

The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum

Fukushima Prefecture
(The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum)



Background

The Great East Japan Earthquake, or the 2011 off the Pacific coast of Tohoku Earthquake, occurred at 2:46 PM on 11 March, 2011.

The Great East Japan Earthquake (9.0 on the moment magnitude scale) with a maximum seismic intensity of 7 (upper 6 in Fukushima Prefecture), was the largest ever recorded in Japan's history, and it struck eastern Japan. The disaster left more than 18,000 people dead or missing nationwide.

As of the end of March 2024, more than 25,000 people in Fukushima Prefecture have been forced to live away from their hometowns due to the nuclear disaster caused by the accident at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, and there is no end in sight for the decommissioning of the Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and the reactions to related harmful rumours and misinformation.

More than 4,100 people lost their lives in Fukushima Prefecture, and over 2,300 of these earthquake-related deaths were due to indirect causes, such as physical deterioration or overwork during their lives as evacuees. This indicates the severity of this complex disaster and its continuing effects.

The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum was established by Fukushima Prefecture in order to pass on the records and lessons of the unprecedented complex disaster of the Great East Japan Earthquake and nuclear

disaster to future generations, as well as to convey to domestic and international audiences the image of Fukushima Prefecture moving forward vigorously towards recovery.

Additionally, it is positioned as an information transmission hub for the national project, the Fukushima Innovation Coast Framework.

Objectives

Those who experienced this disaster share a common desire to collect, preserve and study the records and lessons from this unprecedented complex disaster, and the process of steady recovery afterwards, in order to share them with future generations and the rest of the world so that the memories do not fade away.

The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum aims to properly convey the experience of this nuclear disaster unique to Fukushima, while following three basic principles.

- (1) 'Passing down to future generations and sharing with the world' the records and lessons from the nuclear disaster and following recovery
- (2) 'Disaster prevention and mitigation' utilising the experiences and lessons learned from the nuclear disaster unique to Fukushima
- (3) 'Contributing to a faster recovery' through the revitalisation of local communities, culture, and traditions, and the development of human resources who will play a major role in

reconstruction, in cooperation with people and organisations who care about Fukushima

Project Outline

The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum is a prefectural facility in Futaba Town, Fukushima Prefecture, which opened on 20 September, 2020.

In the museum, four activities are engaged in based on basic principles.

- 1 Collection and preservation: The museum collects and stores a wide range of materials related to the series of disasters caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and the nuclear disaster. These are preserved in a strictly controlled environment, and all efforts are made to preserve them in pristine condition for the future.
- 2 Investigations and Research: The museum has a training room where senior and permanent researchers engage in research activities based on their specialised knowledge.
- 3 Exhibitions and Presentations: Of the approximately 290,000 items collected, approximately 200 actual items are displayed in the permanent collection room. In addition, videos and explanations help to further deepen visitors' understanding.

In the permanent collection room, visitors can learn in chronological order about life before the Great East Japan Earthquake, see vivid scenes of life immediately after the disaster, and learn about Fukushima's efforts to rebuild after a long period of evacuation and negative rumours.

- Prologue Theatre: Community life before the earthquake, the occurrence of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant accident, the evacuation of residents and the path to recovery, is effectively portrayed through a combination of animation and video shown on a big screen.
- Zone 1: 'The Beginning of the Compound Disaster' Introduces daily life in the area, and

coexistence with the nuclear power plant before the accident.

- Zone 2: 'Immediate Response to the Nuclear Accident' The initial response immediately after the accident, such as confusing information and the changing life in the evacuation shelters, is conveyed in an easy-to-understand way through the accounts of memories and records.
 - Zone 3: 'The Voices of Fukushima' Citizens convey how the accident changed their peaceful everyday lives in their hometowns, through the exhibition of testimonies and mementos.
 - Zone 4: 'The Long-term Impact of the Nuclear Disaster' Learn how the people of Fukushima have dealt with the long-term and difficult challenges posed by the nuclear disaster, through their explanations and various materials.
 - Zone 5: 'Striving for Revitalization' Introducing Fukushima Prefecture's efforts to overcome the difficulties and adversity involved in the recovery efforts.
 - 'Museum Storyteller's lecture': Storytellers give talks in the museum four times a day, providing the opportunity to hear directly from local disaster victims.
- 4 'Optional Training Programme': The museum offers training programmes that include storytellers and fieldwork as a paid option to tour the museum. (Although it is held in Japanese, more and more international students are participating.) By utilising these training programmes in addition to the exhibition tours, participants can learn more about the reality of the Great East Japan Earthquake and nuclear disaster.

Features and Innovations

The museum building is located 4 km north of the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, in an area that has experienced the earthquake,

tsunami, and evacuation due to the nuclear power plant accident. This museum's special feature is that visitors can see, hear and feel for themselves the damage caused by this unprecedented disaster, as well as the current state of reconstruction.

Results of the Project

- Since its opening of September 2020, more than 300,000 people have visited the museum, and it has been able to convey to many people the disasters that Fukushima experienced and the current state of the recovery.
- Planned special exhibitions and events have been held in cooperation with the local government, which has enabled local interactions and the dissemination of information.

Issues, Problems and Responses

- In order to get a large number of students to visit the museum, the museum has been engaged in activities to attract educational tours from inside and outside of the prefecture, leading to school groups visiting the museum.

Future Developments (expected effects and project vision and issues)

- A national and prefectural reconstruction memorial park is scheduled to open next to the museum site in March 2026.
- A resort hotel is scheduled to open next to the museum site in March 2026.

URL Reference

<https://www.fipo.or.jp/lore/en>

Contact

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Meaning of Technical and Coined Terms

Fukushima Innovation Coast Framework