[place] *Located on the mouth of Abashiri River as it runs into the Sea of Okhotsk, Abashiri is host to a number of small museums and ruins, and some rather curious "local cuisine".*

In a Nutshell

Abashiri is a small city (pop. 40,000) centred largely around its **fishing** and **agricultural industries** ; main exports include potatoes, wheat, barley and sugar beet, as well as a variety of **seafood** from both the Sea of Okhotsk and its **inlying lakes** . It is notable in particular for its proximity to the recently discovered **shell mounds** of the **Moyoro people** .

What to See

At 207m above sea level **Mt. Tento** provides an excellent view of the Sea of Okhotsk and the lakes surrounding Abashiri; it also hosts the **Okhotsk Ryu-hyo (Drift Ice) Museum** and the **Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples**. The **Abashiri Prison Museum** is a reconstruction of the Meiji period prison of the same name, while the **Moyoro Shell Mound Museum** has relics of the Moyoro people on display. Between February and March **drift ice** can be seen on **boat tours** and the **JR Norokko** special train, which departs twice daily from Abashiri while in season.

What to Eat

The local tourism association is currently pushing ***zangi-don*** and ***moyoro-nabe*** (see here) as Abashiri specialities, though the provenances of both are, dare I say, a little suspicious. On the other hand Abashiri is rather favourably positioned - directly off the **Sea of Okhotsk**, and surrounded by rich, well-supplied **lakes** - and its various **seafood**, when in season, may be worth a try. **Pink salmon**, in particular, can actually be seen in Abashiri River, and is excellent when in season from **late August to November**.

Getting There

The **JR Okhotsk Limited Express** runs four times a day from Sapporo (via Asahikawa) and takes **just under 5.5 hours**. A ticket is **¥9,130** (£68.30 / $107) for an unreserved seat each way, though **free with a JR pass** .

Transport

Buses operate infrequently from near the train station, providing connections to **most major tourist spots** . Please check local timetables.

Even the nearest restaurants are a considerable distance from the train station, and walking is not recommended.

Recommendation

To be honest, it **just didn't click** with me. Although a little more lively than the equally remote (and equally underpopulated) **Wakkanai** , something about **Abashiri** feels off - the attractions feel a little forced and artificial, and the food (***zangi-don***?) even more so. **Wakkanai** is **equally featureless**, in a way, but there I could enjoy the remoteness, at least - and I did, and it's one of my fondest memories. Here, they've taken even that away. It **deserves points** for the effort that's clearly gone into developing the industry, as such, but I rather think it starts to lose meaning if it loses **authenticity** while doing so.

More Information

Abashiri Tourist Association

Ever been to Abashiri? What did you think of the attractions, or the food? What do you think of the city's development policy? *Send in an e-mail* *, comment below or Twitter /* twitter.com/foodjapan