and Paul's place. Paul is a Belgian, and he came here years ago as youth baseball coach with his Belgian team, and fell in love with the place. He has Belgian beer, mussels with butter and garlic sauce, and potato dishes, in case you can't take rice anymore. Pauls Place is

under the Century Royal hotel across the street from Daimaru, and kind of under the Kinokuniya bookstore. He used to have another branch in the Susukino area, but I'm not sure if it's still in business.

If you see a KFC, you may better appreciate the appearance of the Colonel in some of Murakami's novels. KFC has a weird importance in Japan, solely due to extensive marketing in the 70's. KFC for Christmas is a thing (as Xmas has no real importance outside of the Christian world, KFC exploited this to tie themselves to Xmas in Japan).

Italian food: Don't do it. Spaghetti with ketchup could come your way. The pizza isn't much better.

Coffee: I'm a coffee addict. Starbucks is available in several locations. Starbucks is very popular with the younger Japanese. You can find western options and English. Japanese pour-over can be found at the corner of the Odori and the main drag from Sapporo station, on the 2nd floor (Tokumitsu), overlooking the corner in the Odori Bisse building. Also, a really good coffeshop in the Daimaru on a middle floor. And there are others, but they can be tough to find in the subterranean maze below the station.

Cozy coffee-little Japanese shop that is quiet and has breakfast. Almost impossible to find. At the southernmost exit of the Green line subway at Sapporo station, to the right there is a convenience store, and a passageway (Exit 8, see pics above). The coffee shops are on this level through the passageway. Above this is a really good ramen shop. And a popular Indian restaurant.

Tullys-coffee shop chain with location off the Sapporo-Odori underground passage, below Akarenga mall complex

Miyakoshiya coffee—popular chain. Never tried.

Doutour coffee—cheaper, never tried. Many locations.

Breakfast: This can be tough if your hotel isn't supplying an adequate morning breakfast. Coffee shops are your best bet. The Sapporo Grand hotel (where the Emperor stays when in town) has a restaurant serving breakfast buffet. It is quite expensive (2500 Yen), but delicious. There are also French/European bakeries sprinkled about the station underground area. Cozy Coffee has a breakfast set.

Things to Do in Sapporo:

Mt. Moiwa: You can take the streetcar to the base of Mt. Moiwa, and from there take a cable car to the top (or hike if you like). At the top, there is a giftshop and nice restaurant, where you can enjoy views over the city of Sapporo.

Salmon Museum: Never done it. Probably never will, but it's a tourist attraction in all the guide books. If you have grilled salmon at your breakfast buffet (or anywhere), eat it. The salmon in Sapporo are much smaller than the farmed varieties available in the west. Not as fatty, really good.

Nijo fish market: I've never been, but my brother-in-law lives in Basel, and he met a couple from Hokkaido, and the wife told him that going to the fish market in Sapporo is one of her favorite things to do when she goes home. They have a special where you pay for a bowl of rice, then go around to the different vendors and they top your bowl of rice with samples (Chirashi is I think what this is called). (See Houryu map)

Sapporo Dome: Never been. Sapporo Nippon Ham Fighters play in the Pacific league.

Shop: See below:

Shopping: Amazing amount of shopping options available in Sapporo, for what I would consider a moderate size city.

Department Stores: The department stores in Japan are like what department stores used to be like in the US 50 years ago. The top floor is a restaurant court, and the bottom floor is a food court/supermarket area. During the financial crisis in 2008, they finally got rid of the elevator greeters, whom would shepherd you into and out of the elevator. And a few of the department stores were razed after 2008. Still left are Daimaru, Tokyu and Mitsukoshi. Daimaru and Tokyu are connected to the Sapporo station. Mitsukoshi stretches over several different buildings a block or so south of the Odori. The fruits and vegetables in the supermarket at Daimaru look like they are wax models, they are so perfect. The department stores have so much, and they are so big. Dizzying really.

