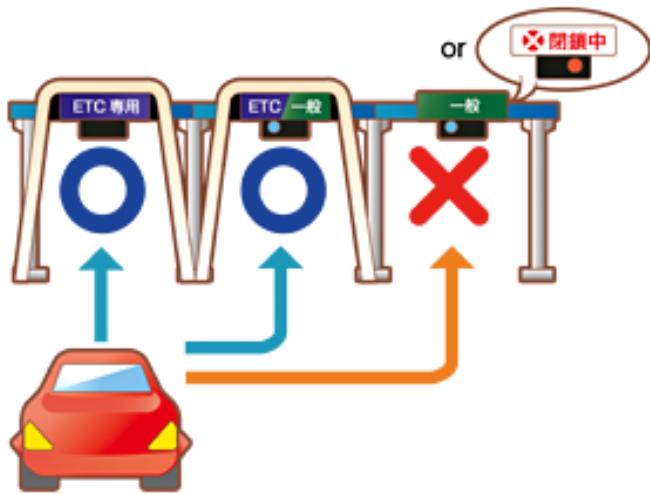


To Momiji - By Car from the Airports

Getting to Hakuba by car is very easy, a great road trip, plus you have the additional benefit and flexibility to explore all the valley's resorts and do some day-trips such as the Snow Monkeys or Matsumoto Castle when you are taking a rest from the slopes. Most rental car companies offer GPS navigation and for a little extra cost, a rental 'ETC Card' that allows you to use the speedy electronic toll gates and access to significant off peak savings if you travel during specific times. No fumbling around for cash or coins! The rental company will provide you with an ETC bill at the conclusion of your rental.



With an ETC Card you can drive through the purple 'ETC' lanes.

If paying by cash you must stop at the green '一般' (general) lanes only.

You'll need to ask for snow tires and 4WD vehicle. Without these options you will not be able to navigate the snowy conditions in the valley. In our experience, some of the larger rental companies promise a 4WD, but try to fob you off with a 2WD and chains when you pick-up the vehicle. You'll need to stress when ordering that you'll be staying in a ski-resort and need a 4WD with snow tires.

An International Drivers Licence is a requirement in Japan. You can pick one up cheaply from your local automobile club such as the RAC, NRMA, AAA, etc. and is valid for 1 year. You cannot use your home country licence alone.

Just to point out any drink driving is strictly against the law in Japan and carries pretty heavy penalties.

Route Choice - Route 1 or Route 2?

From both Haneda and Narita airports there is usually only a 10 to 15 minute difference between Route 1 and Route 2. The major difference is that route 1 is easiest from Narita because it bypasses the maze of interchanges that makes up central Tokyo. The bypass ring road (C3) was completed in 2019 and has a 25km underground section which shaved off over 30mins to Hakuba! It makes for a very easy drive. As you start to climb towards the Alps the views are spectacular with a cool roadhouse at the summit! Route 2 is easiest from Haneda for the same reason that it bypasses central Tokyo. It is a very scenic drive with views of Mt Fuji and the neighbouring valley that you drive through.

On the few days with exceptionally heavy snowfall forecast it's best to use Route 1 as it has a greater distance on the well ploughed expressway system and is also less prone to heavy snow. Generally the road system can take an incredible amount of snow - they have it down to a fine art! If you have any concerns give us a call before you head off or ask the rental agent and they can check the live monitoring which has up to the minute information.

Traffic is rarely a problem outside of Tokyo, however just like any big city, Tokyo traffic can get busy between 6.30am-8.30am and again in the evenings 4.30pm-6.30pm. All hire cars have live traffic monitoring and will dynamically suggest new routes based on the live situation.

With the tollgates you must use the purple lanes if you have an ETC card, otherwise you must use the green lanes toll booth to pay by cash only.

Before you set off you can get the rental company to program the exact location in Japanese into the GPS using Japanese characters.

