

Former Otaru Warehouse

The Otaru Warehouse complex was built in 1890 on newly reclaimed land by Nishitani Shohachi and Nishide Magozaemon, who were merchant shipowners from Kaga. The warehouses are built around a courtyard, where cargo was unloaded and processed.

Pairs of ceramic mythical sea creatures (*shachihoko*) decorate the roof ridge of each building. Commonly seen on castles, this motif was believed to protect against fire and was a symbol of wealth. Similar figures also appear on the roof of the Iwanaga Clock Store on Sakaimachi Street.

Several of the buildings now serve as the Otaru Museum, which traces the city's history through scale models, photographs, artworks, and other artifacts. A section of the museum recreates a typical shopping street in the early nineteenth century, with full-size models of stores and merchant houses. Other displays focus on the wildlife in the mountains and forests surrounding Otaru with realistic life-size dioramas.