

Historical Tracking Tour

「Forest Railway Tour」

Explanation

1 The mountainous area around Rokkasho Village is full of “hiba” cypress trees. Since the Edo Period (1600~1868), Rokkasho has been an area that produces cypress wood.



※The dark green area in the map shows areas that produce cypress wood. The green areas produce wood from Japanese cedars.

2 With the beginning of the Meiji Period (1868~1912) 85% of the territory in Rokkasho became state-owned land. The former forest service field office of Yokohama started building the railway tracks in 1935 to transport timber. Until the late 1940s, the cypresses were cut down by human labor and transported on small rail cars to a collection site in Obuchi. The Rokkasho Forest Railway was founded in 1951 as *Shinrin Tetsudo Ikkyu*. Since then, locomotives transported the wood from the forest to a collection site in Futamata.



3 The forest railway was exclusively made to transport wood out of the forest. During the golden years in Japan (about 60 years ago), cypress wood was used as a luxurious material to build houses. In 1964 the railway was replaced by trucks.

4 This was the Futamata collection site. This was the place where the cypress wood from the forest was collected. On the small hill was the former Yokohama Forest Field Office. South of this

collection site was a garage for the locomotive and the railways were apparently laid out in the shape of an eight. The locomotive could pull about seven or eight wagons and would transport wood from the forest three times a day.



5 AKITO Yoshimichi, who lives in Futamata and worked for the railway, says he worked eight hours a day from 8 a.m.



until 5 p.m. For one summer only in 1950, they had summertime working hours from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., but it was changed back to the regular schedule the following year.

6 Let's go and have a look at a railroad tie that was left in the forest.



This is the said railroad tie. The ties were reused to make gutters. (12 cm×15 cm×180 cm) The tracks of the forest railroad had a narrow gauge of only 762 mm.

7 Here is the first locomotive with a gasoline engine from Toyota. However, because it was quite weak, it was soon replaced by a Diesel engine from Isuzu. The locomotive was made by the company Kato Seisakusho. It was about 5 tons and blue.



8 Here you can see the remains of a bridge



foundation. Because of the Sabo dam in the south, the water level of the river is a lot higher now. But 60 years ago, when the forest railway was crossing this bridge, the bridge was about 20m above the river. It was crossing over the U-shaped cliff of the river.

9 After walking up the cliff, we will walk along the former tracks of the railway. Be careful when climbing the cliff.



10 From here, the railway followed the course of the Oippe river heading north.

11 This is a discarded rail. There were two kinds of rails used for the track. One was about 6kg per meter, the other was about 9kg per meter. The lighter one was carried by one person; the heavier rail piece was carried by two people. One rail piece was about 6 to 7 m in length.



This is an insulator for a phone line. It was made in 1947.



12 These are Japanese wild raspberries. When they're yellow, they are edible.



This flower is called yellow flag or yellow iris.



13 Here we can find many cut roots of big cypress trees. Even after more than 60 years, the smell of cypresses is still in the air.



14 In this spot used to be a shrine gate (torii) for the shrine to pray to the goddess of the mountain. The mountain god is female. Long ago, there were mountains that were forbidden for women to enter. It is said that this was to not upset the goddess. December 12th is the day of the mountain goddess. People would not work that day and pray and enjoy themselves instead.

15 In this spot used to be a break room to have lunch and to relax. The cypresses in the

area were cut down and a little hut was built here.

This hut here was made to store dynamite. When the railway was built, the forest routes were narrow and big rocks would block the way. Dynamite was used to clear the paths.



After the dynamite was not necessary anymore, herbicides were stored in this hut.

16 This is a tube bridge. There are five bridges of this shape in this area. Earlier bridges were made from cypress wood. These bridges are also made by forest workers.



17 The forest railway office was divided in two departments: the mountain preservation department and the track maintenance department. The mountain preservation department's main task was cutting trees, loading them onto trucks, and collecting lumber in the lumber yard. The track maintenance department was responsible for the maintenance of the trains and the transportation of the wood.



18 3km from here there are remains of another office building. Next to that building's ruins are the remains of a bridge. These remains were only found a year ago.



19 This is the end of our tour. Thank you very much for joining us today.