3 9 9 – 9 4 2 2 長野県北安曇郡小谷村千国乙 1 2 8 5 6 – 6 3

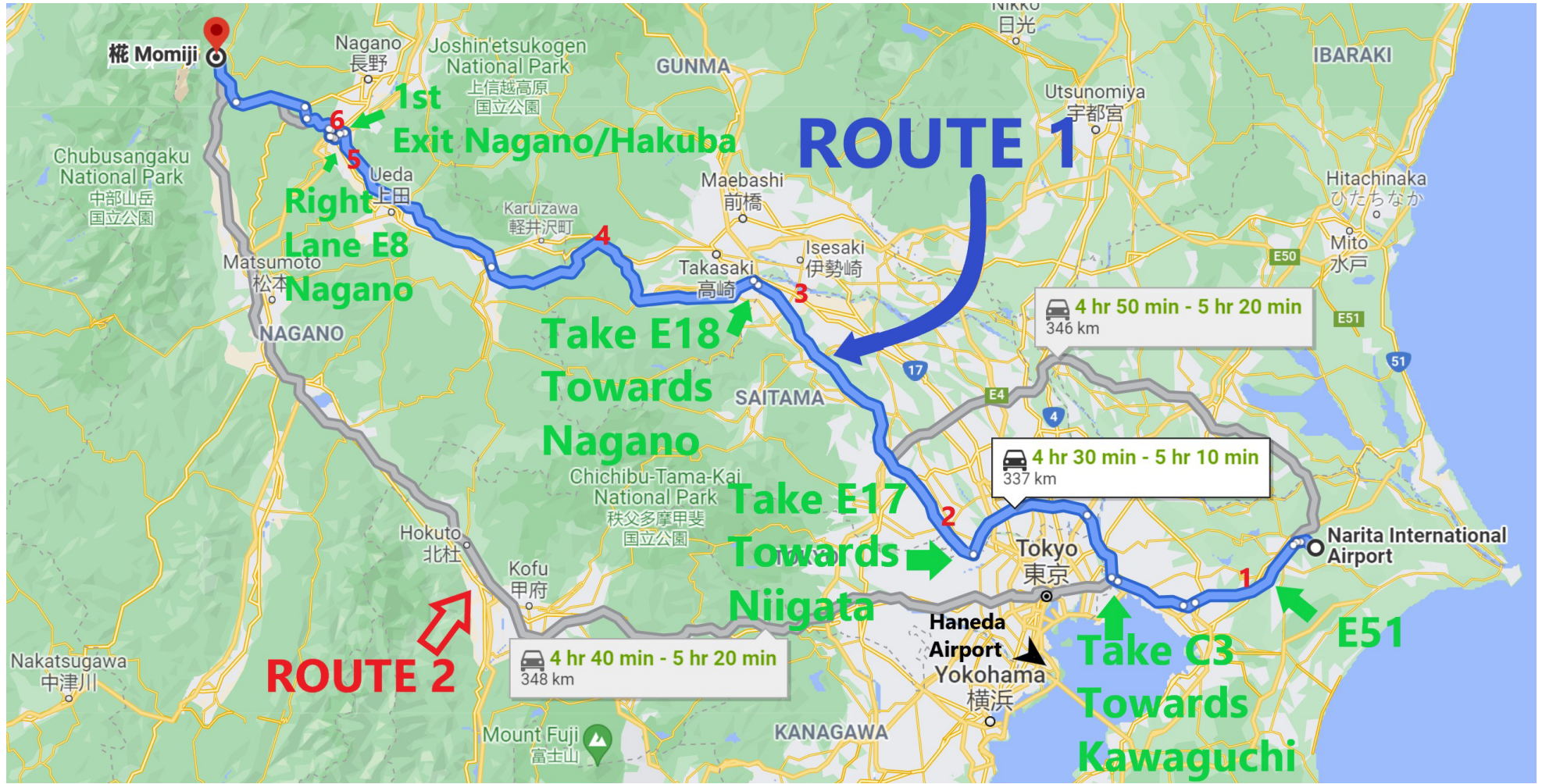
Google Maps Navigation also works really well in Japan with accurate traffic information too. Just make sure not to chew into your roaming!

If you use Google Navigation use this code: QV9H+2W Otari, Nagano

It will take you to our front door.

