

Hokuto Archaeological Site

The Hokuto Archaeological Site is situated on the west side of Kushiro Marsh. It includes the sites of more than 230 pit dwellings used in ancient times. As well as walking through the excavated site, visitors can learn about the pits and see a life-size pit dwelling inside the site's museum.

The Hokuto area is believed to have been inhabited from the Palaeolithic period more than 10,000 years ago to the Satsumon period (700–1200). Excavations have unearthed fireplaces from the Palaeolithic period, as well as dwellings, tombs and shell mounds from the Jomon period (14,000 BCE–300 BCE), and weaving devices and textiles from the Satsumon period. There are 102 circular and oval pits from the Jomon and Post-Jomon periods (14,000 BCE–700CE), and 232 square pits from the Satsumon period. The pits are located in an area that is 2,500 m from east to west and 500 m from north to south. This area was designated a National Historical Site in 1977.

Semi-basement huts over five of the square pits have been recreated. The square pits were 5–10 m long on each side and 1 m deep. Tree trunks were used for the huts' pillars and beams, and reeds were used for the thick-hipped roof that extended to the ground. Inside, there was a sleeping area as well as fireplaces for cooking. The people of the Satsumon period typically lived in settlements along rivers where they could fish for salmon and trout. They lived as hunters, fishermen, and plant gatherers, and cultivated various grains. It is not known why the pit dwellings were eventually abandoned.

The Archeological Site museum is open from April to November. On display are earthenware and stone artifacts, a diorama of the area as it was in ancient times, a full-scale square pit dwelling, and information on the history of the ruins. A video provides a fascinating look at the history of the land and its people.