



History Port of Wakkanai

- 1781-88 The Matsumae Domain establishes a trading post known as *urajoys* to promote the fishing industry, which is said to be the origin of the Port of Wakkanai.
- 1901 At the same time as the inauguration of a town administration system in May, railway and harbor construction is accelerated.
- 1905 Southern Karafuto (Sakhalin) is ceded to Japan after the Japan-Russo War, and the Port of Wakkanai is expected to be a transit point between mainland Japan and Sakhalin.
- 1911 Japan Post Co., Ltd. establishes a seasonal liner route between Wakkanai and Odomari (present-day Korsakov). The port acts a hub on the shortest route to Karafuto.
- 1919 A harbor construction plan to build breakwaters and cargo-passenger berths at the Port of Wakkanai is suddenly added to the Japanese Government's First-term Hokkaido Reclamation Plan. In line with this plan, the construction of loading and unloading facilities run by the Ministry of Railways and the town is also planned.
- 1920 The construction of the Port of Wakkanai starts.
- 1923 The Ministry of Railway's Wakkanai-Odomari liner route, which is connected to direct train services between Hakodate and Wakkanai, is established. A Honshu (mainland Japan)-Hokkaido-Karafuto route is also created and a ferry service between Wakkanai and Odomari begins. 
- 1924 A ferry route between Wakkanai and Honto (present-day Nevelsk) is established by Kitanihon Kisen K.K. The development of Karafuto is accelerated. Routes to Rishiri and Rebun islands are also established.
- 1935 A triangular route between Wakkanai, Oshidomari and Kafuka is established. 
- 1936 The Northern Breakwater Dome is constructed as part of a project to improve the Port of Wakkanai.
- 1945 The Pacific War ends.
- 1948 The port is formally designated as a port open to foreign trading vessels by the Customs Act.
- 1949 Wakkanai is reorganized as a city due to population growth resulting from the repatriation of Japanese from Sakhalin after the war. The port attracts many laborers as one of Japan's most important fishing ports, a status helped by its location close to fertile fishing grounds off the Maritime Province of Siberia and eastern and western Sakhalin as well as in the Mamiya Strait (Tartar Strait). Offshore trawl fishing and related marine processing industries develop.
- 1950 Rishiri and Rebun islands are designated as a prefectural park.
- 1952 The port is designated as a port of entry or departure by the Immigration Control Order.
- 1957 The port is designated as a major port by the Port and Harbor Act.
- 1962 The port is designated as a quarantine port by the Quarantine Act.
- 1965 Rishiri and Rebun islands are designated as a national park.

- 1969 The overall cargo volume handled at the Port of Wakkanai exceeds one million tons.
- 1972 A friendship delegate visits Nevelsk Port in Sakhalin for the first time after the war. Wakkanai City and Nevelsk City sign a friendship city agreement.
- 1974 Rishiri, Rebun and Sarobetsu are designated as a national park. Larger ferries are introduced with an increase in the number of tourists.
- 1975 The overall cargo volume handled at the Port of Wakkanai exceeds two million tons.
- 1976 The total catch at the Port of Wakkanai reaches 510,000 t, the second largest catch size in Japan.
- 1977 A 200-mile exclusive fishery zone is established.
- 1978 The aged Northern Breakwater Dome is wholly repaired.
- 1987 Shiosai Promenade, which is a revetment with a recreational path and is integrated with the Northern Breakwater Dome, is completed.
- 1991 Wakkanai City and Korsakov City sign a friendship city agreement. The Wakkanai Marine Town Project is formulated, and its first term program begins (-1994).
- 1995 The liner route service between Wakkanai and Korsakov (Sakhalin Regular Route) is resumed 50 years after the war. The second term program of the Marine Town Project begins (-2010).
- 1996 A pier for the Japan-Russia liner route is completed.
- 2001 Wakkanai City and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk City sign a friendship city agreement. The Northern Breakwater Dome is designated as a Hokkaido Heritage.
- 2003 The Northern Breakwater Dome is certified as a Civil Engineering Heritage by the Japan Society of Civil Engineers (JSCE).
- 2005 The total annual trading volume reaches a new high (31.76 billion yen). Suehiro Wharf is used as an interim storage place for materials for wind power facilities to be built on the Soya Hills.
- 2007 Fukuko Market is completed. Kita District, Minato District and other areas are certified by the Hokkaido Regional Development Bureau as Wakkanai Minato Oasis.
- 2008 The international and domestic ferry terminals open in the Chuo Wharf area.
- 2011 The total number of foreign vessels entering the port since its opening reaches 50,000. The port is selected as a hub port on the side of the Sea of Japan.
- 2012 The Northern Breakwater Dome Park opens.
- 2013 Fukuko Market and the Port Service Center are certified by the Hokkaido District Transport Bureau as the Wakkanai Seaside Service Station.
- 2015 The passenger boarding bridge at the Chuo Wharf is completed. 
- 2018 Suehiro Pier East becomes large enough to berth a cruise ship.

