
Observation Decks

Two observation decks high up in the Shiretoko hills offer visitors excellent vantage points to see whales, dolphins, and Kunashiri—the large island that sits across the Nemuro Strait from Rausu.

Whale Observation Hill Park (Kujira no Mieru Oka Koen)

This wooden deck looking out over the Nemuro Strait is ideal for viewing the whales and dolphins that frequent the waters year round, and a board with whale illustrations indicates each species. These include killer whales (April–July) and sperm whales (July–September). Spotting sperm whales from land is rare as these giant creatures are only usually found in deep waters off of the coast. At times, superpods totaling 100 whales of various species gather in the strait during mating season from June to July.

Rausu Kunashiri Observation Tower

This two-story building faces Kunashiri, the island 25 kilometers across the Nemuro Strait. View the island through a telescope on the first floor, or from the outdoor deck on the second floor. Kunashiri is one of four islands that are part of an ongoing territorial dispute between the Japanese and Russian governments.