Electronic Stores: Yodobashi Camera, Japan's most famous electronic store, has its Sapporo branch between the station and the meeting venue. Bic Camera, in Esta in the Sapporo station is also a good option. They both also have a US-wired section.

Homeware: Loft, in Esta (6F). Also, all the department stores. And there is a kitchen shop outside of Daimaru on a floor of Stellar Place (2, 3, or 4?). Kitchen 212?

Stationary: Sadly, this is becoming harder and harder to find every year. Loft in the Esta building has stationary and homewares. Also, Tokyu Handz is now a floor in the Tokyu department store. This used to be its own 5 floor department store, with incredible hobby, stationary, and really neat stuff.

Toys: Bic Camera has a toy store on one level, that is the best option. There is also a Thomas the Train store on the 9F of Esta. Also, there is a Pokemon store at the top of Daimaru. If you bring kids, you should take them to Namco, 9F Esta.

Sporting goods: Bic Camera. There is a Fighters store across from Sapporo station, but it sometimes goes out of business (closes in Winter?).

Books: Kinokuniya has an English language section. Across the street from Daimaru, on the road to the meeting venue, next to Century Royal Hotel.

Record stores: Yes, they still have record stores and DVD's in Japan. Just watch the price conversion. I thought I'd get a live album from a group I like from a tour in Japan. I actually found a CD, and almost bought it, until I realized the price wasn't \$15, but \$150. I put it back very carefully.

Other

ATMs and Cash: 7 and i or 7/11 has ATMs which accept international bank cards. You may want to warn your bank just in case. Most ATMs in Japan will not take western debit or credit cards. The

Japan still has a strong element of cash culture, so you will need some yen.

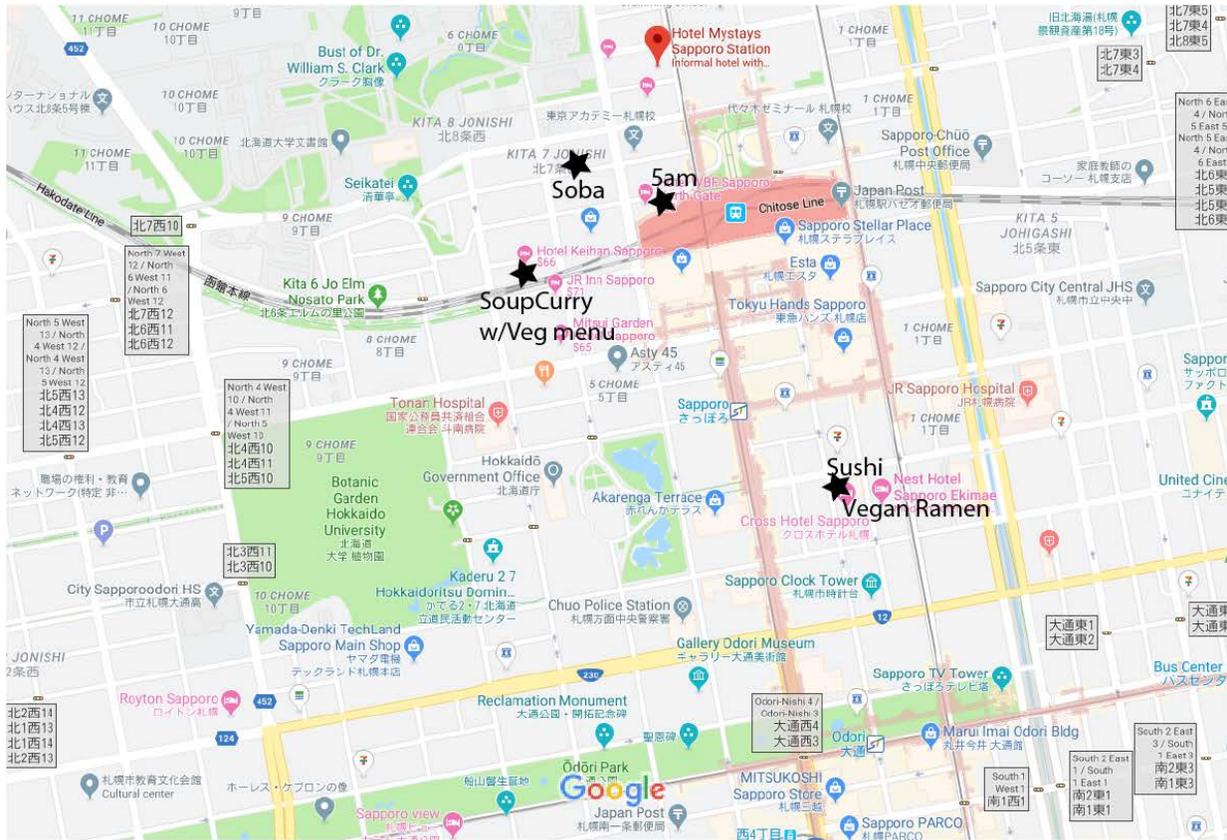
Wifi and Phones: WiFi calling with your smartphone is the cheapest option for making calls. You can also rent a phone at the airport if you think you need one. If you will be traveling outside of Sapporo, you may want to rent a pocket Wifi.