Northern Breakwater Dome (former Port of Wakkanai Roofed Breakwater)



The Northern Breakwater Dome, which measures 427 m in length and 13.8 m in height, is a half-arched breakwater supported by 70 columns. This unique structure is reminiscent of a Roman-style cloister.

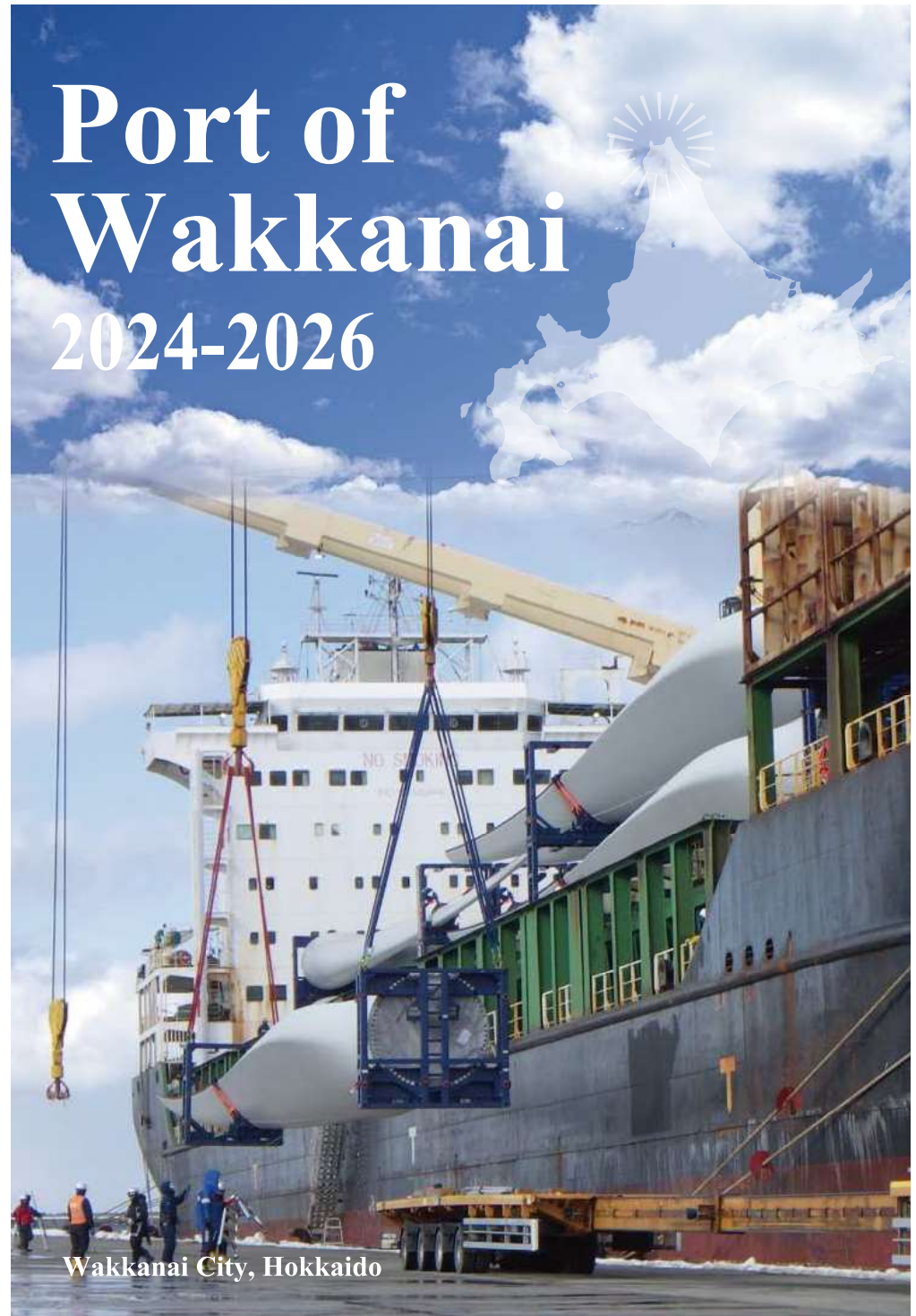
A 5-m high breakwater had been planned at first. However, since a more solid facility was actually needed to protect passengers and cargo from high waves and strong winds at the ferry landing place of the Karafuto Route, the dome-shaped breakwater was constructed. It was designed by Minoru Tsuchiya, who was a 26-year-old engineer at that time. The construction took five years and was completed in 1936.

