

Buried Forest: Exhibit Overview

The Azukihara Buried Forest Exhibit turns a three-story gallery in the new annex into a scene from the ancient world—a forest of colossal cedars buried upright for 4,000 years. Mt. Sanbe's last great eruption caused a landslide of sand and debris that engulfed the valleys on its northern side. Volcanic ash followed, covering the landscape until the Azukihara valley and its ancient forest were entombed far below the surface.

In 1983, the top of a huge cedar was uncovered about 3 kilometers northwest of the museum. In 1990, further excavation revealed 30 more trees still standing beneath the earth. The forest consisted primarily of cedar, but also contained zelkova, horse chestnut, and ring-cupped oak. It remains standing in its original location, which is now the site of the Sanbe Azukihara Buried Forest. The Buried Forest Exhibit here includes some of the trees unearthed at Azukihara, including one that is 10 meters tall and nearly two meters in diameter at its base. Also on display is a cross-section of the tree that was first uncovered in 1983. It shows 443 growth rings—one for each year of the tree's life. Other parts of the exhibit explain the eruption that buried the forest, its discovery, and what it has taught scientists about the ancient ecosystem.