This will give you connectivity everywhere, including subways. I use rentafonejapan.com. They were the cheapest years ago before Wifi calling. They'll deliver to Narita, or your hotel, or before you leave home (better hurry though).

Language and Customs: You should have nice socks, since you may run into a situation wherein you need to remove your shoes (like at a restaurant). At restaurants, they supply bathroom slippers at the shoe locus. Don't go in your socks, put on the provided shoes. Someone may come over to assist you in the more expensive places, but not at izakayas.

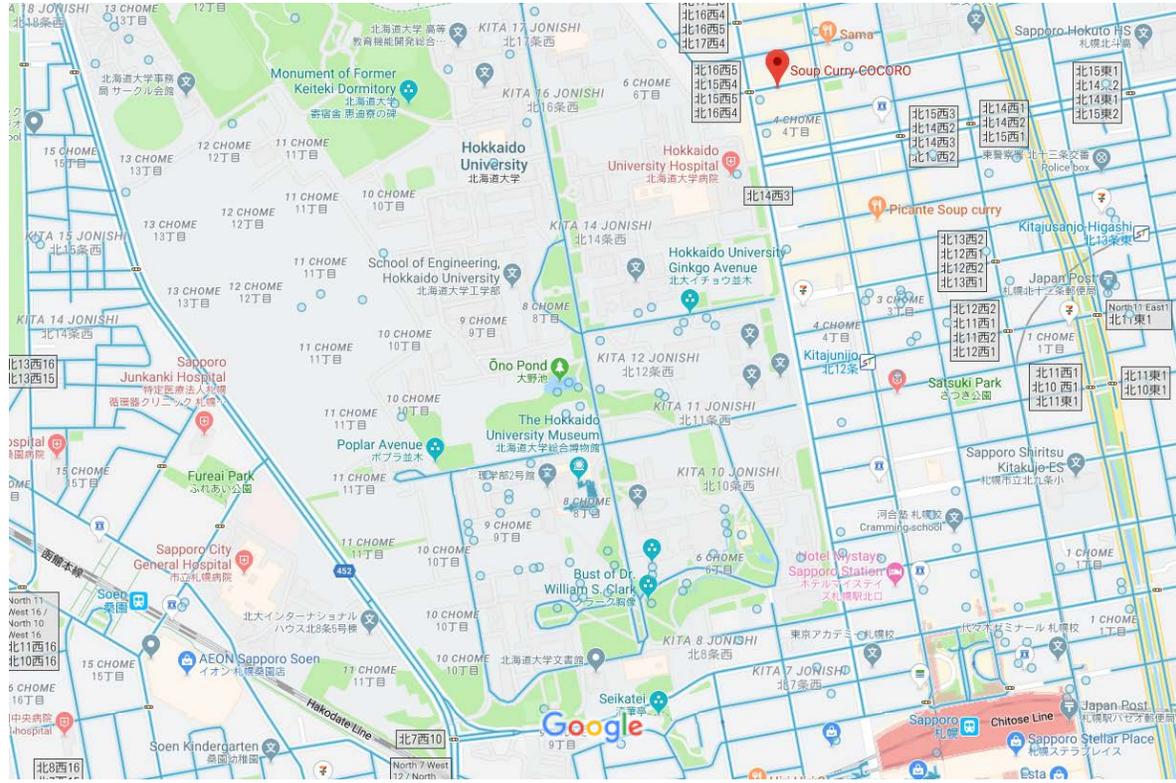
Prescriptions and Meds: You should bring anything you need with you, as you may have difficulty finding the Japanese equivalent. For example, I use ibuprofen and Benadryl (for allergies) and these are both prescription meds, not over the counter, in Japan.