A half a century later, a three-year period of repair work began in 1978 to solve a safety problem due to aging, and the former grand structure was rebuilt. Moreover, in order to conform to new earthquake-resistant design methods, a three-year project to perform seismic retrofitting of columns and reinforcement of other defective sections of the dome was begun in 1999, and in 2016, measures to prevent ageing and other deterioration were implemented under a

preventive maintenance plan, all of which further enhanced the safety of the structure.

The Northern Breakwater Dome has now achieved nationwide name recognition not only as a breakwater but also as a landmark of the Port of Wakkanai and a tourist spot. The inside is used as a multipurpose space where various events and exchange programs for local residents are held. It is popular among tourists and locals alike as a symbol of Wakkanai.

The breakwater was selected as a Hokkaido Heritage in October 2001 as a structure that passes down the history of the Port of Wakkanai and the Karafuto Route. It was also designated as a Civil Engineering Heritage by the Japan Society of Civil Engineers (JSCE) in November 2003 for its unique structure and the technology used at the time of its construction.





Port of Wakkanai – the northernmost hub port

Photo courtesy:Wakkanai Regional Development Bureau

Outline Port of Wakkanai

Wakkanai, which is Japan's northernmost city, is rich in marine and land resources and boasts attractive natural surroundings such as the vast Soya Hills. Sakhalin on the opposite shore is just 43 km away. Wakkanai has long been Japan's northernmost traffic hub and port city.

The Port of Wakkanai was first developed in the late 18th century, when it acted as a place for the transportation of seafood in concert with the development of the fishing industry. In the Meiji era (1868 – 1912), the port made a significant contribution to the development of northern Hokkaido as the gateway to the region. When Japan occupied southern Karafuto (present-day southern Sakhalin) after the Japan-Russia War, Wakkanai Port attracted attention and traffic as the base for the shortest sea route to Karafuto. A liner route was established between Wakkanai and Odomari (present-day Korsakov) in 1911, and a Wakkanai-Odomari liner route, which is connected to direct train services between Hakodate and Wakkanai, was established in 1923. This formed a route connecting Honshu (mainland Japan), Hokkaido and Karafuto, and further increased the significance of the Port of Wakkanai as a traffic hub. The construction of the Northern Breakwater Dome, a symbol of the Port of Wakkanai, began in the early Showa era (1926 – 1989) and was completed in 1936.

After the Second World War, traffic to Karafuto stopped, but the port has continued to be improved as a base for the northern sea fishing industry, a shipping port of Tempoku coal and a departure and arrival place for ships on the daily routes to Rishiri and Rebun islands.

The Northern Breakwater Dome has supported distribution activities as a departure and arrival place for ferry routes to Rishiri and Rebun islands. When the areas were designated as Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park in 1974, the number of visitors using the facility increased partially because of the introduction of larger ferry boats. Repair work on the dome began in 1978, and then Shiosai Promenade, a revetment integrated with

the dome, was completed. It is popular with people as a symbol that passes down the history of the region and the Port of Wakkanai.