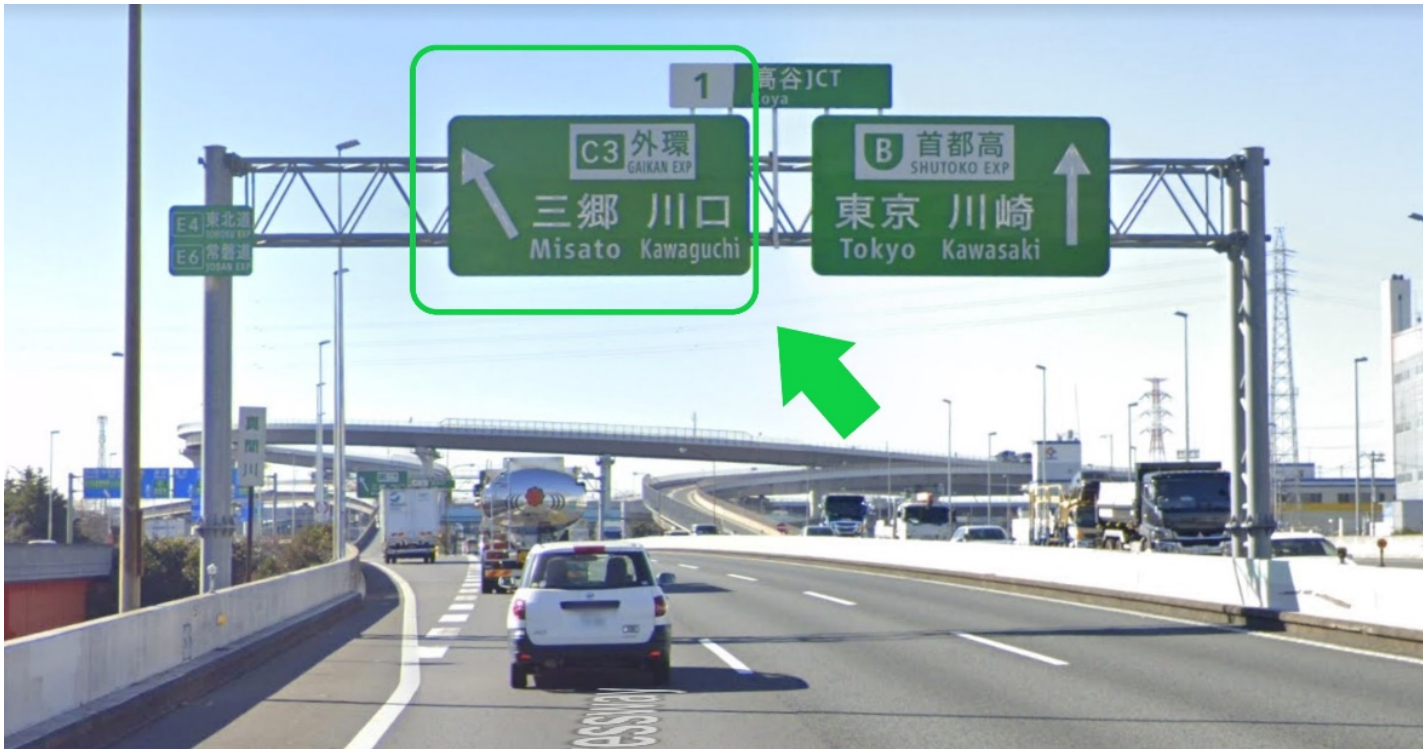


Route 1



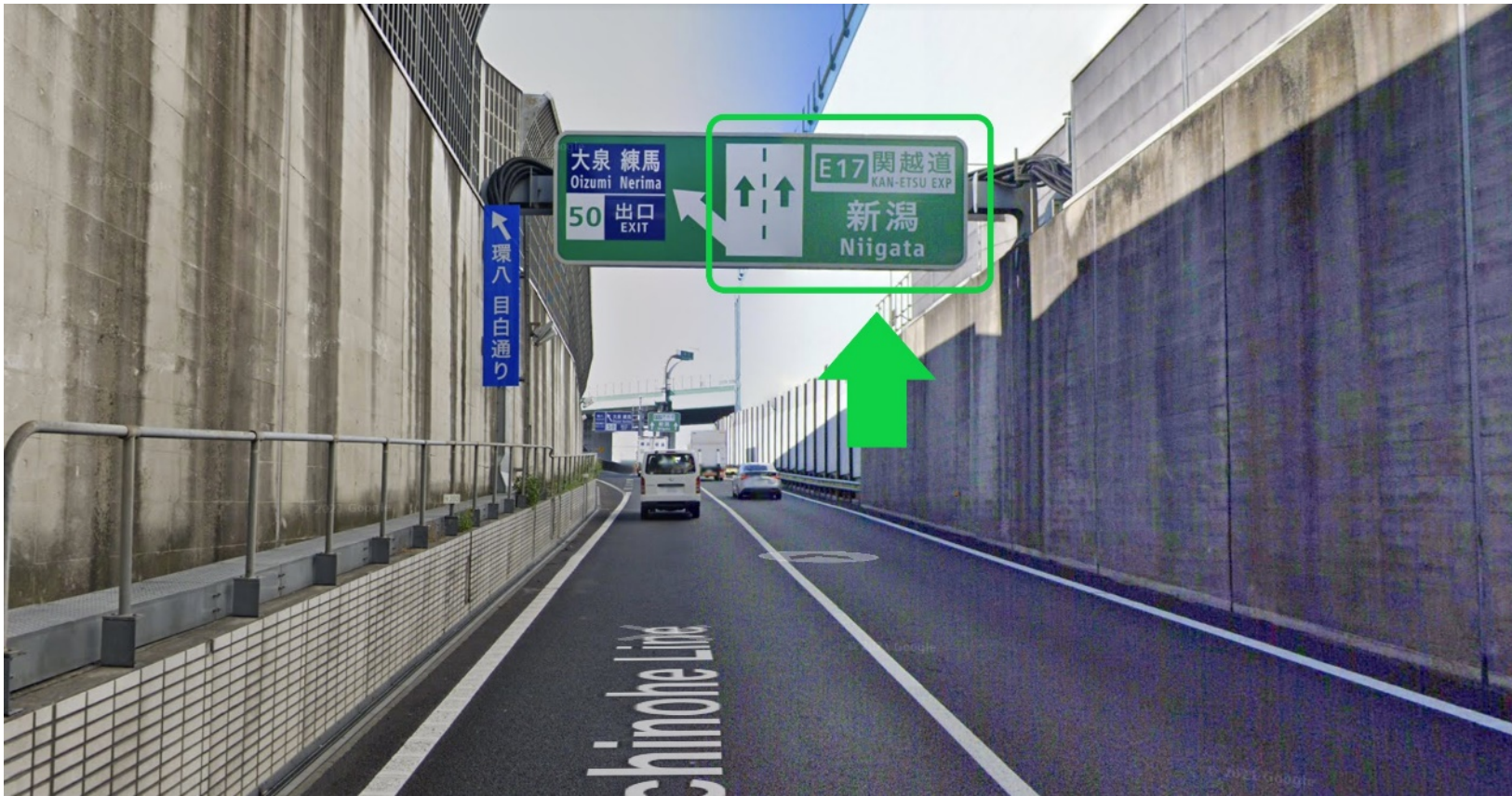
Directions (Green text). Useful Rest Stops (Red numbers)