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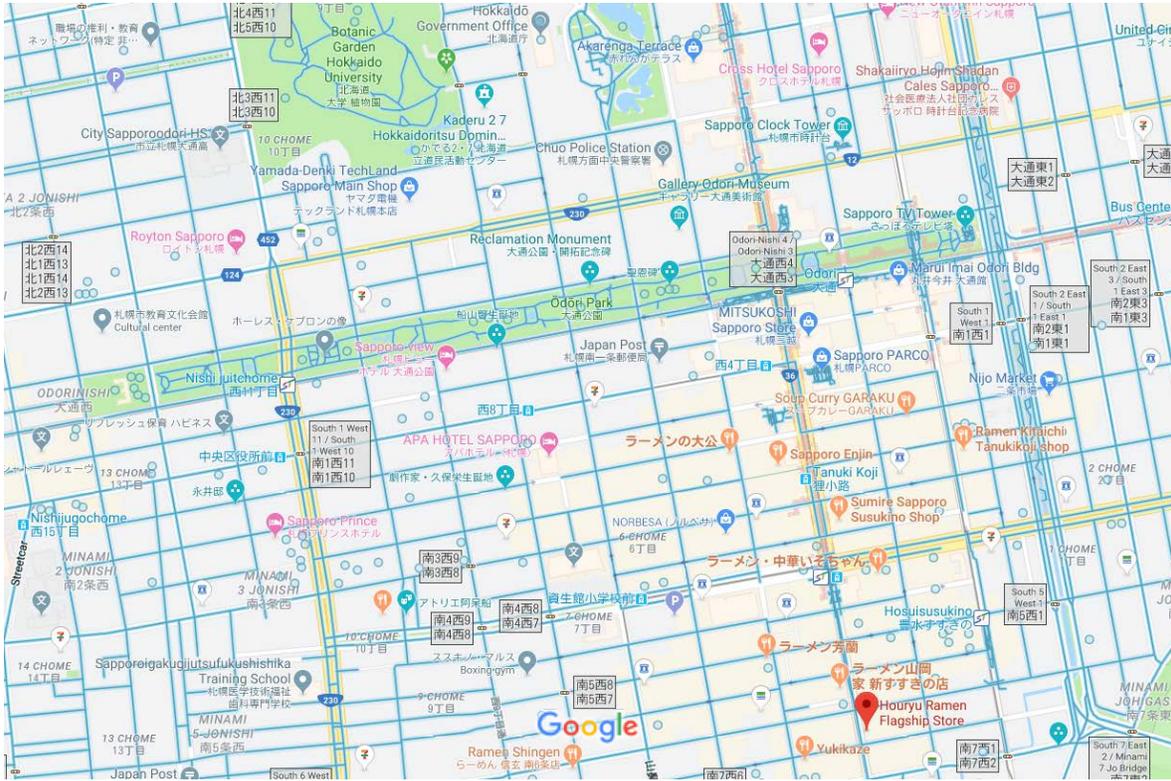
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Google Maps Soup Curry COCORO



Map data ©2019 Google 500 ft

Google Maps Houryu Ramen Flagship Store



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