



Introduction of Mikasa Coalfield Geopark Plan

Mikasa City, Hokkaido, Japan

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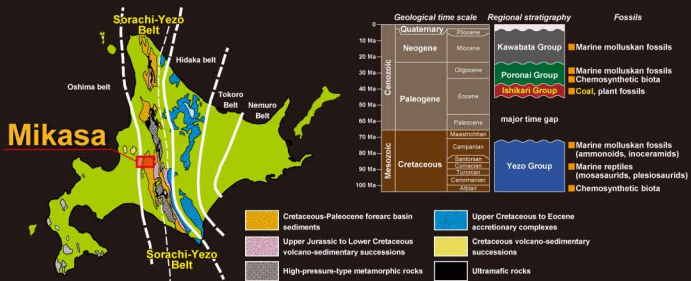
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We now go into action to become a member of Japanese Geoparks Network in 2013!

Introduction

The City of Mikasa, a local government in Central Hokkaido, Japan, is rich in nature and materials (e.g., coal and fossils) in spite of a short distance from the capital city of Hokkaido (the City of Sapporo).

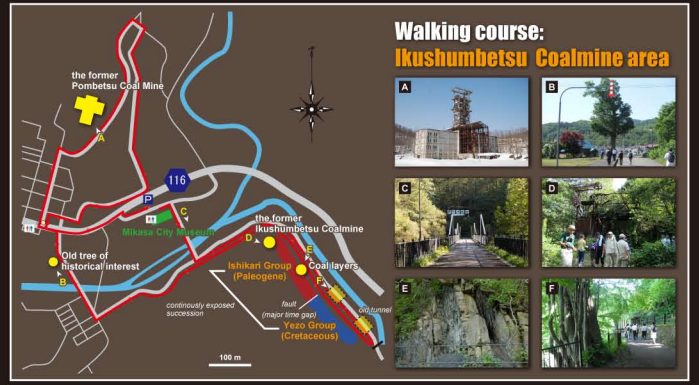
The story of modern Mikasa began with the discovery of soft coal in 1868 (the first year of the Meiji era). Mikasa had flourished as a coalmine city after that, and had a population of over 60,000 in 1950s. Now the city only has a population of about 10,000 because of the closing of the coalmines, but **there are many industrial and cultural places and events, which developed on the geological attributes.**



Pick up the geosites!

There is a recommendable walking course around the Mikasa City Museum. At first, you can study geology and history of Mikasa in the museum, and then you can see both the coalmine heritage and coal layers by walk (about 90 minutes).

Now we are planning to set up signs which explain the geosites in this year.



Relationship between the coalmine history and geological background of Mikasa

Heritage

Coalmines




In 1868, the "burning stone" coal was discovered in the Horonai area, southeastern part of Mikasa. Then, there were a lot of the comings and goings together with the operation of Horonai Coalmine in 1879, and flourished as a coalmine city.

All of the coalmines in Mikasa, however, was closed by 1989, because of the conversion of energy policy from coal to oil.

Now the coalmine facilities are extant, and we would like to preserve them as the industrial heritage.

Culture

"Hokkai-bon-odori" Bon festival dance



"Hokkai-bon-odori", a traditional bon festival of Hokkaido, takes place every August. In the festival, visitors can experience the traditional bon festival dance with the traditional song, "Hokkai-bon-uta". Mikasa is known as the origin of the Hokkai-bon-uta song, and thus these cultural and historical events are designated as part of the Hokkaido heritage.

The highlight of festival is a display of fireworks on the last day of the festival, and Mikasa comes most alive then.

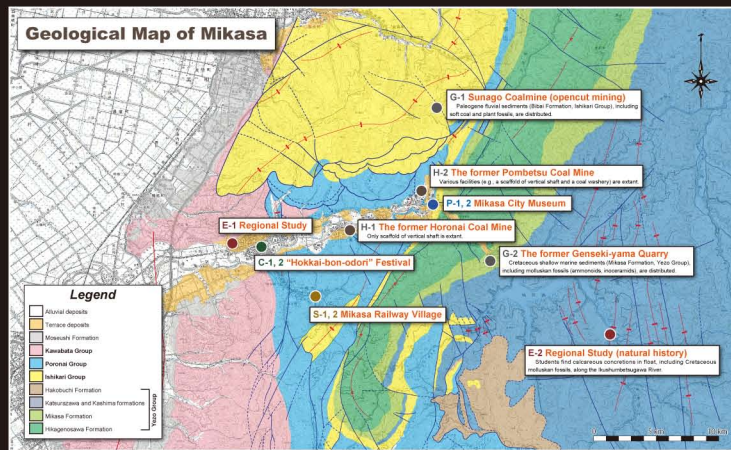
Tourism

Mikasa Railway Village




The Horonai Railway was constructed between the Horonai (Mikasa) and Temiya (the present City of Ota, Hokkaido) areas in 1882 for the first time in Hokkaido, in order to transport soft coal for supporting the industrialization of Japan. This railway line, however, was discontinued in 1987.

The Mikasa Railway Village and Memorial Museum were established in 1987 to honor the history and culture of the Horonai Railway. A steam locomotive runs within the village, and you can ride in this locomotive.



Geosite

Large-scale exposures




The succession distributed in Mikasa spans from the Cretaceous to recent. The Cretaceous marine succession, called the Yezo Group, yields well-preserved fossils (e.g., ammonoids and marine reptiles), and thus Mikasa is known as the "Town of Fossils".

The Paleogene fluvial succession, called the Ishikari Group, yields soft coal. Sunago Coal Mine, an opencut mining, is now operating. We are planning to guide these large-scale exposures as the geo-tours.

Education

Regional Studies



The City of Mikasa has carried out the integrated educational project of elementary-junior high school from 2005. In this educational project, there is a subject "Regional Studies", which learns about attributes of Mikasa (e.g., natural history, modern history, culture, industry and agriculture).

Now the mayor of Mikasa, Mr. Kazuo Kobayashi, teaches "past and present Mikasa", and curators of the museum teach natural history of Mikasa for elementary school students.

Preservation

Mikasa City Museum



The Mikasa City Museum was established in 1979 to honor the nature, culture and industry of the city.

The museum is known as "Museum of Ammonites", and most famous museum in Japan for the richness of excellent ammonite collections. Over 600 ammonite specimens (over 80 species) are displayed, and the highlight of exhibition is a display of numerous gigantic ammonites. Visitors can touch these ammonites and imagine the ancient ocean of Cretaceous world!

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Future

Tourism — Mikasa Railway Village, bon festival dance, Mikasa City Museum



Present

Preservation — Coalmine facilities, culture, modern and natural histories



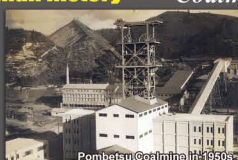
Future

Education — Regional studies for children living in Mikasa



Past

Human history — Coalmine



Earth history — Coal layers