Depart Narita airport onto the expressway following signs for the E51 for Tokyo. Once on the E51 continue 43Km. It will take you through the rice fields on the outskirts of Tokyo then into the commercial and industrial city of Chiba and Funabashi. Continue on the E51 until you see signs for the C3 Gaikan Expressway. Follow the signs for Kawaguchi. (Point to note, there is another parallel expressway the E14 that forks off the E51 before you get to the C3 as mentioned above. Some GPS units will choose that expressway instead, it will also lead to an off-ramp for the C3 to Kawaguchi).



Junction of the E51 and C3. Follow signs for Kawaguchi.

Once on the C3, Gaikan Expressway it will ring around central Tokyo. Continue for 48Km. You should be able to see the Tokyo Skytree on your left when you eventually exit the never ending tunnel. Continue on the C3 to the end junction. There you want to bear to the right. Follow signs for the E17, Kan-Etsu Expressway towards Niigata. There is some ongoing construction at this junction so the road layout may be slightly different.



Junction at the end of the C3 that leads into the E17 north.

The Kan-Etsu Expressway is the major artery connecting Tokyo with Northwest Japan. If you need a quick break there are many roadhouses along this expressway. Miyoshi (Map number 2) and Kamisato (number 3) Services have lots of restaurants and also a Starbucks.

Continue towards Niigata for 117Km, to Fujioka Junction which is where you will leave the E17 for the E18 Joshin-Etsu Expressway for Nagano.



At Fujioka Junction exit left onto the E18, Joshin-Etsu Expressway towards Nagano.

Shortly after the junction you will begin to start climbing up the first mountain range into the Alps. As with all mountain driving be careful of ice and snow. Continue on the E18 for 125Km.

There is a roadhouse near the summit here called Yokokawa. It's roughly the half way point. On a clear day it has some nice views of the surrounding peaks, a few market stalls, souvenir shop and also a food court with a coffee shop. It's not a bad place to stretch your legs. Its number 4 on the route map.

Continue along the E18. As you descend from Yokogawa it will take you across some pretty cool bridges and into some very long tunnels as you enter the Nagano Valley. The E18 will terminate into a fork. Take the off ramp to the right, E8 Horiku Expressway towards Nagano.



Right Lane, Take the off-ramp to the right, E8, Nagano.

Pass the Matsusushiro Services then the Nagano off ramp will be next on your left. There will be a small Hakuba on the signpost too. Take the Nagano off ramp and proceed through the toll gate then turn right at the lights.



Exit expressway to the left



After toll gates turn right at the 1st lights, Right 2 lanes

Cross over the river bridge. Here is a good opportunity to refuel the car as valley petrol is a bit pricier than Nagano. The 1st Eneos station has a 7-11 attached to it for a pit stop. Red pump = regular unleaded. Yellow = premium.

Proceed past the 2nd Eneos station on your left. Shortly there will be a blue sign above the road for Route 19, turn left at the lights for Hakuba. There will be a Shell servo at that intersection. Continue on Route 19 and get in the right lane and keep right to pass over the bridge.



Turn Left at lights with Shell service station, Route 19

Then keep right and proceed over the bridge

Continue straight and you will leave Nagano and follow the river. After following the river there will be a well signposted off ramp to the left for Hakuba and Route 31.



Sai River



Left Lane, Exit left Route 31 to Hakuba

There will be a cash only toll gate just after the underpass. If going through after hours and it is unattended it's ok to drive straight through. This road will climb into the mountains for the last 40mins to Hakuba. The snow will increase as you climb especially for the last bit. Just be careful of slippery conditions. The road is also a little narrow and windy in some sections. Each village has a convenience store along the road if you need a final pit stop.