In Kita District, which includes the Northern Breakwater Dome, the Wakkanai Marine Town Project is being conducted in conjunction with city redevelopment. In 2008, international and domestic terminal functions were consolidated at the Chuo Wharf, and in 2012, the Northern Breakwater Dome Park was completed. The area forms an international exchange hub, especially contributing to the exchange of people and goods with Sakhalin.

In recent years, more and more cruise ships have been stopping in northern Hokkaido, including the Port of Wakkanai, and in 2018, a quay for 110,000-ton-class cruise ships was completed at Suehiro Wharf.

In the area behind the Port of Wakkanai, a wind power generation business that takes advantage of the area's optimal wind conditions is being promoted, and power grids and wind power generation materials and equipment have been landed at the Port of Wakkanai in sequence since 2017. In Sakhalin on the opposite bank, large-scale oil and natural gas development is underway, and the Port of Wakkanai is used as an intermediate port. The port is also expected to leverage its geographical advantage for the Northern Sea Route, which is currently attracting global attention.

In addition to the port's conventional role as a lifeline for Rishiri and Rebun and as a hub for fishing and importing oil-related products, the Port of Wakkanai also plays a vital role as a marine gateway that connects the Soya area and elsewhere in Japan and the world, providing an interim storage place for materials and equipment for the wind power generation business and a place for importing fresh seafood.

Further, in 2017, business continuity planning (BCP) was implemented to reduce possible damage from tsunamis and earthquakes, making more stable use of the Port of Wakkanai possible.

Natural conditions Port of Wakkanai

Location and geographical features

The Port of Wakkanai is located at the northern tip of Hokkaido (45°27'N, 141°39'E). Wakkanai City consists of two hill zones that extend north to south and low-lying areas around the hills, and the urban district spreads out like an open fan toward the south.

Port area

The Port of Wakkanai covers the marine area (1,800 ha) enclosed by the line drawn from Cape Noshappu to Cape Koetoi in Wakkanai and the coast (Announcement No. 550 by the Hokkaido Government, Mar. 31, 1953).

Weather

Wakkanai has a marine climate, and the annual average temperature is approximately 6°C. A record high of 31.3°C was observed in August 1946, while a record low of minus 19.4°C was marked in January and February 1944. Winds blow in from the south-southwest throughout the year, and strong winds with a velocity of 10 m/s or more blow in from the northwest to north during winter. Northeast winds blow during rainy season and other periods affected by high-pressure systems in the Sea of Okhotsk. Snow falls for almost five months from late November to early April. The Port of Wakkanai does not freeze, but when the force of drift ice is strong, part of it sometimes enters the Sea of Okhotsk to the Sea of Japan and remains in the waters offshore from the port for three or four days.



Transportation Port of Wakkanai

The Port of Wakkanai plays an important role as a hub port at the northern tip of Hokkaido. Wakkanai is approximately five hours from Sapporo by JR train and within one hour by air.

By air
Wakkanai→Tokyo (all year round) Approx. 1 hr. 50 min.
Wakkanai→New Chitose (all year round) Approx. 50 min.

Access

By car
Wakkanai→Sapporo Approx. 5 hr. 40 min.
Wakkanai→Asahikawa Approx. 4 hr. 50 min.
Wakkanai→Abashiri Approx. 5 hr. 30 min.

By intercity bus
Wakkanai→Sapporo Approx. 6 hr.

By JR train
Wakkanai→Sapporo At least 5 hr. 10 min.

By ferry
Wakkanai→Rishiri Island (2-4 services/day) Approx. 1 hr. 40 min.
Wakkanai→Rebun Island (2-4 services/day) Approx. 1 hr. 15 min.

Wakkanai Airport (state-operated airport)

Wakkanai Airport was opened in April 1960 as a class 2 airport (an airport necessary for major domestic air routes, present-day state-operated airport) with a runway of 1,200 m in length, and has been improved as an air gateway to northern Hokkaido. As of 2023, the airport is connected via regular routes to Tokyo (normally 1 direct flight/day but 2/day in summer) and Chitose (2 flights/day). The airport plays an important role in regional development as a base for tourists in northern Hokkaido.

By March 2021, Hokkaido Airport Co., Ltd. had started operating seven airports, including Wakkanai Airport, in Hokkaido in an integrated manner, and this is expected to revitalize the local economy by expanding domestic and international routes and promoting tourism.

