**JR Otaru Station: The Gateway to the Port City**

Otaru Station opened in 1903 and the line to Hakodate, Hokkaido’s southernmost city, opened a year later. Passengers arriving at Otaru in the early twentieth century would have seen dozens of sailing ships and steamships moored in the harbor, with barges ferrying goods to the shore.

The current station building is made of steel-framed reinforced concrete and was completed in 1934. The symmetrical Art Deco design of the entrance hall is typical of large station buildings at the time.

Natural light floods the entrance hall through six tall windows along the front of the building, supplemented by the light of 333 glass lanterns donated by local glass company Kitaichi Glass. Although they are powered by electricity today, they resemble the original hand-blown glass oil lamps that the company began making in 1901.

Platform 4 looks much as it did in 1903, apart from some modifications made in 1934 and recent additions such as an escalator and additional lighting. At the north end of the platform, a framed life-size image of popular actor Ishihara Yujiro (1934–1987) commemorates his visit to Otaru to film a long-running television drama. Although born in Kobe, he spent some of his childhood in Otaru and often returned to visit. In the image, taken in 1978, he stands on Platform 4, known locally as “Yujiro’s Platform.”