You will pop out of one final 500m tunnel and you will enter the Hakuba valley pointing at the Goryu resort. Continue on the same road and follow the sign over the overpass to Mt. Happo-one on the outskirts of town. You will then pass over a river. Turn left at the lights just after the river bridge. There will be a 7-11 on the corner.



Follow the signs for Mt Happo-one

You are now in Hakuba so follow your GPS to Momiji which is around 15 to 20 mins from here.

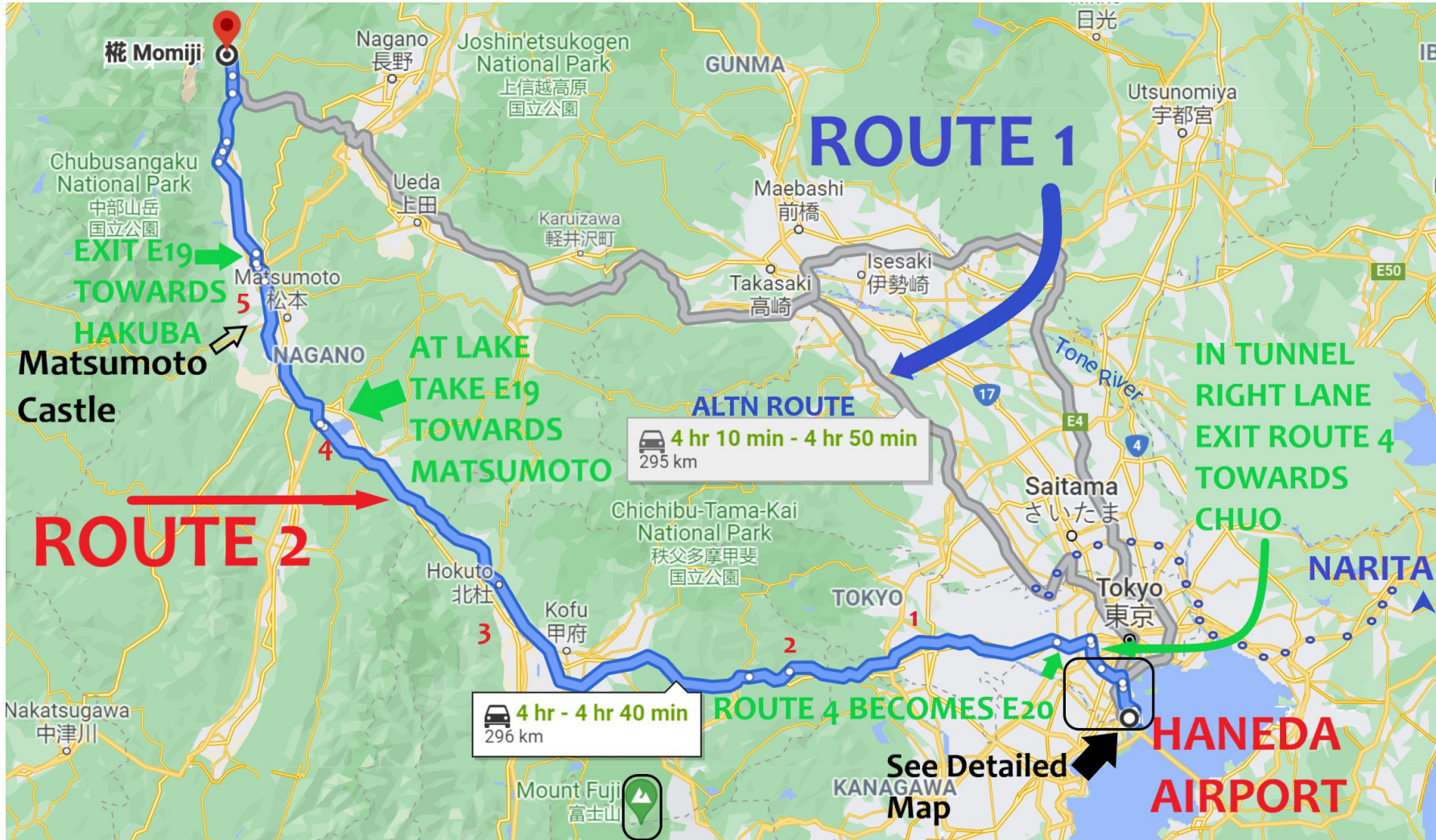
Shisui Services. Just a small roadhouse with a Japanese coffee shop and ramen restaurant. The last major stop before exiting the other side of Tokyo. @ 0:15

