

How to Enjoy Hokkaido

How to enjoy Hokkaido on the cheap! Tips for visitors from abroad!



写真提供: 忠類ナウマン象記念館

Fascinating Fossils

Are you fascinated by *kaseki* (fossils)? Do you happen to be travelling in the Obihiro City area? If so, please stop at nearby Makubetsu Town, where the *Nauman-zou Kinenkan* (Churui Naumann Elephant Museum) tells an amazing story. In 1969, a workman was digging a ditch at a *kouji-genba* (construction site) for a farm road. He came upon an unusual rock with a wavy pattern. Incredibly, he somehow realized that it resembled an elephant tooth that he had seen pictured in a science textbook. After investigating, researchers concluded that it was indeed the fossil of a tooth—from a *nauman-zou* (Naumann elephant). The Naumann elephant is a prehistoric elephant that inhabited Japan until about 24,000 years ago. It was about the same height as today's Asian elephant. This animal was named for the German geologist who, in 1882, first reported on the fossils that had been discovered about twenty years earlier. Naumann elephant fossils have since been found at around 300 sites throughout Japan. The oldest of these fossils date back to around 330,000 years ago! That is when the Naumann elephant *ikou-shita* (migrated) from mainland Asia to Japan across a prehistoric land bridge. As for the workman's historic discovery, it put the little village of Churui on the map. Researchers, teachers, and students came from all over Japan to participate in the *hakkutsu* (excavations). They discovered enough fossils to account for 70 to 80% of the entire skeleton. It was finally possible to *saikouchiku* (reconstruct) a complete Naumann's elephant! The Churui Naumann Elephant Museum was opened in August 1988. A model of the completed skeleton can be seen at this museum and at 21 other museums worldwide. The award-winning museum building refers to the Naumann elephant in various ways. For example, the front entrance resembles an elephant's head. When you visit, be on the lookout for other connections! (Daily 9:00-17:00; Closed Tuesdays (Wednesday if Tuesday is a holiday) and New Year's holidays; NOTE: Closed for renovations 2/29 to 3/19; Adults and SHS: ¥300, JHS and Elementary: ¥200). On the way back, drop by the roadside station Michinoeki Churui to pick up a unique local specialty—snacks made with *yurine* (edible lily bulbs). That might be quite a discovery for you, too! **J**

上空から見ると〇〇の姿!? 太古のロマンを感じる記念館へ

かつて日本列島に生息していた象の1種であるナウマン象。その軌跡をたどる「忠類ナウマン象記念館」が帯広市の隣に位置する幕別町にあります。1969年、農道の建設現場で作業員が偶然ナウマン象の歯の化石を見つけたことをきっかけに、全国から研究者や教師、学生らが集まって発掘調査を行い、キバ、臼歯、大腿骨など主要な骨格46個の化石を発見しました。現在は国内外21ヶ所の博物館で全身骨格の復元模型が展示されていますが、日本で初めて復元に成功したのは幕別町です。ちなみにこの記念館は上空から見るとナウマン象の姿をイメージしたデザインになっています。今いる場所がどの部位なのか考えながら観覧するのも面白いでしょう。

文＝米坂スザンヌ(米国カリフォルニア生まれ、フランス語学士、英語修士。1983年から札幌在住。北海学園大学人文学部名誉教授。)

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※2024年3月19日(火)まで臨時休館、3月20日(水)午前9時よりリニューアルオープン。