

## New Japanese Railway Scenery 6



JR Hokkaido's Series *Kiha* 40 diesel car running near Okaribe Station on Hidaka main line. The 146.4-km line connects Tomakomai and Samani stations. The line originally opened as the Tomakomai Light Railway in 1913 between Tomakomai and Sarufuto (today's Tomikawa). In 1924, the Hidaka Takushoku Railway opened between Sarufuto and Atsuga. The line was nationalized in 1927, and was named Hidaka Line. Eventually, it was extended to Samani in 1937, and was renamed as the Hidaka main line.

The line is single track and local trains are driver-only. A nonregular express to Sapporo called *Romance-go* runs via the Chitose Line in summer.

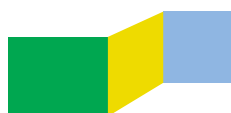
(Photo: M.Mashima Photo Office)

The photograph shows horse-riding visitors to the Urakawa Shrine in Urakawa Town in Hokkaido. This event on 2 January is to pray for the horses' health by riding up the 101 stone stairs of the shrine. Horse riding to a shrine is a tradition dating from Meiji period (1868–1912) and originates from visits to the Nishicha Myoken Shrine inside the National Livestock Breeding Stations Hidaka. After the National Livestock Breeding Stations Hidaka abolished its horse business, the Japan Racing Association Hidaka took over horse-riding visits to the shrine. Many tourists gather every year to watch about 20 horses and ponies trotting up the 100 stairs.

(Photo: Urakawa Town)



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