1. Miyoshi Services. 1st major roadhouse the other side of Tokyo on the E17 just after the big toll gates. Has a Starbucks, food court and convenience store. @ 1:30
2. Kamisato Services. Major roadhouse on the E17. Has a Starbucks, large food court and the convenience store @ 2:20
3. Yokokawa Services. Quite a scenic stop. Near the summit of the first range you cross. Has a Tully's coffee, Modern food court, souvenir shop that doubles as a convenience store. Often a place to get your first taste of snow. @2:45
4. Chikumagawa - Sakaki Services. Big name, little place. Only a 7-11 and a toilet block. Nagano is only 20mins away. @3:25
5. Nagano. Multiple places to stop here. Fuel is cheaper here than in Hakuba and on the expressways. 1st Eneos station you pass has a 7-11 attached to it. After here there are many places to stop as you pass through the villages to Hakuba. @3:45

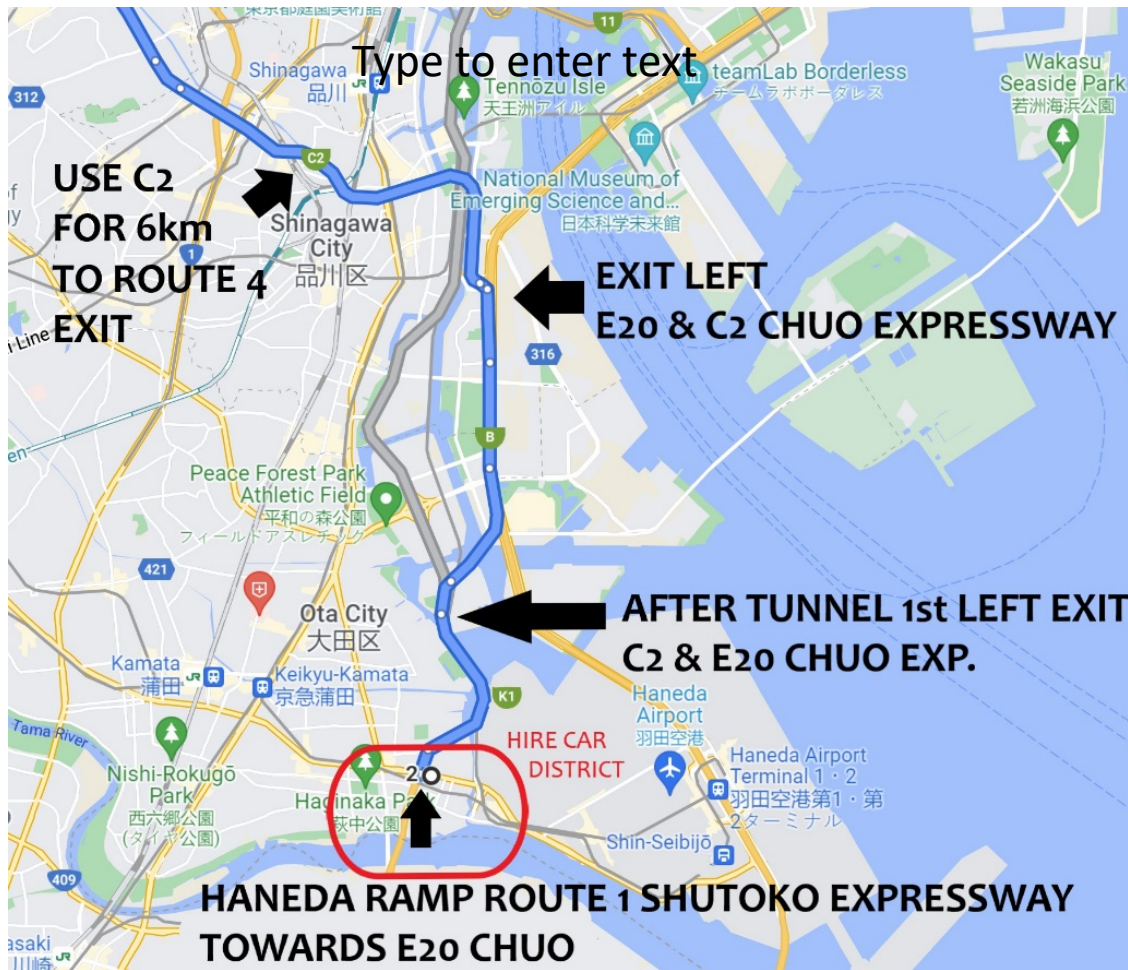


Roadhouse spicy ramen at Miyoshi services, 1am, It's pretty awesome!

