

Meeting of the North and South

Hokkaido and Surrounding Regions Seen from Space

Numerous islands lie to Hokkaido's south, including Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu and Okinawa. The neighboring island of Sakhalin (Karafuto) stretches far to the north, and just beyond lies the Eurasian continent. To the east, the Kuril Islands lead towards the Kamchatka Peninsula. Since ancient times, Hokkaido has been a crossroads

connecting these regions, and a point of interaction for all manners of life, human culture, and goods. The mammoth came to Hokkaido from the north, and the Naumann's elephant came from the south.

Stand on the picture of Hokkaido below, and see the world from our vantage point.



Naumann's Elephant

Naumann's elephant was a species of elephant that lived in East Asia between around 650,000 to several tens of thousands of years ago. This elephant crossed over to Hokkaido from Honshu at least 120,000 years ago. In 1969, the remains of a Naumann's elephant discovered in Churui Village (now part of Makubetsu Town) were excavated by a team of researchers and volunteers from across Japan. Ultimately, the team was able to unearth the fossilized remains of almost one complete skeleton. It is thought that this particular skeleton is of an elderly male elephant. The replica of the full skeleton standing before you is based on these fossils, and the fossil displayed here is one of the originals.



Mammoth

Mammoth was a species of elephant found in Europe, Siberia and North America between 400,000 and 10,000 years ago. The mummified remains of a mammoth found in Siberia preserved in ice showed that the animal had adapted to an extremely cold environment, because of the long hair covering its entire body and the small size of its ears. Mammoth crossed over to Hokkaido several tens of thousands of years ago from the Eurasian continent via Sakhalin during a time of extreme cold. The mammoth is believed to have used its massive curved tusks to dig through the snow in search of food.

What is Hokkaido Like?

The screen in front of you presents footage of Hokkaido's unique geological features. Hokkaido is known as the North Country in Japan, but it is actually located at a lower latitude than most major European cities such as London or Paris. Yet, winters here are harsh, with extreme cold and heavy snowfall, and in some areas the ocean is covered in drift ice. The wildlife that live here are more similar to those found on the Eurasian Continent than those on the island of Honshu. Here subarctic coniferous trees can be found alongside temperate broad-leaved trees. In the ancient past, Hokkaido also served as a crossroads for Northeast Asia. Knowing these facts about Hokkaido will make your visit to the museum even more interesting.