Route 2

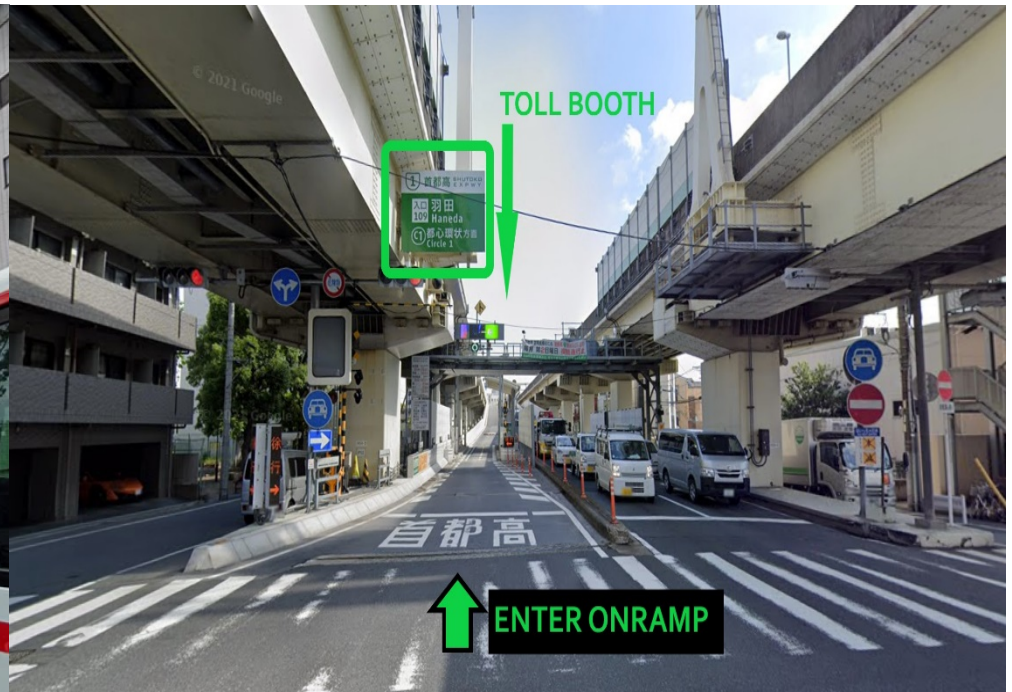


Directions (Green text). Useful Rest Stops (Red numbers)



Most Car rental companies in Haneda are located just off airport in a district just to the west called Anamori or Otorii. They have a shuttle van that takes about 10 minutes to get from the airport. There is an onramp in the district to the expressway network called the Haneda Ramp. We will start the guidance from this point as it will be the most common onramp. For the first 20 minutes winding your way through Tokyo towards Route 4/E20, Chuo Expressway you need to pay more attention but once established on Route4/E20 its 180km before you need to turn again which makes it a very pleasant and scenic drive.

Depart the rental agency towards the Shutoko Expressway. The onramp is underneath the expressway bridge in the centre of the intersection. Take the northern onramp. At the onramp entrance it will say 109 Haneda Circle 1. You will pass the tollgate. If you have an ETC Card you drive through otherwise you must pay the attendant a fixed cash fee.



Turn north under the bridge. Shutoko Exp,109, C1 Circle 1

Enter onramp, Shutoko Expressway, 109, Circle 1

Once established on the expressway, continue 2km. You will pass through a tunnel. Take the 1st exit to the left following the Signs for C2 & E20 Chuo Expressway.



Exit left 2 lanes. E20 Chuo Expressway

You will now merge with another expressway. Continue 1.3Km on the new expressway and then exit left



Exit left lane. E20 Chuo Expressway

You are now established on the C2 Ring Road. Continue 6Km. You will shortly enter a winding tunnel that circles around outskirts of central Tokyo. Pay close attention as the next exit will sneak up on you fast as you will exit from the right lane and there is little warning and signage of the exit. To help give you warning the prior exit is Hatsudai-minami. You should be in the right lane about here. Then you will be looking for signs for Route 4 Chuo. Take this exit and you will also exit the tunnel then merge with Route 4/E20. Sorry the photo below is the best I could find.



Exit Right Route 4 Chuo

You are now established outbound of Tokyo. Route 4 will become the E20 just outside of Tokyo. Follow the expressway for the next 180km.

The outer industrial suburbs of Tokyo will give way to mountains very quickly. As you climb also please be a bit cautious of ice if the road is damp or wet. On a clear day there will be some great views of Mt Fuji on your left side. Once past the Fuji area you will pass through many picturesque valleys too. Enjoy the drive!



As you approach the next freeway it is next to quite a picturesque lake called Lake Suwa. There is a roadhouse there called Suwako. It is worth a pit stop here at about the halfway point. It has some great views of the lake and a large food court, bakery, cafe and even a hot spring onsen!

Just after passing the Suwako services you will exit left onto the E19 towards Matsumoto.



EXIT LEFT E19 MATSUMOTO

LAKE SUWA

Exit left, E19 towards Matsumoto

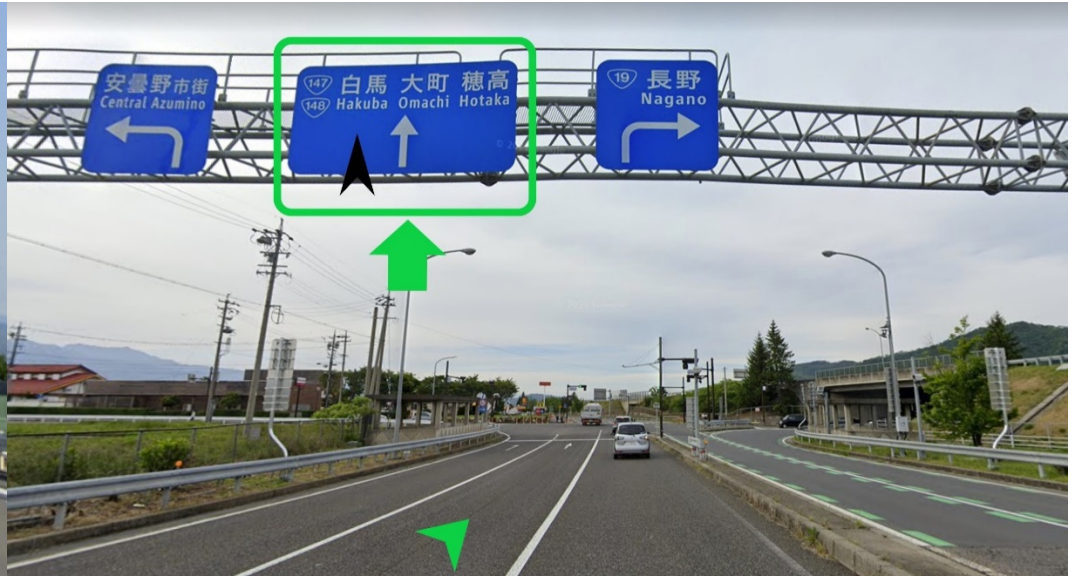
Now continue on the E19 for 32Km. You will pass the city of Matsumoto, famous for its castle. It is one of the 'Big 4' castles in Japan and dates back to the 1500s. It has parking at the North West corner of the castle park if you wish to take a look.





Getting Closer, 'Hakuba Straight Ahead'!
(November photo after first snowfalls)

As you continue past Matsumoto on the E19 you will be looking to take the exit for Omachi and Hakuba. The toll gate will be shortly after exiting the expressway. Then in the middle lane continue straight at the traffic lights following the sign for Hakuba.



Exit left to Hakuba

After toll gate, middle lane and straight at the lights

Continue on the local road for 3.3Km. There will be a set of traffic lights with a well-marked blue sign for Hakuba just prior. Turn right at these lights.



Turn right at the lights

Continue on this road for 22km until the end. The road will follow the river on your right and also give you some great views of the Japanese Alps on your left. Just use a bit of caution from now as the local roads are not ploughed to the same standards as the expressway and the snow will increase as you get closer to Hakuba. At the end of the road turn right towards Kurobe Dam.



Right turn, towards Kurobe Dam

Continue on this road for 12.5Km. It will take you through some rice fields and then into a farming town. Follow the signs for Route 148. As you approach the traffic lights to turn there will be a white ski area sign for Yanaba and Sun Alpina Kashimayari. At the lights you will have a massive Lawson convenience store on your left and a Honda bike dealership on your right. There will also be a blue sign for Hakuba. Turn left at these lights onto Route 148.



LARGE LAWSON

LEFT AT LIGHTS

HONDA BIKE DEALER

Turn Left onto Route 148 towards Hakuba

Continue 17Km on Route 148. It will take you past two very scenic lakes and also the Hakuba Valley ski resorts of Kashimayari, Sanosaka and Goryu before entering the outskirts of Hakuba. There will be a small off-ramp to the left and a blue sign for Mt Happone. Take this exit and follow the road over the river bridge.



Exit Left towards Mt Happoone

Follow the signs for Mt Happo-one

You are now in Hakuba so follow your GPS to Momiji which is around 15 to 20 mins from here.

Useful Rest Stops (Red Numbers on the Route Map)

1. Ishikawa Services. Smaller sized roadhouse. Just a coffee shop, ramen restaurant and restrooms. @0:45
2. Dangozaka Expasa Services. 1st major roadhouse the other side of Tokyo. Large roadhouse. Starbucks, food court, bakery, souvenir shop and on a clear day some great valley views. @ 1:20
3. Futaba Services. Medium sized roadhouse. Small food court, bakery and a lookout tower of the surrounding valley. @2:10
4. Suwako Services. Probably the most scenic roadhouse along the route. Large food court with panoramic windows of the lake, bakery, café, souvenir shop and even a hot spring onsen! It has it all! @2:50
5. Azusagawa Services. Last stop before exiting the expressway system. Beyond here there are many convenience stores in the villages you will pass through. Azusagawa has just a small food court and coffee shop. Just after the next off-ramp there are a few restaurants and shops too. @3:10